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

EDMUND SCHECHTER

Interviewed by: G. Lewis Schmidt
Initial interview date: February 5, 1988

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Schechter Returns to US

Schechter Returns to Germany
- Explanation of Special Role Radio Played in Germany
- Establishment and Handling of Newspapers in the American Zone of Occupied Germany
- Handling of Newspapers in the British Zone
- Discussion of Radio in Western Sectors
- Kudos for the Personnel in Military Government Especially in Information Work
- Problems in Finding "Democratic" German Personnel For Media Positions in Military Government
- Radio Munich is the First Station Transferred to German Control – 1950
- American Success in another Area of Occupation Activities
- Psychological Problems
- Other Problems Nazi and Communist Infiltration
- The Nuremburg War Trials
- The McCarthy Era in Germany

Return to Washington: Policy Officer For European Area

The Aperlura A Srnestra (Opening to the Left) In Italy

Tom Sorenson's Dispersal of Former European USIA Officers

INTERVIEW

Q: Ed, I would like you to start out by giving us a background as to where you came from, what your experience was growing up in Vienna, and then primarily how you got out of Vienna at the time of the Nazi invasion. Finally your experiences after fleeing Vienna--how you got to America, and so forth. Why don't you pick it up from the beginning and start there.

YOUTHFUL YEARS IN VIENNA

SCHECHTER: Thank you, Lew. I was raised in Vienna, and left Vienna a few days after Hitler's Army marched into Austria. I had by that time finished my university studies and received the famous Austrian title of doctor, which is extremely useful in Central Europe, but I never use it in this country.

I was active from my very early youth in Jewish movements. My university years coincided with the ever growing Nazi movement paralleling the Nazi takeover in Germany. So I was in Vienna, part of the Jewish community of Vienna: 200,000 people, 10% of the population of Vienna and I should have seen, at least it looks like it in

retrospective--that the end of Austria was inevitable. After all, part of Salzburg was only ten-minutes from the German border.

The first catastrophic news indicated already what Hitler was doing in Germany and would do in the countries that he would occupy. This is quite clear, but apparently was not clear at all during that time, because I had not known, among my innumerable friends and acquaintances, anyone who had seriously talked about getting to the American consulate for a visa, a document that one day after March 11, 1938, became one of the most precious things in life. There were people that emigrated from Vienna years ago, but that was very rare and for private or economic reasons. Members of my family had moved to Paris, for instance during the world economic crisis that by the way started with the collapse of one of the biggest Viennese banks.

My father went at the end of the twenties to the United States, looking into possibilities for another existence, because his export business in Vienna did not go well. So he was about three or four months in New York, and when he returned, the whole family, assembled to hear about his adventures in "the Wild West." My father, in a Biblical tone, declared, "It's an interesting city, New York, and probably many things can be accomplished, but in a city which doesn't have a coffee house, one cannot live." And we did not move and the matter was never, never mentioned again.

In the University of Vienna, my university for five years, I was almost from the beginning in the leadership of the Jewish students and was a member of the oldest Jewish national fraternity in Vienna, the Kadiman. It was founded ten years before Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement, came on the plan. By the way, I was terribly happy that two years ago, exactly in March 1986, the mayor of Tel Aviv agreed to name a street in Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, after the name of this very famous Jewish fraternity.

ANTI-SEMITISM IN VIENNA

In Vienna, the university was a hotbed of anti-Semitism and generally Anti-Semitism in Austria had always been endemic. These were very, difficult years. As an example, on Saturdays, the old tradition was to gather at the university. The Nazi students tried to throw us out, and it was kind of an honor for us to retreat only after putting up a good fight. My mother, the best of all Jewish mothers, always shuddered when Saturday approached, but she would never try to talk me out of going, because she knew that this was a question of honor, and I would never miss it. But I would always, after we got out of the university, and assembled in one of our regular coffee houses, rush to phone her casually, just as a sign that I was safely out.

So the question is--and in my book Viennese Vignettes I have a chapter entitled "Why Did The Jews Not Leave Vienna?" The city was traditionally anti-Semitic and the Nazis were already deeply established in Germany. It wasn't like in '33, when people thought that this was a transitory development. All the terrible news was coming in Vienna. And

why didn't we move? This is very hard to explain even to myself today, and even more to other people. Because after all, it was a life that went on in two tiers.

Everything about anti-Semitism, about the fights, seems understated when I tell it today. But on another level, life continued to be extremely pleasant in Vienna. Life in Vienna had always been easy, with nobody overworking himself. On the surface, it was a polite and civilized society. The tradition of the old monarchy with a very efficient administration and bureaucracy carried over. As an illustration: an example should be taken from the worst spot, the university environment. Even if during the exams, the whole atmosphere was full of anti-Semitic over- and undertones and if a student came from the East and spoke with a Jewish accent the professor would be as nasty as can be by repeating the question, imitating it in the same Jewish accent. But when it came to the results of the exam, if the student was good, he passed, and if he was very good, he got excellent. I don't know anyone who seriously, at that time, would have said that he was more than harassed, at the exams. It was an unpleasant experience, but you did not fail because you were a Jew. You failed because you didn't know your stuff. Otherwise, we couldn't have gotten that many Jewish doctors. So many that half of Park Avenue in New York after the Anschluss in 1938 was filling up with Jewish doctors. They all had unpleasant exams, but good results.

What I wanted to say is that life went along on two tiers--the nasty one and the pleasant one. Vienna had a great transportation system. It is a beautiful city. It had the most wonderful theater, opera and music, and it was financially accessible. Even today, if you drive out 15 minutes, you are in the most wonderful landscape there is.

These good sides must have played an important role in addition to the main element, that people, to the end, did not believe what they heard about the Nazis, or did not believe that this could happen the same way in Austria. However, both angles that I present are insufficient to explain why Jews did not leave in time, but they're factual, because people in the vast majority did not leave Vienna when leaving was still possible.

My last two weeks in Vienna, I believe, illustrate this best. We had formed in Vienna a Jewish Self-Defense Corps, which was patterned after a very large self-defense organization organized in Poland by one of the great leaders of the Jewish national liberation movement, Jabotinsky, who was, by the way, the teacher of Menachem Begin. And the party of Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, can be understood only on the basis of Jabotinsky's teachings.

The formation of a self-defense group of 200 people was, again, in retrospect, an absolutely childish thing if we really thought that the Nazis would come, but we did form it anyway. We invited to this gathering, which was sort of in parade form, the then-Chancellor of Austria, Schuschnigg. He came. I even have a photo taken on this occasion. He came in half-military dress, because he belonged to the government sponsored military defense organization.

After the short ceremony, I approached him, which I could because I was leading this group, and asked, "Mr. Chancellor, normally, at that time of the year, I go skiing to the Alberg. If I ask you should I go this year, is the political situation such that this would be advisable."[2] Mind you that this must have happened in the last few days of February 1938. And Schuschnigg looked at me and in typical Austrian way, calling me Herr Kollege, "dear colleague," because that was the way an older academician addresses a younger university graduate. "Of course you can go. Why should you miss the most wonderful time for skiing? You will go, you will return, and everything will be all right."

Now, that this was stupid of him to say, is another matter. But the degree of my stupidity and total irresponsibility is again, in retrospect, unbelievable. I wasn't a regular little student who had just a couple of years earlier finished his studies. I was deeply involved in political matters since the age of 13, coming from a very activist family, both my father and my mother. I joined Jabotinsky's ranks when I was 15 or 16 years old. I was in a fraternity which was a fighting, deeply involved group. I read the papers, I listened to the radio, I knew what went on in these decisive days, or I should have known.

And after Schuschnigg's words, I went home and told my mother, "Let's pack, because I'm leaving. Schuschnigg himself said I should go." And my mother was equally convinced, of course, that I should go. I cannot recall today, but the next day or two days later, I went for my usual two weeks in St. Anton.

I might add here that my father was not in Vienna at that time. He was on a business trip in Romania. I went to St. Anton, had a wonderfully, good time, and on Friday night, March 11th, I went to bed under the red/white/red Austrian flag flying over the hotel, when I woke up Saturday morning, the whole valley was in brilliant sunshine and a sea of swastika flags all over the hotel and every house in St. Anton. During the night, the Nazis had taken over Austria.

I was undecided what to do. I could have gone easily over the Swiss border. St. Anton is half an hour from the Swiss border. Trains functioned normally. I had a passport with me. But I just didn't decide to do so, and returned to Vienna on Sunday afternoon. I stayed Saturday, still conversing with myself, whether to go to Switzerland or not.

SCHECHTER ESCAPES TO ITALY

Then I did the first smart thing: I did not go home; I did go into a hotel, Hotel de France, which belonged to friends of mine, and was also the coffee house of the Jewish leaders. I went there, had somebody phone my mother, telling her where I was. Our maid--and a maid was not a sign of richness in Vienna; almost everybody in the middle class had a maid--did not know that I had returned, so that, I think, on Sunday morning or on Monday, probably on Monday, I cannot say whether it was Gestapo men or Austrian police, came to look for me. My mother was not home, and the maid truthfully said, "Dr. Schechter is not in Vienna. He is skiing, as every year, and is expected within a few days." And my mother brought me on Monday a suit, because I had only a tuxedo and

skiing pants and slacks with me. I was teased at for years to come that I knew what my future profession would be--a waiter--because I went into emigration with a tuxedo.

I decided to leave on Tuesday night, because the stories were--no firm news--but grapevine news that somebody who had left Monday for Italy--there was one night train in the evening to Trieste--had safely arrived Tuesday morning. That would mean that Tuesday night it might still work. So I decided to leave Tuesday night.

It will be always one of my terrible memories that I spent Tuesday afternoon, two hours, talking to the father of Bill Stricker, our USIA colleague. Bill was later head in New York for years of our information center.

Q: Our foreign press center?

SCHECHTER: Foreign press center. His father was one of the great leaders of the Jewish community in Vienna, in addition to being the publisher of a big paper in Vienna. He had a wonderful Biblical, long beard, not because he was orthodox, but he just liked it. I tried to convince him to, "Shave your beard and come with me to Trieste. I have this news. I am going." And he wouldn't go. He said, "I am here for 30 years; a leader of this community." He was, after the First World War, elected into the first Parliament of the Austrian Republic on the Jewish list, a very, very well known man. And he did not go, and he ended up with his wife, Bill's mother, later in a concentration camp, where they both perished.

So I got, Tuesday night, on the train. I was accompanied to the station by all my friends and my mother. We arranged that if I got to Trieste, fine, I shall let her know, and if I don't get to Trieste, it means that I'll be arrested at the border. Some friends in Trieste will phone and tell my mother I did not arrive, so she will know that I was taken off the train. Well, I got on the train, and we crossed the border very nicely. There was still some regular Austrian border police on duty who were good Austrian "Beamte," that means official functionaries, which followed orders. Apparently they didn't have orders yet to look specifically for Jews so they didn't. I think that the way to Trieste was open for another two or three days, and dozens of people could have saved themselves if they would have done it.

But just before we got to the border, I had a neighbor sitting near me, a blonde woman with very blonde children, and when she went to the bathroom she asked me if she could leave the children with me for a moment. She did, and I put a little note in her handbag, "If I don't arrive in Trieste with you, phone so and so that I was taken from the train." And after we passed the border, I said, "I apologize. There's a note from me to you in your handbag, and you can now destroy it." It turned out that she was just as Jewish as I was, and just fleeing Vienna to Trieste.

Well, an interesting general side remark about fascism in Italy and how late they arrived at the Hitler philosophy is that when I arrived in Trieste, March 10, 1938, in the morning,

the mayor of Trieste was a Jew. A Jewish fascist. He had been a member of the Fascist Party from the early days. A few months later it all changed when they formed the Axis and took over the German Nuremberg laws. But the Italians--it is a thing that should never be forgotten, when one uses the generic term "fascist,"--the Italian fascists never did anything that even can faintly be compared in its inhuman cruelty to the Germans. The Italian fascists helped many, many Jews across the border, let them in, hid them. So this is the thing that should always be held in great favor of the Italians, whom I really believe are decent good people.

I stayed in Trieste only a few days and met quite a number of refugees. The grapevine continued to work, and the news was that if you went to Florence, you could get a visa. Why? Nobody knows exactly why, but I went to Florence and I got the visa to Paris. That's where I wanted to go, because in Paris we had--I mentioned this very shortly before--a branch of our family that had gone to Paris in the early Twenties and the girls had married French people in fairly high positions.

ON TO PARIS

So I was in Paris by the end of March, and my first task was to get my mother out. My father had never returned to Vienna. He had gone from Bucharest to what was then Palestine, today's Israel. He had two brothers there who had been living there already for a long time. They came from the Austria-Hungarian monarchy, part which became Romania in the early Twenties, and they had a British passport in Palestine. My father's task was to send his brother, my beloved Uncle Oscar, to Europe, and he played the go-between between my mother and me and brought my mother some money, since any account was immediately sequestered in Vienna.

I got to Paris, and my two girl cousins managed, through their husbands--France is a great country, like Italy, where the main thing is whom you know--and they got a visa for my mother. Since they didn't trust the French consulate in Vienna, they sent it with a courier. The courier went, of course, anyway, but they knew him and asked him a special task to inform my mother personally that the visa was at the French consulate, and to come to pick it up, and he would watch for 48 hours to see that it really was issued.

My mother got the French visa and she left home the same evening, same as I did, with no luggage, told the maid that she went to sleep over at her brother's, as she did those days often in order not to be alone at home. She left everything at home as it was, and arrived in Paris with a houseboy. This was early in May `38.

RESULTS OF REMAINING TWO AND A HALF YEARS IN PARIS

Then comes the other problem, which, in retrospect, is hardly understandable. Why did I stay with my mother two and a half years in Paris? Again, I should have known better. The idea was that both my mother and I would join my father in Palestine, and that he will do all he can in Palestine to get us--certificates--not called at that time visas--but

certificates. The British allocated a certain number of yearly certificates to the Zionist organization for distribution.

But I had been outside, "the establishment" all these years, because I was a student and a follower of Jabotinsky, and we were hated and, as I say outside the labor party establishment. I was, though young, already quite well known. I had written a book in Vienna just before I left, which was another reason why I was looked for by the Gestapo. I was one of the organizers of the anti-German boycott movement. I should have known that the Zionist organization will not give me one of their certificates, but from month to month it looked like it was just about to come. My father did everything possible in Tel Aviv, but we did not get it. To explain all this would mean going into the complex Zionist history, and it doesn't fit in here. It explains only why we never took any other step to go somewhere else, somewhere like the United States, because we wanted to be reunited again with my father. That lasted so long until the so-called phony war became a hot war, and the Germans attacked Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg and north France.

GERMAN ARMIES REACH PARIS

The Germans marched, I think, into Paris on the 20th of June. I would say in the first week of June, I was taken by the French authorities, not in their regular Army, but in what they called a Prestataires, or what the British called in a similar set up, the pioneer corps, an auxiliary outfit.

TAKEN PRISONER BY GERMANS

I was sent to the westernmost corner of France, in Bretagne. We were there eight days, doing absolutely nothing, because the French Army didn't do anything. So we were not of any aid. But on the eighth day, we were taken prisoners by a German company. The first pleasant surprise was that they did not divide us into Jews and non-Jews, and the second surprise was that so many of the Prestataires, turned out to be secret Nazis. They just took out from their boots, immediately, membership cards of the Nazi Party, which showed us what everybody suspected in France, that it was infiltrated from top to bottom by German spies and people that had been living there for a long time, secret members of the party.

We were not badly treated at all by the Germans these eight days. We stayed with the same groups as before in our tents. After a week, the German captain called a parade, and a typical Prussian captain, he must have been from northern Germany, because he spoke with as harsh an accent as it could be, and had his signs of duels--just as typical German as they come. He spoke very briefly, saying that his company was a fighting unit and not here to watch over some miserable prisoners. They would leave tomorrow and would be replaced by a detachment of the Gestapo.

ESCAPE TO SOUTHERN FRANCE

I told a good friend of mine, who by pure chance was in the same group, also Viennese, who also had been living for two and a half years in France and spoke very good French, that of course, I cannot know whether I am right or not but my feeling was that the captain told us this to warn us and to indicate we should leave and flee because otherwise, why would his responsibility require him to tell us that tomorrow the Gestapo was coming? Anyway, this is one of the stories the end of which I shall never know.

The same evening, my friend decided to join me. We walked out at 11:00 at night, we walked to the toilet, which was on the way out, walked through the camp, slowly, not running, and as we walked out, I saw--or I believe to have seen--a man standing, smoking a cigarette, and watching the situation. Whatever, I shall to the end of my days believe it was the captain.

We got to the next village, where we changed clothes. Then we started our way from the westernmost part of France, a very long, long ride to the unoccupied zone, Toulouse and then Marseille. After all the stupid things I did, from now on I assumed the psychology of a refugee and had the great idea to do exactly the opposite of what one would expect. We hitched rides only from German soldiers in German vehicles, because these were the only ones that were not stopped and they were not searched and were not asked for identification papers. We took a ride as long as they went in our general direction, even if it was a little bit of a detour, just to move. We spoke during that time only in French, thus these German soldiers took us--we were in sort of peasant clothes which we obtained in the village--for French civilians.

Since in those days, the German general line was to make friends with the civilian population, because they wanted to establish the Pétain regime, which they later did. We made it in a week or ten days all the way to Marseille. Even at the most difficult point, the crossing of the border, the so-called border of the occupied into the unoccupied zone, we did, in a German staff vehicle, with fairly high German officers.

So the first haven of safety was reached, because there were no Germans there, and now my task was to hear what happened to my mother. I had made arrangements, before I left Paris, with some friends that they will leave Paris.

Q: When we came to the end of the preceding side of the tape, you were just talking about having left word with friends to try to get your mother out of Paris.

SCHECHTER: When we finally got, I and my friend, to Marseille, my first and overriding concern was to learn what happened to my mother, if she was still alive, if so, where. And again, one of these incredible stories that can be explained only by the sort of war that was being conducted, which left the south of France completely untouched and undestroyed. Even the rest of France wasn't very much hurt, because the French Army hardly resisted.

So in Marseille, the telegraph functioned normally. I sent a telegram to my father in Palestine, on the assumption that my mother would do the same if she was still alive. Within 24 hours, I got the reply that she is in Casablanca, in Morocco. I only later learned, after I got the first letter, that my friends did keep their word. They picked her up in Paris in their car, there was a place for her, and they drove to the coast, as thousands of other cars did the same, with the aim to get on small or big boats to England, as 10,000 others wanted to do, but there was a special reason that this is what my mother wanted, because she figured out the geography, "If I get out of Bretagne, this is right on the coast, and I would get to England, too." They went to the coast of France. They got a boat, but the boat, it turned out, did not go to England; it went to Casablanca.

So she had been, by that time, in Casablanca two or three weeks, and my problem was now how do I get to Casablanca? In those crazy days in Marseille, which cannot be described, it was the temporary goal of tens of thousands of non-French and French refugees, fleeing the Germans. The city was bursting. You could not help meeting somebody you knew on each corner. I met an old friend from Paris, and he got me to the préfecture there, the police, and after a few days of complicated interventions and miraculous things, I have to repeat all the time that once I had left Vienna and had committed the stupidity to stay there that long, from then on I was both smart and both extraordinarily lucky, luck probably was more important than smart.

PASSAGE TO CASABLANCA

Anyway, I got an entry permit for Casablanca as a French soldier that was born in Casablanca and was now demilitarized, demobilized, returning to his home in Casablanca, which entitled you to a free trip on the highly uncomfortable French boat that brought back French soldiers to their home in Casablanca.

Q: This was on the strength of your belonging to that paramilitary unit that you had belonged to?

SCHECHTER: You are absolutely right. This was the basis and the truth. So at that time, it was either not clear to them, or they didn't have the time for this, or they couldn't care less, or they wanted to be helpful. I don't think they wrote that I was born in Casablanca, just wrote "from Casablanca," but they had to put Casablanca in, otherwise, there was no reason for me to return there.

Anyway, I got on the boat in another few days in Marseille and I got to Casablanca, after we stopped in Algeria. But when I arrived in Casablanca, I was reunited with my mother again. Than came the next episode, and my first contact with this blessed country, the United States.

AMERICAN CONSUL HELPS SCHECHTER REACH U.S.

The next day, the reality, after the first joy of knowing that my mother's alive and I'm alive and we are together and happy and a telegram from my father that he was all right in Palestine after this very ephemeral sense of safety, the problem had to be faced: "What now?" Because now this illusion of Palestine was gone for good. From Casablanca, you couldn't get to Palestine.

I had forgotten before to mention, in regard to Palestine, that I would always have had the possibility of going by the so-called illegal immigration. I was active in organizing small ships that took what the British called illegal Jewish refugees from all ports, including Marseille, so I had known Marseille from before, and I knew my way around a little bit behind the scenes. But I couldn't go, because on these ships, they did not take people over 30, because these were awful, awful trips. It would have meant leaving my mother alone in France, which could not be imagined. That's the reason why I could not go to Palestine from Paris, one way or the other.

The war became more extended, the Germans tried to push into Africa. That was summer 1940 and I did what I should have done in 1938, at least before I left Vienna, go to the American consulate to get a number to register. I didn't.

So now finally I went to the American consulate in Casablanca and there were long lines standing in front of the side door. I didn't quite get why they would stand there, because I had no idea that there were so many refugees in Casablanca. But many, many people, Frenchmen and foreigners, managed to get in the queue before every consulate in Casablanca, because Casablanca was unoccupied. Under the Vichy Government, they had a German control commission, German Armistice Commission, it was called, that really ran Morocco completely. Every visa, everything had to be approved by them, but the French circumvented them. The French were not bad at circumventing the Germans if they wanted to.

I did not queue. I didn't know that I was supposed to. I walked into the main entrance. At that time, I spoke much, much better French than English, because I had French in school for eight years, and by that time I had stayed two and a half years, almost three years in France. I spoke very, very good French. When I walked into the consulate, and she asked me, in French, "What can I do for you?"

I answered in French, "I would like to see the consul general."

Q: You spoke Italian, too, didn't you, to some extent?

SCHECHTER: Italian, I spoke, but at that time, much less than French. I had taken private lessons in Italian in Vienna, which came in handy later in my career in OWI. But French I really spoke very well at that time and speak it very well to this very day, because what you learn when you are very young stays with you.

I answered in French, "I would like to see Monsieur le consul general." And for some reason, either by the fact that somebody walks in the main entrance and speaks perfect French, as 90% of the refugees did not, she was convinced that I am a regular visitor. She must have had the thought that I had some important things to tell, because later, many years later, I learned that the consul had important intelligence functions. So the girl probably was accustomed to "strange visitors," and she got me to him right away.

I entered and immediately saw that we were in the middle of a cruel, most embarrassing misunderstanding. Tall, handsome, typical American, in the good sense of the word, with ruddy cheeks and white hair. I told him, "I'm terribly embarrassed, but I really probably should have come the other way, because what I want is a visa. If you tell me I should walk out right away, I'll walk out right away."

He told me, "Now you're here. Sit down. Tell me what is on your mind."

So I decided very quickly that my only hope was to be as open, as frank, and as close to the truth as I know the truth was. And I told him that everything that I can show him is false. I have papers here that say I come from Casablanca, but I was here the first time in my life. I told him why I came, because my mother is there. I said, "One day I hope again to prove my story. Right now it's a question that either you believe me or you don't believe me."

He said, "What is it that you want?"

I said, "I want two things. One, the most urgent thing is a note to the préfecture, the police, that I am expecting an American visa. I must therefore be reachable by the consulate." This is important, because they started to send men under 40, on orders from the German Armistice Commission to the Sahara Railway that they wanted to build across the continent, and that was certain death. We had only a very limited . . . [telephone interruption]

Q: Before you were interrupted by the phone call, your last words were, "We had only a very limited . . ." and then you stopped.

SCHECHTER: Limited permit de séjour, the right of residence, which was, I don't remember, two weeks or three weeks. And after this, if you don't have a visa or a certification by an embassy or consulate that you are in expectation of the visa and must be available, they send you off. So I said to the consul, whose name I haven't mentioned yet, his name, blessed be he, Herbert S. Gould, "So I need it almost immediately. And the second, Mr. Consul," I continued--Monsieur Consul General, because we spoke in French since we started, he spoke impeccable French. He had spent half his career in France. I said, "That which we are talking about in the letter to the préfecture, that if you will write it, you will mention the visa. Here again, I have to tell you, in complete frankness, that I have no steps taken. I am not registered anywhere, I have no hope of getting an affidavit. If I start right now, I probably have dozens of Viennese friends who, despite the fact that

they left Vienna later than I did, are in the States now, but 'til I get their addresses--I was busy fleeing the Germans and I just don't have any basis for identification."

During my whole talk, he did not open his mouth. His features did not indicate whether he took well to my plea, whether he took badly, absolutely enigmatic. After I finished, he got up, went to his desk, because we were sitting on two feuteils, took out a piece of paper and wrote by hand what turned out to be a letter to the préfecture stating, that I am registered by the consulate--which was not a lie since of that moment he had registered me--and I was expecting a visa. And I must be momentarily available, I and my mother, to the consulate. He smiled, saying, the first words that he really spoke, "There are certain letters that even a consul general prefers to write with his own hand and without copies." He gave it to me. When I read it, I didn't know--if I would be a Catholic and he would be a bishop, I probably would have kissed his hand. I went out, and he said, "Now, the first thing you do, you go to the prefecture." Whenever he thought there was somebody there that would take well to his letter, I do not know, but he emphasized, "The first thing, you go right now."

I did go, needless to say, with my meager monies, I took a cab to the préfecture and I got the extension for three months or whatever it was, without any difficulties. I was like having drunk four bottles of champagne. It was absolutely unbelievable! I took another cab to get to my mother and tell her the most incredible news that we got the permits. She was standing in front of the little hotel where we lived, and before I could start telling her what happened, she tells me that a wonderful American lady, the wife of the American consul, was there to see her and brought some chocolate and flowers and soap, the most wonderful person she has ever seen, and just told her that her husband has seen her husband this morning. So we brought the two stories together. Really unbelievable. I always called this one of the great miracles. We became, during our stay in Casablanca, very, very good friends. Of course, he sent over his wife just to have one check on the story, a usual thing. But nevertheless, he must have assumed that I said the truth, because she came already with some gifts. He said, "Don't worry. I'll get you a visa." And one day, after two or three months, he phoned me to say, "Come over, but come over alone, without your mother."

So I thought the worst news there is. By that time he had a wonderful sense of humor, as I say, we became very good friends, and he told me, "Look, I have a visa for you, but it's a visitor's visa. I'm not giving it to you, because once you enter with a visitor's visa, your time for becoming a citizen doesn't run. You cannot work. You will have to start waiting for an immigration visa. That might be years. You have a great career in front of you, I hope, but you must arrive as an immigrant."

I was imploring him, "Let's not think about the future. I want to get out of here."

He said, "Look, I have kept you in peace here. You will get another extension. I am not going to give you the visa. I am going to get you an immigration visa, you and your mother."

Well, to make a long story short, there was nothing I could do. If he doesn't give it to me, he doesn't give it to me. About two or three months later, the whole thing started in June, and in February, he called us in the morning and made a point, "But do bring your mother with you and all your papers, false papers, right papers, whatever you have." For the first time, a reserved man, he embraced us both and he said, "I have immigration visas for you." Where he got them, how he got them, I have no idea. But it shows you what one of my pet theories was all these years: if American consular personnel all over the world would have done what Herbert Gould did, not break the law, but interpret the law in the mildest and most extensive way, thousands of lives could have been saved. Gould was not the only hero. Far from it. A man that is known to you, Outerbridge Horsey, whose first job was vice consul in Naples, saved, as I learned much later, not from him, but from quite a number of people doing exactly this, interpreting the law in a favorable way. But many other consuls did just the opposite.

SHIP TO LISBON

I had all during this time, and always extended it, a reservation on a boat from Casablanca to Lisbon, reserving, canceling, reserving, canceling, because it was hard to get it. And a boat from Lisbon to the States, became more and more difficult. We were in 1941, and ship communications became a rarity. Because I had reserved a boat ahead of time we had a boat within a few days to get us to Lisbon, and Herbert Gould proved what he was, a most extraordinary man and friend. Because of the divergence of papers that I had, he could not use, for the papers to the States, the fake papers that got me to Casablanca, so he personally took my mother and me on the boat with the old papers, and then on the boat, he showed to the captain the new papers.

PASSAGE TO U.S.A.

We got to Lisbon, and in Lisbon we had to stay for two or three weeks. It gave me time to look back, and Casablanca was exactly during these months just as the film, the famous Bogart film. So I am excused if Gerda and Peter always laugh about me, because whenever some channel will carry "Casablanca," I will watch the film at least to the one great scene where, in the coffee house, all the Frenchmen get up and sing "La Marseillaise." In Lisbon, otherwise my main job was to borrow ten dollars from somebody so we would arrive with at least ten dollars in the States. It was a long trip on a small freighter of 3,000 tons, and it was laden with cork. Therefore, it was continuously right on the surface, and I was two weeks seasick, so seasick that I almost thought I would rather be in Casablanca and the Sahara.

EARLY DAYS IN AMERICA

But we made it to the States in May 1941. When I got there it was easy for the first few days as a transition, because by then so many old Viennese friends were there already. They had arrived mostly in '39, so I was able to get myself a few hundred dollars to rent a

little apartment in one of the brownstone houses on the west side, which is very chic now. It was not "chic" at that time, just a bare room and kitchenette that we could get. Then the question was what to do. I started, as a greenhorn, to get everybody's advice on what to do. Everybody advised me of the old wisdom that in the States you have to forget what you were. What you have to do is to start with any job, a waiter, a mechanic, a car washer, whatever it is, and the opportunity will come, and you will move. But the trouble is, if you ask for advice and you don't take it, then you cannot ask for further advice and further help; you cut yourself off. I knew that I could not be a waiter. The owner would throw me out the first night because I would break all the dishes. I cannot be a mechanic because I would get my finger cut off. So I had to do it my way. Again, the time was with me, because it was war. I started, as incredible as it sounds, with writing articles and lecturing.

EARNING A LIVING IN U.S. BY WRITING AND LECTURING

Q: Was your English good enough so you could write the articles?

SCHECHTER: I could not write the articles. It's a very good question. Imagine at that time, because my English was just for speaking, I had to write the article in German and have it translated and pay for it. But then I went, again with the same naivete that I went in to see Herbert Gould. I went to see newspaper agencies, and I had a story. I had a story about what the Germans do in North Africa. I had an actual story as someone who had stayed in Morocco for eight or nine months. People started already to talk about the later move against Africa. So to the wonderment of everybody, I got articles placed not only in one paper, but in the St. Louis Journal, the Charlotte Observer, and other papers. The Journal was a very well known paper. Once you're accepted, the second is all much easier.

I also started to lecture. In the meantime, my English progressed very quickly, because I tried to talk all the time, and I'm very good in languages. For the subjects they scheduled me, a recent arrival from Europe, the accent or an occasional "how do you say this?" didn't do any harm. I lectured in churches and in synagogues. To say that I made a very good living is strongly exaggerated, but I made probably just as good a living as I would have done as a waiter, but that would have been the end of the road; this was the beginning. So this went on for about a year and a half. Everybody was of the opinion it was a nice job to manage this, but still I was more than eager to get a job within the war effort.

By that time, there were already a number of Viennese, at the OWI. Bill Stricker, the man that I mentioned earlier, and whose father I tried to convince to leave Vienna with me, must have joined OWI in 1942, because he got to the States by the end of 1938 already. He was, by the way, the only Viennese that I knew in OWI. Later, I met Walter Roberts and Bob Bauer and Ernie Land--all these Viennese, and John Albert, all these fine people whom I did not know from Vienna. We never heard of each other. We met at the OWI.

THE BEGINNING AT OWI

Bill Stricker heard of a very good job opening. I got there and applied for it and showed the interviewer my articles, but he regretted to have given away that job just a short time ago. However, he must have seen my deep disappointment, and he said, "Look, there is another job. It's much below your level." Then he started, the old and truthful story that in America, you have to begin somehow. But there is a great deal of difference whether you join OWI at the lowest level or you become a waiter first, if you want to go on in an intellectual and war-related profession. My good sense dictated to me to say "Yes."

So I got the job. At that time, the clearance took only a few hours. They needed people so badly. The fledgling war effort was in the middle of incredible expansion, and languages and experience counted for an agency like OWI. I didn't have to have an exemption for citizenship, but I could have not gotten the job with a visitor visa. This is what Herbert Gould, in his wisdom, had said.

So I accepted, and I think I started working the night after. I started as a monitor, outgoing broadcasts, a very technical job, whether it confirmed to the master script. I got assigned to the shift from midnight 'til 7:00 or 8:00 o'clock in the morning, and then I was looking forward to the greatest breakfast in the world in the cafeteria around the corner at 52 West 57th Street. My beginning salary was $1,800, but with $1,800, we have never been hungry.

Anyway, I started working at OWI, I was terribly happy, and really, after a few months, I was transferred at the princely salary of $2,600 to the Italian control desk as deputy there. Italian control was a policy job, to see whether the broadcasts conformed to the directives and so on. Then I was made chief of the Italian control at $3,200. So I really did quite well.

In the OWI was this very strange atmosphere--I don't think there was ever anybody late for work. I think people came two hours early, because it was this general feeling of contribution to the war effort. But let me make two points here. One, a pleasant point to make, and one, an unpleasant one. The pleasant point is that OWI unquestionably was the major source for a great number of positions filled by parallel and successor agencies while the war continued, such as Radio Luxembourg and Military Government; then when the war ended, by the Occupation (OMGUS), and eventually by VOA, and USIA's predecessor agencies. Because they had acquired so much experience during the OWI time, they were able to fill senior positions later on. So that was the wonderful service the OWI provided. In addition that it was the first propaganda agency that existed. There was, earlier, the Rockefeller directed Office of Coordinator for Inter-American affairs directed at South America, but that was before the war.

COMMUNISTS IN OWI

The second but controversial item is that in later years, it was always said in the accusations against the government, that there were Communists in government. At least

as far as OWI is concerned, it was not--repeat not--a red herring. OWI had its goodly number of Communists, Trotskyites, and all sorts of assorted extreme leftist people particularly after the Germans attacked Russia, who thought to fight the common war. There were often violent--I don't mean fist fights, but violent fights and discussions and shouting between people of that political coloring and the majority of others.

Later, the time of the Cohn and Schine thing, (Cohn and Schine of the McCarthy era) we had gone through so many metamorphoses from being first OWI, then the Department of the Army, then supposed to be taken over by State, that each time some of these former Communists were discovered they were systematically let go and, by the time of McCarthy, the government had purged itself of these Communists in their information and cultural role almost completely. But the answer was mistaken to say it was all a red herring, because a red herring it wasn't. There were quite a few. But we didn't need McCarthy to clean them out. It was almost completely cleaned out before he made his appearance.

One of the typical stories in this respect, was really a trying experience for me much later: when the military government period was winding down in Germany, a certain officer was not taken over by State, and they didn't give a reason. His name was Art Eggleston from the West Coast, I believe, either Los Angeles or San Francisco. He was one of the most popular men that we had.

Q: You were talking about Eggleston, whom you had never suspected as being a Communist.

SCHECHTER: Why I take this example is because we talk about this red herring business. What I'm going to tell you in a few words is such a classic example. So this Eggleston was a topnotch man in a high position, very sympathetic and really popular. We were absolutely not told why he was not being taken over. He said he had no idea why, and he was going to fight it. We almost went on a general strike.

One day, Eggleston appears in the morning, in the office, and tells us: "I've had enough of all that, and I'm going to resign." We gave a big party for him, and he resigned and left. But as he said, he was going to stop in Paris for a year before returning to the West Coast.

A few months later, I hitched a ride on one of these cheap military trains to Paris. This all happened in Bonn. The first thing I did was to phone Art Eggleston, who was a really good friend from way back in the OWI, who went to ABSIE and to Luxembourg and military government as I did.

We met, as people in Paris do, at the Cafe de la Paix, right near the Opera. He asked what's new in Bonn, about people we knew. Then all of a sudden, he starts saying, "Let me tell you what I think about the political situation, the Russians, etc." So I sit and I listen. I didn't believe it. He talks to me. This is my old friend Art Eggleston, whom I had known for six years, I guess. I said, "Art, that's the editorial in L'Humanité of today's

Communist paper." That's the Communist paper in Paris. He says, "Yes. But you really did not know that I am a lifelong Communist?" I was like hit over the head. I walked for hours around town, because Art Eggleston had been a secret, closet Communist, who for all I knew, might still be, in addition to those that were very open and later might have changed their mind. So this is a sad story and one of the good examples where an administration pays a price for not being frank. If any government would have answered the attacks of McCarthy by stating it's true, we had Communists and it happened during the early war years, but we got rid of them. But by saying, "None of this is true," and McCarthy coming out every day with a sheet in his hand, with some names, who really were Communists, but most that had absolutely nothing to do with it, that created all the bad atmosphere and helped McCarthy.

To go back to the OWI, what I did was, in addition to being first monitor and then chief of the Italian control desk, which was a very nice job, I voiced a broadcast of my own under the name of Edward Herman. Herman was the maiden name of my mother, and therefore I chose it. I spoke to German soldiers in Italy. Whether it ever reached a German soldier or not, you have to keep in mind we're talking about '43 and '44, I have no idea. But it was something nice to do, and it was a broadcast in my own name or my fictitious name used for this.

SCHECHTER MEETS HIS CASABLANCA BENEFACTOR AGAIN

Then came one evening--I just have to mention this. One evening still during the early months when I was editor between midnight and the morning, a visitor shows up, and it was Herbert Gould, just returned from Casablanca. He came with great pride to see that this protégé of his now works for the U.S. Government and in his footsteps. He remained until his death very, very proud that I had chosen his profession. We remained close friends until the end. In '57 I lost my mother who lived with me in Washington. I had never seen my father anymore. He died in 1945 in Palestine. I was at that time in Berlin.

By the end of 1957, I met Gerda. I still remember that I phoned Gould and said, "You wouldn't believe it. I'm going to get married."

He said, "Bring her over." So I really had to produce. He was so sure that I would end up as an eternal bachelor. We always met in the old Army-Navy Club. It's the same building now, completely renovated, that Gerda met him, and then two weeks later we left for Italy. That was '58. Then a year later, Gould died. Just to mention that many, many years later, I wrote an article in the Foreign Service Journal in memory of a Foreign Service officer, where I told the story of Gould and Morocco because of the interesting human aspects. I don't think that I ever got as many reactions to something that I wrote as I did from this article, because people like sometimes to read pleasant stories which cannot be invented.

Q: I think I told you before, it's rather interesting, I read that article of yours, and I read it when I was lying on the lawn of the Washington Monument on the Fourth of July 1976,

when they were celebrating the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

SCHECHTER: Yes, a nice coincidence.

Then came the next step in my OWI story. All of a sudden came a request from London that I should join the American Broadcasting station in Europe [ABSIE].

TRANSFER TO LONDON: 1944: BROADCASTING FOR ABSIE

SCHECHTER: In 1944 I was transferred to London to broadcast from there to Europe. Shortly after the Allies invaded Europe, a new station was set up in London called ABSIE [American Broadcasting Station in Europe]. I was transferred there a few weeks after it began broadcasting [Note: discussed in more detail later in the interview] to Italian troops in Italy under the broadcast name of Edward Herman.

Q: How did you pick up all your several languages?

SCHECHTER: My languages. In Vienna, French, because the Viennese school system, in all objectivity, was one of the finest that exist. We had eight years in lycée or gymnasium, high school. I had eight years of Latin and French, and during the last four years, also English. I lived then--after 1938--two and a half years in France, so my French was impeccable. And Italian I took in Vienna with a tutor twice a week, an hour, because it was just useful to have and it kept me in good stead later. Spanish: at that time I didn't yet need, but at a later date.

In the last tape, we talked about my activities in the OWI. Just to summarize, the importance of the OWI was not only in its activity as a propaganda agency and at that time propaganda was not a dirty word yet if used against the Nazis and Japanese.

The importance of OWI post facto turned out to be that it delivered to the diverse successor organizations which flourished under the title of public diplomacy, the first cadres, the first people that took senior positions in the successor agencies, in ABSIE, Luxembourg, in the occupation, and eventually in USIS. Many, many of them got their first experience in OWI. So OWI is even from that point of view, an important milestone in the development of, as I said before, public diplomacy.

Q: Would you mind mentioning by name just a few of the people that started in OWI and went on to greater glory in USIA?

SCHECHTER: Mickey Boerner is one of them; Bob Bauer is another one; John Albert is one; I think John Brown, an outstanding cultural affairs officer, all started in OWI. Bill Stricken was among the earliest OWIers.

Q: Was Walter Roberts there, too?

SCHECHTER: Walter Roberts started in OWI, sure. He was one of the first to join. I think Howland Sargeant played a role in different positions.

Q: Is that Howland Sargeant who later married Myrna Loy?

SCHECHTER: Yes. He was in OWI. So quite a lot of people. If I would think about it, 20 others would come to my mind. That's our USIA people who later became active and moved up to very important positions in the Agency.

I stayed with OWI until early 1944, and then moved to ABSIE, American Broadcasting Station in Europe, to London. Again, it wasn't as big a miracle as my finding this angel, Herbert Gould, in Casablanca, but it was also a minor miracle. I did well in OWI as chief of the Italian control desk, and had a once or twice-a-week show myself.

My direct boss in the OWI was a man called Templeton Peck. He was one of the senior editors of the San Francisco Chronicle. He was the chief of all the control desks, when I was on the Italian control desk. I knew him because we had a daily staff meeting, where the chiefs of the control desks reported on the guidances we received and so on. I never had a private word with him but I respected him very much. I was still a very young American only three years in the country and "Temp" was just one of these wonderful straightforward, intelligent Americans, and he was for me in the early days a new type from the West Coast, since mostly the people in OWI were from the East Coast or where refugees.

Q: Had you gotten your citizenship by that time?

SCHECHTER: No, no. Because you had to be in the States for five years. When I arrived, that was law. But because of the war, you got exemptions for working in war related activities. They had to have people. A lot of these people that I mentioned, like Walter had no citizenship at that time yet. But you had to be a permanent resident, meaning you arrived with an immigration visa which entitled you to become, after five years, a citizen. An incredible story is connected with this problem.

Templeton Peck was transferred from the OWI in the beginning of '44 to London to become chief editor of a new station which would be the forward station of the OWI. The war sort of neared a climax, and we wanted to be nearer, to be heard. So this American Broadcasting Station in Europe (ABSIE) was founded, and Templeton Peck went there as chief editor.

After he had been six or seven weeks in London, he sent an official telegram requesting the establishment of a new position of deputy chief editor. He got the position. Within another two days came a request, for Edmund Schechter to fill the position as deputy chief editor, American Broadcasting Station in Europe.

So here enters now your question before, whether I was an American citizen. Templeton Peck didn't realize whether I was or I wasn't, and years later I asked him, "Why did you select me?"

He said, "Among all the control editors, I didn't know that many people. I thought that you would be the best." Well, I was absolutely delighted to get back into--I mean, this was a holy war, to go to London and be near Europe. But then it turned out I hadn't got an American passport.

Q: Did you have any passport?

SCHECHTER: I had an old Austrian passport, but Austrians, considered honorable emigres in the U. S. were classified as enemy aliens in Great Britain. All these things can be understood only in the framework of the atmosphere of that time. So I got a travel document which stated I'm a legal resident of the United States, working for the U.S. Government, and being transferred to another position, to a U.S. Government institution, American Broadcasting Station in London. With this I got a British visa. In one sense it was a difficult decision for me because I had to leave my mother alone in New York, but it was a war against Hitler. In addition, this meant a remarkable increase in salary, three steps, to $4,600, which made it very easy to have a part of the salary paid to my mother. But later I got stuck on the 4,600 level for years, because they said there was nobody who had moved from 1,800 to 4,600 in two and a half years!

Now comes the story which people very often doubted because of its absurdity, but I have the documents to prove it. I was put on a bomber and flown via Scotland over to London. On the plane there were soldiers and officers of all sorts. When we arrived in London, the British controlled all the people. They said to me, "You're an enemy alien. It says you're an Austrian citizen. If you're an Austrian citizen, you're an enemy alien. First of all, we have to see whether the whole thing is not forged." So I had to spend, as a potential deputy chief editor of a U.S. Government station in London, a night in a not-uncomfortable jail until they got in touch with our embassy. In the embassy was Templeton Peck.

In the morning, a couple of young embassy officers came, got me out of the British jail, and installed me as deputy chief editor in London. Stories like these can be understood only from the perspective of a colossal war and colossal confusion.

Once I was on British soil and established in the ABSIE compound, nobody ever asked me again whether I was a U.S. citizen or not. One assumed you were. ABSIE was a short but fascinating experience, because we were much nearer to the front. It was really the beginning of my career since it was a fairly substantive job. Templeton Peck was on the day shift, and I was on the shift from 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon. ABSIE closed on July 4, 1945.

Q: You were there, then, on that job during the invasion of Normandy? Or did you miss it?

SCHECHTER: No, I was there first in London and later in Luxembourg. But to come back to ABSIE: we were in daily touch with and part of SHAEF. We wore uniforms with just a patch which said ICS, Information Control SHAEF, and also in very close touch with the BBC. Thus it was a real policy job. Basically my job was to write daily guidances on how to treat the different subjects, the eastern front, western front, news from the Free World we got from SHAEF, and coordinated with BBC. Thus we had the feeling that we were really across the ocean and in close touch with events that were all moving toward a victorious end.

TRANSFER TO RADIO LUXEMBOURG - ONTO ARMY PAYROLL

Then I was transferred to SHAEF, and thus on the payroll of the Department of the Army. Therefore I was simple military transfer from London, ABSIE, to Radio Luxembourg.

Radio Luxembourg was the most forward of all the forward stations. It had been in German hands and then it started to broadcast for the allies after the Germans evacuated Luxembourg, in September '44. 'Til the end, we had in Luxembourg two compounds, one the Third Army, a tactical station, and the SHAEF main propaganda station beamed to occupied Europe. I believe I moved from London in January.

Since this was a SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) station, we had all nationalities represented, particularly a lot of British. I replaced a Britisher as the chief editor, the head of all broadcasts to foreign workers. There were millions and millions of foreign workers doing slave labor for the Germans. Then after the liberation, they became displaced persons, and there were chaotic situations in Europe due to the wanderings of millions of people. In the first part we advised foreign workers what to do: to slow down and then try to hide out when the Russians or the Americans approached.

RADIO LUXEMBOURG ASSISTS DISPLACED PERSONS IN ESCAPING NAZIS AND RUSSIANS

Q: You already knew that the Russians were picking up people and sending them back east for slave labor? So you were helping them escape that potential.

SCHECHTER: What we tried to do is, first, to save the workers from the fury of the Germans in their last convulsions. That meant to try to hide in the countryside from the Germans that tried, in the very last few months, to starve them or kill them outright.

Then after the unconditional surrender, the question was instructions for the DPs [displaced persons]. There were two types of DPs. One type, the westerners, French, Dutch, Belgians, etc., that solved itself very easily because these nationals by their own initiative, and by the ten thousands, made their way back home. The main and real

problem were the survivors of the concentration camps, (fortunately relatively few). And the eastern people, as you said, the Russians wanted them as quickly as possible back into Russia. Some of them went, some didn't want to go.

One of the wonderful things in Luxembourg was that by that time, part of Germany was already liberated, occupied by our troops. We made study trips to know how to broadcast. So I was very early in occupied Germany, in Aachen, in Wurzburg, in all the western cities that were liberated. I saw them often just days after the liberation. Of all the destroyed cities, I shall never forget Pforzheim and the degree of its destruction, or Wurzburg, and then later Berlin.

SCHECHTER GETS BACK TO HIS NATIVE VIENNA

On one of the trips, we went into Austria, and I saw the first concentration camp after its liberation. It was Mauthausen near Salzburg. That was the first concentration camp that I saw a few days after liberation, the next was Dachau.

Let me mention a personal angle as part of this overall story. Vienna had been occupied by the Russians already in the spring of '45. Patton's army on the way to Prague and Vienna, was stopped near Linz. Linz was the birthplace of Hitler, by the way, the second largest city in Austria. Patton's Army was inactive for three months because the negotiations with the Russians to make Vienna like Berlin, a four-power city, with different sectors assigned to the four occupying nations, mood very slowly.

I was in Luxembourg, and all the time, I think, excusably dreaming that I would love to get into Vienna with the first American troops. You know, in Luxembourg, from the Army we got all the latest intelligence, and it looked like this time it would work. I got myself orders to Linz and there I talked myself into being part of the first convoy to go to Vienna. It was in July or August 1945. It was a very exciting moment, having left Vienna seven years earlier as a refugee, without any rights, without any money, without any standing, and to come back seven years later in an American uniform on a jeep as victors and liberators, it was very exciting. I remember when we drove into Vienna--I was with an associate of mine from Luxembourg--and we had a GI, a southerner as driver of our jeep. We slowly moved into Vienna, and we passed the main road near where I had lived, the side street, and I all of a sudden impulsively told him, "Get out of the convoy and drive to the right."

He said, "How do I find my way back?" I said, "I'll tell you how to get back." And he never could really understand that I could have been a Viennese coming back in American uniform. We drove by the house where I had lived, and then we joined back with the column. It was a very moving time for me. I stayed eight days in Vienna.

Probably this is the psychological reason why Vienna has become, from then on, sort of an indifferent city for me. Since that time, I have been innumerable times in Vienna; but

never stayed longer than a week. All my deep-seated emotions and feelings of humiliation were compensated by this--for me--"triumphal" return.

So that was my re-entry in Vienna. I think it was a difficult and complex life, running away from the Nazis a few times, but I had these two incredible compensations. One was this return to Vienna, and secondly two or three months earlier, on the day of the end of the war, May 8th, also still stationed in Luxembourg, I was in Paris celebrating Victory Day, the Paris that I had left three years earlier to be taken prisoner by the Germans in the Bretagne, leaving my mother to an unknown fate. These unforgettable days were great compensations.

RADIO LUXEMBOURG CLOSES - SCHECHTER MOVED TO BERLIN

Luxembourg was closed on November 11, 1945. I was the last remaining American there, and I returned the station, because all the military were dispersed, demobilized, literally the keys to the station--to the French-Belgian owners who had owned Radio Luxembourg before the war.

SCHECHTER ORDERED TO ESTABLISH AMERICAN CONTROLLED RADIO STATION IN BERLIN

I was a civilian under Army control, and I got orders to go to Berlin. The orders were specific, with the task to establish an American-controlled radio voice in the shortest possible time.
So I got to Berlin either at the end of November or the beginning of December 1945.

It was one of these incredible during-the-war, post-war situations. Berlin was a four-power occupied city with four sectors, approximately the same as Vienna became later. The original Radio Berlin, the big German propaganda station, was in the British sector. But because the Russians had entered Berlin first, they took possession of Radio Berlin and never, never returned Radio Berlin to four-power control, as the agreement was, and despite the fact that it was physically located in the British sector.

Q: It remained physically in the British sector?

SCHECHTER: For months and months, General Clay negotiated with the Russians to get all four occupied powers into the running and the control of this Radio Berlin, which was a gigantic radio station. It didn't work.

So when I was sent to Berlin to establish an American voice, an American radio station, these were my orders, it wasn't as much the belief that we were really going to establish--a radio station, but rather as additional pressure on the Russians. "If you don't let us in, we are going to create a station." But the Russians decided differently. They decided not to ask the British or the French to share control of Radio Berlin, but to go to the maximum to prevent us creating a radio station of our own.

So it was one of these situations in Berlin where there was still on the one hand a great deal of fraternization with the Russians, where in the evening you met with your Russian counterparts, had innumerable toasts and drinks. During the day, however, people would tell you that secret Nazis, or the werewolves, as they called the young Nazis that were in hiding, were sabotaging our efforts to build this new radio station. I was one of the first to point out that, "I just don't believe it."

Q: You mean what the Russians were telling you.

SCHECHTER: Yes. I just didn't believe it, because in all of Germany, there were hardly any acts of Nazi sabotage against the occupation. The Germans formed a sullen sea of humanity which had not recovered from their superiority complex--and the sudden full, total defeat. There was no food, incredible destruction--hardly any sabotage. Why should there only in Berlin have been attempts of sabotage?

Well, we found out that what happened was that radio, in Germany, was always under the authority of the general post office. There were never private stations, even in the Republic. The post office headquarters were in the Russian sector, and we needed all the wiring and everything else from them, and they were under Russian directions.

RIAS IS BORN

So we had to scale down our first proposition, and what we did was a set up Drahtfunk. I cannot explain it technically. Funk is "radio," and Draht is a rather primitive sort of radio transmission. It was called RIAS, short for Radio in the American Sector. What RIAS was doing first was acting as a lifeline to the German population in the American sector.

Q: How did you get the facilities?

SCHECHTER: We got an old office, half destroyed, in some building in the American sector, where we took over as a building for RIAS. [Looking at photographs]

Q: This is you?

SCHECHTER: Yes. Under pressuring by our Army, the German post office, slowly got what we needed, and we opened on February 7, 1946. We opened the broadcasts which, as I said, first included the proclamations, regulations, ordinances, instructions of military government for the population in the American sector--rationing, curfews, where certain food could be gotten, what was permitted, what was not permitted. An American voice giving the U.S. military government the possibility to contact with the 2 or 3 million people that lived in the American sector.

Q: This was an old German transmitter that you found?

SCHECHTER: Yes.

Q: You got it repaired.

SCHECHTER: And we got on the air. Since I came to Berlin the end of November '45, the beginning of December, it was not really a bad job. When we went on the air on February 7, I received--and I treasure this--a letter from General McClure, (he was the head of the ICD) in appreciation for this.

Q: This is the same RIAS that has existed to this day. You were there as the person who set it up.

SCHECHTER: I am the founder and the father of RIAS.

Q: And it's still going on today, 40 years or so later.

SCHECHTER: This is the point. It's very rare. I stayed there until May '46. I headed it through the first few months of its existence. In May, I left RIAS and finally got back to New York. Don't forget, as I say, I had my mother there.

Q: This was May of '46.

SCHECHTER RETURNS TO U.S.

SCHECHTER: May of '46. I left Germany for the first time to come back later, but we'll come to that.

RIAS is a matter of understandably great pride for me because there are few war time institutions that were founded in February 1946, that still exist today, decades later. It is the same RIAS that was continued through a series of chiefs of station and Americans there, it's the same RIAS that was founded with the same name, except that it started out in the smallest possible way. But already after a few weeks, we were able to use in RIAS a little more than just for the official announcement and communiques, some news. But then the further gigantic explosion of RIAS as one of the most important policy instruments was the result of the deterioration of relations with Russia and the permanence of Eastern Germany. The impossibility of jamming or interfering with the reception just across the border made AIAS an instrument of ever greater importance.

[Editor's Note: Narrative that follows is a bit out of sequence, and pertains to Schechter's return to Germany in 1947. Mention of his Washington stay resumes after this comment about RIAS and Radio from 1947 to '49.]

I got RIAS back under my jurisdiction in a second instance, a few years later, when I became chief of the radio branch, HICOG [High Commissioner of Germany] in the American zone in Bonn, when we opened our embassy their.

[End Tape I, Side A. Begin Tape I, Side B]

SCHECHTER: By then RIAS had assumed this importance that it has to this very day. In the development of the political situation, it played a major role as morale supporter during the Berlin Blockade. Why I know so much about its further development is because in my later incarnation as chief of the radio branch in Bonn, as mentioned before I was supervising not only the four German radio stations, but also RIAS. So when Gordon Ewing, for example, was chief of station at RIAS, he reported to me in HICOG as chief of the radio branch. Therefore, it was always a very good reason and a great pleasure for me to go to Berlin and see how incredibly RIAS had developed.

Q: I've heard a great deal about how Mickey Boerner broadcast regularly over the German radio. Was he broadcasting over RIAS or over the German stations?

SCHECHTER: Over the German stations--his famous broadcast which started out with "Guten Abend." It was truly one of the great success stories. But it was done over the German stations, in the later period. Mickey's role in HICOG was chief of Policy and Plans and, in addition, these broadcasts.

Q: Was that while you were in charge of the German stations?

SCHECHTER: During that time I was in charge of the German stations. However, Mickey was stationed in Berlin. After RIAS I returned to the U.S. and then was assigned to Munich as head of one of the radio stations. Mickey remained in Berlin, because Mickey was involved not only with radio, but also with press. People knew him all over from his "Guten Abend," (good evening) broadcasts. He spoke perfect German, with just the slightest trace of an accent to make it very authentic as an American spokesman. This was really one of his great achievements.

Q: How long did he broadcast, and during what period of time?

SCHECHTER: I would say '47, '48, '49. 1944-1947 was when I returned to Germany, which we shall take up the next time.

For today I would like to conclude that I left Berlin in May '46, went back to New York, and got my citizenship in '46.

Then I was newly hired. Because in the meantime, I think we moved to the State Department. I believe it was called the IEE, whatever it stood for. I got newly processed. That was after the war, so slowly the old bureaucratic rules took over, you couldn't go any more on a bomber, and so things really got back to normal.

Then I got assigned, as my first job after the war, back to Germany, to Munich, as chief of Radio Munich. I got there in the beginning of '47. Then I stayed in Germany for seven

years. What you have to keep in mind is that the RIAS story was very dramatic, but this was all during just five or six months, like ABSIE, extraordinary events, but crowded into a relatively short period of time. Then I stayed for a number of years. First in Munich, then in Bonn, where we opened our embassy. That was the occupation period in Germany.

I returned to Germany in '47 just to correct what I said earlier, I was still with the Department of the Army (not State), because in Munich at the beginning, we still wore uniforms. I still went alone, because dependents were not entitled yet to join me. So my mother again remained alone in New York, and joined me about just a year later when dependents were all of a sudden permitted, when there was housing available and enough rationing cards. I think one of the very first dependents was my mother. To wait for this, she had gone to Europe. We discovered a cousin who had saved himself, so she stayed the last two or three months in Nice so we could be easier in touch. Then we got the go-ahead she joined me in '48, and was with me in Germany until the end, until we left in January of '55.

About the occupation of Germany, we might talk next time.

Q: During the nearly year that you were back in New York, before you went back to Germany, were you employed by VOA then?

SCHECHTER: No. I was really never employed by the Voice, just as I was never in Austrian affairs. I wrote articles and lectured a bit. I was accustomed, having had no other experiences in the States, to assume that everything occurred like my transfer to London--because somebody requests it. By 1946 and '47 however, normal bureaucratic procedures took over. What I thought I'd get the next week, turned out to take three months. You had to get a proper position, then a request through the military. It took really almost a year. Munich sent out requests continuously urging my return. It later turned out that the chief of Radio Munich, whom I replaced, did not get along with the military, who were in charge, still, of military government. So they wanted me.

Anyway, I did not work for the Voice.

Q: Were you actually unemployed, except for your freelance writing?

SCHECHTER: Yes, it means no salaried position.

Q: You were waiting to go back under military auspices.

SCHECHTER: That's right.

Q: But you were actually not working at that time.

SCHECHTER: I was not on the government payroll during that period.

Q: I see. We bring to a close the first part of our discussion with Ed Schechter. We will pick up a little later and carry this on into the later part of his career. Thank you very much, Ed.

Continuation of interview: February 12, 1988

SCHECHTER RETURNS TO GERMANY

Q: Let's pick up, Ed, from where we left off the other day. I think now you want to talk more about the activities of the American information services in occupied Germany. Why don't you take it from there.

SCHECHTER: Thank you, Lew. I returned after an interlude of about ten months in New York that we discussed the last time, to Munich in the early spring of 1947. I returned to a precise, definite position as chief of our military government radio station, Radio Munich. As I said, my predecessor had trouble with the military government authorities, and Mickey Boerner in Berlin was wishing my return to Munich.

EXPLANATION OF SPECIAL ROLE RADIO PLAYED IN GERMANY

Before I speak now about our activities and this whole period, because I stayed until January of 1955 in different positions and locations in Germany, about the background of radio in Germany, which had an incredibly important impact already during the Weimar Republic and above all, during the Nazi period. Radio was, as in most places in Europe, a state-owned and state-controlled media instrument.

In Weimar was all the freedom and cultural diversity and informational diversity that characterized the Weimar Republic, but because of its central character and its government dependence, it was much easier for the Nazis, when they took over the country in 1933, to take over radio, lock stock and barrel, later the newspapers, because you had newspapers of all varieties, shapes, and political colorations. You had the Communist Party, you had the Christian Democratic Party, and the newspapers were official organs of certain political coloring. Whereas the radio stations were from one day to the next taken over by the new government as they were owned by the previous government. This was later for us a warning that at all costs, in our reorganization, we had to avoid that the radio stations ever would become a central instrument of one central authority. Therefore, when the occupation, under the control of the Office of Military Government, began, Germany was a wasteland; not only physically, because it was destroyed, bombed out, with a hungry population and millions of displaced persons roaming the roads, it was a wasteland psychologically. All the newspapers had stopped publication before the Allies marched in. The radio stations were equally silent, because they were either destroyed, half destroyed, or the personnel, which was all Nazi, had fled their jobs. I don't know how it was in Japan, but in Germany, this would be a situation

that would probably, unless there was ever a nuclear holocaust, never be repeated. It was virgin territory, in a sense, permitting us to do all sorts of things really from scratch.

The first directive already in 1945 outlined the future for the German information media and for the American personnel that was supposed to supervise them and the task to create a media structure which would contribute to the democratization of Germany.

In 1946 came more detailed military government instruction on how to do it and how not to do it. The gist was more or less to prevent the entry among the German personnel that would have to be hired, all those of a Nazi, militaristic or totalitarian attitude, and bring in people that would have a contribution to make to the future democratic state, the form of which was as yet unclear.

As we all know, Germany was divided into the four zones, the Russian eastern zone and the three Western zones in the north, the British zone in the center and south, the large American zone, and then in the last moment, a part was carved out on the western part bordering Switzerland for the French zone.

The media generation system in the four zones was entirely different. The Russians had it very simply: they took over lock, stock, and barrel the media stations. These became Russian-type propagandist stations in the narrowest sense.

ESTABLISHMENT AND HANDLING OF NEWSPAPERS IN THE AMERICAN ZONE OF OCCUPIED GERMANY

In the Western zones, the newspapers were treated differently than the radio stations, the reason being, as I have mentioned before, that whereas the radio stations were completely de-Nazified from the very first moment, going over from one central authority in the Weiman republic to the Hitler government, the newspapers had much more varied complexion. It wasn't like one radio station. There were different Nazi paper in different colorations, but nevertheless, there was some differentiation.

So the system that we introduced in our zone was called licensing. The first aim was to create in each city, from medium-size to large cities, one regular newspaper which would be licensed, where we would select a suitable German as receiver of the license. We would have American press officers who would not necessarily, except for the very beginning, sit right at the paper, but would exercise overall control, and at the beginning, not censorship in advance. They might look it over later, criticize, fire the writer, or whatever else, but there was no advance censorship. This process went fairly quickly with its errors and mistakes and a great number of newspapers sprang up in the American zone.

A little later, just to put this newspaper thing in the context, even if it doesn't follow exactly the chronology, a couple of years later, we added in the large cities, like Munich, Stuttgart, and Frankfurt, another paper, to have one paper more right of center and one

paper more left of center, and licensed a second paper. In the smaller cities, only one paper remained.

In addition, the licensed papers were from the very beginning, though strictly controlled from behind, watched and observed, truly German papers. The publisher, is the word that comes nearest to describing the function of "bearer of a license from military government." In addition, we had from the start of the occupation, an American newspaper in the German language, the famous Neue Zeitung. Though I used only three minutes to describe the process of creating these licensed papers, it was still a process that in each case dragged on for quite a while, and we had to have a paper in the German language right from the beginning for informing the population of what was going on, of military government decrees, what is verboten and was not verboten, and this was the Neue Zeitung.

Q: Was this a sector-wide paper?

SCHECHTER: A sector-wide paper. Very good question.

Q: And American officers handled both the distribution as well as the production?

SCHECHTER: Everything. It was a paper, not as the German papers were, either a Munich paper or a Frankfurt paper; it was a paper for the whole American zone.

Q: In what city was it produced?

SCHECHTER: First in Berlin and then in Munich. This paper became not only well known, but it became--let's use the phrase "a quality paper of the very highest order." It was read in later years not only in the American zone, but all over Germany. The thanks for this goes to two extraordinary newspaper people. One was the first editor, Hans Habe. Hans Habe was a well known Viennese newspaperman who was a refugee, just like I was, and was then a captain or a major in the Third Army, and became the first editor of the Neue Zeitung. He had a lot of newspaper experience, because he was the son of the owner of a big newspaper in Vienna.

Q: He was Austrian born?

SCHECHTER: Austrian born, yes. His name was really not Habe; his name was Hans Bekesy, a Hungarian name, because the family came from Hungary. In the States, he made Hans Bekesy, into Hans Habe. He was a remarkable man. He wrote a couple of bestsellers about the war period, and he was a natural choice for the Neue Zeitung. He was very good. But since he was a very autocratic personality, which he had to be, some difficulties developed. Then he married a very rich woman, returned to the States and still wrote many books.

His successor was the opposite of him, but equally a brilliant journalist, Hans Wallenberg, who was, in Berlin, one of the top executives of the Ullstein, Verlag which was the biggest newspaper and book publisher in German, one of the biggest firms in the world. Hans Wallenberg was one of the executives. There was a great difference in personalities between two men. Habe became very Americanized; he was younger. Wallenberg, 'til the very end, not only by accent, spoke half German and half English, but an absolutely brilliant man who made of what Hans Habe began, a really great newspaper.

When in '49 we liquidated the whole licensing period, lots of Germans wanted to offer and did offer just for the title, just to keep the masthead, the Neue Zeitung, millions of dollars to military government if we would sell them or give them the right to use the Neue Zeitung: It was so popular and considered the best in journalism.

The decision of military government was no, and the Neue Zeitung stopped publishing in early '50 or so. You will hear from Max Kraus, who worked directly for the Neue Zeitung, lots more details on this. I personally knew Habe quite well and was a great friend of Hans Wallenberg.

Q: After the Neue Zeitung stopped publication, did any other German newspaper pick up the name, then?

HANDLING OF NEWSPAPERS IN THE BRITISH ZONE

SCHECHTER: No, they couldn't, because it was copyrighted. It is interesting. The British, in their zone, had a totally different approach to the newspapers. Whereas we licensed individuals with strict guidelines of separation of news from comment, of giving space for all political shades and coloring, the newspaper belonged to a private person. We created a private press. The British acted differently. They licensed newspapers, too, but they licensed newspapers of political parties. They licensed the newspapers of the Social Democrats, of the Christian Democrats, and so they created party papers. They had a counterpart of the Neue Zeitung, Die Welt, The World, published in Hamburg, equally excellent, though, in my opinion, never as good a paper as the Neue Zeitung. But when it came to liquidating, they gave the right of Die Welt to a private publisher. Thus Die Welt is still to this very day one of the three or four most important papers in Germany. Few people in Germany today realize that Die Welt started out as the British official paper in the German language like the now defunct Neue Zeitung.

I want to finish this newspaper picture. When the licensing period ended in '49, all of a sudden, everybody who had the money and could get a printing press, which was still very difficult, could organize a newspaper. In military government there were vicious behind-the-scenes battles: "Should we or should we not really end that period of licensing?" Because very many people were afraid that the licensed press, all the papers that we had created with blood, sweat, and tears would all disappear, and the previous owners, would come and claim their offices, create new papers and use the printing

presses. There were fears that in a few months all the old papers would be back, and Nazi personnel would enter the back door. It was a very justified fear, but it did not come true.

It's one of these great success stories of ours that all the papers in the American zone that we created exist 'til this very day under the same name. Let's take Munich. We created first the Sueddeutsche Zeitung. Then we had created the Münchner Merkur, a little bit right of center. And to this very day, what you can buy in Munich is the Münchner Merkur and the Sueddeutsche Zeitung.

The first paper in the American zone was the Frankfurter Rundschau. You go today to Frankfurt, you buy the Frankfurter Rundschau. There is only one paper in the American zone, in the bigger cities, that later, after the licensing period ended, was created by Germans independent of military government, that's a very excellent paper, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, which fits beautifully into the picture.

But it is truly interesting and remarkable that the German military government licensed papers, were able, in a very short time, to create the trust of their readership and survive the wave of attempts to discredit them as stooges and instruments of the occupation, and survived to this very day. Not survived. They are the press of today's Germany. The same, more or less, in the French zone.

So there can be no doubt that the press and its wise handling in the first few years, together with the radio stations which I shall deal with in a few moments, have, to an extraordinary degree, contributed to the democratization of Germany. Whatever your or my opinion about Nazi Germany is, about the crimes that the people had to share with the regime, the fact is that Germany today, though there is legitimate criticism, is an eminently democratic country. It is a fact that for 40 years now, they exist as a part of NATO, of the Western alliance. Without laying the foundation in the media, it could never have been possible,

This is what I mean, by an eminent American success story that is now 40 years old and which has so basically contributed to the political structure of Europe. We Americans criticize ourselves on the most minute things, but tend to forget our eminent successes.

Q: You talked about the newspapers. Were there any periodicals licensed during the occupation period, or did they all come after '49? How about Der Stern?

SCHECHTER: They came afterwards.

Q: There was no predecessor?

SCHECHTER: No. They came all after, because there was not enough paper; there was not enough personnel; there were not enough printing presses. It was impossible. No. They all came later. There you have a great variety, Der Stern, you have Der Spiegel, after

the Time format. Germany is a great country with a great publication tradition. Germany is still, to this day, holds the greatest book market, book fair in the world, in Frankfurt.

DISCUSSION OF RADIO IN WESTERN SECTORS

Now a few words on the radio side. The radio side was quite different than the licensed press, because we had in Germany the system from way before of regional stations under central authority. We had stations in our zone, in Munich, in Frankfurt, in Stuttgart, and in Bremen. The British had one in the British zone, Hamburg. It was always there. A new one was founded in the headquarters of the French zone, which was a famous spa and gambling place in the olden days, a beautiful place called Baden Baden. That was not before the war a radio station. But all the others that I mentioned were the previous regional stations.

So the stations, right after the occupation began, were halfway repaired for the main purpose of broadcasting three or four times a day, military government news and instructions--rationing, saying when an assembly is permitted, whatever decrees came out, about traffic, about licensing of mobile vehicles, etc. For this, we used German-speaking American personnel.

Then newscasts were added as the stations were repaired and more facilities became available. Then slowly, a complete program developed. I say this in a few words, but it was quite a period of time at each step, requiring great efforts.

KUDOS FOR THE PERSONNEL IN MILITARY GOVERNMENT ESPECIALLY IN INFORMATION WORK

This might be the place and the time to say a few words about the kind of people we had in military government, because God knows I can hardly imagine another example of this sort of diversity of American personnel which was concentrated in military government, and particularly in the information field, in the ICD, Information Control Division, of military government.

You had people who were assigned for a reason, such as the fact that they happened to speak the language, or because they had studied in Germany, or for no reason whatsoever. So you had people from the various parts of the U.S., younger and older, and then you had the vast variety of Central European refugees who had reached the shores of the States, got into the Army or in civilian service of the Army, and then were, like by a sponge, soaked up into military government. Well, because of the diversity you could have found "character" by the hundreds. I mentioned two, Habe and Wallenberg and their extraordinary merits. We had people from Prague and from Vienna and from Germany, mostly Jewish refugees in its different facets of occupation duties, but we had a number of non-Jews who were anti-Nazis and who had fled Germany. We had all sorts of people who all brought this variety of approach with them but shared non-familiarity with American regulations, instructions, or even ways to do things.

My greatest compliments go to the Army, which demonstrated a wonderful flexibility and a willingness to skirt restricting regulations in the interest of letting the new information media be effective in those unusual times in Germany.

Q: You were complimenting the American Army when we came to the end of the last tape. Would you just pick up from there, please.

SCHECHTER: The compliment is based upon the fact that an Army, by its very nature, is a rather rigid organization wedded to its ways to do things and to its regulations. In the case of the reconstruction of the German media, it proved its wisdom by just leaving it to the people who were supposed to do it, interfering as little as possible and showing a magnanimity of extraordinary proportions that otherwise would have made the task impossible. Because substantively, what was the problem? Both in the press and even infinitely more in the radio stations, in the Military Government basic instruction of 1946, which I mentioned before, it said what sort of personnel we want to have, it said what sort of personnel we do not want to have, it said what the aim of the media was, all highly laudable things.

PROBLEMS IN FINDING "DEMOCRATIC" GERMAN PERSONNEL FOR MEDIA POSITIONS IN MILITARY GOVERNMENT

I remember I attended a few years ago a seminar of the Wilson Institute on the occupation discussing the text of all pertinent instructions regarding the media. I was sitting there and I was asking myself, "Are they talking about the same thing?" I mean, I knew the instructions, except that once we read them, nobody gave any thought to it, because the problem was not what it said: "Don't take Nazis, take democratic personnel." The problem was how to find democratic personnel in a country that has been 12 years under Nazi occupation, under Nazi grip, where every field of activity and endeavor was reserved for Nazis? But no field or endeavor was so controlled, so absolutely deeply inbred in the strictest Nazi sense as the information media. Goebbels was the past master of propaganda, and radio was particularly a Goebbels instrument.

It was easy to get rid of the Nazis. They got rid of themselves; they disappeared all over. But the method of how to find "democratic" replacements could not be given in a circular. This was left to the ingenuity, to the innovative spirit, to the most--to use my term--unorthodox methods of selecting and finding people.

The "characters" that I described earlier used the most varied methods. For instance, we wanted to get German personnel from secretaries to future chiefs of stations to replace, let's say, Ed Schechter as chief of Radio Munich. Some former members of the Weimar Republic radio station that were removed by the Nazis, but luckily for one reason or the other, such as not being too prominent, were not taken into a concentration camp, or were not taken by the Army and killed on the Russian front, but "disappeared" in some God-forlorn village and survived the Nazi time. That was, as an example, how I found the man

whom I brought up as German chief of Radio Munich. In '49, I appointed as German chief of station, Rudolf von Scholtz. He was an old aristocrat who had a medium-size position in Radio Munich during the Weimar Republic and was living, during the Nazi time--he was too old for the Army--unobserved and unmolested in a little village. I somehow got his address, drove out, talked to him, brought him in first to work, and then later brought him up as a chief of station. That's one example.

Then as chief editor who later became Germany's chief radio commentator we found a man who was also an old Radio Munich hand guy from the Weimar Republic. Then a few German refugees returned but very few.

Then we had to take young people who had not been Nazi members but just soldiers, junior officers who returned from prisoner of war camps, in England and the United States. So American personnel had the role of finding people. And then in many cases, to teach them the business. I worked with my three assistants as tutors explaining why a commentary had to be separated from news. We also had to find women for transmissions to women and for children. It was a constant struggle of new ideas for whom to get. At the Officers Club in the evening, when stories of the day were exchanged somebody would say, "Look, I found a German today. You would not believe how . . ."

The stories sounded like finding gold in the far West, because everything in our plans depended on finding suitable German personnel in a completely Nazified country. In addition, relations with Russia were becoming worse and worse, we had to be aware of possible Communist infiltration which added an additional dimension to the problem.

Let me give you an example of how things worked and of the cooperation between the press and radio divisions. It was the time when in Munich one licensed paper already existed, and our press people wanted very badly a second paper that was right of center, but they had to find somebody they could license, and who had all these positive and negative qualities of not being a Nazi, but nevertheless already experienced.

I had a man in my radio station, one of the editors that I found six months before. One day I went to the bathroom, and I was standing at one stall, and right of me was this Dr. Buttersack, a very strange name, (it means a sack of butter). His first name was Felix. He stands right near me doing what you do at a urinal, and as I look at him, I get this idea that he would be the ideal man for the license of this second paper. As I left the toilet and went back to my office, I phoned my counterpart, Ernst Langendorf, who was the head of the press, just as I was head of the radio. I phoned him and said, "Ernst, under very special circumstances, being in a toilet with him, I had the brainstorm that Felix Buttersack would be your man."

He said, "It's a brilliant idea." The same afternoon, Felix Buttersack was called in for an interview, and in three days he left Radio Munich and became the licensee of the Münchner Merkur a paper that successfully still exists today. He was the publisher up to three or four years ago, when he died.

Why this little story? Because it's typical of the unorthodox methods in use and times where you could do things without complex processing. Since Buttersack he was already cleared by us, he could easily be transferred. This is how we operated. The idea of this oral history project is to negate the impression of, for example, the Wilson Institute, that people were sitting half a day studying the instructions, then following the instructions, then gave an advertisement in the paper, an open position for so and so. This is childish. This was a world which never existed before and I cannot imagine to exist again, where a medium-level official like myself and Langendorf and decided who would become the owner of a big city newspaper.

Again, to come back to the Army as an institution, they, too, had incredible characters. The head of ICD press, radio, theater, film, everything, was a Colonel Barney McMahon, an Irishman with a wonderful sense of humor, who selected for himself and for his division headquarters, a castle right near Munich, who had never read or didn't want to read about the regulations of non-fraternization and all this and was running a brilliant show. By his Irish charm, he got people to work day and night. Once he trusted his lieutenants everything was possible. Langendorf and myself went over to him, and he said, "It's okay with you? Let me see this sack of butter," and that's how it went.

The Army was lucky. The whole military establishment was lucky that we had three truly great Americans as chiefs. We had, of course, General Clay, John McCloy, and then Conant, the former head of Harvard. So we had three great Americans of great wisdom. Clay was a typical political general, what I consider in the best sense of the word, that saw the Army as an instrument of national policy. So as usual, if you go for the explanation of this phenomenon of the Army permitting these unorthodox methods, it can be traced to the top leadership.

To continue with our radio story, within a year after my arrival in Munich, we were broadcasting, after my arrival in Munich, an 18-hours-a-day program with German personnel. We had four American officers. This is the very important thing. Pre-broadcast scrutiny lasted until 1949, whereas there was no real pre-censorship of the German press. In radio, we had pre-broadcast scrutiny. That means that everything that was written for broadcasting was brought first to an American control officer for initialing, which he read. So the Americans had to have perfect German. As you started to know the people that wrote and trust them, scrutiny was then almost a formality. Commentary however, was a different thing. These texts you really read.

As human life is, even those of us--and God knows I was one of them--who came to Germany with the greatest reservations, (two dozen members of my family perished at the hands of Nazis) but you cannot live and work with people on the basis of hostility. It isn't that you tell yourself, "As of tomorrow I shall not be hostile." It doesn't work that way. But as you work with individuals, the selection that we did was as efficient as it could be, that we did not select Nazis, a sense of joint working for a common purpose, even camaraderie, developed slowly. Sometimes I asked myself, if somebody would have told

me a few years ago that I shall sit with Rudolf von Scholtz and Walter von Cube late at night, at work, and really share ideas and feel rather comfortable, I wouldn't have believed it. Whether this is good or bad is beside the point. That's what human nature is. After all, it was that they were now bound inextricably with us in the effort of building up a democratic press, a democratic radio in the future democratic Germany.

We didn't even realize the real importance that this radio development had, because when television developed, there was again not the system of private television stations. Television developed first as a junior partner of the radio stations. So Radio Munich or the Bavarian Radio today is a television station. Today, radio is a minor partner. And it developed the same way in Frankfurt and in Bremen and in Stuttgart and in Hamburg as part of the radio station. So what what we did in building the structure and the personnel, was to build it, not realizing it at that time, really for an infinitely more important medium that played a decisive role, in the development of the new Germany, and it had its roots, fortunately, in this period.

When we reached what I thought was a plateau after one year, which was parallel to developments in Frankfurt and the other stations in the zone, I began looking, as I said before, for a German chief of station. I found it in Rudolf von Scholtz, and we had a big, big ceremony, because with the German chief of station, this pre-broadcast scrutiny almost disappeared completely and we began to reduce the staff from four to three and later to two Americans. I let the German chief of station, Mr. von Scholtz and his chief editor, Walter von Cube, run the station as much as possible.

Even after we had the German chief of station, the stations remained under the military government. The next step was to return the radio station to German supervision but keeping them politically independent.

RADIO MUNICH IS THE FIRST STATION TRANSFERRED TO GERMAN CONTROL (1950)

I was very happy and proud that the first station in Germany that went officially into German hands was Radio Munich. Negotations with the Bavarian land government--the regional government--went on for six or eight months because they wanted to go back to the old Weimar system, where the station was more or less controlled by the central authority and then it becomes all political, a political football, depending on whoever won the local election. That party would control all the chief positions at the radio station. Our military government was absolutely adamant and did not permit the transfer until we had a radio law that was satisfactory.

In a very big ceremony in Munich in 1950, in the presence of the Minister, president of Bavaria, and top American officials, General Clay came from Berlin and transferred Radio Munich into German hands. I still remained for a few months to help in the transition, but the station from then on was run by the Germans. One of the key provisions of the Radio law was the establishment of a Rundfunkrat, a council for radio--

which was an independent and a supra-political council. The Council was politically independent and supervised the station. There were people of political parties but they were not selected because they were party members. The other radio stations in Frankfurt, and Bremen once we had it in Bavaria, followed suit in a few months.

The transfer was again a success story, as I mentioned in the first part of our discussion today. Some of our people were fighting this transfer into German hands, because they said, "In a short time you're going to have the Nazis back." But to this very day after 38 years except for minor changes in the law, mostly caused by the fact that television plays now the major fiddle not radio, rather than the way around in 1950, the basic law in Bavaria and in the other states of the former American zone is the same one that was written under our guidance. And how many people today, except a few old hands realize that this system of an independent, democratic radio and television so vital for Germany stems from the time when Americans were running the show?

So this is, I am unhesitatingly speaking, a real success story that is worth being occasionally mentioned. History never starts yesterday. In this country, we always believe everything started yesterday. For the very young, the Vietnam War is already old hat. But the past World War II events could not have happened in the times of Napoleon or the 30-Year War. But the occupation of Germany happened in our generation and our information policy was certainly an important contribution of the democratization and stabilization of Germany, which enabled Germany to become a partner in the NATO structure. It's good to realize that some of our own up to a few years were still active in USIS and in other areas and had played their part in the shaping of post-war Germany.

We have mentioned Mickey Boerner several times, and he deserves it because he was from the beginning in a position of policy making where he could really smooth differences very well. Our top ICD chiefs, these were also brilliant, unusual characters. We had General McClure, who was ICD chief, for whom Mickey worked directly. Later we got more and more civilianized, and Shepard Stone was brought in, the editor of the New York Times magazine. We really got top people over in different positions that were running a large staff of these diversified, almost wild men of crazy ideas, and let them do it, because they themselves were characters who must have had a strong belief in the importance of the mission.

AMERICAN SUCCESS IN ANOTHER AREA OF OCCUPATION ACTIVITIES

Let me now mention, since I have been discussing the American successes during the time of the military government occupation in Germany in the information field, which covered radio, newspapers, theater, and films, an entirely different area which today is forgotten by almost all the people who know only that the German mark, the Deutsche mark is one of the strongest and most stable currencies in the world. The Germans today are against any attempts which could possibly bring back any degree of inflation, and we tend to forget why, and that everything has a history. And this goes back to one of the

greatest successes that we had during the occupation, namely the currency reform in 1948.

Germany was a country which until June, 1948, three years after the war was in very poor shape, though never as bad as Austria, which really was at times near famine. The physical destruction though, in Germany was much greater than in Austria. The rationing was very tight, but the Germans handled it quite well because they are, by nature, a disciplined and obedient people. But it was a very difficult situation. You just couldn't get anything but the dire necessities. This had very little to do with the living standards of the American occupation personnel, because we got everything that we wanted in the PX. We were not living under local economy, so what I am saying now has nothing to do with the American soldiers or civilians. They were not "suffering" except for psychological factors that I will touch on briefly in a moment.

I have one of my favorite stories to illustrate the unavailability of even the simplest items. It loses its flavor in the translation. I needed a pair of shoelaces. There were no shoelaces in the PX, and it was the beginning of '48, and I was on a trip from Munich to Berlin. I walked to a shoemaker store and asked for shoelaces. The Berliners have a very dry humor, quite different from the subtle sense of wit and humor that Viennese have. I remember this old woman there. Stating in staccato phrases: "(Phrase in German)." "Shoelaces we don't have, we never had them, and we shall never again have them." A beautiful Berlin statement. (Laughs) A few months later, after the currency reform, you got not only shoelaces, but within a few months, practically everything that was hidden in black markets and was raring to be sold.

It was a very simple thing which made many rich black marketeers poor people overnight. The currency reform was kept secret. The next morning, ten marks would be changed into one new German mark, the Deutsche mark. Really, nobody knew it, not even the soldiers, because some of them were quite good black marketeers themselves. It was a cigarette and coffee economy, items that replaced cash. We helped the Germans who worked for us and everybody knew this. But we did this for a good purpose. I, for instance, had no idea of the currency reform. This was kept really among maybe 20 people. It was an incredible story!

The recovery of Germany starts on June 20, 1948, and with the recovery of Germany, the rest of Europe, and this was another extraordinary success story. But this explains, also, the German fanatical aversion and fear of inflation. They had it twice, after the First World War, the most incredible inflation, and after the Second [World War], after the collapse of Hitler, you had the hidden economy with the inflation, and then the sudden currency reform. So you have to understand German resistance to overheating their economy. Certain political and economic phenomena can be understood only historically. I wanted to mention the currency reform both as an American success story and as a the factor that plays a role in the world economy to this very day.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

And now a little bit of general psychological atmospherics. I tried to explain before how myself and hundreds of similar cases of Jewish refugees harbored justified resentments against Germany and the Germans. Nevertheless, by living and working together with selected Germans, we developed ties of, maybe "great friendship" is exaggerated, but a feeling of camaraderie and joint aspirations. But this was because we worked with them.

I had, for instance, sometimes a difficult time with my mother. You see, my mother came over. I already mentioned this the last time. She was already waiting in Europe and with the first permission of dependents joining the occupation cadres, she came to Munich. I had a nice house reserved. As I say, our living conditions were quite good. My mother was a good soldier, she would have made a wonderful Foreign Service wife, but she had much more psychological trouble living in Germany than I had. It would be another three or four years that she stayed with me. It was easier for her, after Munich, in Bonn, because in Bonn, we lived in an American compound, so she had less contact with Germans and much more with Americans.

OTHER PROBLEMS NAZI AND COMMUNIST INFILTRATION

I would like to touch on a few overall problems and phenomena which will sort of typify the years of the occupation. First, a justified question. I talked about the successes of hiring hundreds of Germans for top and medium and low positions in the media. Did Nazis and Communists slip in? Of course, they did. It is just a miracle that relatively so few did. It was contrary to what one would think, easier to catch the Nazis, because Germans had their own private reasons to denounce them. Sometimes the denunciations were just the other way around, that a Nazi denounced a non-Nazi to be twice victorious. So if Nazis slipped in, it was rather a brief period until they were caught and fired.

It was different and more complex with Communists, because they might have been really Socialists before, and now they were in alliance with the Communists. East Germany was strictly a Russified and communized zone of Germany. It was easy to slip in and out. I remember well a very typical example, which was after we had already given up pre-broadcast scrutiny, which was after '49. I was sitting at home and listening to a commentary by Radio Munich, which, as I said, was not scrutinized in advance, because we had given that up in '49. The speaker was a man whose name I remember and whom I see almost in front of me, his name was Egel. The talk was the straight Communist line. I went the next morning into the office and confronted him with a direct accusation that I had reason to believe that he was a member of the Communist Party, and this was proven in the commentary of last night. He didn't even argue the membership; I fired him on the spot and he left the same day by train eastward to the Russian zone. The incredible thing was that the next evening, he broadcast out of Berlin and renamed one of the chief commentators from Russian-controlled Radio Berlin for years and years to come. So it is no question that infiltrations happened.

Whereas I'm pretty sure that we had caught almost all Nazis sooner or later, I would not say flatly that no Communist inspired people remained, because they could go under "left leaning," still permissible groups that we, ever eager to extend freedom of speech just permitted.

There were funny and strange events, like there was a Minister for Culture and Education, Dr. Hundhammer, in Bavaria. He was not a great selection by military government, though he was really a convinced and proven anti-Nazi who spent two or three years in a concentration camp. But he was an arch-conservative who wanted to re-introduce corporal punishment in the schools at a time when we were talking of school reform to further the democratic development of Germany based on the theory that a strict disciplinary school system was at the basis of Germany following a Fuehrer and a totalitarian regime. Hundhammer happened to love soccer, and so do I, and we met once at a soccer game. Just as military government, was re-introducing and permitting theater and movies, it was also re-introducing sports, to make life as quickly normal as possible. A picture of mine with Hundhammer appeared in a Munich paper, then distributed by one of the agencies in the States, and published by, I believe, the Buffalo Evening News, with a little acid comment that U.S. military government officials fraternize with the "re-introducer of corporal punishment in the Bavarian schools." So for a while I got in all sorts of hot water. The photographer thought it was interesting to see two prominent inhabitants of Munich, one American and one Bavarian, at a soccer game. But I was for a long time, the butt of jokes such as the innocent question when I'm going to introduce corporal punishment in the radio station.

THE NUREMBERG WAR TRIALS

During the occupation period, one extra ordinary event happened, again in which the media played a major role, the Nuremberg war crimes. Nuremberg was in the operational radius of Radio Munich. It "belonged" as a primary source of coverage to us, and we founded a substation in Nuremberg with a special correspondent in charge. This was unquestionably for the licensed newspapers, and for the radio stations, which were still military government stations, a truly major task, because the trial touched the lives of two-thirds of the German population. The War Crimes trials went on for a couple of years, first the major war crimes and then the second echelon. The whole world press was there, and in addition to the trial, they were roaming all around Germany covering all facets of the occupation.

The one thing I got as a "war booty," I mean, I just got it as a gift, is the complete volumes in German of the trial. I went by car three, four times a week for a few hours to the trial, and I have photos from Goering and the other murderers just as they were sitting in front. It was politically a very complex time, how to cover the trial in what amount, how angled.

I still sometimes wake up during the night and see some scenes of the trial, of the cold, indifferent, faces the "banality of evil," how people reported about the killing of hundreds

of thousands of people in a tone like you would report about a corporate session where the board of directors decided to buy or to merge or have an unfriendly acquisition of another enterprise. It is something that when I heard it at that time, I would never have realized that things like these might still come to haunt me decades later. So this goes also under the title of the atmospherics of life in Germany, this Nuremberg trial.

THE McCARTHY ERA IN GERMANY

Another subject to talk about was the McCarthy period. It came much later. By that time, I had left Munich already and was promoted to chief of the radio branch for Germany. That meant supervising all the stations in the American zone, and RIAS again becoming part of my "empire."

The chronology was very simple. I left Munich in 1950, being transferred to our new embassy in Bonn. But the embassy wasn't ready, so all those that were transferred got stuck in Bao Homburg near Frankfurt--for a few months before we moved on to Bonn. There I was first the deputy chief of the radio branch. My boss for a few weeks or maybe months was Charlie Lewis. Then Charlie resigned and I got the job. Now, this is important because it's part of the McCarthy story. You will remember that I discussed in our previous sessions that the "red herring" there was never true and I gave the example of a colleague like Eggleston that there were Communists in government. Now it never became quite clear whether Charlie Lewis was one of the last ones who had slipped through, or that his problem was only a mistake in his youth. I had said the last time that we got rid of almost all Communists long before Cohn and Schine and before McCarthy. It was done mostly on occasion of transfers from one agency to another, requiring another clearance and so on.

Charlie Lewis, I personnally believe, was not a Communist during the time he was with the government, which was now for ten and 12 years dating still to OWI. Rather he must have been a member of a strong leftist student group when he was studying. Anyway, on one occasion or the other, he required another clearance, got sick and tired of it, or resignation was suggested to him. I knew him very well. Just as Eggleston was a clear-cut Communist, I never thought and 'til this very day don't think that Charlie was. Anyway, he resigned and I moved into his slot.

But that got me into trouble a few months later, when these "gumshoes," as Cohn and Schine were called in a famous article by Ted Kaghan, came to Germany to look into the libraries and all the other activities, because according to McCarthy they were "infested with Communists." They had on their list to look into, the chief of the radio branch, but the chief of the radio branch, when they arrived, was the newly appointed Ed Schechter. They had the chief of the radio branch put on their list two months earlier. Therefore, I had to introduce the story of Charlie Lewis. It took them a week or two weeks to find out that I'm Ed Schechter and for food or worse I was of no interest to them.

The episode of Cohn and Schine in Germany, just as the whole bulk of my "testimony" today was an enthusiastic endorsement of the performance of the Army, was a truly shameful story from the beginning to the end. It was shameful, because the government could have finished it easily in explaining that in the beginning of the war, some Communist had slipped in, after all Soviet Russia was our ally. As the situation changed, we got, as I had explained one after the other, rid of them. But by denying it, we made it easy for McCarthy to come up with some names which some people shipped onto him as is usual in periods when rumors and gossip flourish and people get commended by denunciating other people. I mean, there was what they called themselves a "patriotic underground" in the Voice of America that fed names as they saw fit to McCarthy and Cohn and Schine. One of them was Steve Baldanza, who used to be a good friend.

Q: Steve Baldanza?

SCHECHTER: Steve Baldanza, yes, sir.

Q: I never knew that story.

SCHECHTER: Steve Baldanza. I knew him from the Voice of America, and we were very good friends. Later, though he didn't do anything to me, but to people that I knew and who were accused unjustly, never spoke to him. And then after I retired and he retired, one day we found ourselves on a promotion panel together. I was the head of the panel and he was one of the other three or four participants. So he came over and asked, "Ed, so many years have passed by. Do you mind shaking hands?" So we shook hands.

Another aspect was that two such ridiculous people, like Cohn Schine, Cohn--I have to withdraw the word "ridiculous," because he [Cohn] was a very smart man, but just an evil man, as evil as they come. Schine was an idiot, a rich boy who just wanted to be in the spotlight. Cohn and Schine were able to terrorize hundreds of people with their methods, and men like James Conant, the U.S. high commissioner whom I have mentioned before as one of the great Americans, was afraid the appearance of these kids. I remember I came home for lunch, and my mother gave me the message that--I just had left Conant--he phoned that I had to come back immediately, because Cohn and Schine phoned him, they wanted to talk to him for another 15 minutes. And such was the atmosphere of fear that he couldn't find the courage to say, "Go to hell." And what could he, Conant, risk?

Again, things are very hard to understand out of a perspective of 30, 40 years later, what fear and psychological terror can do. I like always a general story to serve as an example.

When Cohn and Schine arrived, they were continuously pestering me because they thought that I was the chief of the radio branch that they had scribbled down somewhere. One morning, they found out that I am not that guy, and that I was the founder of RIAS. So Cohn, who had treated me like dirt for two or three weeks, (they were for a few months in Germany) must have heard the whole story about who I am, so all of a sudden, he stops me in the corridor. I swear to you again, I see the scene in front of me. He puts

his arm around me and for the first time calls me Ed. "Ed, let me talk to you. I know what a wonderful job you did with the founding of RIAS, but now the station goes completely down, it becomes practically a red station. Just tell me, who are these people who ruin your work?"

I looked at him. What I really wanted was to spit in his face, but I told him, "I tell you something. RIAS was a very good station when I founded it, but it was nothing. It was in its childhood. I left it right after putting it up--I am very proud I put it on the map, but RIAS is today under these people that you defame, a really great station. Not only is there no story to tell that you want to hear, I have to stress that RIAS is the most efficient anti-Communist instrument that we have. You don't even have to go to RIAS." He just looked at me and hissed, "No sense talking to you."

Just to show you by this story, one day I was a source of spite for him because I was the wrong chief of radio, and the next came this crude approach by flattering me, how good it was when I was there, and now it's becoming red, to find another source for anonymous accusations. From that moment on, I have really had only feelings of the greatest contempt for him.

I recommend that on the Cohn and Schine story, we arrange for an interview with Hoofnagle. Jim Hoofnagle was at that time our chief executive officer for ICD in Bonn. The HICOG Exec officer was an old-time, very well known Foreign Service officer, Glen Wolf. Glen Wolf behaved magnificently, with much greater courage than Conant did. Jim Hoofnagle was also a wonderful, courageous guy with great knowledge of how far he could go and how to deal with people. I have a very high opinion and great admiration for both Hoofnagle and Glen Wolf who died a few years ago.

But this McCarthy interlude was not a story to be proud of, and one of the really bad things during that occupation period. It was also a very great setback for our efforts in Germany, because practically every American official in the information and culture field was at one time a "suspect," got in the news, and something always remains. People have read a name in this context, but don't know exactly what it really meant. So this was probably one of the saddest and worst episodes that we had.

I am coming shortly to the end. I stayed on as chief of Radio in Bonn. I had two or three assistants, and we were supervising, again in a very loose and informal way, the German radio stations. By that time these were all truly German radio stations. We still left one American officer at each local station. He was not anymore physically at the radio station but had his office in the military government complex.

Mine was a very interesting job because there was a lot of traveling involved and many contacts with my counterparts among the French and the British. They became good friends. By the way, the French continued their close supervision of the German radio stations much longer.

TED STREIBERT'S VISIT TO GERMANY

I stayed in Germany until January '55. Mickey left Berlin in '54 and returned to the states. It so happened that I was the first future USIS officer to know the first chief of USIS. It was Ted Streibert who was sent by the Eisenhower Administration to Germany. He was an old CBS executive who after this McCarthy upheaval came to Germany as the informal "super-boss." He had no real title except representative of the President. Since he was very interested in radio, which was his medium, he just got rather close to my operation. He didn't feel particularly at ease with me the first few weeks, simply because of the fact that he apparently--which is very difficult to believe in New York--he had not met many Americans with an accent and who ate with a fork and knife at the same time. I would not say that he had prejudices in the beginning, but I was certainly not the man with whom he would choose to have a comfortable glass of beer after work.

As time went on, relations warmed and got very much better. He like my operations and he came home with me often for dinner and got along famously with my mother who was a very charming woman.

One day he called me in to his office and said, "Ed, I understand you're making preparations to go home. So let me tell you that I am going to be your new boss. I'm going to be the chief of the new USIA."

Thus, when I returned, I knew the new boss very well and by that time, we had established good relations--I did not see him in Washington privately often, not like in Germany where I saw him every day, but he was a good friend, and we liked each other. He was not a genius, but to bring order into the organization after the total upheaval of the McCarthy period, I think he was a very good choice.

RETURN TO WASHINGTON: POLICY OFFICER FOR EUROPEAN AREA

As I said, we left Germany in January of '55. I had been in Germany since the beginning of '47, quite a long period, that really covered the occupation period. I got back and I first I worked for Lou Olom, because my job was supposed to be as policy officer for Europe. But as usual, it wasn't ready. There was particularly a fight between Andy Berding, who was in charge of policy at that time, and Bill Clark of the European area office. Bill Clark wanted the job to be under him not under Berding. Initially, I came to IIA--was it IIA?

Q: It was called IIA until the August 1, 1953 executive order which made it an independent agency.

SCHECHTER: USIA, yes. The research part CIRA of the independent agency in '53. Lou Olom was the boss of it. I became head of the European branch of IRA, I think for six or eight months. Therefore, I know Olom well. The jurisdictional dispute was settled then. Berding lost the policy office job that was attached to the assistant director's job, and I

became policy officer for Western Europe under Bill Clark. I stayed there for four years, until '58, then I was transferred to Rome, where I stayed for six years. One of the characteristics of my foreign service career was that I was in not that many posts, but for a long period in each post, which has advantages and disadvantages.

THE APERTURA A SINISTRA (OPENING TO THE LEFT) IN ITALY

In conclusion there are a couple of things that I still would like to mention, not in any of the detail that we talked about Germany and the early days of the occupation and its historical importance, but even during the period in Italy were certain events which amounted to terrific foreign policy successes for the United States which are mostly forgotten today. Foremost we succeeded with a wise policy to detach the Socialists from the Communists, which were closely allied and at any moment could have become a legally elected majority in Italy able to form together a Communist-controlled government, which would have meant the loss to the West of this important Mediterranean country, Italy. Our policy was to slowly detach the Socialists from the Communists, and make it thus impossible for the Communists to get the majority, and they never got it. Today they are a sterile minority and the Socialists another democratic party. Today most people have completely forgotten that this was the fruit of American policy, and all parts of the embassy were involved in this complex operation which was called apertura a sinistra, the "opening to the left." I am very proud of having been part of this operation.

TOM SORENSEN'S DISPERSAL OF FORMER EUROPEAN USIA OFFICERS

Let me close on a lighter note. After Rome, which was also a wonderful post for me personally because I got married just before [going there] and my son was born there, we were sent to Bolivia. That was the time, as you know very well, that Sorensen decided upon the dispersal of the old European hands. Mowinckel was sent to the Belgian Congo (ZAIRE) in Africa, Mickey Boerner was sent to South America, and so was I. The theory was that it's high time that these people who have lived off the fat of Europe should go out to another world and, of course, they will all fall flat on their faces. So I went to Bolivia, and then I went to Caracas. One day we had, in Bogota, a PAO meeting. I looked around and this is what I saw: There were four class one posts in Latin America: Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela. The PAO in Argentina was Mickey; the PAO in Brazil, was John Mowinckel, the PAO in Venezuela was Ed Schechter; in Mexico John Brown was the cultural affairs attaché. All the people that were supposed to have fallen flat on their faces, once they left Europe, were a few years later in top positions in Latin America.

So the end of it is that we couldn't have done so badly in Europe if we managed the same thing later in Latin America, which required an entirely different approach. But basic factors, being able to get along with people, learning the language, and knowing ways of contact and policy, will, in different ways, if you adapt, make a half-way good officer wherever you serve.

Q: I agree with you thoroughly. I was fully aware of Tom Sorensen's campaign against the Europeans, for reason that I put on my own interview tape later on, rather than have you tell it.

End of interview