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

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INTERVIEW

Q: I wonder if you can give me a bit of your background before we get into your career as a foreign service officer.

CHAPMAN: I am the son of an American father who was a professor at Princeton and a French mother. We always had strong attachments to Europe, spending every summer there. When war came in '39 to Europe, I felt quite strongly on the issues involved and in 1941 I left Princeton half way through my sophomore year and took a boat from Canada to go to England. I arrived at Liverpool on June 22nd, the very day the Germans launched their attack- Operation Barbarossa- against the Soviets- a day that brought a great sense of relief.

I enlisted in the Royal Air Force, actually in a Free French squadron of the Royal Air Force, and spent four years with them, flying a Spitfire. I was fortunate to survive the war. I was shot down two months before the end and became a prisoner of war of the Germans. I was sent to Luftlag Eins, a POW camp for allied air force officers, which was located on the Baltic Sea between the Elbe and the Oder, and was liberated by the Soviet forces. I spent

several weeks with them helping repatriate allied prisoners of war and inmates of a concentration camp.

Q: Could you give us an impression of the Soviet forces at that time?

CHAPMAN: The German guards left the camp on May lst to go West and give themselves up to the allies, rather than wait for the Soviets. A number of allied officers and I just went south to see what we could do for other allied soldiers in the prison camps. We commandeered a truck and drove through the Soviet armies as they were moving up for the last attack. The first division we met was Asian, but I've never known from what republic. It used horse-drawn carts, piled high with bundles presumably of loot and many with a cow or calf tethered behind. Some had a woman perched on top of the bundles. Soldiers walked alongside this caravan. The whole gave a hallucinating impression of the armies of Genghis Kahn, moving into Western Europe, five hundred years later.

The greater Russians from Leningrad and Moscow clearly showed they felt closer to us than to their Asian compatriots. They would say, pointing to the Asian troops in language we could understand, "Be careful, they've got hot blood." It was an extraordinarily interesting experience.

Even in war, the political commissars were visibly present. As soon as the Soviet armies had overrun German territory, the commissars appeared and installed themselves and started questioning people, establishing their control throughout the zone.

I returned to Princeton in January 1947 and worked straight through to my AB degree in June 1948. I took the foreign service exam in San Francisco in September 1948. Having looked around at job possibilities, I became more and more attracted to the State Department and was pleased to learn in December that I had passed the written exam. I came to Washington and passed the oral in February 1949, but then had to wait until November 1950 before being sworn in. Even then there was a maladjustment between taking in new classes of officers and the budget. I continue to believe that this delay is inexcusable. It is bad administration to bring in young people and then let them stew for months; they are caught in a very difficult situation, in a limbo where they can't build another career, and yet have to fend for themselves.

Q: Was there any problem having been with the RAF?

CHAPMAN: No, not really. I had a number of references. My former commanding officer for instance, was a French Colonel who was assigned to the UN Military Committee in New York at the time and helped clear me very quickly.

Q: It happens again and again. Well, you came in 1950?

CHAPMAN: Yes I was sworn in in November 1950 and began the initial training course in 1951.

Q: What was your impression of your class?

CHAPMAN: It was a wonderful group. A wonderful group. To this day, I consider many to be friends. But looking back, you realize you live in your own times. It was lily-white male. There was not a single ethnic minority. There was not a single woman. I sincerely believe that we were not prejudiced against women or minorities as colleagues, but it simply was a fact of the times that almost only white males applied for the foreign service.

Q: What was the outlook? Why were these people, including yourself, joining the foreign service?

CHAPMAN: Our class had had essentially the same experience: we witnessed the rise of fascism which led to a dreadful war and coming out of it, felt that World War II could have been avoided, if the US and the Western democracies had shown a little more vigor and energy and belief in themselves. I believe that to this day. I think the war forced our generation to take an active interest in the world just to maintain peace and preserve this country. This view was I believe a primary motivation for going into the foreign service and working in foreign affairs. Most of us having experienced war felt that that was where the action was at that time.

Q: This was a group whose experience was molded by the armed forces or by seeing the democracies collapse.

CHAPMAN: And the memory of the great depression. This too was a major factor molding our generation. So we had a mindset very hard on communism which to us was just fascism of the left, and an ethic of hard work.

Let me just say, I have a very deep sense of satisfaction today, because when you step back and look at the experience of our generation, we really fought for fifty years, an entire lifetime, against the authoritarian regimes of the right and of the left. And we've won. I think that what has happened in the last few months is by way of a vindication of our lives.

Q: I think all of us take tremendous satisfaction in what has happened since 1989. I hope that all this doesn't turn out to be a false spring. But it is very encouraging.

CHAPMAN: There is a whole new set of problems, however, that are going to develop. And very difficult problems. We can identify many of them already. But it is not going to be the kind of harsh life-and-death confrontation that we've experienced, and that forced us to devote enormous resources - time, energy, talent, money - of all our countries to preserve the peace.

Q: And to make compromises that we sometimes wished we didn't have to. Moving on. Your first assignment was to Casablanca.

CHAPMAN: That's right.

Q: How did you feel about this and what was the situation?

CHAPMAN: I had asked to go to the Middle East because that's where I thought there would be some action. I was sent to Casablanca and I wasn't terribly enthusiastic. I thought, my god this is terrible. I was going out somewhere in left field where nothing happened. But, as it turned out, it was a wonderful two years. It's a beautiful country. It was an introduction to the Middle East, to Islam and to the problems of Moslem societies. And to the dying days of one empire. So it was very instructive.

Q: The empire being ...

CHAPMAN: The French. Indeed, I left in '53 and Morocco became independent three bloody years later.

Q: Let me ask you. You had a French mother and fought on the French side. Now you are an American vice consul in Casablanca. Weren't you looking at everything with bifocals?

CHAPMAN: I always felt I was an American; I served in the Free French as an American. Speaking French and understanding the French, but as an American, I've never had a problem representing this country. I believe in it and I believed, and continue to believe, in its foreign policies. We've all had our reservations about some aspects of our actions abroad, but, by and large, to this day, I think that the thrust of our policies has been right, and, on the whole, successful.

In Morocco, I specifically thought that the French were wrong. It was quite sad to observe an otherwise perfectly intelligent people, absolutely refusing to face the reality of the situation. Any foreign observer could see that the situation was slipping out from under their control; that, regardless of their belief that they were absolutely necessary for the country, their days were in fact limited. In a way it was a poisonous atmosphere. You could not get into a conversation with a French person without " the Moroccan problem" coming into the conversation. They had intoxicated themselves in the belief that they were essential to the maintenance of the country, that the Moroccans could not rule themselves.

Q: Were there any instructions from Washington at this time?

CHAPMAN: There was tension between the American posts in North Africa and the Embassy in Paris. Our colleagues in Paris were of course working with the French government and trying, at that time, to work out a security system, the alliance of NATO. It was essential to develop cooperative relations with all the people of Western Europe. For the French government, the issue of their empire was a major consideration. For those of us who were observers on the ground, in the empire, we could see what was going on and thought it unwise for us to be allied too closely with France, the imperialists, against what

seemed evident to us, the wave of the future. So there was an inherent tension between the North African posts and our embassy in Paris.

Woody Wallner, who was First Secretary at the embassy in Paris, in charge of empire affairs, was our principal adversary. We loved him dearly, and respected him highly, but we were in a continuing struggle with him, to win Washington's soul, as it were. He was putting forth the French case and doing his best to maintain France as an ally in Europe, France which of course played a central role in NATO. We in the empire went a different way, arguing that the US should not be perceived by the natives as supporting imperialism, or at least too wedded to the maintenance of French authority in their countries.

Q: This was part of the great battle over the dissolution of colonies that was fought in the Department and in the field really up to the end of the "60s.

CHAPMAN: Well no, until independence in 1956.

Q: But the battle continued with others. Well now, who was your consul general?

CHAPMAN: John Madden.

Q: How did he feel about that?

CHAPMAN: John was a fairly relaxed, detached individual. He presided smilingly over his post.

Q: How did that play out?

CHAPMAN: The junior officers felt more strongly than the senior ones.
Q: Were you under any restraints?

CHAPMAN: No. I have always prided myself on being a very professional diplomat. And so, although at one point, a French friend warned me to be careful, because in Rabat, the French authorities apparently considered I was too critical, and had spoken, according to this friend, of declaring me persona non grata. Essentially I was trying to say what I thought in nice terms - that there was an evolution taking place in the world, things were changing and it was wise to adjust accordingly. Even such a mild proposition was taken amiss- which is a pretty good indication of the extraordinary sensitivity of the French at the time.

The most dramatic event in my two years in Casablanca was the Korean War. It caused a very great rise in anxieties.

Q: The Korean War started in ...

CHAPMAN: In June 1950. And I got to Morocco in February of 1951. In the spring of that year, Washington decided that we had to have the means of striking at the USSR. At that time, there was no plane that could reach the Soviet Union from the US. There were no ballistic missiles, of course. The longest range bomber was the B-33. It didn't have the range to reach Russia. The only way we could reach the USSR was to have intermediate bases. So it was decided in Washington, to build five major bases in Morocco.

Well, in 1951, 1952, there was full employment in the US. The economy was going great guns. There were not many able-bodied, qualified men (women had not entered the work force as heavy equipment operators as yet) to be hired in the streets. The whole program was carried out on an absolutely crash basis. Negotiations were concluded with the French which eliminated dealing with the Moroccans at all, for which procedure we paid later in Moroccan resentment. A consortium of engineering firms under Bechtel was established and started hiring Americans helter-skelter, many characters not to be believed.

Some were hired in New York, got drunk on the plane, stayed drunk on the plane, arrived in Paris drunk, were transferred to another plane, arrived drunk in Casablanca. Three days later, they were sent back home, drunk. Any able-bodied man who had ever driven a truck or even been close to big equipment was hired. Within a matter of days, the center of Casablanca was turned into a wild west town. Brawls all the time; shootings. It was just a terrible mess.

Now it happened that we still had extraterritorial rights in Morocco, which meant that any American who was arrested, who was a defendant in a civil or criminal case, was tried by a US consular court using the jurisprudence of the District of Columbia. There was the Consulate General court in Casablanca, and there was the Legation court in Tangier.

Well, it was a lot of fun, but it became a lot of work and John Madden decided to crack down. We had to restore order. And we began to be tough on all of these Americans arrested by the police for disorderly conduct and other acts. We levied increasingly heavy fines for misconduct and sent those found guilty of more serious crimes back to the District to serve time, and, so, with the help of the Consortium, we managed to get the situation under control.

It was important that we did for it had become a crazy scene. Shootings, fighting, double murders. You name it, we had it, including, but that was not related to the bases, a case of piracy on the high seas. Some Americans had become involved with the Italian mafia. Attacking from high speed boats, they hijacked a ship on the high seas and took off hundreds of cases of cigarettes to peddle in Sicily. Somehow, they were arrested and tried in the Tangier court. It was completely an 18th century happening in the 20th century. But it was interesting.

Q: What happened after that?

CHAPMAN: I was transferred in 1953 to Beirut, Lebanon, after home leave, as an economic officer. Beirut at that time, was indeed the Paris of the East. A delightful place. I was in the section under Armin Meyer. Raymond Hare came as ambassador. Charming man. But I was there only three months before being transferred directly to Tehran.

I replaced Joe Cunningham there. Missy, his wife, had developed an illness somewhere which the doctors couldn't identify. She kept losing weight; she really was not in very good shape. They thought maybe it had to do with the altitude at Tehran and so they were transferred to Beirut. I was sent to take his place. She was finally sent to a hospital in Germany, specializing in tropical diseases. They found a virus that she had picked up in Burma, and she made a complete recovery. They were a thoroughly professional couple and remain good friends to this day.

So I took a most interesting trip. Being a bachelor and being in the Middle East where you display your wealth, I had bought a Jaguar in Beirut. I drove it from Beirut to Tehran: from Beirut to Damascus to Amman and then along the International Petroleum Company (IPC) road to Baghdad. And from there, up country, into Iran to Hamadan and Khorramshahr and finally Tehran. Imagine doing that today! While language was a major barrier throughout, nevertheless, I did not sense any animosity- more curiosity, particularly regarding the Jaguar- than animosity.

Q: What was the situation in Iran at that time. You were there from 1953 to '56.

CHAPMAN: Three years exactly. It was a very interesting time in that it was just after the overthrow of Mossadegh and the return of the Shah from exile. It was a time filled with hope for that country. We had very large aid missions- both economic and military- and we were prepared to make a major effort to help the Shah modernize his country. Iran was still largely in the middle ages. There was a big gap between a very thin layer of exceedingly rich people and the great mass of very poor and very ignorant people. Villages thirty kilometers from the capital had not changed in any significant way in the last 3,000 years since their creation. The houses were built of mud and straw, the plows were made of wood, the winnowing was done by throwing the wheat in the air; twelve, thirteen-year old girls wove rugs in very dark rooms filled with dust. There was of course no electricity. The major families still measured their wealth by the number of villages they owned. It was an extraordinary experience. You really stepped far back into history.

Q: What was the feeling in the embassy about the overthrow. Were we uncomfortable about this?

CHAPMAN: I got there afterwards with a new group of officers who had also arrived recently. We therefore had rather limited knowledge of the past events. Still there was a consensus that the Tudeh Party (Iranian Communist Party) was the most coherent force in the opposition to the Shah, and would have eventually overwhelmed Mossadegh. There very much was the sense that the Shah represented stability and that his heart was in the right place. We were prepared to help him move the country forward. However, all of us

became increasingly concerned by the Shah's inability to deal realistically with his budget and establish true priorities, and with the general lack of responsibility on the part of the ruling class. They apparently felt no obligation towards their society. They were out for themselves and for their families. Corruption was wide-spread. While every society is corrupt up to a point, there it was so rampant, it was damaging. For American observers, it really rubbed the wrong way.

Q: You were doing economic work?

CHAPMAN: I was first Special Assistant to the Ambassador, Loy Henderson. He was one of the great diplomats of the post-war. His wife was a problem for everyone including himself. But he was very attached to her. Part of my job was the care and feeding of Mrs. Henderson, which was not easy.

Q: I wonder if you could explain, since this is now history. From the view of: what happens when you have an ambassador's wife who is a real problem.

CHAPMAN: As in so many things, you try to support and protect the Ambassador, and try to absorb some of the difficulties created.

Q: In what manner? How does one work under these conditions?

CHAPMAN: I think you accept more unpleasantness than you would normally. You try to handle each difficulty as best you can without bothering the Ambassador. Help him keep his peace of mind kind-of-thing. She dealt with the whole staff, both junior and senior officers, in a very insulting fashion. She was very socially inclined, loved the beautiful people. The fact that I was accepted by the beautiful people, (because those were the people with whom the ambassador had to deal - the Shah and his whole family and their entourage) I got off relatively lightly.

She was a curious person. Not well educated. She liked gossip, dancing, men, parties, fun in the worst Persian sort of way. She was impressed by wealth. She was quite insensitive. But the Ambassador was very attached to her. She was Lithuanian. They were married when he was serving in Moscow in the 1930's, before the war. The story was told that his friends at the Embassy strongly disapproved of this marriage and did not attend the wedding ceremony. It was further said that he never forgave them.

Q: Could you talk about Loy Henderson, one of our great ambassadors.

CHAPMAN: He chose Bill Rountree as DCM. He had great confidence in him and Rountree was a very competent, well organized, clear headed person, who ran the Embassy. Loy Henderson operated from a very conservative philosophy, profoundly anti-communist, anti-Soviet, and somewhat suspicious of anyone who was not WASP. He had been very harshly treated by the Jewish lobby in the US, when he was Assistant Secretary for the Middle East, and as a result was very suspicious of Jews and Jewish activities. We had

excellent relations with the British Embassy. Iran in the view of the Ambassador, and indeed of virtually all of us, was the key country in the middle east at that time; it was the most significant barrier between the USSR and the Persian Gulf. This, I believe, is still true today. Geopolitically, Iran is one of the most important countries in that area, and indeed in the world.

He was very, very conservative, with some biases of his generation. He worked very hard to support the Shah and to effect a reconciliation between the Iranians and the British. Henderson had been in Moscow in the '30s. His experience there formed much of his outlook- as indeed it did others who lived there in those bleak years. He was a major player in bringing the British back and arriving at a settlement of the oil problem. That was the most important issue with which he dealt. And he dealt with it with Rountree without anyone else being involved. He held all the negotiations on oil very tightly, so I never really followed the discussions on how the agreement was reached.

He was a man of great charm, of great dignity. A great presence. The very personification of a diplomat. Straight out of central casting. He didn't speak any other language except English. He didn't speak much Russian, and no French or German. He was very highly regarded. He had considerable political imagination to find solutions to problems and he had a very precise mind. He was truly a diplomat's diplomat and a man who imposed respect. Everyone had taken their measure of Mrs. Henderson but it did not affect his position or reputation.

Q: Special assistant to ambassador allows you to see the whole operation. From your viewpoint, how was the embassy run?

CHAPMAN: Henderson had that rare ability of keeping a broad view of the situation, and at the same time a keen eye on all elements which he considered important. On these he had precise and detailed knowledge. He had an excellent memory. Perhaps from his days in Moscow, he had a very strong sense of security. On the most important issues- oil negotiations, relations with the Shah- he operated very close to his chest. I believe he shared these questions with Rountree who had his full confidence and ran the Embassy, but with Rountree alone. For instance, all the files on the oil negotiations were kept in Rountree's office.

Q: What about the corruption?

CHAPMAN: We had other issues to worry about. There is very little one country can do about corruption in another society. I think one of the great myths that has been allowed to flower in this country is the degree to which we have control over other countries. Americans hold themselves responsible for everything bad that happens in the world. Yet one conclusion I have carried away after 30 years in the foreign service is how remarkably little direct influence we have in fact on the functioning of another society. They have their own values and their own ways of working. You just don't change these. Particularly by moralizing.

Q: We weren't moralizing then, were we?

CHAPMAN: The AID people were those who had to deal with the problem and were always fighting and trying to get the leadership to recognize how much it hampered programs. But it was a very difficult matter. You had the Shah's sister and his brothers who were involved. Later after I left, I was told you couldn't build a factory without paying off Abdor Reza, the Shah's brother.

Q: Your next post Saigon, was another trouble spot. How did this happen?

CHAPMAN: I was in the foreign service to be active. It was a French speaking area, and it was going through a difficult period. I was single and that was a factor. I was sent as deputy chief of the political section, which was a very nice promotion. This was in 1957.

I was acting chief for several months because the previous chief had left. Tom Bowie, the new political Counselor, came in three or four months later. It was fun.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

CHAPMAN: Durbrow. Durbrow came in after Reinhardt and Daniel Anderson was the DCM. As a Foreign Service tit-bit, the administrative counselor asked me to stay in the residence to keep an eye on things in the interim between the two ambassadors. I jumped at the chance and there gave some of the best parties ever in my whole career. It was elegant living!

Q: What was the situation as you saw it in 1957?

CHAPMAN: I think all of us felt it very difficult to penetrate the Vietnamese situation. I attended a number of so called political meetings and there were a lot of formalized speeches in Vietnamese. Not knowing Vietnamese it was difficult really to get a grasp of the reality of political life. Diem and his family were very close knit, and completely ran the show, which was in the tradition of the country. Flowering democracies are not many in this world.

There was no political party that was impressive as such or that you could determine its true configuration. The country had completed what I call the French chapter in 1954 with the signing of the Geneva Agreement and the departure of the French administration. Many of us were disquieted by the tensions that existed between French and Americans and it just happened that there was a group of recently arrived young American officers who spoke French well, and were trying to bridge the gap between the French and ourselves. Some Americans were coming over and saying, "well, now that we're here, we are going to save the situation, and the French don't know how to do anything. They fought the war poorly but now we're going to be here and teach the Vietnamese how to fight."

These were American military officers mostly. Particularly, the more senior officers. The captains and lieutenants who had been out in the field, had a much better appreciation of what was involved than the colonels and generals.

The lieutenant general in charge of the MAG at that time was called Hanging Sam Williams, because he had been responsible at Nuremberg for overseeing the execution of the prisoners condemned to death.

The junior officers had a better sense of the nature of the insecurity, than the senior military coming out of World War II. The latter tended to be disparaging of the French; the junior officers, both military and civilian, felt that this was not a terribly intelligent attitude, because the French had a good understanding of the country and still held very important positions. To start with, the Vietnamese leadership spoke French more than English and still felt surprisingly warmly towards France. There were French schools and French businesses were still a major factor. So most of us thought it was better working with them rather than against them.

1957 was a year of restoring relations between the French and American embassies. We managed quite well but with the military it remained difficult. These were also some of the rare years of peace between 1954 and 1960, when the war heated up again. In 1957, you could actually drive a car from Saigon all the way to the highlands. There was a remarkable sense of security and it was a beautiful country. The people are hard working and interesting. Very pleasant and interesting posting.

Q: Did you feel optimistic about how things were going to go?

CHAPMAN: I think we were optimistic because we were putting in a lot of money, a lot of effort and a lot of good people, and felt that Vietnam could be built up into a viable country.

Q: Having come from Iran where you were seeing this corruption, did you feel this was being duplicated.

CHAPMAN: Again, it is so hard for a foreigner to measure such things. There was a feeling that Diem was absolutely honest, but that feeling didn't extend to his family. That was one of the strong factors that led us to support him. He was a stabilizing influence. He was clean. He was patriotic. He represented a tradition, even though he was a Catholic, and he represented a moral force. But even in '57, we were debating among ourselves how much support Diem had among his people. Our impression was that Diem was very rigid and that he was alienating a lot of his countrymen. The country had been very heavily worked over by the communists, who were still gaining positions in the countryside. So while we respected Diem, we had a very uncomfortable feeling that he was not establishing the sort of authority that would pull the country together. To this day, I find it very difficult to make a judgement of how in fact he was viewed by the Vietnamese themselves because after his murder, there was a series of coups but there was no one who was really able to establish his authority. In countries like Vietnam which have always experienced

authoritarian regimes, it is crucial to have a respected central authority, and to be able to work with it.

So it was a time of hope. Diem represented a leader of eminent qualities: honesty, patriotism, seriousness. In many ways he represented the kind of leader whom we have looked for in many developing countries, but we remained nagged by doubts regarding his ability to cope in a confrontation with a major communist challenge.

SIDE TWO

Q: Then you were only there ten months. Then where did you go?

CHAPMAN: I was transferred directly to Vientiane in Laos as chief of the two-man political section. I found it a very interesting, but puzzling, situation, with an ambassador I respected very much, James Parsons, and his wife, Peggy, a charming Canadian, and a Prime Minister Prince Souvanna Phouma for whom I developed considerable respect. Unfortunately, there was a personal antagonism between the two men. And they reflected two fundamentally different views on how to save Laos. Jeff Parsons very much espoused the view of Washington that given a Communist China and the then apparently firm Sino-Soviet Bloc, it was essential for us to draw the line in Southeast Asia. There could be no compromise with the communists. Souvanna Phouma dealt with the Lao reality, which favors compromise. His half-brother, Prince Souphanouvong was a leader of the Pathet Lao, which was the Lao communist party and held two provinces in the Northeast, resulting from the 1954 Geneva Agreement. Souvanna felt that the way to maintain peace and the integrity of Laos was to work it out with the Pathet Lao, among Lao of all tendencies. For the Americans, this was unthinkable. At the time, Americans perceived the communist threat as world-wide, determined and coordinated. We put little trust in men of good will such as Souvanna being able to hold out against the communists. It was a fear of the camel's nose under the tent.

The tension between the two men existed right through this time. There very unfortunately developed an active dislike between them. It was a clash of policy but it became personal. Jeff went back to become Assistant Secretary for the Far East and this tension remained a problem.

When I came back later to Washington to become desk officer, the junior officers felt much more in sympathy with Souvanna than Jeff and the senior officers throughout the government.

Q: How were you able to report, to operate.

CHAPMAN: When I arrived, the other political officer was John Gunther Dean, whom I did not know but who already had the reputation of being a very able young officer, and who had established a personal relationship with Souvanna. John's wife, Martine, is French and a very intelligent and able person. They worked very well together.

There was the same problem in Laos that there had been in Vietnam: of Americans coming in and trying to push the French out. All of us at the Embassy understood that it was much better to work with the French community, and we made great efforts that way, including with Souvanna Phouma, who remained close to the French.

When I arrived, rather than take over all these contacts that were senior to John, I told him, "You carry on with Souvanna and the others, and when you leave, I shall take over all your contacts. We are only two men in this section. It's no big deal." That's the way we operated.

In any event, in a village like Vientiane, you get to know everybody pretty quickly. It was a dusty village of less than 100,000 people, and marvelously cheerful. The Lao are very welcoming and relaxed. Unpretentious. Non-competitive. Friendly, warm people. For any occasion, there would be a boon, which is a Buddhist feast celebrated on all important - and not so important-occasions, marriage, birth, holiday and departure, etc. And they included foreigners. The Lao have no side to them. They remain an extraordinarily attractive people. They are not very vigorous, and they don't work too hard. But it is a very attractive, small society. They're very humble and say, "Oh, we're just 3 million people in the middle of Southeast Asia and there's only so much we can do. " They recognized that the Vietnamese were the power in the area and that they were caught between Vietnam and Thailand.

So it was very easy to get to know the full leadership, all of the ministers, all the senior generals. In parenthesis, to show the stability of that society, I left in 1959 and when I came back in 1974, Ambassador Whitehouse gave a dinner in my honor with all the senior generals. They were exactly the same gang I had known 16 years earlier! The same was true for the political leadership. I could not believe it. It is a small society with stable ruling families.

Q: Laos didn't get the attention that flared up later.

CHAPMAN: More papers, hours, energy, money must have been spent by more people in the USG on Laos per square mile, per head of population than on any other country. When I came back to Washington in 1959 as desk officer for Laos, the country was in continuing crisis.

Q: Did you feel the crisis there?

CHAPMAN: Yes, but it was in no small measure generated by Americans. The least thing caused us to get terribly excited.

In 1975, on April 15, Phnom Penh fell, and Saigon fell to the communists on April 31. On May 1, one day later there were demonstrations in Vientiane. Within a month the Pathet Lao had taken over. I think the case can be made that it was the activism, firmness, deep

involvement, however you might want to call it, of the United States in these countries that kept the communists at bay, at least until 1975.

Q: What were the tools at hand for trying to do this. You had an ambassador who couldn't talk to the leader very well. What were the other tools?

CHAPMAN: In 1958-59 when I was first there, we had a large aid mission and what was called the Program Evaluation Office, which was responsible for keeping tabs on the military assistance we were providing. It is a measure of the artificiality of the situation that the PEO was manned by US military officers who had been civilianized. They were not in uniform but all wore white shorts and white short sleeve shirts. Everyone knew who they were in reality and called its leader, John Heintges, "General", even though he always scrupulously introduced himself as "Mr." We had gone to extraordinary lengths to maintain the fiction of the country's neutrality.

The economy, such as it was, such as it had developed, was totally dependent upon foreign assistance, particularly the US and France. In terms of Laos, it was very large. And one of the problems that we never resolved though we recognized its negative impact was that of the counter-part funds. Because we were providing a lot of military assistance, and economic aid, and generating kips, which was the local currency, it was necessary to find a mechanism to absorb these kips so as to avoid causing a wild inflation. And to do that we helped them import consumer goods to sop up these kips..

Goods could be imported with a license. Any Lao who had a license, had money in the bank, because licenses could be sold and that led to widespread corruption. A lot of people became very rich through the system. This was something that we never resolved.

Q: On the field there, how did you view the Pathet Lao at that time.

CHAPMAN: I think we viewed the Pathet Lao more seriously than they were in fact. They were hidden, living away to the Northeast in the hills bordering on Vietnam. The danger was the Vietnamese. The Secretary General of the Pathet Lao was half-Vietnamese and Prince Souphanouvong, who was one of the principal leaders of the Pathet Lao, had a wife who was Vietnamese, a dedicated communist and a very strong influence on him. That was the danger, of course.

Q: The whole thing had a racial overtone, didn't it?

CHAPMAN: The Lao were the valley dwellers. Then you had the Hmong, the mountain tribes in the northeast. The reason they became involved in the so-called secret war, was that they were situated between the Lao in the Mekong Delta Valley and the Pathet Lao and the Vietnamese in the northwest.

Q: Were the Vietnamese being perceived as a threat, that they were trying to take over Laos?

CHAPMAN: The Lao always felt threatened by the Vietnamese and by the Thais. Both are historical enemies. The former now had in addition an expansive political system and ideology. The Lao genuinely feared them. There was a feeling among the Lao that if the French had not taken over the country in the last century, there would have been no Laos today. The Cambodians had very much the same feeling. The Thais and the Vietnamese would have taken over these countries.

Q: How did you feel towards the Thais?

CHAPMAN: We treated them as respected allies. And important. We tried very strongly to encourage them to be generous and supportive of the Lao. By and large I think we did help mediate between the Thais and the Lao.

Q: So in many ways, our efforts and the French efforts helped gel these borders.

CHAPMAN: That's right. Historically, the Vietnamese push into Cambodia a few years ago is in line with the history of the Vietnamese. They originally came from China 1200 years ago.

Q: By Vietnamese you mean South Viets.

CHAPMAN: I don't know the etymology.

Q: Their word for South actually means south China.

CHAPMAN: They came down from China along the south China Sea, a strip of land between the Annamite chain and the sea and then gnawed their way over a thousand years right down into the south, eliminating all the peoples who had lived there, establishing soldier-farmer villages and gradually working their way forward. The thrust into Cambodia a few years ago was in line with the general thrust of their entire history. The withdrawal from Cambodia last year is historically the first time they pulled back.
Q: The question is whether they have really pulled back.

CHAPMAN: So there was this sense that you had a dynamic, energetic, determined people, the Vietnamese, who were kept within their boundaries by the French and then by us. Any chance they would have, they would press west against the Lao and the Cambodians, and eventually the Thais.

Q: Were you thinking communist threat or Vietnamese threat?

CHAPMAN: Communist threat. What is now forgotten about this situation is that at that time, there was a Sino-Soviet bloc that was truly threatening. It was threatening by its size, by its ideology, by its determination, by its global weight. Supporting communist rebellions in all three Indochina states, in Thailand, in Malaysia and in the Philippines.

There was a great deal of uncertainty as to where the whole area would be going. All these countries were still very vulnerable and weak throughout the 40's, 50's, 60's and even 70's.

Q: When we talk about the domino theory, which is now snickered at.

CHAPMAN: I believe it.

Q: I believe it too. People forget these things. You were operating under this impression, that there was a communist threat and you had to toe the line.

CHAPMAN: I believed absolutely in Washington's overall view. On the ground, however, the junior officers saw the reality and felt a little uneasy as to the amount of resources we were devoting to these countries. They were such weak societies and we were pouring in these millions and corrupting them in very large measure. But to hold the line is not easy when you deal with societies that are vulnerable in so many ways.

Q: Was it possible to talk to the Pathet Lao?

CHAPMAN: No, they were up in the northeast in the other province, and there was no contact. To the best of my knowledge, not even the CIA had any direct contact. However, there was one moment in 1958 after Souvanna returned to power when his half brother Prince Souphanouvong and his wife came to Vientiane to test the waters. The new American Ambassador, Horace Smith, even had them to a swim lunch at his pool. The conversation was very guarded and neutral. Finally, tensions in the city developed which forced the Pathet Lao Prince to leave.

Q: This was the kind of area that became CIA country.

CHAPMAN: That's right.

Q: How did the CIA operate and interface with the rest of the policy. Were they a loose cannon?

CHAPMAN: I was in Laos twice. Once in '57-59 and again in 1974-75. Theirs was a large presence. Already in 1958-59 their operation was larger than the Foreign Service. And they were in touch with all of the players. By 1974-75, they had wired the whole place. As a Foreign Service officer, you looked at an event and weren't quite sure whether it was generated by the society or somehow generated by the agency. They had half of the ministers on their payrolls- or so it seemed. It was, I think, a very unhealthy situation.

I felt then and I feel today that we work in but one embassy and therefore must work cooperatively with the CIA. I had good relations with the agency people. They probably considered me a bit naive and didn't tell me what I didn't need to know, and in truth I did not seek it out.

Q: You left in 1959. Was it stabilized?

CHAPMAN: Yes it was stabilized. After untold happenings, a new government under Phoui Sananikone, the leader of the major family from Vientiane, was established, courtesy, I suspect in part, of the CIA. Souvanna was ousted. Phoui was a genial, roly-poly, easy going man, but shrewd and intelligent. It was a government that had essentially accepted our point of view- i.e., the communists were a threat and to be opposed without compromise. The government was genuinely friendly and eager to work with us. We were comfortable together. We felt that after years of spending time and energy making tactical moves, finally we had a situation that would permit the Lao, with our active support, to build their country. Here I think some credit is due the new Ambassador who replaced Jeff Parsons, Horace Smith. He was a big man who exuded energy and optimism, and who by his very cheerfulness and gung-ho attitude reassured the Lao, and certainly his relations with Phoui were excellent.

And so I left feeling good. And then I came back and ...

Q: I have you at the Laotian desk between 1959 and 1962.

CHAPMAN: Yes. In June 1960, we sent out a new ambassador, Winthrop Brown, a marvelous man. Very steady and open-minded. Within two weeks of his arrival, there was a coup in Vientiane led by a young captain, Kong Le, against the government. He declared: "I am for Laos, and the Lao people, for honesty, purity and against corruption," and he completely upset the apple cart. He asked Souvanna to take back the prime ministership. Phoui and his Ministers were out of the capital when the coup happened. It was a time of extreme tension. No one knew exactly which way things would go and there was always the fear that the Pathet Lao would take advantage of the situation and come in. Vientiane became isolated and Souvanna Phouma became Prime Minister again. Fortunately, Win Brown remained calm and managed to establish a good relationship with him. Win being very level headed, argued that we should work with Souvanna, because he represented the Lao reality.

Well, you have never seen a town so emotional as Washington. The Pentagon considered Win Brown virtually a traitor, gone-soft kind of thing. The senior levels of the State Department gave him very little support, although his old friend, Jeff Parsons, stuck by him. But the working folks in the Department and even in Defense, thought he was right.

Q: Why did this happen? Laos is not a place people know much about.

CHAPMAN: Laos was the front line. It extended from Korea, through Indochina, to Iran, Turkey and NATO. Indochina is where the issue was now joined. This was the weak link and it was perceived that way and believe me, at that time, there was a lot of emotion. There was a lot of fear regarding the drift of events. We had demobilized after World War II and then there was the Korean War, and now we were involved in this very messy situation in Indochina with an aggressive Soviet Union and China.

Q: We're still talking about the latter days of the Eisenhower Administration. What did you do as a desk officer?

CHAPMAN: Well, I worked very closely with Jeff Parsons, whom I very much admired and liked even though I thought better of Souvanna than he did. But there was an emotional factor there. Bill Sullivan was assistant to Jeff and because the Laos desk was the most agitated right then in Southeast Asia, I had direct access. Daniel Anderson, the Director of the office and Dick Usher, his deputy, worked a good deal on Laos affairs but left me considerable freedom. In fact, most of the officers in the Office of Southeast Asia worked in one way or another on the problems generated by Laos. It was quite a boiler room that office.

Q: What did you do?

CHAPMAN: It's difficult to convey years later but it was a very charged atmosphere. When a country is in crisis, formidable pressures and demands gather on the desk: continuing requests for briefings and speeches from the top levels of the administration; continuing inquiries from Congress; unending questions from the media; inquiries from many Embassies; requests for speeches, for discussion panels, etc. All this on top of a flood of materials coming from all over the world. These were twelve hour days, seven day weeks.

As an indicator of the priority Laos had assumed by the end of 1960, one of the first trips Kennedy took in January of 1961, was to meet Prime Minister of Great Britain MacMillan in Key West in Florida. There were a couple of issues but the first big issue was Laos. (Skybolt was the other.)

Q: Before Kennedy came in, did you get this pessimistic impression of Laos from the Pentagon? Where was it coming from?

CHAPMAN: It was coming from the general atmosphere. We were so deeply involved with our military and AID missions that every happening in Southeast Asia echoed in Washington. You felt you had to react to every word Souvanna said. A climate develops in Washington that requires you to act at every step, otherwise, you are preempted by other players, and the more serious the crisis, the more players you have- which provides another element of tension. (Just as an example. In order to maintain the leadership of the Department in the conduct of affairs on Laos, I gathered every once in a while all the officers who dealt with it on a daily, operational basis. We were some thirty, and I am not talking of the dozen of others, inferiors and superiors who numbered in the hundreds, but just the immediate operational guys.)

Q: This is an example of how things get completely overplayed. I suppose those who had been there could say that this was no big deal but obviously nobody is going to listen to a relatively junior officer.

CHAPMAN: That's exactly right. Anybody who had said at that time, "Well, maybe we should talk to the communists" would have been crucified within the executive branch, in the legislative branch, and in the press. There was a degree of unanimity in this country that created a lot of pressure, and made it virtually impossible to propose alternatives. Now everybody says that Vietnam was a mistake, but at that time we marched down that road as a single man.

Q: Were there others that thought like you?

CHAPMAN: I think the junior officers felt on this specific issue of Laos that Souvanna was probably right and that we should help him find a Lao solution.

Q: And that would be?

CHAPMAN: Compromise with the Pathet Lao. But this coup was important. The one by Captain Kong Le in June of 1960. He ousted the Sananikone government which he considered corrupt and asked Souvanna to become Prime Minister. So this made everybody uncomfortable - a young captain revolting and choosing Souvanna. Souvanna was again talking peace among the Lao, bringing all the factions together. Win Brown said that he was right and that he was the only one who could put the show together again. And in Washington, people were saying Win Brown is a traitor and Souvanna is dangerous, he wants to compromise with Communists. He is going to lead us down the road and the Pathet Lao are going to take over. Emotions ran very high here.

One of the great regrets I have in my career was that unbeknownst to me, and I was then the Laos desk officer, a high-level DOD mission was sent to northeast Thailand. They went there to see Colonel Phoumi Nosavan who was in south Laos in dissidence against Souvanna Phouma. They promised Phoumi gold and US support.

Q: Good God.

CHAPMAN: Contrary to everything we had told Souvanna. To this day I believe it was one of the more shameful acts of this government.

Q: This was not a Pentagon operation.

CHAPMAN: It was approved by the President.

Q: This was the Eisenhower ...

CHAPMAN: It reflected the reality of the views in this town much more than I did.

Q: What happened in the operation?

CHAPMAN: Phoumi took Vientiane by force, bombed it including our embassy, among other places and took over the government.

Q: When did this happen?

CHAPMAN: August 1960.

Q: How did we react to that?

CHAPMAN: He was our boy but he was a disaster. He was corrupt and a rather limited man. It took some months before he could be eased out of position and sent as military attaché to Bangkok. He was part Thai and had some family there.

Q: We organized a coup against Souvanna?

CHAPMAN: We supported Phoumi, who attacked Vientiane.

Q: What were we getting out of our embassy?

CHAPMAN: From the embassy we had Win Brown who was saying Souvanna is right and Phoumi is wrong.

Q: How come Win Brown lasted. Why wasn't he just yanked out?

CHAPMAN: Because he was proved right in the long run.

Q: But at the time?

CHAPMAN: He was a very disciplined officer and he and Jeff Parsons were very close friends. It was a very painful moment.

Q: What happened then?

CHAPMAN: What happened was that there was a great deal of uncertainty for some months. Finally Kennedy came in and Harriman was made Assistant Secretary for the Far East. Harriman met Souvanna in India and took a good measure of the man and helped bring him back.

Q: Let's talk about Kennedy. One of the first sights I had of him was sitting with a map of Laos on television explaining where this country of three million people was.

CHAPMAN: This was the front line between the Free World and the communist world. There was instability in the country and therefore the fear that the Pathet Lao would take advantage of the situation, and break the front.

Q: You were an experienced desk officer. Were you able to get across to the Kennedy administration how you felt?

CHAPMAN: It was done beyond me. I don't know how the Kennedy Administration was briefed on Laos, frankly. I know I wrote some long papers.

Q: Kennedy became renowned later for talking with desk officers.

CHAPMAN: Not this one, but he did take me to Key West. With MacMillan.

Q: And Averell Harriman?

CHAPMAN: Harriman was the one who turned this around.

Q: Did you have much to do with him?

CHAPMAN: Not very much because I left the desk not too many weeks after he took over and I was on the Vietnam Task Force that was being organized at that time. I had gotten married in April 1960, and working twelve hour days was not ideal under the circumstance. So I left the desk in 1961 and joined the Vietnam Task Force.
There was a growing problem there; the north Vietnamese had launched an offensive against the south the previous winter and the situation was deteriorating.

Q: Can you describe your trip to Key West with Kennedy. What did you do?

CHAPMAN: I was a note taker. I had a hard time hearing MacMillan who spoke through his heavy mustache and dropped his words on the table. Essentially there was an agreement to work towards the reconciliation of the anti-communist Lao factions, and support Souvanna as leader. The Europeans were always more favorably disposed towards Souvanna.

Q: The British have never been much of a player there, so why the meeting?

CHAPMAN: They weren't. But the British have always known how to work this town, how to work with Americans. In embassies abroad they have always been close to the American embassies because they speak the same language, they understand the American perspective and they add their own intelligent views to our own. They are very professional and for us Americans, friends like that are always very useful. It extends the range of our reporting and the knowledge of a society, and they are very professional colleagues. Canadians are very good also. But world wide, the British are certainly the best diplomats that I have dealt with.

Q: What about this task force? What were you doing?

CHAPMAN: I was one of a growing number of officers on the Vietnam Task Force because there was a growing problem in that country. This was the winter of 1961. Hanoi had reopened the war in the south. There was a growing number of incidents. So we got more involved in Vietnam.

Q: You were there from 1961-62. How did the officers feel about Vietnam.

CHAPMAN: There was no real dissent, no real dissent. This is the great tragedy of Vietnam, that at no point did anyone suggest alternative policies nor could we easily disengage ourselves from Vietnam. I don't know when we could have disengaged without shaking our alliances throughout the world. When a situation becomes worse and the United States pulls back, this seeming backing-off a commitment causes great anxiety for Koreans, Europeans, Iranians. I think all of us recognized that. We tend to the overkill, and we made an enormous effort in Vietnam, committed enormous resources, and rather than take a more distant view and build up the Vietnamese forces and say, "We'll do the best we can. We'll deliver the guns and the money, but if you can't hack it, that's it; we have done our best."
I tried one initiative which to this day I think had some merits. To launch a proposal to neutralize Laos and Cambodia (I didn't dare say South Vietnam) under international supervision with rather large international forces in those two countries. With the thought of creating a neutral barrier between Communist China and Vietnam on one side, and Thailand and the Free World on the other. I should have persevered more and pushed it to a higher level. But it got shot down right away.

Q: Was neutral still a bad word?

CHAPMAN: Yes, yes it was. Dulles had said it. To be neutral in the world is to be immoral. It was the one initiative that I took that to this day I think had some merits. I don't think it had a chance in hell. If it had been accepted in the State Department, it would have been killed by the Pentagon, the Congress and the press.

Q: In 1964 you went to Luxembourg.

CHAPMAN: From 1962-1963, I was in charge of the Far East Branch of Personnel, responsible for assigning both clerical staff and officers to the area. It turned out to be a wonderful assignment. It gave me a better understanding of the workings of the Department than any other I have had. And it left me with a very good feeling about the assignment process. All the branch chiefs met once a week and decided on all individual assignments world-wide. It was efficient because the process was clear and it was fair, because much time was devoted to individual cases, contrary to the impression that has unfortunately developed in the Service.

From 1963 to 1964, I went to the National War College, a very good experience. I chose Luxembourg for my next assignment because that was the seat of The High Authority of The Coal and Steel Community, the first in the construction of Europe. I still consider that

the European Community was the one creative idea that came out of World War II. It has changed history. I had read up on it and was interested to take a closer look at it.

In terms of career, it was not a very intelligent move because by the time I reached Luxembourg the High Authority was in its dying days. It had fulfilled its basic functions and its only future was to be integrated into the larger framework of the European Economic Community in Brussels. So I didn't get much scope for activity and I was glad to be transferred a year and a half later to the international staff of NATO. By then, Ambassador Jack Tuthill and everyone else recognized that there was not much going on in Luxembourg. The Europeans had decided to fuse the High Authority into the European Community. The outstanding questions before the organization were largely administrative- questions of personnel, assignments and division of jobs among the different nationalities, the allocation of the various elements of the Authority between Luxembourg and Brussels. The fusion took three years to be resolved.

Q: Then in the international side of NATO. I have you there from 1966 to 68. Could you explain what you did.

CHAPMAN: I had the longest title of my career. I was Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Information. The Assistant Secretary was German, Joachim Jaenike, who served just below the Secretary General. The Directorate had about a dozen officers at the Counselor level from various nationalities.

On the political affairs side, we chaired the many political committees, the committee system being the heart of the workings of NATO. This is where the fifteen member countries could on a regular basis compare notes on what was going on in the world and what each country was doing. The political aspect of NATO has never been sufficiently appreciated. It provided , and provides today at a time of extraordinary change, a mechanism for the allies to remain currently informed and moving in the same direction. It remains a very important function- one that historically has never been so successfully tried over so many years.

We were also responsible for a very large information effort with about a hundred people. Interestingly enough, while all fifteen governments in NATO actively supported NATO, politically they felt very vulnerable at home with their public opinion. The heart of the matter was that all governments were under great domestic pressure to do more on the social side of their societies. Defense appeared to public opinion, even in the US, to take resources away from other purposes. All the governments therefore considered that this information effort was essential. So we had a big program. Busloads of people came to NATO every week and we gave them lectures and pamphlets and booklets, all sorts of literature and distributed widely information materials of all sorts.

Q: Who did you consider to be target groups? What countries or types of people were you aiming at?

CHAPMAN: Probably it was mostly the academic world. Students and teachers, grade schools to universities. But many other groups came through.

Q: The same kind of effort that has been made with the United Nations.

CHAPMAN: That's exactly right.

In 1967 De Gaulle threw out the military from France and the Council decided to move the entire organization to Brussels. I felt then and I feel now that had NATO been as fragile as it was perceived by governments, it would have broken up at that time. In fact the move from Paris to Brussels was remarkably well done. We closed our offices on a Friday in Paris and reopened on the following Monday in Brussels. Without missing a committee meeting.

Q: What was the feeling among the staff towards the French?

CHAPMAN: A lot of bitterness.

Q: How about with the French among you.

CHAPMAN: Our French colleagues were very embarrassed and of course we avoided making an issue of it with them. They were very unhappy and we had a lot of sympathy for them because it was a very difficult moment. They thought of NATO the way we did, as essential. De Gaulle was playing a political game. In fact while the French military was out of the command structure, they nevertheless retained a very close liaison. To this day it is so close that it is ludicrous for France to remain outside the military structure.

Q: So there wasn't any real break then.

CHAPMAN: There was a real moment of uncertainty when it could have broken up. And if one country had sad, "Well yes we too want to take our distances from the organization," I think it could have started the unraveling of NATO.

Q: Did you have any feeling that other countries' leaders were thinking about this at the time?

CHAPMAN: The revelation was that despite the governments' anxieties regarding public opinion, they all stuck together very firmly. This was the best evidence that NATO mattered to Western Europe.

Q: Do you think de Gaulle was surprised at this or had he counted on it?

CHAPMAN: I think he counted on it. He would not have made his decision if it would have broken the alliance apart.

Q: That would have left France isolated with Germany right there.

CHAPMAN: With Germany and Russia. De Gaulle was very realistic about the Soviet Union. In fact, allowing his military to work very closely with the allies was pretty good evidence and France remained in the Alliance Council. So it was a charade for domestic purposes.

Q: How did you feel about Greece and Turkey?

CHAPMAN: All of us felt that NATO provided a forum where countries like Greece and Turkey which could not talk to each other directly might find a way of talking with each other privately. In fact over the years, this is what happened. The Greek and Turkish Ambassadors maintained civil relations and were able to meet quietly whenever that was necessary.

You asked about the Greeks and Turks. In the political section, of which I was Deputy Assistant Secretary General, we had about twelve officers at the consular level, and there was one Greek and one Turk. In that context we all worked amicably and cooperatively. The Secretary-General also headed a Greek/Turkish Task Force to bring together quietly in the confines of NATO, the Greeks and Turks to resolve their mutual issues, and to provide a mechanism to coordinate allied aid to Turkey and Greece. To this day, I believe that NATO has fulfilled an important function in mediating the emotional relationship between these two countries.

Q: Please talk about your experience at the time, from 1966 to 1968. How political was NATO as opposed to military. We're talking about NATO and there has been the break up of eastern Europe, now being a much more political instrument much more than the Common Market.

CHAPMAN: It was both. It was created to organize a common defense against the perceived Soviet threat. But it was governed by a political Council from the fourteen member countries. Under the Council there was a variety of committees that enabled the member countries to exchange information on developments throughout the world. For instance, there was an annual meeting of experts on the Middle East, on Africa, Latin America and the Far East. So there was a continuing effort to exchange information and to coordinate policies.

Q: At that time did you see a difference between it and the move towards the Common Market?

CHAPMAN: NATO was responsible for maintaining a common defense towards the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and exchanging information relevant to this responsibility. The Common Market was an effort of nine and then twelve European countries to develop a market without barriers to trade and exchanges, a common economic base on which to build political unity. The work of NATO and of the Community went forward in parallel, and in a deep sense, the two efforts were complimentary: one providing

a secure environment within which the other could build a new community. From the beginning of its creation, the US encouraged the European unification movement.

We perceive to this day that Western European unity would contain the differences and tensions among the European states that had led to two world wars in this century, and, would offer a real counter weight to Russia.

Q: How serious did you regard the Soviet Union as a military threat.

CHAPMAN: There was unanimity that the Soviet Union was threatening and if the West lowered its guard, that the Soviets would push. Such a push need not be an all out military aggression. The Soviets could have squeezed Berlin which was well within Eastern Germany. If Berlin had been squeezed to the point of being neutralized, most of us were convinced that West Germany would seek an accommodation with Moscow. That would have broken up the Western Alliance.

Q: What was there about Berlin?

CHAPMAN: For the Germans Berlin was a highly emotional and real symbol. Bonn made, over the years, enormous efforts to maintain the vitality and viability of Western Berlin.

The German government organized trips for foreign diplomats to visit Berlin for two or three days at a time, just to show their allies the reality of the city. We would be received by the Mayor of West Berlin and lectured, and allowed to visit the city freely. The West Germans made a very large effort to maintain the economy of West Berlin in order to anchor the young people there. There was the fear that the young people would leave and drain West Berlin of its vitality. This effort was very successful.

Q: Was there unanimity that if the Soviets continued to squeeze, that we would respond up to and including all out war?

CHAPMAN: There was unanimity that we would resist any Soviet effort against Berlin. In 1947 the Soviets tried to block and isolate West Berlin which was only saved through an enormous airlift effort.

Q: But in the '60s did you perceive that we were ready to use force to get to Berlin.

CHAPMAN: In 1961, when Khrushchev began to threaten, Kennedy sent a regiment to West Berlin and called up some reserves. He very clearly showed that we were prepared to make an important military effort to counter any attack on Berlin.

Q: How did the people within NATO view Vietnam?

CHAPMAN: We had expert groups that would compare notes on all areas of the globe, but NATO did not discuss political matters outside the treaty areas. It was always a point of

contention. We sought to broaden the range of discussion NATO held, NATO at the council level, but this view was resisted particularly by the French. There also was not much enthusiasm among the others to get NATO involved with the Middle East, for instance, Vietnam or Latin America.

I think what dominated the European reaction to Vietnam was a fear that we were getting, this was 1968, we were getting absorbed by Vietnam. There was the fear that this might be at the expense of NATO and our interest and support of NATO. In fact, some US troops were taken out of NATO and sent to Vietnam.

Q: Were you getting any reaction, maybe not official reaction, in the corridors or elsewhere? Was there disquiet about our involvement?

CHAPMAN: Oh yes, clearly. There was a clear sense that we were bogged down in Vietnam at the expense of our effort in Europe.

Q: How would you rate the country's commitment to NATO?

CHAPMAN: I think among the governments there was a unanimous feeling in considering NATO an essential organization for the maintenance of peace in Europe, to protect Western Europe. The best evidence was when de Gaulle threw the NATO military out of France, that the council transferred its offices from Paris to Brussels over one weekend and continued to operate right long. If there had been any doubts about NATO, any country that did not value the organization, that was the moment they could have broken free. The French left the military but in fact remained very active in the council and kept very close liaison with the military.

Q: How about the Canadians? What role did they play?

CHAPMAN: One remarkable aspect of NATO was the quality of the representatives the countries sent there. They were a very high class of people. The ambassadors had very well developed personalities, some of them with real political power at home. Harlan Cleveland was our Ambassador and a very remarkable one. He had enormous energy: the American mission which was by far the largest regularly worked later than any other and generated much of the drive of the organization, drive and ideas. Cleveland in particular had a very creative mind. Phil Farley, the DCM, was also an officer of considerable talents and political imagination.

Q: You left there in 1968 and came back to the Department. What were you doing?

CHAPMAN: In 1968 I came back to the Office of Political and Military Affairs that was transformed into a Bureau within two or three months of my arrival. I was asked to create a new office in that bureau, the Office of Military Assistance and Arms Sales. Up until then, the State Department had a Special Assistant to the Under Secretary of Political Affairs to oversee military assistance and arms sales and indeed military strategy generally. There

was an imbalance between State and Defense, with State having a very weak organization to deal with a vast range of subjects while Defense had an entire division ISA (International Security
Administration).

Q: Which was their little State Department.

CHAPMAN: Which was their little State Department and they had desk officers for every country and region. It was a very strong organization with very competent people both military and civilian. A few FSOs also served there but the military were very good people. The State Department had no organization to interface with ISA.
So eventually, this imbalance was corrected by the creation of the Bureau of Political and Military Affairs in 1969. Phil Farley was its first Director. He asked me to organize this new office to provide a political framework around these arms transfer programs. These were world-wide programs at a time when the sales were running about $4 billion and grant assistance at nearly $800 million. These were not small matters.

I spent five years in that job and I like to think organized the office, developed the policies, established it in the bureaucracy, and insured that it functioned effectively. Bureaucratic momentum took over, and the office divided into two offices- one for planning and one for implementation. I had five officers in the beginning, and at the end, after five years, between the two offices, there were about twenty-five.
It was a very interesting perspective to see how important the military supply relationship was with many countries. I was amazed how, on the occasion of visits by prime ministers and presidents and foreign and defense ministers and kings etc, the most senior political leaders of most countries, the military supply relationship, military assistance and arms sales, was at the top of their agendas in discussions with the President and Secretary of State.

Q: What was your general impression of the desire on the part of the military to sell arms?

CHAPMAN: There had been a directive from MacNamara in the early '60s, to push sales as a way of helping out our trade balance, which was even then a matter of concern. By the end of 1969, many of us were troubled by a policy that had, in certain areas, destabilizing effects. One of the efforts of the Bureau and certainly one I felt strongly about was to dampen down this push for sales, and indeed I also sought to reduce grant military assistance because I thought that in many countries it encouraged the maintenance of defense establishments those countries really could not afford. But overall, as a matter of generality, what this interest in arms revealed was the sense of insecurity felt worldwide. Not just against communism, but world-wide, among neighbors. In Latin America, Brazil, Argentina and Chile, for example. I thought Latin America as a particular egregious place in that it was difficult to conceive scenarios where there was a need for very sophisticated weapons at a time when the economic situation in many countries was not of the best. These were, we thought, misspent resources. So we tried to reduce the level of armaments

going to these impoverished countries. Our greatest success was in keeping the F-4 Phantom (the hottest fighter plane around at that time) out of Latin America.
The problem is that you provide one of these weapon systems to Brazil for instance and immediately Chile and Argentina want it. You provide to El Salvador, one of the Central American countries, another fighter plane with less potency, but all the other Central American countries want it.

Q: Were these weapon systems a way gaining friendships?

CHAPMAN: I think it is a caricature of it. It was asked by the political leadership of those countries, and the one that was the most difficult was the Shah of Iran. He really wanted to build up his forces into one of the major military powers of the world, second only to the Soviet Union and the United States. By the time of the revolution, in 1979, he had units that were better equipped than American units. For instance, in helicopters. I felt, and I was not alone, that it was a terrible waste of resources for that country.

At one point, I tried to question one of the requests that had been put in for a very expensive and sophisticated type of equipment that required very well technically trained people. One of the concerns I've always had is by providing very sophisticated weapons, we drain from the society some of the best educated and ablest people to maintain and operate these weapon systems. The Iranian ambassador happened to be an old friend of mine and invited me to lunch to sound me out. I very gingerly explained some of my reservations. Well he reported this back to Tehran and within a matter of days, I got a rocket back from the American Ambassador who had been approached by the Shah and the Shah had told him, "What is this bureaucracy that is trying to holdup my request?"

Q: I have had interviews with people who had been at our embassy and said that Nixon and Kissinger through there ...

CHAPMAN: had given a blank check to the Shah.

Q: Basically, don't question anything. Let them have it.

CHAPMAN: That is exactly right.

Q: I have to say that within the bureaucracy as a foreign service officer I had nothing to do with this. I was thinking, "Are we out of our minds, dumping all this stuff in that country?"

CHAPMAN: Nixon and Kissinger went farther than any other administration, but the fact is that seven Presidents of the United States rolled dead in front of requests from the Shah for over thirty years. The argument was made that we had to maintain the confidence of the Shah, we had to maintain a relationship with him, help build Iran into a strong country, and in any event, if we didn't sell him these widgets, the Shah would go to England, France and the Soviet Union for his military supplies. And in fact, he did. This is the bind in which we found ourselves.

Beyond all strategic and political considerations, the French and British had military industries that could not be sustained by just their internal markets. They had to export. Israel also needed to export certain types of military equipment. These countries- and others later on, Brazil, China, had to export and they made big efforts in this regard. Anywhere we said, "Well I don't think they should have this weapon system", the country would go to Paris or London and get it. The French went so far in Latin America as to send aircraft carriers bearing all their wares, and put on big displays. By the '60s we no longer controlled the arms trade.

Q: Were you looking at this as business or policy.

CHAPMAN: I was looking at it as policy, because I thought in many places it heightened tensions, it diverted resources from more important items, like the building of the economies of underdeveloped countries. It diverted the talents of human resources, and I thought this was a bad allocation of resources in many countries.

I sought very hard to make people think about the consequences of providing major weapons systems. One I developed a questionnaire to force people to analyze the economic consequences for providing weapons. Because once you have a widget, you have to maintain it. It is expensive. And to show how that would be maintained by the economy of a recipient country.

Q: Were you a gadfly?

CHAPMAN: The desks at State and at the Pentagon were pretty well saying, "This is what the country wants, this is what it should get." I was very much of a gadfly, getting people to think about it.

Q: What about the Pentagon and ISA?

CHAPMAN: The ones I dealt with didn't question these requests very much. They would just shrug their shoulders. After all, the recommendations on the level of support came from the MAAG's.

Q: Weren't there two minds to this. On the one hand you don't want to have to fight against your own weaponry if relations go wrong, as in the case of the Persian Gulf, and on the other hand a savings in quantity.

CHAPMAN: That's exactly right. In fact the military opinion was much more nuance than divided. You had military officers who were very responsible and understood very well the consequences of some of these arms transfers. You had the services, for instance the Air Force, who had a very real interest in selling some of their planes because it meant that the unit cost of the airplane went down as they were sold abroad. This was a very real factor. But in ISA where you had serving officers who were detached from the services, you had a

more dispassionate point of view. But the Pentagon as an institution, was interested in maintaining good relationships with foreign military establishments through, among other things, the sale of weapon systems. Moreover, the Pentagon had an economic interest in the sale of major systems because as I said it brought down the prices of their systems but also provided for a long-term relationship through the needs to provide maintenance, including spare parts.

Q: What was the problem with spare parts?

CHAPMAN: One of the things I was pushing for was to shift from grant to sales, in order to confront countries like Greece with the question of the cost of these systems. When you give something to someone for free, it's fine and dandy, but there is no appreciation of the impact on the local economy. But when you have to buy something, it is another matter. I made a special effort to shift from grants to sales.

Q: How did we view Greece and Turkey. It was obvious from over there that the Greeks had only one thing in mind. A war with Turkey. The Turks had to think in broader terms. How did we feel about that?

CHAPMAN: We didn't like the automatic formula of providing eight to Turkey and five to Greece. But we were not very successful in breaking that. I think the effort in this area was to maintain both those countries first of all as able allies of NATO, and secondly to dampen down their fears and hatred of each other.

I can't remember the specific about spare parts. But overall the policy we were trying to push was to make countries responsible for their military defense.

Q: Were you there when they just cut off arms to the Turks, in 1974?

CHAPMAN: No I had just left there.

Q: This was the period of Henry Kissinger. Was there a strong hand coming out of the White House?

CHAPMAN: Oh yes. He considered military assistance and arms sales as an important tool of overall diplomacy. But he did not appreciate some of the consequences of some of the decisions. The most dramatic was the decision to provide major help to support the Cambodians when Lol Nol broke away in 1970. Sihanouk was traveling in Moscow and Lol Nol took over the government. The decision was made to support him and to divert a hundred to two hundred million dollars worth of assistance to support him. That had to be gotten from all of the other country programs. So we had to scrub the whole military assistance program worldwide, to come up with the sum. I went to Alex Johnson (the under secretary for political affairs), and said, "This is the decision but these are the consequences. It is going to create a lot of problems with the Philippines and other countries." But that's something that Kissinger considered as a bureaucratic problem and

not a political one. Yet it did have political consequences, in terms of our relations with a lot of countries, Korea for instance. Philippines.

Q: Were the desks screaming to you?

CHAPMAN: Oh yes. But I had a pretty good command of these programs and I was able to control all the desks pretty well.

Q: Someone looking at this bureaucratically they would look to your office.

CHAPMAN: That's right.

Q: What about Israel? We didn't provide the weapons for the 67 war, but afterwards.

CHAPMAN: Israel, even then, was treated with profound cynicism. Because it was all handled at a very senior level. And what the Israelis wanted they got, pretty well. In 1969 Secretary of State Rogers and Sisco, the Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East, tried to limit the airplanes to Israel. It was called the Rogers Plan and immediately became a big emotional issue. Finally Israel got what it wanted.

Q: You were there during the 1973 war, weren't you?

CHAPMAN: And this was handled as a supply problem for the Pentagon. It was completely outside any policy framework. We were dealing with regular programs, and what happened in 1973 was a crisis. The decision was taken to the White House and the Pentagon delivered the weapons.

Q: Were you getting any reverberations. I understand the military was very unhappy ..

CHAPMAN: Because they were drawing down from their own inventories to give to Israel. The hottest and latest weapons.

Q: State had no influence.

CHAPMAN: No. The Secretary was for it. The Administration made the decision. There was no choice.

Q: Any concern of selling arms and creating peace.

CHAPMAN: I felt quite comfortable with that issue because I don't think that absence of arms necessarily leads to peace. I think it is very important in many cases to remain well armed. As for instance in Western Europe.

I think we said at the beginning that our generation has been branded with the memory of the 1930s and World War II. That World War II could have been avoided if the Western

democracies had been stronger, firmer and better armed. So I had no problem with general policy of arms transfers. It was a matter of providing appropriate arms to given countries. I had no problems providing arms to Israel, within certain limits, Greece and Turkey, Korea, but we had limited budgets and you had to do it judiciously. I had more problems with Latin America, where it was difficult to make a case that standing armies were really essential.

Q: In many ways they seem to be used internally if for nothing else, to provide a way up for lower and middle classes.

CHAPMAN: That's exactly right. It was a social mobility force. One other factor that did weigh with me, I confess, that is very seldom brought out, is that it is very easy from a desk in a nice office to say, "Well we won't sell arms to x, y and z countries," but the consequences of such a decision may mean closing down a factory in this country. Putting workers out of work. To my mind it was a very real issue to make a decision like that, knowing that the requesting countries could go to England and France and some to the Soviet Union to get what they wanted.

I think a rather dramatic example of this is the recent example of Saudi Arabia. We hemmed and hawed so long in providing reconnaissance airplanes to Saudi Arabia, that they got tired and went to England. And we just passed up a $35 billion contract. $35 billion could keep quite a few American workers working. So that was a factor that added to the difficulty of making decisions.

Q: You then moved to a difficult job. You left in 1974.

CHAPMAN: I left the political-military, and spent one year as director of regional affairs in the Bureau of Far East and Pacific. It was a kind of catch all office. It had some very good officers and it was very pleasant. In my view and as I told the new assistant secretary, a businessman from Chicago, a very good man, who was later ambassador to Japan, when he came on board that he could do away with this office if he wanted to, but what was important was that this office be directly related to his own, as a kind of support office.

In my time there, I guess the greatest accomplishment was to have written and prepared the study to do away with SEATO, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, based in Thailand, that was created in 1954, when the Geneva Agreement brought an end to the war in Vietnam with the French.

This was a Dulles creation, part of his worldwide creation of military blocs in order to contain the communists. We all felt that by 1974 that organization had really run its course. It was not serving much of a purpose any more. We wrote the basic papers on that. The one who worked most directly and effectively on those papers was Harriet Isom, who is now our ambassador in Africa somewhere. A first class officer.

We also dealt with military assistance and arms sales, regional problems, UN affairs, drugs, it was a catch all office covering the entire Far east and Pacific Basin. Very interesting.

Q: Then you went on to Laos.

CHAPMAN: I returned to Laos as DCM in June 1974. My family stayed until June 1975, and I, until August 1975.

Q: What was the situation?

CHAPMAN: The ambassador was Charlie Whitehouse. The situation was that we had a very large AID mission, we had a very large military assistance program although it was not called that. The situation was very, very tense and uncertain. There was a national government which included the Pathet Lao under Souvanna Phouma. I had been in Laos fifteen years before and Vientiane had grown. It was a much more tense situation. You couldn't travel around the country. You were pretty well confined to Vientiane. We could fly up to the northeast, to the Meo country, the Hmong, the tribes that lived on top of the mountains between Vientiane and Vietnam, and fought the Vietnamese all those years. We were supplying them and the question of supplies was a very major subject. We had a large AID mission that was very active, road building, providing medical supplies and education, we developed textbooks in Lao and a whole educational system. We built schools. We trained agriculturalists. We sought to help the Lao raise their food supply by improving and diversifying their crops. The effort put into that little country by the United States over thirty years was really enormous.

SIDE TWO

Q: In Laos did you see any progress from when you were there before, in terms of our effectiveness?

CHAPMAN: The results were a mixed bag. It is a very small fragile society, and not very energetic. There were some very real accomplishments. Schools had been built, hospitals had been built. There was one Western-trained doctor in 1958-59, now there were a hundred by the time I got back. That is real progress. The young people were better educated, coming back from abroad and taking senior positions in the administration, but significantly, at one of the first dinner parties that Ambassador Whitehouse gave for me, attended by military officers, I knew all the guests from about fifteen years before. They hadn't changed, the colonels or the generals. The great families had remained in power. It was the same cast of characters. Things don't change even within the Pathet Lao, some of the great families were represented.
It was very clear that an independent Laos was dependent upon the support and active involvement of the United States; that the day we weakened that support the Vietnamese who were in the eastern part of Laos in force, would just take over through the Pathet Lao. Indeed this is what happened.

Charlie Whitehouse left for reassignment at the beginning of April, on April 15 Phnom Penh fell to the Khmer Rouge, on April 30, Saigon fell, and on May lst, the following day, there were large demonstrations in Vientiane against the nationalist ministers and generals in the government, demanding they be thrown out. I immediately got the country team to fan out all over town to try and keep the nationalist leadership steady. We pointed out that we were continuing to support them, we had large AID and other programs that we were maintaining. But fear swept the city and within ten days, the entire nationalist leadership crossed the Mekong and fled into Thailand. Except for Souvanna Phouma who stayed.

Q: While these events of spring of 1975 were taking place, what instructions did you get. How did you view what was going on?

CHAPMAN: Glumly. The problem between the United States and Laos under these circumstances was that we had played such a large role, that any indication of our being concerned, that things were going badly, that maybe we should retrench in some way, would have absolutely panicked the situation and any chance of maintaining this dual government of the Pathet Lao and the nationalists would have been finished. We would have been held responsible for the end of the independence of Laos. So we were caught in this situation. Particularly after May lst, when I was trying to encourage the non-communist leadership to stay on, assuring them that we would continue to support them, and told everyone in the American community to stay steady, and calm, and not panic. When the leadership left, the situation turned more and more sour. We started evacuating our people, first the families. There were about 800 Americans there, wives and children included, but I wanted to maintain at least the principal officers who might be able to give a degree of stability to the situation. I thought it would be very, very bad if we just pulled up stakes and left, to be viewed as the abandonment of Southeast Asia. So by the third week of May, we brought in some specially chartered planes and started getting families out, but we were at the same time continuing to have discussions with the Pathet Lao and Souvanna Phouma trying to encourage them to work with us, to continue these programs. The Pathet Lao had just come down from the hills and were, in retrospect just as anxious as we were, not knowing just what would happen. This was their first real meeting with Americans. May, June and July were very tense.

Q: Any dealings with them before this?

CHAPMAN: We had met several of the ministers who were there. But after May, while we continued to deal with Souvanna, we worked mainly with the Pathet Lao who had taken over the government. As a community, we were terribly vulnerable, and I think that one of the things that helped us get out of this terrible situation in which we found ourselves was that we were in constant touch, morning, noon, afternoon, evening and night with the Pathet Lao leadership and most particularly, Phoumi Vongvichit who was Minister of Foreign Affairs. There was sustained, continuing communication.
One lesson I brought out of that period, was that in a tense situation, it is essential to keep communications open. What is dangerous is the fear that's built up over time to the point

where the least incident can be misunderstood, misinterpreted and create a very serious crisis.

Q: What sort of instructions were you getting from Washington.

CHAPMAN: Very little and I was very grateful. This was an essentially tactical situation and I was very grateful to the State Department for not telling me how to suck eggs on the spot.

Q: In Phnom Penh and Saigon people were yanked out. Why weren't all of you?

CHAPMAN: I could have sent a telegram to Washington that said, "Situation deteriorating fast, we should evacuate all personnel and close the embassy." And Washington would have said okay.

I felt that it was important to maintain a presence in Laos. I felt that given the role the United States had played in Asia and Southeast Asia, we could not abandon ship and scurry away like a small frightened country. We were too important. I thought it was important to stay there to the extent possible. And if there is an embassy today in Vientiane, it is because we made that decision at that time.

Q: I find it interesting because the view of Southeast Asia was as a whole unit and if two of the capitals fall, very obviously there was nothing to stop anybody from taking over in Vientiane. I would have thought there was a lot of pressure to get Americans out.

CHAPMAN: We were under a lot of pressure to get Americans out. And I wanted to retreat on an orderly basis. I did not want to appear that we were turning tail and fleeing. We managed to get out ... planes came in and we got out many of our people by air and many simply drove their cars out. All on a more or less orderly basis. To me, that was important.

Q: Were you having trouble from your staff?

CHAPMAN: They were pretty steady on the whole. In fact, I was very proud at the way the Americans reacted: there was no hysteria and all remained on the job. There was understandably a lot of bitterness among the AID people who had worked very hard to help the Lao and many felt that we were being treated very poorly. There were some nasty reactions, but by and large the American community stayed very steady and disciplined.

Q: How did they feel that they were being treated poorly?

CHAPMAN: They felt that they had worked very hard to help the Lao and now they were being thrown out of the country, with the Pathet Lao showing no interest in pursuing programs that we had developed over years.

Q: How did you phase out?

CHAPMAN: We were in continuous discussions with the Pathet Lao leadership to see if the aid programs that had been elaborated over the years, at great cost, could not be salvaged for the benefit of Laos. For instance, we had an entire warehouse full of medicine. There was a very large depot of earth moving and road building equipment. There were programs in progress. It was to no avail. The Pathet Lao held to the philosophy that politics primes all and that all these matters were technical and of secondary interest.

In the end, after a dramatic capture of our aid compound by so called students and a fourteen hour confrontation between myself escorted by Stephen Johnson, a young political officer who spoke Lao, and a mob of several hundred "students', and after other varied happenings, we decided that the Pathet Lao were simply not willing to pursue normal relations. Finally, one morning in June I went to the office of the Minister of Economic Affairs with whom we had been negotiating over aid, and just put down on his table a box full of keys- all the keys we had of the aid compound. He had wanted to have a big, symbolic ceremony of turning over all our assets to the government, but given their unwillingness to enter into any meaningful dialogue or to recognize that we had laws prescribing the disposition of assets, we left it all, noting that our laws were being violated.

From the beginning of May I had a country team meeting every morning to make certain there was complete communication and coordination among ourselves.

Q: Who was on the country team?

CHAPMAN: There was General Round who was the senior military officer, head of the MAAG and senior Attaché. All told we were half a dozen.

Q: Basically, AID, CIA.

CHAPMAN: AID, CIA, USIA. We met every morning at 9:00 am, and go over exactly where we were. Everything was going so fast. Then each would carry out the decisions in his own mission. It was mainly a question of phasing down our operations and coordinating our actions.

Q: I find it very interesting that Washington was letting you alone in all of this.

CHAPMAN: Their concern was for the safety of Americans and that's why we accelerated the evacuation by air and by car. Washington put a lot of pressure on me to get my wife and three children out. They were wonderfully steady. We did not feel that as the senior family we could leave before all others had left safely. They finally left, the last family to leave, at the beginning of June, following a particularly nasty rocket from Washington.

At the beginning of June, June 2nd, Phil Habib who was then Assistant Secretary for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, came to take a look at the situation. I told him that we had to stay

calm, withdraw to the extent necessary, try to maintain working relations with the government, and avoid aggravating fears. His response was, "Don't be a cowboy." He came away sensing that we could maintain relations with the Pathet Lao government and that it was useful to keep an embassy there.

Q: You were in charge of quite an operation.

CHAPMAN: I was four years in World War II as a fighter pilot and I have never been so steadily frightened as in those three months, May, June and July. We were absolutely defenseless as a community. With all the arms lying around Southeast Asia, one kook tossing a grenade could have created a very ugly situation. In the event, we got away sort of whole.

Q: Why did the Laotian communist side act different than Vietnam.

CHAPMAN: Because it had been a completely different situation. The Pathet Lao had been in the government with the nationalists; there was not a war situation, as in Cambodia and as in Vietnam. Vietnam was conquered militarily. Phnom Penh was conquered militarily. In Vientiane the Pathet Lao were there already and simply took over completely when the nationalist leadership left. There was no fighting, there was no battle. It was a completely different situation.

Q: What happened as far as our work there?

CHAPMAN: Maintaining a presence. We were down to a dozen people from eight hundred. Then, at the beginning of August, Tom Corcoran came, to relieve me. He arrived one morning and I left the same afternoon.

Nothing illustrates better the tensions of the moment than this change of Chargé. We didn't know what the reaction would be. We thought that they might try to keep me. So we made the relief in the most expeditious and quiet manner possible. But it was a very tense time.

The experience of dismantling the American mission in Vientiane was very illuminating. I must say, one felt that the Pathet Lao had a point when they said that the United States was a state within a state in Laos. We had a police force of about 5 or 600 men, with night sticks to protect the Americans in the compounds. We had a fire department with a couple of fire trucks. We had an infirmary, with a doctor and nurse. We had an independent telephone system connecting all houses and offices. We had an independent power generation capability all over town. We had all the elements of a government for our community. When you take that apart, you measure the extent of the effort.

Q: How big had it been?

CHAPMAN: We had had 800 people.

Q: This is an unclassified interview but how about the CIA efforts.

CHAPMAN: I don't like to speak too much about it because it was very highly classified. Let's say it was a very large effort, to the point that you looked at events and you wondered whether it was authentically generated by the society or whether it was a CIA generated operation.

Q: I spent eighteen months in Vietnam between 1969-70. I came away with the feeling that we don't go in and try and win a country very well. We tend to take over and cause more problems than ... I don't think we are very good at this. Maybe nobody is.

CHAPMAN: To this day I find it difficult to pass a judgement. In 1958-59 most of us felt that the effort being put in was not related to the strength and absorptive capabilities of the society. We were putting much too much weight on these fragile societies. At the same time the reason for this effort was the Sino-Soviet bloc, which was indeed threatening and there were communist insurgencies in Thailand and in Malaysia and in the Philippines. North Vietnam was very vigorous and communist. Adding everything up it was a very threatening situation. If we could have made a lesser effort and if we had let the communists take over earlier, what the impact would have been on Thailand and Malaysia is uncertain. I thought the domino theory was justified. I still think so today. So once we became involved in that kind of effort I don't know a time when we could have reduced it without seeming to abandon these countries with consequences that would have been felt worldwide. When we left Saigon under those dramatic circumstances in 1975, there was a shudder around the world. There was real concern. In fact European attitudes changed after that.

Q: I was in Korea later on, and they too were looking differently at the US. You moved back from a very dangerous situation to one that sounds quite a change.

CHAPMAN: It was a bitter moment, I confess. I came back after three months when I thought that I had accomplished a good deal, maybe in a negative sense, but at least had kept the American flag planted in Southeast Asia, and to a degree had contributed to reassuring the Asians that we were not abandoning them. As it was, I could have come back from anywhere. Only two people went out of their way to welcome me back to the department. Two lawyers took me to lunch.

Q: I find that astounding.

CHAPMAN: Absolutely. I went around the department just to say thank you for having supported us, for not sending detailed instructions, and giving me a free hand. I called on everyone. No one asked me to see them.

Q: You think they wanted to forget about the whole thing?

CHAPMAN: I think in part it was that. That spring was so traumatic. Abandoning Saigon. The circumstances in which we had to leave Saigon caused such a trauma that people wanted to forget Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, on a personal basis, it was very harsh. If that happened to me who was in charge of the mission, I wondered how would my hundreds of colleagues of lesser rank be treated? Washington did not give them the time of day.

There is a lack of sensitivity. Even with all these intelligent people, the Department is like a machine. It is unthinking, unfeeling, and it lacks imagination in the management of its personnel.

Q: I have to say that I completely agree. It does not respond.

CHAPMAN: You would think that the desk officer, the deputy assistant secretary and the assistant secretary for instance might take a personal interest in people coming back from a dangerous and difficult situation.

Q: I think that at least the secretary should say, "Come on up and a job well done."

CHAPMAN: That's right. Some gesture like that.

Q: The problem really stays at a lower level because they didn't organize this. No one bothered.

CHAPMAN: No one bothered.

Q: There is a problem with the foreign service. It does not think in these terms. For all the nice people, it is a very cold blooded organization.

CHAPMAN: Finally I mentioned this to Arthur Hartman, an old friend. And his response, which I think is the right one: when all is done, only your friends really count.

Q: You came in early.

CHAPMAN: I came in early so I was out of phase with the assignment process. For about three months I sat at a desk and did nothing.

Q: Out of phase.

CHAPMAN: Out of the normal cycle. There seemed to be nothing at all. For personal reasons, with my family, I preferred to stay in Washington, after these difficult months. The children were of an age to go to school, and I therefore felt we should stay here.

There was nothing available and finally I guess Eagleburger, who was then Under Secretary for management, named me Deputy Assistant Secretary for Cultural Affairs. It turned out to be a very interesting assignment.

Q: What were you doing?

CHAPMAN: The position was a real sleeper.

I was in charge of the geographic desks and world-wide programs of the Bureau. I had a very interesting two years there. From the vantage of this Bureau, I discovered that there are hundreds of volunteer organizations throughout this country involved in international exchanges in every field you can imagine. Youth exchanges, arts exchanges, sports exchanges, scientific exchanges. You name it. There are grass-root groups everywhere in this country. Energetic, active, involved, interested groups. It is a very comforting view of the country, to have to deal with these organizations.

Q: My impression is that no other country in the world has this type of thing.

CHAPMAN: Bush calls it "points of light." I'm not enthusiastic about the term. But he is right. It is an enormous strength. Very creative. Some of these programs, I know we are all cynical FSOs but I'm convinced, do matter. The visitor program, bringing in young men and women in their '30s, or forties, to visit this country - the Leader Program it used to be called - Distinguished Visitors - is an important program; it pays off over time.

You run into Prime Ministers and all sorts of important people throughout the world who visited this country under this program years before and came away with a much better understanding of the US.

The Fulbright Program is one of the best known, Over the last forty years, it has nurtured a remarkable group of scholars from all over the world.

In the State Department, CU, as it was called, was not considered a great career advancement. Nevertheless, I found it very interesting and worthwhile. John Richardson was the Assistant Secretary. He was a Boston Brahmin, reserved, keen and self-confident. He was also a visionary, a true believer in these programs, in the whole philosophy of exchanges and he imparted a remarkable enthusiasm and energy to his bureau. It was very satisfying.

Q: How did you find the Carter Administration?

CHAPMAN: The Carter Administration decided to shift CU from the Department to USIA. Philosophically I had no difficulty with the principle. The new Assistant Secretary, a political appointee, was a curious man who had been a minister and in the '60s had been one of the radical agitators against the Vietnam war. Joe Duffey was an incompetent administrator but a very nice fellow. He was very much a political animal and spent much of his time on the telephone calling his contacts all over town, maintaining his relationship on the Hill and the White House. Although the Administration thought there would be a lot

of resistance to the move, in fact, like good soldiers, we just marched down that road and transferred CU to USIA.

It was not easy. It was a real problem, as you can imagine. You had to resettle many people. The majority in CU were civil servants but there were a few foreign service officers. All told we were about 220 in the Bureau.

But it was very satisfying work. Very constructive and peaceful. After selling arms and things like that. And very educational. You come across a whole new kind of interesting, active people you would not normally meet and organizations that you would not normally deal with.

Q: Any incidents you might think of?

CHAPMAN: I went to India as the Secretary's representative on the Indian-American Cultural Commission that had been set up some time ago to encourage exchanges between India and the United States. I found that there was some real reservations on the Indians' side regarding research done by some social scientists who had come to India and allegedly had not followed up as they promised. There was a good deal of bitterness also felt over certain American studies. And so we tried to keep the doors open for further research and see what could be done to improve the climate that had really soured in that field.

Q: Were you able to get back to those American social scientists?

CHAPMAN: The American Social Science Association was represented on the Commission by some of its very senior people. This was a very useful means of communication with the American academic community.

Another interesting point was that most countries have ministries of culture and ministries for youth. Many governments have central organizations to deal with such matters as culture, sports, youth. In this country, no one, no organization fulfills this function. No one can speak for sports, for culture. One very interesting aspect of this bureau was that it served as a communicating mechanism between the private organizations of this country that dealt in these fields and foreign government organizations and ministries.

After India I went to Syria and Algeria, to begin negotiations on cultural agreements. From our perspective, these agreements were statements of good will and intent. No one in the US government could sign a cultural agreement that would commit us to send over three concerts and two plays and whatever in the coming year. For the Syrians and Algerians, this was difficult to understand. They were prepared to undertake to receive so many professors and have such and such a level of exchanges per year. On our part, it was the first time we were talking to these people, and it was essentially an educational exercise: to explain how the United States is organized; what are the limits of United States government power and capabilities and authority. So it was a very interesting experience to translate the reality of this country and its decentralization and the limited nature of

government power. To explain the basic weaknesses of the American government to countries that had strong central governments.

Q: That brings me down to the time as an FSO trying to explain in Serbo Croatian to communist officials in Macedonia the American educational system, which is as complex as any organization as you could imagine.

Then your next assignment was one that must have been sort of interesting. That was as Deputy Chief of Mission in Paris.

CHAPMAN: That was totally pleasant.

Q: How did you get that assignment from 1978-82?

CHAPMAN: Because Arthur Hartman called me and asked me if I would take the assignment. Arthur Hartman is a friend from Saigon days. I'm very fond of him and his wife, Donna, and have great admiration for both of them.

It was a totally pleasant three years with an ambassador who was thoroughly professional and very highly regarded. Arthur Hartman is one of the most politically sensitive persons I have ever known. He has antennas, that pick the essence of situations out of the air. Very good judgement. Very broad views. A strategic thinker. Highly respected in Paris and Washington.

Q: How did he operate that embassy. That is almost always a political appointment, someone with money.

CHAPMAN: He and Donna are very culturally inclined. They genuinely love the arts, particularly music. They put a lot of effort into it and received a lot of American artists and went out virtually every night to concerts or something. So they established a climate around the embassy of being receptive to the arts and to the world of the artists. Which in France, plays big. As far as running the embassy, he left it largely to me. I ran the embassy, but Arthur always kept an eye on what he considered problems that had to be dealt with. He was also very sensitive on personnel matters. Professionally as a foreign service officer it was a fascinating job. On one side you run the embassy and at the same time, you have to maintain a presence in town so that when the ambassador leaves, the embassy doesn't become faceless. In effect, you are doing two jobs. It means thirteen to fourteen hour days every day. But it was professionally very satisfying.
We had 27 different agencies represented in the embassy. One great advantage of being the Paris Embassy was that the agencies sent, by and large, very good people. There was never a dearth of volunteers. As a result, we dealt with first class professionals in all agencies, which makes all the difference in the world, as you know.

Q: How did you find dealing with the French bureaucracy?

CHAPMAN: I let my colleagues do that. I tried to have as few operational questions to deal with as possible. Otherwise operations and contacts become layered and confused. If I were to deal with the Quai d'Orsay extensively, that would mean the political counselor would be squeezed out. It was much better to give him full rein. I had a State Department house with four servants, and I tried to provide support for my colleagues in every field, as they considered it useful and necessary. For instance, I had luncheons for senior people at the Quai to let the more junior political officers get to know them. Or when American businessmen came through, the economic and commercial officers would organize an event for their counterparts in the French government. I found this kind support for our colleagues a very good use of our rather elegant appointments.

Q: How did you find the consular operation. You had consulates all over.

CHAPMAN: It was a real problem because we were under pressure to reduce the number of consulates. The case had to be made that they served an important purpose. Very frankly, it was a stretched argument in that, although it is a very good thing to have consulates, to have an American presence around a country like France. That keeps tabs on what is going on around the countryside, the reality is that French political power remains very largely centered in Paris. However, the power of politicians remains anchored in local communities in the provinces. Typically, a French deputy spends each weekend in his department nurturing his constituencies.

It is also good to have consular affairs officers and commercial officers closer to people throughout the country. But consular posts cannot be a top priority; yet powers that be in Washington remain very attached to some of these posts, all for different reasons. The most amusing was the case of Nice. We went through a painful exercise of justifying this post, pointing out among other things that closing it would save really very little. Nevertheless, the decision was made to close it. Then, Grace Kelly wrote a Dear Ron note to President Reagan, and presto it was reopened- on a more modest scale. We lost a magnificent property in the heart of the city, and the Consulate General was reopened in a more modest setting.

Q: This happened when they tried to close Turin. Fiat wrote and you just don't close these things because there are constituencies.
CHAPMAN: Yes, and from the point of view of the local people, the Mayor of Strasbourg for instance, felt quite genuinely that closing a US consulate is a reflection on their city. (Strasbourg by the way hired a public relations firm in Washington, and for whatever reason, the Consulate General was saved.)

Q: There is the problem too, that sometimes we overload a capital. There is a world outside the capital. I speak as one consul general in Naples at one time and Rome seemed to be a world unto itself. If you want to know about Italy it wasn't enough.

CHAPMAN: The same was true in France, although perhaps not to the same degree as in Italy. France is simply one of the most centralized systems in the world.

Q: Any major issues at the time?

CHAPMAN: There was the transition of the Presidency from Giscard d'Estaing to Francois Mitterrand, as a result of the elections of 1981, which we called wrong by a hair. It was a very interesting transition, with a hard right government in Washington and a dreamy left wing government coming to power in Paris.

The great question was what sort of relationship would we have. I confess the recommendations we sent in from the embassy were to stand aloof and tough with this government to see how it would evolve. To let it define its position before we defined ours. And for once I gave the Reagan White House credit of writing, contrary to our recommendation, a very warm letter to Mitterrand, congratulating him on his election. It also came as a surprise to the L'EysÈe. I don't know how it happened, but Bush, who was Vice President, came for a get-acquainted visit. The election was held over two weekends in May-June, and Bush came on the 25th of June and made a twenty-four hour stop to call on Mitterrand. It came off very well.

The issue that had rattled Washington immediately, was the incorporation of communists in the government. But Bush managed to put this in context, and I guess was reassured by Mitterrand's firmness on the subject and the impression that Mitterrand always gives of knowing what he is doing.

I had personally one experience which illustrated the gap between the Reagan Washington and the Mitterrand Paris. Early after the legislative elections, I called on Pierre Beregovoy (who by the way is of Ukrainian background) who was responsible for the transition and who is now minister of finance, and probably the most influential Minister in the government. He received me in a small office at the headquarters of the Socialist Party, where the transition team was located. He greeted me at the door and said, "*Alors, M. Chapman, vous vous mettez dans la gueule du loup*.!" ("Well, Mr. Chapman, you are putting yourself in the mouth of the wolf!") He was persuaded that Washington viewed the Socialists as a dangerous threat, almost on par with the communists. I reassured him on that count, and we got on very well from the beginning.

One word regarding an event that received wide publicity. On November 12, 1981, a young man tried to kill me in front of my house in Paris when I was the Chare at the Embassy. He failed. This attempt was the first of a series of terrorist attacks in France.

The previous September, we had received an intelligence report that teams of terrorists were leaving Libya to attack American Embassies in Europe. While there are always alarmist messages in the air, we had taken this one seriously. I was Chargé at the time and immediately called a meeting of the Country Team. Together we steered a prudent course between insuring that we would continue to do our job in France and maintaining tight security. It's not an obvious line: the tightest security is, of course, to close an Embassy down. What we did was to review all security measures already in place, tighten

procedures and raise security-awareness among all personnel. This too is tricky because to keep the efficiency and energy of personnel up and doing their work, they must not be frightened into a state of fearful caution, but they also must be aware that there is a threat. The particularly difficult problem is that of families, the American school being our greatest concern.

In my own case, we changed my morning house-to-Embassy procedure by having the driver wait in the car several blocks away, allowing me to call him by radio when I was ready to go. This was the procedure I followed that November 12 morning. As I stepped out of the door onto the broad sidewalk and cased the whole street, I noticed some 150 feet to my right a handsome young man, thirtyish, bearded, Middle Eastern, and dressed in black leather pants and jacket. Not only that, but he had his hand inside his jacket. A pure grade-B movie scene.

I normally walk fast and was already halfway across the sidewalk when I saw the young man start to run towards me and heard the pops of his gun. My response was to run forward and hide behind the car waiting in the middle of the street. He fired six shots (as the Police later determined) and then quietly walked away. No one tried to stop him as none of the witnesses, including us, was armed and someone had cried from a window across the street that he had an accomplice.

It did not take long for a flood of folks to invade the house: police officers, prosecutors, and of course our own security people. The police process was launched.

The problems then were first to communicate what had happened to all personnel in order to avoid false rumors creating a climate of fear, to review again all aspects of security, and to deal with the media that were soon clamoring for news.

The Country Team is a wonderful mechanism of communication and consultation. We held a meeting as soon as I returned to the Embassy. I described what had happened; we discussed security once more; and for the time being, we decided not to close any U.S. facility, but simply to tighten procedures. And to meet together every day until we had a better appreciation of the situation facing us.

To handle the media, I decided to hold a press conference that very morning in order to set the record straight and to limit the public pressure on all of us. There was quite a turnout of news people, technicians, still and TV cameras. It was a slow news day and this conference was the top item on Washington's morning TV and radio shows. My ever-thoughtful secretary had fortunately called my wife immediately to forewarn her of the events. But what was so striking was the transformation of this minor event into a world-wide real happening (Ah, the Information Age! It magnifies and distorts instantly.). Two months later, in January 1982, one of our Assistant Military Attachés, Lt. Colonel Charles Ray, was shot in the back of the head at close range on the sidewalk in front of his apartment building. In April, an Israeli diplomat, Jaacov Barsimantov, was murdered in front of his family as they left their apartment building. Two months later, our Commercial Counselor,

Rod Grant, and his family escaped a magnetic bomb that had been planted under his car. (He and his wife had taken the car to drive their son to the airport. They knew nothing until they returned to find the street blocked off by the Police. What happened is that, quite fortuitously, an alert American Assistant Military Attaché, a Captain, happened to have walked past the place where the car had been parked just after they left, noticed a box in the gutter, became suspicious, and called the police. The police responded very efficiently, cordoned off the street, and brought the bomb experts who proceeded to examine the box. Tragically, it was indeed a bomb and two experts blew themselves up. It was determined that before driving off, the son had put his bag in the trunk of the car and had slammed down the lid, presumably causing the device to fall to the gutter. Finally, in 1984, the U.S. Consul General in Strasbourg, Robert Onan Homme, was shot and severely wounded.

The individuals who committed these crimes were not caught but through one of these stranger-than-fiction happenings, the chief of the Lebanese Armed Revolutionary Faction, Georges Ibrahim Abdullah, was arrested in 1985 in a routine police check in a train after he was found with three different passports. He was tried, but was sentenced to life imprisonment only after a long and tortuous trial. The interesting point here is that the members of the LARF were Lebanese Maronites, Christians who had espoused the cause of the Palestinians and sought revenge against Americans and Israelis. As they worded a statement issued after the attempt against me: "The attack is directed at Reagan and his imperialist colleagues who are trying to destroy Lebanon."

A week following the attempt against me, a friend called and noted that November 12 is the feast day of St. Christian, and obscure Ukrainian monk who was murdered by robbers in the 12th century!

Q: Were you in France at the time of the new ambassador, Van Galbraith?

CHAPMAN: Yes.

Q: Could you talk about him, he was after all, a fairly controversial man.

CHAPMAN: Van Galbraith is something of a mystery to me because he spent five years in Paris, four years in London and one in New York, at senior levels of banking, a very sophisticated world. But he is an ideologue. He considers the Soviet Union, not only an enemy, but as the power that manipulates everything in the world. Everything in the world can be explained by Soviet activity and action. There has to be therefore an uncompromising confrontation with the Soviet Union everywhere. He spent four years as ambassador in Paris and I don't think that to this day he understands why anyone could possibly have voted Socialist much less communist in a country where half of the vote was to the left. So I never felt that he had a good grasp of the reality of France, of Europe, or indeed of the world. Otherwise, he was a perfectly nice fellow.

One aspect of Galbraith was interesting and challenging. He considered that, in the communication world of today, the role of an embassy was limited and its principal

function should be to engage in public diplomacy. He really carried out this view of modern diplomacy. He was always available to all the media for interviews, participation in panels and reactions to events. This delighted the media, greatly irritated the government (at one point they considered asking for his recall), and left his staff with their eyes lifted to the skies. Finally, I do not think it was an effective approach: the French being a formal people did not appreciate this perceived intrusion into their internal affairs. And this was a reaction of both left and right, both socialists and conservatives..

Q: Was this a little bit like a hostile confrontation when he arrived?

CHAPMAN: No, he had chosen Jack Maresca who was Director of Western European Affairs to be his DCM, and I was delighted. I spent two months with Galbraith and then left.

Q: Then your last assignment was Special Assistant on Cyprus. You were there from '82-'83. Could you tell me what you were doing and what was your impression.

CHAPMAN: The history of that position was that General Haig became involved in the Turkish-Greek confrontation when he was SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander-Europe). He became active in trying to deal with a very difficult and ugly problem. He carried over that interest when he became Secretary of State and created this position, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Cyprus. Reg Bartholomew was the first and I took over from him. I eventually went to Cyprus to meet the cast of characters there. Called on Kyprianou and Denktash. The former was formally President of Cyprus, but in reality of Greek Cyprus only, and the latter was head of the Turkish Cypriot community. I also met with a variety of other officials on both sides of the dividing line. I came away convinced that there was nothing we could do. The problem for the administration was that there was that the strong Greek American community always actively pressing Congress to have the government do something. Like reducing military assistance to Turkey. And the Administration considered Turkey as an absolutely vital ally in the eastern Mediterranean.

The reason I felt that nothing could be done was that Kyprianou and Denktash as heads of their communities were probably in a better position than they could possibly have in a united Cyprus. Both would lose some of the power that they had, and I just didn't see that they were men of the dimension who would want to diminish their power or prestige by reaching a compromise even one in the interest of the country. I felt that the best thing the US could do was to do nothing. But politically here, it was very difficult to do nothing.

Q: Were we doing much? Was it just a charade?

CHAPMAN: It wasn't a charade. We had an ambassador and we tried to get both sides to come to terms and we strongly supported the UN Secretary General who took a very active role in searching for a settlement, and had a permanent representative in Cyprus.. And things have not changed much in all these years: just last week Greek and Turkish Cypriots were in New York working with the Secretary General. The Secretary General had a

personal representative on Cyprus. But there was just no movement then and not much that I can see even today, seven years later. I thought that the United States would be best served by getting completely out of it so that both sides would not use us as a crutch, as a way of trying to get at the other side. With the Greeks putting pressure on us to put pressure on the Turks and vice versa.

Q: I know you have to run. One last question. Looking at the Foreign Service, if a young man, or young woman came to you and said, what about the foreign service as a career, what would you say?

CHAPMAN: I would tell them that I had a wonderful thirty years, very stimulating. It was of course a special time. It was a time when there was a sense that there was a genuine threat to the peace of the world, a time when the United States played a role that has never been paralleled in history. In modern history. When you were a US representative abroad, you felt that you spoke for something that mattered. On issues that mattered. So it was a very satisfying time. Having a sense of working on large issues in a large context. It was also a time when you could go to many cities which were interesting and exotic, and fun to live in. Bangkok, Manila, Hong Kong in those days were very attractive places. Tehran and Damascus and Beirut. Now most of those cities are overbuilt, polluted, with too much traffic, with violence. From a purely physical living situation, today's cities are just not as attractive.

There is also the factor of security. I always thought that security was overblown, because it is a matter of being a little careful. You can't generalize but there are few places today that are as pleasant, exotic, filled with charm, free of violence and stimulating as there were in the past forty years.

But it still remains a very stimulating career. Diplomacy still provides orchestra seats to observe and play a part in modern history.

Q: Thank you very much.

End of interview