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

ALEXANDER AKALOVSKY

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INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Akalovsky]

Q: Today is June 21, 2000. This is an interview with Alexander Akalovsky. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Shall we start? Could you tell me when and where you were born and something about your family?

AKALOVSKY: I was born in what is now Croatia, on a little island called Rab, a beautiful place. The reason I was born there was that my parents left Russia after the revolution and they wound up on this island for a short time. My father was in the White Army, and then came to Yugoslavia. He was among the remnants of the White Army, some of them at least, along the Yugoslavian–German border, and my father was a lawyer in the army at the time. Anyway, he wound up patrolling the border on a boat.

Q: What year were you born?

AKALOVSKY: 1923.

Q: Can you tell me a bit about your mother and father and their background?

AKALOVSKY: Well they are both Russian. My father volunteered in World War I. He quit college and entered the army, and then went into the White Army. He met my mother in Kiev and they both studied in Kiev. They were not born in Kiev.

Q: Where were they born?

AKALOVSKY: My father was born in Communist Poborsky [?], which is in the Ukraine, although he's not Ukrainian. And my mother actually comes from Kursk, the central part of Russia, but she studied in Kiev. Anyway, then they were evacuated by the British from Crimea and wound up in Salonika and then _____. But my father stayed there a bit longer, about six months, through the whole thing, and then set up shop in Belgrade. Many joined the government, and again, the then king, King Alexander, he had actually been educated in Russia and he was very well disposed to the Russian émigrés. There were 13,000 Russian émigrés in Belgrade, but there were many more all

over the country. They were allowed to work for the government and the government employees would now be citizens. Even those who were accepted for citizenship, in the case of the restoration of the dissident government in Russia, they were automatically given Russian citizenship. Anyway, then when World War II came, I went to French school first, my first elementary school was in French. Just once class, one day actually, for the Serbian language. This was done by French Jesuits.

Q: This was in Belgrade.

AKALOVSKY: Yes. It was called Paroissial St. Joseph (French-Serbian School of Saint Joseph). Do you know the area Neimar in Belgrade?

Q: Yes. Now I recall.

AKALOVSKY: That's where it was in that area. In fact, you may know Mrs. Angolich?

Q: Yes, Angelica Angolich.

AKALOVSKY: She was in school with me. I was in Belgrade with Nixon in 1970 and met her and we started chatting, and we didn't realize we were in the same school—well just for one year—in kindergarten. Because then after kindergarten, they separated boys and girls.

Q: She is now at the embassy as a teacher of Serbian, a wonderful lady.

AKALOVSKY: Yes. She must have retired by now.

Q: I think she's retired, but I think she's still there. You were going to school. Was it always a French school?

AKALOVSKY: No. Elementary school first. Then I went—there was a Russian Gymnasium, as they called it, a high school in Belgrade. But I didn't go there, I went to a local Serbian school in Belgrade. But the first three years we had the Serbian school from 8 to 1 every day, and then in the afternoon I went to the French school. The first three years and then it became too much so I went to the Yugoslav school.

Q: You were speaking Russian at home?

AKALOVSKY: Yes. And also the private tutor there, in Russia and German.

Q: And German. I take it—because of your later career—did you find that the facility for languages was forced on you or did they come easy to you?

AKALOVSKY: I think they came easily. I had no problem at all. My parents made the decision. They didn't have much money, I was the only child, and there was a choice. I loved music. I wanted to study music, but that was very expensive. And they said that

languages can always help in life, from their own experience. So, they made the choice and said, you study languages, and if later we have more money you could study music. But it never came to that.

Q: What type of work was your father doing with the Yugoslav government?

AKALOVSKY: He was with the government's state railway administration.

Q: How did you find as a young boy growing up in Belgrade—did you have problems with being somewhat different, being of Russian background?

AKALOVSKY: No. Well this always bothered me. We talked about the situation here. People feel so isolated and uncomfortable. In my high school, we had Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Jews, Muslims, Orthodox Catholics, and old Catholics. Not a problem, never any problem.

Q: Yes, I agree with you. I think we're in a very precious time. Everybody is trying to prove that they're different so that they have to be treated extra carefully.

AKALOVSKY: But we never had any problem. We had the Germans in my class.

Q: Were you feeling—how was the government looked upon—obviously you were a kid, but was there a feeling of stress on the government or was life pretty calm in those days?

AKALOVSKY: It depended on the period, really. Serbs are very quarrelsome people. [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: They are very passionate and they can argue and argue and argue. But no, probably the Croats—Then in 1938 they changed the name of one of the—I think they called it banovina units and that impacted migration. And then of course there were problems along the coast. Primarily run by what they called the Ustaše order of the Catholic Church—very very separatist. And there were demonstrations occasionally and so forth. There were some terrorist acts by the Ustaše in Belgrade.

Q: The king was killed in Montessori in '34, was it?

AKALOVSKY: Yes.

Q: So you were 11 years old. How did that—

AKALOVSKY: Well, in Belgrade of course it was a tragedy. Some of the Croats may have rejoiced, but I have no idea. But it was a big tragedy. And of course, the next king, Peter, was my age, a boy king. And Prince Paul—

Q: Well, he was the uncle, I guess.

AKALOVSKY: Yes.

Q: Were you getting a good solid dose of Serbian nationalism about 500 years under the Turks?

AKALOVSKY: Yes there was a history of course, but other than that, no.

Q: As time went on, World War II started when you were about 16.

AKALOVSKY: In '39, although it didn't affect us though.

Q: Were things changing there then, in Yugoslavia?

AKALOVSKY: In Belgrade? No not really, in fact in the summer we used to go to the coast, at Split, and everything was calm. Of course in '41 the situation became—

Q: Were you still in high school when—

AKALOVSKY: No, I graduated right after the German invasion, which lasted only two weeks. I finished my last year and then we had to take an exam, *Abitur*, or the *baccalaureate* in French, and that we took after the Germans were already in.

Q: Oh, boy.

AKALOVSKY: But that was in June, the war was in April for two weeks.

Q: Belgrade got heavily bombed. How does that affect you and your family?

AKALOVSKY: Fortunately, our house—we were in an apartment building on the top floor which was very high in those days, the fifth floor. [laughter]

Q: [laughter] Oh, boy.

AKALOVSKY: One of the tallest buildings in Belgrade at that time, other than the Albanian building. Remember the Albanian building?

Q: Yes, the main part of Terazije, in the Central Square.

AKALOVSKY: I don't know if they call it the Albanian building nowadays.

Q: I think they called it the Albanian building when I was there. Though today, I suspect it's not! [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: Yes, not today, it may have changed. We were near Slavija, you know

the big square there. Just the length of a block there. Well on that day, June 6, 1941—my father was always an early riser, which I am not—It was a Sunday, he got up. Well prior to that, the situation was very very tense, because at one point, Yugoslavia joined the Axis.

Q: Yes.

AKALOVSKY: And therefore, there was a coup, by Simović, a general. The government was overturned, and the relations between Yugoslavia and Germany became very tense. And they were exercising air raids and so forth. So my father got up very early and looked out the window and he could see the mountain out there.

Q: Mountain hill. [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: [laughter] And he looked out and he was actually shaving at the moment, and pop pop up in the air. He looked and looked, and at first he thought they were exercising again. Well, then he realized that they weren't because he saw planes coming and the noise from bombs falling. So he ran into my mother's bedroom and my bedroom and said get out into the basement. So we went down to the basement and we stayed there for three days. But German bombing, it's sort of hard to say, but it was easier to take than Allied bombing, which occurred later on.

Q: Well it was early days of—

AKALOVSKY: Oh, no. You could stand in the street and you would see where the bombs would fall before they hit the ground by the house. If you saw them going that direction, you were safe. If you saw them coming this direction, you hit the dirt or—Whereas Allied bombing was higher bombing from 5,000 feet and all you could see was shimmering and glittering planes in the sky and you never knew where they would fall. You'd hear the noise—[swishing noise]—and then my father—as I said he worked for the railways; he managed to put us on the train to get us out of Belgrade and we went down to some village and that's where we stayed. And he said he would go with his office, wherever the office got evacuated. I don't know where they went. A few weeks later, he showed up with a white band on his arm. They all had surrendered, his office. So the war was over. So we went back to Belgrade but then there was no bombing until '44. Food was scarce and there were shootings by the soldiers, retaliations and executions.

Q: What were you doing? You were moving into military age by this time.

AKALOVSKY: Yes, but I wasn't drafted. There was no draft. At my age, we're going to work. But I always wanted to be an architect. That was my ambition. And I was good at drawing, and math and figures. But the Germans closed down the University. So that was out. The only establishments for higher education were the specialized schools like the school of commerce, the academy of commerce, the academy of fine arts. So I went there. Took the exam, was admitted, and went there for almost two years. During that time, most of the professors as they call them there—first of all, there was no fuel, so in

the winter we couldn't stay there with our models, it was too cold, couldn't have classes. Some of the instructors were either unwilling to work any longer in there, or just disappeared. Some maybe joined the partisans or whatever, or were arrested. I have no idea. Anyway, that episode ended, and there was '43 and you know the Russian House Belgrade?

Q: Mhm.

AKALOVSKY: That belonged to the University. It was taken over by the federal government. There were theaters there and a high school and everything. There was a distinguished professor there at the Yugoslav University who specialized in architecture and engineering and so forth and he opened courses for people like me in these areas. So I went there. Then in early '44, the Germans announced that they would allow the university to be open, and the university organized refresher courses. You know [name of Russian foundation]?

Q: No.

AKALOVSKY: Well, it's a foundation basically. But it's a big building beyond the theatre square. You have the main square—

Q: Yes—Is that where USIS had its information—They had it on [name of Serbian street]

AKALOVSKY: Well in that area. I doubt it would have taken over the building. I think that the foundation still exists. Anyway, they opened these courses and I went there, also I applied to the University's School of Architecture. And again, on Easter Sunday, 1944, out of the blue, Allied bombing came. And they were back and a lot of people got killed because nobody expected it. In fact, people went up on the roofs and waved. Here come the Allies! And the bombs fell.

Q: What were they bombing? Was it just—

AKALOVSKY: According to BBC, which we were not allowed to listen to, but we did of course, the Germans were then retreating from Greece and the objective was to prevent them from going to the Western front or the Eastern front or whatever. But, in fact, they didn't hit the British until later. A lot of people were killed because nobody expected it, nobody was in shelters. But the way it happened was very interesting. We saw these planes, a huge armada, flying toward Armenia. And that was basically a routine matter, we saw it umpteen times after that. And then, the Germans started shooting their artillery, and they hit one of the planes and we saw the crew bailing out, fast. And a lot of people went running in the direction of where those people would land. To, I presume, hide them from the Germans. Then of course the plane crashed. Then upon their return, they started a round of artillery around noon. I was on my way to a friend's house because it was Easter Sunday, a very important holiday for Orthodox Russians, on that day. So I was walking down the street and I saw that thing and then I heard the bombs and I ran into one of the apartment buildings and fortunately wasn't hit. Our apartment building was not

hit directly, but on both sides the buildings were destroyed. When I was there in Belgrade the first time after the war which was in 1966, I went to look at that building and still there were cracks. It wasn't damaged completely, but still there were cracks.

Q: I was in Belgrade in '66 at the embassy which was an old apartment building, which also had some problems as a result of the bombing too. You never felt quite happy about those. It's hard to understand because the Germans weren't much of a presence then in Belgrade—

AKALOVSKY: Not really. Well, we saw them of course, but initially they were, they had field kitchens and soup and so forth for people and they behaved quite well. And there was curfew of course, but then the situation got bad after June 22, 1941, when the war with the Soviet Union started. And that's when Tito became very active. The story about Communism in Yugoslavia is very interesting. It kept shifting. For example, when Germany annexed Czechoslovakia the slogan was [speaks in Serbian].

Q: Would you say it in English so that—

AKALOVSKY: Yes, well, it rhymes in Serbian.

Q: Better peace than war.

AKALOVSKY: Yes. Because there were some elements who wanted war against the Germans. And that lasted until June 22, 1941. And then the slogan became [Serbian version]: better war than to go back, that's how it became.

Q: Were you picking up—as a young lad and all—the stories about what the Ustaše regime was doing in Croatia?

AKALOVSKY: Ustaše, yes, sure. We could see corpses on the Drina river. But that was right after the war when they declared so-called independence. It was a massacre.

Q: I assume that things were changing within Belgrade—the Croatians I suppose most of them had left by this time.

AKALOVSKY: No—well I didn't know that many Croatians anyway—but I didn't hear of any exodus. I didn't hear about any uprising against Belgrade. As far as Bosnia was concerned or other places, maybe. I don't know. But basically of course, there was a massacre of Orthodox Serbs, and some Russians got killed too in Croatia because they were Orthodox.

Q: Yes. When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, did that change—here you are part of a Russian community which is obviously not—it was a large Russian refugee community—did that change matters at all for you all?

AKALOVSKY: In what way?

Q: I was wondering if the Germans were trying to recruit from your group, or was there strong anti-Russian feeling by the Germans or what?

AKALOVSKY: There were many Russian émigrés at home, and they thought that the war would mean the end of the regime. Not that they wanted a German takeover, but they thought maybe that they would leave. So in that way, they were sympathetic to the Germans, in that sense. Just like many people in the Soviet Union greeted the German troops with flowers and—

Q: Yes, sure.

AKALOVSKY: Some joined some volunteer units, but beyond that, no.

Q: Were you feeling in Belgrade the civil war between Tito and Milosevic's forces?

AKALOVSKY: Not in Belgrade, no.

Q: I was just wondering—

AKALOVSKY: In fact, we hardly heard of Tito. We knew about [other Serbian name]. Tito's name came up only much later.

Q: Well I assume particularly in your community anything that smacked with Communism was not received with any great pleasure. [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: [laughter] Tito we knew there were some—but Tito's name only came up much later.

Q: As the war progressed, towards the end, as the Germans began to pull out of Greece in '44, did that change things?

AKALOVSKY: In what way? In general?

Q: In general, as far as relations within the city—were they—

AKALOVSKY: Relations were very difficult to maintain during that period because the city was dead during the day. The Allies bombed only during the day. Unlike in Germany, where they bombed mostly at night. So the city was empty. People went out of the city into the suburbs. That didn't prevent any big things, because many of the bombs fell there as well. And then life came back around 6 in the evening, it was of course summer time, and the stores opened. Of course there was a curfew at 10 o'clock, so there was a brief period for the citizens to be out between 6 and 10 to buy bread or visit somebody. So life was very constrained in that way. People were really worrying about how to get by, in terms of food, and basic necessities. We had to go to the hydrants to get water because the water system was damaged.

Q: How long did you continue to study architecture then?

AKALOVSKY: Well, that was the end of it.

Q: That was the end of it.

AKALOVSKY: After the Allied bombing, they hit the university too. So the first thing I did, we ran to see whether the building where my paperwork was, was still there. Well fortunately, it was still standing so I retrieved all my papers. And the university never reopened.

Q: And then what did you do?

AKALOVSKY: Well then in September we left.

Q: This was September 1944. Where did you go?

AKALOVSKY: Vienna.

Q: Was there a problem getting to Vienna?

AKALOVSKY: There was chaos. Again, because of my father's connections with the railway system, he put us on a train and it took us 2 weeks to get to Vienna.

Q: We are talking about 100 miles?

AKALOVSKY: No, about 300 or 400 miles. Anyway, normally it would have taken 8 hours by train in those days. The reason it took so long was the Allied air raids all the time. Then either the tracks were damaged, either by bombs, maybe by people crowded on them, or whatever, and then the planes came down and strafed the trains all the way. We had to jump out and hit the dirt on both sides. My parents had friends in Vienna, of course, before the war. Even though communications were nonexistent between Belgrade and the occupied Serbia and Germany, somehow they got in touch with them and they told my parents that if need be we were always welcome there. So we arrived there and stayed with them for about 5 months. The next person, a friend of my father's, was on the board of directors of the Red Cross in Vienna.

Q: Wow.

AKALOVSKY: And when the Soviets occupied the _____, which is only 50 kilometers from Vienna, he said "well it's time to leave." The Red Cross organized a couple railroad cars for Russian refugees going west, and then it took us 3 weeks to get to Lake Constance. When we arrived there that was the end of the war for us.

Q: It must have been a great concern as Russian refugees in the First World War that

you stay out of the hands of the Soviets.

AKALOVSKY: That was the reason for leaving.

Q: Did you know of any people who were caught by the Soviets?

AKALOVSKY: I know that some stayed in Belgrade, and what happened after the war when Tito broke with the Soviets in '48, he had declared all Russians as the enemy of the state, even those who were Yugoslav citizens, and he expelled them. Some people came and many of them went to a big refugee camp. We came to the States afterwards,'52, '53, around there. Others went to Bulgaria and some went to Russia. But some still stayed in Belgrade, but not many.

Q: We had a woman who worked in our embassy, Madame Jukov, who was of the Russian community? She was head of the visa organization at our embassy.

AKALOVSKY: I think there were some drivers too.

Q: We are talking then about 1945 when you were at Lake Constance. What did you do when you got under French control?

AKALOVSKY: Well, the French, the *Repartee*, the office for stateless people. They provided us with food, a ration card, and we were housed in private German homes, actually we moved from Lake Constance to an area near _____. The first thing I wanted to do was go to school. I applied to a number of architecture schools, Munich, etc. They were opening gradually. I submitted copies of my papers and I got responses from all them to the effect that all right, you are accepted, but we can't give you a place now because priority goes to soldiers returning from POW camps and so forth. So I was on the waiting list. Then, in 1945, the friends of my parents from Vienna meanwhile had moved to Heidelberg, and they established themselves there. We got in touch with them, and they said, well since I can't go to the school of architecture, why don't I come to Heidelberg and go to the university there meanwhile and study something else. And then when my turn comes to go to the school of architecture, I can go back. So I went there and I got a stipend from ANGRA __ (United Nations—). Actually, then we moved to the American sector in 1946, and I worked for a couple of months where there was a big camp there, mostly for Baltic refugees.

Q: I was going to say, with your language facilities, early on, I would have thought that both the French and the Americans would have put this to use.

AKALOVSKY: When I worked for _____ my boss there was a French woman married to an Englishman, her name was Churchill. She claimed that her husband was not related to Winston, a very nice lady. But anyway, then I was accepted in Heidelberg. I got a stipend and finally graduated from there. Meanwhile my mother had cousins—she had a brother in Canada who had left after the war and stayed in Canada—and she had two cousins in California, both of them widowed. One of them married an American during

the civil war; he was representing the American Red Cross. They gave us the papers necessary for immigration. Out of the Displaced Person's Act, we came here in 1949 and I graduated from college.

Q: What type of degree did you get from Heidelberg?

AKALOVSKY: We called it a diploma. I had a variety of courses under the aegis of the school of philosophy: language, economics, history, international law. One of our professors was one of the lawyers at the Nuremberg trials so he told us a lot of stories about that. It was a combination.

Q: You went in 1947—

AKALOVSKY: Started in 1946, '47, '48, and '49.

Q: So in '49 you went to California?

AKALOVSKY: Well first in New York. We went by ship, army transport. I had to work on the ship.

Q: What did you do?

AKALOVSKY: I was in the supply room, and I was appalled to see the crew throwing things overboard which we would have been delighted to have. Like crates of oranges, for example. A couple of rotten ones and they'd throw the whole crate out. I'd say what are you doing? Oh, we can do that because the others might spoil. That was my job. The women didn't have to work, just men.

Q: Had you picked up English in this period?

AKALOVSKY: Yes, not much. But actually, coming back to my stay in Heidelberg, one day I was called in by CIC. We had a number of screenings by CIC for immigration. There was a major—he offered me cigarettes and coffee and so forth—and he said we hear that a lot of people here, Russians, would say they are all immigrants, but they are not, they are from the Soviet Union. Of course at that time there was forced repatriation.

Q: Yes.

AKALOVSKY: From ____ and I knew that because at _____ they rounded up at the church. They pulled out people and pulled out the priest by his beard basically and sent them forcefully back to the Soviet Union. It was very rare—

Q: It was one of the great mistakes, tragedies, or whatever you want to call it.

AKALOVSKY: And the British did the same thing. So I said, well I assume there are those who had fake documents or whatever, but I cannot be sure. And he said, well if you

find somebody like that, we'd be very happy to inform them. I said no thanks. I didn't get recruited for that job.

Q: No, that would not have been a pleasant—But when you got to California, this would be '49, where did you go?

AKALOVSKY: San Francisco.

Q: To Russian Hill?

AKALOVSKY: No, Russian Hill is not Russian, it's just a name [laughter].

Q: [laughter] Yes, I know.

AKALOVSKY: In those days, most of the Russians were in an area called Richmond.

Q: Who were your sponsors, relatives of your mother's?

AKALOVSKY: My mother's cousin was one.

While we were still in Germany, my mother's cousin was sending Russian newspapers from San Francisco to me with other care packages and so forth that we would get. One day, he saw an article written by a man who my father thought was the commander of his unit in World War I. So he wrote to the newspaper and asked if that was the person and they said yes. Anyway, they got in touch. So he was also our sponsor, this ex-commander. He was, at that time, the head of the Russian department of the Army Language School in Monterey, California.

Anyway, we landed in a home in the Richmond district of San Francisco, a reception home for Russian refugees. Many of them came from the Far East, but later.

Q: These were the ones coming out of Shanghai—

AKALOVSKY: Yes, but later. Because they were put on an island to Macau, a big refugee camp, and some of them went to Australia, and most of them to the States. We were there for three weeks and my father got a job with the Goodwill industries repairing furniture. And my mother got a job for 50 cents an hour in some kind of clothing sweatshop on Market Street in San Francisco. I got a job and I made more than either of them, for $1 an hour [laughter].

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: At the Southern Pacific Railroad. I was in a real fancy title, a special diet aide. My function was to prepare very special orders with so many grams of this and that. My job was to deliver this to the right person. [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: In between meals I had to mop the floors, but that was a very good job. I worked from 6 in the morning until 2 in the afternoon. I hated to get up early, but I managed to do it and the reason I liked to was because in the afternoon I could go to school. There was a private college called Fields Engineering College. Again, with the ambition of becoming an architect, and it was also a way to learn English too. But then when the Korean War came—

Q: June 25, 1950.

AKALOVSKY: Correct. In June, 1950, they started expanding the Army Language School, especially the Russian department, and my father's friend said "Alex, why don't you come teach here?" And I did and I stayed there until '55. Although in '52, my first wife died, but she was working at the graduate school.

Q: Where did you meet your wife?

AKALOVSKY: In San Francisco.

Q: Did she also have Russian background?

AKALOVSKY: Yes, but from the Far East. Her parents had been out in Korea and then in China but they came earlier. In '52, my wife and I decided I should quit the language school and go back to school to study architecture. I went to Berkley and applied and got accepted, and then my wife said, you know what, I'm pregnant. And that was the end of that. So she could not continue working, and I could not go to school so I stayed with the Army Language School.

Q: How did you find the Army Language School—the procedure, the memorization—what did you think of it?

AKALOVSKY: Well, it had some very good sides but some bad ones too, like anything else. It was used by some linguists as an experiment. There was a lieutenant commander, I think was his rank at that time, who handled them. Who spoke no foreign languages but knew how teach any of them. Things like that, which we had similar problems in science.

Q: I think we do, yes.

AKALOVSKY: So they allowed them gimmicks, gadgets. For example, I don't know if that was before your time or after your time, they put tape recorders—a new invention at that time—and they put speakers under pillows.

Q: I heard about this. It didn't happen to me, thank God.

AKALOVSKY: And one poor guy got crazy.

Q: The idea was you'd sleep and learn the language. I remember hearing about this.

AKALOVSKY: Right. And many of us instructors protested because this is impossible. Immersion is fine, socially and so forth. We went for coffee breaks and would try to speak Russian to immerse them but to put pillows with speakers was too much. So, starting in late '51, I became one of the core developers for that. I wrote most of the stuff.

Q: [speaks Russian] or something like that. Greetings Stalin's falcon [laughter].

AKALOVSKY: We wanted exposure to Soviets. In 1955, a group came from Washington, from the Pentagon, to develop a language prototype language proficiency test, and I was assigned to the team developing this. It was in May or June of 1955. After we completed that task, a couple of people from the team came to me and said that if I'm ever in Washington to get in touch if I ever need help. And then the American Council of Language Societies gave three grants for three instructors to go to a summer course in foreign language instruction pathology. I was selected to be one of the three. One came from the Japanese department, one from the Russian department, and I think from the Arab, I'm not sure. There were three or four universities as possibilities, and I chose Georgetown. I came to Georgetown for three months.

Q: This would be '55.

AKALOVSKY: Summer of '55 and I took linguistics and so forth and my language was Tagalog.

Q: The language of the Philippines.

AKALOVSKY: That's right. I had very interesting exercises with my native speakers. I had to transcribe. After that, the person in charge of that, a professor of the methodology course, came to me and Dosser, then the director of the Institute of Languages.

Q: Who was this?

AKALOVSKY: A Frenchman, an American friend. Dosser. He was the director of the Georgetown Institute of Languages and Linguistics. That's where I was.

Q: At that time, Georgetown was one of the few universities doing this.

AKALOVSKY: Michigan was another one, and Texas. Ann Arbor in Michigan. The director Dosser called me and said why don't you stay and go to graduate school to get your graduate degree, masters. So I went back to Monterey, and again consulted with my wife. My parents volunteered to take care of our girl, who by then was only a year old. We decided my wife would come with me here and go to work, support me while I went to school, for a year or year and a half, while I was taking classes. So we came and then I got in touch with these people in the Pentagon. One day they called me and said that the

State Department is looking for somebody with Russian language, for a conference on North Pacific fur seals. Would I be interested? And I said, sure, you know. Then I would have to work at night, and be editor and supervisor of the night shift of the Russian translators. So I could review documents of English in the day, and then during the night I would translate until the next day. I went to the State Department and they gave me a test and an ID on a contract basis. I went to this conference and worked there at night, and during the day I went to school, and would sleep in between.

Q: I want to go back just a bit. When you were at Monterey, something I noticed there—I was just a student—but there was quite a dividing line between those instructors who had come out of imperial Russia, like your father, and those who had come out of the Soviet Union right after WWI. They almost don't seem—

AKALOVSKY: No I don't think—Well, it depends on personality.

Q: Some of the men, I remember, had great trauma in getting out. Like Mr. Gordon, who—

AKALOVSKY: Yes, I know. He was Jewish and was hidden in an attic.

Q: And Mr. Arkangus.

AKALOVSKY: Yes.

Q: A big man, real bald.

AKALOVSKY: He didn't come from the Soviet Union.

Q: He came across Siberia.

AKALOVSKY: Yes.

Q: It was a very interesting group for us. It was my first learning experience, which I used later as a consular officer with the refugee relief program, and I began to understand all the intricacies of refugee life which was a very important thing in Europe during the '50s.

AKALOVSKY: I wouldn't say that was widespread. Surely there were some personality clashes even between people belonging to the same group that you were.

Q: You started to do this work with the State Department when?

AKALOVSKY: In the fall of '55 and then I took a leave of absence of a year from Monterey. I was still enrolled there, leave without pay. That took some doing in getting them to let me.

Q: I'm sure it did.

AKALOVSKY: And then in January or February of '56, the then head of the language services in the department asked me if I would be interested in a permanent faculty position. I said yes, and then I joined the State Department on April of '56. Then in '57 I—

Q: In '56, when you say the language service, what did that mean at that time? I mean what job did you do?

AKALOVSKY: Interpreter.

Q: Interpreting is almost an art, isn't it? It's different than just knowing the language.

AKALOVSKY: That is true. Well, first of all, you have to have good English, number one. Then you have to know the cultures on both sides because a lot of the expressions you cannot translate them literally, you have to be able to find some equivalent in the other culture especially in proverbs, sayings, things like that. And concepts in general. So you are right, it's not just knowing the language. You have to have a knack.

Q: Did you find that you had the knack?

AKALOVSKY: Well I had no problem, so I guess I did.

Q: It's obvious from your career that you did. When you first joined there, was there a Russian division?

AKALOVSKY: There was a Russian unit, yes. Well, I take it back, there were two branches. One was the translating branch and one interpreter branch. I was at first in the translating branch, but my title was interpreter.

Q: This is still the after results of the McCarthy period. I mean was this hitting hard?

AKALOVSKY: None whatsoever. I know it had an effect on some other people, but not me.

Q: So you came in in '56. What were some of the things you were doing at that time?

AKALOVSKY: First of all translation of diplomatic notes, or travel requests from the Soviet embassy, but then I was sent to Mexico City for a conference in '56. Then in '57 I was assigned to the U.S. delegation to the five nation _____ subcommittee of the United Nations, which met in London. The head of the delegation was Harold Stassen, the presidential contender.

Q: Had been the youngest governor of Minnesota, was quite a political still at the time.

AKALOVSKY: I can tell you a long story about him.

Q: Well, let's hear a little about him, because he was a figure. What was your impression of him?

AKALOVSKY: I went to London for six months and I was assigned another duty, not just to interpret for Stassen when we had the bilateral meetings with the Soviets. The Soviet at that time was Zorin. Remember Zorin?

Q: Oh yes.

AKALOVSKY: So he asked me, ordered me, to write reports on the Soviet press and also reports on the reporting officer duty. So I was not only interpreting, but doing substantive work as well. That conference lasted almost six months and then the Soviets walked out in September 1957. Now to come back to Stassen, we celebrated his 50th birthday while we were in London. He was very much from _____ and he thought that Lodge had that job before.

Q: Henry Cabot Lodge.

AKALOVSKY: Right, and then Stassen regarded this as a stepping stone because he was the President's advisor on disarmament, this separate office on Jefferson Street in one of those town houses of the State Department. And then how I got into the arms control business, after that I went to _____ talks and so forth, always as a member of the delegation and not as interpreter, although I did some interpreting on the side. In 1960 the Agency for Arms Control was formed, the predecessor to ACDA (Arms Control and Disarmament Agency). I don't think most people are even aware of that.

Q: No.

AKALOVSKY: It was called the U.S. Disarmament Administration. It was established in August 1960 in response to the campaign proposal by Humphrey, and then Kennedy, to establish ACDA. The Eisenhower administration established this U.S. Disarmament Administration within the State Department. How that separates it [laughter]—I mean history repeats itself. I was assigned there as an FSR, Foreign Service Reserve officer.

Q: Going back to the staff sometime—how serious are we taking disarmament proposals? Were we feeling in a way marking time that someday something might happen?

AKALOVSKY: Yes, well nobody had great expectations except Stassen maybe. Because, obviously, the situation was not right for them and basically arms control was quite different from what it became later. It was focused on Europe and basically disengagement disputes within the armed forces. There was a Norstad plan—

Q: General Lauris Norstad.

AKALOVSKY: And then Stassen presented the plan to the Soviets, unfortunately, without authorization from Washington. Eisenhower was up in arms in NATO, and then Dulles, and he sent three watchdogs to London. Stassen was recalled. We thought he would never come back when he did. But after the whole thing was over when the Soviets walked out in '57, Stassen was given reprieve. I still remember a *Third Bloc* cartoon of Stassen shivering behind his desk and icicles on his arms. That was the end of his career in government.

Q: What was your impression of the Soviet delegation when you were there? Zorin and those.

AKALOVSKY: Well, highly capable. They always had continuity.

Q: Did you have the feeling that these were people who were told keep talking for a while but don't do anything.

AKALOVSKY: The Soviets you mean?

Q: Yes.

AKALOVSKY: They couldn't do anything because our position was quite different. Their basic purpose at that time was propaganda war.

Q: Yes.

AKALOVSKY: On the one hand, they were in favor of banning the nuclear bomb. In Britain, especially in Britain at that time, there was strong movement. So they were trying to exploit that and of course there was some of that here too but less of it. Obviously, it was basically a PR war.

Q: Was there any feeling that you could reduce the tension on the borders by thinning out the forces and all?

AKALOVSKY: That was the hope, but the feeling was so different it was impossible to achieve.

Q: Geography always plays its thing. The Soviets could always pull a number of divisions back for two days away and we'd be sitting in the United States with our divisions.

AKALOVSKY: That was the crux of the problem.

Q: Geography at that time, things have changed a lot. Now at that time—

AKALOVSKY: Yes.

Q: This is the way I prefer it. In oral history, more is better than less.

AKALOVSKY: Yes, you can weed out—

Q: So, we'll pick this up again, after Stassen had left and they'd shut down that effort of disarmament after the Soviets walked out. And that was when, about 1957?

AKALOVSKY: Yes.

Q: We'll pick it up then in 1957.

AKALOVSKY: At the time of the establishment of the disarmament administration.

Q: Today is the 30th of June, 2000. Alex, 1957, where were you going?

AKALOVSKY: Well, I think I was talking about September of 1957. After that, we were engaged in negotiations with the Soviet Union about cultural exchanges with Ambassador Lacey, who was in charge of the delegation, and a couple of people from USIA, and then at that time there was an exchange staff in the State Department. Max _____ being one of the officers assigned to that staff. He was in the delegation. So we negotiated that I guess in September or October of 1957.

Q: Let's talk a bit about the negotiations. What were we after and what were the Soviets after?

AKALOVSKY: We were obviously after opening up the Soviet Union. And the Soviets were after information from our side and were not interested in information from their side.

Q: The Americans said that the Soviets only ought to go for information, but in the long run, on our part, the scientific things, even under the best of circumstances, I think it would be very hard to get exchange scholars to go to the Soviet Union to study scientific things. It was not the place to go.

AKALOVSKY: Of course they had a lot of people in the third world there, but not from the West.

Q: How did you find the negotiations went?

AKALOVSKY: Basically I would say it was a draw because on our side, while we were obviously speaking to open up the Soviets as much as possible, we were leery opening up our side too much to them. So there had to be a trade-off. Basically, from that standpoint, I would say it was a draw.

Q: Well, that's what you want. That's really what negotiations should all be about.

AKALOVSKY: That's right.

Q: Was our delegation a pretty professional one? What was your impression of how—

AKALOVSKY: We were doing quite well. We had a very _____, I don't remember his first name, but I remember his middle initials were SB, and he used to tell me, remind the Soviets that my initials are SB which means son of a bitch [laughter].

Q: [laughter] You could say that. [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: [laughter] And then we had another interesting character on our delegation, Shelton was his last name. Turner B. Shelton became famous, or infamous if you will, when he was ambassador to Nicaragua, years later. He was a big guy. During the earthquake, when he isolated himself, he didn't want to—

Q: Yes, he had a movie connection, didn't he?

AKALOVSKY: Yes, sort of. When he was in the delegation in '57, he was in charge of the motion picture section in USIA. He stayed there for several years, and then became a Foreign Service officer; he told me that was his ambition. He went as chargé at that time. We didn't have an ambassador in Budapest of all places.

Q: Where?

AKALOVSKY: Budapest.

Q: Budapest, oh yes.

AKALOVSKY: I was in Moscow when Ambassador Shelton was leaving Budapest. We got cable after cable from Budapest about farewell parties for him. Citing different people saying how great he was. It was very amusing.

Q: From all accounts, I've heard he was a considerable self-promoter.

AKALOVSKY: Oh, yes.

Q: And other accounts said he was not adverse to making sure that important people, particularly Congressmen and all, had a good time wherever he went.

AKALOVSKY: Well, that's right. When he was in Managua, he was on the ball at first, but then when the earthquake hit—

Q: Yes.

AKALOVSKY: I'll tell you a little something about him a little bit later.

Q: Well, let's talk about the time you were dealing with him.

AKALOVSKY: Well, I had no problem with him. He was quite personable. And then in '58, Eric Johnson, you know who he was—

Q: Yes, he was—

AKALOVSKY: Head of the motion picture association. And Turner Shelton, the two of them plus, Eisenhower's brother, Milton, he was in the delegation too. The three of them, plus me, went to the Soviet Union to negotiate field exchanges under the umbrella of the cultural exchange. The cultural exchange was basically an umbrella agreement and the details in the negotiations between the various organizations, universities, and what not. So, when we arrived in Moscow, Eric Johnson was a special envoy of Roosevelt to the Soviet Union during the war.

Q: Oh, I had forgotten that.

AKALOVSKY: For some special mission. And he was greeted at the airport with pomp and so forth, we wined and dined. When we arrived, the only person who was at the airport was Hans Tuch. Do you know Hans Tuch?

Q: Oh, yes, Hans Tuch of the USIA.

AKALOVSKY: At that time he was a junior officer. No one from the Soviet Union hierarchy, and Eric Johnson looked at that, and he was dismayed that he was so snubbed by that. Then we arrived at the embassy. And Tommy Thompson was the ambassador there on his first tour as ambassador. He was out of the country, and Boris Klosson was Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM). We arrived at the embassy and Eric Johnson said, well I'll take over in the ambassador's office, and Boris said no sir, even I can't take his office. That was sort of the prelude to the trip.

Then we went down to Tashkent because there were movie studios in Moscow and in Tashkent. That was a very interesting experience because we arrived at Tashkent after a couple of days and then we were supposed to fly to _____, just for sightseeing. As we arrived at the airport early in the morning, 7:00-7:30 in the morning, we were accompanied by a woman, the minister of culture. So we sat down, had breakfast with cognac and they served brandy at breakfast. Then we were supposed to board the plane, and we saw people with bundles and baskets boarding the plane. Then the flight attendant came out and said, I'm sorry, the flight is full and we had been booked on the flight. And the minister of culture said, don't worry, don't worry, I'll take care of it. Just follow me. So we followed her and she counted noses, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, out, out, out, and the poor people meekly got out and we were given seats which was embarrassing to us.

Q: Of course.

AKALOVSKY: But coming back to Turner Shelton, we went actually to Stockholm and Helsinki, but that was strictly for the motion picture association business.

Q: What were you getting from Johnson on his take on the Soviet film industry at that time?

AKALOVSKY: Frankly, I don't know. He didn't comment at that time that the main issue was money.

Q: He wanted money for the movies—

AKALOVSKY: Right. The bargaining went something like this. He would say, when the movie costs, say $150,000, and the Soviets would come back and say, how much do I need? [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: Literally. And then you say, well maybe $135,000. Well maybe $125, [laughter] bargaining.

Q: A rug merchant or something.

AKALOVSKY: Then we flew back to Moscow, and Cinemascope was a novelty at that time. One of the first movies in it was *The Ten Commandments*. Johnson, or maybe Turner Shelton, had no problem in showing this movie to the Soviets. Our embassy had no projector for showing the Cinemascope, but the German embassy did have one, so we had arranged for a showing in the German embassy in their hall there. After the end of the movie, the Soviets were polite, but the Minister of Culture, Madam Pultziva, remember her?

Q: Yes, she was the sole woman in the ministry of culture.

AKALOVSKY: In the cabinet. She was up high in the party hierarchy too. Again, I'll tell you something about her later. So the deputy to Pultziva, who had been the head of their delegation for the negotiations in Washington came up to me and said, you know the movie is okay, but why do they have to electrocute God? There was a burning bush and it was so poorly done that you could see the glowing wires, in those days [laughter].

Q: [laughter] They should have shown "How to Marry a Millionaire" with Marilyn Monroe and Betty Grable which came out at the same time. That would have had a much bigger impression in the Soviet Union.

AKALOVSKY: Did I tell you about, going back to '56 if I may, about my trip to the Soviet election observance?

Q: I don't think so. When was this?

AKALOVSKY: In '56, in the Spirit of Geneva, remember the Spirit of Geneva in '55?

Q: Oh yes.

AKALOVSKY: When Bulganin and the rest came to Geneva and then Eisenhower was there.

Q: Khrushchev and Bulganin. Twins.

AKALOVSKY: _____ was still not the highest. Anyway, under that Spirit, we had the first exchange visit by the Soviets to observe our elections and teach them how democracy works and there were three members of their delegation. One was Pudiavsec who was a party hack but also a commentator _____, then a man by the name of Rubenstein, a Russian, who was an elderly economics professor, and then Soloviov who was the head of the trade union associations who later fell into disfavor was _____. So they came in October of 1956, and we were supposed to travel all around the country, we went everywhere around the States. But we skipped _____. It coincided, of course, with the Hungarian uprising.

Q: October 1956 and the Suez.

AKALOVSKY: The Suez didn't affect us because it was earlier in the first place, and it didn't affect the trip, but everywhere we went at the airports there were people with placards, "Murderers Go Home." That sort of thing. That, of course, didn't please me. But the people were very interested because they saw the country. The only thing they could not understand, or at least pretended not to understand, was that our parties are not ideological. Everywhere they went, they would ask what's the difference between the Democratic and Republican party in terms of philosophy. Well, especially in those days, it depended where you came from. If you were a Southern Democratic, you were more conservative than a Northern Republican.

Q: Absolutely.

AKALOVSKY: And so forth, so it was very difficult to give an answer.

Another thing that they couldn't understand, the Soviet visitors, was that everywhere we went we were served a traditional American dinner: steak and potatoes [laughter].

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: And after a while, they said, don't Americans eat anything but steak and potatoes? [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: But we were invited to private homes, and they gave us—

Q: Yes.

AKALOVSKY: Then we arrived in Los Angeles, and at that time—I don't know if it still exists—there was a Russian food for Russians establishment called Bublisky. Not Romanov.

Q: I was thinking Romanov. A fake Romanov.

AKALOVSKY: No, it was called Bublisky. Do you know what Bublic in Russian is?

Q: No.

AKALOVSKY: It's like a bagel, much thinner.

Q: Oh, yes.

AKALOVSKY: Much like geberich in Belgrade. Remember geberich in Belgrade?

Q: Yeah.

AKALOVSKY: There was a famous song during the revolution called _____ Bublisky, Bye Bye Bagel. Our folks in Los Angeles invited us to go there in the evening. It's sort of a bar, night club. So as we arrived, we were greeted by a beautiful young girl who spoke to us in pure Russian. Regal, very polite, she said welcome and so forth. And our guests were stunned. Where did you learn your Russian so well? Very simple, she said, I was born in Crimea [laughter].

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: Oh, well how did you get here? I moved here with my parents. She was very brash. Well they sort of swallowed it. We went in and sat down and there was an orchestra playing, with balalaika and gypsy songs in Russian with a very good looking woman singing gypsy songs. They wanted to invite her to the table to chat with her, and so she came over to the table and they started talking Russian to her and she said what? They said we thought you speak Russian. No. Well how come you sang in Russian? I just learned the words [laughter].

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: She was Irish. Then, as I said, it was a pseudo-Russian establishment because it was sort of kitschy stuff, most of it, the décor. Above the bar there was stained glass. It looked like icons or stained glass in the church. One of the Soviets looked at it—actually we were accompanied by a man from the embassy, Gordon Witchcroft, who died in 1977, a nice young fellow. Anyway, I forget who it was, he looked up and said look there are icons up there, aren't there? Should there be icons in a bar? I said does that bother you, and he said, well, you know, it would be unusual. Then we went to

Chicago—I'm not relating all this in the proper sequence—and the Sears Tower building was brand new at that time. We went to look at it, and the visitors said it was just a large box, not stylish. Our skyscrapers in Moscow, the Stalin wedding cake styles—

Q: Yes, wedding cake style, a university wasn't it? And some apartment buildings?

AKALOVSKY: There were several. The foreign ministers liked that, pseudo Gothic or whatever it is. Have you seen our new embassy in Moscow?

Q: No, I've never been to Moscow.

AKALOVSKY: It's horrible. Like a factory or prison. So they said we don't like this. And the young guy from the embassy Tony _____ said, after New York it's not too bad after all [laughter].

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: We had a wonderful trip from Oakland to Denver on the California Zephyr train. I don't know if it still exists.

Q: I don't know. The kind with the dome.

AKALOVSKY: It was a 36 hour trip. Beautiful. We arrived in Oakland at the railroad station which was awful, just a shack. I don't know what it's like now. Before boarding, this guy from the embassy came to me and said, can you recommend a book for me to read during the long trip? So, on the newsstand, there were pocketbooks, and the first thing I saw was *1984*.

Q: By George Orwell.

AKALOVSKY: I said it's an interesting book but I don't think you will like it. And he said, "No, no, no. What's it about?" I said, "Well, it's about what would happen to our society if certain trends in the world proceeded in the way they were going today." I think they got the hint. I tried to be as diplomatic as possible. And he said, well I'll get it, and he read it on the train. He came to me later and said this is depressing. There's no hope in that book. I said that's the point [laughter].

Q: [laughter] I have to mention this Alex, in the main square, in the big book store there, I saw one time in the agricultural section of the book store, this was during the Ivan Ribar regime, Animal Farm was there, which was of course again by George Orwell, and anti-Communist—[laughter]

AKALOVSKY: [laughter] They didn't read it, didn't know what it was about.

Q: Well-informed Yugoslavs were buying it. They must have thought, oh, boy, we've got a great farming book here. [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: [laughter] Again, if I may digress for just a moment, since you mentioned the Yugoslav book—when I was in Moscow, the DCM who was there, a fellow from Sarajevo, who said he was Croatian, although he was Jewish—You weren't there at that time, were you—'55, '56?

Q: Yes, I was there.

AKALOVSKY: I don't know if you remember but there was a big debate within the Yugoslav academia circle, what was the language, was it Serbo-Croatian or Croatian-Serbian? Remember?

Q: Oh—

AKALOVSKY: Between the two academies.

Q: Oh, yes.

AKALOVSKY: And that was reflected in the embassy in Moscow. It was the DCM saying it was Croatian-Serbian, and the Serbian ambassador and the rest of us saying it was Serbo-Croatian.

Q: Back to this '56 trip, Khrushchev was in and we had great hopes.

AKALOVSKY: No, he wasn't in yet.

Q: Oh, he wasn't in yet.

AKALOVSKY: But we had some hope because of the Spirit of Geneva, which didn't last very long because after that we had the Berlin crisis, and the Soviets sent up Sputnik. Then we went to the big rally in Madison Square Garden, Republican, for Eisenhower. The young Roosevelt girl, she was Roosevelt's grand niece. A Republican, I forget her name. Remember Whitney who was our ambassador in Great Britain.

Q: John Whitney, yes—

AKALOVSKY: She was his stepdaughter; he was married to one of the Roosevelts. They were throwing _____ and eating hot dogs.

Going back to '58, we were with Eric Johnson. I told you about the movie, the *Ten Commandments*. Then we went to Warsaw from there. We were supposed to visit every Eastern European country, except for Sofia and Belgrade. _____ and from the Soviet perspective so it wasn't covered by our umbrella, even Poland and Czechoslovakia were not, but they were willing to follow through. So when we arrived in Warsaw, Poland, Jake Beam was now our ambassador. We stayed a couple days and then Johnson wanted to fly to Prague, but there were no direct flights to Prague. We had to fly to Vienna, and

then Prague. Well he insisted we have a direct flight. He said to Beam to call the Poles and tell them to organize a direct flight. Jake was a very quiet, taciturn person, he said, well if you pay the landing fees for direct flights and so forth, I'll try [laughter]. But Johnson decided not to do that so we flew to Vienna and then Warsaw. Our trips there were not very successful in terms of getting a deal. Then we went to Budapest in '58, which was only two years after Berlin. Budapest was bustling. Lively with nightclubs and so forth although you could still see a lot of damage still on the buildings from the shelling. We went to the embassy, the chargé there saw us. We used to ride around Budapest in a powder blue convertible Cadillac. Cardinal Mindszenty was still in the embassy and Eric Johnson insisted that he wanted to see the cardinal. And the chargé said, like Boris said about the ambassador's office in Moscow, no way. The only person in the embassy who can see the Cardinal is me. And again that infuriated Johnson. He had a tremendous ego.

Q: Oh, boy.

AKALOVSKY: But we could see the Cardinal was on the upper floor in the embassy, we could see the big stairway, the open space in the whole building, remember—

Q: Yes.

AKALOVSKY: Like an apartment building. You could see him walking back and forth on the landing there. All we could see was his skirt, basically. Then we went to Bucharest first, and then went to Budapest. Then we were supposed to go to Bucharest again, I forget why. When we were in Budapest, I got a phone call from the embassy in Bucharest saying there was a cable for me. I remember the date, the 23rd of October, 1958. I said what is it about? Well, you have been assigned to the delegation to the nuclear test ban talks in Geneva. Oh, well we are flying to Bucharest and I'll pick up the cable then. So we went back to Bucharest and there was the cable and it said you are assigned to the delegation you are supposed to report to Geneva on the 31st of October, a week later, and due to the shortness of time, suggest you proceed directly after completion of your current mission. I looked at that and then he said, this is the punch line, expect the duration to be three weeks [laughter].

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: I remember that in '57 when I went to London with Stassen, my initial orders also said three weeks, but I stayed six months in London. I remembered that and with winter coming on, I'd never been to Geneva before and didn't exactly know what to expect. The cable said, "However, if you deem it essential, you are authorized to return to Washington." So, I deemed it essential to return, if only to gather different clothes, and to see my family, and so on.

Q: You were married at that time.

AKALOVSKY: Yes. So that was the end of the cultural exchange episode. And then I

went to the test ban.

Q: Overall, how did the Johnson tour work?

AKALOVSKY: They did close a couple of deals for movies. Nothing spectacular. One interesting thing about Turner Shelton. During the entire trip, he would eat nothing but fried eggs, because he was concerned that he might get some disease, and decided that fried eggs were the safest thing [laughter]. Again, you know how Georgians are, Uzbeks are the same way, very hospitable.

Q: Oh yes. And you better participate in what they serve for you.

AKALOVSKY: Wine and everything. He would refuse everything. Just give me fried eggs and the people were shocked of course.

Q: Oh, yes.

AKALOVSKY: He was not the greatest _____. He died some years ago.

Q: This was a test ban—

AKALOVSKY: Yes, you see what happened in 1958, there was pressure for at least stopping atmospheric tests, even earlier. There were big demonstrations, especially in England, less so in this country.

Q: The Soviets had set off some huge—

AKALOVSKY: That was in the '60s. This was _____ moratorium. In '57, the Soviets wanted a permanent ban on atmospheric testing, at least a sense of it. Deep down they didn't. They knew we wouldn't buy it, but they kept pushing for it. And then we came back with some partial proposals like suspension for a year, and then see how things go. The Soviets wouldn't buy that either. Coming back to '58, after some negotiations with the Soviets, we agreed to explore the possibility of a nuclear test ban, including all tests, including underground. We had a scientific meeting in August in New York, with seismologists and people like that. You know Ron Spiers?

Q: Yes.

AKALOVSKY: Ron was part of the delegation on the political side and that lasted about a month. After that, we agreed to have these talks with scientists participating and the delegation. Harold Brown was one of our scientists. He was head of Livermore at the age of 28, at that time in '58. Then he was Secretary of the Air Force, then Secretary of Defense. He is now in California. I don't know what he's doing. A very different kind of character, a very acerbic sense of humor.

Q: When you went out there, what was the American side after?

AKALOVSKY: We were after on-site inspection. We would not buy any plan without on-site inspection, to be foolproof.

Q: In those days, what would on-site inspection mean?

AKALOVSKY: The on-site inspection meant that if you had a wiggle on the seismograph that looked suspicious to you, that indicated that it might be something other than an earthquake, then you were entitled to send a team to that site, to the location of the tremor and inspect to see what really happened.

Q: This would be for underground tests.

AKALOVSKY: Yes. For above ground testing, there was not need, really, because there would be fallout. Those talks lasted until '63.

Q: How long were you there? From when to when?

AKALOVSKY: I was there from October '58 to the end. What happened was there were negotiations between us, the Soviets, and the UK, because they were testing on our sites, so they were participating in the negotiations as well. And then in 1962, the 18 nation disarmament committee was established. But when this was established, our negotiations were sort of a subcommittee of that committee, bilateral, but there was no progress and so it petered out. I left in '65, and by that time it had petered out. I left Geneva then. When the Soviets introduced their Troika concept, remember that?

Q: I don't remember what the Troika concept was.

AKALOVSKY: When Hammarskjöld died in the Congo, the question was who would succeed him as Secretary General of the United Nations. The Soviets insisted that it be a three-headed hydra, one from the West, one from the East, and one Alliance. The Alliance was a brand new movement, '68—

Q: Kind of a seven in the Soviet pocket, not quite, but close.

AKALOVSKY: It depended to whom you were talking. But the Soviets certainly wanted to make it, no question about it. They were always leaning in that direction. We refused to do that. It was hard to replace Hammarskjöld but the Soviets applied this concept to a lot of other things. Including, in 1957 when the London disarmament talks were going on, then in 1960 there were no talks except for the nuclear testing. Nothing on disarmament per se. By 1960, we'd reached agreement with the Soviets to have a ten nation committee, five NATO, five Warsaw Pact nations, and they met and I was on the delegation at that time. It lasted two months, in 1960. Of course the U-2 incident occurred. The meetings started sometime in March, went through April, then U-2 came, and it lasted another month or so. And the Soviets walked out again. The entire eastern side walked out.

Q: Was there a feeling at the time—Khrushchev came in during this fight, '58-ish or so, was there a feeling that Khrushchev was interested in a change?

AKALOVSKY: Yes, but he was going hot and cold.

Q: During these initial negotiations, because we are talking about all types of testing, aren't we?

AKALOVSKY: Yes.

Q: Was there the realization of how dangerous the above ground tests were?

AKALOVSKY: And getting into kelp and kelp was used in all kinds of products including ice cream. Well there were arguments among scientists, and I can't judge who was right or wrong, but obviously there must be some ill effects. The U-2 incident, I was in Geneva and then when this happened—going back again. When Khrushchev came to the States, in '59, I went with Nixon to the Soviet Union, spent two weeks with him there and then we went to Poland.

Q: Shall we talk about the Nixon trip?

AKALOVSKY: Sure.

Q: This was really Nixon's first time there. How did he use you and his delegation? What was your impression of Nixon?

AKALOVSKY: He was very, very much relying on everybody. Tommy Thompson was of course our ambassador at that time. I was in Geneva in '59 and got a cable that I was to be interviewed by Nixon's vice president staff. I didn't know what about, and I flew back to Washington and I was called in by General Robert Cushman who became later the head of the Marine Corps. He was at that time Nixon's military aide. A very nice man. And Herb Klein who was at the time director of communications, later on in the White House, but at that time he was press secretary. Also a very nice man. So I was called in and they wanted to give me a test in Russian, to see if I even spoke Russian to see how good an interpreter I would be. So it was set up like this, the tape, and so forth, and translated this thing, and it would be examined by experts. To make a long story short, I was selected, out of I don't know how many candidates, to go with Nixon. Prior to our trip, Nixon had a reception in his home, which was somewhere in Spring Valley. Julie and Patricia were tiny girls at that time, and it was a lovely affair, very informal. Nixon was a terrible introvert, one of his basic problems. But on this occasion, very, very nice. And then we went to Moscow. As we arrived, I was quartered in the Ukrainian hotel, which was about ten minutes from the embassy, very nice. It's a huge wedding cake type of hotel on the other side of the Moscow River. On the very first morning in Moscow, Nixon got up early, 6 a.m., and he and one of his security people went for a stroll. He wanted to see the city, and came to a market place and there were vendors, and

that, I don't know exactly what he wanted to buy, but the price was 50 kopeks or a ruble and he gave a ten ruble note to the man, then vendor, and he said keep the change. But the man said, oh, no, we don't accept tips or bribes. This was blown up the same day in the afternoon press, about Nixon's attempt to pay off Soviet citizens and buy their souls as it were. And of course, Nixon had no such intentions, and ten rubles in those days was next to nothing. A dollar or so. So he said there was some misunderstanding, that he was not bribing at all, didn't want anything in return. I was moved from the Ukrainian hotel to the Spaso House, and Nixon was telling me, you stay with me everywhere I go from now on. [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: Which I did. I must say, I had a very good relationship with him.

Q: Most of the Foreign Service when they dealt with Nixon, found him to be someone who really listened and absorbed and was able to use what he absorbed. Did you find this?

AKALOVSKY: Definitely. He sought advice and followed advice.

Q: He never apparently cared for the Foreign Service, but that was almost a social thing, but a lot of them had a lot of respect for him.

AKALOVSKY: One of the episodes that we had—we went to a factory in Sverdlovsk, Yeltsin's hometown, which at that time was a closed area, but they opened it up for Nixon. We also went to _____ It was closed but they opened it up for Nixon, one of the famous academic cities there. When we were in Sverdlovsk, we went to a factory. There were a lot of factories there. There was a pretty young girl there, and Nixon of course said hello, and made small talk, and asked are you married, and she said no. He said, how come? She was offended, and took it the wrong way, and said nobody wanted her. He meant, how come a pretty girl like you, and the stupid men, and so forth, he didn't say all that. She became very offended and blushed and said it's none of your business. I explained it to him and said she really didn't understand it the right way, and I said why don't you embroider it a little? And he went and did that and said, such a pretty girl, and the stupid young men, and—that sort of thing he found a use for me. Not of course, in official talks.

Q: Now in official talks, were you sitting next to Nixon, and they had somebody, and how about the kitchen cabinet debate?

AKALOVSKY: The kitchen debate in the Cabinet.

Q: Yes, the kitchen debate.

AKALOVSKY: Of course that was during the trip when Nixon was there.

Q: Another trip.

AKALOVSKY: No, same trip, that was July of '59. That was a model kitchen that even in the States was outlandish, with all the gadgets, dishwasher moving close to the table after you pressed a button—we still don't have that thing, not that we needed it. Anyway, Khrushchev would not be impressed by that thing, and said, again we were trying to pull the wool over their eyes, a fable and this is not true. And Nixon said we are not trying to do anything like that we are just trying to show you what our life is like in the United States. But despite the other reports in that scene, I was not involved. I was there, but the crowd was so big I got pushed back. I could hear but I could not translate. So the Soviet guy did that, and he made some boo boos there, having some trouble translating some of the Russian proverbs and sayings.

There's a Russian saying that literally translated, well I shouldn't because it wouldn't make any sense—but it's, we'll show you Kuzma's mother. What it really means is, we'll teach you a lesson. And Khrushchev used that expression in that debate, saying well, eventually when we catch up to you in terms of reduction [of radiation] in pepto milk and blah blah blah, we'll teach you a lesson. [Speaks Russian] And the poor interpreter didn't want to translate that, and said well this is a saying about Kuzma's mother, and nobody could make any sense out of it. The next day, there was a big story about the Kitchen Debate and how Khrushchev had told off Nixon, etc., but the poor American interpreter didn't know the words and didn't know how to translate.

The same evening, there was a reception, and duBay, Khrushchev's son-in-law—Aleksei I. Adzhubei at that time, married to Rada, a very nice woman—I saw duBay at the reception, and I went up to him and said, you know you were at the Kitchen Debate when we were in the kitchen, and he said yes, and I said you know who interpreted, and he said yes, so I said so why do you print in your paper that it was I and not your man who goofed? We have freedom of the press, too. That was his response. [laughter]

Q: [laughter] What was your impression during this visit? I mean when the Vice President visits, it's more for show than anything else—

AKALOVSKY: Yes, there were no agreements or anything.

Q: What was your impression of how Khrushchev was dealing with Nixon at that time?

AKALOVSKY: Well, Khrushchev was a very volatile person. Very volatile. He could switch from one mood to another in no time and switch back and forth. But when we arrived in July, or maybe while we were there, Congress had passed a captive nation resolution and Khrushchev was incensed. Here we are greeting you, Mr. Nixon, our honored guest, and so forth, and at the same time, you are, pardon the expression, you are shitting in our tea. And Nixon didn't take that lightly at all, this expression. [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: And he answered in a similar vein. So, you know, he was pretty tough, Nixon. Very tough. But there were not agreements of anything, it was for Nixon to open the exhibit and tour the country.

Q: Did you find that Nixon was taking things in as he went around?

AKALOVSKY: Oh, yes.

Q: Part of this is domestic policy in the United States so you are trying to show that I dealt with the Soviets on an equal basis and I know the country a bit. I was wondering if there was another layer there of a man who was trying to understand the society and asking questions.

AKALOVSKY: Oh he was asking very pertinent questions. And his entourage was interesting too. He had Admiral Rickover, Milton Eisenhower, and a number of people who were quite knowledgeable and interested in the whole thing themselves. Rickover went to look at the famous ice breaker in Leningrad. Rickover was a fun guy. We were flying someplace and he was reading something like this literally—[demonstrates]

Q: You are saying he ran his finger very quickly down the page and went on to another page.

AKALOVSKY: I asked Rickover, "Speed-reading?" He said, no, I'm just looking for something more interesting. [laughter]

Q: [laughter] Did you find it difficult to be an interpreter at this high level?

AKALOVSKY: This was my first high level. Well Stassen was pretty high level too, but not as high as this. In terms of work, it was basically the same thing and I had to adjust it so I wasn't too emotional in the high level things. As I said, the Nixons, both of them, Pat was with him too, are extremely nice, unpretentious, down to earth. The situation changed much later.

Q: Well, situations, particularly crowds are tricky anyway, and one always thinks of the—I'm not sure when it cropped up, but with Khrushchev saying, "We'll bury you", which means we'll live longer than you will. But it sounds like we are going to kill you.

AKALOVSKY: Exactly.

Q: How did that come about? Or that wasn't on your watch?

AKALOVSKY: No, that was way before my watch. No it's the press, among other people. They pick up this and they do it all the way and it's very difficult to change.

Q: Yes, look what we are talking about now. It happened over 50 years ago and we are still talking about that.

AKALOVSKY: Yes, I agree. That was mistranslated, misunderstood.

Q: Things were happening so rapidly, that when you get to proverbs do you have to have a self censor so that you don't come up with something that might be misinterpreted?

AKALOVSKY: Oh, yes, sure. Not only proverbs, but in general. Some words have a different effect in different languages. I'll give you one example, going back to Stassen. Zorin was there, he was head of Soviet resolution in London. In one of his statements he started complaining about the slow paced, turtle-like pace of the negotiations. And Stassen took it as a personal affront to him, that he was a turtle. How he got to that understanding, I don't know. So he turns to me, I was the only one sitting behind him, with a red face and so forth and says, how should I answer that? I said, don't, he didn't mean you, he was just complaining about the slow pace of our negotiations, he didn't do anything wrong. Which was a fact. Sometimes you have to intervene or explain something.

Then we went to Poland with Nixon after that. Jacob Beam was still ambassador. Talking about relations with the Foreign Service, Nixon liked Jake very much. When Nixon was president, he sent him as ambassador to Moscow.

Q: One of the great complaints about these trips of high dignitaries, President, Vice President and so forth, the support staff that goes along with the principle person, is that they are arrogant, they push people aside, and they stir up more ill feelings than the principals can create good will. Did you find this with the Nixon trip?

AKALOVSKY: No, Nixon had a very small entourage, very small, so there was no problem there. But that brings to my mind another thing, which I skipped in '59 before Nixon's visit. There were quite a few incidents. Aleksei Kosygin came, who was then number two in Moscow, for the opening of the Soviet exhibit in the Coliseum in New York. I don't know if you recall, he came the first time on a TU-104, which is a very tall plane, and they didn't have the right steps, the ramp to wheel up to the plane, so they had to put a ladder on top of the ramp so they could get off at JFK. The reason I remember that is, talking about the support staff, we went to the opening of the exhibit in the Coliseum, and it was with Kosygin and some city officials and so forth, and several women on the Soviet delegation, all high ranking. Ministers of culture. We were boarding an elevator, there were a lot of people pushing and shoving, and the security people literally threw out a couple of Soviet women.

Q: Soviet secret service people.

AKALOVSKY: No, no, secret service. That's how they behaved, not thinking what they were doing. They didn't ask who are you and so forth, just push you out. That created a lot of bad feeling for the visitors. So you are right, the entourage—not only security people, Foreign Service or staff aides sometimes behaved very arrogantly.

Q: Oh, yes. I would have thought that it was always difficult to have a Soviet high functionary go to New York because, well no matter what nationality, you've got a dissident group that is going to take violent exception to whoever you are. [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: [laughter] Yes, in the '60s there was the famous shoe incident, you know, with Khrushchev banging his shoe—

Q: Yes. At the UN.

AKALOVSKY: At the UN.

Q: Did you run across, in this trip with Nixon, Gromyko at all?

AKALOVSKY: Yes, well I met Gromyko before that.

Q: What was your first impression of him?

AKALOVSKY: Well, contrary to all the reports you see that he was dour or he had no sense of humor, not true. He had a pretty good sense of humor. He could smile and he could laugh and he was very human. There were a lot of misconceptions that probably came out, not only about Soviets in general themselves public figures. Like when I mentioned Khrushchev, in '61 I went to—well, let's finish this first and I'll come back to it.

Q: Well, after the Nixon trip, you went back to Geneva?

AKALOVSKY: Yes, well maybe I didn't because I was still with the delegation, but I may have stayed here because Khrushchev was coming.

Q: Oh, yes, you were on the Khrushchev trip.

AKALOVSKY: Yes.

Q: Let's talk about that. That's a very famous trip.

AKALOVSKY: The large one, with the official escort. We went to Los Angeles, to Iowa, Knott's Farm, to New York, San Francisco. Khrushchev had been there before, with Nixon, and knew the area, but cause when we were talking about disarmament. Dulles—

Q: What was your impression of Dulles?

AKALOVSKY: Well, I didn't know Dulles too well, but in those days, '56, '57, Khrushchev kept sending Eisenhower missives, primarily about disarmament matters you know, ban the bomb. Long, long letters, which we had to translate of course. Before we went to that process, Dulles used to call me into his office, which was in the old building where the acting director kept his office later. And he wanted me to give him a

preliminary translation before he went to the White House, or before it was translated. And he would sit there like you are and I would sit here, and [he'd say] read this and translate this into English, and he would write or read, talk on the phone, or something else, and I would stop, and he'd say, no, no, continue, continue, I'm listening. Well, there was one letter where Dulles was accused of trying to stir up a third world war. Stevenson was against the H-bomb. And Dulles was the bad guy, he was against banning the H-bomb. As I came to this passage and read it to him, he stopped and said, what? What? Would you repeat it again? [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: And then another interesting episode with Dulles. He was sitting at a desk like this, and I was reading one of the missives from Khrushchev. At one point, Jake Beam who was then head of Office Eastern Affairs, came walking in on his tiptoes and said, Mr. Secretary, we just got reports that Soviet troops have surrounded Warsaw. That was during the October '56 Polish crisis, when Garrick and Movoka would be released from prison, and there was some unrest in Poland. And Dulles said, oh, oh, and he got up and viewed the map behind him on the wall and said, Alex, let's look where Warsaw is. [laughter]

Q: [laughter] On the Khrushchev trip to Washington, how did that work?

AKALOVSKY: It was, again, our people wanted to be as hospitable and nice as possible. I'm talking about five people who didn't have any official function, as the hosts were always from private organizations, like in San Francisco, the Economic Club, so he went to that. The Center for Capitalism, things like that. Then in Los Angeles we were met by a representative of the mayor who turned out to be the son of a Russian Jewish family.

Q: Was this Yorty?

AKALOVSKY: The mayor?

Q: Yes. Sam Yorty.

AKALOVSKY: I guess the mayor was Sam Yorty at that time.

Anyway we got in the car, a big limousine, a young man—well Khrushchev and he started talking to the man, who proudly announced that his parents came from Rostov in Russia. And Khrushchev said what were you doing there? And he answered he was in a factory. Khrushchev said, oh, I might have occupied that factory and pushed your parents out of there. It wasn't a very friendly exchange on Khrushchev's part you know.

Q: No.

AKALOVSKY: Then we were hosted by the Hollywood community, the movie stars there, with open arms, spirit of detente, and so forth. And then we went to a movie studio

where they were making the movie, Can Can.

Q: Can Can, yes, Cole Porter's.

AKALOVSKY: We saw the scene where the dancing started. We were seated actually where there were actually props of the New Orleans house, balcony, and so forth, and we got seats there to watch the whole thing. And then we went down and Khrushchev started slapping the girls, dancers, on their butts and so forth. He had a great time. But the next day he made a big speech accusing American hosts of exposing him to this filth, you know—

Q: I remember that.

AKALOVSKY: Indecent exposure, etc.

Q: It sounds like the Soviets and Khrushchev were trying too hard to play both ends.

AKALOVSKY: Oh, yes, sure. First of all, the problem was on a personal level he obviously was enjoying the show. I was there watching him enjoy the show.

Q: Yes. Well, did you observe—I've seen where Khrushchev had his own translator.

AKALOVSKY: He actually had two. When he first arrived, it was Teranovski. Teranovski, is the son of a former ambassador to the United States, had friends here. A very nice man. Then they had Sukadar, who became famous with Brezhnev and Khrushchev earlier, primarily as an interpreter. He was very, very good. Teranovski was already being groomed to become Khrushchev's sort of personal aide, because after the first few days, he sort of took over the interpreting function. In knowledge, at that level at least, and he did very well. But both of them had problems with proverbs or sayings or expressions. When Khrushchev was talking about the future of communism and capitalism, he used the Russian expression that communism will never collapse, capitalism will collapse, this will only happen when the shrimp whistles. And Sukadar got lost. How could he translate it? He started saying it literally and nobody got the meaning of it. You know what it means.

Q: Yes, basically when pigs can fly.

AKALOVSKY: Yes, when hell freezes over.

Q: Yes. I would think for someone to translate this sophisticated, to translate for Khrushchev would be very difficult because he really came from a Ukrainian miner's background.

AKALOVSKY: Well, you are wrong, if I may say so. Not Ukrainian. He was born just across the border from the Ukraine. And he told me himself, later, that he worked in the Ukraine, but he was not Ukrainian.

Q: Yes, well he came from essentially peasant worker background where you learn your expressions.

AKALOVSKY: A lot of folksy expressions.

Q: Yes.

AKALOVSKY: A lot of them were more than folksy.

Q: Yes, and a sophisticated Moscow boy would learn English as a boy would not pick up folksy expressions.

AKALOVSKY: Well a lot of them are very common. This particular one is very common [speaks Russian]. Actually the translation of when the shrimp whistles—when the pike sings, but nobody listened to the first part. But Teranovski had problems just before leaving, before Khrushchev's departure from Washington, there was a national press conference. And they were talking about the Soviets having sent this satellite to the moon. And the question from the press was, when are you going to launch a man to the moon? Teranovski was translating then, because of the big event, so they put him, in reserve, I guess. And the way he put it in Russian, he used a verb which in Russian can mean two things. One to launch, and the other to neglect or to sort of throw out of sight. So Khrushchev chose to interpret the question the second way, and said, we, we never neglect our people, we take good care of them from cradle to grave and so on and so on. And of course the audience, the press people were confused, what is he talking about? Poor Teranovski didn't have the presence or what not to intervene and say that there's a misunderstanding, that isn't it at all. So the question was never resolved as far as the press was concerned as to why Khrushchev answered that way.

Q: How did you find the time on the Garst farm in Iowa? This almost seemed to be the high point of the trip, was it or did it?

AKALOVSKY: Well there was a big to do about it in the press, and there was also the situation where somebody misrepresented themselves as the son of Garst. There was admission control, and, who managed to get in who claimed he was Garst's son, and there was a big stink about it. Of course, Khrushchev kept saying they could do the same thing because they had this big program called_____

Q: Virgin land.

AKALOVSKY: In Kazakhstan, in that area, in central Asia. They could grow corn from grass, hybrid corn which never prospered apparently. The whole corn program was a fiasco. For one thing, in Russia they don't eat corn. It's fodder.

Q: It's fodder. Well that's true in all of Europe.

AKALOVSKY: That's right. Well, in the Balkans and in Yugoslavia they eat corn. And in Italy there's polenta, a corn meal. Otherwise they don't eat corn. So that was not a big success.

Q: At the end of this thing, what was your feeling and other Americans who were involved in the trip—had this helped at all or in trying to show our best face sort of gotten the backs up of the Soviet leadership?

AKALOVSKY: Well our main concern at that time was that the Soviets come out of Berlin. And Eisenhower had Khrushchev to Camp David at the end of this trip. Eisenhower hardly saw Khrushchev before and then we went touring and then came back for a business session basically, at Camp David. At that meeting, Khrushchev backed away from a policy meeting. At least he gave the impression of backing away.

Q: The card that the Soviets kept waving around there and threatening to play was that there would be a peace treaty with the East Germans.

AKALOVSKY: Exactly.

Q: And once they did it, they would back away and we'd have to deal with the East Germans. And we were saying hell no, and that meant Berlin.

AKALOVSKY: Well Berlin was in a state of_____

Q: After, was there a feeling that relations were a little bit better?

AKALOVSKY: Yes, hope, I'm not sure there was a feeling, but there was hope. Then came the U-2. Eisenhower was invited to come to the Soviet Union. It was supposed to be in June and then Khrushchev cancelled the invitation after the U-2 incident.

Q: And Eisenhower was in Paris.

AKALOVSKY: I was there too with him then.

Q: What were you doing?

AKALOVSKY: The Bordeaux Summit.

Q: Had anything started at that summit?

AKALOVSKY: Started? It was just the opposite. The summit had been scheduled before the U-2 incident, primarily at Harold Macmillan's insistence.

Q: Prime Minister of Great Britain.

AKALOVSKY: Yes. He very much wanted the summit because he was desperately

trying to get the test ban done, and he thought the summit could resolve this issue. Of course the U-2 incident occurred when we came to Paris, and de Gaulle was sitting there in front of the big fireplace in a regal posture like this, you know, presiding over the whole thing. Here was de Gaulle for example, Khrushchev was sitting on his left, Nixon on his right, and Eisenhower facing on the other side of the table. Khrushchev was flanked by his defense minister and Gromyko. On our side, we had Herter and that was it. Only five people were allowed to be part of the delegation. Dick Walters, then Colonel. He was seated behind Eisenhower, and I was sitting behind Herter. And Chip Bohlen got in the room as note taker, and he was seated at a small table in the back. And the same kind of arrangement for the British, and the Soviets. De Gaulle spoke first, and then Khrushchev gave a fiery speech lambasting the United States for intruding upon their territory and stuff like that. And then Eisenhower's turn came. Eisenhower's face got redder and redder as Khrushchev gave his speech. Eisenhower understood French, spoke it very well, and according to protocol he was first interpreted in the language of the host country. So French came first and Dick Walters did that. But Eisenhower read the first paragraph of the text and stopped. Dick and I both had the text in front of us so we could pay attention. Dick is a delightful fellow, you should talk to him, he has thousands of delightful stories—he wrote a book of these.

Q: <u>Secret Missions</u>.

AKALOVSKY: That was primarily about Iran. Anyway, I guess his mind must have wandered because when Eisenhower stopped, [Dick] turned to me and said, Alex where did he stop? So I pointed to the end of the first paragraph, and he got up and went into the French translation of the first two paragraphs. In other words, he translated a paragraph that Eisenhower hadn't spoken yet. And Eisenhower sort of good-naturedly said, Dick I don't think I've said that yet. [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

AKALOVSKY: And then I got up and translated only the first paragraph.

Q: Khrushchev came in at that point and sort of—

AKALOVSKY: The summit was never finished anyhow because he walked out, he never came back. So we had one morning session. He made a speech with de Gaulle saying, well he complained about planes flying over his Soviet territory, it wasn't about your Sputnik flying over my territory. He never lost his calm, de Gaulle. Neither did Eisenhower. Then Khrushchev left. So the three stayed behind and deliberated what to do. Macmillan was almost in tears. Literally. He wanted to stay at the summit. Again, it was at his insistence it was decided to reconvene in the afternoon and see what happened, to see if he would come as scheduled before an afternoon session. So the three came, and we had the French police every once in a while inquire about Khrushchev's whereabouts, what he was doing. What he was doing was traveling all around Paris, sight-seeing, making remarks to the crowd and so forth. And every time his motorcade would turn in the direction of the Élysée Palace Macmillan would say, he's coming, he's coming. But

he never came.

Q: What was your feeling that people were saying, I mean the U-2 was not a good idea at that time. It flew over the Soviet Union on May Day, and Eisenhower denied it even happened.

AKALOVSKY: It wasn't May Day, it was the end of May, May 31st. [U-2 went missing on May 1.]

Q: Oh, May 31st. Was the feeling that this was—something like this could have been taken care of by saying, it was unfortunate—on the Soviet side?

AKALOVSKY: Oh no. They wanted to blow it up, obviously, for their purposes. This incident brings up another different point about translation. In his speech, I don't know if you ever read the book, The U-2 Affair by David Wise—

Q: I think I have.

AKALOVSKY: Well, he mentioned that in his book. In his speech, he said that the Soviet government cannot tolerate activity like that, over flights, and things like that. It was a matter of, to us the Russian word, politika. And Chip Bohlen interpreted this phrase with great significance, because he thought this meant internal politics, politics, not policy, was the driving force of the war. I didn't believe it that way because I couldn't conceive Khrushchev or any other Soviet leader admitting—

Q: Yes, well, whatever the motivation—

AKALOVSKY: I thought it was simply a matter of our policy, not to tolerate—so Chip and I disagreed on that, and this is mentioned in David Wise's book. But of course, if Chip was right, it was very significant.

Q: Right.

AKALOVSKY: But I couldn't conceive Khrushchev really admitting that there was some internal politicking over this issue.

Q: I don't know if whether over time Khrushchev felt he was unsure—I don't think there was any internal pressure at that time. He was pretty much in control.

AKALOVSKY: That's right.

Q: Maybe this is a good time to stop. We've been going for two hours now. Let's just put at the end, we've just finished the end of the Bordeaux Summit, was it May of 1960?

AKALOVSKY: It was back and forth.

Q: Did you go back to Geneva at this time? Did this end your—or did you get involved in other translation activities at the upper level of the American government?

AKALOVSKY: Well, in ‘60 I went back to Geneva, yes. In ‘59 we had the last negotiations on Germany.

Q: Okay, next time, let’s pick up in ‘59 the last negotiations on Germany, and going back to the Geneva negotiations after the aborted Paris summit, okay?

AKALOVSKY: Okay.

End of interview