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**SEYMOUR I. NADLER**

*Interviewed by: Jack O'Brien*  
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## Retrospective and Reminiscences

### INTERVIEW

*Q: This is November 21, 1989. My name is Jack O'Brien. I am about to become engaged in a conversation with Si Nadler. I will ask him to explain Si and ask him to begin by telling us how and when he got into the information business. Si?*

#### Education: From Pre-Med to English Major to Writing

NADLER: As was the case with many others, I am sure, I didn't plan to get into the government information business (or even the government) when I was in college. I attended Columbia, in New York City, intending to become a doctor. After three-and-a-half years of pre-med, however, I sat down one night, my completed applications for medical school in front of me, and realized that I did not really want to attend medical school.

I changed my curriculum and wound up getting a master's degree in English at Teachers College of Columbia University. Although I did not realize it at the time, my non-athletic (I was a member of the crew) extra-curricular activities had some bearing on my ultimate career in information. In addition to writing for and, in my senior year, becoming managing editor of the Columbia Jester, I wrote the book and lyrics for two varsity shows.

After getting my M.A. in 1937, I did some high school teaching in New York City, at the same time doing considerable radio script writing. This was, of course, in pre-television days. Incidentally, the name "Si" does not have any particular connotation. My initials are S.I.N., and, somewhere along the line, somebody combined the first two initials and started calling me "Si."

#### **Early 1941: Army Service: First Anti-Aircraft Artillery**

Getting back to what we were discussing, after a year or two of teaching and radio script writing, World War II came along, and, nine months before Pearl Harbor, I entered the Army. I was assigned to Anti-Aircraft Artillery. Because of my writing background, I was sent to the Anti-Aircraft Artillery School to write field manuals on what were then rather technical subjects.

#### **1944 - OSS**

In 1944, I was recruited by the Office of Strategic Services, the OSS, and sent to China, where I became part of a unit doing black propaganda work. It was all then highly

classified, but, if anybody is interested, it has been briefly covered in a book by Betty McDonald, *Undercover Girl*, and in some detail in *Radio Warfare: OSS and CIA Subversive Propaganda*, by Lawrence Soley, published by Praeger in 1989.

After the war, again I am sure like many others, I had no desire to go back to what I had been doing before. I found that I enjoyed the experience of working with other peoples, other cultures, and, at that time, agencies of the U.S. Government were actively seeking qualified recruits to serve overseas, especially in the Far East.

### **1947: Foreign Service: From State to USIA's Predecessor Agency, 1951-1953**

In early 1947, I was a vice consul in Tientsin, China, in charge of the visa section and also working for another agency. I returned to the U.S. in early 1949 and in 1951 was given another dual assignment, this time in Singapore. The other part of the dual assignment was with USIA and I discovered that I was liking this part of the work more and more.

### **1954: CPAO, Taiwan**

I returned to the States in mid-1953. In 1954, I became CPAO in Taipei, Taiwan. This was not a dual assignment, and I suppose it could be considered my formal entry into USIA.

*Q: Was there at that time in Taipei a well-established USIS establishment?*

NADLER: Yes, there was a well-established post, actually three posts. The main one was in the capital, Taipei. We had our own two-story building, apart from the embassy, complete with library. We had an active exchange program ... the works.

*Q: During that period was there a difficulty between relations of the Republic of China as it was then now and still is and the United States that caused you difficulty, special difficulty?*

NADLER: I wouldn't say it caused us special difficulty except from time to time, when the Chinese understandably were very sensitive to anything that might be perceived as a change in the U.S. attitude toward what they called the Republic of China on Taiwan and support for their military operations, political plans, and so forth. At that time, one of the worst things that could have happened - did happen a bit later - was adoption by the U.S. of the concept of "two Chinas."

### **Reversion to Discussion of Nadler's Singapore Tour (1949-51) During What British Called "The Emergency" - Chinese Communist Insurrection in Malaysia**

*Q: I think that we may have skipped over Singapore a little too quickly. In one of our earlier talks you described a philosophy that was passed on to you by one of your British colleagues. Would you share that with us, please?*

NADLER: Yes. This was rather early in my assignment but at a time when I found I could talk rather frankly with my British colleagues. One in particular, whom you could call my opposite number, in the course of conversation one day about one of the problems that we, the U.S., faced at the time and the British didn't seem to be taking as seriously as we did, said, and I am paraphrasing, "Americans seem to believe that every problem has a solution. You just can't seem to face the fact that there are some problems that are literally insoluble except in terms of time. You waste your energies and beat your heads against the wall trying to solve a problem for which there is no present solution. If you just sat back, like the rest of us, and waited, in time it would just go away."

He also pointed out that far too many people think that, in his words, everything that happens in the world has previously been planned in Washington, London, or Moscow. He went on to note that some things just happen. Nobody has to plan them. As he said, "I am not just referring to earthquakes and things like that, but political developments."

*Q: Didn't the British feel at that time, Si, that we Americans were being too pushy in trying to get them out of Singapore?*

NADLER: Oh, no. As a matter of fact, I don't think we were particularly pushy at that time, because, well, for one thing, there were other things on our mind. We knew that they were working toward getting out and they were faced with this rather horrible guerrilla war, which, with customary British understatement, they called "The Emergency."

It wasn't just in the jungles that this was going on, but even in Singapore, where the average tourist would notice immediately, walking down the street, that restaurants and stores all had a sort of strong wire mesh in front of them to deter somewhat the throwing of grenades or small bombs into them. The government faced special problems, particularly one concerning Chinese school teachers. If the guerrillas thought that these Chinese school teachers were teaching, to their minds, the wrong attitudes, they would throw acid in their faces, particularly if they were women.

The American government knew what the British were facing and that the British control eventually was going to be relinquished, so there was no wisdom in pushing them. We certainly didn't want them to pull out when the communists were as strong as they were.

*Q: Right. At that time was American business trying to get a stronger foothold in Singapore?*

NADLER: Yes, but I think it was sort of on the back burner as far as the overall American economy was concerned. Companies which operated in the Far East before the war were back again, of course.

*Q: I ask because in some parts of the world USIS had been asked to facilitate this getting American business into position.*

NADLER: We didn't face that problem there. I think one of the reasons was that those who came out were still dealing with the British. There was no cultural barrier and no language problems vis-a-vis the British, and many of the American companies, as already noted, had ties with British companies, so that was not a problem anyway.

### **Back to Taiwan**

*Q: Well, can we move back to Taipei, then?*

NADLER: Sure.

*Q: As you pointed out, we had three posts there. Was each one a post with a library and the usual facilities for press releases and so on?*

NADLER: I suppose you could say yes, but the major activity was out of Taipei, the capital, and one of the three posts, Kaohsiung, in the south, was primarily the locale of the State Department's FSI Language Branch.

*Q: Oh, right.*

NADLER: People who had studied Chinese in the States were sent to Kaohsiung to complete their studies. Thus, the activity of USIS there was of a more modest nature, but it did rely very heavily, as I think back, on the library.

*Q: As a result of these interviews we learn how just extremely valuable local employees are. What was the caliber of your local employees in Taipei?*

### **Interlude: Jumping Ahead to Discuss Problems Involved in Visits of Prominent Persons to Foreign Posts**

NADLER: As I think back, at almost every post where I have been, the local employees were indispensable. And there were always a few who acted above and beyond the call, so to speak.

*Q: Yes.*

NADLER: You could always depend on them and sometimes, things that seem funny now were very serious at the time. Let me point out just one. This was actually in Buenos Aires, when I was involved with the visit of President Eisenhower, and anybody who has been involved in the visit of any high-ranking U.S. official, not to mention the president, knows what this entails.

Fortunately -- I am digressing for the moment -- his advance man was his son John, who was easy to work with and knew what he was doing. I mention this because John Eisenhower taught me the importance, in the context of such state visits, of not taking anything for granted in the arrangements, to check everything out, and then, when it is all set beyond a shadow of a doubt, to go back and check it all again. Then, you invariably find out that somewhere along the line you see a thing which couldn't possibly fall apart did, and you can fix it.

Anyway, we thought everything was arranged. The plane was coming into the airport. Two small grandstands had been set up for high dignitaries. President Frondizi was to be there to greet President Eisenhower.

*Q: Could you spell that name there, Si?*

NADLER: Frondizi is F-r-o-n-d-i-z-i. Each one was going to make just a brief statement - - as a matter of public relations. After a half-hour before the presidential plane was to arrive, one of our local employees made a most upsetting discovery. A temporary stand had been erected for Presidents Eisenhower and Frondizi to exchange greetings. About twenty feet away, on platforms, stood loudspeakers. The wires to connect the microphones in the stand to the loudspeakers were lying on the ground, unconnected. It was not a simple matter of connecting them, either, because an honor guard was scheduled to march in front of the two presidents, between them and the loudspeakers. What to do .... and do quickly? One of our local employees sized up the situation and, consulting nobody, suddenly charged off toward the terminal. Within five minutes, he came running back, followed by two Argentina airport personnel carrying a rolled-up red carpet. He connected the wires and unrolled the red carpet to cover them. It was not just a solution; it all looked planned. What more natural than a red carpet for the visit of a foreign dignitary?

*Q: A great story. Well, they saved my life more than once, too. Let's hold on here for a minute.*

*Well, Si, while talking about local employees is there another story that comes to mind?*

NADLER: Well, actually, not about local employees at this point. We were talking about state visits or important visits. This was one area where you go through something such as I went through in Buenos Aires and figure, well, that is a once-in-a-lifetime thing. I am never going to face that again. Thank God, it's over! In reality, there is a good chance that someday the same thing is going to happen again.

When I was in Ankara, many years later, I was put in charge of the visit of the astronauts who walked on the moon. The lessons that you learn handling one such visit certainly do apply to another. Let me tell just one more anecdote about these visits that I think would be of help to anybody at any place in the future, concerning things that are obvious when they are pointed out to you but that the average person just wouldn't think of. We go back

to the visit to Argentina of President Eisenhower. I remember talking once to the security people, the advance men, who asked us to intercede with the Argentines, who were very industrious in cleaning up the city and doing a beautiful job, making it spic and span. Our advance security people, however, noted that in the process of cleaning the streets, the Argentines had picked up stones along the parade route, which is commendable, and placed them in neat (and accessible) piles at all the street corners, which is not a good idea. Also, I remember saying to them that "Eisenhower is so popular down there that when the motorcade goes down the streets of Buenos Aires you are going to have wall-to-wall people and rooftop-to-ground people hanging out."

*Q: It probably makes your job terribly difficult.*

NADLER: Something had not occurred to me. The security people set me straight. When you have wall-to-wall people, so to speak, anybody who makes any sort of move that doesn't fit in with the pattern is immediately noticeable. It is when you have a sparse scattering of people here and there that you don't often notice a move that doesn't fit. Finally, while on this subject, when we had the astronauts' visit in Turkey, we were talking about talking about the program. One of the advance men mentioned to me that they wanted to condense the program, eliminate certain stops, combine others. He said that most people don't realize that the most fatiguing part of a visit like this for the astronauts or anybody who is making that visit is getting in and out of cars.

*Q: I hadn't thought of that.*

NADLER: If you ever plan it, you might keep that in mind.

### **1956-1958: Deputy Director, then Director USIA Office of Intelligence and Research**

*Q: Yes. Well, shall we move on, then, to your job after Taipei and what was that assignment?*

NADLER: After Taipei, I was deputy to Henry Loomis, who was then director of what the Agency called the office of Research and Intelligence, and about a year later I succeeded him as director when he left to take charge of the Voice of America.

Our job at the time was divided between intelligence reports from the field about background, attitudes, and program effectiveness. The other half consisted of public opinion surveys conducted overseas.

*Q: How long were you in that assignment?*

NADLER: Approximately two years, in the course of which I gave up certain prejudices that I had come in with against public opinion polling. The efforts of Dr. Crespi -

*Q: That is Leo Crespi?*

NADLER: Leo Crespi, and also thanks to the results of some of these surveys we conducted. Like certain other activities, you find that sometimes what you think you are looking for clouds the judgment of what you actually see.

Let me give one specific example. I forget whose request it was, but on a rather high-level request from the government we supported a public opinion survey in one of the least developed areas of Brazil, northeast Brazil. One of the questions was rather obvious -- along the lines of what do you think, on a scale of one to ten (or whatever it was), about the United States.

When it came out, the result that would normally be accepted and disseminated was simply that opinion was divided. Of those who had an opinion, it was divided about fifty/fifty for and against the U.S. But what the average person doesn't look for was the important thing. Those who had an opinion numbered somewhat less than forty percent of those surveyed, and the majority of the rest of them had never heard of the United States.

Obviously, that was the most significant finding.

*Q: So you had about two years in research?*

NADLER: Well, actually three, one as deputy and two as director.

*Q: Now, that led to a job where, Si?*

### **1959: Country Public Affairs Officer, Argentina**

NADLER: After that I went to Buenos Aires.

*Q: This is interesting, that your background overseas so far had been in Asia. How did you arrange or did someone else arrange for you to jump to Latin America?*

NADLER: The job came up, and I made it known that I wanted to go overseas again. I was offered that job. I did go to the Foreign Service Institute to study Spanish before I went and actually came up with a three-three-plus rating, which was later raised.

Let me say this. As I was taking the Spanish language course I found that I was assimilating it quite rapidly, and I was very proud of myself, particularly my ability to acquire vocabulary. Then one day it occurred to me that what was happening was that my three years of Latin in high school were paying off. The Spanish words all had Latin roots and my mind made the connection.

I had studied Latin for three years in high school. At the time, you had to study Latin and a foreign language in high school in New York City. Anyway, I went to Buenos Aires for the next three years.



*Q: Good story. What were relations overall between the United States and Argentina at that time?*

NADLER: To the extent that the Argentines can accept anybody, Americans were more or less accepted at the time. There were problems because of the volatility of Argentine politics, which was - and is - nothing new, but they did have a civilian president then. President Frondizi was an elected president. Nevertheless, the Peronistas were still very strong.

*Q: Let us establish the dates, please.*

NADLER: I was there from the beginning of 1959 to August of 1962, nearly three years.

*Q: Now, did we have complete freedom as an alien foreign information service to conduct our affairs? Were any restrictions placed upon us?*

NADLER: I can't think offhand of any serious restrictions placed upon us, no. In other words, we did not have to submit anything to an Argentine jury before releasing it.

*Q: Yes.*

NADLER: On the other hand you knew, as you do in any foreign country, that there are certain bounds beyond which you cannot go, and we accepted that.

*Q: You had a library that was used?*

NADLER: A library that was used.

*Q: Did you have a Fulbright program?*

NADLER: A very active Fulbright program and a particularly active cultural program. The people in Buenos Aires have always been very interested in matters cultural. You have to bear in mind that, as big as Argentina is physically, a third of the population lives in the city of Buenos Aires.

*Q: Overall, you found that an agreeable assignment?*

NADLER: Oh, yes, yes. This was -

*Q: Any exceptions that you would like to record or not?*

NADLER: Well, not for any personal reasons, just the lessons that I offer to people in the Agency, young people who might someday be based somewhere like that. Let me say first

that this was the first post that I had where I could take a walk down the street and not stand out as something different and alien.

### **The Book Translation “Scam” in Buenos Aires**

In any event, we had at that time -- well, before I got there, as a matter of fact, for some time a program that was one of the showpieces of the Agency. Unfortunately, it turned out to be something quite different. I will make this as short as possible. It was one of the book programs, the book translation programs that were popular in those days, except that this one had been sold to the Agency as something which could operate throughout Latin America (except, of course, Brazil, where the language is Portuguese) while based in and controlled from Buenos Aires, which had the strongest publishing industry in the entire area.

In any event -- again, I am trying to keep this brief - the arrangement was that, through USIS-Buenos Aires, USIA would pay for translations and subsidize publications of American books which we wanted to reach Latin American readers, but to reach them as if they were American books selected, translated, and commercially published by a Latin American publisher.

It could be called a gray activity. Edward R. Murrow defined a gray information activity as one where the hand of the United States is concealed, but if revealed could be admitted to without serious national embarrassment. When I arrived in Buenos Aires as CPAO, the activity was in full swing and had been in operation for a couple of years. Reports to the Agency were not only encouraging but enthusiastic. The program became an Agency showpiece, especially where Congress was concerned.

The books that were very important to have disseminated were supposedly being disseminated and bought, which would have meant more effectiveness, because when people buy something they pay more attention to it than when it is given as a gift. Remarks by some local employees led me to think a little more about it. It just didn't seem to ring true.

In any event, drawing on my experience from research and intelligence, I had a routine check initiated, by employing local offices of American survey firms, simply to go out and try to determine how many of these books were actually being sold, by checking the kiosks and so on.

It turned out that sales were almost nonexistent in Argentina and in some countries, for all intents and purposes, nonexistent. The whole thing was just a scam. I reported it back and eventually the program was ended.

*Q: Well, the person or persons responsible for this mischief -- what happened to them?*

NADLER: Well, the one primarily responsible was permitted to resign from the Agency. I suppose some of the others were reassigned, or whatever happens or doesn't happen in those cases.

*Q: Yes.*

NADLER: The bearer of bad tidings got what the bearer of bad tidings usually gets.

*Q: Now, as a lesson you would like to leave with persons who listen to this tape -*

NADLER: The lesson is, very simply, that when conducting a particularly ambitious program of any sort, never take anything for granted. Never say we can assume this or we can assume that. From time to time make checks that should be made simply to make sure that what is supposed to be happening is happening and happening the way you want it to happen.

*Q: Yes.*

### **American TV Programs in Argentina: The Mexican Accent “Thing”**

NADLER: Let me mention now, still in Buenos Aires, something amusing and enlightening that happened to me. At that time American television programs were being sent in great numbers to Latin America through commercial channels for commercial purposes.

*Q: Mr. Nadler will continue.*

NADLER: American television programs were first sent to Mexico, which had the most advanced equipment in Latin America for dubbing into Spanish. Then they were sent throughout Latin America, where television was just taking off at that time.

At a party one night, an Argentine lady, one of the so-called elite, came charging over to me, and I could see fire in her eyes. She was obviously very upset. We knew each other. She did everything except shake her finger in my face and she said, "Your American television programs are being broadcast down here now. I have six children at home of an impressionable age -"

I thought that was a good point to break in. I said, "Yes, I understand. We in the United States are concerned, too, about all of this violence on television and the possible effects on children. We are assured by psychologists -" and I gave the theory that children naturally have tendencies toward violence and don't see it the same way we do.

I was part way into what I thought was a good defense, when she raised her hand imperiously and said, "I am not concerned about violence. I am concerned about my children starting to talk with a Mexican accent."

*Q: Do any other stories about Argentina come to mind?*

NADLER: Well, just something that was more often said there than elsewhere. As you know, Jack, before World War II some of the radio script writing I did was for comedians. I did some research when I was much younger about the nature and uses of humor. I have always thought it important to determine what kind of stories are going around at a given time in a country. Today, people say that you can listen to Johnny Carson and some of the other late night talk show hosts to learn exactly what is on people's minds by what they are laughing at, what the major issues are, and where politicians stand.

In any event, in Argentina there was a magazine called Tia Vincenta, which actually means Aunt Vincent. It was sort of a cross between The New Yorker and Mad Magazine. It was vicious politically and, of course, it had a wide following. At that time there were occasional attempted coups in the city, which usually got nowhere. They were more of a politico-military exercise than anything else.

One of the magazine's regular cartoonists had a two- page spread shortly after one of these attempted coups. I still remember one of the cartoons. The perspective was looking down toward the street from a fifth-floor apartment terrace. Tanks were visible in the street below. A man was depicted on the terrace, pointing down toward the tanks in the street, looking back over his shoulder, saying -- this was the caption -- "Rosa, come look! Elections!"

We -- call it a calculated risk -- took a chance on offering the editor of this magazine an opportunity to travel to the United States on a leader grant. We were taking a chance, but actually when he came back it really paid off. He had a lot of critical things to say about the United States, but a few of the things he wrote in his magazine canceled all the rest. He did criticize our lack of sophistication about the rest of the world -- he said, "I was taken to a lot of parties, which I enjoyed, but wherever I went, you know, as soon as I walked in out would come the LPs with sambas, rhumbas and tangos. No one asked me -- I happen to like jazz piano." He also wrote: "I especially appreciated my introduction to the voting machines that they use in the United States. You can cast your vote by machine. It would never work down here, because there is no that lever says 'fraud.'"

**1962: Back to U.S.: USIA Member on Staff of State Department's Interdepartmental Seminal on Problems of Development and Internal Defense**

*Q: So, Si, after four years in Buenos Aires - three - your next assignment was what?*

NADLER: I came back around August of 1962. I had some home leave. I was then assigned to what was called the National Interdepartmental Seminar on Problems of Development and Internal Defense at the Foreign Service Institute.

*Q: I would like to see an acronym for that.*

NADLER: Well, we called it NIS, the National Interdepartmental Seminar. It was concerned pretty much with counterinsurgency, which was very important in those days. The purpose was to increase the efficiency of country teams overseas; that is, to bring into play all the various U.S. government agencies that operated overseas so that they would be working toward a common goal, each understanding what the others were doing.

*Q: Across the board or on what subject?*

NADLER: Again, the development was concerned pretty much with the so-called developing world. It had nothing to do, say, with western Europe or anything like that. It concerned itself with not only what you could call morale operations, but also where economic aid fitted in, how it should be handled, looking into the hearts and minds of people and so on and so forth. The seminar numbered on its staff representatives of the State Department -- usually, I guess, three or four of them - two people from AID, one each from CIA and USIA and each of three major military services, the Army, Navy and Marines.

*Q: You were the USIA representative?*

NADLER: I was the USIA representative, yes.

*Q: Now, who organized or arranged or directed the curriculum?*

NADLER: It was pretty much a State Department-controlled operation, but various people, generals and others, were concerned with the curriculum, and Robert Kennedy took a very strong personal interest in it. I do not know whether he had been one of the forces that led to its organization, but I do know that all through its existence he was a very strong force.

*Q: At that time he was attorney general?*

NADLER: He was attorney general, yes.

*Q: He would appear for lectures?*

NADLER: Every now and then he would appear just to listen in. He did lecture once or twice. The most important part of the program involving speakers was the question and answer period, where absolutely nothing was forbidden -- no holds barred. Any questions could be asked and answered.

*Q: How many USIA officers would attend at any given time and for how long?*

NADLER: The course ran in six-week sessions. Only senior officers were assigned, including ambassadors- designate and general or flag rank. USIA assigned PAOs and some CAOs.

Given that factor, you had from one to three or four USIA representatives in a class.

*Q: Overall, looking back on it, Si, did it - the institution of this - reflect a need of the time?*

NADLER: It reflected the needs of the time, yes.

*Q: Well, did it end while you were there?*

NADLER: No, no. I left before then. I was called back to the Agency.

### **1966: Recalled from State Department Seminal to Agency's Public Information Office**

*Q: Yes. I understand your next assignment was in the Agency's Public Information Office, is that correct?*

NADLER: Yes, in the Public Information Office, fielding questions from the media and Congress, as well as the general public. One of the main reasons I was brought back, however, was to take over the writing part of the semiannual reports to Congress. Someone had directed a change in the format of the semiannual reports, making them look a lot more attractive, more readable, more photographs, and lots of art.

*Q: I remember.*

NADLER: Robert Sivard was assigned to handle the art work, the layout and so on. I remember at one point -- we had done five of these semiannual reports -- someone asked how we got along so well together, without friction or anything. Bob said, "Well, when we started I suggested and Si agreed that I wouldn't tell him how to write and he wouldn't tell me how to do the art work."

*Q: A simple formula, yes. That went on for how long, that job?*

### **1969: Deputy PAO, Turkey**

NADLER: I guess that was about two years. I went to Turkey in the very beginning of 1969.

*Q: You went there as PAO?*

NADLER: January of 1969, yes, as deputy PAO.

*Q: The PAO was -*

NADLER: Bob Lincoln was PAO most of the time I was there, actually until the last couple of months.

*Q: Anyway, did you have any preparation in language before you went to Turkey?*

NADLER: I was always interested, wherever I went, in learning something of the local language. As I mentioned before, I did go to FSI and learned Spanish before I went to Argentina.

I did take the short FSI course in Turkish before going. I learned enough so that with the help of a dictionary I could read headlines of the daily paper and a number of the articles and could communicate when traveling in the country on a very basic level.

*Q: I somehow had the idea that Turkish enters this discussion.*

NADLER: Yes. I wanted to learn some of the language. The then area director said that it was not really necessary to learn it to go to Turkey for a lot of work we were doing at the time, and also I was too old to study a new language. After discussion, he said he would make a bargain with me: if I took the standard FSI language proficiency test and passed it he would OK my study of Turkish. I did take it and I did pass it. I had been told, and most people believed at the time, that the proficiency test given was created for that purpose, with all the rules of grammar and vocabulary, all made up. I recognized nothing in it and assumed I was correct, but later on I found out that a real language was used: Kurdish.

### **Kidnappings of American Service Men**

*Q: I like that one. In Turkey, Si, I believe there was a kidnapping that drew some attention.*

NADLER: Yes.

*Q: Can you tell us about that?*

NADLER: Three American enlisted men who were working at a highly classified communications establishment commuted daily to and from their work. They were kidnapped by leftist guerrillas.

*Q: Was this in Ankara?*

NADLER: Just outside Ankara. We didn't know at the time, but as it turned out they were held in an apartment in Cankaya, which was the most exclusive part of Ankara. That we learned after it was all over.

At first there were no real demands made. Then there were some demands calling for release of some of the Turkish terrorists who had been jailed. Two of the kidnapped Americans had wives with them and they pleaded on the TV for release of their husbands.

At that particular time Bob Lincoln was out of the country. In crisis situations, you have to anticipate contingencies, no matter how unpleasant. I spoke with the ambassador about preparing three statements to be used in case of release unharmed of the captives, presentation of demands that could not possibly be met, or, finally, something like delivery of dead bodies - one by one or all at once.

This went on for a while, and, suddenly, one day these three enlisted men got out of a taxi at the American embassy and walked in. It turned out that they had been held, as I mentioned, in an apartment in Cankaya, not badly treated, but nevertheless held, and one day their captors suddenly said, "You are free to go after we do." The captors took off, and the soldiers were left alone. They thought it was a trick and waited a while. Then, they came out, and there they were in the street in one of the main parts of Ankara, completely free. One of them, it turned out later, even bargained with the taxi driver before being driven to the embassy.

It turned out that the police were observed getting closer and closer to this apartment by the guerrillas who held the three American servicemen captive, and they thought that it was just a matter of time before the police, acting on this or that information, closed in and captured them. They decided that they had just better get the hell out of there - but it did develop that the police, were, indeed, there and were clearly getting closer. They were, however, working on an entirely unrelated operation and had absolutely no knowledge that the guerrillas were there.

As I mentioned before, this took me back to what I had been told in Singapore, about things sometimes just happening without being planned.

*Q: Well, it upsets some of my theories about captives.*

### **The Opium Poppy Growing Trouble in Turkey**

*There was a -- during that period you were in Turkey the opium problem became of increasing importance to the United States. Tell me about that, Si.*

NADLER: That represented a lot of difficulties for us because the poppy has a special place in Turkish culture. It serves many important purposes to the peasants who grow it, none of them relating to its use as a narcotic as such. The plant has a wide spectrum of uses, including one tenuous relation to our drug problem: the peasants have long used the poppy as sort of a home remedy for children who had very bad coughs or related illness.



In any event, their livelihood depended on growing the poppy, which is a very, very painstaking procedure. Opium poppies require almost individual care. They can be harmed by high winds and so forth. They have to be picked carefully. That is one part of it.

When it came to our persuading peasants to give up this crop and growing something else, the Turks tried to explain that this was not as easy as it sounded -- we, are now running into that, of course, in Columbia and other places -- not just because of the economic side of it, but also because of cultural considerations.

As a matter of fact, I remember one case where it was suggested to some visiting American Congressmen by one of the Turks, "You offer to send people over here, experts, to teach our peasants how to grow another crop and to give up this one. This is really not our problem. It is your problem. We do not have a drug problem." At that time they didn't, in Turkey.

He added, "We suggest sending some of our experts over to teach your tobacco farmers how to grow something else to substitute for that most harmful crop." This argument did not go over well.

I could see why they felt they had to get this dig in. A New York congressman had just made the headlines, which did not help us any, when he said - I am paraphrasing, but I am not too far off the actual quote - that every time a deceased heroin addict in New York City was being taken to the graveyard for burial, the funeral cortege should be made to pass in front of the Turkish consulate in New York.

We kept telling them to help us and take a strong stand when a young American was captured and admitted to smuggling drugs. A Turkish court sent him to Turkish jail. What happened next was that, all of a sudden, sympathy went to him, and Hollywood came out with a money-making film called "Midnight Express." You can't have it both ways.

This was a continuing problem, not always for the right reasons.

### **American Military Bases in Turkey**

*Q: Another problem, I suppose, was the American bases in Turkey. How many did we have, roughly, at that time?*

NADLER: I don't know. Major bases numbered perhaps three including two very important air bases in the south at Adana and a base known as Cigli on the Aegean coast at Izmir. Even more important were some that -- I don't even know how many there were at the time -- very small units of perhaps half a dozen men or less each along the Russian/Turkish border which were primarily electronic listening posts. You have to bear in mind, this was all done under the NATO aegis, so the Turks had a voice in things.

*Q: Si, did that bring into play our responsibility, if we had one, on community relations with the Turks? Did USIS get involved with that?*

NADLER: Fortunately, there were not too many problems in that respect. To the extent that there were, yes, we did get involved. There was always a potential problem that a lot of us kept in the backs of our minds, and that was that in Ankara itself there was a large group called MAAG, the Military Assistance Advisory Group, with military and civilian personnel. There was an area which was more or less off limits to Turks and they accepted the fact. The APO and the AFEX as well as an American school were located there. The buses would pick up American children as they came to school and would take them home.

We didn't talk much about it but I think all of us had this horrible nightmare in the back of our minds: what if guerrillas suddenly kidnapped a bus load of American children?

*Q: Sure.*

NADLER: On a couple of occasions when there was anti-American feeling there were rocks thrown at the buses, but that was about it. This happened only once or twice while I was there.

That was about the time when the leftists were very strong, not just as guerrillas outside the cities, but in the cities, especially the universities.

*Q: Do you want to say more on your experiences in Turkey?*

NADLER: Well, I don't know that it has too much relevance, but, as in other places, when you travel outside the capital every now and then (as often as possible in my case), you find out that, like in Washington where things become different as soon as you get beyond the Beltway, in almost any country when you leave the capital and go to a provincial city or to a small village, you are almost in another world, not just another country. If you are to succeed as an information officer, somehow you have to expose yourself to this every now and then and bear in mind that things are not always as they were described to you by these very helpful bilingual friends.

*Q: Overall, you found that actually a satisfying assignment in Turkey?*

NADLER: Oh, yes, but I must say I found all of my assignments satisfying in one way or another.

### **1973: USIA Representative on Faculty of National War College**

*Q: Well, that leads, Si, to your final assignment with the Agency, from which you can draw upon your experiences and pass on, as a member of the faculty at the National War College. How did that come about?*

NADLER: It came about in the way those things often come about. I had only two years to go before retirement. It was highly unlikely that I was going to be sent out as a PAO somewhere for two years. Among other things, it wouldn't be worthwhile economically to the Agency. I was looking around to see what was open, and lo and behold, one day along came Dan Oleksiw, who had been but was no longer the area director when I had been returning. He had been assigned to the National War College faculty and had decided he didn't like it and he was looking for somebody he could offer as a replacement for himself who would be acceptable there.

It worked out that way and it was an assignment I wanted. It seemed like a rewarding assignment for the last two years of one's career, you know, passing along some of your experience to people on the way up.

*Q: Yes.*

NADLER: Also, a little selfishly, it was a chance to go on these trips they took every year. First, I accompanied them to Africa, because my only experience in Africa before that had been on an inspection trip to two countries, and I wanted to see a little bit more of Africa. The second one was a trip back to the Far East, where I hadn't been for about twenty-five years. I am still debating whether that was wise or not, because the changes were so immense that it wasn't quite the way I remembered the countries.

### **Retrospective and Reminiscences**

*Q: I think we are getting close to the end of part two, but if you want to sum up in any sense, Si, I heard you say a little while ago that you would recommend this career to a young person. Do you have any observations in general about, say, such fundamentals as the Agency's personnel policies? Do you feel that you have been treated fairly in that, that there was really recognition of your interest and adequate time for training?*

NADLER: My own feelings on this, I don't think, would be of assistance to anybody, because I have more or less gone through life accepting something I once read in an essay by Emerson about compensation, that somehow things balance out one way or another, and sometimes - and this happened in my own career. When I came back from Buenos Aires, I was not particularly popular in certain higher quarters where it mattered because of what I did about the book program. I was sent to the National Interdepartmental Seminar, an assignment nobody particularly wanted.

It turned out that there I had an opportunity to again expand my own horizons. I exchanged ideas with people from other agencies and services and had a chance to write. I established a magazine there that was still in existence long after I left. Some of my writings there came to the attention of the USIA Director, and he brought me back to this very interesting assignment at the Agency, in Public Information, but also writing the semi-annual reports to Congress, as well as his speeches.

Now, again, I feel that no matter what the policies are in the personnel section of any organization, somewhere along the line personalities are going to prevail -- somebody knowing somebody will get an assignment and somebody else who deserves it may not. Either way, there are compensations if one takes the trouble to identify them. There is nothing Pollyanna-ish about it. It is just that somehow, if you take advantage of whatever you are doing at the time to hone your own particular skills, you are going to average things out, even come out ahead.

Let me mention one thing that you may want to take out later that may have affected my whole outlook. When I was taking my master's degree at Teachers' College at Columbia University, one of the requirements was that during the -- it was a one year master's course at the time -- you had to be an assistant teacher somewhere, either in the New York system or in a private school.

As it turned out I got a real plum of an assignment, and that was assistant teacher at a very, very exclusive private school for girls called Horace Mann.

*Q: Oh.*

NADLER: Now, the way I got it had nothing to do with personnel. It was just that one day one of my professors turned to me and said, "Would you like to teach at the Horace Mann School for Girls?"

I said, "Oh, yes!" He had turned to me because we were standing at adjoining urinals. I don't know where that fits into personnel policies or anything. These things are going to happen.

*Q: It goes back to your British friend in Singapore.*

NADLER: Let me say just one more thing about personnel. Sometimes you do have to speak up for yourself, because you may feel there is a plot against you and find it is something far more innocuous. At the end of World War II -- after VJ Day, when I was in Yunnan Province -- I was one of many military people in the OSS assigned to a commanding officer who was a civilian. There were promotions all around me, and I didn't get a promotion. One day I asked to see this civilian commanding officer and I asked what was wrong with my work. He said, "Nothing. You are doing a great job." I said, "Well, everyone is getting promoted. Why don't I get a promotion?" In all seriousness he said to me, "You are an officer."

*Q: That was the end of it?*

NADLER: I explained to him that officers have various ranks. He said, "Oh, okay." So a week later I was a captain, but if I hadn't gone in and mentioned this I would have had all sorts of paranoid views of what had happened to my military career.

*Q: Well, I don't know if we are running out of tape or not, but I have enjoyed this. As usual, I learned a lot. I have no further comments right now, so shall we cut it off, then, for now?*

NADLER: Sure.

*Q: Okay, then.*

*End of interview*