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

LUCIAN HEICHLER

Interviewed by: Susan Klingaman
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is February 2nd in the year 2000. This is an interview with Lucian Heichler, a retired Foreign Service officer. This interview is being conducted on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I am Susan Klingaman. Lucian, could you tell me something about when and where you were born and something about your family?

HEICHLER: Okay, I was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1925. My father was a doctor in private practice, an internist. I lived a relatively normal life for the first 13 years of my

life, until 1938, when the Anschluss with Germany changed everything for me. I am Jewish, and after a few weeks I was no longer allowed to attend school.

Q: What did you do when you couldn't attend school?

HEICHLER: Well, my family tried at first to teach me at home, but that experiment didn't last very long because everybody was too nervous, too anxious, too busy. I ended up spending most of my time reading, daydreaming, keeping a diary. Our principal concern was leaving the country, and young as I was, I quickly became an expert on most of the world's immigration laws. Our first intent was to go to America.

Q: Why was that? Why, rather than any other country?

HEICHLER: My father had been to America several times in the late '20s and early '30s and liked it and thought if we wanted to settle anywhere at all it would be in the United States. Now this is a little funny; it's almost miraculous. Under the American immigration law, my father, having been born in Czernowitz (which before World War I was part of Austria-Hungary, but then became part of Rumania) was placed on the Rumanian immigration quota (and my mother and I, even though born in Austria, along with him). Given the small size of pre-World I Rumania, the quota was tiny, only about 295 people. And my father went down to the American consulate to register. A few weeks after the Anschluss he was told that it would be at least 10 years before his number came up and he might as well forget it. So we started casting around for other places to go, and then he remembered that in the early '30s, probably about 1931, he had toyed seriously with the idea of going to live in America and had been to the consulate to register.

Q: Had he registered for a visa then?

HEICHLER: Yes, he had registered for a quota number. Miraculously, the consulate found his application, even though it was by that time seven or eight years old - something that would never happen today.

Q: Exactly. I can imagine.

HEICHLER: They found it, and they told him that he was now practically at the head of the quota.

Q: That is miraculous.

HEICHLER: That did not mean necessarily that we could leave right away. We had to fulfill other requirements. We had to find someone in the United States who would provide an affidavit attesting that we would not become burdens to the state. If that somebody was a relative, his signature would suffice; if a friend, he would have to deposit $5,000 -- a very large sum in 1938 dollars.. It took two years, but my mother finally found a very distant cousin in Chicago who had emigrated in the early '20s, and he agreed to issue the affidavit -- on condition that we would never bother him.

Q: Right.

HEICHLER: And we never did bother him. We never met him. All I know is his name.

Q: Interesting.

HEICHLER: And with that in hand, quota number, affidavit and all, we were able to obtain an immigration visa in January or February of 1940. Then came the problem of how to pay for passage to America, at an unbelievably inflated rate of exchange. The Deutschmark was worth practically nothing at this time - something like 30 marks to the dollar - however, we had to pay at the official rate, which was 2.5 marks to the dollar, with the proceeds going to Vienna's Jewish Community Center, which used the money for such purposes as trying to save members of the Jewish community in Vienna by "buying" them free from the Nazis. Buying the three steamship tickets took about all the money that my parents had, but apparently it sufficed. We packed up. We sold most of our goods at auction but were allowed to send a lift van to America. We were allowed to take the official equivalent of 10 Reichsmark a person out of the country with us - $4.00.

Q: That took a lot of courage, I would say.

HEICHLER: Yes - and a very limited number of goods, like no more than 100 books, no clothing less than two years old, no jewelry, no medical instruments - very, very limited. And we booked passage on one of the last -- perhaps the last -- Holland-America Line ships to leave Rotterdam for New York, the S.S. *Volendam*. The ship was supposed to sail on the 28th of March, 1940. Under Dutch law we were allowed three days transit stay in the country, no more. Well, as it happened - I don't want to make this too long a story (see endnote 1) - we arrived at the border on the 25th of March and were turned back by the German border police and told curtly that we might as well go back because the Dutch wouldn't let us in. We were traveling with a transport of maybe 30 or 40 people accompanied by a young agent of the Dutch Holland-America Line office in Vienna.

Q: These were all other families, other Jewish families?

HEICHLER: Yes. My father and this young man managed to persuade the German police at least to allow us into the waiting room and to make some inquiries. Our young companion called his office in Vienna, and slowly but surely the story came out. The ship we were supposed to sail on had been held up on the way back from New York to Rotterdam by the British, on suspicion of carrying contraband, breaking the British blockade of Germany. She was still being held in Southampton harbor, and there was no chance that she could sail from Rotterdam three days later. Then we were told to sit and wait. We waited there for some seven hours in total silence. It was for me an unforgettable experience - I've written about it (see endnote 1) - because I knew, even at the age of 14, that there was no place for us to go other than a concentration camp if we were not able to cross the border. After all this time in that silent room, the phone rang: it was the Vienna office of the Holland-America Line calling back to say they had cleared a

path for us. They had taken our case all the way up the line to the top of the Dutch government, allegedly to Queen Wilhelmina herself, and gotten a dispensation from this otherwise very strict three-day transit visa law.

Q: So this was another example of the Dutch willingness to help European Jews.

HEICHLER: Yes, it was, because they realized perfectly well what was going to happen to us. And so within one quick hour - this was about four in the afternoon - by five o'clock we were ready to board a train to take us across the border into Holland, which was to us, to me, miraculous because the war had been on in Germany since September, 1939. We were under blackout; we were under very tight food rationing (After the outbreak of war in September 1939, Jews were placed on half rations and forbidden to purchase any fresh fruits or vegetables.); we were very hungry. And here we arrived in this wonderland full of lights and food and people willing to help. We finally arrived at the Rotterdam train station around midnight on the 25th of March and were met by people from the Dutch-Jewish "Montefiore" Relief Committee, which had put us up with some families to house us and arranged for other families who were prepared to feed us. And with all that, without any money at all, we spent two glorious weeks in Rotterdam waiting for the ship to sail. I've written that story up, too (see endnote 2). And then we finally arrived in New York on the 17th of April, 1940. I spoke no English at all.

Q: How about your father?

HEICHLER: My father was fairly fluent in English; my mother and I were not.

Q: Okay.

HEICHLER: But I was sent to high school almost immediately.

Q: This was in New York City.

HEICHLER: In New York City. The school system very kindly let me start at a grade which corresponded to my chronological age. I had lost two years of school in Austria. I had not been able to go to school from March 1938 until March 1940, but I was enrolled at my chronological age and therefore lost no time.

Q: This would have been what year of high school?

HEICHLER: 1940.

Q: No, but what class in school?

HEICHLER: Let's see - 10th grade.

Q: Okay, 10th grade with no English.

HEICHLER: With no English.

Q: How did that go?

HEICHLER: It didn't go well at first. This was late spring, and the only subjects in which I was able to do any work all were Latin and geometry, for fairly obvious reasons. I was way ahead of the other kids in Latin, having started Latin at age 10 in Vienna and having already had three years of that language, and geometry because of its obvious visual nature.

Q: How did you learn English?

HEICHLER: My father found an experiment -- an intensive summer course -- conducted by the New York University School of Education to help train its student teachers. This was not meant for foreign students; it was intended to assist New York City high school students who were behind in English. It was a marvelous course. It went on every single day all summer, for six or seven hours a day. I don't remember exactly what we did. All I can remember is that toward the end of the summer, I suddenly found myself able to comprehend English without having to translate back and forth in my head.

Q: That's very quick.

HEICHLER: Yes, but of course at 15 one learns rather quickly.

Q: Did you have American friends at that point?

HEICHLER: Not really, no. In fact, the only friends or acquaintances I had came from the German-Austrian Jewish refugee community. The only newspaper I was able to read was a German-language weekly called *Aufbau* [Reconstruction], and I felt very frustrated because I couldn't read the daily New York papers, I couldn't understand what people were saying. I was strangely reminded of a time, way back, when I could not yet read at all. It was a bit like that, looking at words without knowing what they meant. But from September 1940 on things went very, very quickly for me. I had a terribly heavy foreign accent, some of which, of course, I still have. But I had no difficulty at all learning.

Q: Did you start reading a lot of English?

HEICHLER: Yes, I did.

Q: That must have helped.

HEICHLER: I remember working hard at it over the summer. Something has come to mind. I remember that after the fall of France, June 1940, Ambassador William C. Bullitt came back from Europe and delivered a marvelous speech to Congress about the need for United States intervention. This was very important to me politically, and I can remember translating the whole speech for myself with the help of a dictionary. It took up one or

two entire pages of the *New York Times.*

Q: Did he mentioned the Jewish situation in the context of that speech, or was it couched more in terms of American foreign policy.

HEICHLER: It was couched more in terms of American foreign policy.

Q: Because my impression is that the Roosevelt Administration was not all that keen on admitting more Jewish refugees. Is that correct?

HEICHLER: It is and it isn't. There was heavy resistance on the part of the trade unions to admitting refugees because we were still in a depression, and they wanted no competition for the few available jobs. And influential officials in the State Department were quite hostile to the idea of taking in Jewish refugees. Roosevelt himself, though, very definitely took an interest in the Jewish problem and - this is another ironic twist of history - in the late spring of 1938, he convoked an international conference at Evian, Switzerland, to discuss what could be done to save the Jews of Austria and Germany. The result was most ironic, in that the 50 or 60 nations represented suddenly woke up to the fact that they were not sufficiently protected from unwanted immigration, and they instantly enacted the necessary laws and barriers to keep people out --

Q: To restrict immigration.

HEICHLER: --so that at the end of the conference there were only two places left in all the world where someone like me might go without a visa. One of them was Shanghai under Japanese occupation; the other was Trinidad. We were still, of course, waiting for our American visa. Our attempts to go to England, to go to Sweden all came to naught. An uncle of mine and his family managed to go to England as indentured servants. The only way they could be admitted was to be hired, sight unseen, as domestic servants by an English family. In Sweden, the Quakers tried to put together a program ("Project Hope," I think) to save a number of people, but that fell apart for us, at least. I have the Chinese immigration visa stamped in my old German passport but never made any use of it.

Q: Let's get back to your time in New York as a young student. You learned English, I guess, fairly well in the summer of 1940, and then you progressed through high school?

HEICHLER: I progressed through high school in two years. I made the honor roll in every semester after that.

Q: That's fantastic.

HEICHLER: I graduated in the summer of 1942 and then was able to get a scholarship to attend New York University. My father's wish, and mine at that time was that I should become a medical doctor, as he did. I had, in fact, no other thought but that. I had really wanted to go to Columbia, but Columbia was too expensive, and I did not get a

scholarship there. Even NYU was expensive -- for me. By today's standards, of course, tuition was a ridiculous sum: $400 a year...

Q: Well, It's all relative. But I assume you lived at home when you went to NYU?

HEICHLER: I lived at home, yes. My father still didn't have his license to practice. My mother and I both worked. She took in work, sweatshop work that she did at home. I started working almost immediately. In the same month or two that I started high school, I got a job delivering clothes from a cleaning store. After that I remember working every summer at one job or another - messenger boy, what have you. After I started college, in order to raise the $300 tuition that I needed to pay (my scholarship was good for $100 per academic year), I found part-time jobs. My girlfriend found a job as a waitress in a New York hotel restaurant, and she got me a job there as a busboy, partly for romantic reasons, so we could see each other every evening and have supper together after work. This was the Essex House. It's on Central Park South.

Q: So you were essentially studying pre-med there?

HEICHLER: Yes. I enrolled in the pre-med course, working pretty hard. Then, with a scholarship, I had to carry a full program of 18 semester hours, and I worked every evening from six to 10. I had to show up at the Essex House about five. I didn't get home until 10 or 11, after which I would sit down and study and do my homework. I didn't get a lot of sleep, but I didn't need a lot of sleep. This lasted - let's see-

Q: From '42-

HEICHLER: From '42 until '43, when I came down with meningococcal meningitis and nearly died of it. I did not go back to the same restaurant, but did go on with part-time jobs, mostly restaurant-related jobs - not all of them. My last job before going into the army in 1944 was running a Union News Company newsstand in the waiting room of the Weehawken ferry boat, on the Manhattan side of the Hudson River.

Q: That must have introduced you to a lot of interesting people.

HEICHLER: It did.

Q: Good chance to practice your English.

HEICHLER: Yes. This was every afternoon from four to seven or so. So the years slipped by rather quickly, and they were all work and all study.

Q: And then at some point you went into the military.

HEICHLER: Yes, as a pre-med student I had a deferment for a year or so. At age 19 I was drafted, however, and told that while as an alien I did not have to serve, I would probably forfeit my citizenship if I refused. I had no intention of doing that, and so I

joined the army, even though I was still an alien, and was sent to a training camp in Florida for infantry basic training. While I was there, about three weeks after my arrival, I was taken to the Southern District Court of Florida in Jacksonville and made a citizen of the United States. I still have my naturalization certificate, of course.

Q: So this was within four years of having arrived in the U.S.

HEICHLER: This was within four years of having arrived in the U.S. As luck would have it, I got my first job at the State Department in 1954, and the ten-year interval was the minimum required. Under the law I could not have been employed any earlier than that. You had to have been a citizen for at least 10 years to join the Foreign Service.

Q: I see. Now in the military, did you go overseas?

HEICHLER: Yes, I did.

Q: Where?

HEICHLER: Japan. Well, again, my military career was -

Q: You mean they didn't use your German expertise by assigning you to Europe?

HEICHLER: No, they didn't.

Q: That's interesting.

HEICHLER: When I came before the so-called qualifications officer at Camp Upton, New York, during the first few days after my induction, I was asked to list my qualifications, languages and so forth, and I explained that I was bilingual in English and German and had some French, and that I was a premedical student. And he duly wrote all this down and then assigned me to infantry basic training camp. While I was at Camp Blanding, near Jacksonville, Florida, the Army Specialized Training Program Board came through, interviewed me, gave me a language test, and assigned me to a year of intensive Japanese.

Q: It sounds sort of like the State Department -

HEICHLER: Yes.

Q: In terms of the logic of assignments. One would think they would have put you in the Army Medical Corps and sent you to Europe.

HEICHLER: Actually, their first thought was chemical engineering, but I had no qualifications or interest for that at all, and so the next choice was the Japanese language, apparently because I had scored rather high on a language aptitude test. At least that made a certain limited amount of sense to me, Japanese being a hard language. Anyway it

probably saved my life, because I finished basic training in December '44, just at the time of the last German offensive, the Ardennes Offensive, and everybody panicked. My training company was flown to Europe and thrown into what became known as the "Battle of the Bulge," except for me because I was already on orders to go to Minnesota to study Japanese.

Q: Well, I would say that was probably another miracle in your life.

HEICHLER: It was. There have been a number of them. In fact, I've written a story - I should have given it to you - which I call "Lucky Luciano"-

Q: I would enjoy reading that.

HEICHLER: -because I have been saved a number of times. So I felt rather guilty, especially after what I learned two years later when I was being discharged... I met somebody from my old training company, and he told me that, half-trained as they were, about 70 percent of them became casualties within three days. And of course, I had survived. I suffered a certain amount of survivor guilt, as did we all in that Japanese language course, because we felt terribly guilty: We were living the life of Riley; we were stationed on the beautiful campus of the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, 300 of us. Most of the male students had been drafted and were at the front somewhere and that left us with about 10,000 girls -

Q: Well, that must have been very enjoyable.

HEICHLER: --most of them Scandinavian beauties--

Q: Right. Minnesota.

HEICHLER: --and, well, rather in need of men. And here we were, with invitations to sorority houses every week.

Q: That must have been very pleasant, but did they ever send you to Japan?

HEICHLER: Yes.

Q: They did.

HEICHLER: They actually did send me to Japan. But of course, once I got there, they gave me a job that required no knowledge of the language whatsoever. Some corporal, looking for somebody to manage his general's house, looked at my service record and found that I had restaurant experience. The so-called "restaurant experience" consisted of my having worked part-time as a busboy, but this made me eligible to become sort of the chief steward and housekeeper of this mansion.

Q: Well, it is interesting how one thing leads to another. So you were in Japan when the

war ended, or--?

HEICHLER: Well, no, I was still in Minnesota when the war ended. I didn't get to Japan until early 1946.

Q: Oh, so you didn't get to Japan until after the war.

HEICHLER: I never did see any military action at all.

Q: I see, okay.

HEICHLER: And I wasn't in Japan very long. I was there for several months, and then I was discharged and sent home in June of 1946, went back to school, had by this time decided not to study medicine -

Q: But rather to study what?

HEICHLER: --but I had become interested in getting a graduate degree in history. I wanted to teach history at the college level.

Q: Why the shift in interest?

HEICHLER: I found that I had far more interest and ability in the field of the humanities. My science grades were not bad, but they were not all that great, either; and I became extremely interested in history during those years in the army. I went back to graduate school, got a master's degree in Renaissance history, and then wanted to teach but could not get a position because in the early '50s, at the start of the Korean War, there was very little demand for faculty, most of the students having been drafted.

Q: Having been drafted, yes.

HEICHLER: And I had just gotten married. In desperation I put an ad in the *New York Times*, a position-wanted ad, in which I listed such qualifications as I possessed, and there weren't all that many. Well, I got one serious reply from a young military officer who had come across my ad on a train between Washington and Baltimore. He was head of the Research Section, Foreign Studies Branch, Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, hard at work writing the official history of the U.S. Army in World War II, and he needed an historian who could do research in German.

Q: Well, sounds like it was tailor-made for you.

HEICHLER: It was. I was assigned to work with another historian, and my specific job on this book was to write the story from the enemy side of the hill, exclusively. This was intended to make for truly objective history. We would decide on the parameters of a chapter - very broad parameters - in terms of front line sector and time period and then we would part company. I would go to my German sources, which were considerable,

since we had captured some 600 tons of German documents during the war, including a complete set of German situation maps. And having been told what American units we were going to be writing about and during what time frame, it was fairly easy for me to identify the German units opposite our forces and to start writing their day-to-day history on the basis of thick, bound volumes of war diaries, situation reports, field orders, quartermaster records, and what have you - masses of material, far more than the American Army ever kept, the Germans being much more paper-happy.

Q: Very thorough, yes.

HEICHLER: So I would end up writing a monograph which my co-author and I then coordinated with his draft. We had fund fitting our two accounts together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle -- a fascinating part of the job. The book has come out long since. It's called *The Siegfried Line Campaign*. It covers the history of the war from September 1944 to March 1945 along an arc of front line from Antwerp all the way south into Luxembourg, to the Hürtgen Forest. Some of what I wrote has been used as source material for more popular books. For example, I'm listed in the bibliography of Cornelius Ryan's *A Bridge Too Far* because I had written a monograph about the allied airborne landings at Arnhem, Nijmegen, and Eindhoven - a few things like that (see endnote 3).

Q: So after that project, what happened then? At that point you moved over to the State Department?

HEICHLER: Yes. In 1954, the money gave out -

Q: For the book.

HEICHLER: --for the book, or for my job at least. I was first RIFed (RIF = Reduction in Force) and then rehired with some funds provided by some source other than the Civil Service, but anyway by the summer of 1954, I was definitely out of a job and found myself a job as an intelligence analyst in INR.

Q: That's the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the State Department.

HEICHLER: Yes. At that time the Bureau included a Division of Biographic Information, later absorbed by the CIA. But in those days, it was part of the State Department, or at least a good part of it was.

Q: What was your personnel status at that point?

HEICHLER: GS-7.

Q: You were Civil Service.

HEICHLER: I was Civil Service. Well, actually, not for very long, because while I was waiting for my clearance, I got a phone call from the INR personnel officer explaining

that the position for which I was being cleared had been included under the Wriston Integration Program. I don't know whether that means anything to you.

Q: Yes, it does. I'll just explain for the purpose of the person transcribing it, this was the Wriston report, Wriston recommendations -

HEICHLER: Dr. Henry Wriston.

Q: --spelled W-R-I-S-T-0-N.

HEICHLER: Yes. And under this plan, this program, several thousand substantive State Department positions which had been Civil Service were blanketed into the Foreign Service, mine included.

Q: And what year was that, about?

HEICHLER: 1954 or 1955. It did not mean that I automatically and instantly became a Foreign Service officer. I was given a Foreign Service reserve officer commission.

Q: Okay.

HEICHLER: Which rather held me back, because it made promotion almost impossible. It was limited in time. It was all in all not particularly favorable, and I tried almost from the beginning to convert to career status. It took me nine years to do that, though.

Q: To FSO status?

HEICHLER: To FSO Status. That took from 1954 until 1963.

Q: I see.

HEICHLER: During all of which time I was not promoted.

Q: But you remained in INR for how long?

HEICHLER: I remained in INR until late 1959. I switched jobs while there. I worked for about four years with the Division of Biographic Information and for a couple of years for an interesting small unit monitoring international Communist agencies and organizations. And then an officer on the German Desk - Elwood Williams, I don't know whether you -

Q: I do know Elwood Williams, yes. I did know him very well.

HEICHLER: Well, Elwood was sort of a king maker when it came to picking people for overseas assignments. He seemed fond of me, perhaps because I had worked hard and promptly for him. When he needed a biography, I supplied it, usually the same afternoon.

He called me up one morning - I guess it was January 1960 or December '59 - and said, "Lucian, how would you like to go to Berlin?" I said, "I most certainly would." What had happened was that the labor officer of the Political Section, U.S. mission in Berlin, Dan Montenegro, had suddenly had to go back to the States on compassionate leave. His replacement, Ernie Nagy, whom you probably know-

Q: Yes.

HEICHLER: --was then in training for the labor officer's position but not yet ready to go, and so to fill the gap, Elwood picked me to go to Berlin to become, temporarily, the mission labor officer. And so I was suddenly set free from what had become a boring job, financially difficult to sustain, with no real future to it, and sent to Berlin and able to start a real career, because when Ernie arrived on the scene, I was kept on in the Political Section as a regular political reporting officer.

Q: And what particular aspect of political reporting were you asked to specialize in?

HEICHLER: Berlin internal political affairs and matters pertaining to the interaction of the three allies with the city government. I became the American secretary of the Allied Kommandatura, which was the allied authority governing Berlin, at least on paper - by then on paper, because certainly by 1960 the Germans had obtained a great deal of autonomy.

Q: Who was the minister in Berlin at the mission at that point?

HEICHLER: Allan Lightner.

Q: Okay.

HEICHLER: And I was a member of the Civil Affairs Committee; I was secretary of the Kommandatura. And then just two weeks before the Wall went up, the American liaison officer, George Muller, was promoted to be chief of the Political Section, and I was put in his place as the Senat liaison officer.

Q: That must have been very interesting.

HEICHLER: It was a fascinating job. I had an office in the City Hall. I had another office out on Clay-Allee. I was fairly junior. I was an FSR-5 at the time. That was under the old system.

Q: Yes, right. You were an FSR-5 under the old officer ranking system.

HEICHLER: Yes. I guess it would have been FSR-6 later. But because of the nature of the job, I was always in the midst of whatever was going on.

Q: And I'm sure your fluency in German was indispensable.

HEICHLER: Yes, I did conduct just about all my business in German down at the Rathaus (city hall). And once the Wall went up, and Berlin really became the center of world attention, I had the privilege of escorting just about anybody who was anybody up the steps of the Rathaus and into Mayor Willy Brandt's office and sitting in to take notes. And I reported on the first set of talks to allow Berliners to visit relatives in East Berlin, talks that went on for a couple of years. It was hard work, but absolutely fascinating work and a very good life.

Q: I must say, just to interject, perhaps unbeknownst to either of us, we might have met hobnobbing with Willy Brandt. At that time I was a Fulbright student in Germany, and the group of Fulbrighters went to Berlin in May of 1960 and were welcomed at a reception hosted by Willy Brandt, and he left an enormous impression on me for many years.

HEICHLER: In May 1960, I would not yet have been involved; however, a few months later I would have been. This Senat liaison officer's job was in some ways an enormously privileged reporting officer's position. It gave you a level of access that without this strange status of Berlin you never would have had at that level.

Q: I'm just pausing here for a moment because I think the tape is about to run out and I want to just let it go. But I think when we turn the tape over I would be interested in hearing more about the Berlin Wall going up during your period there. Let's just see how this goes, since this is the first time I've used this machine.

HEICHLER: Do you think this is going okay?

Q: I think it's wonderful. The first part was just very interesting, you know.

HEICHLER: As I said, I lived very well, and I felt I had a very privileged position.

Q: What Germans did you have liaison business with besides -

HEICHLER: Well, my principal contact was the head of the Senat Chancery. When I first started, this was Heinrich Albertz (Albertz was a most interesting man -- a member of Brandt's Social-Democratic Party (SPD) and at the same time an ordained minister in the German Evangelical Church. After his resignation as Governing Mayor of Berlin in 1967 over the police shooting of a student protesting the visit of the Shah of Iran, Albertz became pastor of a church in the poor working class borough of Berlin-Wedding. He later moved to Bremen, where he died during the 1990s.) who later became deputy mayor and finally governing mayor of Berlin, and then Dietrich Spangenberg, both of them now long gone. I also knew and dealt with a number of other people, like Otto Bach, the president of the Berlin House of Representatives -- the legislature. I knew the man who conducted the negotiations for the *Passierscheine* - Korber, Horst Korber - very well.

Q: How would you translate Passierscheine*?*

HEICHLER: 'Transit passes.'

Q: Transit passes, between East and West Berlin.

HEICHLER: These had been terribly difficult to negotiate. Here again, I had a very small role. The East Germans originally wanted to open some kind of "passport offices" in West Berlin to issue these passes, which would permit West Berliners to visit their relatives in the Soviet Sector (East Berlin). This was nothing but a device to gain some recognition and a foothold in the Western Sectors of the city.

Q: Which, of course, we would not allow.

HEICHLER: Which we did not allow, and as chairman secretary of the Allied Kommandatura for the month, it was I who signed the Allied Kommandatura order forbidding this.

Q: I see.

HEICHLER: There is a book called *Dokumente zur Berlinfrage* in which you will find that order with my name on it.

Do you want me to start talking about the Wall?

Q: Well, I think we might as well since the tape is still running. You were in Berlin at the time. What was it like? Did it take us by surprise or not?

HEICHLER: It did and it didn't. We have been accused over and over of having had foreknowledge of the Wall, and I'm absolutely convinced that this is not the case.

Q: Why?

HEICHLER: Because we naïvely did not believe that the Russians and East Germans were capable of just cutting the city in half the way they did. We were naïve in other ways as well. This particular chapter in the Berlin crisis began in 1958 with the Khrushchev ultimatum. Khrushchev insisted that it was time for the occupation of Berlin to end, for the Western Allies to leave, and for West Berlin to become a free city, whatever that meant, with East Berlin already established, illegally in our eyes, as the capital of the German Democratic Republic, a status which we never recognized. The crisis became more and more exacerbated. Years passed and we refused to budge. The Russians continued to issue threats. And of course for many years Berlin had been the only place through which people could leave East Germany, the only window in the Iron Curtain. Until August 13, 1961, it was still possible to get on a subway train or an S-Bahn train in East Berlin, get off in the West, and there you were -- free. You couldn't leave Berlin by surface transport, but you could fly out. And over the years an average of 10,000 people a month left East Germany that way, an enormous number.

Q: And yet you say that the U.S. and others in the West still did not foresee a Berlin Wall?

HEICHLER: No, what we foresaw... We realized that because of this human drain, this veritable hemorrhage, the GDR was experiencing an ever more serious economic crisis. What we expected, if we expected anything at all, was that the East German regime would make it more and more difficult for people to reach East Berlin. And that was naïve on our part, because as long as the GDR insisted that East Berlin was its legal capital, it would have been politically awkward, to say the least, to prevent its own people from going to their own capital from which to flee into West Berlin. But the idea that they would actually block access between the two parts of the city seemed too outlandish and too difficult to implement. There were, after all, something like 88 crossing points between the Western and Eastern parts of the city, and there were buses and streetcar lines and subway lines that ran between the two parts of the city. The phones lines, to be sure, had been cut years before.

Q: That's what I was going to say. In some respects it was divided.

HEICHLER: Well, over 100,000 people who lived in East Berlin and worked in West Berlin, the so-called "border crossers," or *Grenzgänger*, and their jobs ended from one day to the next.

Q: So what happened on August 13, 1961?

HEICHLER: Well, it was a Sunday morning (see endnote 4), and I went to church, and when I looked around, I suddenly realized I was the only man there, surrounded by women and children, and I thought: Something is definitely wrong here.

Q: This was a German church?

HEICHLER: No, it was the Lutheran American Church in Berlin. It was an all- American congregation. And I suddenly realized that except for the pastor I was the only male present. Alarm bells went off in my head. I rushed to the office, called my boss (George Muller) who reacted furiously, wanting to know “where in hell I had been,” because he had been trying since three o'clock in the morning to reach me, and I reminded him that I had just moved a week before. He'd been calling my old phone number, which was no longer in service. And so I was apparently the only person left in Berlin who didn't realize that a Wall was going up. But what happened - of course people have asked me how could they build a wall overnight. Well, they didn't build a wall overnight. They strung barbed wire and put up a human wall of East German army troops and police behind it.

Q: And what was going on in the mission when that all started?

HEICHLER: Well, crisis, big-time. Flurries of immediate cables back and forth.

Q: To Washington? To Bonn?

HEICHLER: To Washington, to Bonn, to military headquarters: “What do we do now?”

Q: Right. And the answer that came back?

HEICHLER: The answer that came back was: "Wait, we're considering the situation."

Q: We're talking about it, yes.

HEICHLER: It took three whole days before we even managed to cobble together a rather feeble protest note.

Q: That's astounding.

HEICHLER: It was horrible.

Q: Was this because of the number of people, offices, et cetera, that were involved, like the military and the White House and the State Department and all of that?

HEICHLER: It was because we feared that military intervention on our part might provoke World War III. Military intelligence told us that the Russians had deployed two armored divisions around Berlin to deter us from any such move. Anyway, we didn't have much in the way of military force on the ground in West Berlin. We had about 12,000 Allied military personnel. We had about an equal number of Berlin police. We had one American reinforced tank company. We had nothing to pit against a significant real military force, and the U.S. Army was not the least bit anxious to get into a totally unequal fight. The State Department was far more eager to test this Soviet-East German “surprise,” at least, to try to break through, to prevent the Wall from being built.

Q: So the State Department was more hawkish than -

HEICHLER: Much more hawkish than the military or the White House, for that matter. I mean they were all set to send our few tanks up against the Sector border and keep these people from stringing their wire. But nothing of the sort ever happened.

Q: Do you think that if we had done that it would have been successful?

HEICHLER: People said, "There is no point to this. Either they're going to clobber us or else, more cleverly, they're going to just move back 50 feet and start over. And what are you going to do? Occupy East Berlin 50 feet at a time?"

Q: Yes, interesting concept.

HEICHLER: That kind of reasoning went on. It fell to me, of course, August being one

of the four so-called American months in Berlin -

Q: Which means?

HEICHLER: Which means that every month the chairmanship of the Allied Control Authority moved from one of the three Western Allied powers to another.

Q: To the United States.

HEICHLER: In other words, every three months the chairmanship came around to us. August was "American month," and we automatically held the chair of the liaison offices, the Allied Kommandatura Secretariat and everything else. As chairman liaison officer, I was sent to show Willy Brandt a copy of this miserable protest note.

Q: And what was his reaction?

HEICHLER: Oh, he boiled over.

Q: I can imagine.

HEICHLER: And the whole wrath of this man - and he really could get pretty angry - descended upon my innocent, junior, FSO-5 shoulders.

Q: Maybe that was your calling at that time.

HEICHLER: Maybe it was. I was given a history lesson unlike any other I have ever received, because he started to lecture me, and I came to feel afterwards that I had been "present at the creation" -- the birth of what became known first as the "policy of small steps," and later the German *Ostpolitik.*

Q: Well, what did Willy Brandt say to you?

HEICHLER: For some surprising reason Brandt had believed -- rather naively -- that the "Protective Powers," as he called the three Western Occupying Powers, would move with courage and dispatch to stop this latest Eastern outrage. And when it didn't happen, he suddenly lost his faith in the Allies; his confidence in the West collapsed all of a sudden.

He then developed the concept that something had to be done to change what he called this "frozen landscape" between East and West, even if it were only small technical steps that could gradually evolve into larger political steps, but that we couldn't afford to go on like this.

Q: So already at that time he had a concept beyond the Iron Curtain, a concept of rapprochement *with the East in some small steps?*

HEICHLER: Yes. Well, he felt that Adenauer's policy of simply standing firmly with the

West was a dead end. Something had to be dreamed up to substitute for it. The people who did the dreaming were he and Egon Bahr. And Bahr announced the new policy in a subsequently famous speech delivered at the Tutzing Annual Conference in Bavaria and made the Allies furious.

Q: I can imagine.

HEICHLER: They felt that he was betraying us. In fact, he was not doing anything of the kind; he and Brandt were simply searching for possible solutions to get out of an absolute dead end. Nobody wanted war; nobody could conceive of nuclear war over Berlin, and the Russians had the upper hand geographically and militarily.

Q: And Berlin was divided.

HEICHLER: Berlin was divided. Families were divided. People could suddenly no longer talk to each other, see each other, go to work.

I had a very moving experience which might be made part of this record. A few days after the Wall went up, I got a call from the gate at headquarters saying there was a young Berliner there who wanted to speak to a political officer, and I said, "Well, send him up." And the young man came up and said, "Look, I have a fiancée in East Berlin. We were going to get married. I can't call her because the phones lines are cut. I have no way of seeing her. I want to, I must get this girl out. How am I going to get her out of there?

“If she went to one of the other Communist countries on some pretext - international youth festival, or whatever, World Peace Congress, one of the innumerable Communist front organizations - if she went to Budapest or Bucharest and went to the American embassy there for asylum, would she be able then to get out?"

I replied, "No, my friend, I'm afraid not. We have no such asylum policy. Cardinal Mindszenty was an exception. And he lived in the ambassador's office in Budapest for 15 years before he was able to leave the building." I said, "There's no point to this. If your girl goes to Budapest and goes to the American embassy, they won't let her in. And if they did let her in, she wouldn’t be able to leave the building again without being arrested as soon as she set foot outside. There's no sense in this. You've got to find some other way."

He said, "Well, I'm going to find a way." I said, "Well, if you do, let me know. I'm very interested."

So he went away, and three weeks later I got a call from the guard shack at the Clay-Allee entrance to the American headquarters, saying, "There are two young Germans here to see you." And I said, "Well, send them up." And here comes my friend with this very pretty girl in tow and says, "Well, I did it." I said, "How did you do it?" He said, "Well, I found a car that has no hump..." - you know.

Q: "Hump" meaning... trunk?

HEICHLER: No, not trunk, but the drive shaft that runs down the middle of the floor of the car, elevated - you know.

Q: The axle?

HEICHLER: Not the axle, the drive shaft which runs the length of the car, connected to the universal joint - or whatever it is.

Q: Okay. So he found a car.

HEICHLER: He found a car with a flat floor where he was able to take out the back seat and make enough room for a small human being to hide in there and put the back seat back and cover it with blankets and stuff. "I arranged with her brother that they would drive out to a rest area on the Autobahn between Berlin and Helmstedt, and I would meet them there with this car, and when nobody was there, nobody was looking, she would slip from her brother's car to my car and get down into this hidey-hole I had made, and I would drive back into Berlin," which he did. And the East Germans were not yet clever enough then to search cars with the thoroughness with which they searched them later. And so he got through the checkpoint okay into Berlin, and here she was in West Berlin and free, and all they needed to do now was get married and emigrate.

He invited me to the wedding. It was a lovely little family affair. And then they flew to Canada, where, as the German fairy tales always say, *"Wenn sie nicht gestorben sind, dann leben sie noch heute."* [If they haven't died, they're still alive today.]

Q: So they lived happily ever after.

HEICHLER: They lived happily ever after, I hope, and they're probably in their 60s now, somewhere in Canada. That is one of my favorite Wall stories. A few months later it couldn't have happened, because by that time the East Germans were hep to just about everything. They had mirrors on long handles to hold under a car, and all kinds of other detection devices.

Q: Well, so after the Wall went up and we had, in effect, done nothing, did things change with regard to your job as liaison?

HEICHLER: Well, no.

Q: I mean were the Berliners really -

HEICHLER: Hostile.

Q: Hostile, you would call it.

HEICHLER: Hostile. I remember the one and only time in my whole six years in Berlin when I feared for my safety on being recognized as an American officer, and this was during a protest rally that Brandt held on the Wednesday after the Wall went up. It must have been the 17th of August or so, a protest rally in front of the Rathaus, directed as much against the Allies as against the Russians. I attended as an observer in order to report on it, but it was scary - the anger. However, that period lasted only about a week, and then Kennedy came through. It was, of course, all political; it was all smoke and mirrors, but -

Q: When did Kennedy come through this time?

HEICHLER: Kennedy did two things. He sent -

Q: This would have been when, in the fall of '61?

HEICHLER: No, it was just a week after the Wall went up.

Q: Oh, right after the Wall.

HEICHLER: On the 20th of August.

Q: August 20, 1961.

HEICHLER: He announced that he was sending an additional [third] battle group to Berlin, as a signal to the Russians that we were prepared to fight for West Berlin.

Q: Okay, so that was the American reaction, in a sense.

HEICHLER: And the second reaction was that he was sending Vice-President Johnson to Berlin, and the two arrived more or less simultaneously. It was an unbelievable circus.

Q: I can imagine. What all was involved?

HEICHLER: Well, LBJ came and as usual behaved like a politician running for office, and when word came that the first elements of the additional or third battle group were arriving in Berlin off the Autobahn, having marched all night from Mannheim, Johnson insisted on being there to greet them "on behalf of the President and the people of the United States." I was in his retinue, and it was truly a wonderful moment. LBJ made the most of it. Those poor guys were not allowed to go to bed and sleep. They were paraded through Berlin for the rest of the day, everywhere. And anyway, LBJ enjoyed himself. I have some wonderful stories about LBJ.

Q: Well, he was a character of the first order.

HEICHLER: I mean this was just about the time, Susan, when the Vice-President was given his official residence, the Naval Observatory on Massachusetts Avenue..

Q: Yes.

HEICHLER: Until then he had his own housing somewhere, and LBJ was interested in furnishing the residence, and so his last Sunday in Berlin he went--

Q: He went shopping.

HEICHLER: He went shopping. You know the story.

Q: No, I don't. But he visited Manila when I was there, and he went shopping there also. He shopped everywhere.

HEICHLER: He made the famous Berlin porcelain manufacture factory, the *Königliche Porzellan-Manufaktur (KPM)* open its showroom on a Sunday afternoon, and we all had to go there. The poor director came down. And LBJ announced that he was looking for a nice set of china for the vice-presidential residence in Washington. And they showed him one beautiful set after the other, and they were all too expensive for him. And he finally - and this is true; I was there - he finally said that what he was really looking for was "seconds."

Q: He was really looking for seconds. That must have gone over very well with the Germans.

HEICHLER: By that the Americans looked for holes in the ground to crawl into.

Q: Yes, but I would have thought he would have asked if they would give it to him as a gift.

HEICHLER: Well, he didn't have to, because they -

Q: They did!

HEICHLER: The deputy mayor of Berlin, a man named Franz Amrehn, who was CDU, quick-thinkingly stepped forward and said, "But Mr. Vice President, the Senat and people and Berlin want to give you this as a present." And, "Oh, well, in that case..."

Q: What a great surprise that must have been.

HEICHLER: In that case, he picked the fanciest set he could find - a 36-person set of everything, and then arranged that his office would send us the vice-presidential insignia through the diplomatic pouch to give to KPM to be painted on every plate, saucer, cup, and bowl, and so it was done. But these are my little anecdotes, you know.

Q: Yes, well, and all of this in the context of the Wall having just been erected throughout Berlin.

HEICHLER: And then there was the matter of the Vice-President's shoes and shavers.

Q: Tell me a little bit about that.

HEICHLER: Okay. On the second day of the visit, at five o'clock in the morning, I got a phone call from a deputy chief of protocol saying, "Mr. Heichler, I'm so sorry to wake you so early in the morning, but we have a problem. Yesterday, the *Herr Vizepräsident* admired the mayor's shoes, and the mayor said that he wants to give him a pair just like them, and we don't know the size. Could you find out what size the Vice-President wears?" So I called the residence at five-thirty in the morning and asked to speak to his valet, who was very angry at me.

Q: For waking him up.

HEICHLER: For waking him up at five-thirty in the morning, and I asked him about the shoe size, and he blew his stack. He said, "The Vice President has his shoes made to order. We don't know what his size is. They're all handmade." I had to report back to Herr von Selchow that I had failed in my mission, and he cleverly solved the problem by sending an entire range of sizes, maybe 20 different pairs of shoes, to the residence of the American ambassador in Berlin. And that was the last I heard of it until three days after the Johnson party had mercifully left Berlin, and the ambassador's wife, Mrs. Walter Dowling, a very nice lady, called me at the office and said, "Lucian, can you get these damned shoes out of my living room? And also, while you're at it, there are all these electric shavers sitting around, because he was interested in buying an electric shaver and some man came around with samples and left them, and they're still lying around here as well, and I want them out of my living room."

Q: Well, he left quite a wake in all of his travels, but getting back to Berlin, post-Wall, how much longer were you in Berlin after that? Quite a few more years?

HEICHLER: Five more years.

Q: Five more years. So you must have been there during Kennedy's visit - when was it - 1963?

HEICHLER: 1963. I worked on the Kennedy visit. I was a member of the control officer team. I was with Kennedy the whole eight hours he spent in Berlin. I drafted one of his speeches. It was actually not used the way I drafted it. I wrote the draft of the City Hall speech, but he used most it at the Free University, and so the famous line, "I am a Berliner," was not mine, I'm sorry to say.

Q: Well, it was a good line, in any case. That's the one that everyone remembers, but the visit was... By that time, I assume or I have the impression, the Germans were enthused about the United States again.

HEICHLER: Oh, they were all in love with Kennedy.

Q: Yes.

HEICHLER: Totally and completely, and if Jackie had come along, it would have been an even greater love feast. She didn't, which was a pity, because I would have liked to meet her at least once. I was tremendously taken by John Kennedy myself. He actually shook my hand, but that was because he took me for a German.

Q: Well... whatever works. What did he say besides "I am a Berliner" that struck a chord? Was it just simply his presence, the American presence, or was it his youthful enthusiasm?

HEICHLER: His youthful enthusiasm; it was the strength with which he spoke - I mean it was the whole powerful passage that led up to this "I am a Berliner." "If you want someone to see so-and-so, then let him come to Berlin," over and over. It was a fantastically good speech.

Q: Yes.

HEICHLER: There was this one little interplay I was privy to because I was standing two feet away from him during the minutes-long applause which erupted after the "I am a Berliner" line. The interpreter, taken by surprise, simply repeated the phrase in German. This interpreter was a Herr Weber, assigned by Adenauer as the best German-English interpreter in the Foreign office, but when Kennedy said, "*Ich bin ein Berliner,*" Herr Weber automatically repeated,*"Ich bin ein Berliner*." And Kennedy, who had this wry sense of humor, quickly leaned over to him and said, "Thank you for correcting my pronunciation."

Q: Yes, wonderful.

HEICHLER: A few of us overheard this and never forgot it.

Q: Well, it had a quite a play in the United States as well, the speech. I remember it very well.

HEICHLER: Of course it did.

Q: Yes.

HEICHLER: After that, during my last few years in Berlin, I was more occupied with internal politics.

Q: Before we go to that, it couldn't have been very long after that Kennedy was assassinated.

HEICHLER: Well, no. That came just a few months after that.

Q: And so what was the reaction in Berlin?

HEICHLER: Unbelievable. I've written that up (see endnote 5). Like most people I remember exactly where I was when we got the news of the assassination. The cultural affairs officer was giving a reception for returning Fulbright students, to which I was invited. And a few minutes after the reception began, we got the news on the radio that Kennedy had been shot. And very quickly thereafter came confirmation that he had been killed. Well, the reception broke up instantly, as did everything all over Berlin. It was amazing. Theaters closed. Movie houses closed. Restaurants closed. Bars closed. The city *died.*

Q: I believe that happened all over Germany.

HEICHLER: Yes. I went to the "bunker" - a situation room we had at headquarters which was used for emergency situations - spent the night there with colleagues from the mission and the military, mostly trying to figure out what to do -- protocol matters. Nobody knew what the protocol is when a sitting president dies. So we occupied our minds with that, and somebody was sent out to buy condolence books and this and that and the other thing, and it was a good way to keep from being emotionally overwhelmed. Nobody - but nobody - was prepared for the reaction of the Berliners - that once these condolence books had been placed in strategic locations, people would line up for days on end and blocks on end to sign them, millions of signatures. We got condolence notes from strangers, from neighbors, from waitresses who had once worked a cocktail party for us. The Army organized some particularly impressive military reviews for sad events like this, particularly powerful, slow, measured, muffled-drum kind of march. Willy Brandt was invited to the one the Army did at Andrews Barracks. One of the things the Army did was to position a bugler at each end of the parade ground to echo “Taps” back and forth between them, which was incredibly moving. And Willy sent for me - I was sitting a few feet away from him - and he said, "Herr Heichler, I am going to have a *Trauerfeier* (memorial service) at the Rathaus Monday night. I won’t be there; I'm going to the funeral in Washington, but would you please arrange for this exact same thing to be done at the Rathaus?"

Q: The bugles at this memorial service.

HEICHLER: I'm getting ahead of myself. Brandt had been on a trip to Africa, and he had only come back that evening and gone to bed because he was very tired. Charlie Hulick, whose name you may not know -

Q: Yes, I do know the name. H-U-L-I-C-K?

HEICHLER: --who was the political advisor - *de facto* DCM of the mission - and I spent hours trying to track him down, finally got him on the phone, told him the news. By pure coincidence, the governing bodies of the three university student organizations were

holding a meeting that evening, and when they got the news, they organized a spontaneous procession with candles -

Q: Of students.

HEICHLER: --of students, and people, ordinary people, passersby, kept joining this procession until by midnight there were 60,000 people standing in front of the Rathaus calling for Brandt to come and speak to them, because that was a Berlin tradition: if something bad happens, you go down to the Rathaus and wait for the mayor to tell you what's going on. And so we got Brandt up from his post-African nap, and he went down and made an impromptu speech -- one of his best -- during which he announced that he was flying to Washington to attend the funeral, but that in his stead, Mayor Albertz would preside over the *Trauerfeier*.

Q: Okay - 'condolence ceremony,' I guess you would translate it.

HEICHLER: Condolence ceremony, yes, or a memorial service.

Q: Memorial service, yes, sorry, memorial service.

HEICHLER: And the day after Brandt asked me to arrange this business with the two buglers. We put one on the Rathaus roof and the other on the roof of an insurance building, the Viktoria Versicherungsgesellschaft, on the other side of Rudolf Wilde-Platz, then immediately renamed John F. Kennedy-Platz. And for the first time ever in the history of postwar Berlin, the city invited an American honor guard, a platoon of American soldiers, to be deployed in front of the Rathaus. The city government traditionally had been careful to keep the American military away from there, but they broke with that principle that night. I was there, sitting in the bleachers with my wife, and the contrast between the jubilant throng of June 23, 1963, and that cold, misty November night four months later was emotionally shattering. There were not nearly so many people in the square, but still there were a few hundred thousand of them, now weeping rather than cheering. For four days this went on, four unbelievable days. I will tell you this: I'm not ashamed of it. I guess it was the fourth day, Sunday or Monday afternoon, the day of the funeral in Washington. I'd been working at the mission the entire weekend through, until late afternoon. For the day of the funeral of a sitting president, Army protocol called for six big guns, six howitzers, to be drawn up, three on each side of the flagpole, to fire all day long, every minute on the minute - one round in rotation every minute on the minute. This went on the entire day.

I went downstairs when it came time to lower the flag for the night, and they marched a platoon of infantry and a band up to the flagpole to play “Taps,” lower the flag, with the guns going off -- all of this at the same time. A few people, civilians like myself, stood around and watched this, and suddenly I started to cry.

Q: Well, it must have been wrenching and shattering.

HEICHLER: All this is in the papers I gave you.

Q: Well, I think Berlin probably was the most stirring place to be at that time. I remember, I was in Düsseldorf at that time, which did not have anywhere near the connection to Brandt, but the effect there, as I described to my oral history, was also very, very moving. People were crying in the streets who had no official function whatsoever.

HEICHLER: That's right. I was incredibly fortunate to have experienced all this myself, and then from 1963 on my last few years in Berlin were occupied with crises, crisis on the Autobahn, crisis with the last meeting of the Bundestag in Berlin, with Soviet MIG's buzzing the city in protest.

Q: So it was a time of harassment and lots of messy things to deal with.

HEICHLER: Messy things to deal with. And Brandt's own political ambitions. And I was, by dint of my position, the political officer assigned to report on Brandt and his doings and what he wanted, and I was sent to attend the SPD *Parteitage* (political conventions), even those held outside of Berlin.

Q: The SPD Party Congresses.

HEICHLER: And I remember Brandt's unsuccessful run for the Chancellorship in '64, after which there was not talking to him for weeks on end.

Q: Well, this was at the time after Adenauer, was this the Erhard time in Bonn, right? So it was kind of a transitional time in German politics.

HEICHLER: So it wasn't until after I had left Berlin that Brandt and - what's his name - sorry, the man who succeeded Erhard became chancellor. [trans note: Kurt Georg Kiesinger]

Q: After Erhard.

HEICHLER: I'm sorry, I've forgotten his name right now.

Q: Well, I have, too. We'll both have to look that up.

HEICHLER: Anyway -

Q: But then Brandt came in later.

HEICHLER: -- They formed a “grand coalition” (CDU-SPD) and Brandt became vice-chancellor and foreign minister.

Q: That's right.

HEICHLER: And then he became chancellor.

Q: Right.

HEICHLER: And remained chancellor until the Guillaume affair.

Q: That's right, in '74. So you were in Berlin, then, until -

HEICHLER: Until October of '65.

Q: October of '65, and then after that?

HEICHLER: After that: There was an officer named Frank Taylor, who was head of the Economic Section. I remember meeting him in the hall one day, and he asked me, "Lucian, what are you going to do after Berlin?" He said, "You are bilingual. You don't want the Foreign Service Personnel Office to think that you're making it just because you happen to be bilingual. Go do something altogether different" and show them what you can do without the crutch of your second language."

Q: By this time you were an FSO, right?

HEICHLER: Yes. He said, "Get out of this German business for a while." So I said, "Yes, actually I would like to do something different. I'd like to try my hand at economic reporting in a Third World country." And by coincidence, the Department was then organizing its first economics studies course, as an experiment, and I was chosen for that. There were 22 of us. Jacques Reinstein was the organizer of that course, and after I came back from Berlin, I attended this economics studies course at FSI for six months and then was sent to Cameroon.

Q: So this was the first time the Department actually had a formal training course for people doing economic reporting. What does that consist of? What was it, what kind of training?

HEICHLER: Well, it was very, very ambitious. It was supposed to be the equivalent of a master's degree in economics, obtained in six months.

Q: Well, that's quite an order, I would say.

HEICHLER: We worked like dogs. We had to ration our time for lunch. We had no free time whatever. At the end of the course we were asked to take the Graduate Record Examination for students of economics.

Q: Some kind of an aptitude test?

HEICHLER: No, after we'd finished.

Q: No, actually an achievement test, then.

HEICHLER: An achievement test, in which we scored 150 points above the national average.

Q: So it must have been extremely intense.

HEICHLER: And I came in first in the class.

Q: Well, congratulations - belatedly. What was it primarily? It must have been basic economic theory.

HEICHLER: It was macroeconomics. It was, you know -

Q: And then an emphasis on international trade, monetary, and all of that? There must have been an emphasis on the international side - or not?

HEICHLER: No, it was more Keynesian economics and money and banking, really very sophisticated.

Q: Who taught the course - I mean not necessarily people, but were they professors from universities?

HEICHLER: Yes. And we had some training in economic analysis and reporting from foreign countries, which unfortunately was sort of wasted on me, because the Third World country I was sent to was too primitive to keep any economic records -- with one single exception: the records of imports and exports maintained by the Customs Office -- and so I wasn't able to do much with the analytical reporting I had been taught to do, and I promptly forgot it again (So eager was I to make use of this sole source of economic data that I very nearly cost Cameroon its foreign aid. Nations trading with the “enemy” (the Warsaw Pact) were not eligible for AID help, and in my eagerness I once reported that Cameroon imported about $50 worth of Chinese spices a year from Red China, a purchase by the one and only Chinese restaurant in Douala. Some bean-counter in the Commerce Department caught this and rang the alarm bell. Fortunately, cooler heads in Washington prevailed, and our assistance to Cameroon continued.).

Q: Well, I'm sure some of it stuck. That course then was repeated, and years later became a very well-known and highly regarded course.

HEICHLER: Yes, it was expanded from 22 weeks to 26 weeks, and then was taught for... I don't know if it's still being taught or not, but it was an excellent, excellent course. I've never worked so hard in my whole life; I literally had to ration my time. I studied through lunch; I gave myself one hour for dinner with my family and went right back upstairs and hit the books until bedtime - that kind of thing. I made myself go to bed at 10:00 pm every night so that I would not burn myself out.

Q: So after that course, you did go to a Third-World country?

HEICHLER: Yes, I was sent to Cameroon (see endnote 6).

Q: And what was your job there?

HEICHLER: Economic/commercial officer.

Q: And you said that obviously not too many records were being kept. How big was the embassy, then, because Cameroon could not have been independent for all that long?

HEICHLER: No, Cameroon got its independence in 1960. The embassy was quite small. There was one economic officer, one political officer, a small AID mission of four or five people, one CIA man, a military attaché assisted by one enlisted man.

Q: What was he doing? I mean, why CIA in Yaoundé?

HEICHLER: Watching the Russians.

Q: Watching the Russians, and were they doing anything?

HEICHLER: They were watching us.

Q: They were watching us - okay. And this was at the time, I guess... Well, this would have been following in the wake of Kennedy's wanting an American flag to fly over every country in Africa, so we had an embassy in-

HEICHLER: Everywhere.

Q: Everywhere, including Yaoundé. So what did you do for - how many years was that?

HEICHLER: Two years. As the commercial officer, I tried hard to attract American business and investment, which was next to impossible to do, because the French had it sewn up, completely. Nominal political independence notwithstanding, Cameroon and its francophone neighbors in UDEAC (Union douaniére et economique africaine (African customs and economic union), consisting of the former French colonies of Cameroun, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, the Central African Republic and Gabon.) formed an integral part of the French economic empire, and behind a mile-high tariff wall it was almost impossible to sell any American product at less than 150 percent of its French price. By and large the only thing the Cameroonians bought from us was Caterpillar earth-moving equipment because they liked it and were willing to pay the tariff-inflated price.

Q: And what was it like to deal with the Cameroonians?

HEICHLER: They were rather pleasant. The people I dealt with were de facto black

Frenchmen. They had been taken off to France as young men and returned as senior civil servants, more chauvinistically French than the French. It was characteristic of them to bring French wives back with them to Cameroon. Since they'd already had African wives when they were taken from their villages and sent to France, this created problems, especially for the French wives who were obviously not welcome back in the tribal community, nor fully accepted in the "European" community of the capital.

Yaoundé had a diplomatic corps of 13 missions- (end of tape)

Q: So it sounds like Yaoundé was something of an incestuous place to live, in the sense that the French had the economic interests pretty much tied up, and it was a small mission, but yet was there a U.S. policy as such toward the Cameroon? Were we trying to achieve anything, or we were just flying the flag, essentially?

HEICHLER: We were just flying the flag.

Q: Flying the flag. Okay, did you have any opportunity to travel in the country?

HEICHLER: Yes, fortunately. Our enterprising young political ambassador loved to travel and loved to take staff people with him. We would load up two Land Rovers and off we went for 10 days at a time, trekking through the bush. And that was the most fun we had, because the town was a nothing, and the African bush I rather liked.

Q: What was interesting about it?

HEICHLER: The people.

Q: Did they speak French?

HEICHLER: No, for the most part they spoke only African languages, but somehow we managed to communicate. From the day that I arrived in Africa, I felt that the cities -- and the bigger the worse -- were the places where the European and African cultures clashed and brought out the absolute worst in each other. My next assignment, Kinshasa, certainly proved that beyond any additional proof, and from what I read, it does so now more than ever. Lagos was equally terrible, as I gathered from a couple of visits to that former Nigerian capital.

Q: And yet in the countryside you were able more to come in contact with the African culture?

HEICHLER: Yes, I found the Africans in their natural environment to be nice, generous, hospitable people. It seemed to me that there was no crime; there was no racial hatred; there was none of all the danger, crime, and general unpleasantness you ran into in the cities.

Q: So you were in Yaoundé until -

HEICHLER: '68.

Q: '68, and then after that?

HEICHLER: Two years in Zaire. (Now again the Democratic Republic of the Congo)

Q: Okay, well, we'll wind that up now and continue on that the next time.

HEICHLER: And then came Rome.

Q: Okay.

HEICHLER: The NATO Defense College, and so on and so on.

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Q: This is February 14, 2000. Lucian, when you receive the draft transcript of this interview, I thought you might want to incorporate some portions of your written essay on "Berlin Mourns Kennedy," which I had the pleasure to read, and I think it contains some details that you might not have included in your interview. Also, could we backtrack a little and discuss your conversion from Civil Service to Foreign Service status. I think you said something about its taking nine years. What was involved in that?

HEICHLER: Well, it was one of these bureaucratic nightmares, really. As I told you last time, when the position for which I was being cleared was put under the Foreign Service, I was given Foreign Service Reserve officer status.

Q: This was when you were in INR?

HEICHLER: Yes, this was in 1954, when I first joined the State Department. Oddly enough, had I been able to come on duty 19 days earlier, I would have become a regular FSO automatically, but I missed the deadline by 19 days. My security clearance had not yet come through, and I wasn't actually hired and on board until September 19, 1954. So I was given Foreign Service Reserve officer status -- a total misuse of a category designed for specialists hired to do a specific job for a specific number of years and then let go. However, there were many of us in that category, including those of our colleagues from other intelligence agencies who were using FSR status as a cover, the result being that there was a great deal of confusion as to which of us were CIA people and which of us were bonafide State Department people. And that is how I ended up in the East German publication *Who's Who in the CIA*.

Q: Oh, well, that made you famous then.

HEICHLER: Well, reasonably famous. I have a copy of that little book. The book is disappointing in that obviously it was simply copied wholesale from the so-called "stud

book" without any attempt by the “Stasi,” the East German intelligence service to add their own observations.

Q: The "stud book" being the Biographic Register of Foreign Service officers of the State Department.

HEICHLER: Yes, and FSR's were included in the Register (then still unclassified and publicly available from the Government Printing Office); so all the East Germans had to do was copy my entry for their *Who's Who in the CIA*.

Q: I see.

HEICHLER: In any event, in this peculiar FSR status you couldn't be promoted because in theory you were not there to climb the career ladder; you were there to do a specific job and get out. Actually, there was supposed to be a time limit of five years on these appointments, but that didn't apply in my case.

Q: Now what kind of specialists were they bringing in under FSR status at that time?

HEICHLER: Technicians, legal experts, that kind of thing. In my case, though, it was just a -

Q: --bureaucratic convenience?

HEICHLER: --a bureaucratic convenience, exactly. And what eventually made it possible to take the so-called "lateral entry" examination and join the career service, was a change in the pertinent legislation or rules and regulations (I'm not sure which). At first it was almost impossible. You needed a recommendation from your bureau assistant secretary endorsed by the Secretary of State himself to be promoted. Later, you were allowed to appear before a board and be tested and declared fit to serve as a regular Foreign Service officer. That made it easier - I guess it was in 1962. I was sent to Bonn and interviewed by a panel of my peers, three senior Foreign Service officers from the embassy.

Q: This was while you were stationed in Berlin.

HEICHLER: This was while I was stationed in Berlin. I didn’t ever have to take a written examination. I feel like something of a cheat because I got around the Foreign Service Entrance Examination altogether. I never took it.

Q: Hmm. Interesting.

HEICHLER: But I did have this oral interview, which was considered a bit of a joke by the people who administered the interview; they were all friends, colleagues and acquaintances of mine.

Q: They were all people who were at the embassy?

HEICHLER: Yes, they were all senior embassy people, counselors, minister counselors, heads of sections, and so on.

Q: Who already knew you?

HEICHLER: Or knew of me. Anyway, they passed me, and I was then sworn in as a career Foreign Service officer. I should add, though, that just before this, there had also been a change making it possible for FSR's like myself to be promoted, and so I finally got out of the class I had been in for nine years and was promoted to one higher grade, from FSR-5 to FSR-4, and then took that new grade with me to into the FSO category. My wife and I threw a so-called "lateral entry" party to celebrate the event; we made our guests come in through the side entrance of the house.

Q: Oh - yes.

HEICHLER: And a good time was had by all. I was very proud to be able finally to have calling cards printed which said "Foreign Service Officer of the United States of America" instead of "Foreign Service Reserve Officer of the United States of America." They used such calling cards at the mission, because the mission in Berlin had its own peculiar status as the de facto legitimate government of Berlin, and we had no such titles as first or second or third secretary.

Q: Okay, so you finally did make it into the Foreign Service officer ranks after nine years of actually doing essentially the same kind of Foreign Service work.

HEICHLER: Yes, and changing jobs within the Berlin Mission several times.

Q: Okay.

HEICHLER: Then, during my first year of service in Cameroon, I was promoted again, to FSO-3 and first secretary of embassy.

Q: Okay. So after Cameroon, where did you go?

HEICHLER: I was assigned to Kinshasa, Zaire, as head of the Economic Section, and at the same time deputy director of USAID.

Q: All right. Tell me a little bit about the size of the embassy at that time.

HEICHLER: It was quite a large embassy, maybe 200 people or so. It had an unusual feature in that USAID, itself quite a large mission of at least 60 Americans or more, was integrated with a four- or five-officer Economic Section in such a way that the AID director was also the economic counselor, and the head of the Economic Section automatically served as the deputy director of USAID.

Q: Right.

HEICHLER: For me that was a very interesting and educational experience. I was fortunate to have an excellent chief, with whom I became very close friends, Donald S. Brown.

Q: He was the AID Director.

HEICHLER: He was the AID director, yes, and the economic counselor of the embassy.

Q: How well did that integration work, actually, combining State Department economic officers with AID in one section? Was it a smoothly functioning section, or were the bureaucratic lines evident?

HEICHLER: I quickly came to the conclusion that this was entirely a function of personalities. If the two people involved at the top got along well together and wanted to work well together, it worked fine. If they didn't, if they were jealous of their prerogatives, if there were personal animosities, the system broke down completely - which it did, in fact, shortly after I left, after both Don Brown, my chief, and I left and new people took over who did not get along with each other. And as a result of this, I think, the entire integrated setup was abandoned a couple of years later.

Q: Yes, I haven't heard of too many AID and State Department Econ Sections integrated in that way since that time, so that's very interesting. Who was the ambassador at that time, do you recall?

HEICHLER: Sheldon Vance, who later retired and took up a practice of international law in Washington. I don't think he's living any more.

Q: So what was going on in Zaire at that time?

HEICHLER: It was actually, in relative terms, a fairly good period for Zaire. Zaire had come under the financial policy direction of the International Monetary Fund. The central bank was run by a senior functionary of the IMF, who rather restricted the excesses and incompetence of the people who otherwise ran the bank and the finance ministry. In addition, copper prices - the main income-producing export of the country - were fairly high and fairly stable, so that the Congolese economy as a whole was not doing too badly. That did not benefit the individual Congolese at all, to be sure -- they were as dirt-poor as ever -- and foreign assistance endeavors to improve things, to restore, for example, the transportation network left behind by the Belgians, which had fallen apart completely, got nowhere. Corruption, indifference and incompetence reigned supreme.

Q: Who was leading the Congo at that time? This was after all that turmoil with Lumumba and Tshombe and all that. That was all cleared up before that.

HEICHLER: It was well after that. By this time Joseph Desiré Mobutu (who later called

himself Mobutu Sese Seko) was firmly entrenched as president for life and dictator of the Congo as the head of a one-party state. I did not personally live through some of the more violent rebellions--like the attempt on the part of Katanga, later called Shaba Province, to break away - or the Simba Rebellion in the north of Zaire, the terrible troubles in Stanleyville, later known as Kisangani. So the country was relatively stable and relatively quiet, and in relative terms it was not a terribly bad time to be there. But I found the atmosphere difficult, poisoned by deep divisions and mutual hatred. The memory of Belgian treatment of the Congo, especially the atrocities committed many decades earlier under King Leopold, was still very much alive, and all whites were lumped together as "Europeans," whether they were American, Australian, or what, and despised in much the same way as the Belgians.

Q: So interacting with Congolese was not a pleasant thing?

HEICHLER: No, it was not. Interacting with the upper class of Congolese bureaucracy was civilized enough, normal, and there were far more opportunities for American business and American investment than there had been in the former French colonies. The Belgians had left behind their advisors, but they did not run the country from behind the scenes the way the French did in their former colonies. Under an 1884 treaty concluded in Berlin, which had sort of divided up Africa, the Congo Basin was declared a free-trade zone, and that was respected up until the time I was there. There were no tariff barriers to trade. Thus American firms were able to compete on an equal basis and did fairly well.

Q: What kind of industries or enterprises were the American firms engaged in?

HEICHLER: What comes to mind mostly are enormous construction companies like the Bechtel Corporation. The Congo was very interested at that time in developing a huge hydroelectric dam, the so-called Inga Dam, ideally capable of providing electric power to the entire country. And the contract for building this mammoth project went to the Bechtel Corporation. I think there was also a fair amount of business for communications companies, telephone links, that kind of thing. So there was more opportunity for the economic officer to assist American business and potential investors than there had been in Cameroon. I had one officer who served exclusively as commercial officer, another officer whose field was more theoretical economics and analysis.

Q: What other countries had significant business interests in the Congo?

HEICHLER: Germany, the Federal Republic, did. Belgium, of course, retained a great deal of its former influence and predominance, France some. I think the British as well, to some degree. There was so much raw material to exploit and to explore - not just copper but just about any kind of strategically vital mineral you can think of - and enormous quantities of diamonds, mainly industrial quality diamonds, but also some gem quality diamonds, mined in the Kasai and smuggled at a tremendous rate. There were strong links between South African and Congolese diamond mines. Interestingly enough - and I throw this in as a footnote - I came to know Maurice Tempelsman, the later companion

(de facto third husband) of Jackie Kennedy, quite well because Maurice was a diamond dealer who worked with De Beers in South Africa, kept an office and a permanent representative, a Belgian, in Kinshasa, who was part of the social scene, and Tempelsman himself visited the Congo at least once a year, when I always saw him at embassy functions, usually at the ambassador's home. Of course this was years before any of us ever dreamed that he would end up as the non-official last husband of Jacqueline Kennedy.

Q: Yes. What was the United States trying to accomplish, or what were our policy objectives in the Congo at that time? If we had an embassy of some 200 people, we must have considered it to be important to U.S. interests for some reason. For example, what was the AID mission doing in the Congo?

HEICHLER: The AID mission placed its main emphasis on the transportation sector, for example, restoring the fleet of river boats which plied the Congo River from Kinshasa northwards toward Kisangani. In theory this was definitely the right thing to do. The Congo is an enormously long river but is not navigable everywhere. It is not navigable between the Atlantic Ocean and Kinshasa, for example. There are the Stanley Falls. Then after Kisangani, again, there are rapids that interrupt it. But there are a couple of thousand miles of navigable river between former Stanleyville and former Léopoldville. Otraco, the Congolese company running its so-called "mail boats," was an important part of the transportation sector, and we supported that effort materially and technically. And we also tried to improve or restore the road network and the rail network, providing rolling stock, trucks and the like; but I found this all terribly frustrating because whatever was not absorbed in some way by corruption was defeated by indifference and incompetence.

Q: On the part of the Congolese.

HEICHLER: On the part of the Congolese, who would, for example, unload trucks from the port of entry and drive them away without any oil in the engines, whereupon they would, of course, immediately burn out and be left to rust behind the nearest tree in the rain forest. And I found all this quite discouraging.

Q: Yes, to say the least. Were there many American citizens in the Congo at that time?

HEICHLER: Yes, there were, for the most part missionaries, thousands of them. I don't remember the exact figure, but I think we had some 3,000 American missionaries scattered around the country.

Q: And how did they fare?

HEICHLER: They fared fairly well, and they differed quite a bit in their outlooks. Some of them were very, very conservative, not to say reactionary and racist, who saw their role entirely as paternalistic, treated the Congolese as children who would never advance beyond a certain level and who considered it their job solely to teach the Word of God, rather than to teach the people anything useful to earn their living. At the opposite end of

the spectrum there were people who got things done, who didn't worry too much about church and more about teaching efficient farming and the like. So we had both kinds. We had all kinds of missionaries covering a wide spectrum of American Protestant churches, not too many Catholic missions, as I remember. The children of these missionaries, to a large degree, lived in Kinshasa in huge hostels supervised by missionary couples who served as host parents.

Q: I see, while their parents were off in the country somewhere.

HEICHLER: And these kids constituted about two-thirds of the population of the American school of Kinshasa, and they were the wildest bunch you can imagine. Talk about adolescent rebellion, smoking pot, and all the rest!

Q: Missionaries' children were wild?

HEICHLER: Yes, they were the wildest bunch. They were far wilder than the embassy kids or the business community kids who made up the other two-fifths of the school population.

Q: It might be interesting for you to comment... I assume you've read The Poisonwood Bible.

HEICHLER: I'm in the middle of it, actually.

Q: Yes, well, it's a very interesting commentary on... Actually, that took place in the Congo before your time-

HEICHLER: About '58-59.

Q: Okay, so anyway, missionaries' children. That's a wonderful book.

HEICHLER: I am quite fascinated by the book because I knew missionaries just like that and little communities in the bush just like the one that's featured in *The Poisonwood Bible.* But you asked me another question before, which we left by the wayside, and that was what of the American strategic objective? I would say it was mostly to keep the Russians out of Zaire; rightly or wrongly, the U.S. considered the country an important Cold War battlefield, and for this reason we supported Mobutu even though we were well aware of what a ruthless crook he was.

Q: So it was in the context of the Cold War.

HEICHLER: It was a Cold War battlefield more than anything else.

Q: And were the Russians there? Was there a large Soviet presence in the Congo at that time?

HEICHLER: There was, I think, but it was not overwhelming, and I must admit I don't really remember it. I remember the Soviets in Cameroon so much more clearly because they were our next-door neighbors and we had some social contact with them.

Q: What were the Soviets trying to achieve in the Cameroon?

HEICHLER: Well, I think, like us, they felt they had to fly the flag. They didn't seem to have any practical objectives that could easily be fulfilled, and their people didn't seem particularly competent, linguistically or otherwise. There seemed to be something rather pathetic about the utter futility of the Soviet presence in Cameroun. At one point my son was given a school assignment to write a report about one country, and he chose Russia. He walked over to the Soviet Embassy to ask whether they had any useful material for him in English, and they fell all over themselves, loading him up with cheaply printed books and brochures about the USSR, some of it propaganda, some of it objective fact. I think he may have been the only customer they had in years.

The Soviets in Zaire I don't really remember. We had, I think, a large CIA presence, which was there to watch the Soviets, not to concern itself particularly with Congolese politics. But my knowledge of that whole part of things is rather fuzzy and limited.

Q: Okay. Did you have the opportunity to travel much in Zaire at that time?

HEICHLER: Not a great deal, because there were no passable roads or waterways. You couldn't travel more than a few miles outside of Kinshasa in an ordinary automobile, and beyond that, even travel by jeep or Land Rover became difficult. We did have an arrangement for a while with the Mobil Oil company, which had a two-engine Piper Aztec with a Belgian pilot. They had been just about to give up the plane because they felt it wasn't cost-effective, and the embassy made an arrangement with them whereby we would have use of the plane one week of the month and thereby help defray its expenses. That wasn't a bad arrangement. It worked for a while, and I went along on a number of these flights into places in Zaire that I would otherwise never have been able to see. In addition to that, our military had its own little air force.

Q: I was going to ask about that.

HEICHLER: We had an old DC-4, nicknamed the *Bluebird*, which was reserved for the use of the ambassador. The military attaché had a small plane, nicknamed the *Bug Smasher,* and the U.S. military assistance mission to the Congo, COMISH, had an old cargo plane, I think a C-123, which was called *The Gray Ghost*, used for taking supplies to the Congolese Army and for larger embassy excursions.

Q: What did you have in the way of military attachés - Army, Air Force?

HEICHLER: We had an Army colonel who was the senior military attaché, and the above-mentioned sizable American military mission called COMISH.

Q: Which was doing what?

HEICHLER: Helping to train and supply the Congolese army. Their *Gray Ghost* sometimes flew us to places the ambassador wanted to visit along with his staff. I remember going along on some of those trips. But almost all the travel I ever did in Zaire was by air, and it was not that frequent.

Q: And what was the ambassador doing on these trips? Speeches?

HEICHLER: Speeches, ceremonies, book presentations.

Q: Was there a significant USIS program at the time?

HEICHLER: Yes.

Q: Okay.

HEICHLER: I remember that we made much of our space program in those days, but we found it difficult to convince our Congolese audience that the Apollo Program was not a put-up job. They suspected us of having made these moon landing films in Hollywood and then pretending that they were the real thing.

Q: Did any of the Congolese leaders go to the United States at that time? Was there any kind of an exchange program going on?

HEICHLER: I think there was some. Mobutu was a regular guest at the White House. I don't have any details.

Q: It just seems now reading the papers right now, recently, there have been several large articles on the Congo and the sorry state that it's in now with all kinds of rebellions, and other African countries muscling in and so on. Do you have any comments on that in the light of there we were back in the late '60s and then what has become of the Congo now?

HEICHLER: Well, it was well on the way downhill then, and I'm not at all surprised that it's gone further downhill. I don't have any great hopes for it. I don't think that Laurent Kabila, the current president, is any great improvement over Mobutu. He may be more honest, but I don't see any indication of greater democracy or freedom or any move toward a more open society. I'm not sure, in fact, that the country is even ready for it as yet. Mobutu used to visit the United States regularly, because he was, you know, at that time considered a friend and a trusted ally against the Soviets, with Zaire considered a key piece on this great chessboard.

Q: Well, it certainly has a lot of resources.

HEICHLER: Yes.

Q: But it's also cursed with many neighbors now who, I guess, would like to have a piece of all of those resources.

HEICHLER: Sure, yes. Their great tragedy was having these resources and never being sufficiently organized to exploit them effectively, or at least to their own advantage. The Belgian society, the Société Générale and its subsidiary, *Gecomines*, that ran the Katangese copper mines before independence was enormously efficient at becoming enormously rich and making Belgium enormously rich. Well, then it was nationalized. Zaire didn't get much out of all this, though. Zaire continued to sell its raw copper on the world market and had to buy back the far more expensive finished products, the usual problem between the developed and underdeveloped world.

Q: Okay, so do you have anything further to say about your time in Zaire?

HEICHLER: It was an unhappy time for me, and I think for just about everybody except the kleptocrats at the top. As I said before, I felt uncomfortable there. I felt frustrated, professionally frustrated. I felt that personally I wasn't accomplishing much of anything, that I was not in a position to accomplish much of anything. I remember one moment of particular frustration, when Congress had voted a $10 million loan to Zaire that we had lobbied for long and hard, only to have Mobutu announce on the very same day that he was going to spend $10 million on a monument to Patrice Lumumba in the center of Kinshasa, in the form of a kind of space needle, *à la* Seattle, with a rotating restaurant in it. And I hit the roof.

Q: Understandably. And what was the reaction in Washington when they heard about that?

HEICHLER: None that I'm aware of. There may have been some, but it didn't get down to me.

Q: And Mobutu no doubt said this was essential for national unity or some such thing?

HEICHLER: Yes, whatever.

Q: Okay. And what was it like living in Zaire? I mean daily life.

HEICHLER: We lived fairly comfortably. Kinshasa was really two separate cities, the old Belgian *Ville* and the *Cité*, which is black Kinshasa, the two quite separate. We lived on a lovely tree-lined street, about a block away from the ambassador's residence. We were allowed to use his pool. We had a big, comfortable old house and really lacked for nothing.

Q: And how was personal security? When you mentioned that Congolese did not care for Europeans, which included Americans, was there ever any sense of personal danger at that time?

HEICHLER: Yes, there was. We personally did not experience any violence, but there were far more burglaries, holdups and violent crime than there had been in Cameroon, and also one had to be very much concerned about the lack of discipline on the part of the army and the police, who were corrupt and not well disciplined, especially Mobutu's elite corps, his paratroopers, to be considered a real menace if one ran afoul of them. We had constant horror stories about harassment by the traffic police, who would use the pretext of the slightest infraction to hit somebody up for bribes, or else then pretend that the bribe was another crime and drag the victim off to the police station and goodness knows what.

The following story does not lend itself particularly well to oral history, because you have to see rather than read it, but we had a wonderful tale about a young American secretary, recently arrived, who while driving on the Boulevard Trente Juin -- the main drag of Kinshasa -- stopped six inches beyond the white line. And the policeman promptly pulled her over and lectured and lectured and lectured, and she cowered in her seat and finally the policeman said to her, *"Mademoiselle, quelle couleur est-ce que je suis?"* (What color am I?) And she said, Oh, my Lord, now he's going to start on the race business. And so she said, "*Ô Monsieur, vous êtes marron clair.*" (You are light brown). And he replied, "*Imbécile! Quand je suis comme ça, je suis vert. Quand je suis comme ça, je suis rouge."* (Idiot! When I stand this way, I am green. When I stand that way - [at a 90 degree angle] - I am red). A favorite story. It probably wasn't true, but-

Q: Well, interesting, but that sounds like a relatively peaceful incident. I know you weren't in the consular section, but were there any interesting consular cases at that time that you remember, I mean with all those missionaries out there in Zaire, anything dramatic happen?

HEICHLER: I'm afraid I don't remember any of this.

Q: There probably were, but we'd have to interview a consular officer for that. All right, so you left Kinshasa in 1970, was it?

HEICHLER: 1970, yes.

Q: And then?

HEICHLER: Then I applied for senior training and was assigned to the NATO Defense College in Rome, which promised to be a more interesting experience in some ways than the War College because of the presence of students from at least 12 different NATO countries and a mixed faculty (see endnote 7). The NATO Defense College had been attached to NATO headquarters in Paris until the '60s, when De Gaulle forced NATO out of France. At that point the Italians invited the Defense College to Rome, while the Belgians asked NATO headquarters to move to Brussels. The school was given new and very elegant and comfortable quarters in a modern suburb (EUR), south of Rome. The student body varied between 50 and 60 officers, most of them military, from most of the NATO countries, with established quotas reflecting the importance and size of the

member nation. The United States and the United Kingdom each had eight slots; other countries had respectively fewer. The American delegation was always made up of two Army colonels, two Navy captains, one Air Force colonel, one Marine colonel, and one Foreign Service officer. Have I got eight? I think I do.

Q: I think so.

HEICHLER: For the American Foreign Service officer and his family, Embassy Rome kept an odd little furnished apartment near the College, a great little Art Deco place full of funky furniture that seemed to have come from somebody's attic. That's where we lived and had fun for, oh, about six or eight months. Since we were not part of the embassy staff, my wife had no Foreign Service responsibilities and could enjoy Rome at leisure. In fact we had practically no contact with the embassy at all except for being allowed to use the commissary. Once I tried to pay a protocol call on the ambassador, thinking that it behooved me to do so. Apparently this was considered very strange, 18th century behavior on my part, and I never got an answer to my request.

Q: So you were essentially, then, under the NATO umbrella at that time.

HEICHLER: At the college we didn't learn much, nor did we work very hard there. We kept to a very leisurely pace. We started the day around 10 o'clock with a one-hour lecture, never given by a member of the faculty but always by a visiting lecturer. This was followed by an hour of discussion and questions. Then came a long, leisurely lunch to recover from our exertions. Then, naturally, everybody wanted to take a nap, but instead we were made to do so-called “committee work.” We were broken up into eight different committees of mixed nationality -- a psychologically clever move to break down national barriers and instead build a sense of friendly competition and rivalry among the committees.

Q: All right.

HEICHLER: Psychologically that worked remarkably well, with committees trying to outdo each other in the work they did.

Q: So what were you working on in these committees - supposedly?

HEICHLER: Supposedly - we were given the task to produce a major paper or two in the course of our time there - I think two papers. I remember one that we (or rather, I) wrote in my committee on Soviet political, economic, and strategic influence in the Middle East. I had a British naval captain, the only one of us in the committee who had ever been anywhere near the area, and he and I sort of cobbled the paper together. The others didn't do a heck of a lot; they didn’t speak very good English or French.

The official languages of the college, of course, were the same as those of NATO - French and English, which most of the students were supposed to be able to speak. If they didn't speak these languages well enough, they were given the opportunity to study them.

Those of us who were already considered reasonably proficient in both English and French were given a chance to learn Italian, of which I availed myself every morning. We had a small class of people (about four officers) studying Italian for an hour, which I found quite delightful and, regretfully, did not continue after the college experience was over. All four of us were in love with our teacher, the 25-year-old pretty and vivacious Francesca, fiancée of an Italian army *tenente*.

The high points of the whole college experience were two trips to the different NATO countries. As I was there during the winter term, we visited the so-called southern tier of NATO in Europe. We started in Brussels for briefings at NATO headquarters in Evère and then visited NATO installations in Germany, Italy, Greece, and Turkey. On our second trip we flew to Portugal and North America to visit installations in Canada and the United States, all of which was quite fascinating. In the United States we were flown all the way to Wyoming and Utah to see the Minute Man missile sites. We were taken to the joint U.S.-Canadian NORAD Command deep inside Cheyenne Mountain (supposedly immune to nuclear attack), to the then new Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, to the Martin Marietta aircraft factory near Atlanta, Georgia which produced the giant C-5A cargo plane -- the world's largest aircraft.

Q: The trip of your NATO college class to the United States must have been very interesting not only to you, of course, but also to your colleagues from other countries. What kind of reaction did they have to these visits?

HEICHLER: I think much the same as I. The visits evoked real interest and left a deep impression. For the American contingent it was psychologically a somewhat strange and ambivalent experience to be guests of our own country as members of a foreign delegation and at the same time to feel some obligation as Americans to play host to our foreign colleagues and show them what we proudly wanted them to see - the sights of Washington, for example, and generally anything that seemed to us particularly good and interesting about the United States. But that little schizophrenic thing was just a small part of the entire experience. These trips were very comfortable, in that we had our own airplanes. This is no longer true today; today the College travels by commercial air. But on our first trip, the Belgian Air Force made a plane available to us which we kept throughout as our private plane. On the second tour, an old British Royal Air Force "Britannia" took us across the Atlantic and from there we flew in a U.S. Air Force C-140 cargo plane, unfortunately without windows in the passenger compartment.

Shepherding the 60 or 80 of us who took these trips was one American naval captain on the staff of the college who served as trip coordinator and worked terribly hard to keep this whole unruly herd together, keep them from getting lost, keep them on time and on schedule and so forth, and he did a fantastic job. He kept his promises -- or, rather, threats -- if a student missed a scheduled departure time, he flew commercially -- and at his own expense -- to catch up with the main body at the next stop.

We were fairly well housed, although a lot of the hotels left much to be desired because some of the poorer NATO countries like Greece and Turkey paid only a small per diem,

and so the accommodations were tailored to what individual members could afford. If we had been, let's say, only Americans or Germans, we could have lived better, but that was all right. I remember staying in a terribly overheated little hotel in Ottawa where we could hardly sleep because of the heat. It was midwinter, and the temperature in the rooms must have been about 90. In Washington, they put us up in a hotel at K and 14th Street, on the edge of the red light district. But in other places the accommodations were beautiful. There is a hotel called The Antlers, in Colorado Springs, which is as luxurious and pleasant as any place I had ever stayed, so things balanced out. And we were treated everywhere with great attentiveness and hospitality by our hosts. The further west we got in the United States, the better that got.

Q: Were the representatives from the other countries primarily military, or were there some diplomats in your class from other countries?

HEICHLER: That depended on the size of the delegation. There were very few other diplomats. There was one Norwegian, who was, in fact, I think not a diplomat at all but some kind of non-military government servant. I think there were also a Greek and a German civilian, but for the most part, they were all military men.

Q: Did your class become involved in any of the issues that were being discussed within NATO at that time?

HEICHLER: Oh, yes.

Q: And what were some of those issues? This would have been 1971.

HEICHLER: Well, I can't remember specifics, but I can assure you they were principally Cold War issues - whatever was going on between the West and the Warsaw Pact at the time -- no longer the time of the great Berlin Crisis; that was behind us.

Q: That was done.

HEICHLER: Yes, that was done. The big new agreements between Bonn and Moscow/Warsaw and Washington and Moscow had been signed, finally regularizing what had been known as “interzonal trade” and the movement of people between Berlin and West Germany, and so that was off the table for the time being.

Q: Did you ever have discussions about the U.S. commitment to Europe? There always seemed to be that underlying anxiety that when the chips were down perhaps the U.S. might not come to Europe's defense. Did that ever surface?

HEICHLER: Oh, yes.

Q: Wasn't that - yes.

HEICHLER: It did. What we discussed depended primarily on the lecture of the day.

Q: Okay.

HEICHLER: I think as a group we were mentally rather lazy otherwise. We did our committee work; we enjoyed ourselves at lunch; we drank entirely too much. Our ample lunches in the College dining room were washed down with the nice dry white wines of the *Colli Albani* and followed by Sambuca - the popular Italian anis liqueur which is always served with an uneven number of coffee beans floating in the glass.

Q: You made good friends?

HEICHLER: We made good friends, yes.

Q: Which is useful, potentially.

HEICHLER: Very good friends with a Norwegian colonel and his wife, with a British Royal Marine colonel with whom we stayed in touch for years after. We lost touch with the Americans rather quickly. There was a lot of partying, a lot of visiting back and forth, and the College also arranged regular cultural visits for us within Rome. At least once a week we were bussed to the Colosseum or the Pantheon or whatever, and we had--every NATO Defense College course has or had--our audience with the Pope.

Q: Do you have lasting impressions of that?

HEICHLER: I have this one great photo of Pope Paul VI surrounded by NATO Defense College children, all angling to get a papal medal out of him, all appropriately dressed in little white mantillas. My pushy Episcopalian daughter pressed herself forward and managed to snag a papal medal, which she still has.

Q: So, a memento of a special moment.

HEICHLER: Yes.

Q: All right.

HEICHLER: I have one special photo album containing all the publicity pictures from Berlin, the big glossies I used to get from the city government protocol office that showed me with the Kennedys and God knows whom all else, you know, and I have the picture of the Pope with our delegation in there as well, along with other mementos..

Q: Okay.

HEICHLER: They are nice mementos to have.

Q: So I assume the NATO Defense College is still in existence.

HEICHLER: Yes, it is, and every year it holds a reunion of its alumni, called *les anciens du collège*, and I did attend one while we were in Bern, not too far away to go. The British colonel I just mentioned (then posted in Brussels), his wife, and we drove down to Rome and attended the reunion and had a good time. But that was the only time I ever went back. I still get the occasional letter in French and English inviting me to the next reunion of the college. I'm still considered an *Ancien* of Course 37 of the NATO Defense College.

Q: Well, perhaps you will get there again some day.

HEICHLER: That's possible but not likely.

Q: So it sounds like it was a very interesting and relaxing year, but still, I would say, worthwhile.

HEICHLER: Worthwhile, yes, I did learn something. It was an interlude not to be dismissed as entirely unserious, although we all could have worked a lot harder. I don't know how much harder they work at the War College or the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. I suspect they work a little harder than we did, but probably not all that much.

Q: Probably not all that much, yes. Well, after the NATO Defense College, where did you go?

HEICHLER: With characteristic Personnel logic, I was then assigned to neutral Bern, Switzerland, as political officer of the embassy.

Q: Of course, to a country which was not in NATO.

HEICHLER: Yes, that struck me as peculiar.

Q: It sounds strange having sent you for a year's training in NATO and politico-military matters and then you go to neutral Switzerland, although, of course, you did have the language, which would have been very useful, I'm sure.

HEICHLER: Yes. I had, in fact, both languages. I had French and German.

Q: Yes. So you were a political officer in the embassy?

HEICHLER: Yes. I actually played a dual role, because just about at that time USIA decided to abolish its program in Switzerland.

Q: Why was that?

HEICHLER: Budgetary reasons.

Q: I see, okay.

HEICHLER: And the embassy - I think it was the embassy as much as the State Department desk, I'm not sure which - who persuaded USIA to keep the program running under the direction of a Foreign Service officer whom USIA wouldn't have to pay. So the arrangement was that the political officer, in addition to his upstairs duties, would run USIS with its three Swiss national employees and supervise the very modest USIS effort. Thus I became, in addition to political officer, the embassy press and information officer and cultural attaché.

Q: Now how large was the embassy in Switzerland?

HEICHLER: It was fairly small.

Q: You were the one political officer - political officer/USIA?

HEICHLER: There was one political officer, one economic officer.

Q: Consular, I assume.

HEICHLER: Yes.

Q: Administrative.

HEICHLER: Yes, and a sizable CIA presence, as well as other Washington agency representatives such as an agricultural attache, a legal (FBI) attache, etc.

Q: Who was the ambassador then?

HEICHLER: Shelby Cullom Davis.

Q: Oh, yes.

HEICHLER: He was a non-career Nixon political appointee, a very wealthy investment banker who has left us the Shelby Cullom Davis Foundation, a name that you will find here and there around Washington and other places.

Q: And how was he as an ambassador?

HEICHLER: Well, the best that I could say for him is that he didn't meddle.

Q: He didn't meddle in what?

HEICHLER: In the work of the embassy.

Q: In the work of the embassy - all right.

HEICHLER: When I first arrived, we had an energetic and competent DCM, Richard D. Vine. The ambassador did his bit with a great deal of entertaining, which he did very well. He worked very hard at remembering the names of his guests. It was rumored that he put their names up around his mirror when he shaved in the afternoon and memorized them. He did well at that. He gave a black-tie dinner for 20 Swiss guests at least three or four nights a week and spent a great deal of his own money in the process. Other than that he didn't concern himself much with the political or economic work of the embassy. He let Dick Vine do it, and Dick, you know, was a sufficiently clever diplomat to let the ambassador feel that he, the ambassador, was in charge. He kept the ambassador informed, and there were no particular clashes. But basically, Dick ran the embassy.

Q: Okay, and how did the Swiss react to the ambassador - apparently fairly well socially, I gather?

HEICHLER: Yes. They didn't take him particularly seriously. They were well used to grief. They'd had much worse before him; they had much worse after him.

Q: I was going to say, if the ambassador had the good sense to let the DCM run the embassy, I think that's a good arrangement, better than some, I would say.

HEICHLER: Yes, and the Swiss had almost never had a professional diplomat as the American ambassador; in fact they've had to put up with some pretty awful people, both before and after Shelby Cullom Davis.

Q: So what was the United States trying to accomplish vis-à-vis Switzerland?

HEICHLER: First and foremost, to maintain good, friendly, stable relations - close economic and financial relations and the like. There were no real issues to be worked out. It was all pretty dull, because none of the business that's, you know, come up in the last few years had yet raised its ugly head. No one even suspected any of it, at least no one I knew..

Q: And you're referring to Nazi gold and so on?

HEICHLER: Yes, right, exactly. And also the Swiss refusal to take in Jewish refugees, even the Swiss suggestion that the Nazis put the big red letter “J” in Jewish passports to make them more easily recognizable

Q: So at that time there was really no -

HEICHLER: The Swiss kept feeding us the line about of their plucky, heroic resistance to the Nazis, their stout anti-Nazi attitude, and their threat that it would cost Hitler a million men if he tried to attack them, and that's why they were never attacked and all that good stuff. And the fact that they had fairly close relations with Germany during the war was never mentioned at all.

Q: Right. And that's all been very recently revealed.

HEICHLER: Yes, long after my time. I had basically rather a boring time there. Now this little anecdote may amuse you. This was, after all, my first political job since Berlin. In Berlin I had gotten very spoiled. I had no basis for comparison, Berlin having been my first and only political post. And I was in Berlin during the crisis years. I was at the center of the universe. To me it was only natural that not only the Department but the White House and even the President read our cables--

Q: Yes.

HEICHLER: --and was interested in every last bit that we could dream up to report. And naively, when I got to Switzerland, I assumed that it would be the same there. So I began to cast about for things to report on, there being nothing obvious to do.

Q: Now, you see, you should have gone after that Nazi gold.

HEICHLER: Yes.

Q: But none of us knew that was lurking in the background.

HEICHLER: Being somewhat interested in political theory, although not schooled in it, I decided to draft a series of what we still called "despatches" in those days -- later known as “airgrams.” For instance, I wrote a long and learned treatise on the rather peculiar nature of the Swiss government, with its presidency rotating annually among the seven federal councilors, and I wrote a series of long essays devoted to each of the major Swiss political parties represented in Parliament. And all this stuff went off to Washington, where it sank without a trace.

Q: I'm sure they went into the files somewhere.

HEICHLER: And I remember the put-down I got when I came back on my first home leave and consultation. The then head of AIS - the Austria-Italy-Switzerland Desk - this was before -

Q: All right, yes, okay.

HEICHLER: Beaudry (I think it was)....

Q: Austria-Italy-Switzerland was one Desk in the Bureau of European Affairs, obviously. Yes, I'd forgotten that was the combination at that time.

HEICHLER: It was the office that preceded the EUR/CE Division.

Q: Okay.

HEICHLER: Anyway, whoever the director was -- it might have been Beaudry, I'm not sure - anyway, we had a pleasant hour's conversation in his office, and he figuratively patted me on the head and said that they already had a lot to read and didn't consider it necessary for me to send in all this stuff, and if I would just report on the outcome of the Swiss elections every four years, it would probably do. I felt rather put down by that.

Q: Yes, I can well imagine. Well, I can see that it would have been something of a - what should I say? - boring, stagnant - whatever - situation in a sense, because Switzerland was not involved in NATO, which was the big thing in those days, nor was it in the European Community -

HEICHLER: Nor in the UN.

Q: Nor in the UN. How did the Swiss see their role in the world - or didn't they?

HEICHLER: Well, they did see their role in the world as standing firmly on their principles of strict neutrality and non-involvement and their traditional role as arbitrators of disputes, if called upon. They were extremely proud of having gotten into this business way back when, and that produced an interesting little job for me.

I don't know if you have heard of the so-called *Alabama Claims.*

Q: Vaguely, I do recall.

HEICHLER: The *Alabama* was a Confederate raider built in Britain which preyed with deadly effectiveness on Northern merchant shipping during the Civil War. After the war the United States government sued Britain for damages; we calculated that Britain owed us $15 million by way of compensation. For the first time in history, the two nations agreed to submit this dispute to international arbitration and to abide by the decision of an international tribunal. A panel of five judges was assembled in Geneva, consisting of representatives of the U.S., the U.K., Italy, Switzerland, and the Emperor of Brazil. The panel found in favor of the U.S. -- and Britain actually paid up! The deliberations or the trial, or whatever you want to call it, were held in a large, elegant room in the Geneva City Hall, a room which was then named the *Salle de l'Alabame* - the Alabama Room - and was used to sign the charter of the League of Nations at the end of World War I.

When the centenary of the settlement of the Alabama Claims rolled around in 1972 or 73, while I was in Bern, the government of "the Republic and Canton of Geneva" approached me as the cultural attaché of the embassy, announced its plans to celebrate this anniversary and asked for some United States assistance in terms of mementos, exhibits, and anything else that we could provide for them. I enthusiastically got into this act and corresponded with Washington, which came up with some good stuff from the Archives. I went back and forth between Bern and Geneva a few times to help set up this exhibit, got a chance to visit the beautiful, impressive *Salle de l'Alabame* (done up all in red), and I had a great time. It was a nice diversion. I had actually known about the *Alabama*

Claims from a graduate course in diplomatic history I took in 1947.

Q: Yes, that's where my vague recollection comes from, yes. But I recall - as you know, later I was on the Swiss-Austrian Desk in the Department - the Swiss are very prickly about their neutrality and their sovereignty and so on. During your tenure in Switzerland did you have any problems with U.S. government agencies wanting to do business directly on Swiss soil? You know, the Swiss always wanted agencies like the Securities and Exchange Commission or the FBI to make the proper routings through the Swiss government itself before doing anything like issuing subpoenas and so on to Swiss. Did you have any problems like that?

HEICHLER: I was not aware of them.

Q: Or was that later we just had all kinds of pressures?

HEICHLER: I had no personal experience or knowledge of this. We had an FBI -

Q: -attaché.

HEICHLER: --attaché, the so-called legal attaché at the embassy, but I never talked to him about his work.

Q: Well, he probably did know all the niceties that he was supposed to do with the Swiss. It was just later, I think, particularly, when I was on the Desk, that the Securities and Exchange Commission people used to be sending in subpoenas and so on directly to Switzerland, which made the Swiss government extremely unhappy.

HEICHLER: No, I was blissfully unaware of those things, I must say.

Q: Well, Dick Vine was very much aware of it. He always mentored me on that particular issue when I was on the Desk. I would imagine -

HEICHLER: I mostly concentrated, as I said, on the bit of political reporting and the contacts that I maintained and on the USIS program, which, when I got there, consisted mainly of a film lending library and which I expanded to publicize our space program. There was an ambitious, interesting man in Lucerne trying to start a Swiss air and space museum, which may still exist for all I know, and he and I worked together to try to get him some American assistance in the form of space rocket models and things like that.

Q: In any event, I'm sure living in Switzerland must have been very pleasant.

HEICHLER: It was pleasant. And it was dull. The Swiss were not particularly pleasant to live among, being obsessively fond of litigation, rude and rather harsh. We were lucky in having good neighbors, but... And we did have a lot of contact with “built-in” Swiss friends through the Swiss-American Society which I served (as part of my job) as the American vice president. There had to be a Swiss and an American vice president. And

we did a lot of social stuff -- parties, dances, excursions -- which was fun.

Q: And the diplomatic community in Switzerland - was it an active group, or not? There must have been a lot of countries represented.

HEICHLER: Quite a lot, I think. At least 60 missions, maybe more. And yes, it was active. I don't recall off-hand that we saw very much of one another. Our ambassador had a regular monthly luncheon with the Soviet ambassador, at whose initiative I'm not sure, but once a month they would come to us or we would go to them, have a meal and a polite, restrained discussion which never led to anything. It was more *pro forma* than anything else.

Q: Okay, so is that it for little neutral Switzerland?

HEICHLER: That's it for little neutral Switzerland.

Q: And after Switzerland? This would be now -

HEICHLER: That was 1973. I finally came home, after almost 14 years of nearly uninterrupted overseas service--

Q: That is a long time.

HEICHLER: --the only interruption, actually, being that six months-long economic studies course I attended in 1966. Other than that, we stayed overseas just about the whole 14 years. Then I came back, and as you know, you and I worked together in EUR/CE. I started out there as the economic officer for the office as a whole.

Q: So this was in 1973.

HEICHLER: Yes, when Jimmy Sutterlin was still there as the office director.

Q: Jimmy Sutterlin was the - what did they call it at that time? Was it now called -

HEICHLER: Office director.

Q: Oh, office director.

HEICHLER: Don’t they still call it that?

Q: Yes, they do, that's right. So this was in '73, you were economic officer in EUR/CE at that time. The initials EUR/CE - Europe--Office for Central European Affairs. And how was that structured at that time?

HEICHLER: Besides the director, there was his deputy and then there was your desk, for one.

Q: Well, I arrived '75, so -

HEICHLER: But there already was a desk.

Q: Right, there was an Austrian-Swiss Desk, and Liechtenstein - Austria, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein Desk.

HEICHLER: And then there was a desk for the FRG.

Q: Federal Republic of Germany.

HEICHLER: Actually staffed with two, maybe three officers.

Q: Okay.

HEICHLER: And two more officers for GDR and Berlin affairs, respectively.

Q: East Germany and Berlin.

HEICHLER: One of whom, during my time there, was John Kornblum.

Q: Yes. He was at that time doing... Berlin? Or-

HEICHLER: Actually, I think he was doing GDR affairs.

Q: Okay, he was doing GDR, that being the German Democratic Republic, okay. And you were economic officer for the entire office, all those countries.

HEICHLER: Yes.

Q: Okay.

HEICHLER: And then, when Elwood Williams retired, I was made the senior desk officer for the Federal Republic of Germany.

Q: Okay, let's just pause for a minute and talk a little bit about Elwood Williams. I mentioned him in my oral history as well, and I think you mentioned him earlier in connection with your assignment to Berlin and so on. He really was a pillar of German affairs in the Department for many years.

HEICHLER: Yes, he was an almost mythical figure, and he was a man whom I grew genuinely to love. It's an odd expression for a man to use for another man, but it was true. I developed the greatest respect for him years earlier, when I was supplying him with biographic information. When I went to see him in his office -- helplessly confined to his wheel chair, able just to use one hand which habitually held a cigarette -- and his personal

assistant happened not to be around, he quite naturally asked me to help him with physical things like taking him to the bathroom and anything else that he couldn't do by himself, and I felt deeply honored to do these things. It didn't put me off - quite the contrary. And we talked some, you know, about personal things, and grew to like each other very much. But I never suspected that he thought well enough of me to pick me out of a hat when it came time to find an interim replacement for the labor officer position in Berlin. Later, while I was still in Berlin - I think this was in my last year - Elwood and Frances decided -

Q: His wife.

HEICHLER: --yes, a Canadian woman. Did you know that things were so strict then that after Elwood came back from the Navy in 1946 and before he developed MS -

Q: Multiple sclerosis.

HEICHLER: Yes -- he'd had to resign from the Foreign Service because he wanted to marry a foreigner - the foreigner being the afore-mentioned Canadian woman.

Q: Right. In 1946 -

HEICHLER: In the late '40s, whenever it was.

Q: In the late '40s, yes.

HEICHLER: But he then stayed on as a civil servant, and by dint of being a civil servant handicapped by multiple sclerosis, unable to be re-assigned, he became a fixture in the Department. He became the living institutional memory of the Office of German Affairs, and soon the entire Department of State learned that if you needed to know anything at all about German postwar history or German political figures from Konrad Adenauer on down, you went to ask Elwood because he would know.

Q: Yes.

HEICHLER: And then somehow - I don't know how that happened - he acquired the role of personnel officer - not officially, but in terms of deciding who should go where to fill a vacancy in his empire.

Q: That's right. Well, I first met Elwood myself as a very young officer. In fact, when I first joined the Foreign Service, it was in June of '63, and the A-100 class wasn't beginning until late August, so I was working temporarily in INR on German affairs. And I met Elwood Williams at that time through the man I was working with, who was Phil Wolfson.

HEICHLER: Oh, yes, I knew Phil very well.

Q: And I have no idea whether or not Elwood had any role in my being assigned to Düsseldorf as my first post, but I do know that he did come out to Düsseldorf in '64-65 and -

HEICHLER: I think that was part of the same trip.

Q: --talked to me and asked me where I wanted to go for my next assignment and so on. And of course I startled him by saying I wanted to go to a French-speaking post, and he said, "You know that means Africa." And is said, "Yes," and he said, "Well, I'll see what I can do." But the point is that he was very much was interested in Germany and *in people and Foreign Service officers and trying to do what he thought was good for them and for the Department. And he did continue; even after his retirement, he did stay in touch with the Department for a long time.*

HEICHLER: He did. I remember his Berlin visit very well. I rather insisted on being made his "control officer" for the Berlin visit, and I spent days running around measuring doorways in restaurants, men's rooms, and what have you for his wheelchair.

Q: Right, for his wheelchair, yes.

HEICHLER: To make sure that we went to restaurants and to rest rooms and to God knows what where he could maneuver, including the then brand-new Berlin concert hall, which had been built with an elevator up to the balcony and a row of empty spaces where you could push wheelchairs right up to the railing. And we had a wonderful evening with Gustav Stresemann, the son of the former German Weimar Republic chancellor, who was then *Intendant* of the Berlin Philharmonic, taking very good care of us. I'm sorry, I'm telling you all kinds of stuff that's really non-substantive.

Q: No, that's fine. It's actually substantive in the sense that the Oral History Program is very interested in getting people's impressions of other Foreign Service leaders such as Elwood Williams. Since he's no longer living, he can't do his own oral history, so the only way we can get at his is through other people. Which is why I think it's really valuable to have your impressions of him.

HEICHLER: So that was a high point for me, his Berlin visit.

Q: So you were first economic officer and then in charge of FRG affairs. This would be from '73 to '75 or so?

HEICHLER: Thereabouts, something like that.

Q: And what kinds of issues were going on between the United States... I assume you spent most of your time on Germany.

HEICHLER: I did.

Q: And what kind of issues were going on then?

HEICHLER: Well, the principal issue that occupied almost all my time, at least the first year or two I was there - and this was in my role as economic officer - was negotiation of the second U.S.-German Balance of Payments Offset Agreement.

Q: Oh, yes. Explain a little bit about what is meant by offset agreements.

HEICHLER: Well, it was an arrangement under which Germany undertook to offset the costs of our troops stationed in Germany through buying American goods. It was never a matter of actually paying us for our expenses. To me, quite frankly, the whole thing seemed to be a thing of smoke, mirrors and double-bottoms, produced mainly for political effect - to pacify the Congress and public opinion, especially those people and politicians who thought naively that we were spending the hard-earned money of the American taxpayer keeping all these troops in Europe, whereas in fact it cost us far less to keep them in Europe than it would have cost us to keep them on active duty in the United States.

Q: But that would not sell very well on the Hill, I assume.

HEICHLER: That wouldn't sell on the Hill at all. So I became a member of the American delegation that negotiated the offset agreement.

Q: Now who -

HEICHLER: The German Desk did not play the leading role in this. It was the under secretary for economic affairs who led the American delegation, who was then none other than William Casey. And his German opposite number was an Ambassador Hermes.

Q: H-E-R-M-E-S.

HEICHLER: H-E-R-M-E-S - Peter Hermes, a high official with the German ministry of economic affairs, who several years later became the German ambassador to the United States. The negotiations were protracted and difficult. I remember that the real breakthroughs were achieved by people above and outside the actual delegations, the principal players being George Shultz, then Secretary of the Treasury, and Helmut Schmidt, German Defense or Finance Minister at the time, I believe.

Q: How interesting.

HEICHLER: -who sat down together one morning in Shultz's office in the Treasury Building and simply hammered out the agreement.

Q: And Schmidt at that time was... Well, let's see now, it depends what year you're talking about.

HEICHLER: I think Schmidt may have been defense minister.

Q: Yes, he probably was defense minister if he was involved in the offset agreement, because later he became chancellor.

HEICHLER: It was before he became chancellor, of course.

Q: Right, okay, so defense minister - and also very schooled in economics. Wow, interesting.

HEICHLER: So after that breakthrough, whatever formula those two men worked out became the basis for the agreement, which then simply needed to be written up and signed and ratified, and that was it.

Q: How did the Germans feel about this whole idea of an offset agreement?

HEICHLER: Put upon.

Q: Right.

HEICHLER: And they liked to complain about it. Actually, though, I think they realized as well as we did that it wasn't really costing them anything. The stuff they were obligated to buy from us, they would have bought from us anyway, whatever it was.

Q: And did they have some understanding of the role of the Congress in America?

HEICHLER: They did, and they realized the need to pacify some of the more isolationist elements in Congress and public opinion which threatened the American presence in NATO Europe, and for that reason, you know, they realized that they had to go along with this nonsense. So that was my main preoccupation for the first year or two in EUR/CE. I reported more directly to a terrible man - terrible in terms of his wrath and impatience - he scared the daylights out of me - George Springsteen, Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of European Affairs.

Q: Oh, yes - very famous man. Actually, I do remember him, but I never was in such a position to incur his wrath. He was well known for not having exactly a hospitable personality.

HEICHLER: He was wrathful with everybody, and he scared the daylights out of me when I would get phone calls from George Springsteen saying, "Come upstairs right away with your offset files," which I took to mean that I should put this three-drawer file cabinet on my back and run up two flights with it to his office.

Q: What was his role, what was his position at that time?

HEICHLER: He was principal deputy assistant secretary for European affairs.

Q: For EUR, okay.

HEICHLER: His bailiwick included EUR/CE, and he had a particular interest in the offset negotiations - God knows why, but they were his hobby-horse, I think, because he had been involved in the previous agreement, and he wanted to make sure that this one would be just every bit as good and satisfactory to us as the first one had been. Jimmy Sutterlin stayed around for only a very short time after I arrived. He had this run-in with Kissinger-

Q: Oh, right, that's right.

HEICHLER: -and left and went to work for the United Nations in New York. And I got-

Q: And he was succeeded by-

HEICHLER: Well, I have only a slightly shadowy recollection of the people who came between him and David Anderson.

Q: Well, let's see... Yes, I'd have to think about that, too. But in any case, yes, well, anyway - we can both think about that.

HEICHLER: They were not terribly effective people, as I remember them. I can't think of their names now, but -

Q: Okay.

HEICHLER: The high points of my time as the FRG Desk officer were to make all the detailed arrangements for major German visits to Washington, with attention to the last minute detail, and coordination with all other agencies involved, from the National Security Council to the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Q: Okay.

HEICHLER: Two of these big visits stand out: Walter Scheel came on a state visit as president of the Federal Republic. He was then head of the FDP (Free Democratic Party), and he was elected president of the Federal Republic about '75 or so. So there was his visit, and then when Schmidt was chancellor, he came over once on an equally major

visit. Both of these took place during the Ford Presidency, and it was very, very hard, detailed work. Ken Kurze - I don't know if you remember Ken--

Q: Yes.

HEICHLER: -- and I sat across from each other in my office, our desks facing each other, and worked like troopers on every last detail of these visits, but we enjoyed it; we got inside the White House and so forth. Those famous second-class guests - where they have a White House -

Q: The "after-dinner guests"?

HEICHLER: The "after-dinner guests," who were invited to come at 10 p.m. and go through the receiving line again and then partake of the champagne and the dancing.

Q: Well, better after dinner than not at all, right?

HEICHLER: Yes, absolutely. I was always very proud of having been actually invited to the White House.

Q: Yes. And so then you became deputy director of the office in '75.

HEICHLER: Yes, this is when Bob Davis left.

Q: Who?

HEICHLER: Davis, who had been the deputy director.

Q: Oh, okay. I don't know who that was. All right, so you became dep-

HEICHLER: You must have known him. Maybe not.

Q: Davis... Anyway, you became deputy director of EUR/CE in '75.

HEICHLER: Yes, and that was interesting because this was the time when we had decided to recognize the GDR and had started to negotiate the details of full diplomatic relations with them. I was rather heavily involved in that, in the search for an appropriate chancery and ambassadorial residence for us in East Berlin and in working with the East Germans in finding reciprocally appropriate quarters for them in Washington, including denying them locations from which they could have listened in too easily on sensitive communications -- fun and games- (end of tape)

I had occasion to go to Berlin several times in the course of these negotiations. We had appointed our first ambassador to East Germany, a retired and by then somewhat senile senator named John Sherman Cooper, first occupant of the residence that the East Germans had made available. This was rather an odd house on the outskirts of Berlin,

which would have made a terrible firetrap if anything had ever happened there. I remember spending a very interesting and scary afternoon having tea with Mrs. Cooper, Lorraine, who shocked me by having been so totally brainwashed that she thought the members of the SED (Communist) Politburo were the most wonderful people she had ever met -- totally misunderstood and looked down upon by us for no good reason whatever. I can still remember her sitting in her salon, covered entirely in red damask wallpaper, with her two little black dogs, one on either side of her, gesticulating at me with her teacup, and my not daring to contradict the absolute hogwash she was dishing out. Cooper was an old man, and he didn't stay there very long.

After him his DCM, Sol Polansky, remained chargé for quite a long time. I don't think I really had any dealings with our second ambassador, whose name has escaped me; he was a black man.

Q: I don't remember. [David B. Bolen, 1977-1980]

HEICHLER: My next major involvement with the GDR was negotiation of a bilateral consular agreement. There were several rounds, held on alternate occasions in Berlin and Washington. During the last Washington round I served as head of the American delegation. I felt desperately inadequate because I didn't know enough about the meat and potatoes of a consular agreement and sat up there feeling useless, pretending to be the head of a delegation without knowing what the others were talking about.

Q: Who else was on the delegation?

HEICHLER: Well, there was the man that saved me -- Jonathan Greenwald.

Q: From the legal office.

HEICHLER: From the Legal Advisor's Office, who knew what he was talking about and who managed to formulate the agreements that were concluded and took hold. I was quite annoyed by the whole experience because it made me feel inadequate and guilty for being unprepared, and I considered it my fault that I was not better prepared. The East German delegation was headed by a cunning old lawyer who knew his business inside and out, so that the playing field was pretty uneven. I'm afraid that this is a characteristic and weakness of the Foreign Service for which I fault it greatly: It never or almost never gives you a chance to prepare adequately for whatever assignment you've been handed. It's all instant, on-the-job apprenticeship instead of sound, solid training.

Q: That's right.

HEICHLER: This is one of the things that pursued me throughout my Foreign Service career - this persistent feeling of inadequacy, of never having had enough training or opportunity to immerse myself sufficiently in a problem to feel completely at ease with it, to feel that I had real mastery of it. This was also true of my assignment in Turkey, of which more later.

How long do you want to continue today?

Q: Well, we can...

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Today is February 28th, 2000. Lucian, could you talk a little bit about your relationship with the embassy of the GDR in Washington?

HEICHLER: Yes, that was an interesting time for us. The embassy had just opened, and it was the first time that we had full relations with the GDR. For an old Cold Warrior like me, who had spent his years in Berlin referring to East Germany as the Soviet Zone or at best as "the so-called GDR," but never as the German Democratic Republic, this took some getting used to. I had contact with about three or four people in the embassy--the ambassador, who was a young man, very smooth, a little oily; and an even younger political officer, both of whom spouted nothing but propaganda like automatons. Whatever you talked about, out came the SED line, and the usual stuff about how, "Oh, we're just a small country, but - you know - we are the other, the good Germany." The most interesting contact I had was with a slightly older embassy officer who had been recruited for the diplomatic service when the GDR suddenly found itself overwhelmed by diplomatic relations with all kinds of Western countries. Since they had not enough personnel to staff all their new missions, they drafted people from industry and elsewhere. This man was by trade an industrial engineer and had no particular interest in ideology, international relations or the foreign service. He made it quite clear that he was not enthusiastic about his role or about the regime he was representing. His teenage children had been forced to stay behind in Berlin - the typical hostage situation - and he never said anything overtly anti-GDR, but it was quite obvious where his sympathies lay. I am fairly sure that except for his children back in Berlin, he and his wife would have defected. I remember specifically one Christmas when we gave a big open house for our diplomatic contacts and State Department colleagues. This gentleman and his wife came, and when they saw our Christmas tree all lit and decorated, she burst into tears, saying it had been so long since she had seen a real Christmas. I wondered about that later, because I don't think the GDR did that much to discourage people from decorating Christmas trees, but I really don't know. Anyway, that made an impression on me and has remained a memory. That's pretty much all I have on the GDR embassy.

Q: Did you have any impression of the relationship, if any, between the GDR embassy and the West German embassy?

HEICHLER: Yes, it was definitely hostile, with no contact between the two missions. The Federal Republic embassy, of course, as you know, runs a school for its dependent children, but the children of the GDR embassy people were strictly forbidden from attending and were educated in their own embassy by one teacher whom they had brought over from East Berlin. There was no social contact whatever between the two embassies as far as I recall.

Q: And the two ambassadors had no contact?

HEICHLER: I think they may have had some contact. It was inevitable that they would meet at diplomatic functions -

Q: Diplomatic functions.

HEICHLER: --but I don't believe that they ever met *unter vier Augen*, as they say.

Q: 'Under four eyes.'

HEICHLER: *Tête à tête,* "under four eyes," as the Germans say. Or that they were encouraged, or even permitted, to have a particular channel of communication between them. There was quite a difference in stature and age between them, anyway. The ambassador of the Federal Republic, Bernd von Staden, was an older man and a very distinguished diplomat.

Q: Yes, Bernd von Staden. And who was the East German ambassador?

HEICHLER: I don't remember his name. He was probably only about 30, and what was known as a "150-percenter," a party functionary, with as far as I know no prior diplomatic experience at all.

Q: Lucian, by this time, I guess you were deputy director of EUR/CE, and who was the director at that time? Of course, you had several during your three or four years.

HEICHLER: Yes, I had several. I think by that time it was David Anderson.

Q: He was the country director, and you were his deputy?

HEICHLER: Yes

Q: And this was, of course, during the period when Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State, right?

HEICHLER: Yes.

Q: What kind of a relationship did Kissinger have with the German Desk at that time, or with the officers on the Desk, I should say?

HEICHLER: Well, it has been said that Kissinger didn't recognize anyone below the level of deputy assistant secretary, if that; that he mistook the assistant secretaries and at most their deputies for the actual desk officers. He did not acknowledge the existence of any life forms lower than that, or at least consented to have any truck with them. So you can't really speak of a relationship. My contacts with the Great Man were limited to those

occasions when a German politician came to visit, especially one who didn't speak much English, and I was told to go upstairs and take notes. For some reason Kissinger knew that I was bilingual. How he knew this, I don't know, since he refused to acknowledge my existence, otherwise.

Q: Somebody told him, undoubtedly.

HEICHLER: It was a bit funny, because he consented to have the interview take place in German if the visitor wasn't up to English, but he liked to pretend that his German was not very fluent. He enjoyed the game of occasionally pretending that he could not think of the right German word. Then he would glance over at me, toss me the English word like a bone to a dog, and expect me to jump up with the German translation.

Q: So do you think he was testing you?

HEICHLER: No, he couldn't have cared less about me; I think he was just play-acting. He barely acknowledged my presence. I knew the ground rules by then.

Q: And what were the ground rules?

HEICHLER: The ground rule was that the note taker was to say nothing - absolutely not one word. He was not under any circumstances to inject himself in the conversation. He was to take verbatim notes, including the meaningless pleasantries at the beginning and the end of the conversation. This verbatim memorandum of conversation had to be written in the form of a play or screen play: THE SECRETARY:.... THE (NAME OF VISITOR):, etc.

Q: That's right. I recall that.

In other words, direct quotes rather than indirect.

HEICHLER: Direct quotes. If you couldn't take shorthand, and very few of us desk officers could, it was next to impossible to get it all down, and so inevitably a certain amount of it had to be made up. I have a good memory, though, for substance, and if I made anything up, it concerned the meaningless pleasantries and not the substance of the conversation; I was pretty well able to keep up with that and render it accurately.

Q: Do you have any idea why Kissinger insisted on verbatim memcons?

HEICHLER: Well, we were told that he wanted them for his memoirs. How much of this material he ever actually used for his books I don't know.

Q: Do you suppose that he felt that he could trust a close to verbatim MemCon rather than some Foreign Service officer venturing to paraphrase the meaning of the conversation?

HEICHLER: I think that's entirely possible. Kissinger certainly did not trust us.

Q: Why was that, do you think? Was it just the typical distrust of bureaucrats?

HEICHLER: Yes, I think it was a typical distrust of the career Service. It was a paranoid attitude that was shared by his close circle of advisors, like Helmut Sonnenfeldt and others, and he loved to do end-runs around the career Service. I felt very bad about the way he treated the American ambassadors to Bonn and Moscow or the eminently capable assistant secretary for European Affairs, Art Hartman.

Q: Who was ambassador to Germany at that time? Was that Hillenbrand?

HEICHLER: It was, in fact, Martin Hillenbrand, and Hillenbrand resigned over his relationship with Kissinger.

Q: I didn't realize that.

HEICHLER: Yes, whether he was forced out or whether he resigned in protest over the continual end-runs, the fact that all real business was done by back channel or through the German embassy in Washington, rather than through him or the embassy in Bonn, I don't know, but I do know that Martin Hillenbrand was extremely angry at Kissinger and the treatment he received.

Q: That's very interesting. I understand Hillenbrand has written his own memoir recently. I haven't seen it myself.

HEICHLER: I haven't seen that. I'd like to see that.

Q: Well, you mentioned Helmut Sonnenfeldt. He was Counselor of the Department, wasn't he?

HEICHLER: Yes, he was the Counselor of the Department, normally a rather meaningless position, I believe. Supposedly it had something to do with legal affairs, but of course we had a Legal Affairs Department and a Legal Advisor in charge of that. Sonnenfeldt seemed to play the role of the closest advisor, the *éminence grise*, to Kissinger, particularly in Soviet and German affairs. The embassy in Moscow was treated just as badly as the embassy in Bonn, with our relations with the Soviet Union being conducted primarily through Anatoly Dobrynin, the long-term Russian ambassador here. He's written his own-

Q: Yes. Anyway -

He was in Washington for many, many years.

HEICHLER: For many, many years, and he received very special treatment. He was the only foreign diplomat allowed to drive his limo into the underground garage at the State

Department and take Kissinger's special elevator up to the Seventh Floor. He and Kissinger were on a first-name basis, and just about all business that was not done directly with the Kremlin by phone or back channel was done through him, rather than our ambassador to Moscow, who must have felt pretty much out of the loop.

Q: Was this because Kissinger and Sonnenfeldt felt that they simply knew more about Soviet and German affairs than anybody else?

HEICHLER: Well, it was partly that, and it was partly their paranoia, their paranoid suspicion and distrust of the Foreign Service. They wanted to delegate as little as possible to career people who might sabotage whatever it was they were trying to do. They were totally paranoid about secrecy. In that respect, Kissinger and Nixon had quite a bit in common. The attitude was not dissimilar.

Q: It seems strange, then, that the Russian ambassador would be allowed to drive into the State Department garage, given recent episodes of their planting bugs and so on.

HEICHLER: Yes, it does.

Q: Well, what kind of a relationship, in your impression, did Kissinger and Sonnenfeldt have with each other?

HEICHLER: I think very close. I think Kissinger trusted Sonnenfeldt and his advice. I don't know how this relationship came about. It rather surprised me. Sonnenfeldt was a career Civil Service officer whom I had known in the '50s in INR, where he was an intelligence analyst for Soviet affairs. We were on a first-name basis, but we were not friends. Of course he remembered me, but he didn't like to be reminded that I had known him when he was a minor functionary. When we met in a crowded elevator, I enjoyed calling him “Hal,” knowing how much this annoyed him. He had his own staff at the end of the long fourth floor corridor, the very end office, and I had to wander down there almost daily to clear telegrams, as he insisted on clearing *everything* that went out to the German posts, regardless of the fact that of course such correspondence had to be approved by the EUR front office. It must have been a hard thing for the EUR front office to put up with. Arthur Hartman was the assistant secretary of state for EUR during much of my time there, a man whom I liked and respected enormously, and I think he must have had enormous patience to live and work under the conditions imposed by Kissinger and Sonnenfeldt. And Sonnenfeldt's people were not much better than he. I mean they sort of gloried in the reflection of their boss and lorded it over the country desks.

Q: Do you remember any particular names?

HEICHLER: Well, there was Robert Blackwell.

Q: Oh, yes.

HEICHLER: In particular. We called him “Black Willy” behind his back. I am sure he

was and is very bright and capable, but he was a real pain.

Q: I do remember him. There were others, too.

HEICHLER: There were some others. Some of them were actually rather nice guys once you got to know them, but they were all too conscious of the power they were able to exercise as Sonnenfeldt's aides. I don't remember all the names right now.

Q: I don't either, but I do remember there was a certain aura about that office that rubbed off on people who worked there.

HEICHLER: Yes, and it was downright scary.

Q: Yes.

HEICHLER: The whole atmosphere was one of fear. One of my more vivid recollections of Kissinger was of taking a visitor up to his office one morning and committing the gaffe of saying, "Good morning, Mr. Secretary." He looked at me as if to say, what business had I -- a mere mortal of low degree -- addressing his lordship directly. I suppose I had thought that a cat may look at a king.

Q: Yes, sounds like supreme arrogance.

HEICHLER: He was supremely arrogant, and in fact I did not think much of him. I know that for many people he was the most brilliant Secretary of State to come down the pike in many years, if not ever, but I had little respect for him because I didn't see how anybody who resolutely refused to take the advice of the whole huge staff of experienced people and experts he had at his disposal could always reach the right decisions by himself alone. Kissinger trusted only himself and no one else, and I didn't see how he could possibly always be right. And I don't think that when you look back on it, his record as Secretary of State was all that impressive. The long years of negotiations with the Vietnamese had led nowhere, as far as I could see. His belated attempts to insert himself in the Middle East peace process led nowhere. And I just didn't see what all the fuss was about, why anybody thought he was such a great Secretary of State. For me, his only saving grace was his sense of humor, especially when he directed it toward himself.

Q: What did the Germans think about him? Did you ever get any indication of their attitudes about Kissinger? Of course, they had to work with him; they had no choice.

HEICHLER: I think they were very, very cagey about expressing any opinions. I'm not sure how seriously they really took him. He had one funny little arrangement with the German embassy, which the embassy good-naturedly carried out, and that was to supply Kissinger every week with the latest soccer scores from Germany.

Q: Oh, I see.

HEICHLER: They had to supply the results of the latest soccer games, which Kissinger followed religiously, and the German embassy was responsible for this little service. I don't think Kissinger ever dealt with anyone there below the ambassador.

Q: Do you think that the German politicians had greater access to Kissinger than they would have had to another Secretary of State?

HEICHLER: I think yes, somewhat, because of Kissinger's background - and his very strong interest in German affairs. Next to Soviet affairs that was his principal interest, and so German politicians of the second and third rank, who normally would not have gotten to see anyone as high as the Secretary of State got in to see him fairly regularly. I'm talking now about provincial politicians, deputy prime ministers of *Länder* and the like.

Q: And yet all of those also had to be covered with verbatim memcons, isn't that right?

HEICHLER: Absolutely, there were no exceptions to that.

Q: As I recall - at that time I was Desk officer for Austria and Switzerland in that same office, and I think we all got pulled in to do verbatim MemCon duty at one time or another, and I also seem to recall that there were some officers in EUR/CE at that time who were quite good at imitating Kissinger and Sonnenfeldt - and of course you were one of those -- and Ron Casagrande and Ken Kurze.

HEICHLER: I remember that I was. With the remaining German accent I have never been able to shake, I needed only to lower my voice a few octaves on the telephone to scare people half to death. I would call up someone and say, "Dis is de Secretary speaking." Yes, we had fun with that.

Q: Yes, you were very good at it - I remember it to this day - as were... Ron and Ken were also very good at it. I must say that this made for a very pleasant office to work in, despite all the frustrations. There was always some sort of a mimicry going on of Kissinger and Sonnenfeldt - and very well done, I might say.

HEICHLER: There was a good atmosphere in that office. We liked one another, we got along well, and it seemed to me that the busier we were, the more fun we had.

Q: I think so. Despite the frustrations of Kissinger and Sonnenfeldt and their arrogance and paranoia and all of that, the office was nevertheless a busy one, and there were things going on.

HEICHLER: And the times I remember most enjoyably were those times when Ken Kurze and I worked 12-hour days to prepare a major visit by people like Federal President Scheel and a few months later a visit by Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. This took a great deal of preparation and was frequently frustrating. One of the problems I remember because it came up every single time. Foreign Minister Genscher came to visit, with or without his boss. Genscher was then head of the FDP, the Free Democratic Party,

and Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister in the CDU-FDP coalition government. He was an extremely intelligent, thoughtful man, and a very good foreign minister. Genscher usually requested (and got) an American Air Force plane to fly him from New York to Washington to meet up with Schmidt's party, and an example of the fuss that we always had to go through concerned Genscher's security guards. He traveled with two armed escorts, and they could never be bothered to provide us with the numbers of their firearms in time to get the necessary U.S. Air Force permission to allow these people to fly armed with their boss on a U.S. Air Force plane. It was always a last-minute hitch before they got permission, a dispensation from the rule, to board an American Air Force aircraft with their pistols strapped on. So this was one of the myriad of details that had to be worked out, usually at the last minute, with innumerable phone calls and a great deal of frustration. And yet the whole thing, in retrospect, was rather fun -- whether it was something like this, whether it was working on guest lists for the White House dinners, and so on.

Q: What was it like dealing with the White House on these visits?

HEICHLER: Rather pleasant, actually.

Q: This was the Ford White House, Ford Administration.

HEICHLER: Yes.

Q: They were fairly efficient on visit arrangements?

HEICHLER: Yes, they were, and we really had contact primarily with the Protocol Office and not so much with the NSC (National Security Council). It was nice to be rewarded for all the work by being invited for the "second set" of a White House dinner, which meant that after the state dinner for 120 guests, another 100 or so people would be invited to come after dinner, around 10 p.m. - again in black tie - go through a second receiving line, and then stay for dancing and champagne and so forth until around midnight. It was an honor, I thought, to be invited to the White House and to be dancing with my wife practically next to the President and Mrs. Ford.

Q: That's very interesting because I, just a few years later, was working on Schmidt visits and Genscher visits with the Carter Administration, and dealing with the White House at that time was very, very difficult. We would not get approval for a lunch or a meeting even with the President until sometimes the day of - and you can very well imagine Schmidt's reaction to that. And it was strictly inefficiency, and we dealt with the NSC, and not with the Protocol Office. So it's quite a difference in the administrations.

HEICHLER: Yes, that's interesting and surprising because my recollection of dealing with the White House was on the whole pretty positive.

Q: Yes, it was just an exercise in inefficiency and frustration in the next administration. In any case, what was it like dealing with the West German embassy? You mentioned

Ambassador von Staden, and how was it in dealing with the other officers in the embassy?

HEICHLER: Well, we had very good and friendly relations with the embassy staff, with the ambassador himself, with his DCM (deputy chief of mission), whose name I'm trying very hard to remember, a charming man (Nils Hansen).

Q: Was it... No, I don't remember. I remember the political counselor, Peter Batzing, or maybe that was later, too.

HEICHLER: That was later, too. The political counselor during my time was Von Schaden.

Q: I see.

HEICHLER: The DCM was especially pleasant, helpful and cooperative whenever I had any business with the embassy. I was frequently invited to social functions there. The ambassador presented me with some gift books, which I still have. At one point Bonn published a little history of all their ambassadors and ministers to Washington from the beginning of German relations with the new United States until the present, called *Our Man in Washington.*

Q: I see.

HEICHLER: I have that little book, and of course they had the usual presentation books, similar to what USIS hands out, and I still have some of those.

Q: And what was it like dealing with Embassy Bonn, our embassy in Germany? You mentioned, of course, Ambassador Hillenbrand's frustration with Secretary Kissinger. Did you have a lot of telephone contact with the embassy in arranging things, or was it primarily by cable?

HEICHLER: A fair amount of telephone contact, but more by cable and, of course, a lot of visiting back and forth. I saw officers from our embassy whenever they came through, and on several occasions during those years I went to Germany, to Berlin, to Bonn, and to the six consular posts..

Q: What were some of the main issues between Germany and the United States at that time - in addition to offset - what were they talking about?

HEICHLER: As I mentioned before, the principal preoccupation when I first joined the office was the balance of payments offset agreement, and later on, too, I think the status of forces agreement. The question of the continued American military presence in Germany was a permanent preoccupation, a concern that it might be reduced at the behest of certain members of Congress who wanted to pull the troops out of Germany and out of Europe or at least reduce our force levels significantly. Then there was, of course, the

whole question of relations with the Soviet Union, with East Germany, and Eastern Europe. At that point, East and West Germany did have bilateral relations of a sort. They didn't call their missions embassies, but *de facto* they functioned much as such. We didn't get into the middle of that very much.

Q: Did anyone foresee during this period of '76-77 that 20 years later Germany would be reunified?

HEICHLER: No, indeed not.

Q: Did you ever hear anybody even venture to suggest that possibility?

HEICHLER: No, it seemed out of the question. It seemed to us that as long as the East-West conflict continued - and we saw it continuing indefinitely - there could be no change in the German situation, no solution to the division of Germany, no reunification, no end to the Berlin Wall - no real movement. At least on the German Desk we were not aware of true conditions in the USSR; didn't dream that the USSR might one day simply implode as it did under Gorbachev, so I certainly can't pretend to having had any such visions, then or, for that matter, much later. I remember that a Soviet writer (who was of course sent to Siberia for it) published a book with the sensational title, *Can the USSR Last Until 1984?* It made an impression on me because it seemed such an absurd question at the time. As matters turned out, he was off by only five years.

Q: Yes, I never heard anyone on the Soviet Desk with any indication of that either. So, history develops in interesting ways.

HEICHLER: Yes, it certainly does. To me, as to most other people, the *annus mirabilis* 1989 was a total wonder and surprise.

Q: Yes. Do you have anything else you'd like to add about your four years in EUR/CE?

HEICHLER: Nothing. really, no.

Q: It was an interesting time to be there.

HEICHLER: It was an interesting time to be there. I was rather glad, though, to leave Washington again in 1977. Like most Foreign Service officers, I have always enjoyed overseas duty over Stateside duty.

Q: Why was that?

HEICHLER: Because I felt overwhelmed by the huge, multi-layered structure of the State Department, the enormous number of people working there, the masses of paper circulating, the fact that I was just a little cog in a huge machine. I did not have the feeling that what I did made the slightest difference in the big picture.

Q: And so, where did you go overseas?

HEICHLER: I was offered a very interesting position at NATO headquarters.

Q: And what was that position?

HEICHLER: It had a very long and impressive sounding title: deputy assistant secretary general for political affairs and head of the political directorate.

Q: That definitely sounds impressive. Now this was in NATO headquarters.

HEICHLER: Yes, just outside of Brussels in Evère, where the Belgians had put up temporary buildings for NATO Headquarters in the '60s, which they always intended to replace with a fancy permanent headquarters complex but never did. So what we had there on the Route de l'aviation was a large group of very ugly two-story tempos resembling nothing so much as a penitentiary without the guard towers, and that remains NATO headquarters to this day.

Q: I see. Hmm. And what was your job?

HEICHLER: Well, the International Staff position to which I was seconded was traditionally held by an American Foreign Service officer, sort of reserved to the Americans. Most of the senior positions on the international staff were parceled out among the member nations. My immediate boss, the assistant secretary for political affairs, was always a German of ambassadorial rank, and his deputy was always an American Foreign Service officer..

Q: I see. What did you do?

HEICHLER: I wrote reports for the secretary general, presided over the weekly meetings of the NATO political committee, attended all the NATO ministerial meetings, took notes for the secretary general and prepared his summary statement, which he delivered on the second and final day of the ministerial meetings; and was at the disposal of the secretary general's office for whatever they needed. Once I was asked to accompany Secretary General Joseph Luns (former Foreign Minister of the Netherlands) on a trip to Greece and Turkey, which I found quite fascinating. Only two or three of us went with him and sat in on his discussions with the prime ministers of these countries, discussed the Cyprus problem and other current issues.

Q: What language did you use?

HEICHLER: French or English. My French was barely up to it. I was supposed to be bilingual. I did manage, but just. The French, of course, insisted on speaking French at these meetings, and I did my best to keep up with them and answer them in French.

The political directorate was one of three that came under the assistant secretary for

political affairs, the others being the economic directorate and the information directorate; when my boss was away, I, as his deputy, was in charge of all three, in total a staff of maybe 90 people drawn from all nationalities, British, Dutch, Turks, Italians, Greeks, and so forth. By the way, I was quite shocked to discover a number of years later that one of the very nice, polite young economists working in the economic directorate had been a long-term spy for the GDR. I forgot his name now, but he was discovered, oh, maybe 10 years after I left NATO and is now in jail.

Q: He was then supposedly a member of the German Foreign Service?

HEICHLER: No, no, he was a permanent member of the international staff. Only the most senior people were seconded from their foreign service; the majority were permanent employees. A large contingent of the international staff was Belgian, especially the lower-ranking functionaries, the secretarial staff, the security guards, and so on.

Q: What kind of a relationship did you have with the U.S. mission at NATO?

HEICHLER: Well, I was encouraged to keep close ties with the American delegation. I was permitted and encouraged to visit the American delegation daily and read the cable traffic; nothing or nearly nothing was kept from me. At the same time, I was supposed to - and did conscientiously - avoid taking a pro-American position. As chairman of the political committee, I had to remain entirely neutral. Of course I was on very good terms with the American ambassador and the DCM, the political officers and others in the American delegation. The DCM at the time was a man named Glickman. I don't know whether he's still on active duty. It's, after all, now 20 years ago, more. I had very good relations with him. I had very good relations with just about all the delegations, actually. I found only the French difficult to deal with.

Q: Lucian, I would imagine that the U.S. mission to NATO would have also seen you as a person with a wider perspective than they might have had. Did they use you as a source of information?

HEICHLER: No, they did not -- and in fact, I had no information to give that they did not already have. They were very conscientious, very sensitive to the somewhat unusual role I was playing, and carefully avoided trying to compromise me in any way at all. And of course, I did the same. I made no use whatever of the information I was privileged to see during my daily visits to the delegation, where I would sit in a room and read the outgoing and incoming traffic.

The high points of those years in Brussels, for me, were the meetings of the NATO foreign ministers. They were held alternately in Brussels or in another NATO capital. The year after I got there (1978), President Carter decided to hold a NATO summit meeting in Washington, and so for these meetings, whether they were at the head-of-state or head-of-government or the foreign ministers level, a large number of international staff people came along. We usually had our own airplane. It was a great traveling circus.

Q: I can imagine.

HEICHLER: And for very little extra money we were able to take our spouses along if there was space available on the aircraft.

Q: How very pleasant.

HEICHLER: There were usually empty seats on these big aircraft that could be bought for our spouses for not very much money. And so my wife came along on that trip to Washington and I think some of the other ministerials. I remember we had one in Copenhagen; we had one at The Hague. And the last one, while I was still with NATO, was in Ankara, just a few months before I was transferred to Ankara.

Q: That must have been very helpful.

HEICHLER: It was. I already knew, I think, that I was going to be assigned to the embassy in Ankara and I made good use of those few days to get acquainted with some of the people at our embassy there, especially with my predecessor, the counselor for what was then called "mutual security affairs," which actually meant politico-military affairs. So those were highlights, but the entire job was interesting. As you know, in the Alliance all decisions must be unanimous. There are no majority votes, so that any country, any member country of the 16 (and today it's 19 or at least, or 20 - it was 15 in my time, before Spain became a member), any one nation could veto anything. And it required a great deal of diplomatic ability and skill to find compromise solutions to get something done in the political committee. So to me this was a wonderful exercise of diplomatic craft, especially vis-à-vis the French, who seemed to have instructions from Paris to cause as much obstruction as possible.

I shuddered every time the French delegate would raise his finger - and I can still hear him: "*Monsieur le Président, je vois un inconvenient...*" "Mr. Chairman, I see a problem here..." Oh, damn, I thought - here we go again!

Q: And were those problems usually substantive?

HEICHLER: No, actually, not so much substantive as procedural. The French tended to accuse the International Staff of taking too much upon itself in drafting papers; they thought that we should play more of a servant's role than we actually did. It was a fact that we wrote the papers - well, we did not write the communiqués, although we played a role in helping the communiqué process along. It was the tradition at NATO ministerial meetings for the deputy chiefs of all the delegations to sit together all night following the first day of the ministerial and draft a communiqué, which was approved the next morning by their chiefs or even referred to capitals, if necessary, and then issued at the end of the ministerial meeting.

Q: Then this drafting, this development of a consensus, was achieved through fiddling

with words?

HEICHLER: Frequently, yes. And then again, these meetings were chaired by senior members of the international staff. My boss, the German ambassador I mentioned earlier, who was assistant secretary general, would chair these all-night communiqué sessions of the DCM's of the 15 member delegations and help them find language acceptable to all, and the like. And of course some of these issues were pretty delicate, particularly when it had anything to do with Greece and Turkey.

Q: Yes. Well, I would assume, then, that over the couple of years that you were there you developed certain formulas that you could plug in from time to time, or was each situation very different?

HEICHLER: I think so, yes... No, no, I think you're right. We were able to fall back on things that had worked before, although I can't think of a particular example right now. And some things were simply best to stay away from.

Q: Right, and so they were just handled by omission.

HEICHLER: Yes.

Q: Okay.

HEICHLER: A lot of it was boiler-plate, let's face it. Being naïve by nature, I found it a bit shocking that the communiqué, allegedly the result of what had been discussed and decided by ministers, was actually drafted beforehand.

Q: Yes.

HEICHLER: I found that rather disillusioning.

Q: But did it bear some relationship to what actually was discussed?

HEICHLER: No, not really.

Q: Not really?

HEICHLER: No.

Q: So it was primarily for public consumption, and even then, I suppose, the public, or let's say the governments that consumed it, also knew that it was rather superficial.

HEICHLER: The more sophisticated public and the media certainly knew this. The real meat of the ministerial meetings was in the secret session which the foreign ministers held without staffs, with only myself present, because I was supposed to keep the notes on that meeting for the secretary general and prepare the summary of the discussion that

he would then read out the next morning in the open session of the ministerial. And to me, of course, these two or three hours of letting-your-hair-down, genuine discussion by foreign ministers was the most fascinating part of the whole thing. This is where I came to know, respect, and admire certain foreign ministers enormously - people like Hans-Dietrich Genscher, whom I mentioned earlier, people like Lord Carrington of Britain. Also, I think it was during my last year at NATO, we were confronted with this terribly, terribly difficult decision of stationing Pershing II missiles in Germany.

Q: Right.

HEICHLER: And Cruise missiles, as a response to the Soviet SS-20 threat.

Q: I remember the period now.

HEICHLER: You remember what an explosive issue that was.

Q: Very difficult, yes.

HEICHLER: It took a great deal of courage. I remember one moment, especially during the discussion of this issue before NATO endorsed the stationing of these weapons, when the then Belgian foreign minister said to his colleagues, "You know that I am sitting here about to commit political suicide. If I endorse this, I'm done for, but I'm going to endorse it anyway because I believe in it." I wish I could think who that man was.

Q: I don't remember, but - you know - you could look it up if you wanted to, but it doesn't really matter.

HEICHLER: I keep wanting to say Spaak, but it wasn't Spaak. Henri Spaak was a much earlier figure.

Q: Yes. Well, did he commit political suicide?

HEICHLER: I don't remember that he actually did.

Q: You can't recall that actually happened?

HEICHLER: I don't think so.

Q: And what about the German position on this issue?

HEICHLER: The Germans didn't have much difficulty with it. They were in favor of our deployment because they always felt that they were the most threatened, the most exposed, the likeliest battlefield if actual war ever broke out, so they did not have any problem with more effective deterrence, more effective defense. And as I remember, the most vigorous protests occurred in Britain, where these women held a sit-down strike at Mildenhall Air Force Base and other places. I don't recall that there was that much

popular opposition in Germany - maybe on the part of the Green party, but I don't remember that it was all that significant. You see, this was one of the more exciting times that I went through, this particular question and these decisions.

Q: Okay.

HEICHLER: Once again I felt enormously privileged, as I had in Berlin, as Senat liaison officer, to be present at these very high-level gatherings and to witness historic decisions and discussions.

Q: The U.S. Secretary of State at that time was Vance?

HEICHLER: Cyrus Vance, yes, under Carter.

Q: And did he play an active role in this? I'm sure he did.

HEICHLER: Yes, he certainly did. Once Carter himself came to visit us, sort of dropped in, and behaved rather oddly.

Q: Really?

HEICHLER: Well, a special meeting of ambassadors was convoked to sit down and talk with the American President and he showed up, and I was there. It was a little awkward, because Carter didn't seem to be very sure about what he was talking about.

Q: What he was doing? Yes.

HEICHLER: And our ambassadors, our own and other countries, found the whole situation rather embarrassing. I wish I could give you an example, but I can't recall.

Q: Well, that's all right. So, that sounds like it was one of the highlights of your career so far - that and Berlin, as you mentioned already, and... Anything more on NATO Brussels?

HEICHLER: Not really. We lived well. We had a very active social life within NATO. We did not find the Belgian people particularly hospitable or particularly pleasant. I think the Belgians were tired of having so many foreigners running around, because it wasn't just us; it was the enormous presence of the European Community downtown. It was also the military arm of NATO, with which I had some contact. I got down to Mons occasionally to talk to the political advisor to SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander Europe), but otherwise my contacts with the military side were confined to visits to the PX and commissary near Mons.

Q: Well, yes - important.

HEICHLER: To which we had access.

Q: Very important, yes. All right, so after your time in Brussels - I guess that ended in 1980?

HEICHLER: 1980, yes.

Q: Okay, and then you went to Ankara?

HEICHLER: Yes.

Q: And you mentioned that in that job you were called counselor for mutual security affairs?

HEICHLER: Yes.

Q: And what was that?

HEICHLER: It was just another name for politico-military affairs. When I got to Ankara, my predecessor, Don Gelber, was still there, stayed a few more days, and gave me an extremely intensive briefing on what was then a prime issue, the conclusion of a new defense and economic cooperation agreement between Turkey and the United States, known by its initials as the DECA. Gelber had worked tremendously hard on this agreement; it had been his main preoccupation during his two or three y ears at the embassy, and he congratulated me on the fact that since the agreement was now signed, sealed, and delivered, I wouldn't have to worry about it for a few more years.

Q: That sounds like famous last words.

HEICHLER: Well, actually he was right, for the most part. The agreement was kept and it worked. Naturally, I was responsible for making sure that the agreement was implemented properly. That meant a lot of detailed work. Mine was an important job because we had a major military presence in Turkey - and we still do. We had some 5,000 or 6,000 largely Air Force troops, mainly in communications and flying operations, in so-called co-located bases with the Turks all over the country, some 30 or 40 of them, the largest and most important being the airfield at Incirlik near the town of Adana in the southeastern Cukorova Region of Turkey. It was from this air base that many of the strikes against Iraq, for example, were and still are being carried out. This is also the airfield from which Gary Powers took off in his famous U-2 flight across the Soviet Union.

Q: Which indicates the sensitivity of these bases.

HEICHLER: Yes. There were other issues so sensitive that I don't think I should go into them -- nuclear arms questions and the like. We had several major military commands -- the very large Joint U.S. Military Assistance Mission to Turkey (JUSMAT), headed by an army major general. There was another command headed by a two-star Air Force general to provide logistical support to all these bases, all these American troops scattered all

over Turkey. I did not have quite as much to do with that headquarters, but I had daily contact with the commanding general of JUSMAT.

Q: Okay.

HEICHLER: Because his mission, his people, constituted a sort of interface between my office - which consisted of only three officers, myself included, and all the American bases which they were supposed to oversee. And I had a great deal of contact with Washington through the ambassador concerning the level of our military assistance. Our assistance to Turkey primarily took the form of Foreign Military Sales through loans, with delivery of American military equipment on credit or by offset. We had a major program to modernize the Turkish armor fleet, which consisted of several thousand over-aged tanks, and the same with aircraft. The Turks had F-4's and F-104's, and during much of my time in Turkey there were heated discussions concerning a new fighter and heated competition among American aircraft manufacturers for a contract with the Turks to buy either the F-18 or the F-16. In the end General Dynamics won a contract to co- produce the F-16 fighter in Turkey.

So there was a great deal to do, constantly, every day. I had two or three truly excellent officers working with me. Here again, as I said earlier, I had the slightly uncomfortable feeling of floating on top of a mass of detail with which I was not as familiar as I might have been. I could fully rely on my staff always to be completely on top of things; they were very, very thorough officers. Also, I found that, since I was constantly being called to the front office and getting involved in this, that or the other thing, if I tried to take on one of the more complex issues concerning our Status-of-Forces Agreement or the status of one of our bases - whether we were going to keep it open, whether we were going to close it, or whether it had been closed and what we still owed the Turks or what the Turks owed us - I couldn't really afford to immerse myself in all that detail because I had to keep myself free to be at the beck and call of the ambassador, who might suddenly want me to draft an instant cable on some completely unrelated issue.

My first ambassador when I got to Turkey was Jim Spain, a career officer, a wonderful man whom I liked and respected greatly and with whom I worked very well. I ranked as the third most senior officer at the embassy -

Q: After the DCM.

HEICHLER: -after the DCM. It wasn't supposed to work that way. The political counselor was supposed to be the number three, but about one month after I arrived in Turkey, I found myself promoted from FSO-2 to FSO-1, under the old system, and that automatically put me ahead of the political counselor, who was and remained an O-2. The poor man resented this rather bitterly, but we worked well together anyway. We were also neighbors, sharing a marvelous villa owned by the American government, the first piece of property the American government had ever bought in Ankara after Kemal Atatürk moved the capital of Turkey from Istanbul to Ankara. And this house, with a magnificent, huge garden, had served initially as chancery offices and ambassadorial

residence. Later, when an ambassador's residence was built up in the hills of Çankaya and a large chancery was acquired, our house was divided into two huge apartments, one upstairs and one downstairs. The political counselor lived upstairs and I lived downstairs. Each of these apartments had about 12 rooms, and I've never lived better.

Q: Sounds nice.

HEICHLER: Yes, and we got along very well, personally and with our respective families. I also liked, respected, and got along extremely well with the Turks, the people at the Foreign Ministry, the NATO Desk, who were my principal contacts, and to some extent with the leading officers on the Turkish General Staff. One fascinating aspect of my tour of duty in Turkey was that exactly two weeks after I got there, the Turkish Army took over. It was their third coup d'état since the Turkish Republic was founded. I was awakened at three o'clock in the morning, told to rush down to the embassy, and found soldiers all over the streets, tanks deployed in front of the embassy. Overnight the Army had taken over the government, closed down Parliament, arrested the political party leaders - the same ones who are still running political life in Turkey today - Suleyman Demirel and Bülent Ecevit. Demirel today is president of Turkey [retired] and Ecevit is prime minister. But they were both put in jail on an island out in the Aegean Sea that night. We worked under a strict curfew for quite a while, which everybody liked because it gave us an excuse to go home early from dinner parties, and we got enough sleep for a change.

Q: Yes.

HEICHLER: We had to be home by 11 o'clock, so everything broke up. Only a very few people had special passes that allowed them to be on the streets after 11 o'clock at night.

There was a funny little incident connected with the coup. My wife came two weeks after me and was supposed to arrive in Turkey the day of the *Putsch*, and since Ankara's Esenbo_a Airport was occupied by the army, I did my level best, in addition to firing off substantive cables to Washington, to track her down en route and keep her out of Turkey that day. I sent telegrams to the embassy in London and the consulate general in Frankfurt to try and catch her at the airport, or wherever she was, and keep her from traveling to Turkey until we knew she could arrive there without being arrested -

Q: I see.

HEICHLER: --or kept out -

Q: Right.

HEICHLER: -of the country. I managed to do this, and she spent a couple of days in one of the guest apartments that the consulate general maintains in Frankfurt, then joined me in Ankara.

Q: So what was it like then dealing with the Turkish government after the coup?

HEICHLER: Well, it was pretty simple.

Q: Simple in the sense that you knew what you got was what you had, more or less?

HEICHLER: Yes -

Q: I mean, you didn't have to go through as many layers as you might have before?

HEICHLER: No, the Turkish General Staff ran the country, and the chief of the General Staff, under the constitution that was then adopted, became president of Turkey. This was General Kenan Evren, whom I had met with Secretary General Luns a year or two earlier, because Evren had invited us to a dinner party at his military headquarters. Later, I took distinguished American visitors in to meet him and sat in and took notes, like Senator Tower, who came once. Evren was quite popular with the Turks who called him "Papa Evren."

Q: Tower, yes.

HEICHLER: People like that. And I had, well, I suppose the same amount of contact with the Foreign Ministry people as I would have had under any government. A lot of social contact with Turks, both civilian and military, and I grew to like the Turks very, very much. For me Turkey was one of the happiest posts I had. I would rank it right after Berlin, in terms of being enjoyable and interesting.

Q: As a country?

HEICHLER: As a country.

Q: And as a place for your family to live also?

HEICHLER: Yes, we lived comfortably. We had some problems to put up with, especially early on, when the Turkish economy was in such sad straits that we had daily blackouts, periods when there was no electricity for four or five hours a day, usually announced in advance so that we could prepare for it, and shortages of just about everything - no coffee, no this, no that - but we did have a commissary at Balgat, the American military base outside of Ankara, so we were not affected all that much, and things gradually got better over the years. The economy revived somewhat. I think the main reason for the continuing economic problems was rampant inflation which continues to plague Turkey today, more than ever. Now the Turks have profited greatly from tourism and are not nearly as badly off as they were then.

During the winter months Ankara suffered from a terrible pollution problem. The city lies in a depression surrounded by hills. Most of the population burns soft coal, creating a terrible layer of smelly brown smog lying over the city. Some days you can't see 10 feet

in front of you. If you can get up into the hills, where the higher-ups lived (like our ambassador), you could look down on this cloud covering the city, like looking down on clouds from an air plane. We didn't live above the smog; we lived right down in the smog, about two blocks from the embassy, which was right downtown. But it didn't bother us all that much.

We had a very agreeable social life and very close Turkish friends, which was a new experience after Belgium, where we hadn't succeeded in making any friends among the host country nationals at all. And we got to travel a bit.

Q: In Turkey?

HEICHLER: Yes, and Turkey is absolutely fascinating for anyone interested in ancient civilizations and ancient art. One of Ankara's main attractions is one of the great museums in the world, the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, normally called the Hittite Museum, which features artifacts from the Hittite period, the Lydian period, the Greeks, the Islamic time and what have you. It's amazing how many civilizations have marched across Asia Minor in the course of several thousand years, and we visited a great many wonderful sites, especially in western Turkey, along the Aegean coast -- Ephesus, Izmir, lovely old port cities like Bodrum (ancient Halicarnassos) and Marmaris, all of which had been Greek colonies in ancient times. We got up to the Black Sea once and visited fabled Trebizond, which the Turks call Trabzon, a city which split off from the Byzantine Empire and was its own isolated little empire for several hundred years. There was a sensitive American listening post up on the Black Sea at Sinop, which served to monitor Soviet missile launches and other traffic.

Q: I see.

HEICHLER: Sinop is a peninsula that sticks up a little ways into the Black Sea, right in the center of the Turkish coastline, and the NSA had a major installation there. Everybody knew about it. I remember taking Senator Patrick Leahy from Vermont to visit Sinop; he was then a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee. So I got around quite a bit.

Q: Well, that's good.

HEICHLER: I never had a boring day.

Q: Did you get involved in any way in Greek-Turkish issues?

HEICHLER: Not very much, no.

Q: Okay.

HEICHLER: I maintained close contact with my opposite number in Athens, social as well as professional. He was serving much the same function vis-à-vis the Greeks, less

extensive - we only had four bases in Greece compared to the 30 and more we maintained in Turkey - but I think he had a much harder time than I did because he had to deal with a rather hostile, anti-American administration under Andreas Papandreou. Sometimes it's a wonder to me that Greece has managed to stay in NATO.

Q: Why is that?

HEICHLER: Well, because so many of its positions and policies have been anti-Western, all the way down to what to do about Kosovo.

Q: Why do you think that is? I know that may be not exactly your specialty.

HEICHLER: I really don't know. It's partly because-

Q: I mean, is it a function of the Greek-Turkish issue somewhat?

HEICHLER: It is partly that. The Greeks resent our assistance to Turkey. They fear Turkey because Turkey is so much bigger and more powerful. And then the issues between the two countries are just terribly intractable. It is not just Cyprus - of course a very sore tooth - but there are other problems: Control of the Aegean Sea. The Greeks talk about extending their territorial waters to 12 miles. The Turks will then show you a map with all the Greek Islands scattered around the Aegean surrounded by a 12-mile Greek territorial limit. In such a situation, Turkish shipping would be imprisoned in Turkish ports - they wouldn't be able to get out into the open sea at all. Obviously they can't live with that. That's just one example. There is also exploitation of the mineral riches on the sea bottom; fishing rights - you name it. It's terribly complicated. I didn't really want to be involved in all this, and I didn't have to be.

Q: And did you have any particular relationship with the Turkish Desk in the Department in the context of your job, or was the relationship with the Department more with politico-military affairs?

HEICHLER: No, it was much more with the Turkish Desk. I talked to the Desk officer on the phone occasionally, and he came out for the occasional visit. I really didn't have much to do with PM. There were some high-level visits by people like Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle, who took a strong interest in Turkish affairs. And I was also responsible (control officer) for one visit by Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger. And there was a visit by Alexander Haig while I was in Turkey.

Q: Haig was then Secretary of State.

HEICHLER: Secretary of State, yes. So we had our share of high-level visits to worry about, but they all went off without a hitch.

Q: Anything else on Turkey? It sounds like a great assignment.

HEICHLER: It was a great assignment.

Q: Do you want to go on for your next or... It's up to you.

HEICHLER: Why don't we let it go for next time.

Q: Okay, the next time we would be talking about your period in INR, and I think that was your last assignment.

HEICHLER: It was.

Q: So then perhaps you could give us some reflections on your overall career in the Foreign Service and so on.

HEICHLER: Right, I'd be glad to do that.

Q: That sounds great.

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Today is Wednesday, March 22, 2000. Lucian, I believe you have a few other comments about Turkey.

HEICHLER: As I think I said before, my job at the embassy in Ankara was one of the most interesting I'd ever had. It involved an interesting balancing act, among other things. My responsibilities included supervising the implementation of the Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement, working with the ambassador and with the commanders of the military assistance mission and others in our efforts to raise levels of military assistance to Turkey, at which we were quite successful. In addition to working with the ambassador and the DCM at the embassy, I had to maintain good, close relations with two major generals whom, according to the army system of equivalent ranks, I actually outranked slightly, but they didn't know that, and of course I lacked their perks - such as my own airplane, my own chauffeur-driven car, and all the rest of it. I met at least once a week with the commanding general of JUSMAT, the military assistance mission chief, and occasionally with the commander of the logistical support command, TUSLOG, which supported all our 30-odd bases in Turkey, where we had a total of over 5,000 men, mostly airmen and a few sailors. I enjoyed very good relations with the NATO department of the Foreign Ministry, my principal Turkish contacts. I made good friends there and generally found it an enormously satisfying, interesting, and sometimes difficult assignment, the kind of challenging assignment which always made me wonder, am I really on top of things or not? But I had an excellent staff with a penchant for extreme thoroughness and competence, and so I felt very good.

Q: You're referring to your Foreign Service staff?

HEICHLER: My Foreign Service staff of two officers plus a secretary.

Q: How did you find working with the U.S. military? I'm thinking in terms of what we hear about the military mind and all of that. Did they have a notably different mind set than Foreign Service officers?

HEICHLER: They most certainly did. For one thing, they rather distrusted and resented civilians like me. For another, they spoke their own special lingo, their own technical language, which was sometimes a little difficult to follow, and they had a tendency to try to put things over on me. The general with whom I worked longest and most closely was a great talker, and to keep him on the straight and narrow was sometimes a little difficult. But my biggest challenge, as well as, I think, to just about every other career officer in the embassy, was our own ambassador.

Q: Who was that again?

HEICHLER: Robert Strausz-Hupé.

Q: Oh, yes, okay.

HEICHLER: A non-career man, a political appointee of Ronald Reagan's, who, to put it bluntly, was quite paranoid about the Foreign Service and convinced that "we were out to get him" and undermine him and his policies. Therefore he tended to use mainly CIA back channels to communicate with Washington, leaving us in the dark. In general he was a very difficult man to work with. He was already over 80 years old, irascible, totally unpredictable. He could be very pleasant when he felt so inclined, but he could suddenly take offense, usually at something imaginary or not worth mentioning, fly into a rage and become insulting and downright impossible. I remember a time when I was acting DCM. The ambassador had written a cable which was automatically, as a matter of course, passed to me to clear off on. When he discovered that I had actually dared to initial it, he got absolutely furious: "What business of mine was it what he wrote to Washington?" and so on. Finally I asked him whether he'd rather have me move back to my own office and leave the DCM's office vacant, but he said, "No, no, no," and allowed me to sit there until the deputy chief of mission came back. I have met very few people in the course of my life whom I disliked more intensely than the Honorable Robert Strausz-Hupé.

One of my concerns during this period, of course, was my own future. I was number three at the embassy in Ankara. I had reached the rank of minister-counselor and was naturally interested in becoming a DCM or head of a consulate general, but I had no luck with that. I found it an increasingly losing proposition because I discovered that especially the politically appointed ambassadors preferred younger, more junior people whom they thought they could control more easily than a very senior officer like myself.

The most promising job opportunity which came along was that of Political Advisor ("POLAD") to SACEUR, the NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe at Mons in Belgium. I was "short-listed" for that position, i.e., one of only five final candidates that were invited to Belgium to be interviewed, but in the end the position went to someone

else. After my tour in Turkey ended, there was nothing for it but to go back to the Department in Washington and start hunting for whatever assignment might be available.

Q: This was then in 1986?

HEICHLER: No, this was in 1983.

Q: Oh, I'm sorry, yes, of course.

So, Lucian, here we are in 1983, and you returned to Washington, I gather, without an assignment. As I recall myself, this was in the days when they were starting to cut back on the number of positions and so forth, and of course, as one rises in the ranks, it gets tougher to get those few assignments at the top. So, tell us how it went for you.

HEICHLER: Well, with the passing of the years, my attitude toward Personnel underwent a considerable change. I had started out with a naïve, childlike faith that my personnel officer would look after me like a fairy godmother, planning my career in stages, making sure I got the right assignments at the right times which would eventually lead me to the top of the career ladder.

Q: Well, we all had that faith, didn't we? For a while, anyway.

HEICHLER: Yes. And as the years went by, this faith grew thinner and thinner and finally evaporated completely. When I came to the conclusion that my personnel officer would just as soon not see me darken her door or have to worry about me, I realized that the biggest favor I could do the Foreign Service was to retire and make room for somebody else, someone younger..

Q: Let me ask you something in this regard. You are referring to a personnel officer in Central Personnel - is that right? - rather than in the bureau. Now what rank was the personnel officer who was in charge of people of your rank? Do you recall more or less?

HEICHLER: Well, she was a senior Foreign Service officer, a counselor rather than a minister-counselor, an FSO-2. I liked her, but I came to suspect that most of these people were using their assignments mainly to grab the good jobs for themselves, and that she was no exception.

Q: Well, that's the point behind my question, too. They were... Yes, it wasn't exactly a disinterested kind of arrangement.

HEICHLER: And Harriet - I forgot her last name, and maybe it's just as well - was a really nice woman, and she got herself a very nice position after she finished with Personnel, but she never did anything for me. And I ran around trying to ingratiate myself here and there, looking for a position. This sounds perhaps silly and a little paranoid and a bit like sour grapes, but I became increasingly disturbed by the fact that only those people who had a talent for cultivating a powerful patron got the really good assignments,

and I have no gift for this whatsoever. If I walked into the office of some assistant secretary of state to ask about a job, I never knew what to talk about except the weather. My whole inclination was to let the system work, to the extent that it was capable of working, to rest on my own record and my performance ratings. As time went on, this seemed to be less and less promising.

Q: It seems to me like you're alluding to the fact that there are really two systems - the formal system, based on what used to be called Efficiency Reports, became known as Personnel Evaluation Reports, as opposed to a more informal system of personal connections.

HEICHLER: Exactly.

Q: Okay.

HEICHLER: The connections were what worked. At some point, the wife of a former colleague of mine who had the same drawbacks as I in terms of not knowing how to develop any connections - she was a very bright woman - and she blew up at the two of us at dinner one night and said, "What you guys don't understand is that a successful careerist has to devote about 50 percent of his time to building connections and the other 50 per cent to doing his job! All you guys do is work all the time and you don't worry about whom you know, and it will get you nowhere." And that was basically true.

In the end, I did get a job in INR. A deputy assistant secretary of state for intelligence and research who had been DCM in Ankara, Dennis Kux, called me in, knowing that I was looking for a job, and he offered me a position which sounded very interesting. It carried the high-sounding title of director of intelligence coordination, on the operational side of INR, not the intelligence-gathering side. Dennis hinted that this was an important job, that I would even have a say in deciding what covert action projects the State Department should endorse on their way to the President and which to oppose. And having had strong feelings about the whole covert action business for many years, I was attracted by this. I have always felt that most of our covert action projects have not been worth the money that was spent on them.

Q: Let's just pause for a minute. You're saying then that INR had a more or less parallel structure to the CIA, in the sense of an intelligence-gathering side and an operational side?

HEICHLER: Yes.

Q: Okay. So you were assigned to the operational side.

HEICHLER: Of course, neither of these were in any way comparable to the CIA, in that the intelligence gathering side did not have their own assets but depended on other intelligence agencies for all their information, and the so-called operational side essentially just worked with other agencies in the intelligence community.

Q: Which included what agencies in addition to CIA?

HEICHLER: The three or four Defense Department intelligence agencies: DIA; the intelligence services of each of the three services; NSA; maybe some others I can't think of. The FBI was also represented. I served in my capacity of director for coordination on a number of inter-agency committees and task forces. There was one that I was given to chair and was kind of interested in, for a while at least. It was an inter-agency group monitoring Soviet "active measures," a term used to describe disinformation, items of disinformation planted - rather effectively in many cases - particularly in the Third World. At one point I was also given responsibility for INR's role in combating the international narcotics traffic, but in this field I felt very much at sea because I knew nothing about the subject.

If I may be blunt, I spent three years in this INR position, and it was without any doubt in my mind the worst job I ever held in my whole 34 years in the Foreign Service.

Q: Why was that?

HEICHLER: Because it was a non-job. I like to be busy, to work hard, and I'm always happiest when I'm under a lot of pressure, as I was in Berlin, as I was on the German Desk and a few other places, and finally in Turkey. I got into this job, and I soon began to wonder where the work was, and I became increasingly disoriented, disturbed, and amazed to find that there wasn't any.

Q: Well, now, does this have something to say about the role of the State Department in intelligence work?

HEICHLER: Not really. I mean, I thought it was good that the State Department should keep its hand in, and INR was its vehicle for being represented in the so-called intelligence community.

Q: So why was it a non-job?

HEICHLER: Well, frankly, because other than sitting in on these inter-agency groups, I didn't have anything to do. I found the whole office so badly organized that I never could get my hands on any relevant, pertinent cable traffic or anything else. I found occasional odd pieces of paper in my IN box, none of which seemed relevant to anything I was doing. I found that the people around me - my colleagues, my subordinates, and the secretaries - all had a penchant for looking busy but not actually producing anything. And if that was not bad enough, I discovered some very strange types who worked on inter-agency staffs. These were the most peculiar bureaucrats I had ever laid eyes on because they represented a new low of incompetence and self-importance, kidding themselves that they had a role to play when, in fact, they didn't. They were a very strange breed indeed.

There was a monthly lunch between the Secretary of State and the Director of Central Intelligence, Bill Casey in those days, and it was part of my job to help prepare the agenda items and supporting papers for these lunches. But that was easily done and took about two hours out of the month. And it turned out that I had no influence whatever on covert action. While I was privy to the most secret papers imaginable, to the prospective and approved findings for covert action projects, I certainly never had the slightest opportunity to influence what was going to be done or what was not going to be done. That was decided at a much, much higher level.

Q: Well, do you think that the State Department, at a level above you, had an influence?

HEICHLER: Yes, I do think so. I think the Secretary of State, George Shultz, could say yea or nay on certain things, but to what extent he acted on recommendations from below, including ours, I could not say.

Q: But also, I assume, the relevant country desks.

HEICHLER: Perhaps, or if not the country desk, then the assistant secretaries or the bureau chiefs.

Q: For the regional bureaus, yes. Okay.

HEICHLER: And then, of course, as we all know, mostly from the newspapers, even the Secretary of State was frequently out of the loop, given the way Bill Casey did business.

Q: Yes, I was thinking about that.

HEICHLER: I was no longer in INR when the fun hit the fan with Iran-Contra and all that. I would have loved to experience that, but I didn't. That came years later.

Q: Yes.

HEICHLER: Or, well, Oliver North - I think I knew who Oliver North was when he was still on the NSC staff but I had nothing directly to do with him.

Q: Yes. You had also worked in INR in a totally different capacity in biographical work back in the early 50s. Did you have any perception of the role of INR in the '80s as compared to the '50s, say, within the State Department and with in the intelligence community in Washington? Had it changed, or was your perspective so different in each job that you can't compare it?

HEICHLER: It think the latter is true. I was far too junior and with far too limited a perspective to be able to judge that. I don't think I even knew that INR played any role other than writing reports which were or were not read, as the case might be. Also, in the mid-'50s, when I was working there, the CIA itself was brand new, getting its feet on the ground. The whole intelligence community, no doubt, changed greatly in character in the

course of the next 30 years or so.

In any event, I thought mine was an absolutely terrible job, and I became very depressed; I began to develop psychological problems because I hated having to pretend that I was busy when I was not. I hated sitting at that desk every day shuffling the few papers that were there to shuffle and wishing that I could be sprung from there into a real job, but that was not to be. I had very little respect for the people I worked with or the people I worked for in INR. I'm sure, however, that the director of INR, the equivalent of an assistant secretary, was a good man and had plenty to do.

Q: Who was that? Do you remember?

HEICHLER: Well, the last one in my time was Ambassador Morton Abramowitz.

Q: Okay, yes.

HEICHLER: I don't remember the name of his predecessor.

Q: Let's just spell it...

HEICHLER: I think he went out to serve an ambassadorship after that. I don't remember right now where. I thought he was a good man. The front office was directly across the hall from me, and I had a fair amount of contact with the director and with the deputy assistant secretaries. We had our own deputy assistant secretary who was my immediate boss, but as far as I could tell, he did absolutely no work, either.

Q: Which is very demoralizing, understandably.

HEICHLER: Yes, and you know, the less work there was, the less was done: This is the only place I have ever worked where I was not only told to write my own performance evaluation but afterwards even to write my own review of it.

Q: Oh, well, that is quite unusual. Well, hopefully you wrote a very good one.

HEICHLER: Well, yes - probably I might have gotten a better one if somebody else had written it.

Q: Well, that's true.

HEICHLER: I can't quite see...

Q: Yes, there are limits to...

HEICHLER: There are limits.

Q: ...had your own personnel file.

HEICHLER: Exactly. But I found all that very disillusioning, and I found the whole Department disillusioning in those years. It seemed to me just a huge, insane paper mill, swirling two million pieces of paper around the building every day and accomplishing very little. I did not have much respect for the leadership of the Department. I think I have expressed my views on Henry Kissinger earlier in this interview. I didn't think that Cyrus Vance, while a much more decent man, was any great improvement. He seemed rather ineffectual and not terribly much on top of things. And so with one thing and another, when the Department developed a really wonderful program to help people prepare for their retirement, I jumped at it eagerly.

Q: You're referring, then, to the retirement seminar?

HEICHLER: I'm referring to the retirement seminar.

Q: The one-week-

HEICHLER: Well, it was more than one week. It was actually... You could get at least three months on full pay.

Q: Okay, so you were on the three-month program as well.

HEICHLER: Yes, after you did the seminar, you reported to the retirement program, which was housed in the former Iranian embassy, which we had confiscated after the hostage-taking of our embassy staff in Tehran.

Q: Just a minute now. So when was this? Because I also, of course, went into that program not too much longer after, but when did you begin that three month retirement program?

HEICHLER: Probably in the early spring of '86.

Q: Okay, I followed you about a year and a half later.

HEICHLER: And I found that what we were given was really quite generous and wonderful, not only that we were on full pay in order to work for nobody but ourselves, to be taught how to write a résumé, to be given all kinds of opportunities to look for good post-retirement jobs in private industry as well as in government. We had this whole library of useful resources at our disposal. I thought this was really exceedingly generous and quite wonderful.

Q: Well, let's pause for a minute to talk a little bit about what was going on in the Foreign Service at that time, because this would be the spring of '86, during this period. As I recall, a number of senior positions - well, not just senior - a number of positions in the Foreign Service had either been abolished or downgraded for budgetary reasons and pressures from the Congress and what not, so that there were fewer positions available,

and the Department was encouraging people to retire, correct?

HEICHLER: Yes.

Q: So part of that encouragement was in the form of this retirement program, to help people reinvent themselves, if you will, or find what talents they had, what experience they had in the Foreign Service that could be translated and used in the outside world. Is that a fair statement?

HEICHLER: That's a fair statement, I think, yes

Q: So you must have been in about the first batch of people to go through that three-month program, because frankly I had thought I was among the first. I entered it in July of '87, so a year later. So it was in the Iranian embassy on Mass Avenue, and who was in charge of the program when you took it? Do you recall?

HEICHLER: I wish I could think of the names, but I can't.

Q: I can't even think who was in charge of mine. The name will come to me, but in any case -

HEICHLER: I remember that there were two people, really, who ran this together, two men.

Q: Right, Foreign Service officers, right, retired Foreign Service officers - or were they still on active duty?

HEICHLER: I think they were still on active duty. It was an assignment for them.

Q: So what did you do in the retirement program?

HEICHLER: Well, as I said, learned to write a résumé - I wrote résumés for myself - I read books like *What Color is Your Parachute?*

Q: Right, I remember that one.

HEICHLER: In fact, a whole slew of books on how best to market yourself, not only as a retiree but generally - how to prepare for a job interview, how to make the best possible impression. And I think I wrote away for some jobs.

Q: Did you find it difficult to translate your Foreign Service experience into something that would be meaningful in the outside world?

HEICHLER: Very much so. What interested me most was to find a teaching position. I was strongly interested in putting my personal experience to good use in teaching contemporary history or international relations, but I got nowhere because I did not have

the necessary academic credentials or experience.

Q: Now you're talking about teaching at the university level?

HEICHLER: Yes. In fact, after moving to Frederick (Maryland), I made several more attempts to get at least a temporary position with one of the three local colleges but with no success. Again, I think it was my chronic flaw of not pushing myself forward sufficiently.

Q: But it seems that academia has its own culture and its own desire that people have a Ph.D., whether or not they have any experience. I'm sure you must have run across that - the Ph.D., the paper problem.

HEICHLER: And the teaching experience, which counted for much more than what a person could actually contribute from his or her own life. So I finally let that go. I was not interested - I think partly because of my negative feelings following the INR assignment - in a consultancy with State. When I left, I left completely. I have barely ever been back in the building in the last 15 years. Of course, I moved out of Washington to another town, not that far away, to be sure, to Frederick, to be with my wife, who was working there. But the kind of work I have done since I was retired--volunteer work--had little to do with my previous experience.

Q: What kind of volunteer work have you been doing?

HEICHLER: For the last ten years I've served as a so-called "behind-the-scenes" volunteer at the Smithsonian Institution, primarily doing translation work from German and French into English as needed. I could also do other kinds of volunteer work for the Institution. Most of the docents and tour guides and the like in museums are volunteers.

Q: Yes.

HEICHLER: Without several hundred volunteers, I think the Institution would have a difficult time within its budgetary limits. I supported my wife quite actively in her ministry by teaching Sunday school, putting out the monthly newsletter, etc. - and I've become involved with voluntary agencies in Frederick. There's an organization called the Family Life Center, which has now changed its name to Families Plus!, which basically, essentially, runs support groups for families for mothers, for children who have trouble controlling their anger, with children of recently divorced parents, and I help issue their newsletter and write their grant proposals. They have no income other than what they get from grants and membership fees. Those are basically the kinds of things I have done for the last 10 or 15 years. And on my own initiative I have written quite a few of my own reminiscences.

Q: So, you can certainly say that your retirement years have given you a chance to do some things that you wouldn't have had a chance to do otherwise.

HEICHLER: Right.

Q: I mean it takes time to write memoirs, and obviously doing community work gets you into a community... Well, I myself found after I retired I became part of a community other than the Foreign Service community and was able to participate in it a lot more than when I was just here on a Washington assignment.

HEICHLER: One thing my return to Washington did for me was to force me to become computer literate.

Q: Now did the retirement program help you in that at all?

HEICHLER: No, it didn't. But the thing is - it's almost funny, you know - my first boss in Berlin in the early '60s insisted that all his officers learned to dictate. He threatened to take away our typewriters. He said, we have these excellent Foreign Service secretaries - use them, learn to dictate. So I did. I came to pride myself on my dictation skills, and the secretaries enjoyed working with me because I dictated fairly rapidly and smoothly and changed very little after a draft was produced. And so this became my preferred working method, and when I came home to Washington I found that everything had changed. The secretary to whom I had access, who worked two floors above mine and served a number of other people besides me, could not take dictation, could, in fact, barely type; and I found that everybody had computer terminals, and I had no idea what to do with these things. I was then given the opportunity to take a three-day course in Arlington to learn how to use a Wang word processor.

Q: The word processing part of the computers, yes.

HEICHLER: Well, it's all we had in those days. They were wonderful machines, but they didn't do anything other than word-processing. And the funny thing is that to practice my computer skills was actually the reason why and how I got started writing my recollections.

Q: Yes, well, it's a lot easier on a computer than it is writing it out by hand. It's a lot quicker and more easily revised.

HEICHLER: I became absolutely enamored of the technology. I then bought my wife a computer to help her with her schoolwork. She was going to seminary and studying theology. And now we wouldn't know how to live without computers.

Q: Well, that's true of so many of us. Well, good, now, let me ask you a few more sort of long-range questions. Your career in the Foreign Service spanned, I guess, about 32 years or something like that - more than that?

HEICHLER: 32 years, yes.

Q: Call it, anyway, over 30 years in the Foreign Service. When you look back on your 32

years in the Foreign Service, in addition to y our memories of the various countries in which you served - which I think we've pretty much covered, what thoughts come to your mind about the Foreign Service as a career or about the Department of State in general?

HEICHLER: Well, I had various thoughts. I have to compartmentalize to some extent.

Q: Sure.

HEICHLER: For myself personally I feel very fortunate to have had this career. As you know, I sort of fell into it. I can't claim credit for choosing it. I didn't, as a young college graduate, take the Foreign Service Entrance Examination. But I think I've had a wonderful life. For the most part I had very interesting, challenging assignments, learned a lot about the world, about history, about current politics, met some wonderful people, generally have no regrets at all for myself.

Where the Foreign Service and the State Department as a whole are concerned, I feel critical of the built-in dilettantism -

Q: Built in "dilettantism" - okay.

HEICHLER: - which comes from not having any kind of real academic preparation for diplomatic service, as many other advanced countries do. We have no academy of Foreign Service. We have Georgetown University, to be sure, but not very many people go there, and somehow it doesn't compare. This tendency to use medieval apprenticeship methods, to expect people to go out in the field and learn on the job and be transferred at just about the point they've finally learned what they're supposed to be doing, has struck me as an inherent weakness of our Foreign Service. Comparing ourselves to colleagues whom I got to know well in friendly embassies like the British, German, and so on, I always felt that we were a bit at a disadvantage compared to their professionalism.

Q: What kinds of things were they trained in that American Foreign Service officers had not been trained in?

HEICHLER: I think they had - and I don't know if it's a matter of training or what - a surer grasp of exactly what their national interests were, what they were supposed to do, how to negotiate successfully, how to conduct themselves in conversations with friendly and unfriendly representatives of other countries, to be less naïve, less prone to indiscretions than our people, even though clearly in some ways less thorough. Our tendency to have a full-sized embassy in every two-bit country in the world is something of a joke to our friends. I remember a funny conversation I once had with the British ambassador to Cameroon when I was serving there. While resident in Cameroon, he was accredited to five countries, not just one. I asked him how he managed to keep up with all that, and he laughed and said, "Well, when I go visit Bangui, from Yaoundé or wherever, the first thing I do is go visit my American colleague, and he gives me a copy of his economic trends report and stuff like that, and I send that in to my Foreign Office."

Q: Right. Well, I mean, they had an awareness that they didn't have, really, vital interests in some of these countries, and therefore it wasn't necessary to staff them.

HEICHLER: Exactly.

Q: Now why do you suppose the United States has never established anything resembling a Foreign Service academy? Yes, there's Georgetown, there's SAIS, there's the Fletcher School, but those are really essentially academic institutions that are not... I mean, many people who go there do not go into the Foreign Service; they go into teaching or international business, or sometimes they end up in the Foreign Service, but it's not necessarily designed... So what should, why haven't we -

HEICHLER: I think we have been and to some extent perhaps we still are, despite our preeminent position in the world, inward-looking, somewhat xenophobic, with little sense of the importance of having a foreign affairs establishment. I found in my travels around the United States that a great many people haven't a clue that we even have a foreign service or what a Foreign Service officer is and does. If you mention the word *diplomat*, it gives them some kind of a clue, but they are deeply suspicious of diplomats, having been taught by Mark Twain that a diplomat is "a man sent abroad to lie for his country" - which is most certainly not true. I remember - here comes an anecdote - when I was on home leave from Berlin for the first time in '62, in Chicago, visiting my wife's family, I went into a bank to cash a check, and being inordinately proud of my new position as a Foreign Service officer, I did not produce a driver's license; I brought out my new, elegant green and gold diplomatic passport, handed that to the teller, who disappeared into a back room with it, came back a few minutes later and said, "What exactly *is* it that you do?" I said, "I'm a Foreign Service officer." "Whose foreign service?" came the suspicious reply.

Q: Well, yes. Well, that happens still. So in other words, it's sort of our naïve and amateurish approach to foreign affairs, that it's really not all that important -

HEICHLER: For much of our history we did not have professionals doing this kind of work. We do now, but we still see them as semi-professional, not worth training the way you would train a lawyer or a doctor or an accountant.

That's one thing I criticize, and the other criticism, of course, I share with most of my colleagues, and that is our unfortunate reliance on political appointees in senior positions, in ambassadorships, and even at senior levels of the Department.

Q: That's not, of course, the fault of the Foreign Service; it's the fault of the American government and the American way of thinking about foreign affairs, which is that anybody can do it, right?

HEICHLER: Exactly, yes, and of course anybody can not do it. And I have seen too many instances where an embassy staff, headed by the DCM, had to do everything they could to keep the ambassador from making an ass of himself, at least in public.

Q: Yes, "damage control."

HEICHLER: Damage control, right. Or the delicate task of making the ambassador feel that he is doing something when, in fact, you're doing it all.

Q: Yes.

HEICHLER: And keeping him somewhat isolated from his own propensity to do damage and make a fool of himself.

Q: And again, this stands in sharp contrast to most other countries.

HEICHLER: It does, indeed. I don't know any other country, at least among our closest friends and allies, which awards political appointments to the diplomatic service as a reward for political contributions and the like.

Q: Yes. Your career included intelligence and research work, political work, politico-military work, some economic work. Do you have any thoughts on that old issue - perennial issue, I should say - of generalists versus specialists? Should we be training Foreign Service officers in just one field, or should we be... In your case, you were very broad-gauged, I think, while having specialties as well. Do you have any thoughts on that?

HEICHLER: Well, I tend to be prejudiced in favor of the generalist. I always have been. I think we should give people an opportunity to become proficient in their field, but I don't think we should keep them in that field so exclusively that they have no understanding of what other people are doing.

We do have a system for bringing in specialists when we really need them through the Foreign Service Reserve Officer Program, and I think we should continue that. When an expert in an esoteric field is needed, bring him in on contract for as long as the job takes, but do not necessarily make him a career officer. Other than that no, I think not. I think I like the idea of rotating people around the different aspects of Foreign Service work, giving them a chance to learn what each “cone” [field of specialization] is about. Now there are several areas of Foreign Service work that I've never done, like administration or consular work, but I don’t see that as any particular lack. I realize that what the administrative side does is essential and very worthwhile, but I have never had any great interest in learning how to manage the properties of an embassy or the housing of families, or whatever. I don’t see it as a lacuna in my own background that I have not done this kind of work. One thing I would rather have liked to do, perhaps, is some personnel work, to get a slightly better insight into just how the personnel system works or could be made to work, if it worked better than it really does. Okay?

Q: Well, that’s been a big problem for the Foreign Service, I think, the personnel system, and it seems like we've tried one system after another, and I think at the time you're

retired, we were still in the so-called "cone system," which was, in fact, damaging to people who had inter-functional experience, or whatever they call it now. So I know that in later years they did establish some kind of a multi-functional cone, or whatever one would call it, but it seems like it's always been a tension between developing people who were in essentially one area such as political work or economic work, or whether we should have people with a broader-gauged background. And there's something about economic as well as political and military and so on. So we haven't figured it out yet, I guess.

HEICHLER: One thing that I am also very critical of, as I am sure many of my colleagues are, is the absolute farce we have made of performance evaluation.

Q: Well, say a few words about that.

HEICHLER: I realize it's very difficult to change now, but I wish there was some way we could get to an honest, fair evaluation system. The way it is now - or at least the way it was when I left - was that if you said one single, honest word about a perfectly good officer, you risked destroying his career forever. After my retirement I once served on a senior selection board and experienced at first hand the agony that these boards go through in sifting through evaluation reports, trying to rank-order hundreds of people who *all* walk on water. And I think that's got to change.

Q: Well, it's got to change, but as far as I know it hasn't.

HEICHLER: No, and I don't see how it can, because who is going to be the first one to say, "Sorry, buddy, I didn't mean to cut you off at the knees, but I am going to write that while you're a very good officer, you have this or that weakness."

Q: Well, it seems, again, to get back to this problem of whether we have a formal system based on merit or whether we have an informal system based on pull.

HEICHLER: Yes. I wish we had a formal system truly based on merit and a way of recording merit that was reliable, honest, and usable, because our present performance evaluations are not really usable.

Q: Yes. Okay, now I would like to ask you if you have any thoughts on being a naturalized American in the Foreign Service. Obviously you're not the only one. There are number of people who were born overseas in other countries who joined our Foreign Service, but do you think that you had a different perspective than, say, the average Foreign Service officer born in the United States, trained in the U.S. educational system?

HEICHLER: Not very much so. First of all, let me say emphatically that I never felt discriminated against by being a naturalized citizen or for any other reason - not in the least. When it comes to having a different perspective, I would say yes, but only with reference to those countries that I knew from my own childhood and experience as a born European. I think when it came to working on German affairs, whether in the field or at

home, my own roots, my own background in German culture and German history...

(see endnote 8)

Having reviewed this interview transcript, I want to add one more criticism of our Foreign Service as compared to the diplomatic services of other countries: Too often I have had the uncomfortable feeling that we were kept in the dark about what the real, genuine, secret foreign policy of our country was, that the official version did not correspond to the reality.

Finally, I would like to invite the reader's intention to the end notes which are taken from reminiscences I have written over the years about my life and especially about my experiences in the Foreign Service of the United States.

Endnotes

1. **Emmerich to Zevenaar**

These two small towns -- one in Germany, the other in the Netherlands -- are not far apart; the train takes less than an hour from Emmerich across the heavily wooded border to Zevenaar. On March 25, 1940, however, it took me all day to travel from Emmerich to Zevenaar, life, and freedom.

More than two years after the Nazis had annexed Austria to their "Third Reich," my parents were able at long last to obtain all the German and American documentation needed to emigrate to the United States. Using up most of the money he had left, my father bought three steamship tickets, at vastly inflated black market currency rates, for a voyage from Rotterdam to New York. He booked passage for himself, my mother, and me on the Holland-America Line's S.S. *Volendam*, scheduled to sail from Rotterdam on March 28, 1940.

In those days Dutch transit visas were good for a three-day stay in the Netherlands; travelers able to document their intention and ability to depart the country on a given date were allowed to enter the Netherlands exactly three days earlier. We therefore left Vienna in the morning of March 24, on the first leg of our great adventure -- an all-day ride on a slow train to Cologne in the Rhineland. We spent the night sitting on our luggage in that city's cavernous old railway station, and the next morning we boarded another train for the two-hour ride to Emmerich and the German border station.

We arrived there about ten o'clock on a gray, chilly morning, "we" being a group of some 30 or 40 refugees accompanied by a young Dutch representative from the Holland-America Line's Vienna office. As we disembarked, we were accosted by a mounted German border police guard who informed us gruffly that we might just as well stay right there on the platform and wait for the next train back into Germany. "But why?" we asked, "for Heaven's sake, why?" -- "Because the Dutch won't let you in," came the reply. The border guard seemed not to know why, and he certainly didn't care.

Why shouldn't the Dutch allow us to cross the border? We knew their law, we were in compliance, our papers were in order. Our tickets and passports showed that we were scheduled to sail on March 28, and this was March 25, just three days away.

In response to pleas from the young Dutchman, my father, and a few other intrepid souls, the guard grudgingly allowed us to enter the dingy waiting room of the border police station. While our Dutch traveling companion used the phone to call his office and find out what was going on, we settled ourselves on the hard wooden benches. There we were to sit for nearly six hours in total silence, contemplating our fate which, we all thought, would certainly be the nearest Nazi concentration camp. What else should "they" do with us? -- We no longer had homes, jobs or anything else to go back to. "They" liked simple, quick and radical solutions for such problems as we had suddenly become.

I was then not quite fifteen years old; my birthday was a week away. Yet I can remember thinking even then how nothing ever turned out if you dared to count on it, if you looked forward to it too much. The Greek fear of *hybris* has been natural to me all my life, then as now, more than half a century later. And yet on that day so long ago the gods chose to show mercy.

About four o'clock in the afternoon -- six hours after we had first occupied the wooden benches of the waiting room -- the telephone rang. In the silence of the room, in the stillness of our thoughts and fears, its shrill ring went through us like an electric shock. A policeman picked up the receiver and summoned the young Dutchman. He came back with quite a tale.

His Vienna office had contacted Rotterdam, headquarters of the Dutch national shipping line. The S.S. *Volendam* could not sail on March 28 because today, March 25, she still rode at anchor in Southampton harbor, detained by British authorities on suspicion of carrying contraband goods on her way home from New York -- in other words, trying to break the naval blockade which Britain had imposed on Germany when World War II broke out. Now the Dutch border police were simply enforcing the rules: no date of passage three days hence -- no entry into the Netherlands today.

Fortunately for us, the directors of the Holland-America Line in Rotterdam were not content with that answer. It seems they had a pretty accurate idea of what would happen to us, and they didn't like it. They immediately asked their government to make an exception in our case. We were told later that they had taken the matter all the way up to Queen Wilhelmina, and perhaps that was even true. In any event, they received permission for us to cross into Holland.

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"Hurry up, hurry up!" said our young Dutch friend. "Hurry up, hurry up!" said the surly German border guards, "The train leaves at five, and we have less than an hour to get all of you through customs and emigration!"

We hurried and they hurried, and at five o'clock, in the gentle, early spring afternoon sun which had broken through the clouds we boarded a friendly Dutch train. We rolled into the forest. Somewhere in the woods we crossed the invisible border to freedom and knew that we would live.

When the train stopped in Zevenaar, a Dutch border guard came on board. With unforgettable nonchalance he held our passports open against the compartment wall and in pencil scrawled the Dutch transit visa on one of their pages. We were given a few minutes to get off the train and enjoy real ham sandwiches and hot chocolate -- the first good and real food I had tasted since the outbreak of war -- and we watched the lights come on in the little town. Since the blackout had been imposed in Germany in September 1939, I had not seen any city lights, and I was overwhelmed by this scene of light, warmth and peace. Little did any of us suspect that only a few more weeks were left to the Netherlands to enjoy their peace and freedom.

On arrival in Rotterdam about midnight we were met by representatives of the Montefiori Jewish Refugee Relief Committee. They had worked fast and efficiently upon hearing about us: Each one of our refugee families was assigned to a Rotterdam Jewish home to sleep, and to the same or another family for our three meals a day. We spent about ten days as the guests of these wonderful people, ten days which were the most carefree my parents had known in quite a few years or, for that matter, were ever to know again.

In early April the *Volendam* was finally ready to sail from Rotterdam to New York. For the first three days our neutral vessel hugged the shores of Holland, Belgium and France and threaded her way very carefully across the English Channel to avoid the mines, and then she crept slowly westward along the southern coast of Britain. On the day we finally rounded Land's End and headed out into the open Atlantic, the ship's radio brought us the news of Hitler's surprise attack on Denmark and Norway. We landed in New York on April 17, 1940. Less than four weeks later, on May 10, the *Wehrmacht* invaded the Netherlands, and *Luftwaffe* bombers destroyed the beautiful Rotterdam I had come to love.

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Postscript

Fifty years later, in August 1990, I took the train from Vienna to Amsterdam in order to catch a KLM flight home to the United States. With an eerie feeling I realized that the train traveled the same route as that day in March 1940. For the first time in half a century I saw Emmerich station again. There we sat a while, apparently waiting for a Dutch locomotive to be hitched to our train. I fought against the irrational fear that we might not get across the Dutch border. But, soon enough, the train began to move, and we rolled through the woods, past Zevenaar, not stopping again until we had reached Utrecht on the way to Amsterdam, Schiphol Airport, and home.

2. **Dutch Interlude**

On our arrival on free Dutch soil unforgettable joy and relief followed the drama of crossing the border from Germany to the Netherlands -- from prison to freedom. We glowed with good will, hope and happiness. After we had changed to an electrified train at Utrecht later that evening, I sat with a girl a year or so younger than I, a small, dark, intense and rather homely girl, and we talked our heads off, sharing our dreams of the future in America. I hoped to see her again, but I never did.

Close to midnight the train pulled into the Rotterdam Station. Despite the lateness of the hour we were met by a delegation from the Montefiori Refugee Relief Committee, and they proceeded to get us organized with awesome efficiency. I don't know how or when they got the word of our plight and rescue, but much hectic preparation must have gone into the arrangements made for us that night. My parents and I were taken to the comfortable home of a Dutch Jewish family and given rooms there for what became our ten-day stay in Rotterdam. We took our meals with another family who lived about a block away. I remember these fine people with affection and gratitude. I have often wondered (without much hope) whether they survived the war and what became of them.

For my parents and me our sojourn in Rotterdam proved to be a welcome respite, a time out between the nightmare we had left behind and the uncertain future ahead. For all practical purposes we were penniless; the Nazis had allowed us to take out of the country only ten Reichsmark each -- about four US dollars at the official exchange rate. But we needed no money. All our needs were provided for by the loving Good Samaritans who had taken us in. The Rotterdam city fathers even treated us to free movie passes. During this week before my 15th birthday I found everything exciting and wonderful -- the clean, modern city with its brisk North Sea air and cosmopolitan atmosphere, the sash windows never seen before, the handsome, streamlined yellow street cars, the pretty Dutch girls...

On my 15th birthday my father took me to the Rotterdam department store called "The Beehive." On the top floor there was a restaurant, and there he bought me a glass of beer. That was my birthday present, and I really appreciated it. My memory of those magical ten days in Rotterdam has grown rather dim, with all that has happened over the past half century, but a few experiences still stand out. One recollection is of a young German merchant seaman who seemed to have taken a shine to me and got my parents' permission to show me Rotterdam one day. He mainly showed me the waterfront. That day marked the beginning of my life-long addiction to Chinese food. My friend treated me to lunch at a waterfront Chinese restaurant -- the first to which I had ever been -- and left me to enjoy Oriental culinary delights, the like of which I had not dreamed existed. Completely naive, and totally preoccupied with my egg rolls, I hardly noticed that he was gone for about an hour. It only dawned on me several years later that this establishment had apparently offered other, different delights in addition to food; I suddenly remembered that there had been quite a few pretty, friendly girls seated on a bench along one wall, and finally I put two and two together.

Another day my parents and I took a local train to the beach resort at Scheveningen. It

was far too early in the year to bathe in the ocean or lie on the beach; the town lay deserted under cold, gray skies. We walked to the beach from the train station and climbed some steps up to a tall dune which formed a natural board walk. Reaching the top, I was overwhelmed: there before me, in all its majestic immensity, the open sea stretched away forever, and for the first time in my life I saw sea and sky merging indistinctly at the distant horizon.

Finally one evening in early April we boarded our ship, ready to sail at last. For me it was a moment of great joy and solemnity. A taxi took us along the edge of Rotterdam's great harbor to the Holland-America Line docks. I had never before seen anything larger than the excursion steamers on the Danube, and I found the great ocean liners awe- inspiring. Berthed at the pier next to our ship was an even larger liner, the S.S. *Statendam.* About six weeks later I was to see an aerial photograph on the front page of *The New York Times,* showing the *Statendam* in flames at the same pier following the *Luftwaffe* bombardment of Rotterdam.

Night had fallen when we crossed the gang plank onto the deck of our ship. The S.S. *Volendam* welcomed us with a blaze of lights reflected in the black waters of the port. It took me only seconds to walk the gang plank from the quay to the deck, but, looking down at the water, I was deeply conscious of this poignant moment when I took leave of Europe and prepared to embrace my new home, the New World.

3. **Military History**

In 1951 the historical division of the U.S. Army, officially known as the Office of the Chief of Military History, was still working on World War I history and already engaged in writing history of the Korean War. Now it was also embarked upon a much greater task -- writing the official history of the American Army in World War II, in a projected series of some 90 volumes. About a tenth of that was to be devoted to the European theater of war, beginning with *Cross-Channel Attack*, the story of the Normandy Invasion, going on to *Breakout and Pursuit* (across France), and ending with the conquest of Germany in the spring of 1945. These were big, heavy tomes, very detailed in their account of operations and equipped with photographs and a thick appendix of excellent maps, prepared by a special mapping section (which often created a bottleneck greatly delaying final publication of a volume).

I was assigned to the third volume in the European Theater series, to be entitled *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, an account of the American advance to the German defense line called the West Wall or "Siegfried Line" in the fall of 1944, and the terrible battles which had to be fought that winter before the Allies were finally able to break through these defenses and cross the Roer and Rhine Rivers into Germany. The great arc of front line described in this book curved from the Atlantic coast at Antwerp all the way east and south into the Ardennes Forest in Luxembourg. The time frame was September 1944 to March 1945. An entire separate volume, called *The Last Offensive*, was to be devoted to the German counter-offensive launched on December 16, 1944 under the command of Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, known in America primarily as the "Battle of the

Bulge" and remembered for the heroic American stand at Bastogne and General MacAuliffe's defiant "Nuts!" in response to a German demand for surrender.

The historian responsible for writing *The Siegfried Line Campaign* was a man named Charles B. MacDonald. It was my role to serve as his "German" counterpart, writing a *de facto* companion history from the "enemy side of the hill," drawing all my research exclusively from German documents. Our "editorial conferences," held about once a month, were usually limited to Charlie's giving me the parameters -- of time and space -- of a new chapter, whereupon I informed myself about the identity of the German units facing our troops and went to work. Once the two chapter drafts had been produced -- Charlie's account of the American action along a given sector of front line and during a specific time period, and my counterpart draft of the German defense -- we met and stitched the two accounts together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. It was a marvelous working method, assuring complete and absolutely objective historiography.

Since the Germans were more meticulous and detailed record-keepers than the victorious Allies, I always had considerably more data to work from than Charlie MacDonald. Despite attempts by the Germans to burn their records as they retreated across France, we had managed to capture some 600 tons of war documents -- war diaries, bound volumes of intelligence reports, field orders, situation reports, quartermaster records, maps, and what have you, at nearly every level of command from supreme headquarters of the German armed forces down through theater command, army group, army, corps, division and even, in some instances, regimental headquarters. Moreover, a large number of former *Wehrmacht* officers were then employed at the European branch office of OCMH at Karlsruhe, Germany, writing their own recollections of the military actions. We had a collection of about 1,800 of these "post-war manuscripts," as they were called.

Upon being given the parameters of a new chapter, my first research tool was a complete set of the situation maps issued for each day of the war by OKW (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht)*, the supreme command of the German armed forces. German intelligence remained excellent all the way to the end of the war -- no mean feat, considering that in France, the Germans faced a hostile civilian population and complete Allied air superiority, making it difficult for them to scramble even one reconnaissance plane. But the OKW daily situation maps showed with unfailing accuracy the Allied "order of battle" -- the identity of the Allied units facing their troops. Thus, I needed only to find on these maps the American corps and divisions Charlie planned to write about, and I would know the identity of the German units opposite them. My next step then was to find the war diaries, etc., of these German units and begin my research.

I enjoyed my work very much. It offered an unusual opportunity for truly original, primary research, tapping sources never used before. And I like to write; I have always enjoyed it, and this job allowed me to write to my heart's content. I wrote a good many monographs as my contribution to *The Siegfried Line Campaign*. Some have been used as sources for other books: Thus, Cornelius Ryan lists my study of the German defense against the Allied airborne landings in the Netherlands in September 1944 in the bibliography of his famous book *A Bridge Too Far*. Unfortunately, I had to leave OCMH

long before “my” book ever appeared in print, but it finally did come out, and I was (and am) grateful to Charlie for his gracious words of appreciation for my work as his “co-author,” in his preface to the book.

In addition to interesting work, I also enjoyed my associates in the office, the friends I made there. The Research Section, of which I was a member, was not large -- in addition to George, its chief and only military officer, there was his deputy, Britt Bailey, a delightful Southerner from Atlanta, who had served as an interpreter at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials, where he had met his wife, the beautiful blond Sara from Iceland. Sara’s English was then still a little shaky, and she liked to recount some of the problems this had caused her. Thus, on her very first afternoon in hot, summery Atlanta, she excused herself to go take “a douche,” as she put it (*douche* being the term for “shower” in much of Europe), and wondered about the icy reaction this announcement evoked from her somewhat stuffy new Georgian in-laws. And when her first son was born in an Atlanta Hospital, the doctor came to tell her that she had a “lovely, tow-headed baby.” Poor Sara thought he said “two-headed baby” and fainted dead away. The Baileys became very close friends of ours and remained so for many years. When we first knew them, they lived in a handsome apartment in Park Fairfax, a development in Alexandria, Virginia. To me, it seemed the utmost in elegance and gracious living; being invited there for afternoon drinks and listening to the Bach Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 on the phonograph was the height of pleasure and good feeling.

Among the other historians employed there was a very nice older woman -- Magna Bauer -- who became a good friend to me, and especially to my mother, after we had brought her down to Washington to live after my father’s death in September 1953. My mother lived in Magna’s house in Arlington until 1957, when we bought our first house and took her in to live with us. There was a young German, about my age, very handsome and rather aristocratic: Charles von Luettichau. Charlie was vain as a peacock and very proud of his Aryan good looks. He and his equally or even more aristocratic blond wife, the Countess Benigna von Rohr, and their two young children lived not far from us in Arlington, and we partied a good deal. Like me, Charlie had been just old enough to be drafted into the military toward the end of the war; he had been a member of a German anti-aircraft battery. Then there was the civilian chief of the Foreign Studies Branch, a German named Detmar Finke who also became a special friend. It was thanks to him that after my employment at OCMH came to an end, I was able to begin a new career at the State Department in 1954: he more or less “sold me” to his wife, Barbara, who was head of the Division of Biographic Information in State’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research. At each level of OCMH there were two chiefs -- one a civilian who did the real work, the other a military officer who served mainly as a figurehead. The military head of the Foreign Studies Branch was a lieutenant colonel, not very bright, whom I mainly remember for an odd comment he made in one of my performance ratings: He noted that “Mr. Heichler speaks quite good English...” I had to wonder -- did the good colonel even realize that I was an American citizen and a World War II veteran of the U.S. Army?

4. **The Berlin Wall**

August 13, 1961, Sunday morning: On the day when the city of Berlin found itself cut in two, my family and I attended services at the Lutheran American Church in Berlin. At one point, when I looked around at the congregation, it struck me that I was the only adult male present. Alarm bells went off in my head: Something very serious must be going on, and it was my business to find out what. A member of the U.S. Foreign Service, I was an officer assigned to the Political Section of the State Department's Mission in Berlin, and I served as the American liaison officer to Willy Brandt's West Berlin Government. I rushed out of church, found a telephone, called my boss at the office -- and was rewarded with a furious blast of "Where the hell have you been? -- I've been trying to reach you since three o'clock this morning!" Meekly, I reminded George that I had moved to a new house just a few days earlier, and he must have been dialing the old number. Slightly mollified, George yelled at me to get to the office as fast as possible. I did so, and I did not get home again, except for a few hours of exhausted sleep each night, for a month.

Contrary to popular imagination, the Berlin Wall proper -- that supremely ugly structure of cinder block topped by barbed wire -- of course did not rise overnight. Soon after midnight during the night from August 12 to August 13, 1961, a human wall of East German soldiers manned the 28 miles of border separating the Soviet sector of occupied Berlin from the three Western sectors. Behind the soldiers, workers hastily erected barbed wire fences and other obstacles, barring pedestrian and vehicular traffic. On Monday morning the nearly 100,000 people who lived in the East but held jobs in the Western sectors found that they could no longer get to work. Many families were divided without warning, sweethearts and engaged couples were separated. Since the telephone lines between West and East Berlin already had been cut for years, contact became nearly impossible.

Rumors of a major move by the Soviets and their East German puppet regime had been brewing for months. Since 1958 Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev had been threatening to force the United States, Britain and France out of Berlin and to turn the Western sectors into a so-called "free city." The West had continued to resist such demands firmly, and tensions rose steadily. With the mounting threat, the steady stream of East German refugees using Berlin as their escape route from the "German Democratic Republic" had swollen over the summer months of 1961 from its "normal" average of 10,000 people per month to 20,000 in June, 30,000 in July. The West Berlin refugee reception centers were overwhelmed. Volunteers went there daily for weeks to help "process" the refugees, serving food, handing out blankets and bedding for the few days that the refugees spent in the camps before being flown out to West Germany.

This human hemorrhage threatened to destroy the already floundering East German economy. On the Allied side we were well aware that East German Communist Party boss Walter Ulbricht and his Soviet masters had to do something, but we did not know what; our best guess was that the East would tighten its controls on traffic moving into East Berlin from the surrounding countryside, even though we realized that such measures would be politically repugnant to a regime which insisted (illegally) that East Berlin -- the Soviet sector of the city -- was the capital of the "GDR." The notion that the

East would build an actual wall to divide a major city -- barring access along some 88 streets knitting together the Eastern and Western sectors of Berlin, imposing travel controls at mass transit stations, closing a number of subway stations altogether -- seemed inconceivable.

Wednesday, August 16, 1961: Late morning: For three days the Allied military commandants of the city and their State Department/Foreign Office deputies had been in consultation with their superiors in Bonn, their military headquarters in the Federal Republic, and their governments in capitals, trying to chart a course of effective action in the face of the outrage being committed at the Brandenburg Gate, on Potsdamer Platz, and all along the long sector boundary running through the huge city. No military action of any kind was authorized; in the end the three Allies were able to agree on nothing more than a protest note -- a fairly meaningless piece of paper.

For the first time since the end of World War II, the West Berliners were outraged at what they had chosen long since to call their "protectors" rather than their occupiers. As an observer, I attended a rally in front of the city hall, and for the first time in my life I was a little afraid of being recognized as an American diplomat. A little later the same day I stood in front of the desk of Willy Brandt, then Governing Mayor of Berlin and later Foreign Minister and Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, to deliver an information copy of the protest note from the Allied Commandants. And so it happened that while still a fairly junior officer without any responsibility for policy, I became the hapless target of the full fury of this frustrated man who had placed his faith in the Western Powers and now felt betrayed and abandoned. I did not know it at the time, but at that very moment, while Brandt was screaming at me, I witnessed the genesis of his new policy toward the Communist East -- the German *Ostpolitik* -- which led eventually to the historic West German agreements with Moscow, Warsaw and East Berlin.

Wednesday evening, August 16, 1961: Our nerves were already as tautly stretched as they could get. Since early Sunday morning we had wondered whether the construction of the Wall was merely a prelude to a Soviet/East German military push to occupy the whole city of Berlin. We were aware from intelligence reports that two Soviet armored divisions had been deployed in a tight ring around Berlin. To counter that, we had two American combat brigades with a reinforced tank company, the British military contingent, and some French troops -- a total of perhaps 12,000 men plus the West Berlin police force numbering another 12,000. Without immediate help from NATO forces in West Germany, we might be able to hold the Western sectors for a couple of days at best -- for a few hours at worst.

For me personally the moment of greatest crisis and tension came that night. Here, a word of explanation is in order -- a word which will serve, incidentally, to highlight the complexities of four-power occupation of a country like Germany and a metropolis like Berlin. Ever since the beginnings of the city's division in 1948, the East German regime had administered the elevated rail transit system (the "S-Bahn") in all four sectors because it was part of the national railway system (the "Reichsbahn") in the Soviet Zone of Germany. By contrast, the Berlin subway system or "U-Bahn" was an autonomous city

transit system administered by the Western powers, again in all four sectors including of course East Berlin. S-Bahn terrain in West Berlin -- tracks, right-of-way, stations and all other installations -- enjoyed a peculiar status, neither fish nor fowl, not East Berlin territory, and yet under East German control.

In the early evening hours of August 16 we at the Mission received a local intelligence warning that the East German government had decided to remove all S-Bahn rolling stock to East Berlin during the night and then to cut the rail lines connecting the two halves of the city. In an urgent staff conference at U.S. Headquarters we reached the grave decision that we would take military action if necessary in order to stop such a move. As I recall, we reached this decision without consulting Washington or Bonn. Then we waited, but nothing happened. At two o'clock in the morning I walked home and went to bed. But I could not sleep: Every time one of Berlin's big double-decker buses lumbered past outside, I rushed to the window half expecting to see our Sherman tanks moving out of the nearby 40th Tank Company compound to go into action. I felt closer to war that night than I had since 1945 or would again until the Cuban missile crisis a year later.

September 1961: While at work in my office at U.S. headquarters in Berlin-Dahlem I received a call from the guard at the gate: a young Berliner wanted urgently to talk to an American political officer. When he came up, he explained that his girl lived in East Berlin; he had not been able to see her since August 13, and he wanted to get her out of there. Supposing she traveled to one of the other East European Communist capitals like Prague or Budapest, could she hope to receive asylum at our embassy in such cities? (Other Warsaw Pact nations were the only ones to which East Germans could travel without difficulty.)

I had to tell the young man that the United States does not grant asylum in its missions abroad (except for a few famous exceptions like Cardinal Mindszenty in Hungary); even if we did, how could the young woman get out of our embassy again in order to cross a border to the Free World? He saw the point but insisted that he would find a way. I doubted it but asked him to keep me posted.

About two weeks later the gate rang my office again. Now there were two young Berliners to see me. My young friend came in and introduced a very pretty girl as his fiancee. Proudly he explained that he had prepared a car in such a manner that a person could be hidden under and behind the rear seat. Then he had somehow contacted his fiancée's brother to arrange that they would drive out of Berlin in separate cars and meet in a rest area along the Autobahn which leads west through East German territory toward Helmstedt. Waiting until sure that no one was around to observe, they quickly spirited the girl from one car to the other, and her boyfriend drove back to West Berlin, his fiancée hidden under the seat. At that early stage the East German police were not yet wise to all the tricks which people learned to use in order to escape, and they failed to search his car thoroughly. My wife and I were invited to the wedding and were happy to attend. Our new friends then flew to West Germany and later settled in Canada. They are middle-aged people now. I think of them fondly and wish them well.

November 9, 1989: Entranced, almost in disbelief and moved to tears I sat in front of the TV screen and watched one of the century's great dramas unfold atop the Wall, in front of the Brandenburg Gate. I had been there when the Wall went up, and I was fortunate to live to see it come down.

5. **How Berlin Mourned John F. Kennedy**

In the evening of November 22, 1963 the cultural affairs officer of the U.S. Mission Berlin hosted a reception for young Fulbright scholarship students recently returned from their stay in the United States. When I arrived at his home a few minutes before eight, someone had turned on the radio to catch the AFN (American Forces Network) news. We heard the fateful words, "The President has been shot..." Within minutes the announcer confirmed the worst: "The President is dead."

The reception ended immediately; the guests left quickly and quietly. Much the same thing was happening all over the city, but I did not know that yet. I learned only later that everywhere in West Berlin stage, film and concert performances ended abruptly, bars and restaurants closed, private dinners and parties broke up. Trained to respond like a homing pigeon, I headed straight for my office in the U.S. Mission on Clay-Allee. A young Foreign Service officer assigned to the Mission's political section, I held the special and unusual position of liaison officer to the West Berlin city government, then headed by Governing Mayor Willy Brandt. Without waiting for a summons, a number of the military and Foreign Service officers on the staff of the U.S. Commander Berlin, the Berlin Brigade, and the U.S. Mission [State Department] gathered at U.S. Headquarters for what turned into an all-night vigil and working session in the "bunker," the rarely used emergency operations center.

Almost eagerly we began to attend to mundane, practical matters, partly because it was necessary, partly because it helped us to deal with our own emotions. Once persuaded that there was no international crisis, no need to move to a higher stage of military alert, we became absorbed in questions of protocol -- almost like a family suffering a sudden death: What needed to be done? None of us knew the procedures to be followed when a president dies in office. Manuals were consulted, cables were fired off to Washington requesting instructions.

We arranged to buy a number of so-called "condolence books" from Berlin stationery stores, books which would be placed in various public locations around the American Sector of Berlin and opened to people who might want to pay their respects by signing their names. No one dreamed that in the days which followed more than a quarter of a *million* people would stand patiently in block-long queues, waiting to sign these books. Our military colleagues searched frantically for what army protocol required under these circumstances and came up with a number of proposals, including a special review ceremony to mourn and honor the slain commander-in-chief. This review would be held on the parade grounds of Andrews Barracks, with German and Allied dignitaries invited.

By coincidence, the student councils of West Berlin's two universities had met in joint session that evening. On learning of the tragic news, they instantly adjourned and organized a torchlight procession of students to march to the Rathaus, West Berlin's provisional city hall in the Borough of Schöneberg. As the students marched, thousands of other people joined the procession so that by midnight about 75,000 people stood in Rudolf-Wilde-Platz (To be renamed "John F. Kennedy-Platz only three days later.) in front of the Rathaus, waiting for their mayor to say some words of comfort and re-assurance to them.

Only that afternoon Willy Brandt had returned from an exhausting two-week swing around West Africa. He had gone to bed and was asleep, his wife Rut told us when we phoned his residence. Frantically, we insisted that he must be awakened to hear the terrible news. Thus it was that at one o'clock in the morning on November 23 Brandt appeared before the huge crowd assembled in front of city hall and announced to them that he personally would fly to Washington to represent Berlin at the funeral two days hence of the American president; at the hour of the funeral his deputy, Mayor Heinrich Albertz, would preside over a commemorative rally to be held in front of city hall -- the same spot where Kennedy had addressed the jubilant Berliners only a few months earlier.

The American military review to honor the memory of the fallen commander in chief was deeply moving. Never before or since have I witnessed the quiet, measured step -- more of a loping stride than a march step -- of infantry marching to the beat of muffled drums. The ceremony was concluded with the playing of "Taps," rendered exceptionally moving by an echo effect achieved by two buglers posted at opposite ends of the parade ground, echoing the haunting melody back and forth between them. Brandt was so taken with this that he turned to me to ask that I make exactly the same arrangements for the Rathaus memorial service. I transmitted the Mayor's request; accordingly, Berlin Brigade sent the two buglers downtown. One stood on the Rathaus roof, the other atop an office building across the square. The effect was every bit as beautiful as it had been at Andrews Barracks.

For Monday, the day of the funeral in Washington, U.S. military protocol prescribed that guns should be fired every minute on the minute, all through the long day, until evening. For this purpose Berlin Brigade drew up six 105-mm howitzers in the courtyard of American Headquarters, deploying three of the self-propelled guns on each side of the central flag pole. These guns fired in rotation, one every minute, like rhythmic, rolling thunder, all the day long, providing a somber background and punctuation to our work in the building.

About 4:30 in the afternoon that day a bugler and a platoon of infantry came marching up to the flag pole to conduct a simple retreat ceremony. Along with one or two other people still in the building I went downstairs to attend. I watched as the flag was slowly lowered; I listened to the bugler playing "Taps" against the background of the guns booming away with their sullen, somber regularity - and at that moment something snapped; I was finally overcome by emotion and gave way to tears.

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That weekend, and in the days and weeks to follow we Americans in Berlin received condolence calls and notes not only from many Berlin friends and neighbors but also, most movingly, from many total strangers. Waitresses we had hired for one dinner or reception called or wrote to express their sorrow and sympathy. Gradually it began to dawn on us what John F. Kennedy had really meant to these people, and especially to the youth of Germany and the world, how to them he had been a symbol of hope - one leader, at last, in whom they dared to place their confidence and their faith.

The hour of the *Trauerfeier* -- literally the "festival of mourning" -- at city hall drew nigh. Once again, as on that beautiful, sunny day in June, hundreds of thousands of Berliners filled the square in front of the Rathaus. But what a terrible contrast: In place of bright sunshine, a cold drizzle in the foggy darkness, instead of cheering, chanting crowds, a sad and largely silent throng of mourners. For the first time since the occupation of Berlin, the city government had asked that an Allied military honor guard be posted there: A platoon of American soldiers stood at attention and presented arms across the front of the Rathaus. Mayor Albertz and other dignitaries delivered their eulogies.

As I sat among the other invited guests in the hastily erected bleachers, I reflected on the stark and terrible contrast between this sad hour and the electrifying moment when John Kennedy had stood here and told the madly cheering crowd, *"Ich bin ein Berliner!"*

What a joyful day that had been! Kennedy won not only the hearts of the Berliners; he managed also to charm the rather cynical, hard-bitten officers who had worked for two months to prepare every detail of his eight-hour triumph in Berlin. I recalled every moment of that day and of our preparations for it with all their crises and frustrations, their bickering among allies, and their funny, even ludicrous moments:

Air Force One, a Boeing 707 four-engine jet, was too large to land at Tempelhof Airport in the American Sector. Only Tegel, a French air force base (Today Tegel is Berlin's international airport, and a larger airport outside the city limits is in the planning phase.) in the French Sector of the city, had runways long enough to accommodate the president's plane. Now, the American Commandant, naturally enough, wanted to be first in line to shake the hand of his president. But the French Commandant argued that since Tegel lay in his sector, he should have that honor. And Willy Brandt argued that it was, after all, his city; he was the host, and therefore...

And then there was the problem of appropriate music for the arrival ceremony: We, the Americans, wanted the three Allied military bands to play the three Allied national anthems. But the British demurred: It was contrary to British protocol to play "God save the Queen" on this occasion; however, they would be glad to play the Star-Spangled Banner if we would play their anthem... And the Germans, naturally enough, wanted to

play *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*, but the Allies didn't like that, especially the French, and they suggested that the Berlin Police band play *Das ist die Berliner Luft*, a popular and rather silly ditty. The Germans, naturally enough, considered this suggestion an insult to their national pride and dignity... And so it went, and in the end, of course, everything worked out perfectly.

John F. Kennedy came and took the city by storm. He solved our protocol problems by seeming to shake all proffered hands simultaneously. The route downtown from the airport, like all the routes taken in the course of the visit, were lined with people six rows deep, cheering wildly. Berlin gave itself a holiday, the like of which had not been seen in many, many years. A few poignant details stand out in my memory. By dint of my special position as liaison officer I was deeply involved in Kennedy's stop at the Rathaus -- his unforgettable speech on that occasion (I wrote the initial draft of that speech -- but I can take no credit for the inspired *"Ich bin ein Berliner"* passage.), the state dinner given there in his honor by the city fathers.

When President Kennedy spoke from the balcony of the city hall to the approximately one million people filling the square below, I stood behind him as a member of his entourage. German Chancellor Adenauer had made available to Kennedy his best English-German interpreter, a Herr Weber, who stood next to the president at the railing of the balcony and interpreted his speech consecutively, one sentence at a time. When Kennedy reached the climax of his speech -- the dramatic pronouncement "*Ich bin ein Berliner*" -- Weber automatically repeated the German phrase -- in German. While the crowd went wild, filling the air with cheers and chants and applause for several minutes, Kennedy, with his pixyish sense of humor, quickly leaned over and commented to the interpreter, "Thank you for correcting my pronunciation." Only a few of us on the balcony at that moment were privileged to overhear this footnote to one of Kennedy's most famous lines.

Now, a mere five months later, John Kennedy lay dead in the Rotunda of the Capitol in Washington, and none of us were yet able to comprehend the senseless tragedy which had befallen us. How have the myth, the hope, the promise fared in Germany in the 33 years since November 22, 1963?

To a certain extent, inevitably, the image has been tarnished by revelations of Kennedy's womanizing and other character flaws, his handling of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam, his obsession with Fidel Castro. However, Europeans are less aware than knowledgeable Americans that Kennedy's presidency was already beset by increasing difficulties when he was assassinated, that in a second term it might not have kept its promise and become the bright chapter in American and world history which so many people had hoped for. To a remarkable extent the myth of Camelot lives on, especially among the Germans east of the Elbe River, liberated from Communist dictatorship only some years ago, and perhaps in Eastern Europe generally.

6. **Into Africa (With apologies to Isak Dinesen)**

Near the end of my long tour of duty as a political officer in Berlin, I shocked my employer, the U.S. Department of State, by asking for a crash course in economics and assignment to a Third World country. The Department was as usual in desperate need of economic officers and unaccustomed to seeing otherwise sane Foreign Service officers volunteer for hardship posts. Personnel enthusiastically granted both my wishes and secretly earmarked me for psychiatric examination and rapid promotion.

While laboring in the vineyards of Adam Smith and John Maynard Keynes late in 1965, I received my assignment to the American Embassy in Lusaka, Zambia, as the post's economic and commercial officer. My family and I were promptly caught up in the romance of East Africa, savoring exotic names like Lusaka, Bulawayo, the Copper Belt and the Great African Rift Valley. Getting all excited about life and work in Zambia, we read everything we could lay our hands on about life in that country, formerly the southern half of the British Colony of Rhodesia. We studied the Lusaka "post report" (more about post reports later) and took the children to see "Born Free" to get them accustomed to the sight of Joy Adamson walking Elsa the lioness in the streets of Lusaka.

Careers in the Foreign Service are distinguished mainly by the operation of Murphy's Law and the steady drumbeat of the unexpected. About three weeks before our scheduled departure for Lusaka, the personnel officer of the Bureau of African Affairs summoned me to his office. Somewhat apologetically, he explained that our ambassador in Zambia had requested that his very competent economic officer (This was Herman J. ("Hank") Cohen, later Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, and competent indeed.) stay on for another year. This necessitated breaking my assignment to succeed him. As good fortune would have it, however, American Embassy Yaoundé was in desperate need of a new economic officer, the incumbent having resigned in order to take over his family's shipping business in New Orleans. Would I be prepared to go to Yaoundé?

Without a moment's hesitation, I replied (as expected) that I would be happy to serve wherever the Service had need of me. My interlocutor then talked to me for a good half hour more about my new job. I hung on his every word and tried to make appropriate noises in response. The moment I was free to go, I tore down to the Department's library to consult an atlas and find out where in the world this Yaoundé might be.

Good-bye, English-speaking, reasonably cool and dry East Africa! Yaoundé, I learned, was the small, inland, hot and rain-forest-surrounded capital of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, a nation situated on the West Coast of the African Continent, sandwiched in between Nigeria and Gabon -- in other words, in the armpit of Africa, as the local wits liked to put it.

Without pausing for breath, my family and I shifted gears and read everything we could find about Cameroon -- the German Colony of Kamerun until 1916, French and British League of Nations Mandates of the Cameroons until independence and reunification in the early 1960s -- from Gerald Durrell's charming *The Bafut Beagles* (Zoologist Gerald

Durrell was the brother of the better-known Lawrence Durrell of *Alexandria Quartet* fame. Set in Cameroon, *The Bafut Beagles* brought instant fame to the Fon of Bafut, an African noble who was still living among his hundreds of wives and kinsmen during our years in that country. An introduction to that worthy was accomplished by the simple expedient of taking a bottle or two of gin on a visit to his compound. One of my embassy colleagues did this, and reported back that the Fon was much incensed at Durrell for having depicted him as a drunk.) to the embassy's post report on life and work in Yaoundé. For the gullible, this document made very depressing reading.

The production of post reports is a standing requirement for all American missions abroad. Subject to revision every few years, these documents are intended to give newly assigned personnel and official visitors a maximum of useful information about conditions at post -- what to expect, what to bring, what to do and not to do, etc. In theory, this combination of travel guide, etiquette book, and much more, is enormously helpful to the newcomer. In reality, post reports rank with the most imaginative forms of creative writing this side of science fiction. The reasons are not difficult to fathom.

Since 1789, if not earlier, the Department of State has tried without noticeable success to persuade Congress and the American public that Foreign Service people do not live like King Louis XIV at the expense of the American taxpayer. Furthermore, and more specifically, it must be borne in mind that service at so-called "hardship" posts is rewarded by salary differentials as high as 25% of base pay, and often by cost-of-living and other allowances, to compensate for health hazards, danger, or high local prices. Naturally enough, embassies and consulates the world over compete in producing the gloomiest, most alarming post reports in order to preserve and if possible to increase their post budgets, differentials and allowances.

In 1966 I had not yet grasped this fairly obvious ploy. Hence, I found the Yaoundé post report deeply alarming: the climate was extremely hot, humid, oppressive, debilitating and generally unhealthy; the water was unfit to drink unless boiled and filtered; strange tropical diseases abounded, along with loathsome insects, numerous species of poisonous snakes and other reptiles. My children would probably die quite soon of asthma or worse (as it happened, my oldest daughter did suffer from asthma). Life in the capital was a total drag, with nothing to do and nowhere to go... Undaunted, we continued our preparations for a two-year tour of duty in Yaoundé. We spoke no French, the official language of Cameroon; I alone of all my family managed to squeeze in two weeks of language training at the Foreign Service Institute before leaving Washington.

Yaoundé in 1966 was a very small town with one paved street and little to buy in the few shops which catered to European needs (all over the Third World, Americans are honorary Europeans). The small embassy had no commissary. I was advised to include in my household effects shipment a two-year supply of just about everything except perishables: all manner of canned goods, clothing, shoes for four growing children and vast quantities of what were coyly referred to as "paper products."

I had to take out a credit union loan before spending an entire day at a wholesale

distributor's warehouse in Northeast Washington, ordering more than $2,000 worth of "survival kit." The logistics were formidable. It is not easy to anticipate the needs of a family of six for two years. On certain items we overstocked a little: Five years later, we still possessed most of a case of Kikkoman Soy Sauce and about 90 rolls of toilet paper. But we also learned to economize in certain ways. Our Yaoundé habit of carefully smoothing out, sometimes even ironing, and re-using gift-wrapping paper persisted for years after we had left Africa.

My wife took the four children out to buy them sneakers. She bought 50 pairs in assorted sizes, trying to estimate how fast those eight feet would grow between 1966 and 1968. The shoe salesman thought he had died and gone to Heaven. My wife hastened to explain -- as she did with everyone within earshot those days -- that we were on our way to Africa. This got so bad that the children began to pretend that they belonged to another customer whenever she did that.

At last we sailed, in July 1966, on the U.S.S. *Constitution*. The ship was on a so-called "sun lane cruise," and so we enjoyed a superb vacation, port-hopping around the entire Mediterranean Sea for a week before we had to get off and face reality. As we were scheduled to fly to Africa from Marseilles, we left the ship at Cannes, the last port of call before the *Constitution* headed back through the Straits of Gibraltar and the Atlantic. To transport us from Cannes to Marseille-Marignane Airport, I had sent a cable from Genoa to the Cannes office of a very large and well-known car rental company, asking them to reserve a large station wagon, big enough to cart a family of six and 16 pieces of luggage across Provence.

After the somewhat traumatic experience of getting ourselves and all our earthly goods off the ship and onto the pier at Cannes, I walked into town to look for the rental car office. *"Non, Monsieur,"* they had not gotten my telegram. *"Non, Monsieur, [French: No, Sir]"* they did not have a station wagon that large -- *"ça n'existe pas [French: That doesn't exist.]." "Mais, Monsieur, [French: But, Sir]"* -- why not rent two *voitures [French: cars]* instead? *Faute de mieux [French: for want of something better]*, I took them, one small Ford Taurus sedan and one even smaller Renault. My wife was far from pleased that, true to its well-known advertising slogan of those days, the rental car firm had managed to put her in the driver's seat, but there was no help for it -- we both had to drive. We divided up children and baggage and set off in tandem across the lovely, rugged countryside, my Renault in the lead. Soon I had reason to regret that I had not taken the time to be instructed in the mysteries of that little French car. That I never did find the horn button was not too serious. However, that I could not figure out how to put the car into reverse proved embarrassing and potentially hazardous.

I discovered the problem a couple of hours down the *chaussée [French: roadway]* when we pulled off the road to coordinate lunch plans. Once back behind the wheel, I saw that I had pulled up fairly close to a tree -- and I could not back up. There was nothing for it but to get out and push the car back a few feet so that I could drive away. At the next service station someone finally found the fiendishly hidden little button in the gearshift lever which had to be depressed before one could engage the reverse gear. We ate lunch at a

sidewalk cafe in beautiful Aix-en-Provence and finally arrived at the airport about an hour before the scheduled midnight departure of our *Air Afrique* flight to Douala, Cameroon.

Despite all our reading, looking at pictures and studying maps, we found Equatorial West Africa more difficult to visualize than other parts of the world which we had never seen. The cities, villages and rainforests of the region defied our efforts to envisage them. East Africa was much easier -- for who has not admired pictures of the great savannahs and game preserves of the Rift Valley? And North Africa -- the *Maghreb* -- was something else entirely: Arabic Muslim culture distinguished by soaring minarets and bustling *souks*. But West-Central Africa -- what would that be really like?

At midnight our *Air Afrique* jet thundered down the runway at Marseille-Marignane Airport and climbed into the black sky, heading south across the Mediterranean Sea. Looking down, I saw the lights of the French coast recede, then the occasional winking lights of ships at sea, and, much later, the lights of the North African shore. But then I was amazed by the nearly total darkness below which contrasted so sharply with night flights over North America or Western Europe. Except for a very occasional, very faint glimmer below, possibly from a fire, there was no sign of civilization; under the steady hum of our jet engines, the vast continent seemed to lie in timeless sleep.

Dawn began to gray as we began our descent into Douala, the largest city and principal port of Cameroon -- and one of the hottest, rainiest, most humid places on Earth. The aircraft's approach did not take us over any part of the city; all I could make out in the early dawn light were black and evil-looking mangrove swamps with steam rising from them. For an anxious newcomer to Africa at five o'clock in the morning, it was an awesome spectacle. "So that's what it's like," I thought, and felt a little queasy.

Moments later we were on the tarmac. When the aircraft door was opened, the cool, conditioned air of the interior promptly surrendered to the wettest, hottest, smelliest miasma I had experienced since a stopover on Guam Island twenty years earlier, on my way home from Japan. My wife and daughters had all taken care to have their hair done before we left our ship at Cannes the day before. As they descended the gangway, their coiffures descended even faster; all the conditioner, hair spray and whatever promptly dissolved and streamed down their tresses. With an air of wonder my youngest daughter observed, "Look Mommy, it's raining from the ground up!"

It was then about 5:30 am. Our connecting flight to Yaoundé, the nation's land-locked capital, was scheduled to depart at eight. My heart went out to the poor junior officer whom the American consul in Douala had dispatched at this ungodly hour to meet us, ease our way through immigration and customs and entertain us until he could finally pack us off to Yaoundé. He led us upstairs to the airport "restaurant" (quotation marks well-advised) where we spent the next several hours in valiant attempts to make conversation around a bare and very dirty table, sipping stale coffee and battling the legions of flies breakfasting on the sticky rings left by many generations of beer glasses.

Air Afrique then flew us to Yaoundé in an old, propeller-driven DC-4 which lumbered across an unbroken green carpet of tropical rain forest until we neared the city. Yaoundé lies in rather a pretty setting of lush hills, the most prominent of which is called *Mont Fébé*. The scene was somehow reminiscent of a strange, exotic dream and seemed thousands of miles removed from the real world. A band was playing as we came down the ramp: four very old African men dressed in pieces of what seemed to be equally old uniforms, blowing valiantly on silvered trumpets and horns. Having recently spent six years on assignment in Berlin, I could not believe my ears: These ancient Cameroonians were actually playing German marches and Berlin folk tunes! -- As we learned later, this band was well known, loved and frequently hired for social occasions in Yaoundé. Its members were relics of Cameroon's time as a German colony more than fifty years earlier, and they spoke only German, with a Rhineland accent, in addition, of course, to their own tribal language.

As we filed into the small and rather dilapidated airport building, I had another shock: a considerable number of people from the American Embassy had come out to meet us. I was even more thunderstruck to discover that the welcoming party was headed by none other than the ambassador himself. I was then still a junior officer; my assignment to Yaoundé was as a second secretary of embassy, and I had no reason to expect such honors; in Berlin I had considered myself fortunate if I was met at the airport by a driver from the motor pool. But I understood soon enough. To put it charitably, there was little to do for amusement in Yaoundé -- the post report had been accurate on that score. A favored form of entertainment was to troop out to the airport on the pretext of seeing someone off, seeing someone else arrive, or just go there with no pretext at all, to sit on the veranda which faced the single runway, drink beer, and watch the ancient *Air Cameroun* and *Air Afrique* DC-4s and DC-6s land and take off. It was especially gratifying to see their engines belching fire as they screeched down the runway.

Our tour of duty in Central Africa began most pleasantly that warm July morning in 1966. We were dead tired but excited to have reached our destination at last. It was especially nice to find ourselves invited to lunch at the home of the embassy's counselor for administration. Luncheon (the more informal word "lunch" does not do it justice) began with gin and tonic served on the veranda overlooking a lush and lovely garden. A middle-aged "boy" (A benighted anglicism on which the French colonials continued to insist, long after Anglophone Africa had adopted the less unfortunate term "steward.") of pleasant and dignified mien then brought out a fabulous first course of large, succulent Cameroonian avocado stuffed with crab meat, followed by his specialty -- stuffed peppers. His name was Jeannot; a few months later we were living in the same house and he was in our employ, and we never grew tired of his stuffed peppers and rice.

This is really nice, I thought, leaning back in my chair and studying the strange-looking lawn (pure, unadulterated crab grass, clipped short and, in the absence of "real" grass, not so bad-looking). We spent a couple of hours being "briefed" most helpfully about housing, schools, domestic help, shopping and all the rest. After the rather imminent departure of our hosts from Cameroon this lovely villa where we had enjoyed our first meal would become our home; meanwhile we would occupy temporary housing.

I have not seen Yaoundé in 30 years and assume that it has changed and grown considerably. In 1966 it was a small, quiet town with a single paved street, a few shops, a couple of small hotels and French restaurants. The ministries of the government occupied two-story buildings surrounded by wide verandas, built by the German colonial power before World War I. The small diplomatic corps (there were only 13 embassies) lived in a part of town called Plateau Bastos, after a factory there which made "Bastos" cigarettes, a brand popular not only in Central Africa but also in France and Belgium. The most prominent feature of the expatriate community was the imposing three-story Soviet Embassy. As Yaoundé lacked street names and house numbers, the Soviet Embassy building served as principal reference point on all the improvised maps we drew to direct guests to our houses.

Our first (temporary) house faced a picture-post-card African village of small huts and tall palm trees -- a truly exotic and beautiful sight, especially on nights when a huge full moon shone down upon it as the only source of illumination. Our house was built on several levels. Always keen on his privacy, our son chose a bedroom on the lower level; he and I went down there early on our first evening to get him settled. This set the scene for our first, totally unnerving encounter with what I consider to be one of nature's true horrors -- the great African flying cockroach. I would rather have faced murderous Kenyan Mau Mau or crazed Congolese Simbas than two-inch long flying cockroaches. I understand that there are strange people called entomologists who find such creatures interesting and even endearing, but I will never understand them. For me, giant cockroaches are what the rats were for Winston Smith in Room 101 of George Orwell's *1984* -- the ultimate, unendurable horror. Before I knew what was happening, several of the beasts had landed on my back, and I started screaming uncontrollably at my poor and equally terrified 11-year-old son, "Get them off me! Get them off me!" -- Upstairs, my wife and daughters -- not realizing that the situation was actually much more serious -- thought we were being attacked by naked savages from the neighboring village. -- Our son never did sleep downstairs in that house.

There was much to learn about survival in Yaoundé -- shopping, for example. The town had a single, small, smelly, shabby and poorly stocked branch of *Printania*, a French supermarket chain. To enter the store it was necessary to run a gauntlet of begging lepers, piteously crying, *"Cadeau, cadeau!"* (literally, a present, but used here to mean a handout). Across Yaoundé's main street from Printania there were a few grocery and butcher shops run by Greeks or Lebanese -- Cameroon's *ersatz* lower-middle class (Third World countries like Cameroon had no native middle class to speak of when they emerged from colonial rule. The essential role of such a class was played by foreigners. In Cameroon these were mainly Levantines; in Zaire -- our next post -- Indians and Pakistanis served as the shopkeepers, repairmen, and the like. The next rung up the economic ladder was usually occupied by natives of the former colonial power -- Frenchmen in Cameroon, Belgians in Zaire.). Meat, imported from France, was of good quality but inordinately expensive. Dirt cheap and truly wonderful, on the other hand, was the fruit grown in the countryside around Yaoundé -- the aforementioned avocados, the ripe bananas, plantains, mangos and papaya. All vegetables and especially salad

greens had to be soaked in permanganate laundry detergent before they were considered safe to eat; it did little to improve the flavor. And all drinking water had to be boiled for ten minutes and then run through a filter provided by the embassy.

We became quite accustomed to storing our drinking water in old bottles in the refrigerator. As square bottles afforded the most economical use of shelf space, our containers of choice were quart-size Beefeater gin bottles. A Sunday School lesson about the miracle Jesus performed at the Wedding of Cana prompted the missionary kindergarten teacher to ask her charges to tell the class what their families did about drinking water. Whereupon our five-year-old regaled her teacher and the missionary children by proudly exclaiming, "We keep our water in old gin bottles!"

After a mishap following one of our cocktail parties, we switched to whisky bottles. The children were accustomed to rising early and fixing their own breakfast, including preparation of the only orange drink available -- "Tang" -- mixed with water from the fridge. On this particular and memorable morning, however, they unwittingly used a full bottle of Beefeater's, left in the refrigerator the night before by one of the houseboys. Having thus re-invented Screwdrivers, the children staggered happily off to school, leaving a note sternly warning us not to drink the "orange juice."

From the day of our arrival in Yaoundé, our embassy colleagues insisted that life without servants was impossible and unheard-of; we must hire at least three houseboys right away -- a cook, a gardener, and an all-round servant who would clean, do laundry, make beds, serve and do all the rest. The embassy provided "guards" to protect the house at night. I have placed quotation marks around the word *guards* in order to convey derision. Our "*guardiens*" in Yaoundé -- just like, later, our "*sentinels*" in Kinshasa -- were a joke. Feeble old men armed with bits of medieval weaponry, they slept the sleep of the just in our driveway, stoned to the eyeballs on marijuana. Our main concern was not to run over them with the car when we returned home from some evening function. I doubt whether they would even have noticed.

Stories about the exploits of houseboys were without number; swapping these tales in an endless endeavor to outdo one another provided the main form of social exchange on Yaoundé's diplomatic parquet. Soon, we had quite a few stories of our own to contribute. There was our first cook, Adamou, a proud and fierce Muslim Fulani from northern Cameroon -- an excellent cook with memorable French dishes in his repertoire, but also a man who loved to argue about anything and everything, mostly what he considered to be the inadequacy of his pay (which was at least standard if not generous). Adamou delighted in putting me in the uncomfortable position of having to say "no," especially in the curious matter of his wife's bride price.

Adam had been married for quite a number of years and had several children. But to hear him tell it, he had been too poor to pay the customary bride price when he got married, and now his father-in-law was threatening to take away his wife unless he paid up. The sum was considerable by African or, for that matter, American standards. Naturally Adam wanted me to lend him the money, to be repaid over several lifetimes. Just as

naturally, I refused, and this caused recurring tension and much loud banging of pots and pans in our kitchen.

Then there was shining Venant, a pleasant and handsome man who worked hard and well, and whose only weakness, if one could call it that, seemed to be his devotion to personal grooming. Venant literally glistened with cleanliness. Eventually we discovered why. After his afternoon shower Venant liked to anoint himself -- all over -- with oil. Wesson's Salad Oil, that is. When the two-year supply we had brought to Cameroon with us began to dwindle alarmingly, we had to insist that Venant find another source of ointment.

Young John came from English-speaking West Cameroon -- a great relief to us when our French was still very fragile. However, John's English was mostly pidgin, not much more understandable to us than Venant's French. John was a nice kid, probably still in his teens, whose great weakness was baking bread. He baked every single day, great quantities of alarmingly heavy loaves, consuming staggering quantities of the British self-rising flour we imported from Lagos, Nigeria. John also killed mice in the kitchen with awesome skill and speed, using for that purpose the very same trusty machete with which he sawed through our daily bread. And he also did the laundry, reducing my 14-year-old daughter's dresses to sizes which fit only our five-year-old.

Not that things were much different with the crew we took on board two years later in Kinshasa, Zaire. Ignace, the general factotum, was hired on the strength of his claim that he could cook breakfast. (Camille, our excellent cook, came at noon and worked through supper, putting up more or less cheerfully with having all four of our children underfoot in the kitchen as he worked.) Ignace adhered to an unvarying routine: He arrived about seven, fried my egg, set it aside, made orange juice, toast and coffee; at seven thirty, upon hearing my footsteps in the hall, Ignace refried the egg. All my efforts to persuade Ignace to do things differently foundered on his standard response to any request or admonition: *"Oui, Patron [French: Yes, Boss]."* And so for two years in Zaire, I ate tire patches for breakfast. Ignace further endeared himself to us with his equally standard battle cry whenever anything went wrong in his vicinity,*"Pas ma faute!"* (not my fault).

Our permanent Yaoundé home -- the villa where we had lunched on our first day -- was a spacious and charming house, but it also had some inexplicable features. For instance, the back wall of the house, facing the direction whence came the violent thundershowers which struck several times a day during the rainy season, had pretty open work, presumably for better ventilation. Thus, every afternoon during rainy season great quantities of water blew in and cascaded down the stairs into the living room until finally I was able to persuade the embassy administrative section to glass in that side of the house. Another source of joy to me during rainy season was our fairly steep dirt road -- in fact, laterite, a form of clay which when wet is more slippery than greased ice. The rains came right after lunch, when I had to get back to the office. I would get into the car and try to head up the dripping laterite road towards town and the chancery. The car would then promptly skid sideways and gradually slide toward the bottom of the hill where I would eventually get enough purchase to coax the car back up the hill and onto level

ground.

My favorite recollection of our lovely garden concerns the cows. Every few days a large herd of emaciated, hump-backed *Zebu* cattle, driven about 800 miles south from Chad to the Yaoundé slaughterhouse, would wander along our road, turn in at the open garden gate, and munch contentedly on our flowers and shrubs before allowing the cowherds to drive them back out into the street to resume their mournful journey.

Amusements in Yaoundé had to be self-generated. Since the entertainment value of houseboy stories had obvious limits, we put on amateur theatricals. We participated in two major stage productions (*Our Town* and *Carousel*) and held monthly play readings. The only Soviet diplomat allowed out by himself -- obviously the KGB *rezident* -- chose to join the cast of *Carousel* and attended rehearsals faithfully -- always without his score. His apparent objective was to collect as many copies as possible to send home to Moscow. As a member of the chorus, he had only one line. Given his Russian accent, it was inevitable that soon he acquired the nickname "Mr. Kvityashovin." His real name I have long since forgotten.

The lead in *Our Town* went to green-eyed Barbara Greenberg, pretty wife of our young Peace Corps doctor. I was sufficiently smitten that for the next play reading I chose Christopher Fry's wildly romantic *The Lady's not for Burning*, just to watch those green eyes in the title role.

7. **Via delle Montagne Rocciose**

The reward for my four years of servitude in Equatorial African "hardship posts" came in the form of a "senior training" assignment. Offered the choice among several institutions, including the National War College and the Senior Seminar, I requested the NATO Defense College in Rome. I wanted to remain overseas a while longer, and the promise of a multinational institution, drawing its faculty and student body from all NATO member nations, appealed more to me than the prospect of attending a school back in Washington.

The NATO Defense College, a school for senior military officers and diplomats of the (then) 15 NATO nations, had originally been in Paris, as an adjunct to the headquarters of the North Atlantic Alliance. When DeGaulle took France out of the integrated military structure of the alliance, NATO headquarters was forced to leave Paris and accepted an invitation from the Kingdom of Belgium to relocate to Brussels, where it has remained to this day. The Defense College was invited by the Italian Government to set up shop in Rome.

In preparation for the 1942 World's Fair (subsequently canceled because of war), Benito Mussolini had built an impressive, modern suburb south of the Eternal City, named *Esposizione Universale di Roma* or "EUR" for short. It even boasted a subway connection, the *Laurentina* Line extending from *Termini* in downtown Rome to EUR. After the war, a number of Italian government agencies moved there to escape the overcrowded center of Rome. And it was there, in EUR, that the Italian Government built

an impressive, modern, comfortable school for the Defense College. The main building had a large auditorium for lectures, a number of "committee" study rooms, a library, faculty and administrative offices, and an elegant dining room.

Each course at the College lasted six months. Every member country had a quota reflecting its size and importance. This quota ranged from eight students for the United States to three each for Greece and Turkey. If I remember correctly, Iceland had but one representative, and Luxembourg did not send anyone -- too expensive. The American quota was made up of seven military officers -- two Army, two Navy, two Air Force and one Marine, all with the rank of colonel -- and one Foreign Service officer of equivalently high grade. For this lone U.S. diplomat, the American Embassy in Rome maintained a furnished apartment within walking distance of the Defense College, on the *Via delle Montagne Rocciose, venti-quatro, quatro piano* (Rocky Mountain Street, No. 24, 4th Floor). It was a charming, slightly dilapidated flat with about three bedrooms and a balcony on three sides, loaded with potted plants in all shapes and sizes. The elegant marble floors got extremely cold in winter. The furniture was eclectic beyond belief, part *art nouveau*, part Good-Will Industries. One of the more startling pieces was the ugliest floor lamp I have ever seen -- a slightly wobbly, spiral glass column crowned with a lamp shade fit to go with almost anything but what it sat on (A word about the peculiarities of Roman electric current may be in order here: Every house had two kinds of current -- 220 volts for appliances, 110 volts for lamps. Trying to plug anything more than a low wattage lamp into the latter was guaranteed to blow the fuses; the wires for lamps were about the thickness of (indoor) American Christmas bulb strings.).

The apartment building boasted a small, creaky, old-fashioned elevator -- the kind on which you must close both the outer and inner doors before it will move. Whenever we had guests, and more than three or four tipsy people tried to descend *en masse* at the end of the evening, the tiny elevator would sink below floor level under the weight and the outer door would refuse to open. Then it was necessary to coax the lift gently upward until it became possible to climb out of the cage to freedom. Since the street entrance to the building was always locked after ten or eleven o'clock at night, I experienced this problem frequently because I always had to accompany our guests downstairs to unlock the street door for them.

Somehow we managed to squeeze our household -- two adults and three, occasionally four children (the oldest was nearly 18) -- into the apartment and set up house-keeping. While we were allowed to shop at the embassy commissary downtown, there was a grocer at the corner who sold us the necessities, including a wonderfully dry white wine from the Colli Albani, which our nine-year old was allowed to purchase for us there without any difficulty whenever we sent her down to get the *vino*.

The curriculum at the Defense College was far from rigorous. Our small (less than 60-member) student body was grouped into eight "committees," expected to work on different projects, each under the guidance of a faculty adviser. Psychologically, this was a very shrewd move because inter-committee competition quickly overcame any potential rivalry among national delegations. Even our Greeks and Turks got along. The entire

student body came together every morning at the easy hour of 10 am to hear a lecture offered by a visiting "expert." This was followed by an hour-long discussion. Then came lunch -- easily the high-point of the curriculum. All students were expected to partake of the fairly sumptuous midday meal offered by the college, supposedly combining gastronomic satisfaction with mental stimulation and inter-cultural discourse. I ate lots of *vitello* there, washed down with liberal quantities of *vino bianco*. After lunch, coffee came accompanied by a healthy shot of *Sambuca*, an anis-flavored liqueur meant to be consumed, for some mysterious reason, with an odd (*never* even!) number of coffee beans.

The "committee work" to be done after lunch was rarely pursued with the zest and energy piously intended, since everyone was far more inclined to take an afternoon nap. Still, *noblesse oblige*, we dutifully assembled in our committee work rooms under the watchful eye of our faculty adviser for a couple of hours' discussion and preparation of our committee projects. As I recall, my committee project had to do with the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean area. While all eight committee members were expected to contribute equally to this task, lack of English and of relevant knowledge got in the way, and in the end only one British naval officer who had served in the Persian Gulf and I (as committee chairman) produced the paper.

The languages spoken by the College were the two official NATO languages -- English and French. Every student was expected to study one or the other. If, however, he was fortunate enough to be fluent in both, he was allowed to take daily Italian lessons. These were a joy to me. I enjoy learning languages (I seem to have something of a gift for it); I enjoyed the beautiful Italian language -- and I enjoyed the sight of the lovely, raven-haired, 25-year-old *Professoressa* Francesca who taught it. We (there were only four of us in the class) met with Francesca every morning at 8:30 for an hour. *Sfortunamente ho gia tutto dementicato...* ("Unfortunately, I've already forgotten it all...")

My wife and I made many friends among the other students. I felt quite close to some of the Brits -- the afore-mentioned Royal Navy salt who helped me with our committee project, and a colonel of Royal Marines, Ted Potts, who with his wife Joan was among our best friends for many years. I liked the Norwegians and some of the Germans. As to the Americans, the only one with whom I felt any sort of kinship was a friendly Air Force colonel in my Italian class, so singularly lacking in language aptitude, poor man, that he got practically nothing out of it. And there was, I am afraid, a lot of drinking, tolerated if not actually encouraged by the College leadership.

Especially interesting and worthwhile were the two major study trips undertaken by each Course at the College-- one to a number of European NATO member states, the other to North America. In the late fall of 1970 we set off to visit Belgium (for briefings at NATO and SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe)), then on to the Netherlands, Britain, Germany, Greece and Turkey (Ours was a "winter" course; the people in the summer courses went to the northern tier of the Alliance, visiting Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and Iceland.). We traveled in style, in our very own airplane, an elderly "Britannia" (rather like a DC-4) of the British Royal Air Force. I

found the ambience in the cabin rather pleasantly reminiscent of an English pub. Our arrival in Brussels was somewhat embarrassing: Earlier that very warm, sunny autumn day, we had all been conveyed to Ciampino Airport to embark, but our plane was delayed by several hours. As an indirect result, the entire College arrived in Brussels three sheets to the wind. The Norwegian contingent had brought along a case of Aquavit to celebrate a Norwegian national day. (National days were a great excuse for drinking, and among fifteen NATO countries there was never any dearth of national days.) We were meant to enjoy the Aquavit en route to Belgium, but as we sat on the tarmac in the hot sun and waited for our transportation, the Norwegians decided (unwisely) to be hospitable and broke out the Aquavit. And so it came about that the entire college happily tumbled off the plane in Brussels in rather a disgraceful state.

When we arrived at NATO Headquarters -- a collection of ugly two-story concrete buildings outside Brussels, on the avenue de l'aviation -- I had no inkling that several years later, this would become my home. We had a day of briefings there and at SHAPE, a few hours away at Mons. In fact, briefings were pretty much the whole official program in all capitals we visited, and they were not very memorable. Of far greater interest were the countries themselves, the sights, the installations we got to visit. Occasionally, there was a day off, a stop devoted entirely to recreation. This was true of our stop-over in Istanbul: After a day's sightseeing in that fabulous city -- touring Hagia Sophia, the "Blue" Mosque, Topkapi Palace, and the Great Bazaar with its hundreds of shops -- we continued on to bleak, colorless Ankara on the Anatolian Plateau. Again, no clairvoyance revealed to me that ten years later I would be living there, on assignment to the American Embassy in Ankara. Of this first visit, I remember waking in the morning in my room at the Büyük Ankara Oteli, looking out the window and thinking that if I had suffered an attack of amnesia during the night, I would not have a clue where in the world I was -- this shabby, vaguely modern city could have been nearly anywhere. It could just as easily have been somewhere in the Balkans -- Bucharest or Sofia, for instance -- as in the fabled, mysterious Orient.

When the College traveled, its commandant and a number of faculty and staff accompanied the student body. Most memorable for me is the tough American Navy captain whose difficult and thankless job it was to organize the tours and make sure that they went off without a hitch. In order to keep the tour on its tight schedule, he could be completely ruthless: If, contrary to his orders and threats, a suitcase was not placed in front of the hotel room door at 5:30 am, and its owner was not present and accounted for when it came time to board the buses for the airport, that unfortunate was left to find his own way -- of course at his own expense -- to the next stop on the itinerary. The captain spent his life booking the hotels (usually rather inexpensive, second-class hostelries in deference to those students with meager travel allowances), arranging all the transportation, the meals -- in fact, every last detail -- and seeing to it that the tour adhered perfectly to its tight and complicated schedule. It took a Simon Legree type to carry this off, but everyone, from the hard-drinking Canadian admiral who was our commandant down to the lowliest student, respected and obeyed our tough tour coordinator. Having been responsible a number of times for all the details involved in high-level official visits, I can really appreciate the hard work and considerable

organizational skills the captain devoted to his task.

In some ways our second study tour, to Portugal, the Azores, Canada and the United States, was the high-point of the NATO Defense College experience for me. Visiting my own country as a member of a mostly foreign delegation was also a strangely ambiguous, schizoid experience. We eight American students were guests in the United States; yet at the same time we felt a patriotic obligation to play host to our fellow students and show off our country to best advantage. I particularly remember my anger and frustration when we arrived in Washington, DC because of the complete lack of any sense of showmanship on the part of the Pentagon protocol people responsible for us. Our military aircraft, a huge C-141 transport plane (military version, I believe, of the Boeing 707) landed at Andrews Air Force Base on the east side of the Potomac, and the buses took us to our hotel through an especially ugly, run-down part of Washington, carefully avoiding as if by design all the landmarks and monuments for which the city is famous. And our hotel was in a rather poor part of town itself -- again in response to the needs of those students whose travel and per diem allowances did not suffice for something better. Our hotel was on K Street somewhere east of 14th -- more or less in the center of Washington's sleazy red light district. I had hoped that at least en route to our briefings, my classmates would be shown a better part of town, but I had hoped in vain; on the way to the Pentagon, the Army buses took the shortest route -- over the 14th Street or "Highway" Bridge, thus carefully avoiding Constitution Avenue, the White House, the Washington and Lincoln Memorials, the Mall, the handsome Arlington Memorial Bridge, Arlington Cemetery, etc...

On the American tour, we had the opportunity to see what few people have been privileged to visit -- the Minuteman Missile Silos in Wyoming, the combined U.S.-Canadian NORAD (North American Defense Command -- the brain center for the DEW (Distant Early Warning) Line stretching across northern Canada, intended to warn of Soviet intercontinental nuclear missiles coming at us across the North Pole.) Command Center deep inside Cheyenne Mountain near Colorado Springs -- like something out of science-fiction, with a four-lane highway leading deep into the mountain blackness, and there in the center of the mountain, the group of command center buildings standing on giant spiral springs designed to cushion the impact of even a nuclear attack. In Utah and Wyoming we were escorted down into the ICBM silos, each containing its giant, nuclear-tipped missile, and shown the "two-key" arming system -- only one in a series of "fail-safe" procedures preliminary to a launch. (Already today, a decade after the end of the Cold War, all this seems so long ago!)

We visited the beautiful, then still rather new Air Force Academy campus in Colorado Springs, where the magnificent chapel stands out in my mind as the most memorable site. We were taken to Martin-Marietta near Atlanta, Georgia, to inspect the world's largest aircraft, the C-5A transport plane. As luck would have it, one of these planes had just suffered an accident, and as a result we were not permitted aboard an actual plane but had to be content with a visit to a mock-up. Still, it was impressive enough.

On the North American tour we were again treated to one "fun" stop-over -- a night in

New Orleans. For me, the famous city was rather a disappointment. I had looked forward to visiting the Vieux Carré, the Old Quarter, and found it quite spoiled by smut and honky-tonk. But a colleague and I did enjoy a fabulous meal of oysters on the half shell, for practically no money at all.

Our visit to Canada was cut short by the Québécois independence movement: An hour before our plane was scheduled to land in Montreal, the body of a prominent politician, victim of a terrorist attack, was found near the airport fence, and we were diverted to Ottawa, to spend three rather dull days in the Canadian capital, then still a far cry from the sparkling, cosmopolitan city it has since become. I do remember being impressed by the beautiful Canadian Parliament buildings.

My wife and I tried to make the most of our sojourn in Rome. Liberated (as the wife of a student) from any embassy responsibilities, my wife made excellent use of her time to study Italian art and art history; she and her friend Joan Potts visited hundreds of churches in search of paintings by Caravaggio. The College also offered us some group tours of Rome. I remember merry weekend bus excursions to the ancient Roman monuments downtown. One Canadian couple with an unusually large number of children distinguished themselves once by actually forgetting a child at the Colosseum and having to go back for him. (The same Canadian lady once proudly told us that she had recommended to friends in Canada a hotel named "Albergo" (The word "*albergo*" just means "hotel" in Italian...) Toward the end of our course, we were even honored by an audience with Pope Paul VI. I still treasure a large group photo showing all the children of NATO Defense College Course No. 37 surrounding His Holiness. Our two little girls can be seen wearing their little blue rain coats and white mantillas. On this occasion our Lutheran Kate, then about 12, even managed to get her hands on a Papal medal.

Life in Rome was exciting, noisy and unpredictable. We learned to listen to the daily schedule of labor strikes announced on the radio in order to find out whether our children would be able to go to school that day, or whether the school bus drivers were once again on strike. We learned to step warily on the streets on New Year's Eve in order to avoid large pieces of furniture and the like being thrown out of upper-storey windows by exuberant citizens celebrating the end of the old year. We learned (the hard way) that on Christmas *all* municipal services of this metropolis come to a screeching halt -- no public transport of any kind. We had decided to attend Christmas Eve services at St. Paul's Within the Walls, a very posh American Episcopal church (where, after Sunday morning services, you did not get coffee -- you were served *sherry*...). All six of us went by *Metropolitana* to the beautiful service and afterwards discovered to our horror that the subway had stopped running. The pastor dragooned some poor lady with a very small car into driving us all home to EUR. How she squeezed the six of us into her vehicle I still have not figured out. It was reminiscent of the time-honored circus act in which more and more and more clowns emerge from a Volkswagen Beetle.

When we did not take the subway, our way home led past the majestic ruins of the Baths of Caracalla. For some reason the walls encircling the Baths served as a strip for prostitutes. On cold winter evenings the ladies of the night could be seen standing there,

each trying to warm herself by a small fire contained in a bucket. Unfeelingly, we called them the "Camp Fire Girls."

8. **A Day in the Life of a Foreign Service Officer**

Among the many rewards of a Foreign Service career is that, like a fascinating woman, it promises infinite variety: No day is like any other. Thus, when a friend suggested that I write a piece on the above subject, my first question had to be, "*Which* day?" The following is a composite of several days, with the names omitted to protect the guilty.

As my day begins, I leave the grand house I have been given to inhabit by dint of my exalted rank as a "counselor of embassy" and I wander down my curving little street to the chancery. Mindful of dire warnings by the embassy security officer, I make an effort to vary my route (almost impossible), and I try not to leave the house at the same time every morning. This is supposed to make it more difficult for terrorists to target me, but I don't have much faith in this or other "anti-terrorism measures." Like my colleagues, in order to function effectively I have had to adopt a somewhat fatalistic attitude and don't worry needlessly about terrorism.

Entering the sprawling embassy compound, I wave "*Günaidin!*" (good morning) to Yussuf, head of the motor pool and my friend, and climb the stairs to the restricted floor which includes the offices of the ambassador, the deputy chief of mission, the political section, and my own realm. First stop: the "code room," to pick up the "take," a thick pile of paper including the latest incoming and outgoing telegrams linking this embassy with Washington and a number of other posts, some intelligence reports, memos and miscellany. Installed at my desk and armed with the first of many cups of coffee, I begin to read, marking some papers for action by my staff, others for filing or destruction. Looking at the pink "come-back" copy of a long message I had drafted the day before, I am pleased to note that the ambassador had signed it without quibbling.

Soon it is time for the morning's round of meetings. I hold a brief session with my co-workers to review what we are all doing and why (though the "why" is sometimes hard to answer and doesn't bear thinking on too much). Then, I'm off to the "country team" meeting with the chief of mission. The "country team" consists of the ambassador, his deputy, and his key officers -- the counselors and section chiefs, the representatives of the other agencies, ranging from the CIA station chief to the agricultural attache, and anyone else whom the ambassador wants included. We file into the "bubble," the embassy' "secure" room which is supposedly shielded from penetration by listening devices. It is a rather airless little chamber within a room, too small for all the people squeezing themselves in around the long conference table. What we discuss there is usually no more secret than what we discuss in any other room of the chancery, and sometimes, alas, even in the hall.

The ambassador is the last to enter, and we all rise in homage to His Excellency. The meeting lasts about an hour and is a pointless "show and tell" affair; this ambassador has let it be known that he doesn't want anything told him in Country Team meetings that he

doesn't already know -- no surprises! A political (as distinct from career) appointee, much taken with himself, he harbors deep-seated suspicions about the career officers who serve him. Afflicted with the paranoia characteristic of his party affiliation, he suspects us all of being secret enemies of the administration which appointed him, that our purpose is to sabotage him, to do end-runs around him, to embarrass and betray him. This makes for a wonderful working atmosphere. In truth, as the dedicated career officers we are, all of us are fully prepared to serve the ambassador and carry out his policies - assuming that we know what these are. He is given to making heavy use of "back-channel" messages. This is telegraphic traffic transmitted through the channels of the military attache or the CIA chief of station - messages which we, the traditional State Department diplomats, never see.

Back at my desk, I spend some time on a complex legal tangle involving a former U.S. military base in this country, control of which has reverted to our host government. Then it's time for lunch with a colleague from another embassy, and then a trip to the foreign ministry: I have been instructed to make a "demarche." In plain English, this means that I'm supposed to make a formal complaint about something or other which has displeased Washington. I order a car from the motor pool for the five-minute drive to the ministry and go.

My opposite number at the ministry, a distinguished senior diplomat, is my friend, and it is in our mutual interest that we remain on good terms. Therefore, my demarche is not delivered in the hostile and angry manner which the word implies. My friend listens politely and takes notes. His response is formulaic: Using a time-honored defensive tactic of his government, he proceeds to bring up the alleged wrongs his nation has suffered at our hands and those of the West in general, going back several centuries, usually to the Battle of Lepanto. We weren't there at Lepanto; in the 16th century we didn't yet exist as a nation, but we are part of the "West," and that is enough. Then we drink a friendly cup of coffee together, and I return to my embassy.

The rest of the afternoon is spent on paper work -- reading, writing, editing. It looks as though I might be able to leave at a decent hour and get ready for the evening's round of obligatory receptions -- a national day here, another there -- where all that matters is putting in a brief appearance, lest one's absence be misinterpreted as a signal of cooling relations between the United States and whatever country is the host. However, fate wills it otherwise: The "front office" has suddenly received word of a serious terrorist attack at the city airport -- a number of people are reported dead and wounded, and there may be American citizens among them. It is imperative that several of us, including the American consul, go to the scene immediately for a first-hand look at the situation and to take whatever measures may be necessary. So we head out and begin to gather information from the police, the foreign ministry, the various hospitals where the wounded were taken. I don't get home until late in the evening. At least I have escaped some stultifyingly boring cocktail parties. And tomorrow is another day -- another day in the life of a Foreign Service officer.

End of interview