

## SWEDEN

### COUNTRY READER TABLE OF CONTENTS

George L. West	1942-1943	Vice Consul, Stockholm
C. Gray Bream	1944-1945	Vice Consul, Stockholm
Norman V. Schute	1947-1952	Assistant Attaché, Stockholm
Robert F. Woodward	1950-1952	Counselor of Embassy, Stockholm
Paul F. Du Vivier	1950-1954	Commercial Attaché, Stockholm
Roy T. Haverkamp	1955-1957	General Services Officer, Stockholm
Harvey F. Nelson, Jr.	1956-1958	Analyst, Scandinavian Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC
J. Howard Garnish	1957-1958	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Stockholm
Virginia Hamill Biddle	1959-1961	Consular Assistant, Stockholm
Harvey F. Nelson, Jr.	1959-1961	Office Director, Sweden, Finland and Iceland, Washington, DC
Edward L. Peck	1959-1961	Junior Officer, Goteborg
William H. Littlewood	1960-1965	Science Attaché, Stockholm
William B. Cobb, Jr.	1962-1965	Commercial Attaché, Stockholm
Isabel Cumming	1964-1966	Director, USIS, Stockholm
Theodore Wilkinson	1964-1966	Consular Officer, Stockholm
William Bodde, Jr.	1967-1970	Political Officer, Stockholm
Richard J. Smith	1968-1971	Commercial Officer, US Trade Center, Stockholm
C. Arthur Borg	1968-1971	Political Counselor, Stockholm

Haven N. Webb	1969-1971	Analyst, Western Europe, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC
Patrick E. Nieburg	1969-1972	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Stockholm
Gerald Michael Bache	1969-1973	Economic Officer, Stockholm
Eric Fleisher	1969-1974	Desk Officer, Scandinavian Countries, USIA, Washington, DC
William Bodde, Jr.	1970-1972	Desk Officer, Sweden, Washington, DC
Arthur Joseph Olsen	1971-1974	Political Counselor, Stockholm
John P. Owens	1972-1974	Desk Officer, Sweden, Washington, DC
James O'Brien Howard	1972-1977	Agricultural Officer, US Department of Agriculture, Stockholm
John P. Owens	1974-1976	Political Officer, Stockholm
Eric Fleisher	1974-1977	Press Attaché, USIS, Stockholm
David S. Smith	1976-1977	Ambassador, Sweden
John P. Owens	1976-1978	Consul General, Gothenburg
Jack R. Perry	1976-1979	Deputy Chief of Mission, Stockholm
Theodore Sellin	1978-1979	Consul General, Gothenburg
Robert J. Martens	1978-1979	Deputy Chief of Mission, Stockholm
Jenonne Walker	1981-1983	Political Counselor, Stockholm
Ints Silins	1983-1986	Political Counselor, Stockholm
Robert L. Barry	1985-1986	Head of US Delegation, Stockholm Conference, Stockholm
Ward Thompson	1986-1987	Principal Officer, Gothenburg
Barbara H. Nielsen	1994-1998	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Stockholm
Alphonse F. La Porta	2000-2003	Political Advisor to Commander of NATO Forces in Southern Region, Naples, Italy

**GEORGE L. WEST**  
**Vice Consul**  
**Stockholm (1942-1943)**

*George L. West was born in Seattle, Washington in 1910. He received a bachelor's degree from Stanford University in 1933. His Foreign Service career included positions in Paris, Godthab, Stockholm, Helsinki, Luxembourg, Frankfurt, and Bonn. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy on February 9, 1990.*

*Q: How did you go to Stockholm during the war?*

WEST: Well, first we flew from La Guardia to Limerick, Ireland, in a flying boat, I remember, with Barry Bingham on board. I was in London. Then we went up to Dundee and waited quite awhile until we could get a good dark night, and were flown over in the bomb bay of a Mosquito.

*Q: A Mosquito being a British light bomber.*

WEST: Then I arrived in Sweden. Maybe this little incident is worth telling. We had a legation there, and they were beefing it up quite a bit during the war for reporting purposes, covering German-occupied Europe.

I arrived there, and Herschel Johnson was the Minister. He was an old pro after a couple of days. He was occupying a very elegant apartment, which had belonged to the King's brother. He said he wanted to have a junior officer living with him, so that he could carry on from home at times.

He had a reputation for calling a Chargé up at one o'clock in the morning and saying, "Winthrop, I've been thinking about..." He was hardworking and a good professional.

The Minister asked me if I'd be interested in living there with him. I don't think I had any particular suspicions at the time, but I did know that after living with my boss for two years in Greenland (that is when he was there), I wasn't too anxious to continue that.

The bright lights of Stockholm were really rather appealing. I was just 32. I backed out. Then that summer, another fellow who I was living with, a fellow named Alan Leitner, he'd had a similar experience when he arrived in Sweden, and he, too, had dodged it. Over in Finland, Minister... One of the problems of being 80 is that, although I can remember these things, I can't remember names.

*Q: Don't worry about the names.*

WEST: Arthur Schoenfeld was the Minister. He was taken out, and Rob McClintock, whom I'd known from Stanford, became the Chargé.

The department wanted to send someone over there to be with McClintock, so they asked Herschel Johnson at Stockholm if they could spare somebody. He then suggested that I be sent over.

So I went over to Finland and had an apartment. It was pretty bad; we were under bombardment. So finally I moved into the legation residence with the McClintocks. We'd be up on the roof a couple nights a week with incendiaries.

*Q: At this point we might mention that it was a peculiar situation, that Finland was kind of an ally of the Germans, but not at war with us.*

WEST: That's right. The Germans had gone in. All the legations were Axis countries, so to speak, except for two neutrals, Sweden and Switzerland, and then the U.S. and Brazil. There was the black sheep of a prominent family (sent about as far away as they could get him from Brazil) who was the Brazilian Chargé.

Along about Easter, '43, we got instructions, because we were surrounded by Germans. Everybody who came in the legation was photographed right across the street. We weren't allowed out of the city. We could go downtown.

We did go to the consular luncheons, which were something, because all the Consuls were Finnish citizens, and this was their opportunity to really put it on, foodwise, liquorwise.

The Germans were... Mannerheim would never meet with Hitler.

*Q: Mannerheim was the Marshal who was also [President of the Republic] the head of [?]*

WEST: A great man. He told us our codes had been compromised. We'd known that. I think they were compromised in Yugoslavia, actually. He was very standoffish, but the Germans were very much in occupation. You can't blame the Finns after the Winter War. Any enemy of the Soviet Union was their enemy. But things were pretty rough for the people there.

Then came Easter of '43, and the department instructed us to break relations with the Finns. That Easter weekend I was over in Stockholm, with my former colleagues out on my old boat on the Mälaren sailing.

McClintock was authorized to break relations within 48 hours. He was to convert money, Finnmarks, into dollars. He got his wife out. She was pregnant and came over to Stockholm.

I was in constant communication with him during this period. Then a message came through to Sweden. The message was: If you have not already done so, do not, repeat, not break relations.

The responsibility for the Katyn massacres finally had been recognized as the Soviets'. And they did not want that to be associated with our breaking relations with the Finns.

*Q: The Katyn massacres were the massacre of Polish prisoners of war by the secret police of the Soviets.*

WEST: So I stayed on in Sweden. My work was chiefly with reporting on German... We had a special reporting section reporting on German-occupied Europe. My particular assignment was the Baltic States and Finland. I had a group of former Presidents.

By this time, Germany was occupying the Baltic States. The Soviets had, then the Germans. This was when the Germans pushed to the east.

I had a number of former Presidents, Foreign Ministers, etc., of Latvia, Lithuania, and particularly Estonia, working for me monitoring German radio broadcasts from the other side, and trying to put together as much of a picture as we could.

I was commuting once a week to Helsinki with a pouch, with oral messages, back and forth to McClintock. I'd go over, he'd meet me at the airport and give me what there was, and then I'd fly back.

We'd have lunch in the woods outside the airport. Once I almost got on the plane from Riga by mistake. "Achtung! Achtung!" -- I thought it was calling the plane for Stockholm. I didn't though.

But at any rate, I was enamored with the daughter of this former Estonian Foreign Minister. So then about Christmas time, '43, they decided that they would give McClintock a break. Meanwhile I had stood by for the birth of his son in Stockholm.

This time, Johnson was asked to name two people. He named Leitner and myself, both of whom had refused to live with him. Of course, later it was exposed that Herschel Johnson was a homosexual. At that time, he had a young guy named Bloomingdale, who was supposed to be a Special Assistant, CIA, he had this boy, who later was caught with him in Brazil. This isn't the kind of thing...

*Q: No, but it gives a little feel for the problems. But was this sort of suspicioned or you just didn't, I mean both of you...*

WEST: We put our own things together. It was suspicioned at that time. The full confirmation didn't come until after the war. Johnson was then at the U.N. as deputy to Warren Austin, our first Ambassador to the U.N. Then he went to Brazil, and he had Bloomingdale there, too. I don't know the whole story down there.

Meanwhile, the right hand not knowing what the left hand was doing, Leitner had received orders to go to London. And so, West was supposed to go.

I was not too anxious to go back. I was somewhat involved. I was way up in the north, at Sieliensborg for Christmas, Lucia and all the rest of them.

McClintock sent me the Finnish paper, the *Helsingisanomat*, with the announcement of my assignment there. This is rather a good story, because they had this article, all in Finnish, that this was the final insult of sending an officer, even more junior than McClintock, to be the Chargé. The article was in Finnish, but broke into English when it quoted from my biography: "Appointed Foreign Service officer unqualified." Instead of "unclassified." You went in as Unclassified C in those days, Vice Consul and Third Secretary. The editor, old Aerko (we used to go in the Soundov with him), was a good friend of mine. McClintock took great delight in underscoring this in red and sending it to me.

At any rate, I dodged it, and they sent Ed Gullion from London. He arrived in Stockholm more dead than alive. I guess he hated my guts, because he'd had a great setup, both professionally and personally, in London. He went on... I mention his name because later on he did break relations. (I guess it was in the summer of '44.) And he, in turn, was transferred to Stockholm.

*Q: Well, what was the attitude of the Swedes towards the United States, and how did we deal with them while you were there?*

WEST: Depends on the time and place. Sweden, when we first arrived, made a fetish out of their neutrality. They were not too friendly. There were some who were fine, but others, no.

*Q: The war was going well for Germany at that time.*

WEST: That's right, that's right. On the other hand, you get into the south of Sweden, where the nearer to Germany you were the more pro-Axis they seemed to be.

You go over to the west coast, Goteborg, and we were shipping ball bearings out of there every other night to England.

I wasn't personally concerned. In fact I did get down to Malmo once, just to do the pouch for our Consul down there.

But then, after the landings, it got considerably better. A lot of our aviators were force-landed in Sweden, as were a certain number of Germans. For awhile, the Swedes were releasing one-against-one. Then we were allowed to build up a credit as things got better.

In early '45 when they called for the U.N. organizing conference, first McClintock was assigned back to the department to go to the U.N. conference in San Francisco, then I was.

He got off, but it took me a hell of a time to find the ideal conditions. In this flight, it was a larger transport, which went way north on dark nights.

I was told that after the San Francisco conference I would be assigned to our mission next to the Netherlands government in London.

Stanley Hornbeck was the so-called Ambassador at that time. When I'd first gone through London on my way to Sweden, Rudy Schoenfeld (the brother of the guy who was in Finland)

was the number two to Biddle (our Ambassador to these other countries, to the exiled governments).

I was told I'd be going to the Hague, to that or to the Hague, depending on whether the war was over or not.

Well, I thought it only proper, going through London, to call on Mr. Hornbeck, who was the Ambassador accredited to the Netherlands government in exile.

Of course, the department in its usual inimitable way, had not notified Mr. Hornbeck that they were sending me. He resented that. "Well, what do you think you can do?" He was an old curmudgeon; he was notorious.

I did as well as I could. Went up to Prestwich. Oddly enough, there were a number of other diplomats from other countries that were heading for the U.N.

One of them was the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg, Joseph Besh, and his aide. There was one bedroom left. Besh, his aide, and I had to share it (which is sometimes cited as the reason I was subsequently assigned to Luxembourg -- it wasn't true!).

I went out to San Francisco, which was my home anyway. There were lots of relatively junior officers who were assigned to the Secretariat, which was being run by the Americans, the guy named Hiss, if you remember.

*Q: Alger Hiss.*

WEST: Part of our duties were to act as liaison with the foreign delegations. I was assigned (quite logically considering my future) to the Netherlands delegation and to the Norwegians, having served in Danish and Swedish posts. Later on, the Danes came in. They were not in at the very beginning because they were not the belligerents. During the course of the conference, which was the best conference I've ever attended, I got word that Mr. Hornbeck really didn't want me, so I was assigned to Washington.

**C. GRAY BREAM**  
**Vice Consul**  
**Stockholm (1944-1945)**

*Born in Indiana in 1914, C. Gray Bream graduated from Midland College in 1936 and earned an MA and a PhD from the University of Chicago. Bream joined the Foreign Service in 1941 and served overseas in Nova Scotia, Greenland, Sweden, Pakistan, Amsterdam and Germany. He also worked in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research as well as the Arms Control and Development Agency. Bream was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.*

BREAM: I got a telegram one day instructing me to report to Stockholm, Sweden, again no instructions on how to get there, just go to Stockholm. I managed to hitchhike a ride down to the main base, then to Iceland and from there to Ireland and from there to London and from London up to Scotland and from there in due course a bomber took me over to Stockholm.

*Q: How did we get to Stockholm in those times? Did they fly you up and above Germany?*

BREAM: We flew up the coast of Norway and then across Norway and back down to Stockholm. My wife, whom I later met and married, followed the same route, but she went on a British mosquito.

*Q: That's a plywood two engine plane, very fast.*

BREAM: There were two pilots on it and she was the only passenger and she tells a hair raising story as they got to where they could see the lights of Sweden, the engines "konked" out and they managed to float down to a landing somewhere outside of Goteborg. I went over in a B-24 bomber with the wife of a Russian ambassador and her child.

*Q: When were you in Stockholm?*

BREAM: I was there from the autumn of 1944 until the day after the German surrender and then I went to Copenhagen.

*Q: That would be May of 1945. Was it an embassy or a mission or legation at that time in Stockholm?*

BREAM: A legation. Another man and I went down to open the legation. As I said, it was the day after...

*Q: Well, let's talk about Stockholm first. Stockholm was open during the war.*

BREAM: Stockholm was one of the major listening ports, Stockholm and Lisbon.

*Q: What were you doing in Stockholm?*

BREAM: I started out in charge of the code room, as the junior boy on the block. There was quite a rare collection of officers there, very unique. After some months in the code room, I became the liaison with the Danish underground which was operating out of Stockholm to Copenhagen. I was reporting their activities back to Washington. The idea was, as I later discovered, to send me to Stockholm because I had been in Greenland. Washington had anticipated we would have problems with the Danish government regarding Greenland after the war. So they wanted somebody in Copenhagen who knew something about Greenland in the event that they were having some discussions with the Danes. It's a sort of logical sequence.

*Q: It's almost too logical.*



BREAM: I found that the Danish underground people I had been dealing with in Stockholm were out of the picture politically. They were replaced by local politicians whom I got to know. I found the newspaper guys particularly useful. My superior in the embassy there was still socializing with the old underground types and he thought that they knew the score, but by this time they were out of the picture. The same thing happened in Dacca, the guy in Karachi who had been my predecessor had associated with the British. The British were still pretty much in touch, but by the time I got there, they were out of touch. You needed to know the local people.

**NORMAN V. SCHUTE**  
**Assistant Attaché**  
**Stockholm (1947-1952)**

*Norman V. Schute was born in Michigan in 1913. He received a B.A. from Stanford University and served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He joined the Foreign Service Security Program in 1947 and served in Sweden, Finland, Italy, Mexico, and Norway. He ultimately served as Consul General in Paris. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.*

SCHUTE: In August 1947 I was posted to our legation in Stockholm and Helsinki. Not long after, both were raised to Embassy status. From the beginning, I and most of my colleagues at other posts were somewhat handicapped by administrative officers who attempted to supervise our work, much of which was sensitive and none of their concern. Our investigations consisted mainly of file checks through the CIA Chief of Station who had liaison with local intelligence and political authorities, and, interviews in background checks. Since I was on good terms with my Ambassador, H. Freeman Matthews, and Deputy Chief of Mission, Hugh S. Cumming, Jr., and most of the staff was being replaced with new officers, I could pretty well cope with the situation, but from time to time I was given initial assignments such as conducting a Cost of Living survey and preparing an emergency and evacuation plan, a newly established requirement of foreign service posts due to the Soviet Russian deteriorating relations with the United States.

The lowering of the Iron Curtain, a term coined by British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill in a speech delivered in Missouri, and start of the Cold War in 1948 gave urgency to this new program. Meanwhile I managed to improve procedures in document handling. Instead of routing classified documents via non-US citizen messengers from one office to the next or file room, I managed to get American secretaries to deliver these classified documents, telegrams and memoranda themselves - much to their chagrin and irritation. During the period of my two year tour, the Embassy was located in a large old stone building on Strandvagen 7A opposite the Royal Palace, across a small bay. The code room shared a wall with the rest of the building which was a pension. Although I could detect no listening devices with my elementary scanner, I had carpet installed to dampen the sound of our antiquated code machine. A one-time pad code book was used for highly sensitive messages. It was not possible to move this nerve center to a secure area. The telephone system, too, was antiquated. It wasn't until early 1949 the Communications Supervisor for Europe, William P. Richmond working in close contact with the Chief of State Department Communications, an ex-RCA executive, that a new telephone

switchboard system was installed which at least assured some degree of internal privacy and security. Most classified documents were stored in simple key lock steel file cabinets and a few combination lock safes which could easily be manipulated by a professional. There were no overnight guards. Except in Helsinki, the guard was a local employee, a Finn, of course, had access to everything in the building. Only at larger missions were American civilian guards on off-hours duty.

Another problem was that many of our recommendations required support of the various State Department Regional Bureaus. For example, the Bureau of European Affairs (EUR), of American Republics (ARA), of Far Eastern Affairs (FE), Near East and African Affairs (NEA). Africa became a separate bureau in about 1958, and so forth.

And support usually meant an allotment of funds and that very little, if any were available. This state of affairs finally came to a head in mid-1948 and a conference was held at our embassy in Paris the end of June or early July in 1948 for one week under the Chairmanship of Admiral Will D. Wright, US Navy (Ret.). It was generally agreed that security was rather repugnant to many members of the Service who felt we were snooping on their work and their person which was totally untrue. Many cooperated, but many did not. The result was to regionalize the program and establish the regional security headquarters for Europe at American Embassy, London, under the chairmanship of William B. Hussey as Regional Security Supervisor (RSS) and five RSO officers who were Paul Green, Felix Verity, Laurence Gruza, Gerry Rothlein, myself and two American secretaries. Resident Security Officers were stationed at London, Frankfurt, Rome and Cairo. Our mission was to visit all consular and embassies to conduct surveys and write reports with recommendations for improving security. These were forwarded to the post with copies to the Regional Bureaus and the Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs, our bureau.

A full blown detailed outline covering the four basic areas of procedural, physical, technical and personnel security had been prepared in the Office of the Controls, now named the Office of Security (SY), an office in the Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs, and we were now on our way. SCA could now bring pressure to bear on regional bureaus to support our recommendations.

I conducted surveys of the constituent post in England and of the I.G. Farben building in Frankfurt, headquarters of the High Commissioner, and embassies in Warsaw, Prague, Budapest, Vienna and Bern. During this period, arrangements were made by the Department with the US Marine Corps to staff embassies and large consular posts, e.g. the Consulate General in Naples in Italy, with Marine Security Guards. In mid-1950 I was transferred to the Rome Embassy as resident or Regional Security Officer with responsibilities also for covering our posts of Milan, Genoa, Florence, Naples, Bari and Palermo.

**ROBERT F. WOODWARD**  
**Counselor of Embassy**  
**Stockholm (1950-1952)**

*Ambassador Robert F. Woodward was born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He entered the Foreign Service in 1932. Ambassador Woodward's career included Deputy Chief of Mission positions in Bolivia, Guatemala, Cuba, and Sweden. He was ambassador to Costa Rica, Uruguay, Chile, and Spain. Ambassador Woodward was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1987.*

WOODWARD: After I finished the National War College session in 1949 and '50, I was assigned as counselor of embassy in Stockholm. I began to realize that the best possible place from which to become an ambassador was back right where I had been, but I hadn't been quite ready for it, wasn't quite high enough in grade. My next assignment was as Chief of Foreign Service Personnel; I was there when W. F. Scott McLeod came in to be my superior.

*Q: This is Scott McLeod, who was known as Senator Joseph McCarthy's hatchet man.*

WOODWARD: Yes. When he came in, I let the Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs know that I would be delighted if he would request my services as his deputy, which he did. McLeod was a little put out that I was being requested, but I told him that I thought he would want to have his hands free to pick a person that met with his complete approval, someone he would select himself as chief of personnel. So he was reconciled to this.

I went back in to the Latin American bureau, and then after a year and a half, was eligible for the appointment as an ambassador, and I was nominated as Ambassador to Costa Rica.

**PAUL F. DU VIVIER  
Commercial Attaché  
Stockholm (1950-1954)**

*Paul Du Vivier was raised and went to school in France for four years and continued his education in Munich, Germany. He received a bachelor's degree in history from Princeton University in 1938 and a master's degree in Foreign Service in 1940. Mr. Du Vivier served in Marseille, Accra, Ottawa, Stockholm, Berlin, Paris, Bordeaux, Nice/Monaco, Edinburgh, and Frankfurt. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on February 20, 1990.*

*Q: Well then, of course obviously there's a time limitation, so why don't we move on. I have you going to Stockholm. You left Canada in 1950...*

DU VIVIER: Yes.

*Q: ...and you were in Stockholm as a commercial officer.*

DU VIVIER: I was named the commercial attaché.

*Q: Attaché, from '50 to '54.*

DU VIVIER: Yes.

*Q: What were you doing there? Were you reporting or were you pushing American products or what?*

DU VIVIER: No. Maybe pushing American... No, it was almost the other way around then. It was pushing Swedish products into America, helping them to export window frames and kitchen utensils, ball bearings and hardware. I also did a great deal of reporting on pulp and paper. I really learned it from the ground up. A prominent Swede invited me for a week to the network of 40 pulp and paper mills in Sundsvall. Living outside Stockholm in an ancient house I managed to learn Swedish after a fashion from attending movies and reading newspapers. The cartel of paper manufacturers and the price fixing on wallboard, plywood and pulp was a problem of constant concern to Washington and US manufacturers. In addition, we were very active socially because there were a lot of business and Congressional visitors. We were swept into the aristocratic circle of Swedes--they're very precise and clannish. The fact that my wife has Baltic ancestors helped a great deal to make us acceptable in the very best social circles. But we worked like hell. We had a charming little wooden house, eighteenth century, located about ten miles north of Stockholm and I took the suburban train every day. Our daughter was born there. Our son was in first grade, with the present king of Sweden. The king has dyslexia and writes with his left hand backwards, but our son was oblivious to all that. We really led our life in the Swedish style, seeing very little of the Americans, because we were instructed to concentrate on the Swedish way of life.

*Q: What was the Swedish attitude towards America? The war was over, and America was asserting itself, and this was something obviously brand new. Ten years before, the United States was a nothing.*

DU VIVIER: Yes, in their eyes.

*Q: From what I gather there had been a certain sympathy on the part of the Swedes for the Germans.*

DU VIVIER: Oh yes, very much, to the point of allowing a German division to transit Sweden on the way to Norway in 1943.

*Q: How did they feel about the Americans? Was it a little bit dog in the mangerish or...*

DU VIVIER: Yes, very much. That's the best way to describe it. They had bet in two wars on a victory by the Germans, and they had encouraged the shipments of ball bearings--they make the best in the world, and steel--the best in Europe, to Germany to fuel the Krupp and other war plants, and so they were disappointed that their heroes didn't win. And, of course, being terribly proud, they would cover it up by saying that they always knew that the Americans were bound to win. After all they had to favor the Nazis because they might have been invaded, but there was a great deal of hypocrisy, and we pretended to agree, and there were some things we never spoke of. And Walt Butterworth, the ambassador--a Rhodes scholar as was his wife--called us in to a staff meeting one morning and said, "I understand that there are some people here who are

unhappy. They have the nerve to discuss with Swedes their religion (of which they have none); their sex life, of which they have more than we; and their history. Now we are not here to engage in polemics. We are here to win their confidence and report their view. I will accept without a derogatory efficiency report comment any requests for transfer in the next thirty days. After that, I will make sure that those people are sent away and not promoted." And the commercial counselor (my boss) disappeared quietly, as well as two other families. Virginia Butterworth did the same with the twenty Embassy/ECA wives. Immediately we got down to business, so that our job was done with almost military precision, a job of living as they did and getting to understand them and gather any information. By the time we left, I was invited to the birthday party of the mother of the president of the Swedish paper cartel! We got into their private lives that closely. We were on a first-name basis with the oldest manufacturers of industry and the bankers. We really succeeded in earning their trust and our salaries and promotions. Besides entertaining them a great deal on a miserable allowance scale, we did, I think, make permanent friends for the United States. One neighbor in Stockholm decided to emigrate to New York on my recommendation, and I gave him whatever help I could through the Chambers of Commerce. He came to New York without his family for a year, and then, having failed he went back to Stockholm, and said, "I can't take it. I don't belong over there, but thank you for trying." It was the end of our friendship.

*Q: Well just one thing before we move on. You mentioned the emphasis really was trying to get the Swedes to send things to the United States at that time.*

DU VIVIER: It seems incredible today.

*Q: It seems incredible today, but of course the whole idea was to make Europe a more viable entity.*

DU VIVIER: Exactly. And Sweden subscribed to the Marshall Plan for five years.

*Q: And the idea was to get them, and this was what we were pushing in those days.*

DU VIVIER: Yes. We had a trade mission from the Department of Commerce, that came as soon as I arrived there, consisting of our men...I've got their pictures somewhere...and we traveled around the countryside for 18 days visiting shipyards, glassworks and chambers of commerce, trying to find out how their shipyards could make freighters for American commerce and how we could increase their efficiency and you name it. Naturally the Swedes were delighted at this free advice. We had an aid mission called ECA and then MSA in those days, and one day Dag Hammarskjold, who was deputy foreign minister at the time, held a private luncheon as he did every Tuesday with our ambassador, and he said, "The time has come that we don't need your twenty-two million dollar grant every year. We were very glad to get the help, but it means interfering with our national sovereignty, and I think that from now on you should report to your government that the ECA mission should depart." And they were, and boom! like that we stopped getting confidential statistics on finance and productivity. This upset a lot of people, but actually, as soon as you accept money--it's true in personal relationships--you're no longer free. I'm thinking of Corazon Aquino in Manila today.

**ROY T. HAVERKAMP**  
**General Services Officer**  
**Stockholm (1955-1957)**

*Roy T. Haverkamp was born in 1924 in Missouri. He served in the U.S. Air Force in World War II and later earned degrees from Yale University and Cambridge University. Mr. Haverkamp joined the Foreign Service in 1952. His career included positions in Korea, Sweden, Japan, Cambodia, Congo, Benin, Vietnam, Guinea, the United Kingdom, Jamaica, and Grenada. He was interviewed on April 11, 1994 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

*Q: You were in Stockholm from 1955-57. What were you doing?*

HAVERKAMP: First I was the general services officer.

*Q: All those bills of lading, etc. that you hadn't wanted to learn about in the A-100 course.*

HAVERKAMP: Well, more so. I had gone from home to the Army to college, to Korea, which was collegial living in shared houses. Here, I was living in an apartment of my own that the government was paying for. People were complaining about this and that. It was a really whinny, complaining kind of a place with a pretty dismal climate at times. I must hasten to say that I was a failure as a general services officer.

*Q: Were you in that position the whole time you were there?*

HAVERKAMP: No, for a short time I was in the political section.

*Q: What was the situation in that period? The Cold War was in full swing and Sweden was a neutral country.*

HAVERKAMP: There was the Suez invasion and the Hungarian uprising in the fall of 1956 and Poznan before that. The Swedes were very interested in all of this. At that time the Social Democrats had been in power since the early 1930s and were really fishing for something new to offer domestically. They had kind of become the conservative party, if you will, in the sense that they had developed social democracy to a point where they didn't know where to go next. They had made a very bad mistake during the war on housing believing there would be a depression shortly after the war....and then they would need to prime the pump with public works and housing could fit the bill. So they had very bad social problems that came about because of their miscalculation.

They were deeply interested in the Soviet Union, obviously. Every year or two you had some important case of Soviet espionage. They were interested in Germany, in the United States. One interesting thing, I met a lot of young people there and I don't think I ever met anyone who was studying Russian, except a few who were interested in going into the foreign office and dealing

with Russia. After the Hungarian revolt, the Swedes are very good at accepting refugees. They didn't examine people to see if they had TB or anything else, they just let people in. The Swedes were watching very closely what went on in Finland to read Soviet investors for the Nordic countries in their treatment of the Finns. While there were certainly some Swedes who were true believers in communism, Sweden's long experience with democracy left no doubt in my mind where they stood vis a vis the Soviets and the U.S. In Korea Syngman Rhee did not want any military volunteers from Taipei during the Korean war. The Swedes did not want a hot war or a cold war fought on their territory. Their neutrality was of use to both sides as long as it was real.

*Q: Did you find the Swedes easy to talk to?*

HAVERKAMP: I did, yes. But I think a lot of other people did not. The Swedes are very formal, very well educated, and in sociological terms their ideal person would always be somebody with high cultural and intellectual attainments. With the British you kind of reach a break through point and you are accepted like family. But the Swedes are even formal with each other.

*Q: Here is Sweden which has had a social democracy going for a long time. You are in the middle of the Cold War. Did you find them looking at the Soviet Union, which was a socialist democracy to the nth degree, for what it was, or did they wear rosy colored glasses?*

HAVERKAMP: They saw it certainly for what it was. All the political parties, except the Communist Party, were democratic parties. They have had a long tradition of parliamentary democracy. They didn't consider the Soviet Union as a social democracy in their terms. But living next door they were interested in what the Soviet Union was doing and what intentions they had towards Finland in order to interpret what intentions they would have towards Sweden. They saw them as a threat because they knew they would not be able militarily to repulse them if they decided to attack. I think they were living on hope that nothing would develop that would cause them to do it and the U.S. NATO would succeed in deterring them. Their own military were no match for the Soviets of course, but they did not want to be a pushover.

*Q: Were they at time making strives towards at least making themselves into a nut that the Soviets probably would feel was not worthwhile to try to crack?*

HAVERKAMP: Oh, yes. Every man was on the military roster from around age 18-55. All able bodied males of that age group had a rifle in their house and knew where to go on call up day, did regular and reserve service. If you are a Swede and you had a foreigner in your house overnight you had to register their name with the police. I don't think they were under any illusion that they could hold them off very long, but by making them pay a high price the Soviets would not be quick to mess with them. They had a simple but not inconsequential navy and air force.

*Q: What about university students? Were you able to make contact with them in those days or not?*

HAVERKAMP: There was no prohibition on contacting students or other Swedish nationals. Everything they studied, unless they were going into university teaching or research themselves,

was directed toward their future careers. I didn't find any radical students, but then I didn't try to cultivate the students. USIS did that I presume. I never heard anybody say that they were afraid their son or daughter was going to become a communist. The Swedes are very nationalist.

*Q: What about their attitude towards the United States? Later the Swedes took a very jaundiced view of the United States and looked always under the rocks of American life.*

HAVERKAMP: That was in the days of Vietnam. The Swedes were very moralistic as well as nationalist and like to remind people of their faults. They very well, I think, understood the role that we were playing in maintaining security with NATO and its deterrent. They were also, I think at that time, following closely the developing move towards European unification. So I found no anti-Americanism outside the communist press. In Korea the Swedes had a Red Cross hospital unit in the South that treated UN troops.

*Q: Was this the time that the Soviets had this great peace offensive and youth movements? People were flocking into various places.*

HAVERKAMP: I can't remember. I think that took on later.

*Q: It probably wasn't going that strong at that point.*

HAVERKAMP: If some young people were influenced by it I don't think the people in the non-communist political parties, the Social Democrats, the Liberals and the Conservatives, were under any deep illusions about what kind of society the Soviets were and what their capabilities were given their military posture and their previous history in central and eastern Europe.

*Q: And of course the Swedes had fought a very long and bitter series of wars against the Russians anyway, which didn't exactly endear them.*

HAVERKAMP: In Stockholm they have a famous statute of Charles XII pointing towards Moscow. There were two battles. The first, the battle of Narva, I think, they won, but Poltava they lost. The Narva battle flag still hung at the top of the stairs in the Royal Palace, I was told. Soviet espionage was real. The Soviet rape of the Baltic countries and central and eastern Europe was still remembered as recent. Refugees from these areas were living reminders of Soviet imperialism.

*Q: What about the embassy. As the general services officer it is almost your fate to hear all the whining. But what was your impression of the embassy and the ambassador, who was John M. Cabot at the time?*

HAVERKAMP: He was the only one who was there when I was there. I think the Foreign Minister at the time, Osten Undane, who had been professor of law at Uppsala before he became Foreign Minister, was a man who did not feel comfortable with American diplomats. Americans are semi-civilized, and dangerous people. He was never close to us, but other people in the Social Democratic Party were more open to us. In Sweden you had to watch your step because so many things that we could do and talk about in Denmark, Norway or Iceland, would have been



taken the wrong way in Sweden. Any time a NATO plane strayed over Swedish territory, they made a great noise about it. At the same time they made a lot of noise over Soviet espionage in Sweden and followed closely developments in the Warsaw Pact countries. So, it was not an ineffective embassy. I mean embassies are there to understand and to report and interpret what goes on, but they are also there to understand what our interests are and to try to influence foreign governments. I don't think there was a lot that we could have done beyond maintaining our leadership in NATO and not do anything that would embarrass the government and cause them to react against us. To be sure by reaching out we could make our case. We were not blocked from access and there were those in all walks of life who saw it in Sweden's interest to have close and productive relations which is for a variety of reasons.

*Q: I take it John Cabot was a contrast to Ellis Briggs.*

HAVERKAMP: They were friends having served together in Latin America. Yes, very definitely, in the sense that Cabot was a man who was careful to avoid controversy. He spoke and understood Swedish and he went and talked to labor organizations and adult education groups all around the country. But I don't think he saw the Foreign Minister or the Prime Minister very often. Sweden certainly did not depend on us the way the Koreans did, had not been an occupied country and a modern industrial sector. Given these differences our relations and the way we could do business was radically different in the two countries.

*Q: Also, I guess going from an embassy under crisis, which is always much more fun, in Korea where you are all working together and doing your thing, and then to go over to a neutral country sort of cold and dismal, I take it wasn't much fun.*

HAVERKAMP: It was not, if your job is to understand how people view themselves and the world and to try to get them to understand your country's interests. Frankly, I was never in a position to see anybody. I don't think I was ever sent to the Foreign Office to see anybody. In that sense it was boring for me. I don't think we used all the opportunities available. I think by and large most people were unhappy at that post because of the restraints on our professional conduct imposed by Sweden's neutrality. In my case I had a boss in the political section who made it clear from the beginning he did not want me there, which made life unpleasant to say the least. Of course there was a large Soviet presence in Stockholm and it was a listening post for the Soviet dominated parts of the world. For those involved in that it was very interesting.

**HARVEY F. NELSON, JR.**  
**Analyst, Scandinavian Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research**  
**Washington, DC (1956-1958)**

*Ambassador Nelson was born and raised in California. He was educated at Occidental College, The University of Stockholm, Sweden and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. After serving in the US Navy and teaching at Bowdoin College, Ambassador Nelson joined the Foreign Service and served in Washington and abroad, primarily as a political officer dealing in Scandinavian*

*and African affairs. In 1985 he was appointed Ambassador to Swaziland. Ambassador Nelson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.*

*Q: And what happened in 1956?*

NELSON: Then we were told to return to Washington where I was assigned to INR (the Bureau of Intelligence and Research) where I worked in the Scandinavian Affairs office. This office covered Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Sweden and Finland. The Finns were not always happy to be with these other countries because they had been a Swedish colony for 600 years and wanted to distance themselves from these other northern countries.

*Q: What were your office's main concerns?*

NELSON: As I remember we were concerned about Iceland's continued participation in NATO. Iceland was very important to us, but the Icelanders were not totally supportive of their membership in NATO, especially as the Cold War was heating up. It was an important base for us so that Soviet submarines operating in the northern Atlantic could be monitored. There was an Icelandic political party which we considered as communist and pro-Soviet. That worried us a great deal.

Greenland was also important to us also because of the bases we had there. That made it important that the Danes not waver in their participation in NATO.

We worried about Finland because it had to make some concessions to the Soviets in light of their geographical situation. They had lost a war with the Soviets and were paying huge reparations; they certainly didn't want to endure any more hardships. So they played the "Soviet game" sometimes, in our view.

*Q: What were our views of the Swedes at the time?*

NELSON: We considered them pretty soft on the Soviet Union. We kept forgetting the Swedish proximity to the USSR. We were not comfortable with the Swedish position; they never joined NATO although they would have been very welcomed. But I think we recognized their dilemma. Nevertheless, we wished that they would have been a little harder and less compliant with the Soviets. We worried that they could not have defended their own security if the Soviets mounted any kind of threat.

*Q: How did you find the political reporting that was being sent in by our embassies?*

NELSON: I don't think I can give a good answer to that question. I don't remember any memorable reporting.

*Q: What about the CIA analyses?*

NELSON: We had the national intelligence estimates which we used often. We relied on them.

Q: *How were the INR-EUR (Bureau of European Affairs) relationships?*

NELSON: I don't remember it being very close. I don't think I talked very often with the desk officers. I am a little vague on specifics, but in general, I don't remember that relationships as being very close.

Q: *What were you doing in INR?*

NELSON: We were doing our own intelligence analysis on what was going on in each country and where it might be heading.

Q: *Did you travel?*

NELSON: No; it was an "inside" job. In retrospect, I think that that wasn't very good, but as I was still a novice in the Foreign Service, it was a good assignment. I may not have been assertive enough, but I think INR in general was not a central concern to the policy-makers. The bureau was potentially important, but had not reached that level.

Q: *Did INR have a large civil servant component who had been in the organization for a long time?*

NELSON: Certainly; there were many people who had been in INR for many, many years. I found that those with whom I worked were very good. I didn't have any problems with civil servants which might have been due to the fact that I was not experienced enough. We had a good team and we worked well together.

**J. HOWARD GARNISH**  
**Public Affairs Officer, USIS**  
**Stockholm (1957-1958)**

*Mr. J. Howard Garnish was born in Rochester, New York and later obtained a degree in history from the University of Rochester. In 1943, Mr. Garnish joined the Office of War Information and served in Switzerland, Sweden, and Thailand during his career. Mr. Garnish was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt in 1989.*

GARNISH: In 1956 Bill Clark, who was then our area director, gave me word that I was being transferred to Stockholm. My departure was delayed because on the day they cleaned out the apartment I came down with pneumonia. So I got up to Stockholm in January of '57. That was on direct transfer. And it was not the most comfortable situation because I didn't know a word of Swedish and my predecessor, Nils William Olsson, was fluent in the language and was a professorial type. I was fairly fortunate, however, because the staff was excellent. They took me over and we got along quite well.

One of my early jobs there was to speak to the Swedish-American Association. I labored over a text and I must admit that I read most of it to the gathering. It was not a very successful beginning. When it came time for an evaluation, the DCM who did it wrote that he's doing a pretty good job but he sure is not a public speaker. I learned something from it. I've never since written a speech. I've talked but I haven't written a speech. And it works a hell of a lot better.

*Q: It always does.*

GARNISH: There's a little sidebar to that. In the summer, the Swedish American Association has an open-air affair in a park. Swedes who have gone to the United States and returned flock there by the dozens, if not the hundreds. Well, I was invited to attend that summer, so my wife and I showed up and we were escorted to the front row. I thought that was kind of peculiar, because the Ambassador or DCM ought to be up front. But they didn't show. It turned out that I was the representative of the United States for the occasion.

One after another, Swedes and Swedish-Americans were brought up to the microphone to tell something about their Swedish past or American experience, or whatever. This went on for quite a long time. Suddenly the master of ceremonies says, "We'll now hear from Mr. Garnish."

Well, one, I hadn't been in Sweden very long. Two, I didn't yet know much about Sweden. But I had to walk down several feet and then take three steps up and then walk back to the middle of the platform. In the meantime, I was thinking, "What the hell am I going to say?" In desperation, I began, "Well, I was not born in Sweden; my parents weren't born in Sweden; but I have some ancestors who came from Ireland and from England. Now, I've been reading a book titled The Long Ships, by Bengtson, and it tells a good deal about how the Vikings (in Sweden they call them the Veekings) spent a great deal of time in England and Ireland. And so, maybe, I have a little association by indirection with Sweden."

Well, this went over. And when we left Sweden, one of the Swedes who came out to the airport to see us off and said, "You know, that was a great speech you made!" Desperation!

We had a very excellent Ambassador when I got there, John Moors Cabot. He was a pro. The Swedish press is pretty rough and something had come up about United Fruit and, of course, the Cabot family had been associated with United Fruit. One of the papers in particular was just giving us hell. Ambassador Cabot called me in and said, "I know you're going to have some problems with this, and I want to tell you the straight story. I don't own a nickel of United Fruit stock, I am out of it completely. My wife owns some and another relative owns some. But you are free to use any information I give you with the press." And fortunately, being able to do that, the story died in a few days.

Cabot was succeeded by Francis White, a political appointee who had been in Mexico before. And White was almost the opposite of Cabot. White came from Maryland. He had a magnificent collection of Revere silver and he thought that what we should do was have a huge exhibit of Revere silver for the Swedes. Well, one, we didn't have the money and, two, I didn't think it was such a hot idea. We managed to bypass that.

But Thanksgiving came along and he was to give a speech somewhere, I've forgotten exactly where, on "What Thanksgiving Means To Me." He instructed me to do a draft of his speech. I worked very hard to find Swedish associations with Thanksgiving, and there are a few. I worked this into a draft and gave it to him. Well, he eventually made the speech, but not my speech. His speech was how he enjoyed riding to hounds in Maryland on Thanksgiving day.

*Q: Is this the same Francis White who was head of the Visa and Passport Office for a long time?*

GARNISH: No, no. This is -- that was Frances, with an e, she; this was a he.

*Q: Oh, this was a he. I see.*

GARNISH: Since I had gone on direct transfer, I was overdue for home leave the following summer, the summer of '58, and return to Sweden for two years. We made a circuit of the families and so forth, got back to the New York area, we stayed with some friends in Pelham, because we had lived in Westchester. I communicated with Pan Am and reconfirmed our return flight for the following Monday.

**VIRGINIA HAMILL BIDDLE**  
**Consular Assistant**  
**Stockholm (1959-1961)**

*Mrs. Biddle was born in Nebraska and raised in Missouri. She was educated at Briarcliff Manor Finishing School in Westchester County, New York. In 1930 she was married to Charles W. Biddle. Joining the Foreign Service in 1946, she began her long and interesting career as Clerk/Typist at the US Consulate in Bermuda. Subsequent foreign postings include Tangier, Paris, Bangkok, Palermo and Rome. Mrs. Biddle conducted her self interview in 1994.*

*This is a letter written to my sister: Grand Hotel, Stockholm, Saturday, March 7, 1959, 10:30pm*

Just a line before going to bed to say I have finally arrived at my destination. When I got to the airport in Copenhagen this afternoon, I was greeted with the news that my plane for Stockholm would be delayed, so I actually arrived there at 6:15pm and there was no one to meet me. I didn't think too much about that with all the changes, but when I check in at the Grand Hotel, I thought it strange to be told my reservations had been canceled several days ago. So, I phoned the embassy, it was closed being Saturday and the Marine Guard on duty knew nothing about my arrival. By this time I was beginning to wonder if I had been assigned to Stockholm after all. Eventually I was connected with Mr. Persons the administrative officer who explained that he had sent someone to meet me but they were misinformed about my arrival time. He said they were to have taken me directly to the apartment assigned to me where the frig should have been filled with food. But, it was finally decided that I should stay the night at the hotel. I was just as glad, for I am sure I would have felt terribly forlorn on my first night going into a strange new apartment all alone and sitting down to a glass of milk on the kitchen table. As it was, I

freshened up and went into the dining room which was gay with music, flowers and candles on the table and had a delicious dinner and a most exquisite and happy to be in such charming surroundings. I was given a nice single room but with one of those European type small semi-type bathtubs, but knew it was only for one night. I enquired about services at the Anglican church tomorrow thinking I would go as usual at 8:30am, but an English elevator boy who said he used to sing in the choir there spoke up immediately and said, "Oh, EVERYONE will be at the 11:00 service, including the Queen and diplomatic corps." I decided to sleep on it. It is late so will say, "good night" and continue this tomorrow. Love Virginia

*Sunday, March 8, 1959*

It was clear, cold and bright as I went to church this morning to attend my usual 8:30 services at the Anglican church of St. Peter and St. Siegfried and there admired the most beautiful stain glass window in memory of Margaret, first wife of the present King of Sweden, who died in 1920 and who was also English, as is his present wife, Louise, Lady Mountbatten, sister of Lord Louis Mountbatten.

On a knoll, not far away, stood our American embassy, located near the Norwegian and British embassies. The residence, now occupied by our American Ambassador, Bonbright, was nearby. The front lawn beautifully sloping down to the water's edge. Sidney Schuller, consul of the visa and citizenship section, called for me with the keys to the apartment I was to have in the government furnished quarters in a modern apartment building at 15 Oxenstierngotten. The name intrigued me and I was to learn that Oxenstiern was the steadfast, brilliant, loyal chancellor of Gustav II and when the King died in 1632, he became the regent of Gustav's daughter, the romantic Christina, then eight years old, who abdicated in 1654. Many of the staff lived in this building.

My apartment was number 32 on the third floor and it was a pleasant surprise to find a girl I had known in Bangkok who was of Polish origin, Elinor Kaienicki, and was a secretary to the Agricultural Attaché. The building had an elevator and there was storage space for trunks on the top floor and in the basement where there was also a laundry room with electric washing machine and dryer and several vacuums for the tenants.

The apartment had a pretty aquamarine tiled bathroom where I was pleased to see had a full length bathtub. It was furnished in Danish modern with curtains of chartreuse and darkest blue. I was very lucky that there was an extra bedroom with its own frig and lavatory and separate entrance where I could put up Pena, my Italian maid who was to follow me, who had said pending my transfer from Palermo, "Senora, I will follow you anywhere except darkest Africa."

I had no bills to pay except for the telephone. My air and steamer freight had arrived so I could unpack my blankets, although it didn't seem as cold as I expected due to the fact, I learned later, that the Gulf Stream was in the Atlantic Ocean. A portion of my effects, including my pony cart had to be stored in Genoa for two years. The apartment was located near a shopping center called Konsun where lots of fruits, vegetables and tinned things could be found. And, it was just about ten or fifteen minutes from town where the shops were filled with beautiful things. I felt fortunate to be ensconced in a Danish modern furnished apartment so quickly and that it was

within walking distance to the embassy and especially when I heard it was most difficult to find places to live here.

I reported to work on Monday morning. The offices were also furnished with functional furniture and there was a tiny desk, so compact, obviously reserved for me as consular assistant to Sidney Schuller, a very pleasant person whose owl-like eyes behind dark horn rimmed glasses impressed me. My duties were to register American citizens, issue and renew their passports, report births and deaths and be in charge of the classified files. My Swedish colleague was a pretty girl called Aagot. All of the Swedish girls had a certain delicate feminine refinement that was very appealing. The hours were from 8:30am to 5:00pm with a half hour for lunch and there was a cafeteria in the building and also a PX.

One evening one of the girls at the embassy, Audrey Miller, invited me to go with her to see "My Fair Lady." Of course it was in Swedish and has been a big hit here as it has been in the States as we so well know having seen it twice and loved it. These charming songs will ever ring in my ears.

On Sunday, Genevieve Rowan, Ambassador Bonbright's secretary, had me out to her little house for supper with one of the other secretaries. And, Wednesday, one of the girls I knew in Bangkok invited me for dinner. I am liking very much the personnel of the embassy and my apartment.  
Love Virginia

*Palm Sunday, March 21, 1959*

I began lessons once a week in Swedish and to brush up on my Italian, I began lessons the other day. I went to 8:30 communion this morning and am so happy to have the Anglican church so near. Kiril Forelius, the nephew of my Finnish friend, Lisa Lotta Valesca, called last Sunday and upon entering my apartment, bowed low, kissed my hand and presented me with one lovely pink rose. It touched me deeply and cheered my rather bare apartment, to say nothing of myself.

*March 24, Wednesday*

I heard that Pena's ship the *Gripsong* is leaving New York on April 9 and will stop at Bremerhaven on the 17th. I decided to write Mr. Barley, the British I knew in Palermo who was transferred there, that Pena would be on board. I knew he would remember her pizzas.

When Paul H. Pearson, the Consul General in Goteborg, was in our office, I mentioned that Pena would be arriving there and he very kindly said to notify consul Woollons when she was ready to disembark and he would assist me.

*March 31*

I just learned that the famous Passion Play at Oberammergau in Germany occurs only every ten years will be performed on May 16, 1960. Shall we make arrangements to go? I should love to see it.

Before leaving Washington, a friend there, Hedda Van Missenburg, gave me a note of introduction to the Italian Ambassador which I presented shortly after my arrival. A few days later he invited me to dinner saying, "No black tie, we don't dress." So I put on my black taffeta and tucked a red rose at the waist and wore my Cavershawn star rubies. The Italian embassy where the residence and offices were located was beautifully situated right on the harbor where sail boats pass by the front lawn. It had formerly been the home of the brother of the present King of Sweden who married a relative of the Russian Tsar and I learned later had also been the American embassy when Nelson Morris had been Ambassador and remember he had been a friend of my brother-in-law, Jim Trimble, and had sent a beautiful wedding gift when he married my sister Mildred.

When I arrived, the Ambassador greeted me graciously and I conveyed greetings from his old friend the Duke de Belcito I had known in Palermo. He said his wife was presently in Italy. The other guests were an Italian girl just back from Egypt who was married to one of Sweden's foremost actors, Palme was the name, who sat to my left at dinner. He said he could obtain tickets for me at the interesting old 18th century theater Drottnehand when it opened. Then there was another very nice young girl, part Viennese and part Czechoslovakian, who was a refugee. The other two were men, one an Italian consul of the embassy and the other a Swedish baron who brought me home. We were served champagne, red caviar before dinner. Two white gloved butlers served a delicious dinner with white wine and again champagne. The center piece on the dining table was an enormous bowl filled with yellow jonquils and sweet smelling narcissus. On leaving, Mrs. Palme said she would send me a card of her shop, the only Italian one in Stockholm where she hoped to see me one day in old town. Also told me about a place that specialized in the Italian shoes for about \$14, which I decided I must find for they are the only kind I will wear again. It had been a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

**HARVEY F. NELSON, JR.**  
**Office Director, Sweden, Finland and Iceland**  
**Washington, DC (1959-1961)**

*Ambassador Nelson was born and raised in California. He was educated at Occidental College, The University of Stockholm, Sweden and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. After serving in the US Navy and teaching at Bowdoin College, Ambassador Nelson joined the Foreign Service and served in Washington and abroad, primarily as a political officer dealing in Scandinavian and African affairs. In 1985 he was appointed Ambassador to Swaziland. Ambassador Nelson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.*

*Q: In 1959, you were appointed director for Sweden, Finland and Iceland affairs. Wasn't that an awkward combination - a NATO member, a neutral and a Soviet neighbor? Who handled Norway and Denmark?*

NELSON: They had their own country director. They were both members of NATO, although Iceland was as well. I am not sure why they split the work that way; it would have been more



natural to have three NATO countries in one directorate. But once a division of labor is established, it becomes very difficult to make changes.

*Q: Was Iceland still a concern in the 1959-61 period?*

NELSON: It was less of a concern then when we discussed it earlier. I think the Icelanders became resigned to having the Keflavik air force base. I think it is still there. The Icelanders however established very strict rules about leaving the base so that most of our people were essentially confined to the base. That made the assignment more difficult. We were unhappy with the restrictions, although we understood the Icelandic rationale. They didn't want the large American presence to upset their culture.

*Q: There were no fishery disputes during this period?*

NELSON: Those came later.

*Q: How did we view Sweden during this period?*

NELSON: I think we felt that Sweden was leaning toward the West, but for its own geographical reasons had to appear neutral. But the issue never loomed very large. Swedish neutrality was just an accepted fact of life. Swedish policies did not jeopardize our objectives, and their position was a much lesser concern than it had been years before when the Cold War started. I don't remember us having any major issues with Sweden during my tour on the desk. As I recall, I don't think we worried very much about the Swedes.

*Q: Were there any Soviet subs prowling around?*

NELSON: Yes; in fact there was a Soviet sub in Swedish waters at one point. That was not well received by the Swedes, but we thought it might be quite useful for the Swedes to learn something about how the world worked. In the final analysis, no one was able to determine whether in fact a Soviet sub had been in Swedish waters - it could have been an American one. Unlikely, but it could have happened.

*Q: Did the Finns show any bias toward Soviet positions or were they really neutral?*

NELSON: I don't think they took the Soviet side to the extent they could. I think we had some problems with some of their votes in the UN, but we understood that they had to behave with a certain amount of caution. They still had Soviet troops occupying the Porkkala Peninsula. If a Finn wished to transit this peninsula, he or she had to do it in a closed train car. They also were paying very heavy reparations to the Soviets and were forced to produce certain equipment for the USSR. They certainly could not look forward to a secure future. If a war had broken out between East and West they would have been caught in the middle. This is a situation that lasted for several decades including the time we served in Finland. The occupation of Finnish territory had ceased by that time, but they still had to tread carefully.

Finland was of concern to us during the 1959-61 period. It had a very large communist party - about one-third of the electorate - and any opportunity for Soviet intervention worried us. Of course, we were super-worriers about the communist threat in this period. In retrospect, a lot of our concern looks pretty ridiculous, but at the time, we were worried about events in Finland.

Finland was receiving assistance from the U.S. During this period, the Finns had an election. The communists made some gains in parliamentary seats. I had just landed on the desk after my year at Indiana University. I was told to attend a conference on the subject of assistance to Eastern Europe, including Finland. I was very surprised by being asked to do this and was totally unprepared. When it came to discuss assistance to Finland, I was asked why assistance should be continued when so many Finns seem to be supporting the communists. There was a question of whether our assistance had not been a colossal failure. I responded, for the lack of anything else to say, that we should just imagine where Finland would be now if there had not been any U.S. assistance. But we terminated the assistance program a couple of years later. Finland in any case did not really meet the criteria for an aid recipient country. But we did worry about Finland, not only in the bureau, but at higher levels as well. It was hard to make the case that assistance was justified when many Finns seemed to be supporting our enemy.

*Q: You were on the desk when Kennedy was elected. How did you view this change in administration?*

NELSON: We supported it wholeheartedly. The blind fear of communism had been the mantra of previous administrations. Of course, that is easier realized today than it was then. But I think instinctively we thought that it was time for a new look at the world. We thought and hoped that Kennedy might provide that. In fact, there was not that much change, but we had hopes at the beginning of the new administration. So we were quite pleased with the election outcome. It was an unusual reawakening which we had not experienced in the deadly early post-war years.

**EDWARD L. PECK**  
**Junior Officer**  
**Goteborg (1959-1961)**

*Edward L. Peck was born in Los Angeles, California in 1929. As a Foreign Service officer, he was posted to Algeria, Sweden, Morocco, Tunisia, Washington, DC, Egypt, Iraq, and Mauritania. He was interviewed in 1989 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

*Q: Well, now your first assignment was Goteborg. Is that the way you pronounce it?*

PECK: Well, if you're Swedish--it was one of the things that fascinated me--

*Q: I want to spell this. G-O-T-G-E-B-O-R-G.*

PECK: That's pronounced "Yuteboree."

Q: "Yuteboree."

PECK: That's Swedish. Now I've got to digress at some point and talk about my fights with the system. We have a place--a post in Denmark called Copenhagen. It isn't called "Shubenhaven." It's called "Copenhagen" because that's what it is in English. In English it's "Gothenburg." You've heard of it. In Spanish it's "Gotemburgo." In French it's "Gothenbourg." In Swedish it's "Yuteboree." So why shouldn't it be "Gothenburg?" The American Consul in "Gothenburg." No reason in the world. It's not "Moscova," it's Moscow. It isn't "Roma," it's Rome. Okay. But "Yuteboree" stayed "Yuteboree." I wrote memos and did various other things, to effect the change, but they just died.

That was my first post. Most of my classmates went to embassies. I was looked upon as being unfortunate because I was going to a consulate-general. They all went to issue visas for two years, wherever they went. I went and did visas for six months, and then I did econ-commercial work for six months. Then I did citizenship and admin, and then I got into political reporting, and I did everything there my two years. Had a wonderful tour. Marvelous experience.

Q: *Well, obviously we're going to move on to other parts, but what was your impression after you finished a tour there? I mean this was your first real foreign service. Was it the right business? What did you think about the Foreign Service at that point?*

PECK: Well, I'm not sure I was thinking about the Foreign Service in the context of your question. I loved the work. I found it rewarding and fascinating. I was delighted to be in a foreign country, not that foreign mind you. But I enjoyed that part of it. Tackling the language which was quite a challenge--not because the language is difficult, but because Swedes all speak English, and very well, thank you. That hinders your efforts. It was a constituent post in the true sense of the word.

Most of the officers who served there while I was there had not made it very well. The boss was a man with thirty-one years of service, which I described privately as one year of service, thirty-one times. He was an FS-03, was very close to retirement--

Q: *FSO-3 at this point is the equivalent to--*

PECK: FSO-1.

Q: *Now FSO-1, or in military terms, about a colonel.*

PECK: Yes. He was a very timid soul, and I remember asking the next senior guy why the boss was afraid, being very close to the end of his career. There was nothing they could possibly do to him. Retirement was just around the corner. Number two said, "Well, he's always been afraid." He was not a very good boss, not a very good Consul-General, not a very good Foreign Service Officer. He had come into the Service through the commercial service, when they were amalgamated some years earlier. The Rogers Act? I don't know. I've forgotten.

But, gee, I thought it was a great place to live and work up there. I went with my first wife to the post with one small child, came back with two. My little boy was born there. I loved it, thought it was great. I was pretty sure I'd picked the right career because I did well at it.

I did very well at it in every way except one. I didn't get a very good efficiency report. I think the fellow was--I now think was incapable of writing a good one. But the big failure there was that most of the things that I wound up doing which were innovative, creative, and so forth, he tended to look upon as a negative reflection on him. And you've seen this sort of thing--I see you nodding: it doesn't show up on the tape!

Illustration: I had done full-time French at FSI, and morning Spanish at FSI while I was in the Bureau of Economic Affairs. So of course they sent me to Sweden. I asked the boss if I could set up a language program, and he said, "Yes, but just don't bother me with it." So I got in touch with FSI, got a small amount of money, went out and hired a student as the tutor, and taught him the system. We had, three mornings a week in my office, Swedish language training, myself and two other Americans. In order to do this right, Mr. Kennedy, I had the tutor sit behind my desk, and we sat three in front of it--because he was the guy in charge.

Q: *Yes.*

PECK: I thought that was symbolically very useful. The regional language officer came up, and he wrote a report saying "the progress at Goteborg is extraordinary," underlined, in red. My boss, in writing my final efficiency report--in those days the efficiency report had sixteen sections you had to work on. One of them was language: "Describe the rated officer's efforts to speak"--anyway. My boss said, and I quote, "Mr. Peck is participating in the language training program offered by the Consulate-General." Full stop. "Participating actively"--no. "Successfully"--no. Just "Participating." I was really struck--I got a S3-R-3 rating in the language when I got back.

Q: *3/3 means . . .*

PECK: Useful to the service.

Q: *Useful to service level, which is quite good when you consider--*

PECK: We did eighteen month's mornings! That was fantastic. I made speeches in Swedish. I was asked on occasion at dinner parties, where my wife and I were the only foreigners, to make the formal "thanks for the food" speech that is absolutely required in Sweden. I did this in Swedish.

Q: *That's the thank you speech.*

PECK: Yes. Anyway, I was very proud of this facility, this ability, and the Consul-General, who spoke English at perhaps the 2/2 level, was not going to give me any credit. That really hurt me.

Q: *Well, first place, just to put this in time, you were there from 1959 to 1962.*

PECK: No.

Q: *No, excuse me, I'm sorry. From--*

PECK: '59 to '61, yes.

Q: *1961.*

PECK: December.

**WILLIAM H. LITTLEWOOD**  
**Science Attaché**  
**Stockholm (1960-1965)**

*William H. Littlewood was born in Detroit Michigan in 1924. After serving in the U.S. Army during World War II he completed his B.A. at the University of Florida and his M.A. at the University of Michigan. He joined the Foreign Service in 1960 and served as a Science Attaché or Counselor in Sweden, Japan, and Indonesia. He also worked in the NASA Foreign Relations Office and as the Associate Director of Science and Technology for USAID. Mr. Littlewood was interviewed in 2001 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

*Q: In 1960 when you went to Stockholm what did being a Science Attaché consist of? What were you doing?*

LITTLEWOOD: A Science Attaché basically deals with the scientific relationships between the countries. In Stockholm for example, they have a *Karolinska Institute*, which is their equivalent of our National Institutes of Health. The NIH is *the* leading medical research institute in the world and *Karolinska* is close behind. They are the ones that select the medical Nobel Prize winners. Their directors pick Nobel Prize winners which are often some of our researchers in our National Institutes of Health and U.S. universities, and of course from other countries too. So my job was to meet the senior scientists in the country and make sure our relationships go smoothly and help them with information, contacts, and appointments if they are coming to the United States. I would help them meet the right people to be able to do what they want to do over here, and conversely help American scientists coming over to do something there; to get to the right people, and introduce them and help solve their problems too if problems come up.

*Q: One thinks of Swedish science as being very advanced. What was going on? You were in Stockholm from when to when?*

LITTLEWOOD: I was there for five years from '60 to '65. My sphere was actually all the Nordic countries. But I mostly was in Stockholm. That kept us busy enough there. My first year there they hosted a huge international geographic conference in Stockholm, followed by a geophysical conference over in Helsinki, Finland. And then a geological conference in

Copenhagen. I didn't go to the one in Copenhagen. I did go to the one in my "backyard" for a couple of weeks, and then I went over to Helsinki and then I had to get back over Stockholm. This was a *big* international conference; thousands of people. My usual work was whatever came up. Actually one time, my old chemistry professor from Princeton turned up. I was privileged to help him do whatever he was looking for in his visit to Sweden.

*Q: How did you find the embassy to deal with? You were sort of an odd outfit?*

LITTLEWOOD: The Science Office was attached to the ambassador's office so that helped. Our embassy was relatively small at that time, maybe sixty counting everybody, Marine guards on up. Through most of that time Jeff Parsons was our ambassador, do you know him?

*Q: Yes.*

LITTLEWOOD: Jeff Parsons was great, and we got along very well. He gave me a promotion in fact.

*Q: What areas was Sweden in those days particularly preeminent?*

LITTLEWOOD: Well, I mentioned medical science at the *Karolinska*. Geophysical expertise was also tops. Sweden was and is a neutral country; they kind of gave us their geophysical data and said they were interested in vibrations in the ground. Particularly ones that might have been started by Soviet nuclear testing. Overall, Sweden is very technically advanced. They've got a lot of engineers, all top quality. The ancient ship *Vasa* was found and recovered when I was there, and I became quite good friends with Anders Franzen, the one that discovered the ship, which had sunk in the harbor of Stockholm in 1628! Have you heard of the *Vasa*?

*Q: Oh, yes, I've seen pictures of it in National Geographic.*

LITTLEWOOD: Anders actually wrote some articles for the National Geographic. He's long dead now. I remember when they brought the ship up to the surface. He arranged so my wife and I could witness the event.

*Q: As Sweden was neutral, and much of our scientific work at that time had a military component, were the Swedes a bit cautious about things that might have a military application?*

LITTLEWOOD: Well, we didn't have any military in Sweden.

*Q: But the research that was going on?*

LITTLEWOOD: Their research may have had a minor military aspect relating to their own defense, but I wasn't in the intelligence or military side so I can't really address that. The Swedes were cooperative. However, I do know one case where a Swedish company was importing some special instrument from the United States, and apparently covertly shipping them to the Soviet Union, against European trade agreements. This was a special "gravity meter" made only in the U.S., in Texas. It was very scarce at that time. A Swedish authority mentioned it to our

Economics Officer, who asked me about it as the Swedish company produced playing records. He asked, "What do gravity meters have to do with playing records?" I said, "Nothing, no relationship whatsoever." And I am sure our Embassy told the Swedes and Sweden probably stopped them from being transhipped to the Soviet Union, which undoubtedly was after that type of instrument for military reasons.

*Q: This was in the '80s.*

LITTLEWOOD: Okay.

*Q: Did you find that many Swedes went to the United States to study science, and vice versa?*

LITTLEWOOD: Yes. There was a good exchange there. NIH for example had scientists at *Karolinska* and *Karolinska* had scientists that were on sabbatical to NIH. And we did have a problem that arose. There was one Swede who was a *Karolinska* medical researcher. He had a grant from the U.S. National Institutes of Health to support his medical research. This was one of the largest grants to Sweden that NIH had at the time. He was working on a live cancer vaccine. I consulted with the Swedish medical board and learned that this fellow was being very public about his research. He would appear on television where he said the Swedish medical board called his vaccine dangerous and on Swedish television he would plunge a needle into his arm and appear to inject his vaccine. I'm sure it was just a harmless saline solution. But apparently in the public mind he gave himself a shot of his own vaccine to prove it was safe. By the way, this grandstanding is *not* a typical Swedish approach. He had *not* gone through the required testing on animals before he tested on humans. So the Board was very nervous, and against him, and here he was stirring up the public in the tabloid newspapers and TV. He would in substance say, "They say this and that about me but I have the biggest medical grant from the United States from the most wonderful medical institution in the world (NIH)." So we were interested in this and I looked into the matter and brought NIH's attention to it. The head of the NIH foreign grant program came over to Sweden, which is what I had hoped for. What he found was that the mistake NIH had made was in not knowing that this fellow had applied for the NIH grant without the *Karolinska* knowing about it. He was on a "sabbatical," that is, he was on leave from the institution. He still had his office in *Karolinska*, but he wasn't in it. So NIH assumed when he put in his proposal that it had been approved by the parent institution, *Karolinska*, but it hadn't. They also found that he was paying some of his NIH grant money to himself. He was raising racehorses on the side, and he was taking the serum from his own horses and then charging the NIH grant for that. That's a conflict of interest there. So the Board and NIH were able to stop the whole thing and fortunately nobody died from his experiments. But it would have been very bad for NIH if somebody had died in Sweden, and you can imagine all the adverse publicity that would have arisen. That's the kind of thing you just pick up and take care of as a Science Attaché. It's a good example of keeping good relations between host country and U.S. scientific institutions.

**WILLIAM B. COBB, JR.**  
**Commercial Attaché**

## Stockholm (1962-1965)

*William B. Cobb was born in North Carolina in 1923. He received a B.A. from the University of North Carolina and an M.S. from George Washington University. His postings abroad included Managua, Havana, Manila, La Paz, Martinique, Stockholm, and Mexico City. Mr. Cobb was interviewed by Horace G. Torbert in 1990.*

COBB: While I was on the Swedish-Finnish desk the prime minister of Sweden also came over, but he came over on the Easter weekend and wanted to be received by the President. Jackie was furious. We made arrangements for there to be a private luncheon on the President's private dining room on the Saturday before Easter. Mrs. Kennedy declined to attend and Leticia Baldridge sat in for her at the informal family luncheon on Saturday.

Q: *Who was the prime minister?*

COBB: Erlander. He was a very good prime minister of Sweden. He represented all the Swedish virtues. He was simple and direct.

When I was on the desk I met Olaf Palme. Palme came to this country for the tenth anniversary of his graduation from Kent State and the Swedish embassy said, "Bill, you ought to meet this young man. He is going places in Sweden." And he did. Not always places we wanted.

Q: *One of your big achievements on the desk, I see, was to get yourself assigned to Sweden.*

COBB: That was not too difficult. Bill Owen was due to leave, he had been in the political section, and so a switch was worked out between Bill Owen and myself. He came back to the desk and I went to Stockholm. It was a logical assignment. I did not know any Finnish or Swedish, but Swedish was certainly a more learnable language than Finnish. The assignment was a good one although I was number two in the political section. When I first went there Steve Winship was in charge of the political section. He had been staff aide to the Assistant Secretary for EUR so he got the better job. Al Jenkins was the DCM although Al's interest was not in Sweden, but in the negotiations with the communist Chinese that were taking place in Poland. Al used to go over to Poland to translate every six weeks and to be on the team. I think Alexis Johnson was the chief of the team at the time. These conversations went on for the two years we were in Sweden. I was in Sweden at the time Jack Kennedy was murdered and saw the outpouring of Swedish affection towards him that was overwhelming at the time, but I don't think it was any greater than in other countries.

Q: *I was in Somalia and there was considerable there.*

COBB: We were there for the demonstrations. Swedes always have a penchant for finding a cause outside Sweden to support and irritate the rest of the world. They did it successfully when we were in Vietnam, but they were doing against the French when we were in Sweden. *Algeria libre*, free Algeria. And they would demonstrate on every possible occasion about a free Algeria much to the irritation of the French diplomatic corps and the French people who were in Sweden.



Werner Wiskari who was a Finn was the last resident correspondent for the *New York Times* in Scandinavia. He was a good friend of mine when we were in Stockholm, and we worked together. I followed events in Finland and in Sweden with him for a number of years and continued to do so.

*Q: You mean the Times has no representative in Scandinavia?*

COBB: No resident correspondent.

*Q: That is surprising. I thought they had prided themselves on their coverage.*

COBB: Sweden was an interesting post. Jeff Parsons was the ambassador. He was a fine ambassador. He was still in a state of shock after having been assistant secretary for the Far East, ambassador to Laos and then having had the policies he advocated contradicted by the administration. He did a good job in Sweden, but he never got anything thereafter. He was hopeful but realistic. I remember him saying once, "I don't know anybody on the Seventh Floor [executive floor of State Department] anymore." That makes a difference.

*Q: What was the major issue between him and the administration regarding the Far East?*

COBB: He advocated support of the Laotian government and Kennedy did in his first speech and then the apparatus back here got to Kennedy and said, "We can't support the Laotian government, we don't have the facilities for going and backing them up. This would be just water down the drain." That was the end of it.

**ISABEL CUMMING**  
**Director, USIS**  
**Stockholm (1964-1966)**

*Isabel Cumming was raised in Boston, Massachusetts. She joined USIS in 1957 and served in Iran, Korea, Sweden, Poland, Italy, Japan, Yugoslavia, Germany, and Washington, DC. Ms. Cumming was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt in 1990.*

*Q: Then where did you go from Korea?*

CUMMING: I went to Stockholm, Sweden.

*Q: And who was your PAO there?*

CUMMING: Earl Dennis.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

CUMMING: He was a former dean of -- was it Georgetown or George Washington?

*Q: I think it was GW, but I'm not sure.*

CUMMING: George Washington. George Washington. Yes. It was my least desirable post of all.

*Q: From what standpoint, and why was that the case?*

CUMMING: I don't really think you can tell the Swedes much.

*Q: Well, I have gotten that impression but I have never been to Sweden. (Laughter)*

CUMMING: We had a very small office. There was one cultural affairs officer, an information officer, a PAO and myself. I think we might have had ten nationals working for us.

*Q: Did you have a center?*

CUMMING: Yes, we did. Now where was our center? Let me -- yes, we did. We had three women. It was a library. It was downtown -- downtown being down near the shopping center, and it was up on the third floor, or something like that in a building. It was not --

*Q: It was not at street level?*

CUMMING: -- not at street level. So you would have to know where the library was to go. We had a very small section of the embassy. We were in the back of the embassy.

*Q: Was the library utilized to any extent at that time?*

CUMMING: I personally was only in it about four or five times myself and when I was there I would say there would be a handful of people there. But apparently there was enough to keep three senior -- and I mean senior women -- they had been with us for many years -- busy, and they were all librarian trained and educated, maybe with the exception of one. But certainly the two top women were, and they apparently had enough to keep themselves busy.

I am not sure whether the cultural affairs officer or the cultural section used that. We had a big Fulbright program and we had two people -- at least two working in the Fulbright program.

*Q: You say you can't tell the Swedes anything. I gather you don't think that, not through any fault of the US Information Service, but just because of the nature of your audience that --*

CUMMING: No, just the audience. We did a lot with the press because we had a young man -- well, he was our senior national -- was a very active man. We also had a motion picture woman. They seemed to be very busy giving out films and doing things with the press.

But I, personally -- to me it was a waste of my time being in Sweden, and that may be the wrong thing to say. But I just felt that I didn't have enough to do to keep me busy. We had the Vice

President come. Of course, I was there when Kennedy was assassinated, which was a very sad time in our life. The Swedes were very, very supportive at that time. Oh, my.

We had a candle march on the embassy that was one of the most stirring things I think I have ever seen in my life. It almost looked like miles of people walking toward the embassy with candles and just laying them down in front of the embassy and then walking away very silently. You know they didn't want anything said. Then at the service we had for Kennedy -- the King and Queen were there. They made room for all us from the embassy to get in and then all the dignitaries and Swedes that could get in were there. But there were just hundreds of people outside standing.

*Q: Well, a year later, the Agency made and distributed this picture called "Years of Lightning, Day of Drums."*

CUMMING: Light and Drums. Yes.

*Q: Was that shown there while you were there?*

CUMMING: I did not see that. As a matter of fact, I had to ask to see that film and I think I saw it in Washington. I had never seen it overseas. It came out, but it was never at a post where I was at the time. I had finally requested to see the film somewhere, and I think I saw it in Washington -- when I was in Washington.

*Q: That's funny. I thought it was distributed quite widely among the posts.*

CUMMING: It might have come to Sweden, but after I left. I went to Washington after that -- I did not see it at a post, and I don't remember why now. But, I think I saw it in Washington.

**THEODORE WILKINSON**  
**Consular Officer**  
**Stockholm (1964-1966)**

*Theodore Wilkinson was born in Washington, DC in 1934. He received his BA from Yale and his MA from George Washington University. He served as a lieutenant in the US Navy from 1956 to 1960. He entered the Foreign Service in 1961, and his postings include Caracas, Stockholm, Brussels, Mexico City, Tegucigalpa and Brasilia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.*

*Q: Well, then, you went to Stockholm from when to when?*

WILKINSON: '64 to '66.

*Q: What were you doing then?*

WILKINSON: I did consular work the entire time. I was offered the option of doing a year of consular work and a year in the Trade Center as a commercial officer just to get varied experience, and although I didn't feel strongly about it, I opted to stay in the consulate because I thought it was better for the embassy for one person to know what was going on. You need a little time to understand how a section works, and if you have constant rotation you end up with very little management. So I stayed and was, in fact, the senior officer in the visa part of the embassy and found out - I know a lot of people did not particularly like consular work - that I enjoyed it. My predecessors there were Mike Yohn and the late Tom Enders. Enders of course had a very meteoric rise as soon as he left Stockholm, and he had spent as little time doing consular work as he could. He and Gaetana were - I was told - busy cultivating the royal family and other VIPs [very important persons] instead, using family money very liberally. Ironically, the Enders had entertained Swedish Army Colonel Stig Wennerstrom at their apartment the night before he was arrested for spying. Earlier Wennerstrom had spilled NATO secrets during a tour as attache in Washington. Back in Stockholm his spying was revealed by chance, when a maid came across his clandestine radio. (His was probably the most notorious spy case of the '60s).

*Q: We'll come back to the consular work, but what was the situation, particularly vis-à-vis the United States, in Sweden during the '64-'66 period?*

WILKINSON: The Swedes were, as always, officially neutral, but in fact, very pro- Western - almost an undeclared member of the NATO alliance. Quietly, and in every conceivable way, they cooperated with the United States on defense matters, not only because their principal economic interests were in the West but because their political orientation was obviously democratic as opposed to communist. So the Swedes, relying heavily on their consummate diplomacy, were able to maintain a superficial neutrality, which in point of fact was not neutral at all. Now, this was somewhat affected, during my time in Sweden, by our involvement in Vietnam. The Swedes were distressed and ultimately became extremely critical of our involvement to the point where it soured their relationships with the U.S. I was the duty officer in the embassy for the first demonstration against Americans. Subsequently, after I left the country in '66, these demonstrations got very ugly. Eggs were thrown - I guess that's not ugly in today's terms, but in the terms of the '60s an egg-throwing demonstration in Sweden was like a bomb-throwing incident in another country. Swedes are normally very polite. In fact, when they demonstrated in front of the embassy when I was on duty, they had a petition, but they were very hesitant to come up to the gate and actually present it to us, and I had to kind of coax them to come up: "Come on, Guys, get it out."

*Q: How much of this did you find was university-generated? I mean, so often in universities around the world, not probably as much in the United States, but to a certain extent, universities have sort of leftist-Marxist theoretical types, and it's a time to get out and show your stuff and have some fun demonstrating and feeling strongly about causes.*

WILKINSON: Well, that certainly was the case in Latin America. It was the case in Venezuela, when I served there, that the university was a hotbed of leftist activism, with people having so-called - probably in this case true - arsenals of weapons, and protected by the Latin American university tradition, which dates back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, establishing total academic freedom to the point where you might call it "academic license." I don't think that was true so

much in Sweden. I think that there's a deep popular pacifism in the country, a deep moral upsurge in favor of anti-violent movements wherever they are, and that there is very strong opinion in favor of pacific solutions to problems, so it is not just universities which foster sentiments like their opposition to the American involvement in Vietnam in the '60s.

*Q: What type of government was there, and who was the prime minister, at least when you were there, or prime ministers?*

WILKINSON: Well, the prime ministers were a mist procession of Social Democrats whose names I don't even remember now, leading up to the famous Olaf Palme, who was perhaps a more active and more radical Social Democrat than some of his predecessors and was ultimately assassinated in the street. At the time I was there, Palme was not yet prime minister but was perhaps the most strident voice in his party, and he was more vocally critical of U.S. intervention - even Santo Domingo in 1965 - than the more traditional and more moderate elements of the party.

*Q: Did you get involved at all in, you might say, the relations side and all the social life and everything else, or were you -*

WILKINSON: The social life, yes. I mean, we had many Swedish friends - and I still do - but I wasn't deeply involved in bilateral relations between the two countries because, obviously, that was handled by other sections of the embassy. There were some interesting representational events even for a lowly vice consul. When Martin Luther King came to give a talk in Sweden, the Embassy sent me. I remember locking arms and singing "We Shall Overcome." The Yale Glee Club visited and the Ambassador Jeff Parsons - also a Yale man, and a fine Ambassador - couldn't go with them on a cruise in the archipelago. So I went in his place. They asked what I wanted them to sing, and I made them go through all of my many favorites - 'Neath the Elms, Mavourneen, Bandoleiro, etc. The December "Lucia" parties were wonderful. During one our four-year old son "T" was the "Jultomten" - the Christmas gnome - bringing up the rear of the procession with a lantern. For recreation we skied cross-country in idyllic countryside in Dalecarlia or explored the Stockholm archipelago by boat with our good friends Alan and June Tapsell. We also played a lot of squash and competed against the British and Canadian Embassies. On one memorable evening Political Counselor Jerry Holloway led us into sort of a gymkhana against the Brits that included a hilarious match of "high cockelorum" - swatting at each other with newspapers while lying on the floor blindfolded.

*Q: Well, now talk about the consular work. It was mainly visas? Who was going to the United States, and were there any problems?*

WILKINSON: Well, not serious problems. At the time we were reforming our immigration regulations to accord with a 1968 change in the immigration law. The law was intended to advance integration in our own society by promoting domestic U.S. minorities in the workforce, and so we were cutting down on immigration by unskilled laborers of any kind that might compete with minorities in the labor force. One upshot of that was that Americans couldn't import general laborers such as *au pair* girls to work as maids without getting certification from the Department of Labor that there was a scarcity of in that field. Of course with *au pairs* there

never was, but one of their primary skills - a generally genteel upbringing - couldn't be defined in a legal way. Labor didn't want consuls to exercise discretion, but the policy was just too rigid. Asking people who wanted an *au pair* girl from Sweden to live in their families to replace her with an inner city high school dropout was not workable. So, I tried to find ways to outflank the Labor Department and to allow visas for people that I knew wanted to go to the States to live with families that wanted to have them. But that was the only really challenging aspect of visa work at the time. And every year or two for the next two decades I ran into one or another Swedish ex-*au pair* girl who had my signature in her passport, usually married and living in the U.S. with an American husband.

One splendid recollection of my Stockholm consular days was of a wonderful chief consular clerk - a man named Elmar Kuritar, an Estonian who insisted on working for the U.S. Government because we still recognized his own country and the other two Baltic states, which had been suppressed by the Soviet Union in 1939. At that time he had been an Estonian third secretary in Moscow, concurrently with George Kennan and Charles Thayer, both of whom he knew. For many years he had been working as a clerk in the U.S. Embassy in Stockholm, and everybody, including the ambassador, would sort of stand in awe of this person. He was very witty, urbane, spoke eight languages. And I remember once, when I asked this chief clerk, "How am I going to learn this difficult Swedish language?" And his reply was lovely. It was, "I don't know, but they say in French, *"Si vous voulez apprendre de l'amour, il faut coucher avec la grand mère."* And that was a very apt phrase in several senses; one had to watch one's behavior in Sweden because the women were so lovely. I had a consular staff that included eight or nine young ladies, all of whom could have easily doubled as models for some magazine. One of them was the statuesque daughter of Lars Lanheim, the movie producer of a renowned early Swedish "soft porn" epic called *One Summer of Happiness*. But this young lady was... She sat outside my office, and I sometimes had trouble focusing on my work.

*Q: How about that au pair situation? Did you run across problems? You know, these young ladies going to the United States - I would assume that there would be ones who would come back who had had unhappy situations. Did you get involved in that at all?*

WILKINSON: Rarely. But the question does remind me of one incident when a Hungarian-American named Seppi Di Bono, living in Cuba and Florida, came to sponsor an immigrant, a young lady who wanted to come and work in his household. And I said there didn't seem to be a problem, but one of my clerks came and said, "Look, I went to his 'household' last year, and *Playboy* was there photographing all the girls in the swimming pool." And I said, "My goodness, that doesn't sound like an *au pair* situation. It sounds a little different." And so I said he'd better come in for an interview, and he turned out to be quite a character. He showed me pictures of a Taj Mahal type residence in Miami, including a Viking ship bed. He was an artist who did movie star statues in gold. He'd done Anita Ekberg and Elizabeth Taylor and others in gold and silver statuettes for \$35,000, which was a lot of money in those days. And I have since run into Swedish diplomats, even last year, who were good friends with this guy. Evidently he kept going back to Sweden and bringing girls over to the United States as ornaments for his entourage. Others told me later that he married some of them, but the marriages lasted months more often than years.

*Q: Did the Cold War intrude on your business at all? I'm thinking Soviet problems and all.*

WILKINSON. I don't think I have any intelligent comment on that. In Sweden in the mid-'60's, as I mentioned earlier, Sweden was definitely pro-Western in all of its attitudes. The Cold War didn't seem to... There were no particular incidents while I was there, '64 to '66, of heightened Cold War tensions. Those were earlier in the '60s, the U- 2 downing and the Cuban Missile Crisis, and of course later in the '60s was the invasion of Czechoslovakia...

*Q: '68, yes.*

WILKINSON: '68.

*Q: What about -*

WILKINSON: - which did intrude on other things that I'll talk about later.

*Q: What about the Soviet spies or people who were considered to be ineligible for visas? Did you have much of that, I mean, people who were identified as being bad actors?*

WILKINSON: Yes. It's interesting that you mentioned that. It's a good question because I hadn't thought of that, but I did have ample archive of classified information about Swedes and alien residents in Sweden, who were ineligible for visas or who had for some reason been found to be ineligible for visas in years gone by. And I must say that I found a lot of that information to be spotty, unreliable, untested. And my tendency was to set it aside as hearsay unless somebody on the political side of the embassy would insist for me that I was dealing with a clearly ineligible person. I used to check any questionable cases with other people in the embassy, and when they told me that this was definitely an undesirable person with a current record of undesirable activities, then I would deny the visa, but I tended not to deny them. Now interestingly enough, at one point while I was in Sweden, somebody wrote an anonymous letter to the ambassador saying that "Mr. Wilkinsson" (spelled with two s's as a Swede would) was a Communist. That was it, one short, handwritten note. The author was evidently a Swede who for some reason had a grudge against me and why, I have no idea. He or she may have been denied a visa. But the curious thing was that the security people took this letter seriously. They sent people up from Copenhagen to do a full security investigation of me, and they spent hours in the embassy going around and talking to people to find out if I was really loyal, which I found sort of incredible, because it was based on one silly anonymous letter. But the Scott MacLeod attitude, that everybody's a security risk until proven otherwise, still prevailed.

**WILLIAM BODDE, JR.**  
**Political Officer**  
**Stockholm (1967-1970)**

*Ambassador William Bodde was born in Brooklyn and raised in Long Island. He served in the US Army in Korea and attended Hofstra College. He entered the*

*Foreign Service in 1962 and served in Austria, Sweden, and German. He was also ambassador to Fiji, Tuvalu, Tonga and the Marshall Islands and served as EE/MP to Kiribati. Ambassador Bodde was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.*

Q: *I'd like to get the beginning. You were in Sweden from that would be '67 -*

BODDE: '67 to '70

Q: *'67 to '70, and so I take it the Vietnam War would once and a while come up as a subject.*

BODDE: Yes, yes. We had a two-person political section. I worked for Jerry Holloway - Jerome Knight Holloway---an old Asia hand and one of the most brilliant officers in the Service. After a year he was replaced by Buck Borg, who was later executive secretary of the Department.

Vietnam was a major issue for us and for the Swedes. We tried to use Sweden as an intermediary with North Vietnam. It didn't work because the Swedes misled us. Anyhow, it was pretty heady stuff for a relatively junior officer to be involved in secret talks

Q: *Sort of to set the stage, what was the political situation in Sweden at the time?*

BODDE: Well, the Social Democrats had just won a landslide election with the old Social Democrat, Tage Erlander at the helm. Later his protégé, Olaf Palme, became Prime Minister. It was a center-left government but on international affairs it moved to the left and was one of the first democratic countries to recognize Hanoi. There was a group in the foreign ministry called the "Red Guard" by their critics. They set out to move Sweden closer to North Vietnam and, in doing so, away from us. The aide to the foreign minister, Jean Christoph Oberg, whom I knew well, was the unofficial leader of the Red Guard. Later he was named Sweden's first ambassador to North Vietnam. The Government of Sweden under Palme moved from sympathizers to unconditional supporters of North Vietnam.

There was a disconnect between the political elite and the common Swedes. The latter were not hostile to the U.S. and many had relatives who had emigrated to America. While I was there North Vietnam opened up an embassy in Stockholm. The Department would send out experts to boost the embassy efforts to convince the Swedes of the merits of U.S. policy. Some of them were excellent, such as the long-time student of Vietnam, Douglas Pike, or Barry Zorthian, who had been PAO (Public Affairs Officer) in Saigon. Others were true believers who didn't have much to offer except their zeal. I remember one time when a visitor from Washington gave us an emotional pep talk on winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese. His name was Daniel Ellsberg and later he had a change of heart and leaked the "Pentagon Papers" to The New York Times.

President Johnson appointed Judge William W. Heath as ambassador to Sweden. Heath was a Texas crony of Johnson's who had been secretary of state of Texas and the president of the University of Texas. I always felt that Heath was what Lyndon Johnson would have been like if he had never left Texas. Well, Heath thought he was going to a friendly sort of place because



they had lots of Swedes in Texas. When he got to Stockholm he found himself isolated and his friend, the President constantly criticized. To make matters worse, he had a speech impediment from a stroke, and so he didn't make very many public appearances.

Shortly after I arrived, the embassy was about to send the head of the Social Democrats' youth movement to the U.S. on an USIA (United States Information Agency) International Visitor's grant. Just before he was to leave there was a big anti-Vietnam demonstration in Stockholm. The next day on the front page of the Swedish newspapers there was a picture of him leading the demonstration together with four American deserters from the U.S. aircraft carrier, *Intrepid*.

The Ambassador called me in. Jerry was on leave and I had been there about two weeks. The Ambassador said, "Bill, I see you have sent me a memo asking me to approve sending this fellow to the United States. We're paying for him to go to the United States, and there he is demonstrating against us with those American traitors." He went on to say, "Bill, where I come from, we don't reward rattlesnakes." I'm standing there thinking to myself - I have only been here two weeks, and already the Ambassador thinks I'm on the side of the rattlesnakes. So I swallowed hard and said, "Well, Mr. Ambassador, I was born in Brooklyn. As far as I know we don't have any rattlesnakes in Brooklyn. But if we had them, we wouldn't reward them." I told him that, "We can send the handful of people in Sweden who support U.S. policy, and we can keep sending them over and over if that's what you want. What we're trying to do is to send opinion leaders, some of who have been vocal critics of U.S. policy in the past, and try to get them to temper their views. You have to make up your mind whether you want us to preach to the choir or whether you want us to preach to the sinners in the hope we might even convert a few." He said, "All right," and he approved the grant.

Over time, I gained his confidence to the degree that I was the only embassy officer that he authorized to give public speeches. I did a hundred of them in three years. From the very beginning I faced demonstrations. I have a scrapbook at home that's unbelievable. I have a photo of a kid holding a big placard "MR. BODDE GO HOME" and another flyer that reads "BODDE MURDERER." It was good training. If you can get up before a thousand people that are screaming obscenities at you, you will not be daunted by any audience.

*Q: How would you treat this? I mean, you'd try to win over the audience, but how would you phrase your speeches?*

BODDE: It wasn't easy given the Swedish mindset. One time I was up in a village above the Arctic Circle giving a talk before 30 people or so. It was an open meeting and anyone could attend. When I got to the lectern there was a note on it. It said, "Go home, white pig." White pig? I look around the room at 30 blond, blue-eyed people, and I thought, "What are we talking about here? I have more black friends at home than they will ever see in their lifetime - Go home, white pig - I mean, have you people looked in a mirror?" I reminded them that the slurs I hear Swedes make about Gypsies or Finns are the same kind of racist slurs I used to hear about African Americans when I was growing up.

I would try not to give the straight party line. I would admit that the U.S., like all countries, makes mistakes but, that said, the U.S. still represents the world's best hope. At a modern art

exhibit in Stockholm one of the artists had painted a map of the world, or rather a map of the Northern Hemisphere without the United States. The border of Canada and Mexico touched. And I would use that as an example. I would say, "Now, some of you in this room think that things would be ideal if you could just get rid of the United States. But even if there were no United States do you think world poverty would disappear, disease would disappear, injustice would disappear?" I would then ask them where Europe would be if the United States had remained neutral in World War II. I would make the argument that Sweden can be neutral but the world can not afford a neutral U.S. Once a kid asked me if I thought the U.S. could be the policeman of the world. I said, "No, no country is wise enough or powerful enough for that role. The U.S. can no more be the policeman of the world than Sweden can be the conscience of the world!"

After we invaded Cambodia I no longer felt that I should go out and publicly support U.S. policy in Vietnam. Fortunately, for me, it was time to go home anyhow. Having your country attacked over and over about everything makes you very defensive. Back in the Department I joined a small group of young officers who eventually met with Secretary Rogers to protest that our Vietnam policy was alienating our allies. We told him that it was not just the kids demonstrating in the streets but many professionals in the Department that opposed our present policy. We believed that the Nixon/Kissinger Vietnam policy was doing serious damage to relations with our allies in Europe and elsewhere. It was too high a price to pay, we told him.

I have changed my mind since then. I look back and I think we tried to do the right thing in Vietnam. We may not have fully understood that it was a civil war and that we were backing a losing horse. But, at the same time, anybody who believed that the North Vietnamese were the good guys was dead wrong. Since the war ended I've been to Hanoi, I've been to Saigon, and I've lectured to visiting professors from Hanoi, so I have some sense of the area. I have great admiration for the Vietnamese, but when people say the war was a terrible mistake I reply, "If you look at Asia today, who won the war? What's happening in Asia today demonstrates that American values won the war." It was at a great cost in blood and treasure but I believe it was worth it.

*Q: Well, what was your analysis or the embassy analysis, when you could get away from just saying "these bloody Swedes," why were they taking - I mean it seemed like almost a good way to take out their frustrations? I mean we were far away and also we wouldn't kick back.*

BODDE: It was easy to lose your patience with the Swedes. We used to call Sweden "the mother-in-law of the world." They were always lecturing everybody on how to behave. They were arrogant and always ready to solve other people's problems, such as the relations between the races in our country. I remember Ralph Abernathy came to Stockholm.

*Q: He was a leader of the black movement.*

BODDE: He was one of Martin Luther King's key lieutenants and took over the movement when King was shot. The Swedes told Abernathy that his group was too moderate and that they supported the Black Panthers, a radical black group. He told them, "I have more people in my congregation" - he was a Protestant minister - "than there are Black Panthers in America." You know, I mean, get a life, get real. Part of it was naïveté, because Sweden was far removed from

many of the problems. We used to call it “the inverse rule.” That is, the farther away the problem the stronger the Swedes felt about it and the more confident they were that they had the solution. I think Sweden has paid a huge price for their self-imposed isolation since the Thirty Years’ War. Neutrality cost them a lot. Of course, now they’re becoming more engaged and have joined the European Union.

*Q: I would think that you would find yourself sort of driven into the corner of sticking out the fact that they profited by World War II, and everybody else... I mean, where were you in that?*

BODDE: Oh, yes. As the fortunes of the Nazis diminished in World War II, the Swedes became more and more friendly to the allies. Sure, we’d remind them, of course, but that only gets you so far. I would say the average Swede was not anti-American. It was the intellectual elites that were our most vocal critics. When I came back to the Department in 1970, I became Sweden and Finland desk officer, so I spent about five years of my career working on Sweden. But I have never been back. Sweden is a country that’s - in its own way - very intolerant. I remember the Swedish cultural attaché at the embassy once told me ruefully, “Remember Sweden is a small country and only has room for one opinion at a time.” It is a country of iron-willed political correctness; you either were politically correct, or you were an outcast.

*Q: Well, what about the Soviet Union? I mean, you know, after all, this was Communism, East versus West, in a way, and was there any ambivalence, or did they know where they were on that?*

BODDE: The Soviets used to complain to the Swedes, “You say you are neutral, but all your missiles are pointed at us.” The Swedes knew that the major threat to their security was the Soviet Union. At the same time they wrapped themselves in their neutrality and were careful not to provoke the Soviets. The Soviets knew that in their hearts the Swedes were not pro-Soviet or pro-Communist. Even Olaf Palme, when he was a student, had married a Czechoslovakian woman to get her out from behind the Iron Curtain.

*Q: In a way, was this one of those operations in Sweden at that time of, you know, keeping the flag flying? I mean, was Sweden considered sort of a write-off?*

BODDE: It was a write-off as far as Vietnam policy was concerned but there were other areas of cooperation. We had a large military presence in the embassy. We had an air force attaché and assistant attaché. We had a senior army attaché and an assistant attaché. The navy had a senior attaché and two assistant attaches. One of the assistant navy attachés before I got there was Bobby Inman. His successor was a Commander Bob Schmidt, who later became an admiral and the deputy head of the National Security Agency. The Pentagon took Sweden seriously and assigned top-flight officers to the embassy. The Swedish fighter plane, the *Viggen* has a lot of American-built components. The American science community also took Sweden seriously. Sweden grants the Nobel prizes in science, medicine and economics.

Sometimes Washington took Sweden too seriously. After all, it is a small country and not major player in world politics. When they protested or postured at the UN or elsewhere the U.S. should have ignored them. But we would overreact. A distinguished African American educator, Jerome Holland, replaced Heath as Ambassador. But relations continued to deteriorate and when

Ambassador Holland left, the U.S. refused to replace him and after a time we even pulled out the chargé. The Department did not permit contact with the Swedish Embassy above the desk officer level. That was wonderful for me as desk officer because I got to go to a lot of dinners and meet all sorts of important people, mostly from the liberal establishment. Ironically, their ambassador at the time was very pro-American. They had very good professionals at the Swedish Embassy.

Q: *Was this difficult for your wife and for you just to live there?*

BODDE: No, for two reasons. First of all, my wife can cope with any situation. For example, she learned that the Swedish trade unions had special language classes for immigrants and she signed up. Everybody else in the class was an immigrant or a refugee and they were all serious about learning Swedish. As a result, she was soon fluent in the language. One week a Swedish diplomat's wife was teaching the course. She was so impressed that an American diplomat's wife would take such a course that she convinced the foreign ministry to sponsor a course for diplomats' spouses. Secondly, we had a lot of friends in Sweden. Most of our friends were either other diplomats, Swedes married to foreigners, or Swedes who had lived abroad. Because of the vocal anti-American atmosphere, there was a kind of circle-the-wagons mentality among the Americans and our allies. As a result we partied frantically. It was one of the most social posts we have ever been to.

Q: *What about the deserters? What was our attitude towards them?*

BODDE: Another positive factor was that the work was so interesting. One of my most fascinating jobs was to deal with the deserter problem.

Q: *American deserters.*

BODDE: Yes, we had a peak of 140 at one point but we usually averaged 120 at any given time. When the first deserters arrived, we went to the Swedes and told them that they shouldn't take these people. They told us that they must take them on human rights grounds. I think they thought they were going to get a bunch of idealists who opposed the war. They expected Jane Fonda or her male equivalent. Well, there were a few idealists but most of the deserters were misfits deserting from the U.S. forces in Germany. Most of them should have never been taken into the service in the first place. Sweden ended up a dumping ground for servicemen with serious personal problems. Swedish society is highly educated and very competitive and in those days it was still very homogeneous. If you didn't speak Swedish fluently and have a trade or a profession, you would end up working at low paying, dead end jobs. Many deserters found that was not much fun, so they became drug dealers or petty criminals and ran afoul of Swedish law. We had cases of child abuse, suicides, and criminal charges. I even had a deserter, high on drugs, pull a knife on me.

The embassy would lend them money for air fare if they wanted to go home and turn themselves in and many did. The Swedes were unhappy with the troublemakers and came to the embassy to tell us we should take back the ones that got in trouble or the ones that were on welfare. Our response was sorry, "You took them against our advice and now they are your problem." Once we had a deserter come to the embassy who had escaped from a mental institution and wanted to

turn himself in. I spent hours convincing him that I could do nothing for him unless he went back to the institution. He finally agreed and in the middle of the night we drove the 30 miles back to the mental hospital in a police car. The next morning I went to see a senior foreign ministry official to get assurances that there would be no leaks to the media that the embassy was forcing him to go back against his will. In this case they were happy to be rid of him and he went home and turned himself in.

**RICHARD J. SMITH**  
**Commercial Officer, US Trade Center**  
**Stockholm (1968-1971)**

*Richard Smith was born in Cuba in 1935. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of New Hampshire and joined the Foreign Service in 1959. His career included positions in Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, and Washington D.C. Mr. Smith was interviewed by Thad Smith in 1989.*

Q: *You were in Stockholm from when to when?*

SMITH: 1968 to 1971.

Q: *Now how was this career wise, this being a Commerce position?*

SMITH: Well, it was a Foreign Service position, but it was part of the integrated approach that was still working well. The position would sometimes be filled by a Commerce officer, sometimes by a Foreign Service officer. It was in a trade center and was part of a cooperative arrangement between State and Commerce on commercial activities.

Q: *I want to come back obviously to the Swedish reaction to the Vietnam war, but let's put that to one side and talk about your work there and your feelings about how America responded to export and Swedish relations.*

SMITH: I felt that the work fit well with my background and experience. So I went to Stockholm in the summer of 1968. When I arrived at the trade center, I found there were jobs open for both a plans and research officer and a trade promotion officer. The promotion officer job had been vacated, and they didn't get anyone to fill it. For almost the whole three years I was there, I filled both jobs. In the plans and research job, I looked ahead a couple of years at what kinds of shows we should be holding. I put out contracts with market research companies, looked at different product mixes, and tried to come up with analyses that would indicate what kind of shows we should be putting on. The planning cycle required that we think at least a couple of years ahead.

At the same time I was doing that, I also was promoting the current shows. This involved, for example, going out and making calls on potential customers. We would get literature from the US companies we were bringing into the show, and they would indicate whether they were looking for local agents. We would then line up a series of potential agents for them to consider

when they came to the show. Then we would design the flyer for the show and have it printed. We hired a promotion company and worked with it in advertising and otherwise promoting the show. It was a custom-made kind of promotion for each show, with a lot of personal calls. Most of our effort was around Stockholm and in Sweden in general. But we served the whole Nordic region, so we did some promotion in Denmark, Norway, and Finland as well, and did draw potential customers from the whole region. It was an exciting and satisfying period for me. We were putting on seven or eight major shows a year, so it was a busy time.

*Q: What type of things would....*

SMITH: We did a great variety of shows. For example, one was called "Fasteners U.S.A.," where we exhibited the many things used to hold industrial products together. We had a major impact in the computer area, which was beginning to boom then. We had shows on industrial processing equipment, where we had computer processing equipment and robotics. We had a show entirely on robotics. Also, we had very successful shows on machine tools and on building materials and techniques. The shows were carefully recruited. Once a theme was agreed on, the Commerce Department would put the wheels in motion and assign a procurement officer. One of the things that Commerce sought to do was to get a mix between smaller and larger companies. In the computer shows, for example, we'd have IBM and the big companies, but we also had a lot of small ones that otherwise weren't exporting, so that they could be seen in the company of these major companies.

We gave the smaller companies, particularly, an intensive and custom-made promotional effort. We would get them lined up to come into the show early, obtain information on their products, and be in correspondence with them on the kinds of things they wanted to accomplish, e.g., did they want to establish agents in the market? Then we tried, often through personal calls, to make sure that the right potential agents and the right customers showed up at their booth at the trade show. It was an extraordinarily successful operation, and there's no question in my mind that we were making a significant impact on the US share of markets in Scandinavia.

We recorded sales on the basis of what the exhibitors told us. At one of the computer shows, for example, we got reports of tens of million dollars worth of business that was actually contracted at the show, plus a much greater amount that was anticipated as a result of agency relationships that had been established in the market. I remember that a representative of JETRO, the Japanese export promotion agency, came to many of our shows. He said to me once, "This is amazing; why can't Japan do something like this?" And it was amazing.

In the 1970s, the trade center program became a victim of budget cutbacks. The budgeteers argued that the companies were not paying their full freight. They did not want us to subsidize even the smaller companies and insisted on substantial raises in the rates charged to exhibitors, and many of the smaller companies could not afford it. So we lost a lot of momentum on the program in the 1970s, and it started to run down. The pressure continued on trade promotion budgets, and we started closing trade centers. We closed the one in Stockholm and most of the others around the world. At one point we had about eight of them, including London, Rome, Stockholm, Frankfurt, and Canberra.

*Q: How did you find Scandinavia's receptivity to American goods? Because in some countries maybe the people might be delighted, but the government, the bureaucracy and the entrenched industry have put up all sorts of roadblocks.*

SMITH: The Scandinavian market was wide open for American products. I assume that it still is. They appreciated American quality and engineering. The Swedes themselves have very high standards, comparable to the United States in many areas. They recognized the leadership role that the US was playing in computers, for example, and they wanted these shows. We always got large crowds and great publicity. We got a reaction that clearly indicated that we were welcomed there and that they were pleased to be seeing these products.

*Q: How about trade to the United States? Was this something you kept an eye on?*

SMITH: No, not really. This was an export promotion program at the trade center. There were other people in the embassy, in the economic section, who were analyzing trade in the other direction. I think that in those years, the Swedes were exporting a lot of Volvos and Saabs, but the trade balance was significantly in our favor. We were exporting heavily to Sweden, especially a lot of cutting-edge, high technology equipment.

*Q: There is also Palme. Could you talk about Palme? Could you talk about your impression and anything that happened? This is where Sweden was certainly on our almost enemies list, particularly as far as the Nixon administration was concerned because Palme was taking a very activist role. It was not appreciated.*

SMITH: No, not at all. I recall a particular incident which, I think, occurred in 1969, when there was an anti-Vietnam War demonstration and Olaf Palme showed up in the crowd.

*Q: Carrying a candle.*

SMITH: He might have been carrying a candle. You probably remember. Were you in Vietnam?

*Q: I was in Vietnam.*

SMITH: Olaf Palme was probably not your favorite prime minister.

*Q: A few American students showed up at our embassy holding a candle. I went out and looked at them. I felt like blowing the damn thing out.*

SMITH: Palme was a very charming guy himself. When you met him in a small group, he argued quite rationally about US interests and the balance and all. I think that that kind of informed criticism of our position probably would have been taken with much better grace in the United States if he hadn't shown up at anti-War rallies and irritated President Nixon and lots of other Americans. He was out of line in some of the things he did. But I guess what struck me was that beyond the opposition to the Vietnam War, the criticism of the United States was very narrowly based. But there was an elite group, a number of them were in the government, who were down on the United States and felt we were doing wrong things in the world. On the other

hand, in my view, most Swedes, many of whom had relatives in the United States, were very pro-American. The man in the street in Sweden loved America, knew Americans, appreciated America. Palme's appearances never gained him much politically. I never felt in Sweden that there was a ground swell of public opinion against the United States.

*Q: Did you have the feeling that people you were meeting, the elite, was this sort of the equivalent to the French intellectuals who really kind of enjoyed the idea of Marxism but they couldn't stand it up close, but rather only from a distance?*

SMITH: That's right. Well, certainly, Olaf Palme considered himself an intellectual, as did a number of the people around him. This was part of it. Intellectually, Sweden at that point had had some 30 rather successful years of Socialist leadership. Actually, the percentage of private ownership of industry in Sweden was probably higher than it was in the United States. There is very little publicly owned industry. But they have carried the welfare state to extremes. They believed that they had successfully captured the dynamism of capitalism to create the pie and then used the equity of socialism to slice it up, and thus that they were getting the best of both worlds. They had a dynamic, thriving capitalist economy-although they have had some hard economic times since then. They had government programs that assured everybody that their children's tuition would be paid at college and that their welfare was assured. They were convinced that they had created a nice and equitable society where people didn't have to be concerned about things. Palme held no brief for the Soviet Union, and he recognized as much as anybody the excesses of communism.

*Q: How did you find the media there?*

SMITH: There was a range of newspapers. There was a conservative paper that was very critical of Palme and not so critical of the United States. There was also a newspaper that pretty much went along with the Palme line. It was a very free press.

*Q: Did you have much contact with the embassy?*

SMITH: Yes. We would go over there for the staff meeting every week. I did know the people there. We would go to each other's homes. We would be in on the embassy social circuit, particularly with the economic section. The economic counselor was very close to us. Embassy personnel would always come over to our shows. So although we were located in different parts of town, we had regular contact with the embassy.

*Q: I think it's interesting to try to capture the mood of the embassy. In a way, you were sort of the outsider going in. During this time, certainly, Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon, you could see, spent a lot of their time brooding about Sweden. From what you were seeing of the embassy, how were they operating?*

SMITH: As one might expect, the embassy was reflecting that view. They were mad at Olaf Palme, too. I think maybe, on a spectrum, we at the trade center, because we were seeing a different cut of Swedes, were less irate. Almost all the Swedes we saw and did business with were very friendly toward the United States. A lot of the Swedes that the embassy did business



with were not very friendly. So the embassy people were probably more down on Sweden than was the case with most of us who worked at the trade center. You could see that when you went over for the staff meetings, and they would talk about what was happening. There would be a lot of snide and cynical remarks about Sweden and Olaf Palme that we wouldn't have made.

*Q: Who was the Ambassador there?*

SMITH: When we first went there, it was William Heath, a cousin of Lady Bird Johnson. He was a Texas judge, an older guy, very critical, very much in line with the sort of agitation you indicated that the President and Secretary Kissinger felt.

After a year or so, he was replaced by Jerome (Brud) Holland, who was the first black ambassador to Sweden. He was an interesting character and very dynamic. He had been an all-American football player at Cornell University. He was very well received in Sweden. He was more open and there was less tension between the embassy and the Swedes under Ambassador Holland than had been the case under Ambassador Heath.

**C. ARTHUR BORG**  
**Political Counselor**  
**Stockholm (1968-1971)**

*C. Arthur Borg came to the Foreign Service in the mid-1950s after graduating from West Point Academy in 1948 and serving in the Korean War. His Foreign Service career included positions in Japan, Germany, Sweden, Finland, and Austria. Mr. Borg was interviewed by Hank Zivetz in 1990.*

*Q: You went on some years later to Berlin with a stop in Stockholm as a political counselor. Is there anything in that period from 1968-71 that is worth noting, or should we go directly to Berlin?*

BORG: I think the main thing of interest with regard to Stockholm was the marvelous bit of human nature that the Swedes were inversely moralistic to the problem with regard to the distance from its borders. They were giving us a terrible time about our policy on the Vietnam War, very moralistic. I remember about two months before I arrived there, for example, a very large demonstration where the then minister of education, Olaf Palme, whom you may remember was later assassinated when prime minister, participated in a huge march with the North Vietnamese ambassador from Moscow. It was conveniently timed so that virtually every window in our embassy was broken before the police conveniently arrived about 15 minutes too late. It was a very careful moralistic orchestration of their disapproval. That situation improved markedly as US policy towards the war changed. When Johnson instituted the partial bombing moratorium, for example, in 1968, the policy suddenly appeared in time to prevent the windows from being broken at the embassy.

*Q: Did you have any problems with the young Americans who had in effect taken asylum in Sweden at that time?*

BORG: That was one of the principal stopping points. We were put into some compromising situations, really setups, where people from the embassy were enticed into meeting so-called deserters away from the embassy with lots of cameras and media coverage designed to embarrass embassy people. The other noteworthy thing that I can recall is that there really were three main categories of these people that came under the heading of deserters. Very few of them were really deserters in the ideological sense. The great majority of them came up from Germany to Sweden. They had money problems, women problems, military discipline problems. A very small number were honestly opposed to war in Vietnam.

*Q: Was there an official American policy against embassy personnel meeting with these people?*

BORG: Initially no. We had a policy of being quite willing to meet with them virtually anywhere. Then that had to be modified when these setup situations took place so the policy was changed to being willing to meet with them at the embassy. Not away from the embassy where we could be manipulated.

*Q: What was their objective in setting these meeting up?*

BORG: In the early stage, it was primarily to serve as a propaganda weapon for some of their host friends in Sweden. That initial period was a pretty romantic one with these kids coming in outside the country being lionized by left wing Swedes. It wasn't until later, I would say a year or a year and a half, after one or two cold winters that the American kids began to get in trouble with the law. They were involved in bank robberies in an attempt to support themselves. They found it difficult to get jobs, couldn't learn the language, etc. But the initial period was an overly romanticized one.

**HAVEN N. WEBB**  
**Analyst, Western Europe, Bureau of Intelligence and Research**  
**Washington, DC (1969-1971)**

*Mr. Webb was born and raised in Tennessee. A Naval Academy graduate, Mr. Webb served with the US Navy overseas before joining the Foreign Service in 1961. A Political and Consular Officer, he served abroad in Guadalajara, Hamburg, Helsinki, Panama City and Tromso, Norway, where he was Officer in Charge. His Washington assignments concerned Political/Military Affairs, as well as International Organizations. Mr. Webb was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.*

*Q: Today is October 29, 2002. Haven, you were in INR from '69 to when about?*

WEBB: Two years. '69 to '71.

*Q: You must have been dealing a good bit with a particularly Swedish opposition towards our being in Vietnam. I think this was the period as I recall it, when we had Nixon-Kissinger time. Kissinger was national security advisor, but Sweden had been put into Coventry or the equivalent thereof. I mean Olaf Palme was the prime minister and was marching against our participation in the Vietnam War and all. Were you getting some feel for this?*

WEBB: Yes, and I might go back to something that happened in Finland to this regard. Ambassador Tyler Thompson was a contemporary of George Kennan. He always had a certain amount of envy for Kennan's record and his fame and particular position he had in the public mind. He was so far as I know, the first foreign service officer that ever became internationally famous in his own right.

We had once a year, a meeting, sauna, of men at the embassy for student politicians, mainly Social Democrats, but other parties included in it. This by now would probably be '68 or '69 when we were in the depths of the Vietnam debate. At one point, I got one of the more moderate students aside and we were talking. Somehow we did get into Vietnam. He was saying how this was terrible what we were doing and we should pull out. His idea seemed to be that we had no right to interfere in a civil war. I started making analogies with Germany and saying well, what if West Germany were sending in troops and assassins into East Germany and was conducting a terror campaign? I kept backing him up and backing him up. Finally he lowered his voice very significantly and said to me, "I know it is the same thing, but I can't say that," or words to that effect.

I remember once when I had the INR job, I used to work with my counterpart in the CIA fairly often. In fact he had been a junior officer in Helsinki just before I got there. Our DCM, who was the only person in the foreign service who sort of intimidated me, a fellow named George Ingram. He had gone to Vanderbilt, a southern gentleman and all of that, but he didn't strike you as being very southern. I found myself coughing before I would say something to him without even realizing I was doing it until I noticed that one day. Apparently he didn't like this fellow. He was sort of an odd character in a way, his looks and mannerisms.

*Q: The CIA guy?*

WEBB: The guy who became CIA. And since he was on his first tour in the foreign service, it was relatively easy to get him out. He was a white Christian and he didn't fall into any minority category, assuming that was terribly relevant back then. Then he popped up at the CIA where he was on the open side and doing research. I dealt with him. He and I were presumably doing about the same thing. He was following Sweden, except they seemed to have an unlimited budget. I think he had computer backups or whatever. He could let me know anything I wanted to know about a past election or percentages on a moment's notice. I got really dependant on calling him and using his resources. Once I actually lunched at the CIA with him and some others. But another time some people at the Swedish embassy, a couple of Foreign Service Officers had me to lunch. I think they assumed that because of my position, if not my age, that I would reflect the new thinking in the State Department that was becoming very evident. The younger crew that were coming in at this time, and many of them had worked in the CORDS

program. As I understood it, it was almost a bribe. If you would go and work in poor old Vietnam in some capacity with USIA or whatever, you would be looked upon favorably as being admitted in to the Foreign Service afterwards. A lot of these people came in. The only one I can remember certainly reflected the disenchantment of what became the new left at that time. I gather that many others were in the same boat. At this particular luncheon, I think the Swedes were just absolutely astounded that I defended our policy, not our tactics but certainly the principle behind our being in Vietnam. I remember at some point reading that Dr. Spock, who became such an anti Vietnam activist...

*Q: Benjamin Spock.*

WEBB: Benjamin Spock, the baby doctor, had said he thought we were still absolutely right to intervene in Korea and prevent the north from conquering the south. Except for the difference in terrain and climate and difficulty of operation, I have never seen the slightest difference morally. They were exactly the same issue. How anybody could say otherwise has always been a mystery to me.

But I had it out with the Swedes for 20 or 30 minutes. I think at some point they decided I was obviously a hopeless case and not somebody they would find useful, so they abandoned me and went their own way. But it was a very melancholy time. I know in Finland, If I haven't already mentioned this. Helsinki Sanomat, the Finnish equivalent of the New York Times, about our second year there did a big thing for their Sunday supplement of consulting one of Finland's most noted philosophers. He was certainly not a foreign affairs expert. He was going to give the definitive word on the Vietnam affair. When it came out, the man said, that we were just there for all the mineral wealth that Vietnam, to my knowledge, has never produced. But it was quite a letdown, and certainly an intellectual farce. Vietnam is where the media started going off on its own tack and from then, on it seems to me, we have certainly lacked in this country, clear discussions of the issues. There is almost always a politically correct view to take on virtually everything that is controversial, and to a very large degree you are simply not permitted to have any other view, or at least your view is labeled extremely conservative or extreme right wing or something along those lines.

*Q: Did you get any feel while you were doing this about Sweden being by the State Department being pushed to one side and saying OK we know where you are. You really don't amount to anything, and screw you and let's go on? But in a way even more that we were almost taking a certain amount of satisfaction in sticking it to the Swedes because they were so vehement on Vietnam, or not?*

WEBB: I don't know. I really didn't see too much. I was angered enough myself that things that many Foreign Service Officers would have thought undiplomatic in our approach to Sweden at the time I would have thought as far too soft. I never had any great illusions that Sweden mattered very much. You know, the fact that they were willing to host this farce of Bertrand Russell's senility a war crimes trial. Things of that nature I found a complete absurdity. In INR, we had one fellow who had been in Vietnam in the CORDS program and I guess a one tour FSO by now, maybe a second tour, I can't remember. I can remember with him and with several others getting into discussions. I remember one time - maybe it was about Italy - I referred to the

communists as "commies," not really meaning very much by it. One of these fellows really brought me up sharp and said, "How can you refer to other human beings with such a term like commies?" I really let him have it. I mean this is the most evil political movement of all human history of which I am aware, responsible for the murders of tens of millions of people certainly, and directly and indirectly responsible for WWII. I don't know how you can hurt the feelings of somebody that doesn't hear you. I got it very much along the lines of somebody objecting when Churchill, who certainly knew better, called the Germans "Nazis" just sort of to express his contempt. I think he did that publicly in speeches at times. I thought of exactly the same thing as Reagan spoke of the evil empire and the ferocious reaction, I assume, in the State Department. I think I was probably out by then, but certainly in the American press, it always angered me once the new left took control, neither the Washington Post nor the New York Times or for that matter ABC, NBC, PBS or CBS, every referred to the Soviet empire as an empire. Yet as soon as it crashed, they always referred to it as an empire. They have always used that sort of terminology. I suspect the same thing was probably true in the 30's before WWII referring to the Germans. You simply were not permitted to label evil as it is. Of course we have the same thing today with Iraq above all in the present debates.

**PATRICK E. NIEBURG**  
**Public Affairs Officer, USIS**  
**Stockholm (1969-1972)**

*Patrick E. Nieburg joined USIS in 1962 and served for more than 25 years in a variety of positions in Latin America, Europe, and Asia. Among the countries in which Mr. Nieburg served are Brazil, Vietnam, Sweden, Germany, and Turkey. Mr. Nieburg was interviewed in 1988 by Allen Hansen.*

*Q: Now, after Germany you then went to Sweden.*

NIEBURG: That was a strange happenstance. Relations with Sweden had soured. In other words, U.S.-Swedish relations had soured over a sharp turn to the left, including the U.S.-bashing that took place in Sweden because of Vietnam. We had decided, we being the U.S., not to send an ambassador to Sweden. So there was only a chargé d'affaires. The public affairs officer who was there during that period was of Swedish descent and heeded the chargé d'affaires' attitude which was, "let's draw the blinds, let the waves pound Gibraltar. Let's not do any battle, but hunker down and ride it out." Well, these were not the ideas of the management of USIA on how to cope with the Swedish situation. The PAO was due for a transfer. I was asked, again because of my language qualifications, to go to Sweden and take on this contentious job.

Well, I found myself almost immediately in hot water with the chargé d'affaires because I had a conference with all the major television commentators and executives about Vietnam. I insisted that we get a fair shake.

*Q: You were the PAO.*

NIEBURG: I was the PAO. Well, they (Swedish TV people) didn't take it kindly. But I did go on Swedish television. They gave me some very rough questioning. But we did very well. And slowly we even had some editorials in the press in support of U.S. policy. Well, there was also some criticism about the brash--what some people would call an American--counter-move. This was seized upon by the chargé d'affaires, who felt that USIS action in Sweden was counter-productive, in his viewpoint.

Well, USIA did not see it this way. I didn't see it that way. And we continued our work both in the information field and in the cultural center.

Well, one of the problems we did have was that there ..were demonstrations. USIS offices in Gothenburg and in Stockholm were fire bombed. That did not help, because I had to go back to the Agency for funds and repairs and all this. The chargé d'affaires certainly was not on the right track as far as USIS was concerned. He even tried to get the [U.S.] Vice President to come to Sweden to mitigate the situation. This, shortly before a Swedish election. I went out of channels to our then-Deputy Director Henry Loomis. I explained to him how this would be interpreted, viz., as U.S. support for those who were the main antagonists of the United States. The visit was squelched by Henry Loomis' intervention at the White House.

Well, it was no secret, I suppose, to the chargé d'affaires that I must have been behind that particular move through various memos out of channel. So it was ice, ice, ice. It was truly an igloo. It was a little bit of a besieged mentality that we had. And USIA was cut off.

But in the end the chargé d'affaires was removed. So was his political counselor. A new ambassador came in, a marvelous man, a black man. Ambassador Holland was a novice in diplomacy, but was a personal friend of Secretary Rogers. He looked around and sized up the situation. He gave me not only full support, but said to me, "Pat, anytime you want to use me, use me in any way ..you see fit."

Well, it makes a great deal of sense for letting the ambassador be the spokesman rather than using the PAO as a middleman, especially in a country like Sweden where a black face carries extra credibility. And the Ambassador went out on our behalf, did a lot of public speaking, engaged in a lot of public affairs work. But in return, he also asked me to become practically his political counselor. This I was very hesitant to do, though I felt qualified for the job.

It could have made for a difficult relationship with the political section. By this time, however, a new political counselor had arrived. Luckily for me, it was a fellow by the name of Olson, a former New York Times correspondent, who understood the situation. He and I worked actually hand in glove so to say and it worked out very well. What was a very difficult public affairs program in the beginning turned into a rather productive assignment after all. But it happened only over the initial resistance of some of the State Department people who felt that nothing could be done and we should just ride out the storm; make no attempt really to present the other side of the coin.

**GERALD MICHAEL BACHE**  
**Economic Officer**  
**Stockholm (1969-1973)**

*Gerald Bache was born in September of 1927 in Broxville, NY. He attended Yale University and Harvard Law School and then entered the Foreign Service in 1951. His first post in Pusan, Korea was followed by several posts including Germany, the Ivory Coast, and Sweden. He was interviewed by Theresa Tull in 2004.*

*Q: So, you finished the tour in RPE in '69. What was next on the agenda?*

BACHE: At this point, I was assigned to Stockholm, Sweden. The whole family moved, but I went ahead in July and the rest of the family came along in August. I remember watching the moon landing when I was alone there in Sweden; then the family came a month later, after I found a house in a Stockholm suburb.

My job in Stockholm made use of my experience with interdepartmental coordination, especially because Sweden, even though it is a small country, is big in the multilateral area. For example, at that time, Sweden was a member of the Group of Ten in the International Monetary Fund, so I sometimes had to deliver messages to the Governor of the Bank of Sweden on monetary questions. Sweden was also very active in multilateral aid to developing countries and I worked closely with the head of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), on multilateral aid. Also, in civil aviation, there was a Swede who was head of the European Association of Civil Aviation Chiefs, so I often delivered messages to him and from him about civil aviation questions for all of Europe.

*Q: What was the specific position?*

BACHE: I was the number two economic officer; there were only three of us. I served there under Ambassador Jerome Holland. As you know, the State Department defines economics really broadly, so I was dealing with trade policy (including export controls), monetary policy, aid to developing countries, aviation policy, intellectual property issues, regional planning and just about any other issue that could conceivably be called 'economics.' My main job was reporting and representation, which, as we all know, means delivering messages to the host country, getting their reaction, reporting their reply; and making recommendations of our own on U.S. policy in the area. It was mostly a matter of coordination; we worked closely with the Swedes, as I say, on a lot of multilateral issues, so it was a busy office.

Then, in addition to all the rest, I wrote the semi-annual economic trends report, which was published by the U.S. Department of Commerce. It told about opening markets for U.S. products in Sweden. Of course, the work I had done in Ivory Coast and the Commerce Department was a helpful background for that. We had very able local employees, including some who could write first drafts of some of these reports, but I had to review them carefully and put them in final shape. As I say, we did the overview of the whole Swedish economy twice a year, but in between we prepared separate reports on numerous products in more depth. It was a demanding assignment, consisting mostly of economic reporting, representation and market research.

I was also the Embassy escort officer for several Congressional and other visitors, who were interested in Swedish urban and regional planning and other economic issues mentioned above. Eleanor and I would occasionally give dinner parties for these visitors and the Swedish officials with whom they had met. As you know, the escort officer and dinner routine is something that happened at every post, but we did it in Stockholm (and, later, in Bonn) more than at most other posts.

*Q: Now, I noticed the years you were there were 1969 to 1973, the peak period of our involvement in Vietnam. My recollection is that Sweden was not exactly supportive of U.S. efforts there. Did that impact on your work?*

BACHE: It was very interesting. They made a very strong separation between political and economic issues. They made their statements on Vietnam and other political issues, but they said that shouldn't interfere with our good, close relations on economic issues. Of course, it was in their interest to treat it that way, and they did, and I think pretty successfully. We let them get away with it, I suppose, but that was it. I had close relations with all the ministries and the banks and the Swedes who were involved with these economic issues. I just didn't talk much about the political questions.

*Q: Were there any anti-Vietnam demonstrations?*

BACHE: Yes, there were lots of them. The prime minister, Olaf Palme, was even leading the marchers sometimes. So, yes, there was a very noticeable dichotomy there.

*Q: So, as good diplomats on both sides...*

BACHE: I just pretended that I didn't hear it. I mentioned Jerome Holland; I think he was an ideal non-career diplomat. He trusted his professional staff and consulted us a lot. Every time he was going to give a speech or go before the press, or whatever he was going to do, he would call together the senior officers of the embassy and ask us to give him a dry run on the questions he was going to get and give him recommendations on how to treat those issues. He then followed our advice. That made us feel as though we were wanted and respected. It helped a lot in the morale of the whole Embassy staff.

*Q: Your children, who were living with you at the time, were they impacted by the anti-Vietnam sentiment? Did they ever complain to you that they were being taunted about it?*

BACHE: I don't think so. The three of them (other than the eldest) went to the Anglo-American School in Stockholm, where they had a good educational experience. The lower grades were taught mostly by British teachers, while the junior high school was taught mostly by Americans, so it was a mixture of British and American curriculum. Most of the other students were children from other embassies, children of businessmen from other countries and relatively few Swedish children.



Unfortunately, the Anglo-American School only went to the ninth grade, so we had to send our older son, Stephen, to boarding school in the United States for his senior high school years, but that actually turned out to be a good experience for him. Our oldest child, Marion, who is mentally retarded, went to a special school in Stockholm for the retarded, where much of the educational program was non-verbal, so that language was not as much of an obstacle as you might expect. She was even sent to a summer camp for the retarded in Norway. Thus, we had a good situation for all of our children when we were in Stockholm.

Again, I was able to do some water sports. There are 28,000 islands in the Stockholm archipelago. We had a 17-foot sloop and sailed among those islands, part way out into the Baltic Sea. Some of the islands are bird sanctuaries, where you are not allowed to land, but you can get quite close with a sailboat and observe the birds without disturbing them.

In connection with my interest in languages, I should mention that the winter was severe; after it snowed in November, we usually didn't see the ground again until April. To get away from that winter, we decided to take the two boys to the Canary Islands, which is Spanish territory. I wanted to know what was going on around me, so I went to adult education night school to learn some Spanish. We had a textbook in Swedish and a Swedish-speaking teacher, who was teaching us Spanish in Swedish! So I knew a few words of Spanish before I got to the Canaries.

*Q: Did you speak Swedish too before you went to Stockholm?*

BACHE: No, but I obtained a few phonograph records from the Foreign Service Institute before I arrived in Sweden. Upon arrival, however, I found that I had to read the newspapers and economic reports in Swedish right away. I found that all the complex words in Swedish were either like French or German or English. It was only the simple connecting words that were Scandinavian and that you had to learn and understand. So it wasn't really hard to read and understand Swedish. To speak it is a little harder, but I learned to make myself understood.

**ERIC FLEISHER**  
**Desk Officer, Scandinavian Countries, USIA**  
**Washington, DC (1969-1974)**

*Eric Fleisher was born in Washington, DC and was raised in Japan. He served in the Army during WWII and attended the University of Stockholm and George Washington University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1950. His posts included Germany, Washington, DC, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden. Fleisher was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan in 2002.*

*Q: After those interesting years in Helsinki, you came back to the Department. You were on the Scandinavian desk in EUR at the time.*

FLEISHER: That's right.

*Q: What were the problems you were facing there?*

FLEISHER: Well, Vietnam was the biggest problem.

*Q: Because all of the Scandinavian countries opposed our policy, didn't they?*

FLEISHER: Yes.

*Q: And some more belligerently than others. Did you deal with that yourself?*

FLEISHER: Yes. Well, I would usually sit in when Martin Hillenbrand, the Assistant Secretary, when he met with the Nordic ambassadors. I was usually the notetaker at these meetings. I also usually briefed Marti before he met with senior Nordic leaders.

The main subject we dealt with the Scandinavians at that time was Vietnam. Iceland was a little different because we had the base situation and the Icelanders weren't all that interested in Vietnam. But with the other three and even with Finland to a lesser degree, the main topic was Vietnam. Of course, at one time, we weren't even seeing any senior Swedish diplomats. I had a very interesting meeting at that time. Gunnar Heckscher, who had been my professor at the University of Stockholm - I had worked for him and for his father, Eli Heckscher - came through Washington his way back to Sweden from India, where he had been Swedish Ambassador. He had previously been ambassador to Japan. We had an informal meeting with U. Alexis Johnson, who I knew from Tokyo. We lived very close to the Johnsons and I remember when Stephen was born. Marshall Greene, who had also served in Japan and in Sweden, and I... And we sat and talked in U. Alexis Johnson's (Deputy Secretary then) office about what we could do about the Swedish situation and Vietnam. That was a very interesting off the record discussion and one in which I had the satisfaction of having known all the participants personally for many years.

*Q: Maybe nothing came out of it at the time, but it probably laid the groundwork for later smoothing the relations back to normal.*

FLEISHER: Yes. And it surely did. Because we all wanted it. The irritant was Mr. Palme, who was getting out in front leading demonstrations against us. It irritated us to no end.

*Q: Then, of course, Mr. Palme came over to the States in 1970.*

FLEISHER: Well, he had been here many times. He was a student here. I knew Olaf Palme as a student at the University of Stockholm. We also kept up a friendly relationship and when I was stationed in Stockholm, and he was prime minister he called me "Eric" and we got along well. He was, he said, pro-American and I think he did admire many things American, but he made his career as a left-wing socialist. Not coming from the working class, he felt that he had to prove himself with the Social Democratic rank and file. Attacking America was one way of doing this.

*Q: He was an intellectual Social Democrat, not a dirty hand working type.*

FLEISHER: Right, exactly.

*Q: At this period, the Nordic countries were considering how to get together and they talked about an organization called NORDEC. Others were more interested in joining Europe, the European Union. Can you tell us a little bit about what our view was on that or whether we had a view?*

FLEISHER: I think our view was, fine. If they join NORDEC as one of the members not tied to NATO well and good. They probably would be drawn in closer to NATO in due course.

*Q: By joining the European Union?*

FLEISHER: No, I thought we meant NORDEC.

*Q: Well, yes, I do mean NORDEC, too.*

FLEISHER: Yes. Well, NORDEC was an economic concept to begin with. The hope was that it would turn into something political. Our view was generally favorable. The question of Nordic union goes back to before the turn of the last century. Initially it was greeted with a great deal of idealistic enthusiasm. As time went on, however, the basic feeling of Nordic unity came into conflict with that of Nordic individuality. This was just another one of those flashes in the pan. In '47 when there was talk really of a Scandinavian union, when the Kalmar talks were held, there was a chance that there could have been a Nordic defense alliance. But with Finland under the shadow of the Soviet Union, Sweden eventually decided that it could not abandon its' neutrality policy that had served it so well since 1815 and turned it down. Subsequently Denmark and Norway went into NATO. Since then there really was no question but that Denmark and Norway would be aligned in NATO and Sweden and Finland would hold to their neutrality policies. In those days we spoke of the "balance of Scandinavia." There was much arguing back and forth as to whether this was a good thing, but it was generally accepted that as long as the Cold War lasted there could be no changes in the alignment. The "system" would adjust to changes in whatever political situation that might arise.

*Q: Denmark, Norway, and Iceland went to NATO, didn't they?*

FLEISHER: Yes.

*Q: Sweden and Finland didn't.*

FLEISHER: Yes. Well, Finland we knew wouldn't anyway because of the-

*Q: The border with the Russians and so forth.*

FLEISHER: And after 1949 the mutual assistance treaty with the Russians.

*Q: I see. Tell us something about our reaction to the treatment that the Swedes gave our newly appointed ambassador, Mr. Holland when he arrived.*

FLEISHER: Our reaction was, of course, very negative. I think the reaction of most Swedes was negative, too. But it was a vociferous group of mostly young people. You have to remember, this was the time of Rudi the Red in France and the students in all of Europe were in ferment... Che Guevara was a great hero. So, we have to take it in that context.

*Q: How long did Ambassador Holland stay?*

FLEISHER: He was there about three years.

*Q: He was able to tough it out and stay.*

FLEISHER: Yes.

*Q: Was he the first black we appointed as ambassador to Sweden?*

FLEISHER: Yes. We had, of course, had a black ambassador to Norway, Mr. Wharton...

*Q: But their treatment of him wasn't related to his ethnic background. It was related to their hatred of our policy in Vietnam.*

FLEISHER: Yes.

*Q: Then eventually in '71, Norway did recognize North Vietnam. Did the others go along with that or was it only Norway?*

FLEISHER: I don't remember. I think Sweden was first to recognize North Vietnam. They even sent a fellow, Piere Schourri, there as ambassador.

*Q: He was sent as ambassador to Hanoi then.*

FLEISHER: Yes.

*Q: But Norway being a NATO country doing it probably irritated-*

FLEISHER: Norway was the first NATO country, yes.

*Q: Did we feel that Norway should join the European Economic Community?*

FLEISHER: Don't think we ever made it an issue or formally advocated it. I think we probably favored it, as did many Norwegians. We felt it would serve stability in the Nordic area, and thereby strengthen the NATO's northern flank. We did favor it as a whole, but we didn't push it.

*Q: And then, of course, they voted it down anyhow.*

FLEISHER: They voted it down for the second time. They did it twice with a 20 year intervening period.

*Q: We then came to the period where our relations with Sweden deteriorated even further in '72 when we refused to send ambassadors there. Did we refuse to receive an ambassador here from Sweden?*

FLEISHER: I think Debesch remained here for a while and then he went home on consultation and didn't come back. I was then on the desk and I used to deal with Leif Leifland, who was the Swedish charge. A rather interesting anecdote. One day, I received call from the NSC. Palme had done something that made them mad over there. He said, "Who is our ambassador in Sweden?" I said, "Oh, Mr. Holland." He said, "Well, recall him." I said, "As a matter of fact he's back here on consultation." "Well, don't send him back. Who is the DCM?" I said, "John Guthrie." "Call him back." He said. "He happens to be here on consultation," I replied. In fact, he was in my office at that moment. Art Olson, chief of the embassy political section, became charge and remained so for quite a while.

*Q: Yes, he was. I remember that. He was charge there and I was charge in Copenhagen at the same time. Just after the time I arrived in Copenhagen, the Danes did vote to join the Common Market. The Norwegians didn't. It was then in '74 that you went to Stockholm?*

**WILLIAM BODDE, JR.**  
**Desk Officer, Sweden**  
**Washington, DC (1970-1972)**

*Ambassador William Bodde was born in Brooklyn and raised in Long Island. He served in the US Army in Korea and attended Hofstra College. He entered the Foreign Service in 1962 and served in Austria, Sweden, and German. He was also ambassador to Fiji, Tuvalu, Tonga and the Marshall Islands and served as EE/MP to Kiribati. Ambassador Bodde was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.*

*Q: Today is October 16, 1998. Bill, you were still desk officer for Sweden at this point.*

BODDE: Yes, I was desk officer. After I came back from Sweden, I was desk officer from 1970-72. You mentioned Olaf Palme at the end of our last session. When I first met Palme he was the education minister. He wasn't prime minister yet. Tage Erlander, the grand old man of Swedish socialism was prime minister, and had just won a landslide election. Palme took over as leader when Erlander stepped down and later was elected prime minister his own right.

I've always considered Palme a fraud, frankly. He was a type of romantic leftist, that were very common in Sweden. In some ways he knew the United States well because he had studied here, but in other ways he had such strange views of the United States you wondered what country he had lived in.

Anyhow, as I mentioned earlier, we tried to use the Swedes as an intermediary. But the problem in using Sweden, and that was typical of Palme, too: you can't be the honest broker if you're not completely honest with both sides. They should have told us exactly what the North Vietnamese said and they should have told the North Vietnamese exactly what we said. They didn't do that and we were caught by surprise by North Vietnam actions when we should not have been. Looking back, I am not sure either the U.S. or North Vietnam were sincerely interested in peace. Certainly North Vietnam would accept no outcome except total victory. I had a low opinion of Palme, but I must say he was very smooth. While I was desk officer, Nixon gave a dinner for the heads of state and heads of government who were in New York for the 25th anniversary of the United Nations. Because it was a stag dinner each dignitary was given a Foreign Service Officer escort. We were not at the dinner itself. We ate in the White House mess while the leaders ate upstairs. But we escorted them into the White House, joined them after dinner for the entertainment and after-dinner drinks and we escorted them out. It was fantastic. It was like wandering into Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum. At one point, I stepped back and inadvertently stepped on Golda Meir's toe. You looked around and there was Haile Selassie or Edward Heath or whoever.

Well, Palme was in very bad odor in the Nixon White House at the time but he came anyhow. The protocol arrangements must have been a nightmare. There was no time for conversation between Palme and the President in the receiving line but on the way out there would be a few minutes of small talk with the President. I wondered what Palme was going to say to the American President being such a vocal and public critic of Nixon's policies. It could have been an awkward moment. But I underestimated Palme's diplomatic skills. When he got up to the President in the farewell line, Palme thanked the President and said, "The opera singers, Evelyn Lear and John McCracken, who preformed this evening were wonderful. I noticed in the program that McCracken is from Gary, Indiana and if I remember right from my student days in America the great middleweight boxer Tony Zale was from Gary." Well, Nixon was a sports buff and his eyes lit up, and he said, enthusiastically "Oh, yes, Zale was one of the greatest middleweights ever, you know", and - boom - we were out of there. Palme knew exactly what button to push.

Because of the ban on high-level contacts, Ingrid and I were invited to many wonderful black-tie dinners at the ambassador's residence. The Swedes wisely cultivated the liberal establishment, including the Kennedys. The Swedes had some very good young officers at the embassy. I used to have a lunch with younger embassy officers once a month. We used to go over to Georgetown to an Irish tavern. The idea was that this meeting was off the record and we could speak frankly and nobody was going to go back and report it. Of course, if it were really important I would have reported it and so would they. It was an opportunity to talk about the problems they were having with the State Department or whatever. Where possible I would help them and tell them who were the most helpful people to talk to at the Department. I would call in advance and ask colleagues to receive them. My closest friend at the embassy was the political counselor, whose name was Jan Eliasson. He later served as their ambassador to the UN and brokered the Iran-Iraq cease-fire. He is supposed to be coming to Washington to be ambassador. Despite differences between us on Vietnam, we had a good time together, but you were asking about their attitudes toward aid.

They were good in the sense that they gave close to the goal of one percent of GNP for foreign aid. However, most Swedes were more interested in demonstrating in downtown Stockholm than joining the Swedish peace corps and going to live in the Third World. They had a lot of trouble recruiting people. They loved the Third World as long as the Third World stayed down there and they stayed up where they were. Despite their claims Sweden was not immune to racism in the treatment of minorities. That was before the large influx of refugees so in my time there weren't very many minorities, but the ones who were there were often treated poorly. Blacks that I knew, some married to Swedes and very assimilated, told me of the slights they endured. An American black woman who was married to a Swedish diplomat told me she would go into a store and somehow she would always be last to be waited on. Even the black deserters ran into problems. They thought they were coming to utopia where there was no racial discrimination. Nonsense.

*Q: Was there the feeling, because of the socialist...*

BODDE: You're asking whether there were spies and communist sympathizers in Sweden? When I arrived, there was lots of publicity about the Swedish Air Force officer, Westerlund, who had been convicted as a spy for the Soviets. Some of our military people in the embassy knew him. The Left was big in Sweden but it was, by and large, not pro-Soviet. It was more like the romantic New Left in the U.S. They wore North Vietnam buttons or carried Mao's little red book but it was mostly posturing. In general, the Swedish political spectrum was to the left of ours. Even the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party were to the left of their counterparts in the U.S.

Even the Conservatives who were somewhat more in sympathy with us were critical of some U.S. policies or actions. I usually would be invited by the Conservative Party Youth to give talks. But their meetings were open to the public and would often end up in anti-American demonstrations. Whenever I arrived on a campus I would check out the student union or other meeting places to see if there were announcements of my talk, and even more important, if there were calls for a demonstration at my talk. I remember going to Lund University which is in southern Sweden and was known as a very radical university. When I got there I asked my host, "Do you expect any trouble?" "No, no, he said." I said, "Well, let's go over to the student union and have a cup of coffee." The student union was plastered with posters about the visit of the "fascist imperialist Bodde and calling on the students to demonstrate." No trouble, right? We won't have any trouble. Of course we had trouble. But there's sort of a nice story involved with that trip. I spent a week giving talks throughout southern Sweden, and a young Conservative student drove me around. He was in his mid-twenties and really loved politics. As a result he was taking forever to get his university degree. He was even thinking about quitting school and going to work full time at national party headquarters in Stockholm. I said, "Let me give you some advice. Get your degree. What you are doing now is lots of fun and very interesting, but some day there may be a change in party leadership and you could be out on your ear. If you want to be independent, get an education so you have something to fall back on besides politics." End of story. Well, it was not the end of the story. Many years later, I was sitting in my office in the State Department. The receptionist called from the C Street lobby and said that there was a gentleman from Sweden in the lobby who would like to see you. I went down and there was my young friend from that trip almost 20 years earlier. He said, "You probably don't remember me. I took you around southern Sweden to give talks on U.S. foreign policy back in the 1960s." I told him that I remembered the trip but I was not sure I would have recognized him. He said, "I just came to thank you. I took

your advice and applied myself to getting my degree. I'm now the youngest member of Parliament," he said, "but I know I can walk out any time, because I have something to fall back on. Thanks again." It makes you feel good.

Q: *Sure it does.*

BODDE: In fact, Anders Bjork, who's been the senior UN official in Bosnia, was the youngest member of Parliament when we sent him on an International Visitor's grant to the States.

Q: *One last question on Sweden. At that time, the Swedes had a very comprehensive social policy, which was obviously very costly, high taxes and all. Were we looking at this and seeing this is the wave of the future, or they've got problems coming down the way? I mean, were we looking at the cost of this and how it figured in the Swedish context?*

BODDE: Some American senators and congressmen studied the Swedish system to see if it might be applied in the U.S. I don't think they found very much. There were also a few American journalists writing about Sweden's "Middle Way" which they saw as a compromise between rampant communism and brutal capitalism. Marquis Childs, the liberal columnist, wrote a book called The Middle Way. Interestingly enough, the Swedish social welfare system wasn't as extensive as the Germans', and the Germans' system was much older. The problem with both systems is that they are too expensive. Back in those days people were not looking at the high costs. Cost aside, it was apparent that a system that worked for a small, homogeneous county might not work for a huge country with a diverse population. No country can afford it now. The taxes got so bad that some famous Swedes such as movie director Ingmar Bergman and Astrid Lindgren, who wrote Pippi Longstocking, had to leave Sweden. They were paying over 100 percent marginal tax rate. I mean it was just crazy.

**ARTHUR JOSEPH OLSEN**  
**Political Counselor**  
**Stockholm (1971-1974)**

*Born in Oregon in 1920, Mr. Olsen received his BA from the University of Santa Clara and his MS from Columbia University. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1942 to 1946 as an overseas captain. His positions upon entering the Foreign Service in 1966 included Stockholm and Brussels. He was interviewed by Tom Dunnigan on February 24, 1997.*

OLSEN: I left there in '71 to go to Stockholm, so it was just at the time when those demonstrations were beginning. I was gone by then, but I remember particularly my wife ... kept her behind for several months to drive up. And that was when they were marching through the streets and making a hell of a noise. So that was a rough time.



*Q: I was overseas then, so I didn't see it in '71. I remember the riots in '68, but that was different. Well, so you went to Stockholm to our embassy there. Who was the ambassador when you arrived?*

OLSEN: Brud Holland [Jerome H. Holland], a black man.

*Q: From Cornell, a football player?*

OLSEN: That's right, he was an All American football player.

*Q: Had he been a success as ambassador?*

OLSEN: He did a pretty good job. They gave him a hard time at the start.

*Q: Oh, I can imagine, yes. Why, because of his color, or because of our policies?*

OLSEN: Both. He spoke up strongly in favor of Nixon and his policies and so forth. The activists jumped on him pretty hard, calling him Nixon's nigger and that kind of thing. But he started off pretty well, and he made some friends.

*Q: Good.*

OLSEN: He was not a political ambassador; he was sort of a PR ambassador. He did a pretty good job at that.

*Q: I think it would have been hard on anybody being ambassador in Sweden at that time, as you yourself experienced later. And the DCM was...*

OLSEN: John Guthrie.

*Q: John Guthrie, oh, yes, I knew him.*

OLSEN: Brud Holland resigned in September of 1972. The Nixon team hadn't made up their mind what they were going to do about who the ambassador should be. At the same time, the Swedes were finishing up with their ambassador, who had been here for several years and was retiring.

*Q: Out of Washington.*

OLSEN: Out of Washington. So there were no ambassadors there for about three months, in both directions. It was not because anybody was holding it up, but because no one was getting around to... And so John Guthrie was chargé. Finally, they decided, toward the end of '72, that they were going to exchange ambassadors. Or at least Sweden was; they were ready to go ahead. I'm not sure how far we were.

*Q: We hadn't asked for agrément for anyone?*

OLSEN: No. So Guthrie had decided to take a Christmas leave. He left the embassy probably about the 15th or so of December, and went to Washington to stay with friends. He was spending the holidays there.

*Q: Leaving you in charge in Stockholm.*

OLSEN: Leaving me in charge, because I was the next guy in line. At that time, the negotiations with the Vietnamese, in Washington and in Paris, had all kind of come to a stall. ... we almost got the deal, but it broke down.

*Q: Oh, that was the light-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel time, wasn't it?*

OLSEN: That's right. And so the reaction of the U.S. government was to resume the war, and particularly to bomb Hanoi. That was about the 19th of December or something like that. Palme, who was...

*Q: Palme being the Swedish prime minister at the time.*

OLSEN: The Swedish prime minister, exactly. He was one who took an active view of all these events. And so when they began the bombing of Hanoi, Palme went on the TV to denounce this. He likened the Nixon bombing of Hanoi to Ouradour and other Nazi outrages.

*Q: The Holocaust, in other words.*

OLSEN: The Holocaust, yes. Reuters put in a thing about what he had said. Our political officer, Paul Storing at that time, had a kind of a habit of recording important statements by the prime minister, particularly in this case when Palme was talking about Christmas and so forth. So he was recording this speech.

*Q: You had it on tape, in other words.*

OLSEN: That's right. And so, back in Washington, actually Nixon was down in Florida at that time, when they saw this thing on the Reuters, they were inflamed. Nixon got Kissinger on the horn and said, "Pull our ambassador out of that place."

Kissinger said, "We don't have one."

Nixon said, "Pull out the chargé."

... authority... "tell him to stay there." And so he said, "Well, get the guy out of there."

And Kissinger said, "Well, we're kind of down... We'd better just stand where we are."

And so I wound up as the chargé.

*Q: That's how you became our man in Stockholm, was it.*

OLSEN: That's right. They wouldn't let Guthrie come back, and they wouldn't let the Swedes send their new ambassador. And, almost for two years, I wound up as chargé d'affaires.

*Q: Yes, I remember, you had a long period as chargé there. And relations were pretty much frozen, in effect. Was there much antipathy toward Americans from the average Swede?*

OLSEN: No. No, there were two ways you could handle this kind of thing. You could circle the wagons, so to speak, and just hope that things would go away. Or take the other view, which was to have an active embassy and make contact with all kinds of people. That's what I decided to do.

*Q: The Swedes were willing to talk and relate with you and so forth.*

OLSEN: That's right. And so I had a good number of friends among the Swedes, including the guys from the Foreign Office. Willy Wachtmeister was the number-three man in the Swedish Foreign Service. I forget his title. Anyhow, he was my basic interlocutor.

*Q: Later ambassador here.*

OLSEN: That's right. He was finally made the ambassador here. When the ice broke, he was the ambassador who was sent.

*Q: Did you ever have to talk to Palme or not, or get a chance to?*

OLSEN: I had a kind of a curious situation in which there was a young man, whose name I forget now, who was kind of the aide-de-camp of Palme. You know, he was kind of his gofer, so to speak. He was a young guy whom I had met along the way, before he had that particular job. So I thought, well, I might as well maintain this contact with this guy, now that he's with Palme's office. So I would call him up and say I'd come around and have a chat with him. And so I'd do that from time to time, maybe once a month or six weeks or something like that. I never got anything that was truly news out of him, but...

*Q: Kept it open, the pipeline.*

OLSEN: I kept it open. And Palme, once or twice, strode in from his office from across the door and walked in there when I was sitting there talking to I forget his name. So he sat down there and he wanted to talk. And so he talked not so much about U.S.-Soviet relations, but other issues of one type or another. You know, what he thought was happening in the Soviet Union, from our point of view, that kind of...

*Q: Well, he had good sources there, I'm sure.*

OLSEN: That's right.

*Q: The Swedes always have had.*

OLSEN: And he also was interested in American politics and wanted to know how things were going. Anyhow, once or twice, I met Palme like that, because otherwise I never was allowed to get anywhere near him.

*Q: Did you go around making speeches in the country? Were you asked by anybody? Or was USIA able to send you out?*

OLSEN: No, I didn't do any of that kind of thing.

*Q: Did anybody on the staff? In most countries, you know, in friendly countries, in western Europe, we're deluged by speech invitations.*

OLSEN: I think the USIA, particularly the cultural attaché, he was pretty active in doing the rounds and doing that kind of thing that you're talking about. And Jodie Lewinsohn, who was public affairs officer. We didn't have a counselor there.

*Q: A public affairs officer, probably.*

OLSEN: She ran a very active... bringing in American speakers and performers.

*Q: Good.*

OLSEN: Operation.

*Q: Very important, I think.*

OLSEN: Her office was attacked a couple of times, with broken windows and that kind of stuff. The Fulbright exchanges and the cultural exchanges back and forth continued exactly as they had been before. Anyhow, travel grants were continued, and I regarded those as the most useful exchanges that we ever had. A number of these people who became prime ministers, Carl... for example, were among those who were on the list.

*Q: We try to pick out the comers.*

OLSEN: Exactly.

*Q: Did you have a problem with deserting American soldiers who made their way into Sweden?*

OLSEN: Not really. Occasionally, one or two of them would come around to the embassy to talk to us. But, by and large, we didn't try to harass them in any respects.

*Q: When they came around, were they received by the military attaché, or by one of the political officers?*

OLSEN: I think, usually, we used the political officer.

*Q: But they didn't cause any trouble to the embassy.*

OLSEN: Not at all, no.

*Q: We had them occasionally in Denmark, but generally they were on their way to Sweden, because the Danes, being a NATO country, would send them back to their units. Now there was an election in 1973 that was fairly well deadlocked, I gather, between the powers, and it threatened the Socialists, who'd been in power for many years, I believe, in Sweden.*

OLSEN: That's right.

*Q: Could you say a word about that and the effect it had.*

OLSEN: The Socialists were somewhat in trouble during that period of time. As you pointed out, the thing was almost a deadlock, and they depended upon some Communist votes to help them make it through. The centralist crowd, which used to be sort of marginal, was coming on strong under this young politician, Falldin, who eventually, years later, became prime minister. But, anyhow, this centralist group represented a significant opposition to the Palme regime.

*Q: More friendly to our point of view on things, or not?*

OLSEN: I used to talk to Falldin, who was not very much interested in foreign affairs, and so he was not interested in talking about Vietnam and that kind of stuff. He was a country boy, and he was interested in his own country and not in anybody else's.

*Q: Not unknown among politicians.*

OLSEN: I tried to get him to travel to the United States, but he didn't want to go.

*Q: Were you there when Ambassador Strausz-Hupé came? Tell us a little bit about that and how that worked out.*

OLSEN: Okay. That was when the ice broke and Henry... decided they were going to have an ambassador here. Strausz-Hupé then was the ambassador of Belgium, so they chose him to be the man who would open things up. I went down to Brussels to sort of brief him on the situation and how things were going and so forth. Then I returned, and he brought with him his DCM.

Okay, that's the end of my tour in Sweden. And, curiously, it was a kind of a trade-off, so to speak, because I was sent down to Brussels to be the political counselor there.

**JOHN P. OWENS**  
**Desk Officer, Sweden**  
**Washington, DC (1972-1974)**

*John P. Owens was born in the District of Columbia in 1927. As a Foreign Service officer he served in Italy, Venezuela, Greece, Finland, Sweden, Bermuda and Washington. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.*

*Q: You were doing [the desk officer job for Sweden and Finland] from '72 and '74. What were the main issues you dealt with?*

OWENS: Sweden was the main issue, again. It was during the period that we interrupted our relations with Sweden. We didn't actually break off relations with Sweden. In '72, during December 1972, the B-52s bombed Hanoi. Olaf Palme was then Prime Minister of Sweden, denounced this as an atrocity, worse than the massacre at Sharpeville.

*Q: Which happened in South Africa?*

OWENS: In South Africa, yes. I remember a Saturday afternoon in December being called in to the State Department, along with Scott George who was our Office Director of the Bureau of Northern European Affairs, and with U. Alexis Johnson, and we called in the Swedish Ambassador, De Beche, who was planning to leave in just a couple of weeks. We had to search all over for him. He turned out to have been at a shopping mall doing his Christmas shopping. That would show the exact date, I would say the 17th of December. He was to leave in two weeks. So the poor fellow was summoned in to the State Department and then Alexis Johnson, who was the Acting Secretary, read him the riot act and said that obviously Sweden did not value its relationship to the United States, judging from the intemperate remarks by Olaf Palme. Therefore, Johnson continued, the Ambassador who had already been named by the Swedish government, De Beche's successor, would not be welcome in Washington. Moreover, that our Charge who by chance happened to have left on leave, John Guthrie, would not be going back to Sweden which would leave the mission in the hands of the third man, the political counselor who would act as Charge. So, for the next year and a half, my work was primarily devoted to damage control in Washington, trying to prevent the administration, which was the administration of President Nixon, from completely putting our relationship with Sweden down the drain. The word from the White House was that no one above an office director level could see the Swedes. So lots of people the Swedes had been calling on suddenly closed their doors to the Swedish mission. So Scott George and I were the ones who dealt exclusively with the Swedes, with the Charge. His name was Leif Leifland, who later became Swedish ambassador to Great Britain. It reached absurd lengths during that year. Nixon, apparently, personally felt very strongly about this. Kissinger was his National Security Advisor, and William Rogers was the Secretary of State, and the word coming out of the White House was: "Be nasty to the bastards." So, Scott George and I drafted a paper, which proposed, and this was accepted, a "cool but correct" policy towards the Swedes, (reminiscent of our initial policy towards the Greek junta) and we would not disrupt any of our ongoing military relationships with the Swedes, but that no high level visitors could go to Sweden, that in Washington, no one higher than the Office Director would receive them, until such time as the Swedes showed that "they valued" their relationship with us.

So that's how we went throughout most of 1973. Now, things began to change for a couple of reasons by the fall of 1973. Kissinger became Secretary of State, but before that during his

questioning by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, a couple of Senators said: "Hey, what about relations with Sweden. This isn't good for us to be having this so-called 'cool but correct' relationship. We share a lot in common with Sweden, they're an important neutral, etc.." It was clear that the Swedes wanted a normalization of relations. Palme was uncharacteristically quiet during 1973. In addition, Kissinger met Liv Ullman, the Norwegian actress, but who played extensively in Ingmar Bergman films...

*Q: Also, she was with the United Nations Children's Fund. So she was a major personality and an international figure, not just the movies.*

OWENS: That's right. She met Kissinger at a dinner party in Los Angeles, or Hollywood, I guess it was, and came on very strongly for returning to normal relations with Sweden. But I think the pressure of Hubert Humphrey and Claiborne Pell who both had Swedish connections, Humphrey because of Minnesota, and Pell, I can't recall, but some family member came from Sweden, and he visited Sweden frequently. So, there was pressure on the Senate from the Democratic side, and the White House wanted to keep the Senators happy. We knew that eventually relations would be restored to normal.

*Q: I think I heard a story to the effect that a Senator asked Kissinger at a hearing: "Why won't you see the Swedish Ambassador?" and he responded, sort of off the cuff: "Well, I'll see anybody. Of course, my door is open to anybody." And all of a sudden, relations had changed because he had committed himself.*

OWENS: Well, he did. He assured the Senators in the hearing that he would look seriously into this question. I can't recall the specific statement you alluded to, but that would be along the lines that relations would be getting back to normal. As I mentioned, it reached ridiculous lengths. In 1973, the US held a competition for high school students throughout the world, to write "What the landing on the moon meant to me." Some students, one or two, I can't recall, from Sweden were among the winners, and the winners were to receive a piece of moon rock, which the astronauts had brought back from the moon. So, we sent a paper over on that, that the Swedes would also be receiving this, and we would send it to the high school in Sweden. The answer came back: "No, no moon rock for the Swedes," which was incredible how small the thinking was. These were the cronies...

*Q: Ehrlichman, and the Nixon administration...*

OWENS: But once Kissinger got on the bandwagon, and particularly once he became Secretary of State, it was inevitable that we would get back to normal relations. I do remember that when Hubert De Beche, the former Swedish Ambassador left, that Scott George and I were the only ones who went out to the airport to see him off. There was no one there from even Protocol. And during a cold winter day, he departed. Then by the spring of 1974, when we did agree to exchange ambassadors, Wilhelm Wachtmeister was made Ambassador to Washington, and again Scott George and I went out there to meet him. I often thought, in later years, Wachtmeister became quite a social person in Washington. He eventually became dean of the corps, playing tennis with Bush and others. I still think of Scott George and myself, and then Wachtmeister invited my wife and me over the next day for lunch, then to see him twelve years later, the lion at

social functions, because he stayed on then from 1974 until two years ago. He became dean of the corps. So then, after service on the desk, I went to Sweden as Political Counselor with Strausz-Hupé.

*Q: I want to go back to the time you were on the Swedish/Finnish desk. You mentioned the military relationship with Sweden. The Swedes were vehemently neutral, and yet at the same time they were basically plugged in to NATO.*

OWENS: That's right.

*Q: Were you getting screams of anguish from either the CIA or the Pentagon? How were you dealing with this?*

OWENS: Well, they were pretty well intimidated by the political heat from the White House, and they took a low profile. However, the military was able to continue. We did discourage high level military visits. They were also included in the ban, but the existing military commitments not otherwise spelled out were to go on. Now, as far as the Swedish military were concerned, they were very pro-US. They knew they were never afraid of ever having to defend against the United States. They knew who their potential adversary would be. It would be the Soviet Union. So, they depended upon us for research in their own weapons industry, particularly the aircraft industry. They had their own plane, the Viggen. Even though they depended in part on engine technology, Pratt Whitney and General Electric from the United States, they nevertheless competed with us for the sale, the major sales of the '70s, the weapons sales of the century was to sell to various countries, the fighter aircraft...

*Q: The F16?*

OWENS: The F16 which won, which beat a couple of American competitors out, as well as the Viggen, and the French plane.

In answer to your question, the CIA was of course active there. When I did eventually go to Sweden as Political Counselor, in a very large political section, a couple were State Department, and the rest were agency people whom I basically had very little dealings with.

**JAMES O'BRIEN HOWARD**  
**Agricultural Officer, US Department of Agriculture**  
**Stockholm (1972-1977)**

*James O'Brien Howard was born in Alabama in 1915. He received an A.B. degree from Birmingham Southern College in 1936. He then went to Iowa State University and completed his M.A. degree in 1937 and his Ph.D. in 1939. He began his career with the Department of Agriculture in 1939. He became a foreign affairs officer with the Foreign Agriculture Relations department of the*



*U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1953. Mr. Howard was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.*

*Q: You were in Sweden during the early seventies. Relations were, to say the least, cool. I mean regular relations. Olaf Palme was the Prime Minister who was a good solid Socialist and going around sticking it to the United States any time. You had President Nixon, supported by Henry Kissinger, who didn't take this lightly. How did this intrude?*

HOWARD: Olaf Palme was a well educated person. In fact he was a graduate of Kenyon College in Ohio. Where he irritated us unbearably was in his criticism of the Vietnamese war. My wife was as critical of that policy as Olaf Palme, but she said, "You know, to have that guy preaching to us day after day and I am suppose to sit there and take it, it is pretty hard." And it was hard to take. I have forgotten what happened and triggered Nixon to angrily say, "Bring our Ambassador home." The State Department said, "He is already home." "Don't let him go back." Then the DCM somehow got out of the country. Anyway, the Embassy was run for eight or ten months by the chief Political Officer, whose name was Arthur Olsen. He was not a career Foreign Service officer, but had been in the Foreign Service for some time. He was a journalist by training. Art Olsen ran that Embassy and we never had a better period. He was a good administrator and we all got along famously. I kept pushing markets for agricultural products.

*Q: There weren't movements a foot to boycott American products?*

HOWARD: I always thought of myself as a fairly liberal person. But back in California the grape growers were having their problems with a labor organizer, Caesar Chavez. My sympathies were completely with him as he was trying to organize the workers over there. But as one of his tools he was working in Sweden, for example, to try to get the big food chains to boycott American lettuce. Now here is where my respect for Caesar Chavez's efforts ran counter to my job in Sweden, which was to sell lettuce. I waited for Washington to give me some instructions. They were caught between the same rock and hard place. I finally developed some copy to give to these food chains defending their buying the lettuce...things they could do to answer their public. I sent a copy back to Washington telling them what I had done. They immediately published it and that became our policy on these things.

There was a guy over there covering that part of the world for Caesar Chavez and he ran an article in The Nation criticizing what we were doing and Jim Howard by name. So, for a guy who almost didn't get to go abroad because he was a Democrat under Benson, to be criticized by the farm workers rounded out the picture.

**JOHN P. OWENS**  
**Political Officer**  
**Stockholm (1974-1976)**

*John P. Owens was born in the District of Columbia in 1927. As a Foreign Service officer he served in Italy, Venezuela, Greece, Finland, Sweden, Bermuda and Washington. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.*

*Q: You went to Stockholm from '74 to '76.*

OWENS: That's correct, the summer of '74 and that was when Robert Strausz-Hupé was appointed there, I think I mentioned that some years earlier, Strausz-Hupé was going to Sri Lanka as Ambassador, and picked the Consul General in Athens, Peter Petersen, to go with him as DCM. Strausz-Hupé was a republican stalwart, conservative, and supported Barry Goldwater in his campaign. We were at loggerheads ideologically most of the time I was there. I still remember, when Nixon was forced out of office, that he insisted we cancel all social activities, to go into a kind of mourning. He thought this was a great tragedy for the American republic. Ironically, just to conclude that note, a few years later, when the Democrats came in in 1976, he actually wrote to Vice President Mondale saying that he would like to continue on as Ambassador to NATO, which he was. Rather ironic for someone who had been such an open partisan of the Republican Party.

*Q: What was Strausz-Hupé's method of operation?*

OWENS: Strausz-Hupé is physically a very tiny man. Have you met him? But with a massive ego and he had earlier been Ambassador to Brussels, to the kingdom of Belgium. I remember reading his cables when I was on the Scandinavian desk, in Washington, where he kept saying that Belgium had a unique role to play as a bridge between East and West, etc., and it seemed that wherever he went, he wanted to make it the center of action. So we used to all smile indulgently when we received these cables. So then, when he got to Sweden, he wanted to make Sweden the center, and developed a relationship with Olaf Palme. I used to generally go along with him to his meetings.

*Q: How could these two people, conservative and Palme was sort of from the bleeding left?*

OWENS: That's true. But Strausz-Hupé was nothing if not practical, pragmatic. He knew it was to his advantage to be able to say: "I spoke with Palme, today, and he confided to me the following..." I drafted all his cables, he didn't draft himself, but he would give the thrust of what he wanted to say, and he would obviously be in the center of the action. Palme, who was eager for a friendly hand from the US, because he was attacked from the center and right for having jeopardized Swedish relations with the United States. I think most Swedes felt unhappy at the fact. It did bother him a great deal that we had cut off relations. On the one hand, you have this moral fervor, the conscience of the world syndrome that the government had and which was shared by many Swedes, particularly of the left, at the same time, the awareness that whatever happens in the US, happens a few years later in Sweden, because everything from their popular music to their fashion, to their thinking, is completely western. Fortunately, they never imported the violence that we have in our society, unless it was by outsiders. So they felt very unhappy. Even Palme recognized that it was important for him to shore up his right, that the conservatives were very unhappy at this break with their natural ally. So they developed, I would say, a rather good relationship. It was a little difficult for Strausz-Hupé, and for us who were doing the

drafting, because while he wanted to emphasize his intimacy with Palme, at the same time, he wanted to show that he was following the party line and being appropriately tough, and chiding the Swedes continuously, because their positions in the UN and elsewhere often differed from our own. He became very interested in Sweden's role in the socialists' internationale. The fact that Sweden and its social democrats were important figures in the socialist movement, but not the communist socialist movement, we played on that a great deal. Strausz-Hupé had a massive ego. He was quite jealous of the contacts of his staff. We in the political section worked very hard to develop our contacts, but we had to be very careful, because Strausz-Hupé was very jealous that anyone of importance be his contact rather than anyone else's.

We had, during the time I was there, a visit from Kissinger. It was a major event. I recall that there was a plan of the left to demonstrate against Kissinger's coming, and we got a call from Oslo. Kissinger was traveling through some of the other capitals. It was a big event in Stockholm for Kissinger to come. It was, I believe, Bob Funseth who was traveling with him as one of his entourage. "Well, you know, we think we're not going to come to Stockholm, we've heard about these demonstrations that were planned." So we assured him that nothing would get out of hand, and they said they wanted assurances from the government to that effect. And, moreover, they wanted the Prime Minister out at the airport to meet them. So I relayed that to my Swedish colleagues who had no problem with giving assurances that the Swedish government would control the crowds, but were aghast at the idea of the Prime Minister going to the airport which violated international protocol. To me, it was rather symbolic of the Kissinger ego. So we said: "Gee, we'll do everything to assure there's no problem, but that Mr. Palme cannot go out to the airport. The Foreign Minister would go out there." Well, they finally agreed. But behind the scene, they were constantly making disparaging remarks about the Swedes, and about Palme. Nevertheless, the visit went rather successfully. It was a major coup for Palme and for the Social Democratic government of Sweden to have gotten Kissinger there. But it was really a non-event in terms of US foreign policy. There was no real rapport between Kissinger and Palme, because of the past. That's why I was quite surprised to see an article written by Kissinger after Palme's death, when he was assassinated, talking about their close relationship. This was a shock to me, after the nasty and mean things that had been said, at least during those years. Kissinger may have changed once he left State. I suspect he did after he went into business and these contacts became necessary for him. So those were the main events of my stay.

*Q: What was, once you got away from these personality problems, your evaluation and impression of Olaf Palme? He played such a major role.*

OWENS: Yes. Well, I think he was quite a brilliant man, ascetic, very austere type of personality. He lived quietly, and was a very shrewd politician and intellectual, really. I think he had a first class mind. I was impressed by him. I used to sit there and take notes, I didn't get to know him personally, but observing him and dealing with people who did know him intimately. He was hated by the conservatives in Sweden. He was born into a well-to-do family, and his wife was considered an aristocrat by Swedish standard. So he was like FDR, a traitor to his kind. I found it a little grating this "conscience of the world" syndrome, but it seemed to be in inverse ratio to the proximity to Sweden to the location of the issue. As some Swedes will remark today that what was going on in Romania, the horrible things there, was never discussed, whereas US bombing

of Vietnam, what was going on in South Africa, particularly South Africa, or Spain until Franco was overthrown. So it was a selection type of conscience.

*Q: One final thing on the Stockholm base. What about the Swedish feelings about the Soviets? This was a period, wasn't it, when the Soviet subs were sneaking in and out all the time?*

OWENS: It got much worse later, actually. But there was never, in neither Sweden, nor Finland was there ever any affinity for the Soviet Union. I think that the Finns, for example, were fearful of a Soviet invasion. In the case of Sweden, much less, because the Finns had experienced this twice in modern times. In the case of Sweden, there was not that direct fear, but there was very little sympathy for Russian communism. The communist party of Sweden never got more than a small percentage of the votes, 5% was usually its maximum. There were other issues, the Wallenberg case. Oh, that was one other issue that we did...that I worked on in Washington on the desk, to find out what we could about what happened to Raoul Wallenberg.

*Q: Could you explain what that was?*

OWENS: Yes. Raoul Wallenberg was in Budapest during World War II, heading the Swedish mission. He had been personally responsible for helping the flight of thousands of Hungarian Jews out of Hungary, and resisting the fascist government, as well as the Nazis, and taking some chances to assist the Jews in fleeing. When the Soviet troops came in to Hungary, they seized him, or rather took him into custody. He has never again been seen. The Swedes made repeated efforts--this was at the end of the war, and the years following--to locate him, and finally when Khrushchev came to power, he said that it turned out that Wallenberg had died in 1947 during one of the excesses of Stalin. They blamed it all on Stalin. Nevertheless, there were rumors by various defectors, people who had been in prison in the Soviet Union, who claimed to have seen a person answering Wallenberg's description. So the Swedes asked us after we began to improve relations, to give them what we could, and we'd check with our sources. At first the White House was reluctant. We had to get their OK. But the White House finally said: "OK, you can do it." We checked with the agency, and they had reports of people who had been in prison. One fellow who had said that he had been a cellmate, or rather a person in the next cell to his, and that one prisoner had indicated that he was a Swede, tapping on the wall to each other. He seemed to answer to Wallenberg's description. It was pretty vague, nothing very substantial. I personally felt that it was true that he had died if not in 1947, probably many years ago. You know there is a group of people in the United States, many of them American Jews, who have formed a committee to save Wallenberg, and are convinced he is still alive, all facts to the contrary, and have been constantly pressing to put pressure, first on the Gorbachev, and then on the Yeltsin government to release details on this, but I think it is a lost cause.

**ERIC FLEISHER**  
**Press Attaché, USIS**  
**Stockholm (1974-1977)**

*Eric Fleisher was born in Washington, DC and was raised in Japan. He served in the Army during WWII and attended the University of Stockholm and George Washington University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1950. His posts included Germany, Washington, DC, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden. Fleisher was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan in 2002.*

*Q: It was then in '74 that you went to Stockholm?*

FLEISHER: Yes.

*Q: And this time as press attaché.*

FLEISHER: Well, I was the victim of the GLOP. It had been sort of unofficially agreed that I would get one of the DCM jobs in a Nordic country. But then came Mr. Kissinger, who put into effect this GLOP (Global Outlook Policy) which meant I couldn't go to any of the Nordic countries, not even to Northern Europe. It was then that I came up for reassignment. I was offered going to ISA in the Defense Department or going to USIA. I went to USIA who were not affected by the GLOP and they said, "Well, we can send you to Sweden." So, I went to Stockholm.

*Q: No GLOP for USIA.*

FLEISHER: No. So, I went there as press attaché. It was not one of my better assignments because I was a round peg in a square hole. I was not really a press man, despite my newspaper ancestry. My father had had that job about 30 years earlier. A lot of people reminded me of that. They didn't say so directly, but I felt that they thought "You're not as competent as your old man was." Anyway, it was not one of my better posts. But I had family there. My brother and sister lived there. My sister was at the time probably the oldest locally employed American in any of our embassies abroad. She was there for more than 50 years. She's just recently retired in the last couple of years. She ran the residence and handled protocol. So, it was nice to be with my family. It was the last couple years of my father's life. Personally, it was okay, but professionally...

*Q: Did we have an ambassador by the time you arrived?*

FLEISHER: No, we didn't, but we got one. That was Strausz-Hupe.

*Q: Was there still a lingering hostility over Vietnam and Nixon when you got there?*

FLEISHER: Well, not really.

*Q: It had disappeared pretty much.*

FLEISHER: Because it was something that had been fostered by the left-wing, and when the left-wing lost interest, the enthusiasm sort of dissipated. Not that they favored American policy. Just like other European countries, the Swedes had two views on the United States, one being admiration and the other, envy. That remains so today.

*Q: Yes. What were the problems you had to deal with as press attaché?*

FLEISHER: Well, mainly Vietnam. It was still going on and I would make speeches supporting our policy.

*Q: Did you travel around the country making speeches?*

FLEISHER: Yes, I did. I used every opportunity I could. I knew I was speaking to a stone wall with the exception of the Conservatives at that time.

*Q: Was there much embarrassment at our diplomatic boycott there?*

FLEISHER: If there was, it was in a very small circle. No, I don't think the average Swede knew about the boycott or really cared. Their contact with America was quite different - television, the movies, music, American technology and so forth. Whether they had an ambassador there in the U.S. or we had one here in Sweden didn't affect the average person.

*Q: There were strong ties between the two countries. There always have been.*

FLEISHER: Yes.

*Q: What was the affect of the arrival of Ambassador Strausz-Hupe?*

FLEISHER: Well, it was greeted very favorably. Of course, there was much talk that now Sweden was being accepted by the Americans. So, yes, it did have a beneficial effect. It was a good thing for the relations. And Vietnam was over by then anyway.

*Q: Did you have to arrange press conferences for him?*

FLEISHER: Yes.

*Q: And did you write any speeches for him?*

FLEISHER: I don't think so. When he came, my time was pretty short. I was leaving. And I really didn't want to extend in that job. I thought had had enough and would be glad to get back to the Department and do my own thing again.

**DAVID S. SMITH**  
**Ambassador**  
**Sweden (1976-1977)**

*After graduating from Dartmouth University in 1939, Ambassador David S. Smith attended Columbia Law School and later served in the US Navy. In 1954,*

*Ambassador Smith joined the Department of State as a Special Assistant to John Foster Dulles. Ambassador Smith's career included an ambassadorship to Sweden. Charles Stuart Kennedy interviewed Ambassador Smith in 1989.*

*Q: Well, anyway, I want to move on then. Let me ask the question, how did you become appointed Ambassador to Sweden? We're talking about 1976 under President Ford.*

SMITH: Yes. That's correct. I was sitting one day in my law office in Washington on Pennsylvania Avenue when I had a call from a young man in the White House who said that President Ford would like to see me. I had had no thought whatsoever of returning to government service. I had a very, very successful law practice. I was representing an international bank and deeply involved in all kinds of legal problems and enjoying my practice a lot and enjoying life in Georgetown. There was no thought of returning to government. I never spoke to anyone about it. But I had known President Ford really quite well for a great many years. I first knew him when we both first came to Washington in about 1954, he as a congressman and I worked in the Department of State. We had seen each other from time to time, and then after the end of the Eisenhower years when I returned to New York, I always used to bring my graduate students from Columbia University down to Washington for a two-day visit a couple of times a year and asked many of my old friends including President Ford, then Congressman Ford and Speaker of the House, to speak to them. So over the years he had met with me each year for an hour or two, very generously. He was very generous with his time. I think he enjoyed the sharp, active questions of highly intelligent graduate students who were interested to learn about foreign affairs and government. So he knew me in that context as leading a group of graduate students. I guess he just thought he would like to see me back in government. So I went over to see him, and he told me he would like me to be ambassador in some country in Europe and was I interested.

And I said, "Well, I'd have to talk to my partners and my wife, but my initial reaction, well, I hadn't had a chance even to think about it. My initial reaction was it certainly would be great to be an ambassador, and I would be very interested."

So he said, "Well, you go back and check with them, and if they agree with you . . ." and he told me who to see in the White House and talk about it.

*Q: Was Sweden the job or were there several others?*

SMITH: No, I was offered another position to another European country that would have been extremely interesting, but I declined it. The brother-in-law of one of my law partners was then ambassador there, and I felt it would be perceived as a stab in the back if he were recalled and out of office and I got his position. So I said, "No, I'm sorry. I can't take that."

And the young man who was interviewing me said, "Mr. Smith, you know the train only stops once, and you're making a big mistake. You're getting your offer now."

I said, "Well, I'm sorry. I have my own principles and honor, and I don't feel I could take that and I'm afraid if that's the only opportunity I'll have to say no." So I was very saddened when I left.

To my great surprise I had a call a couple of weeks later saying, "We reported the situation to the President, and he said he still wants you to be an ambassador in Western Europe, and we're authorized to offer you another country." He did offer me then another country and I started preparing for service there, and a couple of weeks later I was told that they had changed. They had rearranged a couple of appointments and instead they would like me to go to Sweden, was that acceptable.

And I said, "Well, that's even better. I'm just thrilled, and I'd be delighted to go there."

*Q: I wonder could you explain a little about how you were briefed. How did the Department prepare you? Obviously you were better prepared than the great majority of those who are politically appointed in that you had been teaching, you had worked in the State Department and all this. But still, how did sort of system work to get you ready for this?*

SMITH: I just can't say enough for the Department's preparation. I thought it was excellent in almost every detail. I understand it's much more structured now than it was then, but even in 1976 I thought it was excellent. I was given a long schedule of appointments that would be made for me in almost every department of government usually starting with the top, a very brief meeting--usually brief, at least--with the Secretary and then briefings in that agency because after all an ambassador does come in contact with every conceivable field. While you wouldn't expect the Agriculture Department to have much impact on an ambassador in Europe or other departments that might be even more remote, nevertheless, they usually do come to the ambassador's desk. So in a sense it was a little course in civics and government, but with particular concern for the responsibilities of the ambassador and how it related to Sweden.

So I had appointments, as I said, at Agriculture, in the Pentagon which I was quite familiar with but brought up to date currently with each of the services in the Secretary of Defense's office, with the CIA, of course, where I met with now President Bush, who was then Director of the CIA. He and I had lunch together. As old friends we communicated very well, and I spent a day or two at the CIA and with each of the different branches of the government. Mainly, of course, the conferences were in the State Department. For some of them, for instance a unclassified briefing on terrorism, my wife was asked to join me so that she would be informed, too. But mostly it was just briefings for me arranged through the appropriate branch of the Department of State, and I was terribly, terribly disappointed they had to be crowded into too short a period.

I was hemmed in by the fact that Henry Kissinger had a visit already scheduled in Sweden and also immediately after that the King was to be married and go off on a three-month honeymoon. He had set one day when he would receive new ambassadors, and if I wasn't there for that day I wasn't going to be accredited for months. So we had to encapsulate my briefings into a period of about three weeks, whereas, normally it ran something more like four or five.

*Q: What was the situation, vis à vis the United States and Sweden? We're talking about you were there . . .*

SMITH: In '76.



*Q: When in '76?*

SMITH: I landed in May.

*Q: May of '76.*

SMITH: About the first of May.

*Q: What was the situation at that point?*

SMITH: You mean relations between Sweden and the United States?

*Q: Yes.*

SMITH: Oh, they were excellent. There had been a great deal of friction over the Vietnam War, of course, under President Nixon. The ambassadors had been withdrawn and Olaf Palme, the Prime Minister, had made very derogatory remarks about President Nixon's conduct of the war in Vietnam and the bombing of Haiphong, and there was a great deal of feeling. The Swedes, of course, are neutral and were horrified at bombing of civilian targets and the conduct of the war in general. So mainly over that, there had been a great deal of friction, but with the end of the war it was the intention, I think, of the two governments that the month long trip of the King across the United States shortly before I went to Sweden, followed up by the visit of Henry Kissinger to Sweden, that was supposed to clarify in public opinion that the situation was back to normal. I certainly found everywhere I went in Sweden in all circles an extremely friendly regard for the United States. You can hardly meet a Swede who doesn't have relatives somewhere in the United States, a great many in Minnesota and that part of the middle west. But everywhere they're eager to tell you about their third cousins and where they live in the United States. So there are all kinds of warm relations.

*Q: Well, you're speaking of warm relations, but there must have been as there is in almost every other country, but I think it would be almost virulent in Sweden, sort of the left wing socialist labor group that anything that happens the United States is to blame. I mean, they come out of a Marxist environment. I'm not talking about Soviet. But I'm talking about a Marxist outlook in that we are the enemy, and it's where you've got to have an enemy and the United States is it for this thing.*

SMITH: Oh, indeed there is. That was very prevalent. I didn't mean to suggest that this was a 100 percent situation. Traditionally the Communist Party in Sweden holds about 4 percent of the vote, and there is a small minority of dedicated Communists. Indeed, when Henry Kissinger came, there was a protest march through the streets of Stockholm that gave us great concern. We thought it might mar the visit. Actually it didn't particularly mar it, but all over Sweden buses were organized and largely young people were sent by bus and by train to Stockholm. And on the second day of his arrival there was a march through Stockholm. I observed the march. The young people marched about four or five abreast, many of them pushing baby carriages with them. They had gotten out their red banners from the last march which had been about a year

before, and they were carrying tired old red banners plus a lot of new ones that were saying bad things about Kissinger. So on the extreme left, there was that.

*Q: That was the Communist Party.*

SMITH: That was the Communist Party.

*Q: How about the left . . .*

SMITH: I'm just getting to that. As to the Social Democrats, of course, there's anti-American feeling. It cropped up in some way or other almost daily in the Swedish newspapers. I eventually became proficient in Swedish so that I could read the newspaper, and of course I did, and I watched the news on television. It wasn't as much on television, but in the newspapers which are owned and edited by liberal publishers. There's both liberal and conservative press in Sweden. Of course, there were anti-American remarks, and the embassy gave great consideration whenever there was an article or editorial that was anti-American, and we took what steps we could to counter it. In fact, I personally went to the newspaper and to one of the radio stations on more than one occasion to object to matters that I felt they had published that were unfair to the United States.

*Q: Well, how about television? I sort of have the picture, again, I speak of someone who's never been to Sweden, served there or dealt with it. You have what is true in many countries including parts of the United States the activists and often the most innovative people often come from sort of the left wing of any group, and Swedish cameramen and directors going out and going to the slums of Washington or New York or drug areas or crime areas is fair enough. But I mean, in other words, focusing in on the bad parts. Was this true on TV there or was it, would you say, the TV side, at least, was a fairly balanced picture about the United States?*

SMITH: Remember we're in a different time period now. You're talking now in 1989 when we've just had a good many years off and on of very serious problems of the kind you're talking about. Those problems had begun to surface, of course, when I was there. There obviously had been student demonstrations in '68 and all, and drugs had become a problem and all those related issues. They weren't as much a part of our daily life back in 1976 as they are today, and television has come a long way since then, too. So these things did come up on television, yes, they did. And there certainly were anti-American articles on television, too. There again I objected to them.

I do remember going to television executives and objecting to coverage that I thought was unfair to the United States. Of course, they always claimed they gave a balanced picture, and there were other articles that were more fair. There's no question that the American Ambassador does live a very sheltered life and it's all too easy to fall into a situation where the contacts you have and friends you make in the country come from a very privileged group who are more apt to be friendly to the United States than perhaps if they come from a different background in other parts of the country. But I made every effort to be in touch with all shades of opinion and different groups, and there's no question the group that you describe did exist very definitely in Sweden, but I don't think it was the overriding view of the Swedes. Basically, I think, they admired the

United States and the bulk of the population certainly was friendly to the United States at the time when I was there.

*Q: How about the students? You had had a lot of experience, of course, at Columbia which is not exactly a conservative student body, anyway. But, again, I would think the University of Stockholm and all, I mean, most universities particularly in Europe and many off in the Far East students tend to be much more radical than they are when they get out and get a job. Did you find this a problem? I mean, did you find you were sort of having a head to head with a lot of students.*

SMITH: Yes, of course.

*Q: And how did you handle this?*

SMITH: I did meet with student groups in at least three universities there and spoke to them and had discussions with them. Of course, you're quite right, the students are a great deal more liberal than my contemporaries were. I think you cope with each question as it arises. They objected to the United States foreign policy in many respects.

It's a funny thing, you know, the Swedes are very proud. There is one saying I heard constantly. You would think it's sort of adverse to them, and yet they would tell it with a certain pride. They would say, "Oh, yes. Well, you know, Sweden is the mother-in-law of the world in foreign policy!" They did. I constantly found that Swedes were trying to tell me how we should conduct our foreign policy. It's fine that they are so interested in it, but they truly are and, of course, there are all shades of opinion there. You're quite right, the student groups were a great deal more liberal, and I thought some of them perhaps too liberal. But I agree with you, that's the way bright, young students and graduate students are apt to be.

*Q: We'll come back to the politics in a minute, but how did you find the embassy? You said there was a bad morale problem there. How did this develop? You mentioned part of this, but how did you deal with this? How did you find the staff?*

SMITH: I found the staff just great. My experience there strengthened my great admiration and high regard for the Foreign Service. I think it was largely a matter of personality. It was described to me in Washington before I left. The ambassador who had been there immediately before me was an extremely intelligent man who has continued as a non-career ambassador in other posts and has given long service to this country. He tended, when he was in Sweden, to rely very heavily on his deputy chief of mission who had a proclivity for avoiding decisions. Many important papers that required action got lost either at his home or in his office. This had led to a total despair on the part of the staff. So I think that had a great deal to do with it.

*Q: Oh, nothing can be more annoying.*

SMITH: Well, it was really terrible when I arrived there. But I had been told that before hand. Actually, I guess, just with a single stroke you can cure a thing like that. I was given an open hand to choose a deputy chief of mission which I think is customary with new ambassadors

going in. I interviewed several men and didn't quite reach a decision when I left the United States because there was one who had been so highly described to me who was then serving as chargé on the continent. So I arranged by telephone--I suggested he meet me in London on the way, or if it didn't embarrass him too much, to come directly to Sweden as soon as I got there, which he did. He visited me over a long weekend. We walked along the canals for hours at a time talking about all sorts of things. I became totally taken with him, admired him tremendously, and asked him to come as soon as he could to join me as DCM. He couldn't leave immediately because he was chargé. So it was a couple of months delay before he could come. But as soon as he did come, he and I worked very closely together, and I think he was a model of perfection as a DCM. He was everything a DCM should and could be, and obviously that took a tremendous load off my shoulders. It didn't mean that I dropped things. But I had to serve as both ambassador and DCM for the first couple of months, until he came--which was good experience for me.

*Q: Well, it's probably a very good learning experience.*

SMITH: Yes, it is.

*Q: This is how you learn how it's done. Who was your DCM?*

SMITH: His name was Jack Perry. He was a Sovietologist and had served several years in Moscow and was chargé in Czechoslovakia at the time that I was appointed as ambassador.

*Q: And later was he in Paris, too?*

SMITH: Yes.

*Q: As a junior officer. He and Frank Carlucci are two names that crop up again and again, of talking about really absolutely first-rate people no matter in what context.*

SMITH: He was totally first rate.

*Q: He's in North Carolina right now.*

SMITH: Yes, he is. And I certainly had the highest regard for him. He had just the right sense of balance and dignity and long experience. Unfortunately I had to wait a couple of months before he could get there, but he was worth waiting for. I think I had done quite a bit to get morale on the right track before he got there, and as soon as he got there in no time at all we just didn't have any more problems at all with morale. It became very, very good. It was a total change.

*Q: How did you find Henry Kissinger when he came? One gets what can only be called a mixed review. He's an absolutely brilliant man in some cases and absolutely a bulldozer and sort of secretive and other cases which impeded his effectiveness. How did you find him in your context in dealing with him?*

SMITH: I found him great. I had known Henry Kissinger for a great many years. Each year during the years I was at Columbia he came at least once during the year to lecture to my

graduate students in my International Fellows Program. So I had contact with him while he was a Harvard professor before he entered government service. The first time I saw very much of him after he was in government was when he came to visit in Sweden, and there, of course, I was with him from before 8:00 in the morning until on toward midnight at night for a couple of days. So it was very intensive contact. I'm a great admirer of Henry Kissinger. I recognize we all have all kinds of limitations, and I'm aware of all kinds of things people say about him. I think he was a good Secretary. He certainly had a superb grasp of foreign policy, and I liked his operations.

*Q: Did he have any particular thing he was trying to push when he was in Sweden? Did he want the Swedes to do anything, or was this really a matter of kissing and making up?*

SMITH: It was the latter. Being totally green in service as ambassador and new to the game, of course, I wanted this to be the most successful visit there ever was, and I'd spent quite a bit of time looking through some briefing books which I'd received in advance, a copy of what had been put together for the Secretary. So I'll describe a little brief meeting we had the first morning he was there that I think might amuse you. It certainly was a surprise to me. The Swedes wanted to be sure that he had total privacy and security. So instead of letting him stay at my residence or somewhere else, they had set aside for him a beautiful little 18th century palace in the midst of a rather large garden in the middle of Stockholm. So I appeared a little before the time that we were to meet and was outside with a couple of his traveling companions. He came out about 15 minutes early, to our surprise.

He looked around and said, "Well, let's get going."

And one of them said, "Well, we just can't go there now. We'll arrive there ten minutes early at the foreign ministry and throw them all into confusion. We can't arrive ahead of time."

So he said, "All right." And he turned to me and said, "Let's go take a walk around that lake." So the two of us together took a little walk around the lake. After asking me a few polite questions about how I liked Sweden and telling me what the weather was going to be like, he turned to me and said, "Tell me, what's this all about now? What does Palme want to talk to me about?"

And I somewhat gasped, "Well, I guess all the matters are in your briefing book that I'm sure you studied on the way over."

And he said, "I don't have any idea what's in the briefing book. I had a lot of important work to do on the plane, and I haven't looked at it yet. What's it all about?"

And I said, "Well." I took a long breath and I said, "I think he just wants to know your personal views and what American foreign policy is on each one of the major areas of the world and all the crises that are in existence at the moment."

He said, "Oh, if that's all it is, that's easy. We can talk about that in my sleep. Now tell me more about how you find the Swedes."

So that's how it went. That's pretty much what the conference was about. It was an all-day conference where Palme would ask a rather limited, direct question like, "What is the United States policy toward apartheid in South Africa? Is it going to be changing?" And Kissinger would give a 20-minute capsuled answer and then Palme would say, "Well, now tell me your views on Cambodia." And it would progress like that around the world. Kissinger was sort of Kissinger lecturing to a group of college seniors, maybe.

*Q: I'm taking that we wanted to have friendly relations with Sweden, but we didn't want the Swedes to particularly do anything for us.*

SMITH: No, we really didn't. There were just almost no problems in the foreign relations between the United States and Sweden. There were a few very minor problems. There were some draft evaders that had gone to Sweden, and a few of them had married Swedish girls and had stayed on and were a problem about whether they were going to become Swedes or reclaim their United States citizenship. There were very minor problems like that but nothing of any great consequence. There were problems about stainless steel and what the quotas might be for importation of Swedish steel. But there surely were no major problems.

*Q: Well, tell me, talking about Palme, now Palme I can shut my eyes and see a news picture of him holding a candle and marching in protest against what we're doing in Vietnam. One does have the feeling, talking about mother-in-laws, in the majority sense, I mean, the Swedes do seem to be great meddlers, and their role in world politics has not been that progressive in many ways. I mean, they're a little bit like the Indians. But did you have a problem at the embassy as far as our offices were concerned of treating Palme like the devil and looking at him in more an objective sense or not? Or was this a problem or not?*

SMITH: No, I don't think it was a problem. We definitely had very mature Foreign Service officers at the embassy, and they certainly were prepared to cope with any politician or government official and surely with the Prime Minister. I rather liked Palme, though. Of course, our views were basically very far apart on fundamental issues. I can tell you a couple of things about him that might be of interest.

*Q: You said you were going to tell me several things about Palme.*

SMITH: Palme was a very interesting man. It was often said that he had hypnotic eyes, and it's true even on television his eyes were very piercing. If he appeared on your screen making a speech, they really flashed. At the time I went to Sweden, he was sometimes described as the young Jack Kennedy of Europe. He had a certain charisma that certainly appealed particularly to the young people in Sweden. I found him likable. He had an interesting background. He really came from an aristocratic family. His mother had been a baroness from one of the Baltic countries--it was either Estonia or Lithuania, I think--and married a Swede, and he grew up in a rather important townhouse in Stockholm and was well-educated. He took a degree at Kenyon College in Ohio, and then took a long motorcycle trip around through the southern part of the United States and was very interested in problems among the black populations in our South. It is often said that that's where he became so imbued with socialism and the desire to better the needs of underprivileged people, though the other view on that is that he also spent quite a bit of

time in India, and people who really studied his life, I think, feel that his social consciousness was developed more from the undernourished and impoverished people in India than in our South. But for whatever reason, he certainly was interested in garnering mass votes.

I'm told that when he came back from his education and world travel, he went to the Conservative Party and told them he'd like to run for election to Parliament and they laughed at him and told him he was very young and inexperienced and he'd never get the nomination. So then he went to the Social Democrats and told them the same thing, and they were more practical and gave him the go ahead, and he was elected at a very young age. That's how he switched parties from the party he had grown up in. Then, of course, he was active in politics from then until his assassination.

I mentioned earlier that I had known him before I ever had any thought of going to Sweden through lunches or dinners at the Council on Foreign Relations and his appearances at Columbia University over a period of years. I think the most revealing experience I had as to Palme personally was something that happened during the last few days of my serving in Sweden. At that time, Palme was out of power, and he was living in Stockholm as the former Prime Minister and planning in his own mind that he would be Prime Minister again. I had a houseguest at the residence, Congressman Al Lowenstein, who has since died. He was staying with me on a short visit.

*Q: He was considered quite a radical in his day, too.*

SMITH: Yes, indeed. He was a very liberal congressman from New York, and he was on a world tour and stopped off in Sweden and expressed a wish to stay with us which he did. It was a Sunday evening about, perhaps, 8:00 or 9:00 and Congressman Lowenstein and my wife and I and my son Jeremy, who was visiting us from the States, were sitting in the library, talking. I was called to the phone for a telephone call from the Department of State in Washington, something having to do with my leaving Sweden and arrangements to make and all that. The doorbell rang. Being Sunday night we had dismissed the staff, and I was on the phone, so my wife went to the door, which she wouldn't ordinarily do. One was very conscious of terrorist then, and she really shouldn't have gone to open the door but she did. I could hear her say, "Why, Mr. Prime Minister. What are you doing here? Do come right in." And there was Olaf Palme all alone standing at the front door, unannounced and unexpected. So he came right in, and she came and tapped me on the shoulder and said, "You better get off the phone. Olaf Palme is here." And I did as soon as I could and went upstairs, and then ensued about five hours of one of the most interesting discussions I ever had.

He sat in our library, the five of us did, and my wife and I and my son pretty much were more listeners than engaged participants in a discussion that went on until 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning. It was quite obvious from the start that both of these two men, both of whom are dead now from assassins' bullet wounds, were long-time friends and active participants in the activities and meetings of international socialist groups. They were on an intimate, first-name basis, and they were largely reminiscing about socialist meetings around the world, in Portugal, in various countries in South America and in the Far East and in Europe, of the international socialist gatherings. They were talking about "Good old Joe" and "Good old Ben" like American college

graduates reminiscing about undergraduate days, and talking about developments in the field of socialist activities in a way that was really fascinating to me. Although I'd studied these problems in an academic sense, I'd never heard intimate discussions by two men who were involved in the top-policy meetings of international socialism in this way, and it was truly fascinating to me.

*Q: Did Palme understand the United States, or did he have a viewpoint that you felt was somewhat skewed?*

SMITH: Well, of course, it was to me. I said earlier that we disagreed on fundamentals quite seriously. I found him a very engaging man. He was certainly charismatic and a true leader. You know, he couldn't have spent two or three or four years at Kenyon College. I'm not sure how many, but he graduated there in America's heartland without having had some understanding of it, and he couldn't have traveled all through our South as a young undergraduate on a motorcycle without having some contact with people and knowing something of it, and then continuing meetings at least once a year, I'm sure, in the Council on Foreign Relations and at various American universities. I think he did have a grasp of it. His view of what we are and where we're going, I guess, would be quite different from mine, and, of course, in typical Swedish manner, he was eager to tell us all the things we were doing wrong and what we should be doing.

*Q: Well, now did you have problems on the other side? Particularly I'm thinking of Congress. We had gone through a very bad period of time. We had felt Sweden had been helpful during the Vietnam War. There must have been a lot of resentment still over in Congress. I mean, you would have a senator getting up or a congressman making some public statement about the Swedes? Was this a problem for you?*

SMITH: It really was not a problem, no. I think it probably existed a little bit, but it didn't attract that much attention, and I was not aware that it was a problem.

*Q: Well, looking back on it--oh, the other thing . . .*

SMITH: I should tell you one other detail. You said to me that you like personal reminiscences.

*Q: Absolutely.*

SMITH: An amusing thing that happened once. At one time I had a call from the Department of State from the Secretary's office that we were having considerable trouble in a small country in Africa that had a socialist government and where three American nurses had been arrested and imprisoned. We were getting nowhere with diplomatic overtures there, and the Secretary was afraid that it might get out of hand and get worse and become a real problem. Did I think it would be helpful if I interceded with the government of Sweden and see if they could intercede and get somewhere?

So I went and called on the Prime Minister and described the situation to him and said, "You know, this is outrageous. Here these three American nurses that really have been thrown into jail in this very primitive country, and I would think that you with your good relations with that



Prime Minister and their government could be able to help us and this would be a nice gesture for you to make toward the United States."

And he said, "Well, you know, I agree with you. I think that is outrageous, and I'll call him up. You stay right where you are, and I'll call him up." And he called and had a rather frank discussion, and the three nurses were released within 24 hours.

*Q: This shows how the work of ambassadors with prime ministers often can be down to the very nitty gritty, but really it works. What was the Swedish view of the Soviets while you were there? How did they feel about the Soviet Union?*

SMITH: The Swedes certainly were very conscious that they're a small, neutral country right under the Soviet guns, and they are not going to antagonize the Soviets without serious provocation, and I was always conscious that if they made any bow toward the United States, if one of their Royal Family or some member of the government made a goodwill trip to the United States, simultaneously or within a month or two, someone of equal rank would make a trip to the Soviet Union. They tried to be very even-handed in their foreign policy toward the United States and NATO on the one hand and toward the Soviet Union on the other hand. Certainly their Foreign Ministry had a number of highly trained Foreign Service officers for whom I had great regard, who were extremely informed Sovietologists and who went regularly to the Soviet Union.

I can remember two of them in particular whom I knew quite well who went regularly to the Soviet Union, in and out, and visited with their ambassador there and kept in very close touch. So I felt they had very good relations with the Soviets. It was on a basis that was correct and proper, but I didn't feel it was a basis of affection. At least they were adroit enough and diplomatic enough always to make me feel that their sympathies lay with the West, but they had to maintain correct relations with the Soviets.

*Q: How about the military? Did they view the Soviets as the natural opponent, the Soviet military?*

SMITH: Opponent of theirs or ours?

*Q: Of theirs.*

SMITH: No, I don't think so. Having served for five years in the Pentagon, I naturally had a certain fascination with the military, and I made it a point to keep in close touch with the Swedish military. I did go to inspect a number of Swedish bases and ships and aircraft. I flew in Swedish military aircraft, helicopters and two-seater fighters, and inspected the bases and knew their chiefs of staff. Another thing that I did once that, I guess, was probably undiplomatic but it was of interest to me, and it seemed to me it was perfectly proper for an ambassador to do, and I never got into any trouble about it, and I think, maybe, it was helpful. I let it be known through channels that I would like to have some sort of a briefing on Swedish war plans. Of course, I was well aware that war plans are about the most classified part of any government activities, so I said on a very low informational basis, but I'd like to know about it, and would they arrange a briefing for me. And I got the word back that this was a very unusual request, no ambassador had

ever made such a request before. I did it on my own without any conference with Washington. It just sort of sat for about four or five weeks, nothing happened. Then I called up again, I called the chief of staff of their defense staff and said I was waiting for an answer and when was I going to have my briefing. And he hemmed and hawed a little bit and said he would call back again. Finally, he called and said if I wanted to bring one military attaché, my senior military attaché and come to his office, he would do the briefing himself with no staff of any kind from any of the services, and he would be glad to answer all my questions. So we spent about three hours with a rather interesting discussion of what their war plans were with regard to all possible antagonists in Europe. Well, I can say it's a long time ago, but basically I can say their defense and their offense was all aimed toward the East.

*Q: Well, the only logical . . .*

SMITH: Yes, almost entirely. And which, of course, I observed at the time. They're well aware of NATO defenses and operations and have some understanding of what would be Soviet intentions. But it was fascinating to me. At that time, the United States was supplying the most important part of the Swedish fighter planes which were very, very fine, but we were supplying the black boxes to them.

*Q: The black boxes for the thing, the electronics.*

SMITH: Yes, that guided armament. The plane would be launched. The Swedes were making these for themselves. They had a small but very well-trained, high-disciplined, high-morale air force, and they were making these planes for themselves. But, of course, they also were very interested in selling them to countries that might like to buy them. There was a good deal of activity in their seeking to obtain the United States' permission to sell them to certain other countries, countries that, I guess, we would call Third World, emerging Third World countries. Quite a bit of that came across my desk in one form or another, and I had to be the one to convey a negative reply to them that we would not approve of sales to the countries that wanted to buy them, India specifically, but other countries, too. So that limited the commercial aspects. They would have been happy to make more of the planes than they were making.

*Q: How did you get along with the government of the three-party coalition with Thorbjörn Fälldin?*

SMITH: Yes, he became Prime Minister.

*Q: Was there any change in their policy towards the United States at this point?*

SMITH: I can't really say that there was. I'd say the policy was friendly in both cases, although Olaf Palme was, as you suggest, somewhat unfriendly toward basic United States feelings in many respects, and Fälldin was more friendly. I don't think the policies of the government were significantly different. The Conservative Coalition would have liked to have made very considerable changes in a great many domestic matters in Sweden, and I would say their foreign policy came closer to being bipartisan between the Social Democrats and the Coalition. The

trouble was that the Coalition had a razor-thin margin in Parliament, and it was almost impossible for them to get much done in the brief period they were in office.

**JOHN P. OWENS**  
**Consul General**  
**Gothenburg (1976-1978)**

*John P. Owens was born in the District of Columbia in 1927. As a Foreign Service officer he served in Italy, Venezuela, Greece, Finland, Sweden, Bermuda and Washington. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.*

*Q: You went to Goteborg from '76 to '78 as Consul General?*

OWENS: Yes. Actually, Strausz-Hupé, to give him his dues, was responsible for getting me that job. The US government decided that it should be opened. In fact, it was Hubert Humphrey who pressed for this. It had been closed in '69, and the Swedes lamented the closing, and also in political terms, it was a sign of the cooling relationship between Sweden and the United States. So Hubert Humphrey made it almost a personal mission to get it reopened. And over the Department's objections it was reopened, and I went down to reopen it with a big ceremony, with the Ambassador. By this time, Strausz-Hupé had left, and David Smith had been appointed by President Ford to be the Ambassador to Sweden. He came down. He was a distinguished Washington lawyer, very affable, very nice man. We both went down and reopened it, to much fanfare. It was a big event in Sweden. Hubert Humphrey was supposed to come, but didn't. A couple of his staffers came out, represented him. There was much excitement in the Swedish press, and so on. This sort of was the icing on the cake, symbolizing the return of full US-Swedish traditionally good relations. That was a fairly uneventful two years for me, however it was very pleasant there. Personally I missed the excitement of dealing directly with the Foreign Ministry. I realized more than I had before how much the action in Sweden was focused in Stockholm. Goteborg was going through a recession at the period. Ship construction was dominated by the shipbuilding of the Koreans and others, and shipyards were closing. Shipping generally was in a recession during this period, so it was rather a sad town. Of course, it is the headquarters of Volvo. I got to know people like Volvo chairman Gyllenhamer, etc. But I found that being a big fish in a small pond is not necessarily as rewarding as being a smaller fish in a much bigger pond.

*Q: A more active pond?*

OWENS: A more active pond. I enjoyed doing the reporting that I could, and the consular work, that we did, the excitement, for the first six months, of setting up a new post. Everything had to be reestablished. You start from scratch. But once that was accomplished, it became just a maintenance operation. So I felt that two years was sufficient. Then, we had a new Ambassador in Stockholm when Ford was defeated. Jimmy Carter appointed Rodney Kennedy-Minott, the California professor who had helped the Democratic Party in California. You know that the Democrats did not win California in '76. In any case, he had been co-chairman of the Carter

campaign in California. So he became the Ambassador, we had very amicable relations. So it was a very uneventful two years.

**JACK R. PERRY**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Stockholm (1976-1979)**

*Ambassador Jack R. Perry was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia in 1930. He entered the Foreign service in 1959. His career included assignments to the Soviet Union, France, Czechoslovakia, and Sweden. He was ambassador to Bulgaria from 1979 to 1981. Mr. Perry was interviewed by Henry E. Mattox in 1992.*

*Q: You went to Sweden, and the ambassador was Strausz-Hupé.*

PERRY: No, he had just left, just before. It was a gentleman named David Smith, who was a Republican appointee and a Washington lawyer, who served really only about a year, because you had, then, in 1976, the Ford-Carter election, and so he was invited to leave after those elections, and a new Democratic ambassador came in, Rodney Kennedy-Minott.

*Q: Kennedy-Minott, who was from Cal State. Did you just stay on?*

PERRY: I just stayed on. There never seemed to be much talk about my leaving. Rodney and I got along quite well, as I did with David Smith, I will say. They were both very pleasant.

Rodney and his wife had been among the first Californians to get on the Carter bandwagon. They had given breakfasts for Carter when he was still unknown in California. Don't ask me why, except I will say (I remember this, being a Southerner myself) that Rodney was a great fan of the South. He was a historian and thought it would be a great thing to have a Southern president again--bring the South back into the mainstream and so forth. At any rate, he and his wife were part of the Carter team early on, and he was particularly close to Hamilton Jordan; I think they were pretty good friends. And so he got named. He and I hit it off well. I had been chargé for several months, between ambassadors, so when he came, it was natural for me to take him around and introduce him and all that.

*Q: I think it might have been natural for him to seek his own man as DCM.*

PERRY: I think once Rodney found out that I could be a friend and that I wasn't trying to do him in in any way but was trying to help him, we got along quite well. I really liked him and still like him, and I liked his wife a great deal; she was a very classy person. They had some fine traits.

Like many non-career ambassadors, he tended (and so did David Smith, and so had others I had worked with before) not to take diplomatic protocol and courtesies as seriously as we career people did. And so I had trouble getting him and his predecessor to make courtesy calls on other

ambassadors and so forth. And it bothered me, because they would come up to me at a party and say, "Your ambassador's been here X months and he hasn't been to see me yet." And I'd say, "Well, I'm sure he's coming soon."

*Q: "He hasn't even dropped cards on me."*

PERRY: Exactly.

*Q: Did you still have at that time embassy officers dropping cards on the ambassador when he arrived?*

PERRY: No, I think, at least in Stockholm and other places that I served, it had pretty well faded by then. We did that when I first went into the Foreign Service, and we did it in our earlier posts, in Moscow and in Paris, but then somehow it withered away.

*Q: I remember very well being required to do it at my early posts, too. It struck me as quite unusual, but you go along with it.*

PERRY: Sure, and those cards cost a fortune to a junior officer. Every time I turned around I was buying two hundred new cards.

There are two things about Sweden that stick in my mind particularly. One is what a lovely place it was to serve. I mean, I honestly fell very much in love with Sweden, considered it a second homeland, and have always thought that, if I could afford it, I'd love to live there, at least part of the year. Just a lovely place. And the second thing is that we came not long after the Vietnam War -- when you think about it, we got there in 1976, and Swedish-American relations had been really sour. I mean, you know how the Swedes had been holier than everybody on Vietnam, and wouldn't speak to us very much, and we had had a lot of trouble, although we did have an ambassador there during the Vietnam War named Holland, who was a political appointee. He had enormous respect for the Swedes, as did they for him. I never heard, in my two years in Sweden, anything but the utmost praise for him and how he served during the Vietnam War with dignity and all the rest of it. But what was peculiar was that by the time we got there, in 1976, not long after the Vietnam War at all, the Swedes were quite ready to forget Vietnam and to start improving relations with the United States, almost overnight. And so I was there in sort of a halcyon period when we had no serious problems with the Swedes; everything was good.

The Social Democrats got voted out of office while we were there, for the first time in thirty-odd years, and what they called the bourgeois parties came in for a couple of years. So that was an unusual period, too. But it made serving there, I must say, an enormous pleasure. I had friends on both sides of the political spectrum, and liked and respected them all.

I think the second day that I was in Stockholm, one of the embassy officers took me over to the Foreign Ministry and took me around and introduced me to everybody except the foreign minister. (I didn't meet him that day, but I met everybody else that mattered.) And every one of them was a first name--it was "Jack" this and "Leif" that and all the rest of it. And for two years,

I was on a first-name basis with everybody that mattered in foreign policy in Sweden, and it was such an enjoyment. And they all spoke better English than I did, so it was great.

*Q: Well, you were afflicted with a Georgia accent, but I imagine you knew all the words.*

PERRY: I knew the words.

*Q: Was there any particular reason why they were being so forthcoming?*

PERRY: Well, I think Sweden, of course, could benefit from association with the United States in all kinds of ways--military and diplomatic and all the rest of it. They wanted to be closer to us. And the shadow of the Russian bear was a pretty dark shadow at that time.

We had a bit of a setback while I was there. I always thought that it was an unfortunate decision. Just as an example of the kind of thing that was going on, they were trying to sell their fighter aircraft, the Viggen, to India. A lot of the components of it were American components, and therefore we had a veto on whom they could sell it to. And we didn't want them to sell it to the Indians. This was during the Carter administration, and it went against our, I guess we would have called it, human rights policy, or our arms escalation policy. I think the idea was, if they got it, then the Pakistanis would notch-up their fighter and so forth; it would escalate the danger. The fact was, if they didn't buy the Swedish plane, they were going to buy a French plane, which was every bit as good. And so that was one of those times when we at the Embassy really fought and did our best with Washington to get them to see that this was a case where it would hurt nothing and it would help the Swedes a whole heck of a lot. But we lost it. I think Cy Vance, who was then secretary of state, decided that one himself, and I'm sure he had good reasons for it. But that's the sort of thing that we got into.

Another thing that I remember about service in Stockholm, that, since you're an old FSO, would amuse you, I suspect: the relationship between the ambassador and CIA was very interesting at this time.

And that was because, under the former ambassador, Strausz Hupé, there had been one of those rare times when CIA blossomed into the press. They had recruited in Stockholm an African (I think he was Kenyan, but I'm not sure; it was before my time, of course), and they were going to use him as a source. And after a little while, he blew the whistle on them and went public. It was very embarrassing to Strausz Hupé and to the embassy that we Americans were out recruiting Africans on Swedish soil to spy for the CIA. So it left a bad taste in everybody's mouth.

And so the new ambassador, David Smith, was almost fanatical that he didn't want to be embarrassed by CIA. And, since he was new to diplomacy and really didn't know much about how to do this, he asked me, as his DCM, to sort of take hold of CIA in Stockholm and make sure he wasn't blindsided.

*Q: That's easier said than done.*

PERRY: Easier said than done, to make sure that he knew everything that CIA was doing.

Well, there was an acting station chief, who, as a matter of fact, I had known in Moscow and who was a very decent chap, who, I suspect, came relatively clean with us. At any rate, we went down to the secure room (the Tank) and met, quite a few times, and he went through, he told us, every case that they had going in Sweden, by name...well, maybe not every one by name, most of them by name, who it was, what was going on, the whole story, so that the ambassador would not be surprised or upset by anything that should happen. And the commitment was made that they would keep on with this kind of openness with the ambassador.

Well, I'm not in a position to say how much they told us. And the new station chief, when he came in, was much more of an old-line CIA type that didn't like this thing at all; this openness was really anathema to him. So we had a lot of conflict then, and I suspect that we were never told as much as we thought we were.

But, for me, it was a very interesting experience, trying to get CIA to tell us everything they were doing in Stockholm. It was fascinating.

*Q: Well, this will be of interest not only to me, as you remarked, but to the historian, the student of diplomatic affairs, who reads the transcript of these tapes some day. Were you reasonably satisfied that you were seeing all of the outgoing from the station?*

PERRY: I was never satisfied about that, because, as you well know, most of the communicators at the embassies I've worked in were CIA, or at least a lot of them were, and I just never felt that we were seeing all the messages -- although the ambassador asserted his right to see everything that was going out. And I know, in some embassies, ambassadors, by God, succeeded in doing that. I don't think we did, partly because, you see, the ambassador was using me as his voice, and it was hard for me to talk as tough as a career ambassador could have talked. So I'm not satisfied that we saw everything. Or knew everything.

*Q: Were you reasonably satisfied that you were privy to the information in all of their caseloads, in all of their futzing about in the...?*

PERRY: Well, I guess, being a Soviet type in the Foreign Service, I had an awful lot of dealings with CIA, particularly the analysts' side, the open side. I always had great admiration for the analysts who were covering Soviet affairs, and I thought they had some very good people, of a relatively liberal bent, if I may use that word 'liberal' in a nonpolitical sense. But I always had great hesitations about the non-open side, about the operational side. And, although I had some friends who were in there, I always thought that they never told us everything. In Stockholm, and also, I will say, when I was chargé in Prague, I had very good relations with the CIA people, but I'm not at all sure that they told everything.

Stockholm was an interesting place because it was a center of terrorism--terrorism in a sense that the Swedes were notably lax on cracking down on terrorism, especially until they had had a couple of incidents themselves.

*Q: That was as self-protection, perhaps?*

PERRY: I think it may have been. Remember, I got there soon before Prime Minister Olaf Palme was ousted from office, although he came back after my time. I think that the Social Democrats might have just been a little more willing to put up with some things than some other governments in Europe were.

But at any rate, CIA considered that they were somewhat coddling terrorists and letting them take a free R&R in Stockholm and then go out and do their dirty work elsewhere. I don't know how true that was; I'm not enough of an expert, and I wasn't inside enough to know.

But what it did mean is that the work that CIA did in Stockholm, on the terrorist side particularly, was important. And that was an era, in the seventies, when there was a lot of ugly terrorist stuff going on, some really bad incidents, in Europe particularly. And so CIA did have some cases that they were running that were potentially of great value. Whether they told all of them to the ambassador or not, I really don't know.

*Q: Well, I for one was never totally sure that I even knew the real names of my colleagues I was serving with abroad.*

PERRY: How *could* you be sure.

*Q: Let me ask you a slightly different question. Were there any American exiles still around, those who had fled the war, the draft and such?*

PERRY: There were, and I would occasionally hear a little bit about them. President Ford made his offer of amnesty while I was there, but at that time, so soon after the war, people didn't just flock to take advantage of that offer. As I recall, it was extended again later. There were some there, but the embassy heard of them and got involved with them, during my time at least, rather little.

*Q: You spent two years in Stockholm, and you enjoyed it, and you would retire in Stockholm if you could, even though it's dark all day long sometimes.*

PERRY: It's dark and cold, that's true.

**THEODORE SELLIN**  
**Consul General**  
**Gothenburg (1978-1979)**

*Theodore Sellin was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and attended the University of Pennsylvania. He entered the Foreign Service in 1952. His posts include Denmark, Washington, DC, Finland, Norway, the Naval War College, OES, and Sweden. Sellin was interviewed by Tom Dunnigan in 2003.*



*Q: How strong a pull did the Swedes have on the Finns?*

SELLIN: Well, I don't think that they did. I have to say this, for example, when the note crisis evolved... I had a Swedish aunt, now deceased, and I spoke to her. In fact, I was in Sweden briefly, and I spoke to her. She was a conservative politician and had run for Parliament a few times. Anyhow, if she were any reflection, the Swedes were scared witless. This view was also expressed in the media and in public debate. They were sure that Finland was going to go down the tubes and they would have a common border with a Soviet satellite.. And conversely I think the Finns were happy to have a neutral country on their Western border. I think they would have been quite alarmed had Sweden joined NATO, for example. Of course, the Norwegian border skirts Finland and Russia a little bit in the north, but that, I guess wasn't enough to alarm the Finns.

*Q: That's so frozen up there that they don't notice it...*

SELLIN: So in that respect, I think there was some interest in Swedish affairs. Of course, all the trade unions, other organizations, were interlinked in a sense in the Nordic area. Well, the Nordic Council of parliamentarians had some trade union members in it, there was a common labor market in the Nordic countries, and of course, there was a huge Finnish migration, which started in the mid-'50s, to Sweden. At its high point, there was something of 500,000 Finns living and working in Sweden. Sweden then had a population of 7 million, so it was the largest single chunk of migrant workers in Sweden at that time. So there was that kind of connection. A lot of those Finns stayed on; a lot of them came back when conditions improved in Finland in the period that I was there. But it was huge.

Politically, the political parties were all collaborating with each other in various ways. So, yes, it meant something, but I think basically they were just pleased they were neutral and that was the extent of that.

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*Q: You were [in Norway] in some of the worst days of the Vietnam War.*

SELLIN: Yes.

*Q: What effect did that have?*

SELLIN: That had a considerable effect. The counter Vietnam movement was not as rabid as it was in Stockholm. I think in Sweden they got the brunt of it. Some in Oslo, but in Sweden it was considerable. It was fairly well organized in Norway, but rather small. It really never caught on to the extent that it did in Sweden.

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*Q: Then in 1978, you received an assignment to Sweden. The last of the Scandinavian countries to which you had not been assigned until now, and you went to Gothenburg as consul general. Had you requested that, or how did that come about?*

SELLIN: No, I hadn't requested it specifically, but as I say I was looking around for something. A friend of mine was in that job and his tour was coming to an end, and I knew that. I let it be known to personnel that I wouldn't be averse to going there. It was with the knowledge that the post was on the list of possible closures. In fact, it had been closed by Nixon in part in protest against the Swedish attitude toward the Vietnam War. And, by dint of a lot of activity by Senator Hubert Humphrey and one of his staff aides, David Nelson, Humphrey got the post re-opened for the bicentennial year, 1976. The man who was to re-open it, John Owens, had come down from Stockholm. He did two years at the Embassy as political counselor and decided he wanted a post of his own, and so he was assigned to and re-opened the post in Gothenburg in '76. Then two years later he was transferred onward. I took the job knowing that it was iffy, but hoping against hope that it might stay open and this would be a marvelous way to close out a career, to finally get Sweden. But of course, it didn't work out quite that way.

*Q: Well, they followed through on your request for your first post. You got to Sweden, finally.*

SELLIN: Correct.

*Q: Now Gothenburg is a rather old post in the service, isn't it? It had been around a long time.*

SELLIN: Yes indeed. In fact, it vies with two or three other consulates or posts as the oldest in the history of the United States. Its establishment was one of the last acts of George Washington before he stepped down.

*Q: Is that right!*

SELLIN: He appointed a consul who was actually a Swede who was also a consul for the Russian czar, and I'm not sure if there wasn't another country in there. His name was Baumann. He was the first. Now, the post did continue to function with some interruptions until about 1985, having reopened briefly a few years after I closed it. The other posts in contention for the longevity title were Bremen and Tangier. They were all opened about the same time.

*Q: I remember that Gothenburg is an old post...*

SELLIN: Yes. It was Sweden's only ocean port in the early days, and later, when the Swedish-American line ran between New York and Sweden, that was their home-port. Of course, there was a real use for a consulate then.

*Q: Well, that's the big shipping port for automobiles and things out of Sweden, isn't it?*

SELLIN: Well, they're shipped from a little port a bit North. They're not right in Gothenburg proper, but they're in the general area. But shipping has declined tremendously in Gothenburg since the closure of the Swedish-American line.

*Q: How were your relations with the embassy in Stockholm?*

SELLIN: Well, they were very scant. I was quite disappointed in that regard, in part because of our personnel situation. The American staff consisted of me and the Consul. The consul left shortly after I got there. His replacement stayed for a year but because of the problem of the impending closure, the job was not a career-maker. He was a fine officer who had an opportunity to go somewhere else and I didn't want to stand in his way. In fact, I was the lone American there for the last six or eight months before shutting down all services.

*Q: So you had to do all the signing and everything else?*

SELLIN: Had to do everything. I had a couple of local employees and a USIS local, but basically, it was very hard for me to get away and I didn't get up to Stockholm more than a couple of times. I must admit, that was one disappointment.

*Q: Did the ambassador come down and visit you?*

SELLIN: Oh, yes, Ambassador Rodney Kennedy-Minot came down a couple of times. The first time, I'd only been there a few weeks and Hasselblad of the famous Hasselblad camera died. He had been a good friend of the American embassy and consulate over the years. So I viewed the funeral as an event at which the brand-new consul general could meet everybody of importance in the town. But the ambassador decides to come down and I *go with him*, of course, but I'm the baggage carrier in a sense and somewhat overshadowed. He also came down one other time to give a lecture at the historical society on the American electoral process. About 20 people turned out. That was it.

*Q: How big was your consulate district?*

SELLIN: It was all of southern Sweden and part of western... up to the Norwegian border.

*Q: So you had a lot of territory to cover.*

SELLIN: It was quite large. Yes. And there again, because it was fairly difficult for me to get away, I traveled less than I should have. I did manage, however, to get around to virtually all of the larger cities during that period, but had no chance to make repeat visits.

*Q: Did you do speaking and things like that?*

SELLIN: I did. I talked to whomever about whatever would be of interest going on in the US, to Rotary clubs, schools. It depended on the nature of the local interests. I always visited the newspapers, had a talk with the editors, so we got some kind of local press play as a result of the visits and I got some provincial insights that I could report on.

*Q: Did you get back to your old university in Uppsala?*

SELLIN: I did, and that had changed a lot.

*Q: I visited that from Copenhagen.*

SELLIN: Well, they'd torn down the whole center of the town. The house in which I had roomed, right on the central square, was gone. As was the downtown area around it. But the University complex across the little river that bisected the town was essentially intact.

*Q: What would you say was the attitude toward the United States in your consular district in those years?*

SELLIN: Well, it was very positive. Gothenburg was renowned as, or they claimed it to be, totally Western oriented, unlike, the locals would say, the rest of Sweden. They talked about the "other Sweden." Stockholm was part of the other Sweden, over there to the Northeast. They were the real spirit of Sweden, they thought. They, in fact, were not as pronounced in the anti-Vietnam war rhetoric as the people were in Stockholm and the other parts of the country at the height of the Vietnam war. I would say they considered themselves very, very pro-American and pro-British. Of course, they had several large international industries situated there. The SKF ball bearing headquarters was in Gothenburg, the Volvo car was in Gothenburg, so they were quite dependent on good commercial ties with the U.S. and Western markets in general. The only demonstrations focused on the Consulate took place at the time of the takeover of the American embassy in Tehran. That occurred while I was there. There were a lot of Iranian student who were studying at the technical institute, Chalmers University. According to my contacts, there were about 600 of them at least, and maybe more, and they were divided between pro-Shah and anti-Shah groups. When the embassy takeover occurred in Teheran, next thing you know some of these students appeared in front of the American consulate, which was on the second floor of the building so we didn't feel particularly threatened. The police were very good. They kept these crowds, they weren't huge crowds, but they might be a couple hundred or three hundred, and they'd keep the two factions on opposite sides of the street so they wouldn't tangle. But they were both demonstrating, either for or against the U.S. Other than that all was quite.

*Q: Talking about foreign students and other foreigners, were there any foreign troubles in Gothenburg, any racist problems?*

SELLIN: Not really. Again, as I mentioned earlier, the Finnish contingent made up the largest single group of foreigners workers. There were also Greek and Turkish guest workers and then a smattering of African refugees. But it was really the Finns, the Greeks, and the Turks. And in fact, Swedish radio gave the news once a week, at least, in the three languages.

*Q: [laughter]*

SELLIN: But there wasn't any real trouble. In the years before I got there several terrorist murders of consular officers in Gothenburg took place. I think a Turk was killed, a Yugoslav was killed, and maybe an Israeli.

*Q: Were they killed by other groups...*

SELLIN: Yes.

*Q: ...or not by Swedes?*

SELLIN: No, no, no. These were Kurds killing the Turk, Ustashi killing the Yugoslav. As an aside, the old American embassy in Stockholm, was taken over by the Yugoslavs when we left it in the 1950s to build the new one. About the time they built the one in Copenhagen that you and I both worked in. It was there, at Strandvägen 7, that I think the first ambassador was murdered in Sweden in living memory. The Ustashi murdered him in his office one day. That was quite a shock to the Swedes. That happened in what had been our American embassy.

*Q: Did you ever get any feedback from some of the American deserters who'd come to Sweden?*

SELLIN: I did to the extent that we had to visit prisoners, some of whom were draft evaders or deserters. Although the regulations required a certain number of consular visits per year, we weren't able to do it because I just wasn't able to get away.

*Q: You didn't have the personnel.*

SELLIN: Right. But one of the Military attachés up in Oslo had a man who came down to talk to the deserters who had committed crimes and were in prison, to offer them an amnesty when they finished their terms if they would return to the States. I spoke to a couple of the *deserters* when I did make my prison visits, but we weren't directly involved in trying to get them out or get them involved in the amnesty program. It was strictly the military who took care of that. I don't know how many of them accepted amnesty. I know that some did, but the others didn't want anything to do with us.

*Q: The reason I ask is because when we were in Copenhagen in the mid-'70s, quite a few of them came through on their way to Sweden. And of course our military attachés, nobody were trying to talk them out of it.*

SELLIN: Right.

*Q: Sometimes they weren't very...*

SELLIN: Were they active duty coming out of...

*Q: Yes, they were coming out of the Army in Germany, active duty. And there were some others who came over from the States to escape the draft and so forth.*

*Were there many problems in Gothenburg with strikes and lockouts and things like this?*

SELLIN: None that were noticeable.

*Q: No labor problems?*

SELLIN: No. Unions are strong in Sweden and the welfare state well entrenched even when the national administrations are other than Social Democratic. We had a Social Democratic mayor most of the time I was there. Gothenburg had been one of the very rambunctious towns during the '30s, with much labor unrest and left-wing agitation. But that subsided during the war and post-war period and was minimal when I was there. First of all, the local economy was fairly robust, despite the downsizing of the shipyards that had been a mainstay of the economy for generations. In a last-gasp effort to maintain the yards, government subsidies kept them alive in the '60s and '70s, building a number of bulk carriers, the big super tankers, on speculation, when the Suez Canal closed. When they came on-line the canal had reopened and there was a glut of such tankers on the market. So the Swedish ones were all mothballed in the river marking the border between Norway and Sweden. In fact, the yards were trying to get rid of them at bargain prices. A couple were sold to Getty Oil while I was there. Getty would buy these big ones, they'd get a cut rate price on them and then the yard would take out a center section of about 100-200 feet and then just slap the ends together again. This would raise the draft so he used them to bring oil from as I recall Nigeria to the shallow oil depot in Chester, Pennsylvania on the Delaware River.

*Q: To get up there.*

SELLIN: So that was one of the ways the shipyards were trying to cope. And then they had a contract to build a very large floating dry dock for the Soviets. A Russian C.O.D. contract. They were working on that thing night and day while I was there. The last summer I was there, they were testing it in the waters off-shore. I was sailing up the coast. I had a sailboat there which I was only able to use rarely... and saw the tests that they were making on it, the final test a submersion test. Coming back the next evening, the dock was back in the yard, lights all over it, welding sparks flying, people were working like crazy because this thing apparently had sunk. They had turned off all the alarms while they were working on it... while they were giving it the test and it sank too far and crumpled the sides. So they had to fix it up in time to have it towed to Murmansk before fall weather would complicate that operation. They worked around the clock frantically to get it ready. They finally did so; late in the season the tug came and towed it up the long Norwegian coast and around North Cape, and just over the Russian border up in the Barents Sea the towline broke and the thing drifted ashore just beyond the Norwegian border with Russia. So they had to patch it up as best they could and towed it down to Trondheim, Norway for a more seaworthy patch. Then they towed it to Holland where somebody could really do the proper job. And it was delivered to Murmansk a year late, with all the penalties involved. And the yard had to carry all the extra costs. It was a debacle.

*Q: That wasn't the best deal in the world...*

SELLIN: No, but there was some interest in it. It was the only time I ever reached a global audience with a report. The naval attaché came down a few weeks later and told me that my report of the sinking incident had attracted military attention because of its timeliness. I'd gone into some detail because the dry-dock was designed to take in the largest Russian nuclear submarines, and had all kinds of special equipment to accommodate those. So the Navy apparently sent what would be an "all points bulletin" – which they call a "blue flash" – to every

single Navy command and ship worldwide with my story of the sinking and delayed delivery of the dry-dock.

*Q: Written by Consul General Sellin...*

SELLIN: Yes.

*Q: Right.*

SELLIN: But that was it. Otherwise, basically, everything was quite calm.

*Q: When did you get the notice about the post closing?*

SELLIN: That was an on and off proposition. I'd get word from the desk, from the Bureau, that I was going to have to be prepared, but don't say anything yet. So I kept quiet. And then they'd call me back and say, "there's not going to be an announcement this week, wait 'til next week, so just... business as usual." And it kept on that way until about the eighteenth month.

*Q: The Swedes not knowing anything about it.*

SELLIN: Well, they sensed something...

*Q: I wondered if they sensed something...*

SELLIN: Sure, sure. On the other hand, we didn't close for over a year and a half. But finally the edict came down that I had to close by a certain date, the fifteenth of May, 1980, I had to go public.

*Q: What was the effect on the Swedes?*

SELLIN: Very unhappy. The Swedes of the region prided themselves that there was an American presence on the West Coast.

*Q: Sure.*

SELLIN: I mean the flag was flying there. They really wanted the American presence. It was a matter of prestige for them. Volvo was unhappy because the visa services would cease. We didn't have the waiver program then, although we could give Swedes multiple entries for the life of the passport, or whatever the period was. But still, it was an inconvenience for them not to have the consulate there. So they were very unhappy. One thing I did to extend services -when I closed the consulate I took the visa stamp and the crusher and a bunch of visa applications home with me because I stayed in my apartment until the fourth of July. So I continued, and if there were any emergencies I would issue the necessary visas. I just left the date stamp on May 15 and then just issued visas... [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

SELLIN: I probably issued over a hundred visitors visas with that date until I had to actually move out and bring all that equipment up to Stockholm.

*Q: Did the embassy protest the closing at all?*

SELLIN: Not really. I think they felt that it was not a paying proposition. It wasn't living up to its economic cost, they thought. And of course, they did the immigration visas up in Stockholm anyhow. All I did was non-immigrant visas, American passport services and citizens services. And, of course, fly the flag.

*Q: Now this left no consular post in Scandinavia that I know of...*

SELLIN: Correct.

*Q: Only the four embassies.*

SELLIN: Yes. We did appoint a consular agent in Gothenburg who stayed on for a while, and then even that was terminated. He was the U.S. Bureau of Shipping representative there. Swedes were still building or servicing some ships that would call at U.S. ports.

*Q: Was there any pressure in Congress to keep it open?*

SELLIN: Not enough to do it. I think the people who had gotten it opened in '76 had pretty much shot their wad. Especially one Swedish lady named Maggie Carlson who could hardly speak English. But she was a champion of retention of the office. She would collect signatures on petitions, come over to the States and go up to the Congress and would talk to congressman who had Nordic connections and beat the table and try to charm them. It had worked once, when she was involved in the original re-opening in '76, but it didn't work this time.

*Q: Did we have property that you had to dispose of there?*

SELLIN: No. The residence had been sold years before, when we closed in the 60's. Everything was rented.

*Q: And what about the local employees? Did you have any that we had to take care of?*

SELLIN: Not really. They took their severance pay. The Swedish welfare system was quite generous. When I announced to the staff that we would be closing on the 15th of May, and this would have been about the first of April, six weeks, I said that I really hoped that they would understand that it would be very difficult for me to do by myself and that I hoped that they could stay on until the actual day of closure. Most agreed and did. Two guys, the local employees that were involved in processing visa applications were not enthusiastic. They promised that they would do so but I realized that it didn't look very likely from their attitude. And sure enough, about a week later, they came in and presented their two-weeks notice. So I had to let them go. A month later, doing the last check of the office before evacuating, we discovered that a some 25



mint U.S. passports were missing, presumably taken by the aforementioned employees. An investigation by the local police was unproductive and no charges were brought. But two years later, when the consulate had reopened, the passports were found in an abandoned car outside of the city. One was missing and one had shown evidence of unsuccessful tampering, leading to the conclusion that the missing one had been defaced beyond use in efforts to alter it. Happy ending. I should add that all of the rest of the staff, my secretary, the commercial and USIS staff stayed on and helped until the end, which was much appreciated.

*Q: And we didn't keep a cultural presence there at USIA or anything else?*

SELLIN: No. Nothing.

*Q: Well, that was a rather sad ending to close a post.*

SELLIN: Yes it was. I'd hoped I'd be able to stay there for a little while, somewhat longer at least. But there it was, and I came back to Washington and decided I would step down.

**ROBERT J. MARTENS**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Stockholm (1978-1979)**

*Robert Martens grew up in Kansas City, Missouri. He entered the U.S. Army in July of 1943 at the age of 17 and served in Europe. In 1949, Mr. Martens graduated from the University of Southern California. He entered the Foreign Service in January 1951. His career included positions in Italy, the Soviet Union, Indonesia, Burma, Austria, Romania, Sweden, and Washington, DC. Mr. Martens was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.*

*Q: Was your next assignment sort of a result to get you out of the line of fire?*

MARTENS: My four years were coming up that summer. I had been offered a couple of DCMships in East Asia which I didn't accept, a major factor being a schooling problem for one of my children. So instead of asking for help on a suitable assignment from Holbrooke, I sought some other job and that's why I ended up going to Sweden as DCM.

*Q: You were there for about...*

MARTENS: I was there for one year only. I was picked by the ambassador out of 15 people.

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

MARTENS: A fellow named Kennedy-Minott, a fellow who had been a professor in some minor college in California, and had been involved in the Carter campaign there. We hit it off fairly

well at the beginning, but later on we came to a parting of the ways. I don't want to get into all that, it had nothing to do with policy, it was all personal. The man had... [end of tape]

...aided by his wife and his secretary. There was an effort by the secretary to run the embassy. All kinds of things came up that were so insane that if I described them, you wouldn't believe that it could have happened. But anyway, the result was that I decided that the best thing to do was to leave, and I got in touch with the Director General, whom I knew very well, Harry Barnes, and got reassigned.

*Q: Just to get a little feel for this type of thing for somebody some time in the future. You see a problem like this, and obviously it's not going to help the morale of the embassy, and because you went into the Inspection Corps thereafter. Is this the sort of thing that would trigger an inspection, to say come on and get the embassy back...*

MARTENS: No, it did not although the ambassador was later fired because of an inspection investigation, which I was not associated with, on a completely different matter. Again, I don't want to get into that, but there was no connection with my conflict. At any rate, I wanted to get out of it with the least harm to the U.S. interest. I made sure that it was done in a way in which it was all kept secret--a few people in the embassy knew some of it, the next two ranking officers. I got them aside and told them what I was going to do, and I had to do that in order to ensure that there was continuity, and that they would act in ways that would ensure that our relationship with Sweden would not be harmed, etc.

I won't get into all of the problems but one of the peculiar things is that, after problem emerged the ambassador said that the role of the DCM was to deal only with the FSNs...

*Q: FSNs being the Foreign Service Nationals. These are the staff of the embassy who come from the country itself.*

MARTENS: That's right, and I was to have no other function. Obviously this was impossible, and I said it couldn't be done. But he kind of hemmed and hawed, he had no courage to stand up on these things but he would kind of keep coming back--in fact, I made a certain effort in this direction without stopping the other responsibilities of being DCM. I didn't want to do it the way he wanted me to but I did take time out whenever I had some time to meet individually for approximately a half an hour with every FSN in the embassy just to talk to them, find out what their interests were, and what their background was. This was a remarkably successful thing, something that I wished I'd done earlier and that I would recommend that other officers do, that they take a little time to talk to people one on one at every level. Of course, I spent more time with those FSNs who had professional level jobs. But I also talked to the drivers and the carpenters and all the rest of them too. When my family and I finally left Sweden, the FSNs put on a party for us that was really something, they thought I was the greatest DCM that had ever been there. I never heard of any DCM ever doing this otherwise. I ran into a fellow about a year or so ago, 10-12 years after I had left Sweden, whom I met in the Middle East while putting on a Crisis Management Exercise and who had just come from being the Admin Counselor in Sweden, and he said, "Boy, the FSNs are still talking about you." Nobody else had ever done anything like this.

**JENONNE WALKER**  
**Political Counselor**  
**Stockholm (1981-1983)**

*Ambassador Jenonne Walker's career included posts in Sweden, Washington D.C., and an ambassadorship to Czechoslovakia. Ambassador Walker was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in 2004.*

*Q: You were a political counselor in Stockholm.*

WALKER: Stockholm. It was interesting to see European affairs and U.S.-European relations from that geographic standpoint. The world looks very different up north. Even the maps have a different center of gravity. It was very interesting, but we had some serious issues with the Swedes that made the working life fun and I made lots of Swedish friends, but the job did not offer that much challenge. Sweden is an established Western democracy with whom we had reasonably good relations by that time. So at the end of two years I came back to Washington. Before I went to Stockholm I should say, I ran into the first of my roadblocks about not being a foreign service officer. In 1980, '79, '80 George Vest who was the Assistant Secretary for Europe and Al Hartman who was the Ambassador in Paris wanted me to replace Warren Zimmerman as political counselor in Paris, and they rejected several foreign service nominees and George kept telling me I was just better qualified, much better qualified. They really went out on a limb rejecting various Foreign Service members for the job.

**INTS M. SILINS**  
**Political Counselor**  
**Stockholm (1983-1986)**

*Ambassador Silins was born in Latvia and raised in Latvia and Maryland. He was educated at Princeton and Harvard Universities. He entered the Foreign Service in 1969 and served abroad in Saigon, Duc Thanh (Vietnam), Bucharest, Stockholm, Port au Prince, Leningrad and Strasbourg. In 1990 he was appointed United States Representative to the Baltic States, resident in Riga, Latvia, and from 1992 to 1995, he served as United States Ambassador to Latvia. He also had several tours of duty at the Department of State in Washington, DC. Ambassador Silins was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.*

*Q: Ints, last time we left off we were at 1983, and you were off to Stockholm. What was your job going to be at Stockholm?*

SILINS: Political counselor. I was coming from Leningrad, as it was then called, which had been a very interesting assignment during a not very pleasant phase, actually, of the U.S.-Soviet

relationship. In Stockholm there was also a U.S.-Soviet angle. In one aspect of that I was only peripherally involved. There was a long-term arms control negotiation running with the Soviets for which we had a negotiating team in Stockholm, and I was their embassy contact person.

But the Soviet angle was also quite alive in the relationship with Sweden because of the notorious “Whiskey on the Rocks” submarine incident. The Soviets had managed to run a Whiskey class submarine aground in Swedish waters in 1981, very near Sweden’s main naval base at Karlskrona. It was a serious incident and led to a tense standoff at the time, made worse by the fact that the Swedes thought they detected nuclear weapons on board. And ever since that the Swedes were keenly alert to any sign of violation of their waters. They kept getting signals, and they couldn’t tell if they were really detecting submarines or is this coming from beavers or some kind of animal or what? So they needed technical help, and there was actually quite a lot of under the table cooperation between the Swedes and the U.S. on this topic. It was under the table because Sweden of course made a great point of being a neutral country. Unlike Norway, Sweden was not a member of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), and it wanted to present a public profile of being even-handed between us and the Soviet Union. Indeed when it came to public opinion in Sweden, the U.S. was still not very popular at this time because of the Vietnam War. Sweden had been very active in criticizing our intervention in Vietnam, and that ill feeling hadn’t yet worn off.

I should also mention another U.S.-Soviet angle, which was not profound but I still get a tickle thinking about it. There is a fantastic aircraft that was developed for the CIA, a multi-supersonic reconnaissance jet, the SR-71, also known as the Blackbird. From time to time a Blackbird would come screaming in over the Baltic Sea from the west. Typically it would come in along the southern edge of the Baltic, passing near Poland and the Baltic States, then make a sharp U-turn near the Soviet border, near Leningrad, in fact, and then come back, theoretically over international waters, heading back west. Its purpose was signals intelligence and aerial photography, and indeed part of what it was trying to do was to trigger the Soviet air defense mechanisms so that we could get a reading on where their radars were and how they worked. This aircraft was going so fast – “traveling with the speed of heat,” as one person described it – that it occasionally couldn’t make the turn tight enough. It might nick Swedish airspace, which led to a rather elaborate dance. The Swedes, because they knew that the Soviets could see on their radars that the Blackbird had violated Swedish airspace, had to protest this violation. So what they did was to call me in, I was the political counselor and the person designated to deal with this task. . . call me in and sternly chew me out for the U.S. violation of their airspace. And then we would part company and go our separate ways until the next incident. Perhaps a similar ritual was being enacted in Helsinki.

As I say, this is not a particularly profound thing, but I happen to be a deep admirer of the technology that went into the SR-71. It was a fantastic aircraft and having this slight connection with it gives me a tickle.

*You were in Stockholm from when to when?*

SILINS: Eighty-three to ’86.

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

SILINS: Let's see. There were two in my time there, and I remember that both were Mormons, just by coincidence ... although it turns out that in that period a number of our ambassadors in the Nordic area were of the Mormon faith. The first one was an older man, Franklin Forsberg, in fact he celebrated his eightieth birthday on the job. The second was Greg Newell, who was younger but also of that persuasion.

*Q: How did you find the political situation as it connected with the United States? I mean, the Vietnam War was over about eight years or so ago.*

SILINS: Well, it still cast a lingering shadow over our relations because so many Swedes felt so deeply about it. And by the way, were largely justified, it seems in hindsight, in being very critical of U.S. actions during the Vietnam period. The Swedes also still had what, from our point of view, was a preachy and self-satisfied attitude. The Swedes have seldom been reluctant to give advice to other peoples or countries, and their prime minister, Olof Palme, was, if anything, particularly prone to do that. And the secretary general of the foreign ministry, Pierre Schori, who was very close to Palme, was outspokenly critical of what he considered imperialist U.S. policies. So that affected the tone of relations a bit. I remember once bringing a visiting official from Washington into Schori's office just after some Central American or Caribbean incident and being greeted with a snide, "Well, I assume you're not armed!"

I don't want to give the impression that relations were bad. They were friendly and cooperative. As I suggested, even with respect to security matters there was quite a lot of cooperation going on beyond what you would normally expect, given the public postures that the Swedes took.

**ROBERT L. BARRY**  
**Head of US Delegation, Stockholm Conference**  
**Stockholm (1985-1986)**

*Ambassador Barry was born and raised in Pennsylvania. He attended Dartmouth College, Oxford University, St. Anthony's College, and Columbia. He served in the US Navy and entered the Foreign Service in 1962. He served in Yugoslavia, the USSR, Sweden, and Indonesia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.*

*Q: Okay, you left for Stockholm in '85?*

BARRY: '85.

*Q: There until when? I just like to get this down.*

BARRY: Until I think it was September of '86.

*Q: Can you talk about what the issues were?*

BARRY: This had been something that the Russians had strongly wanted because they were very much in favor of the security basket of CSCE, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. This was something that was under the auspices of CSCE. It was the first arms control conference to be done under CSCE auspices. The purpose was to create a structure of confidence building measures having to do with conventional forces which would help to provide early warning of unusual military events, to require people to advise of major military maneuvers, to invite observers, etc. The key controversial issue was on site verification. This was something the U.S. strongly insisted upon and of course the Russians strongly resisted. The participants of course included all the CSCE members. So, it was the neutral and non-aligned as well as the Warsaw Pact and NATO. We had by far the toughest position in NATO. It was driven by the Pentagon, as you will recall there was some considerable tension between Schultz and Weinberger about these issues in general. At that point we had broken off all other arms control discussions with the Russians. So, this was the only arms control discussion that involved Russia and the United States at the time and thus it took on an unusually high public profile. In fact whenever Jim Goodby and later I came back to the U.S. for consultations we were received by the president, the vice president, the secretary of state, the secretary of defense, the whole national security team to provide reports about progress in negotiations. I'm quite sure it was the wish of many in the office of the secretary of defense to have this thing not succeed because among other things, they were not so keen on having onsite verification of the U.S. military activities, but it had to be a two way street. My Russian opposite member was a man named Grinevsky, a very intelligent, very cultured Soviet diplomat and we got along well personally, but of course, there had been no progress for a very long time. By the time I got there, there was a kind of deadline of, the clock was supposed to run out in I think it was August of 1986 and as we got closer to that deadline the discussions accelerated. Of course, this was the time of Gorbachev and so it was we were trying to figure out whether Gorbachev would put a new face on the negotiation. The sticking point was, as I say, the on site inspection and we had said several times we would walk away from the negotiation in the absence of any strong provision on on site verification. We didn't have a lot of support in NATO for that. I think many people in NATO thought it was unrealistic. The neutral and non-aligned had their own reasons for not liking on site inspections. The Swiss, for example, have got a kind of volunteer force that depends a great deal on secrecy and the secrecy of where their bases are, where their arms are stored, things like that. The Swedes, for that matter, had the same kind of system in place. The idea that they would have to open their borders to on site inspection to see about military maneuvers or to check about whether reports of where their troops were stationed or where their exercises were being held didn't appeal very much to them. But we kept the pressure on and they were of course back channel discussions with the Russians as well. I think we made it clear that without this it was, the U.S. was not going to take part in this negotiation and it was going to fall apart. I guess the key factor came in probably August of '86 when Marshall Akhromeyev who was the chief of the general staff came to Stockholm and announced that yes, Russia had changed its mind about on site inspection. They would be willing to do it, not only would they be willing to do it, we would find that they were more enthusiastic about it than we were. But then of course, they wanted to include things like on site inspection in the United States. They wanted to include operations of naval vessels and things like that none of which we could agree to. The deadline for the negotiations to conclude came and went. We stopped the clock and pretended it

was still August as it went into September and eventually we got within sight of agreement. This made the Pentagon very unhappy.

*Q: Excuse me. But, while you were doing this I imagine you had American military observers observing you?*

BARRY: Well, my delegation was made up of representatives of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, representatives of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the State Department, the CIA, and USIA; it was a big delegation.

*Q: There must have been, I mean, were the battles being fought on your delegation, or were they reporting to their masters and it was.*

BARRY: The answer to that question is yes to both parts of it. The battles were fought within the delegation, and particularly the OSD contingent was reporting back to the OSD.

*Q: OSD is?*

BARRY: The Office of the Secretary of Defense. That included Richard Perle, who was the Assistant Secretary for International Affairs then at the Pentagon. In the end game there were several discussions of course with the chiefs in the tank at the Pentagon and so forth that I had participated in, but in the end I guess it was a discussion between Weinberger and Schultz and the president and the vice president. The last instructions I got were basically that I had a green light to get the best deal I could. That was leaked to the press, I presume by the Pentagon, which of course made the whole end game extremely difficult.

*Q: Oh God yes.*

BARRY: Here I was trying to get more out of the whole negotiation at the end and here the press had it that I was free to agree to anything that I wanted to. We did hold out successfully at the end. I think it was kind of strange because I would go to see Reagan when I came back on these things and we had these discussions in the Oval Office. It was clear to me that he didn't have a clue about what this was all about, but it was the only arms control discussion going on so it was important. I think this was the stage at which Reagan beginning to change his mind about dealings with the Soviet Union. Having this be a success rather than to have it collapse was a major issue at that point.

*Q: Who was the national security advisor?*

BARRY: Bud McFarland.

*Q: Did he play much of a role?*

BARRY: No, at least not that I saw. Schultz has written about this in his own memoirs that the main issue was between State and Defense. My deputy was from DOD, but he was a very constructive force in all this because he well understood the military aspects of the whole thing

and certainly was not interested in seeing the whole thing collapse. As I say this thing came to a conclusion in September. It was the first ever arms control agreement providing for on site inspection, so it got, it was a precedent setting event because of course the subsequent discussions of theater nuclear weapons also had to provide for on site inspections. One of the reasons we were holding the line so much here was to make that sure that that precedent was set for the future.

*Q: How did you find, I mean, when you're talking about onsite inspections at that time, what were you talking about?*

BARRY: We were talking about the ability to send in a team to let's say that the Russians said there was a major military exercise going on in an area that was not open to foreign travel in the Soviet Union and we chose to use one of our quota of on site inspections to go there and see if it was in fact the kind of exercise that they had notified. We would be allowed to send a team in on very short notice and be escorted around to see what was going on. Or they didn't notify of an exercise, but that we detected that one was one going on, say a mobilization exercise or a transfer of forces or something like that, we would be entitled to go in and look at that, too. Now there were reciprocal rights that the Russians had in Europe, at the end it was very difficult to bring the Swedes and the Swiss and others along because they had assumed from the beginning that this would never succeed and we would never get an on site inspection regime. When it became that the Russians and the Americans were going to agree on it, they began to worry about their own defense plans.

*Q: Well, was there any thought, I mean these being neutral powers of saying okay, you're out of it?*

BARRY: That would not have worked. No, there wasn't any thought given to it because the Russians would have said it has got to be for everybody.

*Q: Because neither were part of anybody's pact and let me just put the. So, I mean you have, how did you reach this accord?*

BARRY: Well, what you always do in these things it has to be by consensus. If one country opts out, then there's no agreement, but there was a lot of public pressure on this at this time. Of course, the neutrals and non-aligned, being holier than thou, always accusing the U.S. of not wanting real arms control, so it would have been awkward for them to opt out on the basis of their unwillingness to see inspections on their own territory.

*Q: I mean you do have this imbalance, the Soviet Union is part of, you know it considers itself part of Europe and so you would have an exercise in Kazakhstan and you can go there, but you can't look and see what's happening in Kansas?*

BARRY: Well, that was a point that the Russians did not cease making, but we said this is the whole CSCE is about territory of Europe, admittedly Europe to the Urals, but that doesn't include the continental United States.



*Q: Were they beyond the Urals through Kansas?*

BARRY: I don't recall whether that was a sticking point or not, but we just said no and that was about it. I mean we were quite credible in saying that this did not turn out the way that we wanted, we would back out of the whole thing. I think I said it on every occasion when I made a speech, which I did fairly often.

*Q: Did, I mean, how did you find Defense, what was Defense's attitude?*

BARRY: Their attitude was arms control agreements with the Soviets are worthless, that they don't live up to them, that we would get into these prolonged negotiations and the benefits are outweighed by the costs of doing these kinds of things and so we shouldn't be involved in them.

*Q: Did you find that Richard Perle was a driving force?*

BARRY: Well, I'm not sure that there was any difference between Perle and Weinberger on these issues. The Joint Chiefs took a much more relaxed attitude in fact the Joint Chiefs figured there was some useful information that would come out of this that we didn't have ourselves before and therefore the benefits in fact outweighed the cost. So, as usual, there was a difference between the Chiefs and the civilian leadership.

*Q: I would think, you know, just looking at it as a situation in those days that I mean we had a hell of a time penetrating the Soviet Union and looking at things, they had us covered from A to Z practically with spies and all in fairly open society, so you know, I think this would be, I would think the CIA would be delighted for example.*

BARRY: Oh, the CIA was for it. The arms control and disarmament agency was kind of two minds, the head of ACDA at that point was Ken Adleman and he was on the Weinberger side of the issue. It was a good delegation. We did an awful lot of public diplomacy traveling around to the CSCE member states, meeting with them and having press conferences and all that trying to build support for this. It got a lot of coverage in the U.S. since it was the only game in town at the time.

*Q: How about some of the other players, how did the French fit into this?*

BARRY: The people who were most enthusiastic about this and pressed hardest for an agreement and were most upset sometimes about our hardline position were the Germans. This was of special importance to Germany because it had to do with the movement of conventional forces. Moves that could be threatening.

*Q: That's where the battle would be fought.*

BARRY: Yes. The Nordics were all very much engaged in this with Stockholm being the host of the conference and so the Swedes played an important role.

*Q: How about the, you know, East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, were they jumping to the Soviet?*

BARRY: There was no daylight between any of the Warsaw Pact members on these things.

*Q: Were you able to see a difference when you were talking sort of on the side to save the Poles or something like that or were their delegations pretty disciplined?*

BARRY: I don't think their delegations did a lot of freewheeling discussions. My main effort was devoted at keeping the NATO caucus together because we would meet on a regular basis and there was a lot of potential for dissent within the NATO group, so you had to keep them in line. I remember the Portuguese became particularly difficult. Well, Portuguese are often that way and the Italians were pretty soft on most of these things. The other main effort was with the Russians themselves. So, that was where I spent most of my time.

*Q: Were the British fairly solid?*

BARRY: Yes, I think they were. Nobody was as hard over as we were. So, we were the sort of whip with a NATO hoop.

*Q: Did they sort of roll their eyes when Weinberger was mentioned?*

BARRY: Yes, they certainly knew within our own delegation the differences were quite clear because the OSD representative would go around and threaten they would pull the plug on the negotiation if there was any sign of weakness on the delegation position.

*Q: Were other talks going on at this time? I'm always a little confused on this. There are the three baskets. There was the one that was on borders and to acknowledge that the borders would stay firm, which is what the Soviets wanted very much. They wanted to keep the order line.*

BARRY: Well, by this time of course the Helsinki Final Act was long since put to bed. That was 1974. So, this was part of the Final Act. After the Final Act was approved the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe had a quasi-permanent presence in Vienna, but this sprung out of the conference and it was a separate activity under basket one. It had long been the Russian desire to enliven the security aspects of the dialogue as opposed to the economic or human rights baskets. This got started in I guess it must have been '83.

*Q: What was driving the Soviets in this?*

BARRY: Well, as you say they were most interested in developing the security basket. They wanted to emphasize the permanence of the division in Europe. They wanted to have a security forum in which they participated and they still do for that matter. You see this now going on about NATO because they don't like the idea that NATO makes decisions about things and then brings it to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and tries to get OSCE to make decisions having to do with things like Macedonia or Central Asia or things like that. They wanted to keep; they wanted to have a voice in European security issues.

*Q: What about, where stood the nuclear arms control type things, nuclear and conventional?*

BARRY: Nowhere at that point because we had broken off the strategic arms discussions. The question about theater nuclear weapons was hung up at that point. Remember the zero option, we were saying that the only possibility was both sides to withdraw intermediate range nuclear weapons from Europe. I think towards the end of this period the discussions about intermediate range weapons got started again. Paul Nitze was the head of the U.S. negotiating team and that was concluded sometime later. There had been the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction talks (MBFR), but they were also suspended at that time. At the time I went there, there was nothing else going on in terms of arms control discussions. MBFR started up towards the end of that period or became active toward the end of that period and finally ended up in the CFE Treaty, the treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe.

*Q: Were you getting any inclinations or more than that that the Soviet Union was beginning to have, you know, a leadership crisis, wither it was going and all that sort of thing?*

BARRY: Well, by that time, at least by '84, the leadership crisis was over because you've buried Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko and Gorbachev was in and Gorbachev was talking about Glasnost and restructuring and Perestroika and all that kind of thing. We got the indication towards the middle of '85 was that the Russians were less rigid in issues like the on site inspections and that opened the way for CFE and theater nuclear weapons discussions.

*Q: Was there concern that the Soviets might start cranking up again under a new more vigorous leadership or not?*

BARRY: You mean, was there a threatening posture? I don't think so. I mean the whole emphasis in the Gorbachev period was deal with the problems at home. Of course, this was during the "Star Wars" period so they were being driven hard to keep up with us in terms of spending and nuclear conventional weapons.

*Q: Was there any concern at that time about some sort of an agreement, I mean when you had these things going between the Soviets and the Europeans and the United States that somehow or another West Germany and East Germany might join together as a neutral lump in the middle of Europe?*

BARRY: Well, that was always an underlying fear that people had about the neutralization of Germany and it's a fear that the East Germans had as well because the East Germans were not pleased at all about glasnost and perestroika. Gorbachev came to East Germany and publicly advised them to loosen up on things and that sort of began the crumbling. I think the greatest concern at least among the State Department people was that we would further open the gap between ourselves and the rest of NATO on arms control issues and that this would weaken our posture.

*Q: Well, anyway, were you getting anything from our headquarters in Heidelberg saying you're really opening up a can of worms or something like this?*

BARRY: I think generally the U.S. command in Europe was happy enough with this whole thing. It did in fact make life simpler for them to have advance notification of conventional military activities. Of course, all of our guidance came through the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. We didn't get any lateral discussion, but I did go to visit both SACEUR and CINC/USACEUR, the usual people.

*Q: Just to capture the period, I mean, while we were looking for this, this was not a time when we were particularly concerned about a sudden build up in a dash through the Fulda gap by the Warsaw Pact forces was it?*

BARRY: That was the original focus for the American forces in Europe. They were poised to repel such an activity and the theory was that in order to do such a thing there would be a period of preparation where people would be operating out of garrisons. It was the desire to capture "out of garrison activities." That drove this issue of on site verification because we would get indications that an infantry division had moved its equipment out of garrison and was moving somewhere else, but they would do it by night and we wouldn't see it and so that's why we wanted to have this ability to inspect.

*Q: Were we getting any, were you getting from your military colleagues, the CIA or something readings on the state of military preparedness and effectiveness of the Soviet forces?*

BARRY: Well, we certainly had had all the intelligence that anybody else had at that time, both the compartmentalized intelligence intercepts, satellite activities and things like that, but there was not really a sense that this was an empty shell, that it was, that the Soviet military was in poor condition. This may have been the case when you got back into the hinterland, but the front line divisions in East Germany and so forth were in pretty good shape.

**WARD THOMPSON**  
**Principal Officer**  
**Gothenburg (1986-1987)**

*Ward Thompson attended Brown University before serving in the Marine Corps and attending Tufts-Fletcher School. He joined the Foreign Service in 1966. Thompson's career included posts in Denmark, Korea, Finland, Washington, DC, and Sweden. Thompson was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan in 2000.*

*Q: Very true. Well, in 1986, then, you took a short period of Swedish language training.*

THOMPSON: Yes.

*Q: How did that come about?*

THOMPSON: Well, I had early in my human rights tour found out what my next assignment would be, which would be as principal officer in Gothenburg, Sweden. And the reason for the long time lapse was that this was a language-designated position, and so you have to assign people with a long enough time to take the language. But I was already fluent in Danish, and so they realized that I wouldn't need the language, so I got to spend another year in HA before I went of FSI. And the Foreign Service Institute was about to put together a conversion course in five weeks, similar to what they do for Portuguese speakers learning Spanish and vice versa. And it worked out well. It got one-on-one attention from two or three teachers, and it happened that the other people going out to post had been in Swedish language training for several weeks, and I got to know them at the same time, so that we were all well acquainted, which was important because when I got to post, of course, I was on one side of Sweden, and they were all on the other side. And so in terms of language, I would say that that five weeks enabled me to convert so that I was essentially fluent in Swedish when I arrived in Gothenburg. But it was just as important getting to know people, because otherwise I would only have known the end of a telephone.

*Q: No, that's very helpful. How large was Gothenburg when you got there, as a post?*

THOMPSON: It was very small. I had two Foreign Service nationals and two contract policemen.

*Q: Was there a USIA presence there?*

THOMPSON: No. There was no other agency presence at all.

*Q: So you were the lone American officer.*

THOMPSON: Yes, there had been a commercial FSN doing trade reports, but Commerce had cut him out.

*Q: That's where Volvos are made.*

THOMPSON: Technically, Gothenburg is the industrial center of Sweden. It is also the largest port in Scandinavia, the largest port of Denmark, the largest port of Norway, and Finland also. Now those figures are a little bit inflated because of the oil traffic that goes through there, but it's definitely a very important center. It has the MIT of Sweden, the Chalmers University, in a part of the world where technology is a very important export commodity. And so a lot of the innovation takes place there. And you know, as I listen to the radio these days, the classical stations, it seems every other piece is directed by Neemi Järvi, who is director of the Gothenburg, among other things. I'm actually the one who gave him his first American passport.

*Q: Well, he has a passport?*

THOMPSON: Yes, he is Estonian, and had lived in Sweden for many, many years, but aspired to be an American citizen. He is obviously one of these cosmopolitan jet-setters because he's always directing in different cities. I don't know how he acquired his citizenship, but I do know

when he acquired it. He went through a court in New Jersey, I believe, but he didn't have time to complete his naturalization.

*Q: He came to you?*

THOMPSON: Yes, and of course, I wasn't in the business of issuing passports. The passport found its way to me, and he found his way to my office so he could take the oath. A very nice gentleman.

*Q: Oh, good. I'll think of you when I hear him. Did you get a lot of direction from the embassy in Stockholm as to what to do or what not to do?*

THOMPSON: Well, I got very good cooperation from Stockholm. I must say that the DCM, I think he and I saw eye-to-eye on virtually everything.

The post in Gothenburg had been closed twice.

*Q: I remember that*

THOMPSON: It had been reopened the final time about two years before, at the insistence of Congress, which acted at the insistence of what turned to be a one-person campaign in Sweden by. . . . I think Congress was obliged to open it because it was on a list of posts that had to be opened as a *quid pro quo* for us opening posts in China, and there were a number of small European posts. Gothenburg made the list because a women of some years in Gothenburg had a fixation, an obsession, about America, and I met with her later. It turned out that she was in love with America because when she was a teenager or something, after the war, living in rural Sweden, a very large car came down, probably the only car that passed that way that day, and there was a very wealthy American in the car, and he asked these two girls for some information or something, and they gave it to him. And apparently he went his way, and then they heard from him again - he sent them some money or tickets or something, I don't remember - but anyway, she always loved America as a result of that. And she thought it was terrible that the post had closed, and she started a petition and got over 100,000 signatures. And she made several trips to Washington, and she met with four or five members of Congress, and she presented herself as representative of the people of Western Sweden, and they bought it.

*Q: I always heard that it was Hubert Humphrey that kept it open.*

THOMPSON: At an earlier time, yes, oh, yes, but you see, he was no longer with us.

*Q: No longer available then.*

THOMPSON: There was one particular congressman from Minnesota who got his name behind us, but I think it was primarily her doing, and this was obvious to me. There was no groundswell trying to keep us there. Everybody was happy with us, but at a time when most things can be handled out of Stockholm, people felt the post was not needed.

*Q: Did you get to Stockholm often?*

THOMPSON: I did. I need to say that before I arrived, our ambassador, who was Gregory Newell, a political appointee, had made the decision that the post would be closed, and in Washington he had been assistant secretary for international organizations. And I had met with him, and we had talked about the tenuousness of the post, and he had assured me that he wouldn't make his decision until I got out there. Now for whatever reasons, he volunteered to close it. So this I discovered when I'd arrived. So my job was not only to do the normal things but to prepare quietly to close the post down, at the same time not letting the Swedes know that we had reached this decision. In fact, the logic for closing it was very good, because the other agencies had abandoned the place. USIA didn't do much. I mentioned the symphony orchestra there, which is *the* Swedish orchestra that comes to mind in discussing music. Chalmers University, of course, is probably one that's got more to do with other universities. The art museum, the opera, Gothenburg is a city of not quite the size of Oslo or Helsinki but almost, with at least as vibrant a cultural and academic life, but nonetheless USIA could not cover its employees. Commerce, it turned out that the commercial attaché told me that he did not have the money to travel to Gothenburg, let alone have an officer down there.

*Q: You know, that was the industrial heart of Sweden.*

THOMPSON: Oh, he was very sorry about this, because he understood why he should be down there. So it was similar. I will say that the agricultural attaché was able to travel, did come and put on a wine tasting, so he was doing his job very well. But without this support from the other agencies, it became rather absurd for us to have a post there. Although what was left to me. . . . Well, I'll mention the consular work because this was before we had granted the visa waiver, and of course it made a lot of sense to grant visa waivers to Swedes, after which point you didn't need to have a consulate. But I think I issued about 8,000 non-immigrant visas in my 12 months there.

*Q: You did a lot of signing, then.*

THOMPSON: I did a lot of signing. I had a lot of contact. We would have up to 200 applicants a day in our waiting room, not realizing that they could do it by mail, that they could even apply to Stockholm by mail. But a lot of people like to come in. They like that as part of the process of visiting America. And we had a lot of non-Swedes who would come in. Now, of course, they would have to go to Stockholm. And I had some protection and welfare, Americans who needed help.

*Q: I wanted to ask you, were there still any American deserters in the area?*

THOMPSON: Not that we had anything to do with. There were some Americans who obviously had been around there a long time. There was quite a large business community of Americans. They weren't necessarily working for American firms, but they were in most cases American men who had married Swedish women or vice versa, and they had jobs there. And they kept to themselves. They would invite me to visit with them. Nothing that really required a presence. It's

always good to have a presence, and of course in addition to the consular work what I was doing was public diplomacy and representation. Now it happened that when Congress reestablished Gothenburg, it gave the post its own budget, so that this was not controlled by the embassy in Stockholm, so that I had the means. I had a rather large jurisdiction, which went all down the coast, down to and including Heisenberg and Malmö, this whole area, and the University of Lund, which is another leading Swedish university.

Q: *I see, yes.*

THOMPSON: And so I would travel. I would speak, go to political party conferences if they were in my district. There was plenty to do. Some of the political establishment in Stockholm comes from western Sweden. Again, not more than from other areas, but they are of some importance in the country.

Q: *Well, apparently, being by yourself, you couldn't send in any classified material.*

THOMPSON: No, and it was an awkward time, because it was before e-mail, and I had a teletype that was my main contact with Stockholm and vice versa, so we'd be on the telephone a lot, of course, but nobody would teletype me. I could receive classified information by courier. I could store it to some extent, if it was low level, but basically I would shred it, and I did have a time when my shredder jammed, and I was able to unjam it.

Q: *Otherwise your pockets would have been bulging.*

THOMPSON: Well, we had this unfortunate budget thing that I mentioned, which was unfortunately that I had money that I just couldn't spend. And so one thing I spent it on was another shredder, so that I had a backup shredder. Things were a little skewed in Sweden then. The prime minister, Olaf Palme, had been assassinated in early '86.

Q: *I had wanted to ask you about that, what the reverberations in Gothenburg were.*

THOMPSON: Well, nothing. But the problem was that the Americans became very security-aware after the prime minister was assassinated. Earlier, of course, much earlier, they had had a terrorist attack against the West German embassy in Stockholm, which was located in back of our embassy, and I suppose that added to ratcheting up our security concerns. Nobody knows who shot Palme or why, but chances are no more likely that it was a terrorist than anything else. There was never any indication that Americans were being targeted. Nonetheless, it was decided that the American ambassador would have a follow-on detail and an armed escort in his own car so that every. . . . You know, the Residence is just down the street from the embassy, so he would drive back and forth in a two-car cavalcade.

Q: *When he always could have walked.*

THOMPSON: Oh, yes, he could have, but he's not allowed to walk. And this spilled over to Gothenburg. I think psychologically both my predecessor and I—



*Q: Well, you had no marines.*

THOMPSON: No marines, no. If there were these precautions, then it must be for a reason, and so my residence, which was very, very nice, was outfitted with all kinds of security devices. I spent most of my time worrying that I would trip them by mistake. I mentioned that I had two contract policemen. These were to provide security for us on an in-house basis. In other words, they worked for me. They were on the US Government payroll. And I was able to use them to screen people coming in, and they became very good at screening visa applicants. We couldn't have survived without these two gentlemen, because the official Swedish security system, which is a contract system providing security for embassies, provided us with a Swedish security guard inside our area as well. So our- [interruption]

So I think we were very well covered in security terms, and that was the main impact of the Palme assassination. It's not that the threat was increased, as far as I know, or there was a security risk. And this became obvious to me because one of my first functions there was to attend an all-Scandinavian meeting of social democrats, and many of them were in power at the time, including Ingvar Karlsson, who was prime minister of Sweden. And I recall going to this conference downtown in Gothenburg, and after the lunch, there was going to be a plenary session, and people were literally mobbing the doors to get in. And there were Karlsson and I elbowing each other to get through the door first, and he had no security whatsoever. And as it turned out, Bo Harlan Botman, who was head of the Norwegian labor party, was supposed to address the conference, and the doors shut on her because she didn't get there fast enough. So I saw that for the Swedes very little had changed. It was the Americans were thinking quite seriously of the dangers of living and working in Sweden.

*Q: You were there, then, when the post was officially closed.*

THOMPSON: No, I was told, as I said, that it was going to close, and that was in July of '86, and in early '87 I was given the go-ahead to tell the Swedes to the extent I had to. And the reason for this was that we had a long-term lease of our floor in the building, and the obligation for that would have cost us more if we'd been held to it in closing the post than it would have cost us to keep the post open, so I went downstairs to the owner of the building, along with the GSO from Stockholm, and we sat and discussed it, and he didn't really flinch. And he said, of course, that he'd have no trouble finding another tenant. But that was how we told the Swedes that we were leaving.

But I then was back in Washington and visited the Desk, the office, and Ford Cooper, who was the director, told me that the Department wanted me to go down to Copenhagen and replace the political counselor there. As it turned out, the post was not closed for another year, but the Department wished that I be of use somewhere else. So we just left it empty, as it were. I think one of the FSN's left, and the other one came in and punched a time clock.

*Q: Oh, we didn't send an officer in?*

THOMPSON: No. And the embassy went about closing it, and the remaining FSN was offered a position in Stockholm.

*Q: Well, it's sad when one of these posts that had a long history has to be finally closed. It was done at a number of places.*

THOMPSON: Yes, well, I think one shouldn't get too sentimental. On one of my many introductory calls, I went to the afternoon tabloid, the biggest circulation newspaper in western Sweden. The editor was a very savvy individual, speaks impeccable English and all that, and I called on him, and he said, "Now before you tell me about your wireless file, come on in the back room." And he turned on the television, and he had Worldnet, which was USIA's own international program, and also CNN, and he said, "Look, anything I want to know, I've got it already on. I wish you well. I look forward to seeing you in town, but there's nothing you can tell me." I know, and that I think is why we needed to close posts like that.

*Q: Well, I was glad that I was able to leave the Netherlands before we closed Rotterdam, although we were speculating how long it could stay open.*

THOMPSON: I did have a number of consular cases where I was able to do things which would have been hard to cover from Stockholm because they would have required travel. And fortunately we had no disasters, no train wrecks or anything while I was there. But when you forfeit a post and you have something like that in a country with hundreds of thousands of Americans traveling all the time, I think that's a consideration. I did have one court case right after I arrived where the son of a fairly prominent American athlete had been using his sister's credit card to pay for his hotel bill, had been arrested, and was being tried; and I had succeeded in getting money from his mother, and so I went to the courtroom, and that was the first time I used my Swedish officially, and the judge said that she understood that there was somebody from the American embassy. The whole thing was taking place through translation for the benefit of the accused, who didn't speak Swedish. And she asked me if I had anything that I could offer that was mitigating, so I just dispensed with an interpreter and I announced that yes, I had money, and that we would be able to guarantee that he would leave Sweden, at which point she concluded the trial and that was that.

*Q: And she was happy to hear it in Swedish, I'm sure.*

THOMPSON: Oh, yes.

**BARBARA H. NIELSEN**  
**Public Affairs Officer, USIS**  
**Stockholm (1994-1998)**

*Barbara H. Nielsen was born in New York in 1949. She attended Middlebury College, Indiana University, and Yale University. She has also served in the Peace Corps in Katmandu from 1972 to 1974. Her career has included positions in Montevideo, Tegucigalpa, Dakar, Santiago, Algiers, Stockholm, and Athens. Ms. Nielsen was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on December 16, 2004.*

*Q: Today is February 10, 2005. In '94, you're taking Swedish.*

NIELSEN: Yes. One of those lovely one-country languages.

*Q: I cant remember, how Swedish is Nielsen? Did you have a tie?*

NIELSEN: N-I-E-L-S-O-N would be the Swedish spelling of Nielsen. The Danish spelling is N-I-E-L-S-E-N, which is my last name. It's a name I married into, so I can't claim any personal affiliation, but certainly all the folks in Scandinavia are descended from the same stock, and at least my husband can trace his roots to Norway and Denmark.

*Q: You were in Sweden from when to when?*

NIELSEN: From '94 to '98.

*Q: What was your job?*

NIELSEN: I was the public affairs officer.

*Q: Who was the ambassador when you went there?*

NIELSEN: Thomas Siebert.

*Q: What's his background?*

NIELSEN: He was a classmate of Bill Clinton at Georgetown and was a lawyer and businessperson who worked in the area of telecommunications. His specialty was telecommunications law. He was an early supporter of Bill Clinton and a friend personally from school, so that was how he ended up in Sweden.

*Q: What did he bring to the job?*

NIELSEN: He had a very keen sense of politics, which is not unexpected, but I thought he did a good job of explaining the Clinton presidency. Sweden was the kind of place where you would often be asked to do public speaking. I worked with him quite a bit on many of his speeches. Some of them were focused on economics and business. That was one of our policy interests, to explain how the American economic system was constructed and functioned. We were at that moment very proud of our entrepreneurial achievements, our stock market achievements, our innovation in technology and information technology. The Swedes were interested in that, and the Ambassador was a good spokesman on those things. Also, what impressed me a lot was how he would encapsulate American politics. He knew a lot about partisan politics, but also what effect the charisma of someone like Bill Clinton or Ronald Reagan had and how you accounted for that. He was very effective.

*Q: When you arrived there in '94, what was the status of Swedish-American relations?*

NIELSEN: Relations were good. Eastern Europe had just had its seismic shift and the countries of Eastern Europe were interested in joining western institutions; Sweden was a good bridge for many of them both to see what a nominally non-aligned country looked like in terms of its defense alliances or non-alliances, as well as its economic system. We were able to work very collegially with the Swedes in helping the newly independent states -- specifically the Baltic states because they were the closest neighbors -- to become familiar with western-style democracy, with market-based systems, and with crafting a foreign policy that would contribute to stability in Europe. The Swedes were our partners in that.

*Q: How about Sweden and Poland? Was there much affinity there at that time?*

NIELSEN: I can't think of many direct ties. I met a number of Poles who had come to Sweden as a consequence of the rise of the Nazis. I'm thinking of one Polish gentleman who was the director of the Stockholm Institute for Peace Research. He had a very interesting Holocaust story. There were some others like that that I recall, but I don't know how large the community of Poles living in Sweden was.

*Q: Even though they're on the Baltic, you think of the Poles as part of the European-German connection.*

NIELSEN: That's right. When I think of the Baltic states, I think primarily of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Poland is a Baltic state but kind of in a different category.

*Q: Was there much affinity between the Swedes and the Finns?*

NIELSEN: Sure. There were fine fraternal feelings between Sweden and all of its Scandinavian neighbors. Centuries ago, there were conflicts and struggles, but at this point in time, they had resolved those. They're all members of the EU except for Norway. So, their natural cultural and linguistic ties are only strengthened by the fact that there's so much commerce between them and the citizens move freely from one country to another. The languages are extremely similar, with the exception of Finnish, of course, which is off there on its own, languagewise. There is a Scandinavian bloc often in the EU where those countries see eye to eye on a lot of issues that tend to differentiate them from their southern neighbors.

*Q: How did you find the Swedish media? This was your main concern, wasn't it? I'm thinking of radio, but particularly the press and TV.*

NIELSEN: They were by and large very professional, well-trained. They were sophisticated, or at least most of them were, and not as inclined to just make knee-jerk criticisms of the United States. I think we worked very amicably with them and had a good dialogue. It wasn't an acrimonious relationship at all.

*Q: There had been a time, particularly in the '60s and '70s where the Swedes, particularly the left-wing and the intelligencia, were really having a wonderful time dumping on the U.S. and looking at the warts and nothing else. Had that gone?*

NIELSEN: That generation has by and large disappeared. Yes, there is a communist party still in Sweden and they have their media organs and they will never be friends of the United States. They are not going to say anything good about us. But the mainstream media, first, they were looking largely to local issues like any media would do, and then to European issues and, yes, international issues for sure. But at that time, we were not engaged in any war, and there really wasn't an immediate cause for strident concern. The Swedish media is very different than what it was in the '60s, when there were many activists who were vociferous against the war in Vietnam. Many Americans did end up in Sweden, so there was a reason for them to pay attention. Sure, that was the climate of that time. That has changed.

*Q: How about the Americans who went there? Have they all gone back? Was there an American dissident community?*

NIELSEN: No, I thought there should be and I was on the watch for it, but I can't say that I really encountered it. Every now and again, I'd meet someone who, yes, had been there since the '60s, but they were not necessarily dissidents. There were also a number of Americans who traveled to Sweden and ended up staying. Maybe they married a Swede. But it wasn't that they were dissidents. It was just an inviting place to go and if they liked it, they stayed. The vocal critics, I'm sure there were still some who remained there, but they weren't making their presence felt.

*Q: Did you feel that you had to protect your ambassador from hostility or warn him or was this a fairly open media market?*

NIELSEN: We were viewed very amicably. The Swedes were friendly and the media likewise were not hostile. The ambassador didn't have any problems in that sense. We can contrast it with Greece, which was diametrically opposed. Sweden was a lovely place to be an ambassador because you generally didn't encounter the hostile press that you would find here, for example.

*Q: The Clinton administration had its problems both personal, with the Lewinsky case, but also the problems with Congress which since the election of '92 was not only hostile but quite hostile to the administration. Did that get played out in the Swedish press?*

NIELSEN: We talked a lot about the lack of civility in our political discourse. I think it is still remarkable, was then and is still quite a remarkable characteristic. Things have not gotten markedly better, but those were the days of the Contract with America and Newt Gingrich and his plans, most of which didn't happen. I think there is no good explanation for why our politicians behave the way they do. It's rather an embarrassment.

*Q: It was a very bad period. Were you there during the impeachment of the President?*

NIELSEN: No, by then, I was here studying Greek.

*Q: Was Russia much of a concern in Sweden?*

NIELSEN: Russia has always been a concern in Sweden. Even then, yes, trying to know what was going to happen in Russia was of great interest to them, and there was certainly a large degree of mistrust of the Russians based on their past history. There was great interest in dialogue and we tried to foment at the time quite useful and forward looking foreign policy seminars that brought the Eastern European countries together with the Russian foreign minister to talk about the future of that region. It was a new beginning. Now, these seem like rather tame discussions because all of those countries are now members of Partnership for Peace and some of them have gone on to become NATO members. It was really a new concept for both Americans and for those countries as well, to imagine the close military alliance that now exists.

*Q: The Swedes had been very much involved with African countries, particularly promoting their form of socialism. It's turned out to be kind of a disaster, Tanzania and other places. Was there a great interest in Africa at that time? Did we get involved with the Swedes in this?*

NIELSEN: I can't say that the Swedes had lost interest in Africa, but it wasn't one of our goals at the embassy.

*Q: They were doing their thing.*

NIELSEN: Right. I'm at a loss to recall what our policy in Africa was. Up until that time, we were not heavily engaged. President Clinton did make an important visit to several countries in Africa. It was the first that he had done. This was in '96 or '97. It was kind of a catch-up initiative, since we had largely neglected much of Africa. The Swedes on their own have a wonderful tradition of being very generous in terms of development assistance and medical assistance and they would try to shame us into being more generous ourselves, but it wasn't a big issue, at least in my office.

*Q: How well did you feel the Swedes were absorbing immigrants coming from other countries, particularly Eastern Europe?*

NIELSEN: They were very concerned about immigration. The war in Bosnia created a lot of refugees and prospective immigrants. Many of them came to Sweden under its enlightened refugee policies. The Swedes felt that maybe they ought to actively try to persuade them to return home when conditions were right. The large number of immigrants was perceived to be tipping the balance in their society. There were other waves of immigration well before that – the Turkish immigration in the '70s, for example. Every day, you would have articles in the press that were immigrant stories, how well they were integrating or not integrating. The Swedes did a lot of soul searching on that issue. Their philosophy was to be welcoming on the one hand. On the other hand, they felt that they were a small society. They were homogenous and if too many outsiders were allowed to remain, then their society would no longer be homogenous and they wondered how that would play out in terms of the social contract that they had enjoyed with their citizens. They were afraid on that level. They provided tremendous benefits to people who were there legally. They taught them Swedish for one thing. Kids were given individual tutoring and brought up to speed in Swedish in record time. They were subsidized economically so that they had a very decent standard of living quite early on. So they did a lot, but they did feel the strains of the cost of that.

*Q: Speaking of that, was there a feeling in the embassy about Sweden's very substantial and very nice, but very expensive, social program. I would think this would cut down on entrepreneurship and initiative and so on. How did we feel about that?*

NIELSEN: There were many Swedish economists who pointed out that there were some real problems with their system that was so very generous. One of them often cited the example that a Swedish doctor would not be making appreciably more than a Swedish housepainter and so the doctor had no incentive to hire the painter for his house. He would logically decide to paint the house himself because he would have the time and it would cost him relatively too much to hire this painter. If he did a couple gallbladder operations, he wasn't going to come out ahead economically. So that created some tensions. The education minister was very adamant that there should not be anything that could smack of elitism in the schools. His thinking was that you wouldn't want to encourage the high achievers to propel themselves too quickly or too far because that would make the middle, the average, feel somehow less good about themselves, so you really wanted everybody to be average. The system tried to help those who needed help to bring them up to that average standard, but there shouldn't be any effort to really encourage outstanding achievement. In his opinion, those who were going to be outstanding achievers would do that on their own anyway. You didn't have to encourage them, so emphasis should be placed on making things as equal as possible. They did a good job of making things as equal as possible, with the downside that entrepreneurs sometimes felt they should make their company headquarters at least someplace else, because they would not be taxed as much and they would have greater flexibility in hiring and firing and the labor laws might be more conducive to the growth of their company. A lot of them did make that decision.

*Q: Did you find running a USIS operation difficult under their labor laws?*

NIELSEN: My short answer is "no." We're a government organization and we had very careful safeguards to protect the rights of workers. We don't operate like the private sector. Therefore, if, for example, you felt you needed to terminate an underperformer, I would not say that in our government structure that's an easy thing to do. You have to do quite a bit of due diligence, counseling, documentation. The process is going to take a fair amount of time. You have to commit yourself early if you want to get it done. Therefore, we could follow that procedure and not be doing anything unethical. I don't know if the Swedes would have done it the same way, but at least we weren't acting in an extreme fashion. I can't think of any instance where we had problems with Swedish labor law because of what we were trying to do. I think we obeyed Swedish labor law to the extent we were obliged to do so and were fair in the way we structured our personnel system.

*Q: I'm taking as an assumption that we didn't have to push English teaching because the Swedes already got that through the school system.*

NIELSEN: That's basically true. The Swedes speak very good English and they do teach themselves English. We would make a contribution in the higher graduate level American studies area, but we didn't need to promote English teaching in the same way that you would in most other countries. We did have a program still, but it was small and not that important.

*Q: What about Swedes going to the United States to study? Was there a solid pattern of this?*

NIELSEN: Sure. The Fulbright Program is one way to go to the U.S. to study that the Swedes took great advantage of, because they were very well qualified and could get, in addition to a small Fulbright grant, help from the U.S. schools. There were reasonable numbers who took that route. On the other hand, Swedish universities were virtually free to them, so you wouldn't see people going at the undergraduate level. The system is quite different, so if you grew up in the Swedish secondary school, not that many of them would be thinking of an American university until graduate studies.

*Q: With graduate school, was there a brain drain because of the relatively rigid Swedish system? When you have that much control, I would think that the free spirits would want to get the hell out.*

NIELSEN: Yes, I'll bet that's a reasonable characterization, that those who don't fit in would look elsewhere. Where they were looking at the time I was there were the many options proliferating thanks to the European Union. A great many exchange programs were sponsored within the European Union. I think that was the first choice for most of them because it was affordable, closer, they might not need to know a language other than English either because there are sectors of the German universities that teach in English or the French universities taking EU students and teaching in English. So that wasn't a big problem for them. Then later on, they could be hoping for a career in Europe and that was a big issue given the low rate of job creation in Sweden itself. Many of the university graduates realized they did need to go somewhere else and Europe was the first thought for most of them.

*Q: How did the war in Bosnia play out in Sweden?*

NIELSEN: It was front page news for years while we were there. The Swedes had some peacekeepers or some military contribution in Tuzla (Hungary).

*Q: It was a very large contingent of many countries there.*

NIELSEN: There were contributions from most everywhere there. The Swedish presence was small, but they were doing their part, they thought. The refugee issue was big. The human rights issue concerned them quite a bit. The establishment of viable democracy in Bosnia-Herzegovina was of great interest to them. They have some very skilled diplomats who were mediating. Karl Bildt, the former Swedish prime minister, was one of the mediators. He wasn't the last, so obviously the job was very difficult. Swedes were quite engaged in Bosnia.

*Q: Was there a problem explaining why we didn't go in at first or was this applauded? At first they said, "This is a European problem and we can take care of this." The result was horrible.*

NIELSEN: That's right. I think the Swedes went along with the European line publicly. I don't know what they would say privately. Probably, they would admit it was a good thing when the U.S. took action. In the run-up to the Dayton Accords, Ambassador Holbrooke had quite a bit of



interaction with the Swedish mediator, Karl Bildt, and I think they worked closely together to resolve this conflict. You certainly get that impression from Holbrooke's book, To End a War.

*Q: Were you there during the assassination of Olaf Palme?*

NIELSEN: No, he was assassinated in 1976, a long time ago. But the issue had not yet been laid to rest even at the time I was there. Of course, it had been heavily investigated at the time and for many years since. Occasionally, there would be new developments. There was someone taken into custody while I was there. His name was Christer Pettersson. I think they have reasonably well concluded that he is the guilty party. He did it on his own. It was not a political murder. He was a lifelong criminal. I forget what his reasoning was on that day. He was a drug addict, but whether he was under the influence at that moment I don't know. It reminds you of the recent attack on the Swedish foreign minister, who was killed while shopping at a department store. That individual also was not politically motivated. He was found to be insane as well. The Olaf Palme murder was a wakeup call for the Swedes that not everyone was going to be as civilized as they hoped in their country. As we saw from the Anna Lind murder, the level of violence is very low in Sweden, but it does happen and it is always shocking to the Swedes when something like that happens. But, Swedish government officials do not go around with bodyguards. Normally, they don't need them.

*Q: How did you find social life there?*

NIELSEN: Very welcoming. We were there with our two sons and they played a lot of sports with the Swedes.

*Q: How old were your sons at the time you arrived?*

NIELSEN: Seven and 11. They were able to enjoy things Swedish. We were homeschooling them while they were there, so they didn't per se have a school class that they were part of, but they took part in scouts and sports with Swedish kids. It's a very child friendly or family-friendly country. The Swedes are very sports-minded. They're very fitness oriented. You easily get sucked into being active, which is good.

*Q: During the four years you were there, were there any crisis points?*

NIELSEN: On the foreign relations side, probably not. The important developments were in technology. We really saw the IT revolution take hold and it meant a significant change in how we were doing business. The Swedes were in the forefront of computer use, Internet use and development. Our embassy had one of the first home pages, web pages, and that was an important development. We also saw what was from my point of view a significant event, which was the decision to dismantle USIA. In the run-up to that, partial dismantlement took place. There were major personnel and budget cuts; our operation diminished in a big way, never to be replaced. We went out of the library business and the English teaching business and we cut staff dramatically. That was the run-up to the merger. Some of those functions that USIA used to do remain but maybe in a somewhat atrophied capacity.

*Q: Looking at it in retrospect, did you feel this was a needed development or did it really hurt our operations?*

NIELSEN: I think it makes sense to have everything under one roof. The public diplomacy function can well be part of the State Department. If administratively you want to do that, I don't have a philosophical objection. But in the wake of the merger, many report that it's too easy for public diplomacy to be considered a stepchild and not to be viewed as significantly as it was when public diplomacy was the essence of an entire agency. So, that has an impact on resources and on how members of the Department utilize the public diplomacy resources that they have. Colin Powell was a great supporter of public diplomacy, so his leadership was a positive thing. But you still see in the Department, particularly among the older generation of folks, not as much understanding of what the USIS functions are and should be and could be and that has led to an abiding denigration of its role.

If you were to do the merger correctly, it could be a reasonable thing bureaucratically, but I'm not sure that's what happened. There were efforts to preserve some of the best practices of USIA. I'm not sure that too many that were preserved, though there was an effort to do that. Then, you would logically want to make sure that those things that USIA did especially well, like exchanges and personal diplomacy, were preserved and presumably enhanced because their importance was recognized and their funding ensured. That's a difficult thing to do when we have so many more bureaus competing for resources, even in an era of expanding resources.

**ALPHONSE F. LA PORTA**  
**Political Advisor to Commander of NATO Forces in Southern Region**  
**Naples, Italy (2000-2003)**

*Ambassador La Porta was born and raised in New York and educated at Georgetown and New York Universities. After serving in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1965. During his career the ambassador had several assignments in Washington in the personnel and administrative field. His foreign assignments include Indonesia, Malaysia, Turkey, New Zealand, where he served as Deputy Chief of Mission, and Naples, Italy. In 1997 he was named Ambassador to Mongolia, where he served until 2000. Ambassador La Porta was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.*

LA PORTA: For example, our command in Naples was responsible for conducting Operation Active Endeavor in the Eastern Mediterranean. Active Endeavor was a counter terrorist maritime interdiction force that tracked civilian shipping for nefarious activity. It also was a means of deploying a defensive task force in the Eastern Mediterranean to anchor that strategic region while U.S. and coalition forces were in Afghanistan and later in Iraq. After operation Active Endeavor was deployed by agreement of the Defense Policy Committee, not the NATO Council where the French could have interposed their objection. Active Endeavor became a living and breathing thing. It had a command and control structure, it interoperated, it gathered in forces of not only the United States and Britain, but also German and other forces. A couple of Scandinavians came in and even the Swedes came down to interoperate as a PFP country.

*Q: PFP?*

LA PORTA: Sweden was a Partnership for Peace country. There were also contributions from the Greeks and the Turks in this task force. The number of forces in composition of the forces we had was changing and then every two months AFNORTH deployed a naval task force into Eastern Mediterranean to relieve the Southern region force which came back for refitting and training. Then the Northern Europe force backed out and so forth. This was the kind of operating system we had. It was very effective and today it is very effective.

The French woke up after about two months of this and they said there's something happening here and we're not part of it. All of a sudden the French announced that they were going to send two ships to interoperate with Operation Active Endeavor in the Eastern Mediterranean. What's going on here? Are they just out to collect data on what NATO was doing? Yes. Or are they contributing something by conducting their own patrolling patterns, reporting data and so forth? Yes, too.

*End of reader*