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

MONCRIEFF J. SPEAR

Interviewed by: Thomas J. Dunnigan
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INTERVIEW

Q: This is Thomas J. Dunnigan. I am talking with Moncrieff J. Spear on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and the Foreign Service Oral History Program. Today is Tuesday, April 6, 1993. Tell me, Monty, how did you become interested in foreign affairs and eventually end up as a Foreign Service Officer?

SPEAR: Well, Tom, I think a large influence was a political science professor I had in my junior year at Middlebury College. Then, shortly thereafter, my service in the Navy in World War II took me abroad, particularly to Brazil and the South Atlantic Ocean. I certainly had an interest in foreign affairs even before that, because these were the times when Hitler was taking over all of Europe and foreign affairs were becoming increasingly important and threatening in our whole national life.

Q: Well, that certainly explains why you were interested in foreign affairs. How did you get into the Department of State?

SPEAR: After World War II, I finished my college degree at Cornell University and then came down to Washington, D. C., where I got an appointment under civil service in OIR, the Office of Intelligence Research. Thanks to my knowledge of German, I found myself working on Germany and, more particularly, East Germany and communist matters in general. Those were the years in which the Department of State only called up 50 Foreign

Service Officers a year, so I had to wait pretty much from 1947, when I took the Foreign Service examination, until 1950 before I finally was called up.

Next, I went to the Basic Officer Course and then was assigned to Germany. After a last minute rush to get married before I went overseas, Lois and I went on to Frankfurt, where Brewster Morris, on the basis of my German experience in the Department, got me assigned to the Political Section of HICOG [Office of the High Commissioner for Germany]. I worked for a few months there, doing political reporting, mainly on what was then the British Zone of Germany. At that point a vacancy came up in Berlin, and I was asked to go up there on TDY [Temporary Duty], working on West Berlin affairs. In due course that worked into an assignment in what was called "Eastern Element" in those days. "Eastern Element" was part of the Political Section in Berlin, covering developments in the Soviet Zone of Germany. It was a fascinating period as one watched the Soviets clamping communist rule onto their part of Germany and the whole series of quadripartite agreements on administration of Germany began to fall apart. As the Bizonal Economic Council was set up developments began to move toward the final split of Germany, and the West German Government was established.

This was a fascinating period to be in Berlin in terms of two of the highlights there. One was that the communists planned to hold a massive world youth festival, to which they brought youth from various communist countries all around the world to attend this monster festival in Berlin. There was great concern that they would simply use this as a cover for a forceful takeover of the Western Sectors of Berlin. Security measures were increased, but the decision was also made that there should be all sorts of cultural activities developed in West Berlin to try to attract the East German youth across the border and influence them positively toward the West. These efforts were highly successful--far beyond anybody's expectations. The massive takeover did not occur, but one of the more amusing things was that the Western commandants had decided that the West should put forth its best face. So they cleaned all of the "Western" [i.e., cowboy type] movies off the cinema screens in West Berlin. However, it turned out that these East German, or "Free German Youth," were all great fans of Karl Mal, a German author. The East German youth were just crazy to see Western films. So I made arrangements with our military to get them in to see some Grade B "spaghetti" Westerns on the military film screens. We would run down and pick up these "communist" young men and women at the reception centers in the West and take them across the border to see Western cowboy films. So that part of it went off in highly successful fashion.

Q: Monty, I hope that those films did not ruin the future careers of some of these people. Now, the period you are talking about, I gather, was the early 1950's, some 40 years ago.

SPEAR: That's right, yes.

Q: I'm interested in your telling us about this World Youth Festival. Were there any American youth who came over for that? Were they...

SPEAR: Yes, there were some, under the sponsorship, I'm sure, of the Communist Party U. S. A. We didn't meet any of them in particular. I might add that there was another high point during my time there. Once a year, the Mission [in Berlin] was able to get passes to send personnel down to the Leipzig Trade Fair, which was one of our few opportunities physically to get into East Germany. This was, of course, the area on which we had to do our reporting, most of it second hand. I went down [to Leipzig] in the middle of winter. I took two of my colleagues, Martha Mautner and Marion Mitchell, with me. As we went out through Potsdam, we had to go over to the Soviet Kommandatura to get clearance to go on down to Leipzig. I remember we had this young Russian GI with us. My guess was that he was about 18 years old, sitting in the back seat with Martha and Marion with a submachine gun across his knees. In any event, we got our clearance and drove down over the snowy roads, stopped off at Wittenberg, where, of course, Martin Luther had nailed his famous "Theses" to the cathedral door. Then we went on and spent a day or so in Leipzig, which was just indescribably drab.

Q: You obviously had some fascinating experiences in those days. I imagine it was difficult for you to talk to many people who were living in that area. What were your sources for information for your reporting?

SPEAR: For one thing, we used to follow the communist press and communist periodicals very carefully. This is a bit like trying to find a needle in a haystack. We did the same kinds of things that the Kremlinologists in our service did with the Soviet press. All I can say is that it was a mind-stultifying-exercise, trying to find these small tidbits or hints of changes in the political scene over there. I always thought that people who were willing to brainwash themselves with this stuff should have gotten an extra differential for submitting themselves to it. We also had contacts. The West German Socialist Party, which, of course, had been amalgamated with the communists in a shotgun wedding by the Soviets, still maintained contacts there. I remember dealing with Willy Brandt [later German Federal Chancellor] to get some of the information reports on East Germany, which they would share with us. In those days a certain number of East Germans were able to cross over into West Germany, or West Berlin. I inherited quite a collection of contacts from Dave Mark, who had preceded me there in "Eastern Element."

Q: Talking about "Eastern Element," Monty, that was a different sort of animal, since what it was doing was not really related to the real purpose of our Mission in Berlin in those days--that is, the Military Mission. Where did the "Eastern Element" get its guidance? Did it come from the High Commissioner's Office, or directly from Washington? Tell us a little about that.

SPEAR: I think it was a combination of the two. We simply followed developments from day to day. There would be certain incidents which we regarded as having major importance in our analyses. I think we were able to shape some of the guidance we received, simply as events went along. In other words, it was the interplay between the Department, HICOG and the field that one sees in political reporting throughout the world.

Q: I can hardly think of a more interesting, first assignment for an officer than to have been in Berlin in those days. But then, of course, as with all of us in the Foreign Service, the time came for transfer. And I notice that you moved to a different part of the world.

SPEAR: Well, that wasn't the plan originally. I was assigned at first to go to Lyon, France, to the Consulate there. But while I was back in Washington, attending the Mid Career Course, my orders were changed, and I was sent out to Manila, in the Philippines.

My first job out there was working on the military base agreements. At that time Admiral Spruance had been named our Ambassador out there. The United States had acquired a large number of military bases during operations in World War II in the Philippines. Then, in 1946, the Philippines became independent and, as a result, the future of all of these military bases was up for grabs. A series of negotiations went on there. Ambassador Spruance had gotten, I believe, a 700-page opinion from the U. S. Attorney General that these bases were U. S. property. But the Philippine Government didn't see it quite that way, and we went into a long series of negotiations, some of which only ended when the U. S. left these bases in the last year or two, in the 1990's. These were the beginnings of the base negotiations, and I worked on that to start with.

Q: The ongoing problems continued for many years, as I understand. You must have been in Manila when the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty was negotiated [in 1954, under which the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization was set up in Bangkok].

SPEAR: That's right. As I recall, that was the first occasion on which you and I met. John Foster Dulles [then Secretary of State] had come out there for the signing of [what was later called] the SEATO Treaty. In fact, his counselor, Ambassador Douglas MacArthur, was the nephew of General MacArthur. I remember that when he came out to do some of the preliminary spadework before [Secretary of State] Dulles arrived, the Philippine press in Manila referred to his arrival as "the second coming."

Q: Well, after working on the military bases, you went into the Consular Section in Manila, which is, of course, one of the world's busiest. I assume you had the usual problems there.

SPEAR: Yes, that's for sure. It was a tremendous visa mill, plus the fact that there was an enormous Citizenship Section because there were so many Americans living in the Philippines at that time. This was the period after the Eisenhower Administration came in, and there was a considerable cutback in government personnel. I remember that as a very difficult time because we were severely understaffed. We used to be in the office evenings and weekends, just trying to keep the operation afloat, because we were so short-handed.

Q: You don't need to explain that to me personally because I can reveal that I was the one who succeeded you in that position as chief of the Visa Section in Manila. You left

problems behind, and I left problems behind when I departed. Now, you were in Manila for over two years.

SPEAR: Yes, 1953 to 1955.

Q: And then you were transferred to Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

SPEAR: Yes, because of the interest in communist affairs which I had developed while working in "Eastern Element" [in Berlin]. I was very anxious to get into Eastern Europe and fortunately was able to get the assignment to Belgrade. I originally started work in Belgrade in the Economic Section. One of my jobs there was to supervise what was known as the "Joint Translation Service," which we and the British Embassy ran together. I had been taking early morning courses in Serbian. One of my jobs was to get up at the crack of dawn every morning and go in and scan the Yugoslav press for articles. We had a crew of Yugoslavs who would translate the articles from Serbian into English. I would polish them up, and once a day we would put out a fairly substantial booklet of all of these articles. I know that there were a number of foreign missions around Belgrade which simply bundled these up and sent them back to their capitals as their political and economic reporting on Yugoslavia.

Q: You simplified their work. Tell me, Monty--now this is many years ago, but was there, or did you have, an inkling of the present troubles which have so affected the Yugoslav republics in recent years?

SPEAR: No, I must say that the whole tragedy has really come as a shock to me and, I think, to many of us who served there. Of course, this was the period when the Tito dictatorship was keeping Yugoslavia under control with a pretty firm hand. It was a pretty tight police state, a dictatorship, although certainly, on the economic side of things, conditions had eased off considerably. I think also that it was the external threat from the Soviets which kept a lot of these nationalistic and ethnic conflicts tamped down.

Q: You mentioned, of course, the Soviet attitude toward Yugoslavia. What was the behavior of the Soviets in Belgrade--their Embassy there? Were they quiet, were they boisterous, were they propagandizing?

SPEAR: Well, the relationship had its ups and downs. At least our relations, as far as we were concerned in the Embassy, went up and down as the U. S. and Soviet relations fluctuated. I remember particularly, right after the period of Geneva, when Eisenhower and Khrushchev had met [1955], and there were the beginnings of what was later known as detente. Suddenly, the Soviet Embassy went on a big spree of entertaining American officers. First, of course, Ambassador and Mrs. Riddleberger were invited to the Soviet Embassy. Then they began inviting other officers in the Embassy. I remember Lois and I going there for dinner one evening. The Soviet Embassy was a weird old place. It reminded me of a Charles Addams cartoon of a haunted house, with all of the thugs peering out from behind iron gates, before they let us in. Throughout the evening the

Soviets were trying to pump us for information and trying to fill us up with vodka and get us drunk. [Laughter]

Q: Well, those are the hazards of the career.

SPEAR: It was awfully difficult to write the memcon [memorandum of conversation] the next morning.

Q: Now, after several years in Belgrade...

SPEAR: Well, before you do that, could I go back to some of the highlights there? One was that this was a period of intense, ideological conflict going on between the Yugoslavs with their nationalist variety of communism and the Soviets, who wanted to have a monolithic communist camp. As a result, there were bitter exchanges between the Yugoslavs and the Soviets. At one point, I remember, we were at a big Indonesian reception because Indonesian President Sukarno had just been there. You may recall that Tito tried to enhance his position by trying to build up the "Third World Movement." At this reception, the word spread through the room like wildfire that Khrushchev had arrived in Belgrade. And he and Tito went off to Tito's island of Brioni and held several days of discussions, trying to resolve their ideological and political differences.

This, however, simply provided the prelude or laid the framework for what burst out shortly thereafter, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Tito originally had backed the revolution, thinking that this would result in another, "national" communist state. But then, when events took on an anti-communist cast, he changed and backed the Soviets. And, of course, this caused all sorts of problems. The revolution set off a flood of Hungarian refugees, the majority of whom got into Austria and went to the West. But quite a large number got to Yugoslavia. There was a great question there as to whether the Yugoslavs would return them or not. I know that Ambassador Riddleberger had some very tense negotiations, all the way up the line to Tito, and eventually got these people released so that they were able to come to the United States as refugees.

Q: Didn't our relations with the Yugoslavs cool off as a result of the Hungarian Revolution?

SPEAR: Tom, I don't recall that. I would think that there were probably two factors at work there. On the one hand, of course, there had been some question as to whether, with the Soviet tanks rolling into Budapest, they would stop when they got to the Yugoslav-Hungarian border, or whether they'd decide to go ahead and clean up two messes at one stroke. I think that that consideration tended to throw the Yugoslavs back onto the United States and to make them seek support from the United States and have warmer relations with us. On the other hand they were upset that, in their view, the Eisenhower Administration had seemed to show support for "rolling back the Iron Curtain." The Eisenhower Administration denied this, but the Yugoslavs feared that some of the

statements made [particularly by Secretary of State Dulles] might have triggered [some movement in this direction].

Q: Any other comments about your time in Belgrade?

SPEAR: No. After that I was transferred back to the Office of Eastern European Affairs in the Department. This would have been in the summer of 1957.

Q: And there, of course, you followed some of the problems you'd been working on in Yugoslavia.

SPEAR: Exactly. I was working with Jim Sutterlin as the number two man on the Yugoslav desk. I also had responsibility for Albania, which was rather intriguing. I remember a couple of things most clearly from that period. Washington, D. C., was phasing out its trolley cars at that time and going over to buses. The Yugoslavs were interested in buying those trolley cars for Sarajevo. Over the years, from time to time, I've seen pictures of those Washington Transit trolley cars in Sarajevo. Most recently, I'm sad to say, I have seen TV images of some of them sitting in the middle of Sarajevo, all bombed out from the Serbian shelling.

I also had some interesting dealings when I wore my other hat as Albanian desk officer. We had an Air Force plane from West Germany that was flying to Athens, but which came down in Albania. We had some rather tense negotiations until we were able to get the pilot out. The Air Force decided that they didn't want the plane, and I understand that it's still sitting in Tirana, or was, until the communists were ousted in Albania, as a monument to American imperialism.

Q: Well, if we didn't have any relations with Albania, how did you negotiate that?

SPEAR: Well, this was all done through the French and the Italians. They had missions there and they represented our interests and carried on these negotiations for us. There also was an Albanian Mission at the UN in New York, which was very active in trying to infiltrate the Albanian-American community, particularly around Boston. I was invited several times to go up to Boston when the major Albanian-American organization would have its annual meeting. I addressed the group at times. After warning them about some of the activities of the Albanian UN Mission, I found myself roundly denounced over the Albanian radio and in the Albanian press.

Q: Did our Congressmen pay much attention to Yugoslav or Albanian matters in those days?

SPEAR: As to Yugoslav affairs, I'd say yes, because, of course, we had a Military Mission there, with military assistance going to the Yugoslav Army. And, of course, we were providing very large shipments of PL 480 [Public Law 480 - surplus agricultural

commodities] grain and wheat there. So this, of course, attracted quite a lot of attention from the Congressional committees handling that.

Q: Now after your several years on Yugoslav and Albanian affairs in the Department, you moved to what was called the Berlin Task Force?

SPEAR: Yes, at the time of the Berlin Wall crisis in 1961. Because of my previous experience in Berlin, I was detailed to the Berlin Task Force. I was working particularly with Henry Cox on public affairs in that area. I found myself going out and handling speaking engagements before various groups around the country about what our policies were, what our legal rights were in Berlin, and what our policies were in view of President Kennedy's determination to maintain our position in Berlin. You may recall that this was quite a tense time during which we sent an Army battle group from West Germany to reinforce the Berlin Garrison. Vice President Johnson was sent over there to reiterate our commitment to the people of Berlin. So all of that was a very interesting, tense, and exciting time.

Q: Tell me about the Berlin Task Force. How large was it?

SPEAR: There may have been 25 or 30 people who used to attend its regular meetings, a couple of times a week, up in the Operations Center conference room. Foy Kohler, who was Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, was the director of the Task Force. He had Maj Gen Gray from the Pentagon as his deputy. A lot of our old Berlin hands, like Marty Hillenbrand, John Ausland, and others were also on the Task Force.

Q: Did the Secretary and the Under Secretary and other senior officials in the Department take much interest in the workings of the Task Force?

SPEAR: Oh, very much so. Yes, indeed.

Q: And the White House also?

SPEAR: And the White House as well. Yes, President Kennedy was also very actively involved in those things. You remember, those were the days when he used to call up desk officers in the Department and ask their opinions about current developments.

Q: Well, then, you moved from the Berlin Task Force, literally through the door into the Operations Center, I gather, of the Department.

SPEAR: Yes, I was slated to go out to Malaysia on an economic assignment, but there were some medical problems in my family so the assignment was canceled and I was detailed to the Operations Center, which had just begun to get itself organized. This was, of course, the Department's crisis center, which had 'round the clock watch teams. I originally went in there as a Senior Watch Officer, heading up one of these watch teams. Then, later on, I became Deputy Director of the Operations Center.

Q: What did a watch team do?

SPEAR: Well, it had several functions. One was simply to monitor the cable traffic coming in from the posts overseas. There were so-called editors on the teams responsible for pulling these cables together and preparing précis of these cables and piecing them together to give a running story of these developments. This then went into a morning summary, which was placed on the desk of the Secretary of State. Copies went over to the White House and to all of the other senior officers in the Department. In fact, you may recall that, because, as I remember, you were over on the staff side of the Executive Secretariat, at the time I was in the Operations Center.

Q: You were in the Operations Center at the time of the critical period of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Can you tell me something about that and what you did in those days?

SPEAR: Yes. I wound up as the Acting Director [of the Operations Center] during the Cuban Missile Crisis because the Director was off on one of those Presidential Task Force teams in Brazil. We had known earlier that there were military developments going on in Cuba and a Code Word had been set up which would indicate that the Cuban and Soviet forces there had an offensive missile capability. I remember being called at home one evening by the Senior Watch Officer, who repeated this Code Word to me. He then said that the Under Secretary for Management wanted to take over our Conference Room for a major briefing. So I went rushing down to the Operations Center and brought in one of the officers from the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs who had been following this very closely. He, in effect, told me that they had discovered this offensive, military capability. This was during the week before the President made his speech and the whole thing became public. There was intense activity going on in the Operations Center at that time. I remember that the President's speech kept going through one draft after another. Unfortunately, the Department's communications capability to get the text of the speech out to various, important, allied capitals simply broke down under the strain. I remember one evening, just shortly before the President's speech when the Under Secretary for Management came in. It turned out that they had been down in the Telegraph Branch just below us there, literally pulling tapes right out of the machines there trying to get the changes put in and get this speech sent out. Incidentally, as a result of that, the Department later obtained greatly enhanced communications facilities and was brought into the middle of the 20th century in terms of its communications capability.

You may recall that Chester Bowles had been a very senior official in the State Dept in the early days of the Kennedy Administration. Subsequently, he was replaced by Averell Harriman and was given a rather grandiose title as the President's personal representative to all sorts of Third World countries. He had been traveling around Africa at the time. As you were in the Executive Secretariat, you will also recall that having a morning summary cabled out to you was one of the prestige symbols of top-ranking officials on the seventh floor of the Department. We had been sending a morning summary to Bowles but, on instructions from on high, it was largely a recapitulation of the New York Times that

morning. It was not very highly classified. But suddenly, when we began to look for support in the United Nations, to back Adlai Stevenson's efforts up there, we started to put some really "hot stuff" into the Bowles' morning summary, which skyrocketed up in classification.

I remember, in the early days of the Cuban Missile crisis, that we were all working about 18 or 20 hours a day. At one point all of us were absolutely transfixed. We had a Watch Team over in the Pentagon with the Battle Staff there. They would give us reports of the various megatonnages [of nuclear weapons] which CINCSAC [Commander in Chief, Strategic Air Command] had on first strike and second strike availability. Needless to say, this was very sobering, indeed. Suddenly, there came this report of a missile headed for the United States. It was quickly checked and turned out that it was coming up from the South Pole. It was obviously a glitch in the radars and detection mechanism. But it gave everybody one hell of a scare.

The role of the Navy in the quarantine line around Cuba to intercept Soviet ships bringing missiles to Cuba is well known. At that time it was uncertain as to whether there were actually nuclear warheads in Cuba or whether they simply had the missiles there. A less well known aspect of the crisis was the interdiction effort we ran diplomatically to prevent these warheads from being flown in. We had reports of a number of Soviet flights originating in the Black Sea area which then flew via airports in North Africa, crossed the South Atlantic Ocean from West Africa to the bulge of Brazil, and then went up into the Caribbean area. Under instructions from the Department, our ambassadors in all of those North African posts and up and down the Caribbean made very strong representations to the local governments. In due course, we got these flights stopped, although one of them, as I recall, got as far as Guyana [northern South America] before it was finally stopped.

There was also a great deal of activity going on up at the UN, as our UN Mission presented the case against the Soviets. They used aerial photographs and so forth to bring about UN condemnation. We also mounted a major effort in the Organization of American States to get Latin American states to support our activities there, too.

Going back to the Naval quarantine, I should mention that we were getting all sorts of reports, from various ships' agents saying that, rather than being stopped by the U. S. Navy and running the possibility of an international incident, they would be very happy to have their ships diverted to U. S. or friendly ports, where they could be inspected. However, we couldn't get any information out of the Pentagon as to where these merchant ships were. You may recall that this led to a confrontation between Secretary of Defense McNamara and Admiral George Anderson [then Chief of Naval Operations] which was rather well publicized at the time. I was working very hard, trying to get this information. My opposite number in the National Military Command Center, the Pentagon's crisis center, was a naval officer. Because of his naval officer's uniform, he was able to go into the "Flag Plot" [in the office of the Chief of Naval Operations], make some notes on just where all these ships were and get some of this information back to us. In turn, we were able to get some of these merchant ships diverted and so avoid incidents, perhaps having

the ships fired on, and so forth. There had been one feisty Scandinavian skipper who, in effect, told the U. S. Navy to go to hell. The Navy had to be ordered not to fire on him.

After the message was received that Khrushchev had agreed to remove the missiles, the crisis was far from over as far as the Operations Center was concerned. There was the matter of getting Cuban diplomats up to the UN to continue these negotiations. Because we had air and ground forces ready for an invasion of Cuba, we wanted to be sure that none of the planes bearing these diplomats, or Soviet diplomats going into Cuba, were shot down by our forces. This required very close coordination between the Operations Center and the National Military Command Center.

There are two other footnotes I would add to this. One was that it was absolutely fascinating to work the Department at that time. No more than about 35 individuals were actually doing anything related to the crisis during this period. Of course, we were heavily involved with the people in Political-Military Affairs (POL/MIL) and Alex Johnson [U. Alexis Johnson]. Sometimes you were dealing with an Assistant Secretary. At other times the whole structure of a bureau fell away and we found ourselves, for example, dealing with one of the desk officers in the Aviation Division, when it came to finding out how to get clearances for these aircraft to move diplomats into and out of Cuba. It was really weird. Months afterwards I would run into colleagues in the hall who would keep asking me, "What went on during this time?" The rest of the Department simply seemed not to be functioning.

Q: I was overseas at that time but I can tell you that we were completely in the dark for those few weeks. Only when President Kennedy made his speech did it become clear to us how serious the situation really was.

SPEAR: There was a lighter side to the Cuban Missile crisis. It was a ghastly affair, because I had been working 18-20 hours a day. I'd come home in the wee hours of the morning, get four or five hours of sleep, and then have to go back to the Department. As a matter of fact, I lost about six pounds in a week or two. Lois was working at the time, so she would be gone by the time I would get up. After about the second week, I found a note pinned to my pillow, saying, "I do need to see you urgently on several matters. Can we make a date to have lunch together."

Q: This presumably had to be cleared through the Operations Center. Well, that was certainly an exciting experience. Presumably, one of the highlights of your career. But you didn't stop there, because from then on you moved out to the field again, this time to Bangkok. Tell me something about what you did there.

SPEAR: I went out to Bangkok in 1963 as a special assistant to Ambassador Graham Martin. My job there was coordination of the various counterinsurgency programs which the U. S. Government was supporting in Thailand. There had been a growing communist insurgency, particularly in the northeastern provinces of Thailand. The Thai Government had sought assistance from the United States. As a result, there was a growing

proliferation of these programs and a need to pull them together and coordinate them more closely under the chief of our diplomatic mission. This was a matter on which Ambassador Martin had some very strong views, and I was the one who carried out the staff function of this effort. It involved not only our military assistance to the Thai military forces, but also large amounts of economic assistance, particularly in rural development, road building, community development, and that sort of thing. Our USIA [United States Information Agency] people were also training the Thai in developing all sorts of pro-government propaganda activities to be carried out among the villagers in the northeast of Thailand to convince them of the government's concern for them, and to let them know what the government was doing. In other words, to have a multiplier effect on the assistance programs which the Thai Government was carrying out.

The Thai Government had originally started on its own a program known as "Mobile Development Units." These were largely Army engineer units which were sent out to the provinces to drill wells, develop farm to market roads, and so forth. We funneled quite a bit of military assistance into providing them both with training and the equipment to do this sort of thing.

The USIA people had mobile teams which went around to the various villages. Displaying a great deal of imagination, they had worked up a technique which was known as "Mohlam." These involved local storytellers who used to travel around to villages. With musical accompaniment these people would improvise as they went along, telling various stories. Well, they worked into the stories what the Thai Government was doing in terms of development, public health programs, and so forth. These were supported by our USIA field officers out, who trained and traveled around with the Thai teams. I must say it was all highly successful.

We were making a great effort at that point to keep the Thai in the forefront of this whole program and prevent their throwing their hands up and feeling that the United States would do all of this for them. I'm afraid that this later was one of the syndromes we ran into in Vietnam. The local effort there had slacked off because the U. S. had come in and, they felt had overridden them. Major efforts were made to try to upgrade and increase the police presence of the Thai security forces up in the northeast. Some of the [communist guerrilla] activity got beyond the ability of the local police forces to handle, so there were para-military police and Thai Army units where they were needed, also.

Following that assignment in Bangkok--we were there for four years [1963 to 1967]--I came back [to the Department] and worked as Country Director for Thailand-Burma affairs [1968-1970]. There, I think, our principal concern was trying to get sufficient resources for the various programs in Thailand, so that, in effect, we didn't wind up with two Vietnam's in Southeast Asia, instead of just one. We were in fierce competition for resources with Vietnam. There was a great deal of bureaucratic interplay going on there, if you will, in our effort to get the resources we felt were necessary there.

This was also the period when there was a large military buildup, when the U. S. Air Force was moving into Thailand to carry out bombing operations in North Vietnam.

Q: Well, the programs you describe, Monty, must have involved many thousands of Americans in Thailand at that time, presumably largely engaged in matters connected with our presence in Vietnam.

SPEAR: Yes, that's true. In fact, the U. S. presence in Vietnam had become so large that there was a great deal of pressure to locate a lot of these activities in Thailand. For instance, the [Department of Defense] Advanced Research Projects Agency--ARPA--was carrying out a number of experiments with radio equipment and things like that to support U. S. forces in Vietnam. But because of the heavy presence in Vietnam, ARPA activity was largely located over in Thailand, and that was just one example. A large number of dependents of our Foreign Service staff in Vietnam were also living in Bangkok.

While I was Thai Country Director, we had a visit by Thai Prime Minister [Thanom]. I was in charge of setting up all of the arrangements for the visit. Because he was a general, it had been agreed that after the state banquet at the White House the Marine Drill Team from the Marine Barracks would put on a demonstration of precision drill. This would be followed by a fireworks display. Lois and I were invited down to the reception after the dinner and stood out on the balcony. The drill team, performing under floodlights, was spectacular, with a full moon shining down on the Washington Monument in the background. This was followed by a marvelous fireworks demonstration. The only problem was that the fireworks demonstration took place a week after the riots and burning in Washington following the assassination of Martin Luther King [in 1968]. We discovered the next day that the White House switchboard had lit up in a fashion that almost put the fireworks to shame, with people wanting to know whether the rioting had started all over again.

Q: Well, after your period on the Thai-Burma desk you went to the Senior Seminar for a year [1969-1970]. Anything you'd like to say about that?

SPEAR: This was certainly a marvelous opportunity to get back in touch, through the field trips which we made out to the various parts of the country. It gave us a chance to reacquaint ourselves with all of the developments that had been going on in the U. S. while most of us had been overseas. I also had an opportunity to get to some areas [overseas], during my field trip, which I had never served in, particularly in the Middle East. Having spent so much time on the periphery of the Soviet Union, I also had a chance to get to Moscow. This was a case where my study project largely worked around an itinerary, and I got a chance to stop off in a variety of countries in North Africa. From Cairo I visited Israel and Lebanon and then went on to Tehran. Then I took an Aeroflot flight from Tehran up to Moscow. I spent several days there. Then I went to London and there prepared a paper on Soviet policy in the Middle East. So I had a good opportunity to cover an area I'd never visited before.

After a great year [in the Senior Seminar] I found myself again on the move, this time to the Bahamas, as Consul General.

Q: The Bahamas was just approaching independence at that time, was it not?

SPEAR: Yes, that's true. I was down there from 1970 to 1973. In 1973 the Bahamas became independent. The post, though a Consulate General, really operated like a small Embassy because, although it was a British Colony, we did not report directly to the Embassy in London, except on matters that really involved the British interest in the Bahamas. The post came under our Bureau of American Republic Affairs, ARA.

I think that one of the more interesting developments there was a very lively lobster fishermen's war. A number of Cuban refugees had settled in the Miami area and were accustomed to fishing along the sandbanks in the Bahamas area. As the Bahamas were approaching independence, they wanted to adopt this idea of an "Economic Zone," similar to the one which President Truman had declared for the United States [in 1945], a 200-mile limit which we claimed and where we sought to protect the fisheries there. As a result, this led to lively exchanges. Fishing wars being what they are, there used to be gunfire between the patrol boats and the Cuban fishermen. We found ourselves in a long series of negotiations with the Bahamians and with Government House, the British, on this whole matter. It really was only resolved after I had left.

The other, main point that we had was that while this small country was moving to independence, it only had about 127,000 inhabitants, scattered through all of these 800-odd islands. American tourism there was simply overwhelming. There were about 1.2 million Americans who visited the Bahamas every year. Needless to say, this kept our consular staff, which comprised more than half of our entire organization there, very busy looking after all the Americans who seemed to find more different ways of getting into difficulties than we had ever even imagined.

Q: What was the problem with drugs then?

SPEAR: It was just beginning to get started. This was the end of the 1960's. American college students would come over there for Easter break, bringing some of the marijuana then widely used on American campuses. Marijuana use began there in relatively minor fashion, but it spread among the Bahamian youth, unfortunately. There were some efforts to smuggle marijuana through there, but the whole traffic of "hard" drugs up out of Colombia and South America really only began several years after I left.

Toward the end of our time there our efforts were directed toward getting geared up as an Embassy and looking toward the independence celebration.

Q: How did your role as consul general change when independence came?

SPEAR: Well, I was chargé d'affaires there for a brief period, until Ron Spiers came down as Ambassador. Our main activity was trying to arrange negotiations on the military bases, most of which were left over from the World War II period, when they had been part of the old [1940] destroyers-for-bases agreement, which President Roosevelt concluded with Prime Minister Churchill. The Bahamian Government would be taking over a lot of these bases, and there were very few of them that we wanted to continue to use. So we had teams down from Washington and were carrying on very active negotiations right up until independence, when we were able to get these matters worked out--or at least the ones we were most interested in--and arrange for subsequent negotiations on the rest.

We certainly had a very active social life there, too. Prince Charles had come to represent Queen Elizabeth, as they used to say in those days "giving small islands away." What used to be known at Government House as the "flotsam and jetsam of Empire," which Britain was still trying to shed. We arranged to have the U. S. Navy "Blue Angels" [aerial acrobatics team] do an aerial demonstration for the independence celebration.

I was only there for a few days before the pressure began to mount to get on to my next assignment in Vietnam. Ambassador Martin, who was now our new Ambassador, had asked me to come and join his staff there.

Q: I see. And what position did you occupy on the staff in Vietnam?

SPEAR: Well, I moved on to another, larger Consulate General. This was the one at Nha Trang, on the coast in Vietnam, about half way between Saigon and Da Nang. It covered all of the Central Highlands area, the most mountainous areas of Central Vietnam. In fact, our consular district comprised almost 50% of the land area of South Vietnam.

Q: That was to be my question. Why would we have a post at a place like Nha Trang?

SPEAR: Because the Embassy and the four Consulates General set up there, one in each of the major regions of [South] Vietnam, really had inherited most of the enormous military assistance, economic assistance, public affairs programs, and all of the other things that were being carried on there to support the South Vietnamese Government and its forces, following the withdrawal of American military forces.

Q: Well, now, of course, when you were there, direct American participation in the fighting in Vietnam had ended, and troops had been withdrawn.

SPEAR: That's right.

Q: But that hadn't ended the North Vietnamese aggression.

SPEAR: No, indeed. The Paris Accords [of 1973] had been signed. The original idea when we went out there was that we were going to be monitoring the implementation of

the Paris Accords. So we really went out there as a sort of peacekeeping force, working with the ICCS, the International Control Commission, which had been set up with the Canadians, the Indonesians, the Hungarians, [the Indians, and later the Iranians, who replaced the Canadians] to monitor the accords. My staff helped to arrange an exchange of prisoners of war between the Vietnamese sides. But the pressure which had forced me to break off from the Bahamas and get out to Vietnam right away was that a pitched battle was forming up there in the highlands around Kontum. That battle had ended just about the time I got there, but there was continuing fighting that went on during all of the 18 months I was there, from September 1973 until the evacuation in April, 1975. There was heavy fighting between division-sized forces of the South Vietnamese Army with North Vietnamese divisions which had moved into South Vietnam.

I should explain that these were really pitched battles between regular forces. This was no longer an insurgency.

Q: In other words, they had artillery, tanks, and all of the panoply of modern warfare?

SPEAR: Exactly, yes. The one thing that the South Vietnamese forces had which the North Vietnamese forces did not have was a modest Air Force.

I had people on my staff from the Defense Attaché's office [in the Embassy in Saigon], which took over some of the functions of the old MACV [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam], a military assistance headquarters, handling all manner of military supplies to the South Vietnamese Army, Navy, and Air Force. I had about 100 Americans on my staff and about 700 Vietnamese. I had province representatives in each of the 12 provinces which comprised the consular area. In these offices would be a staff of anywhere from two or three to a half dozen Americans--agricultural experts, community development advisers, highway engineers, the whole panoply of economic assistance there. Then we had USIA officers in the field of public affairs, carrying on the business of telling the American story abroad but also assisting the Vietnamese in some of their efforts, doing similar things to what we had been doing out in Thailand, trying to assist the government to win the hearts and minds of its own people.

Q: How many of you on the Nha Trang staff were actually Foreign Service Officers?

SPEAR: I don't think that there were more than a half dozen of us. Most of the people assigned to the Consulate General in Nha Trang were AID [Agency for International Development] personnel. The Defense Attaché people, of course, were civilian employees of DOD [Department of Defense]. We didn't have any regular military officers attached to the staff. They used to come up on temporary duty from Saigon. We actually had a small "air force" attached to the staff. We had an old DC-3, which I used to do a regular courier run around the 12 provinces, every other day or so. We had a fleet of about a half dozen helicopters and a couple of fast, propeller-driven, passenger aircraft to get around in. So it was a very substantial establishment there.

Q: These province reps you mentioned. Were they Foreign Service Officers?

SPEAR: No, most of those were AID people, though there were one or two Foreign Service Officers who came up on temporary detail and were sent out to the provinces. We used to do a great deal of reporting, including a certain amount of military reporting on the fighting still going on. We did political reporting on developments in the area and tried to keep our finger on the pulse, reporting the progress of various AID development programs as well.

Q: Did we expect the heavy North Vietnamese attack that began in January 1975?

SPEAR: Yes, as a matter of fact our intelligence had been quite good on that, although I must say that the [South] Vietnamese intelligence up in the Central Vietnam highlands left a lot to be desired. In strategic terms, yes, we had gotten from defectors and other sources the outlines of the North Vietnamese plans for the takeover of South Vietnam. It was to be in two stages. It was thought that they would try to break the back of the South Vietnamese forces in 1975. 1976 would be the year when they cleaned up and occupied the entire country.

In the II Corps area [Central Vietnam], which the Consulate General in Nha Trang covered, the North Vietnamese plans to cut the major highways and to cut the Central Highlands off from the coastal area had been obtained. And the South Vietnamese forces had done quite a good job in getting this intelligence. Then, when the attack actually started, things went exactly according to the [North Vietnamese] plan. But, unfortunately, the South Vietnamese forces were not able to break out and keep these highways open. The communists also did a very effective job of putting in a surprise attack on one of the capitals up in the highlands, Ban Me Thuot. They brought a several-division-sized force in there. They were able, consequently, to break the back and destroy one of the South Vietnamese divisions, as a result of which the military balance tipped very substantially, and the remaining South Vietnamese forces at the [provincial] capital in Pleiku were forced to carry out an evacuation down to the coast. But before this happened, our province representative, Paul Struharik, who had been there in Ban Me Thuot, was cut off from the outside. He and a group of American missionaries and others, about a half dozen of them, were captured by the North Vietnamese forces. It was not until after the fall of Saigon [in April, 1975] that we were finally able to negotiate their release through the International Control Commission.

We had also been asked if we could try to rescue some of the Iranians, Hungarians, and Indonesians [in the International Control Commission] who had some of their people captured at Ban Me Thuot, as well. But we were unable to effect that.

The major point however, was that the South Vietnamese and [their] commanding general in II Corps, went ahead and started evacuating out of Pleiku without informing the Americans. We didn't find out about their efforts to bring a column down to the sea until after the evacuation had started. At that point we became heavily involved, using our

fleet of planes and helicopters to get our own people out. What proved to be a much heavier burden was getting our local staff of Vietnamese employees and their numerous family members out of various posts in the highlands which were coming under very heavy attack. A number of our people ran some very serious risks and were very courageous in the face of great danger as they tried to get their Vietnamese employees out. We did succeed in getting a very substantial proportion, a very high percentage of them, down to Nha Trang. But because the communists had cut off the main roads coming down to the coast from the highlands, the [South] Vietnamese forces under General Phu tried to come down over an old road which had been abandoned after the French had left Vietnam [in 1954]. It really was a dirt road trail that led down and then tapered off as it got below the escarpment that dropped off to the sea. So the North Vietnamese forces were able to catch up with the tail of this [South Vietnamese] military column, retreating down this old road. And the column had been followed by thousands and thousands of civilians. The [North Vietnamese] began shelling the end of the column there. And the whole thing became just an utter rout.

Meantime, I remember going up with my own people to where the [South] Vietnamese forces on the coast were trying to fight their way up to this column. And eventually, with some heroic work, [South] Vietnamese engineers bridged a large river that these forces had to get across, a sort of rag tag, bob tail, group was finally able to fight its way down to the coast. But the thing was a horrible tragedy, and thousands and thousands of civilians died of thirst and hunger on this horrible march down to the sea.

Q: By this time you had to be thinking about the danger to Nha Trang and the possibility of having to close the post there.

SPEAR: That's right. We had been trying to get people out because one of the things that I had learned during all of this was that the more people you got out earlier, the easier it was when push came to shove at the very end. One of the things that we had learned from the evacuation at Pleiku was that one of our greatest dangers was from panic at the airfields and other places involving armed soldiers or armed civilians from units which had completely lost their unit integrity and had become an armed rabble. They would try to seize planes and trucks and any form of transportation to get away. It began reaching the point where there were hundreds of these people. One of my colleagues in Saigon used to refer to them as "rattlesnakes." They were loose there in the town, in Nha Trang. And, of course, these young soldiers hadn't been fed or paid and were really desperate, trying to look after themselves. But, of course, they were prepared to do some of this at gun point, if necessary. It really was a terribly dangerous situation.

Under these circumstances we had been trying to put up a good front and to express our confidence that the [South] Vietnamese would be able to stabilize the military situation and establish an effective front. But in the meantime we were sluicing people out the back door as hard and fast as we could, evacuating them to Saigon. I'm afraid that our effort was so successful that there have been all sorts of charges--and I've got half a dozen books about the fall of Vietnam up there [on my bookshelves], in which accusations were

made that we were doing nothing at all to evacuate people. This simply reflected the success of our efforts to maintain calm and avoid setting off the kind of panic which would have made it impossible for us to get any of these people evacuated. It would have resulted in their falling into North Vietnamese hands.

We had been doing fairly well on this until about Easter time. And over that Easter weekend--no, it was the weekend after--we got orders to send all of the planes, which had been handling evacuations out of Nha Trang, up to I Corps, where Al Francis, who was the Consul General [in Da Nang] was in the last and really desperate stages of evacuation. So we had to stop [our evacuation efforts] just as the panic was reaching its height, and the [North] Vietnamese forces were approaching Nha Trang. We lost a whole weekend there by sending the airplanes up to I Corps to evacuate the Consulate General in Da Nang. But given the situation that they were in, they certainly should have had and did have the priority call. This resulted in the fact that on April 1 we finally had to begin evacuating ourselves. The province chief and the [South Vietnamese] Military Police forces lost all control of the city [of Nha Trang], and communist prisoners were released from the jails by communist sympathizers in the city. We started to evacuate people out of the airport. Well, it wasn't long before the situation got so bad, with gunfire around the city, that we had to give up evacuation by bus and by car to the airport, which was about a mile or so from the Consulate General, and start evacuating people by helicopter from its compound. This went on pretty much for the better part of one day, during which we were getting people out. The Consulate General had a fence around it and walls, but we discovered that all sorts of people who shouldn't be there were getting in over the walls. As we were drawing down on the number of Americans, we simply couldn't keep control of the situation there in the compound.

So finally, my deputy, Phil Cook, and I arranged that I would go out to the airport and take charge of activities out there. My administrative officer had previously been doing this, getting people on the planes. Phil would take the last small group and pull out of the courtyard at the Consulate General, where the helicopters had been landing. When I got out to the airport--I had this walkie-talkie radio--I received a desperate message from Phil that the helicopters were being fired on. At that point I could see that the helicopter going into the compound at the Consulate General was making its final approach. They did get Phil out, but I think that that was one of the worst moments I had during that whole damned evacuation.

Then we continued to get people aboard the planes there [at the airport], but at about 5:00 PM, as dusk was approaching, I got word that we were to pull out the last remaining Americans and get ourselves out of there. We tried to get back word that we still hadn't gotten many of our Vietnamese employees out, but the orders were that we were to go anyhow. At this point I discovered that the local Air America staff [at the airport], who had been handling the ramps and getting people up on the planes, and so forth, were no longer available. We all made a dash for the helicopters and pulled out. It was certainly a bitter blow to have to leave these Vietnamese employees behind.

Q: You spoke of orders coming, Monty. Where did they come from--the Embassy in Saigon?

SPEAR: They came from the Embassy, from Ambassador Martin, yes. I believe that they reflected orders that may have come out of Washington. As we were leaving, we were able to get word back to the helicopter pilots. There were some American ships and barges that had come down from I Corps and stopped in the harbor at Nha Trang. We told the helicopter pilots that if they could evacuate the employees that we had left behind, without subjecting themselves to fire, they should get them out on the ships and the barges. It's a funny thing. I was convinced that we had not been able to get these people out. It was only when I got back to Washington, two or three months later, that I read a report which indicated that several hundred more had been able to get out onto the barges and ships and went down by sea to Saigon.

We had left a considerable group of [Vietnamese] employees at the airport. One of our senior Vietnamese employees had gone to the commanding general of the [South Vietnamese] Air Force, which was stationed at the airfield at Nha Trang. He explained to him that they had been abandoned by the Americans. He prevailed on the general to evacuate a large number of them down to Saigon. A few days later, when I was in Saigon, I got an extremely bitter note from this Vietnamese employee about the way in which the Americans had "used" the Vietnamese and then thrown them aside and abandoned them. I think that that was one of the most painful episodes of the whole experience in Vietnam.

Q: Well, tensions were high, of course, in those days, and anger, fear, and many other emotions obviously were close to the surface.

SPEAR: Yes, of course.

Q: So you were evacuated to Saigon where, presumably, Lois had preceded you. What was her role during this period?

SPEAR: Lois had had all sorts of visitors from the time the offensive first began. The wives of some of the leading [South] Vietnamese officials around town would come around to see whether we were packing up and what we were doing. Lois had been trying to maintain a calm front and give the impression that we had complete confidence in the [South] Vietnamese and that we were not pulling out on them. After a while--particularly after things got hotter and closer and we had all of these disorganized troops around town--Lois said that she just couldn't stand it, sitting over there in the house. At this point the Consular Section, which had been registering Americans and getting the evacuation organized, had simply been overwhelmed. So both Lois and the wife of my administrative officer went over there and helped to register people and get the word out to Americans when the planes and flights were ready, how to get their baggage and effects ready to go, and so forth.

Lois had also been working prior to that time, teaching English, because she has a degree in linguistics, at the local community college in Nha Trang. Just before the [North Vietnamese] offensive [began], she had given one of her classes their final exam. We had had some visitors there--old friends of ours, Al and Jill Stoffel--who just happened to arrive as visitors just as the offensive kicked off. Lois had agreed to go on down to Saigon to help them get their flight. Then she came back up [to Nha Trang] and by this time had corrected all of the examinations. Again, as part of this business of keeping calm and trying to avoid panic she had gone out to the school and given all of the students their various grades on their examinations. She left [Nha Trang] the day before I did. Unfortunately, she hadn't been able to pack a small suitcase for me. Literally, I walked out of that office [in the Consulate General in Nha Trang] with the clothes on my back. I was very glad that she had been able to get down [to Saigon] the day before and get some things. Ever since I was married I thought that I had married the most wonderful person in the world. By the time that evacuation was over, I was absolutely certain of that.

Q: Well, I subscribe to that, Monty, as you know. Again, Lois is a wonderful example of what a Foreign Service wife can do in a crisis and what she does do. Now, how long did you stay in Saigon?

SPEAR: For a couple of weeks. My staff and I had been manning flights in the high speed, propeller-driven aircraft up over the area, trying to mark the advance of the North Vietnamese forces. I remember that on [April 2], the day after we evacuated [the Consulate General], Nha Trang lay there, more or less an open city, with no forces from either side there. But then, on the following day [April 3], when my deputy [Phil Cook] flew up there, the plane was fired on by anti-aircraft guns. It wasn't hit or anything, but at that point they knew that the North Vietnamese forces were in there. We continued these flights, then, charting the advance of the North Vietnamese forces down the coast, until it became obvious that they had overrun all of II Corps, our consular district.

Now, as I mentioned earlier, one of the things that I discovered was that the more people that you can get out in an evacuation earlier, the less hairy things become for you at the very end. A lot of my staff had been reassigned, trying to get refugees resettled and so forth. But after discussion with Ambassador Martin we agreed that I should set an example and try and get some of my staff, who were no longer being reassigned to other duties [in Vietnam], out of the country. We left [Vietnam] about the middle of April 1975.

Q: And you proceeded where--back to Washington?

SPEAR: Yes, then I came back to Washington and went immediately to work on a task force which had been set up in the Operations Center to handle the Washington end of the evacuation out of Vietnam. Much of my experience, of course, was put to pretty good use on the Washington end of things.

Q: Of course. Was it long before you got another assignment?

SPEAR: Well, after the evacuation of Saigon at the end of April [1975], I was assigned to an inspection team, which was visiting posts in Mexico. Then, the Department arranged an assignment for me, detailed to a Select Committee of the House of Representatives set up to look into the whole question of U. S. military personnel missing in action or possibly held as prisoners of war. I was detailed as the State Department representative to that committee. I worked with the committee staff for a year [1975-1976]. This was really a fascinating opportunity to get to see how the Congress worked. We did a great deal of research. I was trying to satisfy the needs of the Committee staff for information concerning what the State Department had done during the Paris negotiations and on other occasions to try and account for our missing military personnel there. There was also a military representative from the Department of Defense who handled the DOD side of the thing. We'd get ready for public hearings and things like that which were held.

Q: And that is still an ongoing problem today, in 1993.

SPEAR: It is. I'm sorry to say that the results of this latest go-around have been pretty much what we had before. That is, they proved what we always suspected. The North Vietnamese could come up with quite a full accounting for these people if they really wanted to. What they have been engaged in is this grisly "bone trade," yielding up small numbers of remains, in piece-meal fashion to keep the pressure on us--and particularly on the families, who became a political force and have been trying to find out what had happened to their relatives. Our final conclusion was that there were no prisoners of war there and that all of these [missing] men had either died in captivity or died at the time they were lost. That, I think, is what the conclusion has been of this latest go-around on the whole thing.

Q: You say that you went to the Inspection Corps.

SPEAR: Yes, for an inspection.

Q: Is it your feeling that the Inspection Corps is still essential?

SPEAR: Oh, I think so. Very much. One of the things that I thought was a very useful function and which, I believe, was discontinued--although I am not sure whether it has been reinstated or not--was having the Inspection Corps do a certain number of individual interviews with officers and preparing supplementary efficiency reports on them, particularly in connection with problem cases. I ran into a couple of cases when I was there [in Mexico] of people who had been given "odd ball" assignments and were being passed over for promotion simply because their performance wasn't being adequately tracked and accounted for so that the promotion panels got the right picture. There were cases where people were running up against "time in grade" limits and who were performing brilliantly, and their [supervisors] were trying to see that they did get promoted. But they risked being "selected out." I think that the inspectors were able to perform a very useful function in either spotting some of these problems and bringing

them to the attention of the [promotion] boards or in reinforcing the efforts of [their supervisors] on the scene there.

Q: Obviously, the Department agrees with you because the Inspection Corps has been strengthened, even since the days when you were in it. From there you moved into the area of Human Rights. Can you say a little about that?

SPEAR: Yes. As my detail to the Select Committee of the House of Representatives came to an end, Jim Wilson, who was the Coordinator for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, in other words, who handled Human Rights and a lot of the refugee programs, asked me if I'd be interested in joining his staff. I was. Those were the days [1976] when Secretary of State Kissinger was being strongly criticized that we were practicing too much "realpolitik," or power politics, and not paying enough attention to things like human rights, which, after all, reflected basic American values. I must admit that it turned out to be a very interesting and challenging assignment.

We were required to prepare Human Rights reports for Congress. In trying to develop these reports we had to see to it that they were as objective as possible. We would run into all sorts of problems with the geographic desks. Initially, the geographic desks wrote the basic drafts of the reports. Subsequently, the Bureau of Human Rights was established and had its own staff to write the reports. But the desks-- quite logically, from their standpoints--would express the view that we had certain other, basic interests--security interests in some of these countries. Although the human rights records of some countries might not be all that great, we still had very important, other interests to consider. If we became too critical of these governments, it would tend to undermine and subvert them. This would interfere with or endanger some of our other interests. Perhaps the most graphic case of this was in Iran, where the criticism of the Shah's policies went a long way toward demoralizing the Iranian Government. This expedited its overthrow and the advent to power of the Khomeini regime, whose human rights record left even more to be desired.

Q: I had some personal experience with that, because I was chargé d'affaires in Israel at the time you were working on those reports. I remember that some eyebrows were raised then. When that ended, you went to the Panama Treaty task force, to work with Ambassador Bunker?

SPEAR: That's right. And also with Ambassador David Popper and others. What happened there was that after the Human Rights assignment, I came up for reassignment and was suddenly approached by our people in OES, the office which handled environmental, oceanic, and scientific affairs. The Panama Canal Treaty negotiations had been going on for about 14 years. The Carter Administration decided to put great emphasis on it and push the treaties through to a conclusion. I think that the Panamanians liked what they saw. General Torrijos decided that he could strike a deal with President Carter. However, there was a lot of opposition [in the U. S.] to the "giveaway" of the Panama Canal. Some of the forces opposed to the treaty discovered that under the

recently passed Environmental Protection Act there was a requirement for any major government decision like this to have an "Environmental Impact Statement" prepared. They threatened to take the Department of State into a federal court on the ground that an "Environmental Impact Statement" had not been prepared. So I was approached by OES and asked if I could do this. Well, I said that I'd be willing to take the thing on, but could they show me a previous "Environmental Impact Statement" that had been done. The only thing they had was a statement about a bridge across the Rio Grande [between the U. S. and Mexico]. Of course, that was primarily an engineering report.

So what I did was to read over all the things that were required for an "Environmental Impact Statement" under the legislation. I got a briefing by the President's Environmental Council in the Executive Office Building. But then--and I think that this was most successful--we got groups from the Sierra Club, the Wildlife Federation, and all of the environmental groups together.

I took careful notes, simply asking them what their concerns were about the Canal environment. One of the suggestions in the draft treaty--which was still classified, but which I got to see, was to set up a Joint U. S.-Panamanian Environmental Commission, which would monitor environmental matters in the Canal Zone or the area to be turned over to Panama, when the Canal Zone was phased out. By hearing these concerns expressed, I obtained an understanding, to some degree, as to the things that I should look into in particular. Of course, the existing legislation and the regulations also required certain things.

This really got to be a tremendous package because, for instance, there was not only the impact on the birds, the bees, the trees, and the fish, and so forth, but also the question of what would happen if there were to be a sea level canal, because this was a great concern at that time. There was the question of the impact on the whole labor force down there, both Panamanian and American. The whole matter had to be completed under a very tight deadline, because the Administration was preparing to submit the treaty to the Senate. So, having done as much homework as I could, by reading and going around to different departments and questioning experts in Washington, I made a field trip down to Panama. I got a lot of help from the people in our Embassy there and from the staff of the Panama Canal Commission. I held various meetings with Panamanian officials as well. To illustrate how this was handled, I would come back and write up my notes and start drafting this report on one floor of the hotel where I was staying. About three floors below Ambassadors Bunker and Sol Linowitz, who were the two major negotiators [for the U.S.], and a group of people from the Panama Canal Treaty Task Force were finishing up the terms of the treaty. Some of the things that impacted on the environment were still the subject of the negotiations going on. They would send up the latest draft on what had been agreed to or not agreed to, and I would try to incorporate this in my own report or follow up on it.

Other major concerns were the forests and the whole Canal watershed, because these control the flow of the tropical rains which drained into Gatun Lake and the rivers which

fed the lake and kept the waters in the Canal at the right level. There had been some years when there had been a drought, and the level of the lakes and Canal had fallen to such an extent that ships would have to unload their cargoes and have the containers go across [the Isthmus] by rail. The ships would go across through the Canal, as their draft had been reduced. Then they would be reloaded again. Another problem was that all sorts of Panamanian squatters and settlers were engaged in "slash and burn" agriculture and were destroying the forests in order to plant crops to support their families. This reduced the ability of the forests to hold the water and adversely impacted on the levels of the water in Lake Gatun on which the Canal depended.

Some of the other problems involved the whole question of building a sea level canal. There had been a great proliferation of sea urchins, which fed on coral, in the Pacific Ocean. There was great concern that if a sea level canal were ever built, this plague of sea urchins would spread into the waters of the Caribbean Sea, damaging the coral reefs there.

Well, in any event, after this I went back to Washington and drafted the "Environmental Impact Statement," under great pressure. Prior to that time "Environmental Impact Statements" had been enormous, great documents which the environmental groups had been insisting on. If you had stacked one of these documents up, you would have had a pile of books and appendices about five feet high. We managed to keep this statement down to the point where it ran to only 50 pages and the entire study, including the comments from people and all of the various appendices and so forth amounted to about 350 pages. As a matter of fact, the White House was so well impressed that President Carter put out a directive ordering that from now on these "Environmental Impact Statements" were to be kept short. The statement achieved its purpose, the Department did not get hauled into the courts, the environmental groups were quite satisfied with the report--so much so that some of them were willing to testify at the hearings in favor of the Canal Treaties. We understood, however, that the Sierra Club, which had a large number of members out in the politically conservative West, lost some of its membership for the stand which it took on the Canal Treaties.

Q: Tell me about working with Ambassador Bunker. What sort of a person was he?

SPEAR: While I was drafting the EIS [Environmental Impact Study], I had developed a fair amount of expertise on the Canal Treaties. After the Canal Treaties squeaked through the Senate by one vote, there was the whole matter of implementing legislation. This not only brought in the Senate but also the House of Representatives, where there was a certain amount of opposition. For instance, there were all of these laws which had set up the Panama Canal Commission, which had to be rewritten and the amended version passed to reflect the terms of the treaty. In the course of handling this, Ambassador Bunker was chosen to go up on the Hill and lobby in support of the enabling legislation. I went along to backstop him, support him, and provide him with the assistance he might need there. This was an absolutely fascinating experience for me because, when you go to make a call on someone in the Congress, you can never be quite sure whether the member

will be able to keep the appointment. Members of Congress are frequently interrupted and called onto the floor of the House or the Senate chamber for a vote.

So the two of us [Ambassador Bunker and I] used to have long periods just waiting until a given Congressman or Senator returned to his office. I found that Bunker was an absolute living diplomatic history of U. S. foreign relations, pretty much since the end of World War II. He had been Ambassador down in Argentina when Peron was in power and Argentina had been pretty much aligned with the Axis during World War II. Then there was just a fantastic number of things he had worked on beside the Panama Canal Treaty. He had been Ambassador to India, he had been a negotiator on the West Irian dispute [between the Netherlands and Indonesia]. He had, I believe, helped to arrange for Nasser's Egyptian forces to be evacuated from Yemen. It was fascinating to hear about all of these experiences first hand.

Q: Not to mention the Dominican Republic [affair in 1965], in which he played a key role.

SPEAR: That's right. He played a major role after President Johnson had sent the 82nd Airborne Division into the Dominican Republic. Bunker, in effect, was able to negotiate our way out of that one and stabilized the whole situation.

Q: He was certainly a model for what a "non career" diplomat should be, in my book.

SPEAR: He certainly was. The Department would be lucky to get people like that from time to time.

Q: Did this lead you into retirement? Did you slide from that task...

SPEAR: Well, at that time I came up for reassignment. I could have had one more assignment overseas before I ran up against the legal requirement of retirement at age 60. Incidentally, just a year or so after that the limit was raised to 65. At that point the prospect of going overseas and then coming back, resettling somewhere and deciding what I wanted to do in another career, without any previous preparation, just didn't appeal to me very much. So I retired in November, 1979.

Q: Well, it would have been hard for you, Monty, to find a hot spot after all those you had served in during a lengthy career. Thank you very much.

End of interview