

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

**AMBASSADOR WELLS STABLER**

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy*  
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## INTERVIEW

*Q: Today is February 28, 1991. This is an interview with Ambassador Wells Stabler on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies. Mr. Ambassador, I wonder if you would give me something about your background--where you came from, your education, etc.*

STABLER: Well, I was born in Boston. My father at that time was in the State Department, the Foreign Service, although he went back and forth a bit from Foreign Service to business.

*Q: Strictly speaking there wasn't a Foreign Service in 1919. You were born in 1919.*

STABLER: Yes, October 31, 1919. There was not, strictly speaking, a Foreign Service although there was at that time a Diplomatic Service. He was a member of the Diplomatic Service. Just before I was born he was a member of the US Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, advising on Latin American affairs. At the time of my birth he had shifted over briefly to private business and was a Vice President of All American Cables in Buenos Aires. In early 1920 he came back to the State Department, but only for a few years. In about 1924 he again returned to private business and was in Ecuador representing a consortium of American banks in their effort to collect a loan that the Ecuadoran Government owed to those banks. I was about five years old then, and my brother, who was two years older, and I, appropriately accompanied, went by boat to join my parents in Quito. In about a year's time, after the successful completion of his work in Ecuador, my father was named as Secretary General of the Tacna-Arica Plebiscite which involved a long-standing dispute between Chile and Peru over the sovereignty of those two provinces. In 1925 President Coolidge appointed General John J. Pershing, who had led the American Expeditionary Force in World War I, to supervise the Plebiscite. Pershing's headquarters were in Iquique, Chile.

As Iquique was not considered a fit place for women and children, my mother, my brother and I lived further south in Viña del Mar near Valparaiso. We were there for nine months, and for a part of that time I attended an English school, St. Paul's. In 1926, when the Plebiscite was called off because of rioting in the two provinces, we returned to Washington. My father became the Chief of the Latin American Division of the State Department.

*Q: You were how old at that time?*

STABLER: Oh, I was about six or seven. In 1927 he finally retired from the Diplomatic Service and took a job with Gulf Oil Company. We all moved down to Caracas, Venezuela where he became head of governmental relations for Gulf Oil in Venezuela. We lived there for almost nine years. However, during those years my brother and I came up to boarding school in the US - Fay School in Southborough, Mass., followed by Brooks School in North Andover, Mass., and then graduation cum laude from Harvard in 1941.

*Q: Am I correct in assuming that you learned Spanish during this time?*

STABLER: Yes, we spoke Spanish As we were living in a Spanish-speaking country. But my last summer in Venezuela was in 1936, because in 1937 after I graduated from school, I went over to Europe and spent the summer in Belgium with a Belgian family learning to speak French. So I really did not speak Spanish again except in Paris when we were there later on - we had Spanish household help. But I did not really have to speak Spanish until I was appointed as Ambassador to Madrid in 1975.

To go back, in September or October 1941, several months after graduating from Harvard I came down to Washington to see if I could get a job in the State Department. I had always wanted to go into the State Department.

*Q: Obviously you had had tremendous exposure to this.*

STABLER: We had had a lot of exposure to diplomatic life and to living abroad. Of course, when my father was in Venezuela he was no longer with the Government, but he was involved at that time with the Venezuelan Government. So there was a background of political science, if you will.

As I said, I came down to Washington to look for a job in the State department. At that time, because of the war in Europe, they had stopped giving the regular Foreign Service exams and I was not at that point entirely sure how I was going to deal with this. But through my father's friendship of long standing with the then Under Secretary of State, Sumner Welles, I went to see Mr. Welles and he very kindly put me in touch with the Personnel people in the State Department. I went to see Jack Earhardt who was at that point Chief of Foreign Service Personnel. He referred me to Robert Macatee, who was an Assistant Chief of Foreign Service Personnel. [It is amusing that that was 1941, and seven years later in 1948, Mr. Macatee was my Consul General in Jerusalem].

I was offered an appointment in the Foreign Service Auxiliary in the fall of 1941 with assignment as Vice Consul in Bogotá. I started work in the Department in the first days of November of 1941 in the office in the Division of American Republic Affairs which acted as the liaison with the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs headed by Nelson Rockefeller. John Dreier was the head of the office I worked in and we coordinated for the State Department the activities of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs in its contacts with the coordinating committees in the various countries of Latin America.

After a short while I decided that I really would like to stay on in Washington in the work I was doing. So my assignment to Bogotá was cancelled. I remained in the Department in this position from 1941 until 1943 at which point I was appointed as Desk Officer for Ecuadoran Affairs.

*Q: Let's talk about this time you were working under Nelson Rockefeller?*

STABLER: No, we worked in the Division of the then ARA (American Republic Affairs). Philip Bonsal was my first chief in that office. Then over him was Larry Duggan who had the title of Political Adviser for ARA. In those days there were only three or four Assistant Secretaries and that was all. So, we worked in the Division of ARA under Phil Bonsal but also closely with Larry Duggan. Ultimately the Political Advisers became Assistant Secretaries in charge of various Office Directors (no longer called Chiefs.)

Our job was to make sure that the type of thing that Nelson Rockefeller's office did in Latin America was consistent with US Government policy as set by the Secretary of State. Rockefeller set up so-called coordinating committees in many of these countries, particularly as a wartime effort to try to galvanize American communities to be helpful in the war effort. These were made up of American businessmen and they worked closely with the Embassies, but they were not governmental entities. They received support from Rockefeller's office which, of course, was funded by funds appropriated by Congress. So we were in close touch with Rockefeller's office and his people who were involved in this particular activity.

I was very young then, 22 or 23. As I look back on it, it was sort of heady stuff to find letters written to these committees signed "Nelson Rockefeller" and having to call up Mr. Rockefeller's people and say that I am sorry but I am not sending their letter because it was inconsistent with policy. It was quite interesting.

*Q: Just to get a feel for this. Again from your perspective, obviously you were getting it from your superiors, was there sort of a feeling that Rockefeller was all very well and good but he was a little bit of a loose canon at that time, or was it really just one of coordinating of things?*

STABLER: I think that, on the whole, people felt that he was really very sincere in this effort and it was important to do whatever we could to keep the sympathies of these Latin American countries with the United States. There were a number of countries that had close ties and sympathies with the Axis powers, particularly Germany. Argentina was one, Chile was another. The Nazis had been very active in the years before the war in trying to establish footholds in these countries. In fact, my major thesis for graduation from Harvard was about the Nazi presence in Latin America. The work that had been done by the Germans was quite extensive. Rockefeller's work was aimed at trying to undercut the German presence by galvanizing American presence, the American businessmen in these communities, to help in that effort. But naturally when you have a situation where you have an embassy and an official US presence and you have this unofficial presence--you have the Department of State on one side and a complementary group which looked at itself at times as another Department of State dealing with Latin affairs, you obviously open the door to some confusion and some cross purposes. Rockefeller obviously had considerable political standing. He was, of course, not a member of the President's party, being a Republican and Roosevelt being a Democrat, but this is war time and obviously that political difference was of no import.

*Q: We had people such as Knox and Stimson in the cabinet. It was a much more unified cabinet.*

STABLER: Absolutely. Political differences disappeared during the war. I don't really recall now all the background of how or why this Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs was setup because it had been setup before I came into the State Department, but on the whole it worked really quite well. The office that I was in - I think there were three of us all together - had to look at a great deal of correspondence that came through us from the Rockefeller office going down to these coordinating committees. Also there were other programs they were involved in. Cultural affairs, economic affairs, etc. So we were quite busy trying to make sure that what was done didn't run counter to official policy.

*Q: How about the OWI, Office of War Information, which was the predecessor to USIA? It seems it would need a coordinator job as well.*

STABLER: Except, as I recall it now, the CIA (which the office of Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs was called) was given a fairly broad mandate with respect to Latin American affairs. I don't recall that the OWI really got tremendously involved in Latin America.

*Q: It may have been sort of the same way the FBI was given the mandate to do the intelligence thing in Latin America. Latin America was treated separately.*

STABLER: I think this was it. My recollection is that the Rockefeller office had a very broad mandate in terms of what happened in that area, with the exception of the official side handled by the Department of State, and obviously the military side with their attachés. Rockefeller really had the broad field of responsibility for dealing with various aspects of Latin American affairs that were not strictly political, covering a fairly broad range of cultural and psychological, if you will, economic and things of that sort.

Now, I said economic, but it had nothing to do with strategic materials, that was handled by the Board of Economic Warfare, or whatever it was called, which had the responsibility for making sure that US had access to these strategic materials and making sure that whatever was exported was denied to the Axis powers. The Rockefeller people did not get into that at all.

*Q: What was the impression you were getting from your place of Nelson Rockefeller?*

STABLER: I think that people respected him as an able person who had quite a bit of background in Latin American affairs. There had been a long association of the Rockefellers in one form and another in Latin American. The Rockefeller Foundation, of course, had done an absolutely superb job in many parts of Latin America and later on in other parts of the world in stamping out malaria and things of that sort. There had been the economic interests which developed a good deal after the war. I got to know him at



one point quite well, junior though I was, and I always found him a very pleasant person to deal with.

Even though one could have expected some resentment at this junior officer dealing with these things, I never found that. Later on my mother also worked in that organization and knew Nelson Rockefeller. After that, I had no contact with him at all until he turned up in Madrid in 1975 representing the United States at the Franco funeral and at the installation of King Juan Carlos. We renewed the association, although I suspect that he had no clear recollection of me since it had been 30 years or so since we had met. But here again I found him most pleasant.

*Q: He was then Vice President.*

STABLER: He was then Vice President. I always liked him and recall that in the 40's in Washington he was a respected person and one with whom it was basically quite easy to get along with.

*Q: This covers your Washington time. Again from your perspective as a junior person, did you get any feeling particularly in Latin American affairs about Sumner Welles? Was he really calling the tune on Latin America policy?*

STABLER: I think Sumner Welles at that time was calling the tune pretty well on almost all policies. He certainly was regarded by the President as the expert on foreign affairs. Cordell Hull, of course, was a respected person too and had some political background, which Sumner did not. But I think Franklin Roosevelt turned to Sumner Welles for expert advice on foreign affairs. He probably did not feel comfortable in turning to Cordell Hull for the finer points of diplomacy. So it was my impression at the time that Sumner Welles not only called the tune with respect to what we did in Latin America, but also with respect to some of the more difficult negotiations in Europe. Of course, you recall that he made that trip to Europe not so very long before we went to war to try get a feel as to what was happening, and the possibilities of the future of Europe in terms of the war.

Certainly within the State Department he occupied an extremely important position and was regarded, I think by most of us, as the expert on foreign affairs, although everybody had a lot of respect for Cordell Hull. But the general feeling, as I recall it, was that people did not really think that Cordell Hull had that sensitivity to foreign relations which Welles had.

*Q: So really in a way when there were problems the decisions were made by Sumner Welles.*

STABLER: Pretty much. I think he was fairly careful too, however, not to cut Cordell Hull out. I think Cordell Hull had a political standing with the President. He had been there quite some time. Welles probably was careful not to burn any bridges as far as Cordell was concerned, although there may have been things that the President discussed with Welles that he might not have wanted to be discussed with Cordell Hull. I think

those of us then serving in the Department at that time would have regarded Sumner Welles as sort of the chief practitioner of foreign relations.

But then, of course, it was not so very long after that, that all came to a rather tragic halt, and we now know what happened. There and then he disappeared. And for reasons that I have never fully understood, Edward Stettinius was put in as Under Secretary of State. He had no background, whatsoever, in foreign affairs which was very clear and obvious as one dealt with him. Cordell Hull probably had a good deal to do with this.

As I noted earlier, in 1943 I became Desk Officer for Ecuadoran Affairs. This was interesting for me because the Ecuadoran Ambassador in Washington, Colon Aloy Alfaro had been an old personal friend of my father. So the relationship was a very easy going one and we worked very well together. Much of the work with Ecuador had to do with strategic materials and we did what we could to make Ecuadorans feel a part of the war effort, although they were not in the war.

For example, we brought up to this country the Ecuadoran Minister of Defense, General Romero and I was involved at that time in planning his visit. I participated fully in it when he was here in Washington and was thrown with people like General Marshall and others which obviously from my point of view was very interesting. I went up to New York with him and one of the things that amused me on looking back over my papers is a picture of me, General Romero, and Fiorello La Guardia which appeared in a New York newspaper in late '43 or '44, whenever it was.

For me, as a career thing, being a desk officer was very interesting although Ecuador clearly did not play an enormous role in affairs.

*Q: Was there a border problem with Peru?*

STABLER: I do not recall that at that time this was a problem. I do not remember that there were any really serious problems that one dealt with at that time. It was largely a hand-holding operation and one of insuring that whatever strategic materials Ecuador had were made available to the United States. It seems to me that one of our particular interests was obtaining bark from the cinchona tree for the production of anti-malaria quinine for our troops. There were certainly other strategic materials in Ecuador, but I am not sure that I can recall which ones.

*Q: You mention the term "strategic materials." It seems that a great deal of effort within the Foreign Service during the war...obviously the Foreign Service wasn't in a lot of countries where our enemy was...a lot of effort was put in making a blacklist, keeping strategic materials from the Axis, etc. But something bothers me. You have the British and later the American navy together, pretty much controlling the sea except for submarines. How could strategic materials get to the Axis?*

STABLER: I think the concern really was that there could be possible transshipments. There seemed to be various ways of doing these things because the Germans, at the outset of the war, had a fairly good command of the sea. There were German and neutral ships that would come into these various ports and there was concern that somehow some of these materials would leak out that way. One could not always be certain that the US and British navies, which were pretty well occupied in other places as well, would be able to control the long coast line of Latin America.

You mentioned the blacklist. That was important too, because there were various companies that had German money and German and Italian contacts. There was not what you might say a hemorrhage in terms of the export of strategic materials, but there were possibilities for the Axis to have access to some of these materials. It was in that context that we were particularly vigilant in trying to identify firms and enterprises in these countries that had these Axis connections and working with the governments to try to get their cooperation not only to prevent the export, but also to enhance our possibilities of getting the strategic materials we wanted.

In the case of Ecuador, the political problems were not great because the Ecuadorans did not have great sympathies for the Axis. So we were not in the same position as we were in other countries.

*Q: There had not been the intense migration of Italians and Germans to Ecuador as there were to Argentina, Chile, etc.*

STABLER: Absolutely not. There were problems in Peru, but Ecuador did not have this problem. As I said before, our effort with Ecuador was mainly a hand-holding operation. To have General Romero come up here was, after all, not an enormously important facet of our war program. When he came up he had to be entertained--dinners were given for him. General Marshall had to go to things of that sort.

*Q: Did you find yourself when he came up there having a problem getting some of the people like General Marshall's office to focus on this, or were they politically sensitive enough to know that you had to do this type of thing?*

STABLER: I always found it quite remarkable that in spite of the war going on, people like General Marshall and others, various Chiefs of Staff, etc., were very understanding of the political needs. There really was not very much difficulty in getting them to rally around and attend the things they were supposed to attend. My recollection was, for example, when I went over to the Army Department in order that General Romero could confer some decorations on some of our people, they participated, possibly kicking and shouting, but they did it. I remember one very large dinner at the Mayflower during his visit where all the top brass people turned up at least for part of the evening. It was quite remarkable. But I think they all understood the need to participate in this hand-holding operation.

*Q: You moved to another job dealing with...?*

STABLER: In late '43, I think it was, I had had this vision of my father having participated in the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 on the US delegation. I thought it would be quite interesting to repeat that, if you will, and position myself to perhaps be on the US delegation to the peace conference following World War II. I knew that there had been set up in the Department a group called the Committee on Post-War Programs. This was a senior committee chaired by Edward Stettinius as the Under Secretary of State, to develop various political and economic programs for the post-war period. So I went to see a friend of my father, Breckinridge Long, who was then an Assistant Secretary of State and who had also been in the Diplomatic Service and Ambassador to Italy, to get his support for being taken on in that Post-War Programs Committee. specifically on the political side.

I then applied for the job, and with Long's support, I found myself in early '44 as assistant secretary for political affairs to the Post-War Programs Committee. I worked directly for the secretary for political affairs to the Committee, Easton Rothwell. He was an academic. Then there was the secretary for economic affairs, John Fuqua, also an academic. I found this very interesting, although I have frankly to admit that here I was just barely two years out of college and I was really out of my depth. I really did not have the background that a lot of the people on the Committee had to deal with this thing.

*Q: Did you find yourself sitting there at night pondering whither Europe...?*

STABLER: No, because I really did not participate so much on the substantive side. I took notes and prepared minutes and that sort of gofer type of work. The heady work was actually done by the various agencies and departments. The secretariat performed a secretariat function although, I guess, my boss did prepare papers and I may have prepared a few papers here and there. But it was not something which I frankly admit I was really prepared for. So after almost six months in that job, I recognized, and Easton Rothwell recognized, that the job should be taken by somebody who was older and more experienced in this type of work. I decided that I would leave it and go back into the proper Foreign Service. So in the late summer of '44 I went to Personnel and requested transfer back into the Foreign Service side, although again the Foreign Service exams were not being given. So I went back into the Foreign Service Auxiliary. I continued working the Post-War Programs office for a while waiting for an assignment. In the fall of '44 I left the job permanently and was shortly thereafter appointed vice consul in Jerusalem.

*Q: I would like to go back to this Post-War Programs Committee to get a feel of the times, because what you are telling me is that here you are a young man who realizes he is over his head. Looking at things today, we are speaking with the hindsight of two veteran Foreign Service Officers. It is not unusual to have young men or women charging around in their twenties who really don't know what they are doing, but have power often, while acting for somebody, and are full of confidence dealing with things they really don't know enough about. Is there a little difference of attitude there?*

STABLER: The question really here was that the senior people in the secretariat were all academics. There was, I think, a certain greater division in those days in many ways between those who were sort of career people and the outside academic who was brought in for a specific function. There was not very much power in these jobs. An assistant secretary for political affairs really had no power as such because he worked for the secretary for political affairs who was an academic. He was not encouraged to take any particular initiative on anything because the substantive work was done in the various agencies and departments and by specific offices set up for this purpose. The meetings were rather sharply divided between the political discussions and the economic discussions. When they were talking about strictly economic matters, the secretary for economic affairs attended the meetings. I found it rather strange in a way that there was not cross-fertilization there. I remember that one day I did go just to sit in on the economic meetings and was sharply chastised for having done so by the people in the Secretariat. It had apparently disturbed and annoyed Mr. Stettinius so ultimately I had to apologize for sitting in on the meeting. But they very much compartmentalized it and the idea was that if you were political you did not need to know what was happening on the economic side.

There was this sort of funny situation that developed there. I also have to confess that, as I sat in some of these discussions on the political side with some of the very senior people in government, in taking notes I just did not have the background sometimes to understand fully what they were talking about.

*Q: The allusions sometimes just...*

STABLER: They went by me. I had had no hands-on experience in European affairs. I had been entirely in Latin American Affairs up to the time I went to this Committee. So the allusions that were made, even to certain historical things, were often just not in my ken and I felt uncomfortable in the job. Clearly, I think, it showed. So that was why I say I ultimately recognized, and my colleague Mr. Rothwell recognized, that I probably would do better elsewhere.

*Q: Did you go to any meetings with Under Secretary Stettinius?*

STABLER: Yes, he chaired these meetings. I sat in on many of these political meetings to take notes. My impression was that he chaired them but did not really engage in very much of the substantive discussion because he did not know much about it.

*Q: I read somewhere where he had a tendency at a meeting to sit down and say, "all right, let's take a vote on this." Was this...*

STABLER: No, nothing of that sort, because these were serious discussions of how the United States should deal with some of these questions in Europe in particular. There may well have been discussions on the Far East but I don't have a very clear recollection

because I was only there for a few months and the notes that I kept and then wrote up were all very carefully controlled. I do not have a very strong memory with respect to that period. But my recollection is that there was no such thing as voting because these were serious discussions, consensus was built around certain positions and this, of course, was '44 so there was still some time before the war ended.

*Q: I wonder if you could kind of look at this, you might say almost through bifocals. First the close in as a young man listening to these discussions and granted you didn't have the background and then afterwards as an experienced diplomat looking back on this period. Did these things tend to be sort of an academic wonderland or were these pretty good discussions of how things came?*

STABLER: My recollection is that these were very serious, well prepared discussions by senior officials of the government who faced daily decisions of great magnitude. This was not just a debating society but one where efforts were being seriously made to thrash out various positions, position papers, policies, that the United States should follow with respect to dealing with Axis Germany, Italy and Japan on a post-war basis. Again, I cannot really recall -- for example, I do not have any recollection that the Committee discussed, although it might have, the question of what to do with the Emperor of Japan. It may have been discussed later. But what to do with Germany in terms of rebuilding or the treatment of post-war Germany in detail were things that were discussed.

So this was a serious group and one that was designed to pull together the resources of the government, not just the State Department, in contemplating what should be done. Again, I suppose because of my inexperience at that time and because it played a very small part in my career, I don't have at all a clear recollection of exactly what we did. I cannot tell you, even anecdotally, what at this particular time we discussed with regard to what should be done with Hitler.

*Q: But you have given a picture of its serious intent. It was not a sort of academic exercise.*

STABLER: Not at all. It always surprised me that in this very serious endeavor the person who should be chosen to chair it was someone who had virtually no foreign affairs experience. He had been the head of US Steel, I believe.

*Q: Mainly on the public relations side.*

STABLER: Yes. This was not somebody whose entire life had been spent dealing with foreign affairs. I think that was a certain weakness which was made up by the experts who sat in on the meetings. There were experts from the senior level, there is no question about that. So it was a serious affair and the committee did go on to perform fairly important work in terms of preparing the various positions that would be recommended to the President and others in the post-war period.

*Q: Purely from an institutional side this was the beginning of the State Department getting ready to fulfill its real role which was the field of diplomacy dealing with things after the military had left.*

STABLER: Exactly. We were all in the Old State Department Navy Building--now called the Executive Office Building. In any event I left them in the fall, and much to my surprise was assigned as Vice Consul in Jerusalem.

*Q: Were you married at this time?*

STABLER: No, I was not.

*Q: So you went to Jerusalem in late 1944. How did you get there?*

STABLER: That is a long, long story. I was visiting the family of a close friend of mine, who is actually my brother-in-law, who had gone overseas with OSS. I had gone up to Cooperstown to visit his family and while I was there I telephoned Personnel and was told that I was going to be Vice Consul in Jerusalem. Obviously, one knew about Palestine and Jerusalem, but I really had to go look up a map because I hadn't had it in mind at all, except in the Biblical sense. Curiously, when we lived in Venezuela, I was down there one summer, and I met at the British Legation (my father and mother were great friends of the British Minister and his wife) Field Marshal Lord Allenby who had liberated Jerusalem from the Turks in the First World War and was visiting Caracas. A very nice man. Little did I think at that time that one day I would be walking the streets of Jerusalem.

I left Philadelphia in early November, 1944. on a Portuguese freighter. We spent two weeks crossing the Atlantic, flying the Portuguese flag with a big spotlight over it at night hoping that the German U-boats would see the flag of neutral Portugal and leave us alone. We crossed without incident stopping briefly at the Azores, but we were not allowed ashore. We finally got into Lisbon two weeks after leaving.

At that particular time, in order to go on...there was a flight once a week, I think, from Lisbon to Gibraltar. I could have gone on that plane the day after I arrived, but the Chargé d'Affaires in Lisbon was an old friend of mine from the days I worked in American Republic Affairs, Newby Walmsley [his wife Teresa and he are now both long dead] and he wanted me to stay for a visit. So I accepted their kind invitation and stayed for a week in Lisbon by which time there were no more planes for Gibraltar. So I had to go by Portuguese Airline via Tangier to Casablanca. From there I was supposed to go on to Cairo.

When I got to Casablanca I stayed at the famous Anfa Hotel where the January 1943 Casablanca Conference of Roosevelt, Churchill, de Gaulle and Giraud taken place. It was under US military control. They informed me that there was no way I could possibly get out of Casablanca under a week. So I had a week in Casablanca and made a visit to

Rabat. At the end of the week I flew up to Algiers in a US Army Air Force plane. I spent three days there at a hotel, but saw a great deal of a French Naval Captain and his family who knew friends of mine in Washington. Then I took a Royal South African Air Force plane which was a cargo plane full of Christmas packages. It had no seats, so I sat on some of the packages on the long flight across the desert to Cairo. We finally got into Cairo late at night just a few days before Christmas of 1944. I telephoned the Consulate General in Jerusalem to inform them that I had at least gotten as far as Cairo because the last they had heard of me was sometime in early November. They said, "Oh, we are glad you have gotten this far, but don't you dare come near Jerusalem until after Christmas because no one can do anything about you." At that time the US Minister was Pinkney Tuck whom I had known in Brussels before the war. His number two was an old friend as well from my days in Latin American affairs, Cecil Lyon. And so I spent Christmas with them.

*Q: Even towards the end of the war there were still people coming in there...pilgrims and that sort...*

STABLER: Absolutely. And of course there were enormous numbers of US troops that poured into Palestine, particularly for the Christmas period, Christmas services in Bethlehem. So, the YMCA, which was the one place one could stay, was completely crowded and booked. So I was told to stay out of Jerusalem. I stayed in Cairo for another week and had a wonderful time. I had never been in the Near East and did some sightseeing. I think it was the 27th of December that I finally got a British Royal Air Force plane that took me to Lydda, the Palestine airport.

I thought I would not wire ahead but just arrive in Jerusalem and go up to the Consulate and present myself. I got to Lydda and the first person I saw, but did not meet, was Field Marshal Lord Gort, the British High Commissioner for Palestine and Transjordan, who had commanded British troops at the beginning of the war and had been in charge at the time of Dunkirk. He was leaving Palestine for good after the termination of his appointment.

I wondered how I would get to Jerusalem. At that point a very nice British Army officer who saw me sort of stranded said he was going to Jerusalem and offered me a ride. I rode in his car through beautiful country. The orange blossoms were out. It was a beautiful day, cold, but beautiful. We drove on up into the hills and arrived at the Consulate where I presented myself.

They said they would have met me if I had let them know. Well, I didn't want to bother anybody. I reported to Lowell Pinkerton, who was then the Consul General and to Christian Steeger, who was the number two. I set myself up in the YMCA and there began almost five years in Jerusalem and Amman.

*Q: What was the situation in early 1945 in Jerusalem as you saw it?*



STABLER: The war was still on. The US had camps in Palestine. Of course the British had substantial forces there, although the war had by that time passed on. The Middle East was no longer a theater of operations as such. But there was a Middle East theater but no war operations. It had all shifted basically to Europe.

The Jews and the Arabs were in an uneasy truce during the war. Most of the terrorism and the civil disorder that existed prior to the war had come to an end. There were incidents. The Jews were, of course, bringing in illegal immigrants which was annoying the British and, of course, the Arabs. The Arabs had resented the British efforts even to let some of the Jews in legally and they felt the British were being unfair to the Arabs. The result of that was that there was a certain number of Palestinian Arabs who openly declared themselves for the Nazis. Haj Amin Al-Husseini was the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and he had indeed thrown his lot in publicly by going to Berlin. He was regarded by the British as a war criminal although he was never brought to trial.

In spite of these things, the terrorist operations against the British that had been seen in Palestine in the years preceding the war had pretty much come to a halt. Jews and Arabs alike had participated in the war effort. As a matter of fact, just as a matter of interest, there was in Jerusalem an organization called the Middle East Center of Arab Studies which had been set up by the British Foreign Office for purposes of teaching Arabic to British officers who would either stay on in some civil administrative capacity or go in to the Foreign Service. It was run by Colonel Bertram Thomas who had quite a background in the Arabian desert and who spoke Arabic. He was a bit of a four-flusher, but nonetheless he was there. One of his main assistants who spoke absolutely perfect Arabic was a gentleman who was a British Army major, Major Aubrey Eban, who later became Abba Eban. I got to know him quite well.

So there was a truce. I traveled extensively in Palestine and it was basically perfectly safe for anybody to do that. Curiously enough, it was on the 27th of December, 1945, exactly one year to the day I arrived in Jerusalem, that I almost got blown up. A bomb, Jewish, had been placed in a British police compound. That began again the whole cycle of violence that went on right up until the British got out in May, 1948. The truce had broken down. The Arabs and the Jews started again against each other. The Jews against the British particularly, in protest of British efforts to stop Jewish immigration into Palestine from Europe. Of course, they ran many ships in illegally, beached them and the immigrants would get off and disappear into the Jewish areas of Palestine along the coast.

The Arabs were aware of this. They objected to it. The level of violence simply escalated. You remember, later on, on July 22, 1946, the King David explosion. The Stern gang, the most violent of the Jewish terrorist groups had brought in milk drums filled with explosives into the basement of the King David Hotel which also housed the British Secretariat for the Mandate and blew it up. It was a ghastly scene.

*Q: When you first arrived there was this truce going on. What were you doing and what was the main interest of our Consulate General in Jerusalem?*

STABLER: The main effort, really was, of course, observing what was happening. The Consulate General had the rather unique position of being one of the two Consulate Generals that reported directly to Washington.

*Q: It and Hong Kong.*

STABLER: Yes, it and Hong Kong. The exequaturs were issued by two foreign powers, Great Britain as it related to Palestine and then, even though Transjordan was not independent, we were commissioned as Vice Consuls for Palestine and for Transjordan.

*Q: So you covered Transjordan?*

STABLER: We covered Transjordan as well.

*Q: Which would be today on the other side of Jordan.*

STABLER: At that point it was still an Emirate. There was a British Resident there. Abdullah, present King Hussein's grandfather, was the Emir at the time. But he also had certain authority and we had an exequatur from Transjordan signed by Abdullah, as distinguished from the exequatur signed by King George for Palestine. In 1946, Transjordan became independent.

In any event, the role of the Consulate General at that time was one of really tracking what was happening there. The Consul General, Mr. Pinkerton, was someone who played his cards quite close to his chest when it came to the substantive side of things. I really never did know to what extent he was turned to for advice as to what we should be doing about Palestine.

My role at that time was simply as Vice Consul in charge of visas. In addition I handled cultural matters. I used to take films out to kibbutzims and to Arab groups and give little talks about American history, etc. It was interesting going to some of the kibbutzims and showing films produced by OWI on a variety of things related to the United States. The visa work was tremendous. Not so much the first year because no one went anywhere due to strict regulations and lack of transport, but when the war ended there was an overwhelming number of passports, etc. that had to be dealt with in terms of getting people back to the States. There were ships that came in to do this sort of thing. - to take people back who had been stranded.

Shortly after I got to Jerusalem - I believe in very early 1945 - Mr. Pinkerton apparently had learned that the Emir of Transjordan was unhappy with him because, although he was accredited to Transjordan, he never went there. He decided that he better go down and see the Emir. Abdullah had winter quarters in Shuneh in the Jordan Valley, on the other side of the Jordan River, not very far from Jericho. The Emir was down there and Pinkerton

decided he would go down, but he seemed to think he needed an excuse to go down. The excuse was to present me as a new Vice Consul.

We went down on February 14, 1945. Again - to me who was just 26 - it was pretty heady stuff seeing an Emir. Abdullah was very nice and it was very pleasant visit. The following Sunday I decided that I would go back down and personally sign the book. I got down to Shuneh and was very much impressed by all these Arab Legion soldiers who would snap to attention and salute when they saw a consular license plate - actually I flew an American flag. When I got to the Winter Quarters I said to one of the guards, who came out to ask what I wanted, that I wanted to sign the book. He disappeared and came back a few minutes later and said, "I am terribly sorry the book is in Amman, but the Emir is here - would you like to see him?" I said that that would be splendid. So I went in and had a nice chat with Abdullah through an interpreter - I spoke no Arabic then - and told him how impressed I had been by the Arab Legion that I had seen along the roads. He said, "Well, I am having a maneuver in about three weeks time and I would like you to come as my guest." I said, "That is very kind of you, Your Highness. Of course, I would like to come."

After three weeks I had still heard nothing at all. One morning I was in the file room of the Consulate hunting for some document and came across a letter from Glubb Pasha who was then the British Commander of Arab Legion, addressed to Pinkerton. Glubb wrote that the Emir was holding a maneuver on such and such a day and had commanded him to invite Pinkerton to come to the maneuver. I was crestfallen that I had been forgotten by my new friend, Emir Abdullah.

The appointed day for the maneuver came and I went quite early to my office in what used to be affectionately called "the turnip shed" of the Consulate General--a horrible little shed that was attached to the main building and heated by a big potbelly stove. I had been in my office not more than 15 or 20 minutes when the phone rang. It was Mr. Pinkerton down at the Winter Quarters saying, "You get on down here as quickly as you can. The Emir said that the invitation was for you and he won't start the maneuver until you get here." I thought to myself, "that's a lot of fun, but the end of my career."

I pulled myself together and drove down. As luck would have it I got a flat tire and got stuck in the sand somewhere. By the time I finally got to the maneuver it was over. The Emir was very nice and invited Mr. Pinkerton and me to lunch in his tent.

That was the beginning of a long relationship and friendship that I had with Abdullah and his son, Crown Prince Talal who reigned very briefly after Abdullah was assassinated, and his grandson, the present King Hussein.

*Q: To get a feel of the atmosphere in the Consulate General. This must have been sort of annoying to Mr. Pinkerton wasn't it?*

STABLER: Well, curiously enough you would have thought it would have, but it really didn't seem to. I think in a sense he was somewhat relieved that he didn't have to worry about Transjordan. He wasn't that interested in it. He didn't really enjoy going over there.

*Q: What was his background?*

STABLER: Pinkerton was a Career Foreign Service Officer. He had been in Personnel, had been somewhat of an administrator. I cannot now remember where he came from.

*Q: But he was an Arabist.*

STABLER: No, he spoke no Arabic. I don't think he spoke any foreign language at all. He got along well with the British, -they liked him. But he had no real interest in Transjordan. When Abdullah became King of the newly-independent Transjordan in 1946, Pinkerton was invited to attend the ceremonies along with the other Consuls General in Jerusalem accredited to Transjordan. I was the only Vice Consul invited personally by the Emir to come to his Independence Day celebrations, including the Palace function and the big parade at the airfield on May 25, 1946. By that time I was fully known in Jordan and was regarded really sort of the US presence, if you will. I don't think Pinkerton really resented it. If he did, he never said anything, nor did he try to curtail my activities.

I had lots of things that I did in Jerusalem. I had become by then a good friend of the new High Commissioner, General Sir Alan Cunningham, and his staff. I generally had a pretty good position in the Palestine government, although I didn't really deal with the political side of it. When the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry came to Jerusalem in 1946, the British were already discussing what they should do with Palestine as it was becoming more and more of a burden for them. Violence was continuing and escalating. There was the problem of Jews in Europe. They eventually said that something had to be done. They suggested a group go to Palestine, including Americans, to see what could be done about it. So the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry was appointed and the senior US delegate was William Phillips, a former Under Secretary of State and Ambassador to Rome in the early part of the war before we went into it, and whose wife was my godmother. So Pinkerton assigned me to look after that Delegation. I also was given the responsibility for acting as escort for quite a few Congressional delegations that came to Palestine. Jack Javits was one of them who came.

*Q: He later became Senator and a major figure in the Jewish-American scene.*

STABLER: Absolutely, a very fine person. There were a number of others. So I wasn't ostracized or cut out by Pinkerton, although I did not play any role in political substantive work. He did that entirely himself. He never showed us any of his messages that he sent back and forth on substantive questions. He played it all very close to his chest. I never quite understood why he didn't take some of us into his confidence, but he didn't.

*Q: To get a little feeling for the atmospherics within the Consulate General at the time, this was before the King David business...*

STABLER: Well, that was in July 1946 - the King David explosion.

*Q: Okay, at that time, were you under any constraints about talking either to the Jews or the Arabs?*

STABLER: No, not at all. I traveled extensively and saw lots of both sides. I did a good deal of work on the Arab side too. But I never ever prepared, curious enough, during the period Pinkerton was there, any sort of political report. I went around extensively and talked to people, but my role was not that of a political reporter.

*Q: That is odd. In other words, the younger officers who generally get around more were not being used.*

STABLER: No. We had Pinkerton, a commercial man named Malcolm Hooper, an officer who handled American citizen passports, etc., an OSS representative, and two of us who did visa work. Pinkerton was the only one who did the political work.

*Q: It is interesting because what you are saying is that Pinkerton was not a particularly experienced political reporting officer.*

STABLER: I don't really recall what his background was. My recollection was that it was more administrative--personnel. He was quite well regarded. Pinkerton and his wife, Marion, left Jerusalem in 1947 while I was home on leave. Pinkerton went as Minister to The Lebanon and ended up later, I believe, before he retired, as Ambassador to the Sudan. Loy Henderson, the top man in Middle East affairs, had regard for him. But I never really had any idea of what Pinkerton did politically because I never saw a report. Robert Macatee, whom I mentioned earlier, and his wife came as Consul General during the summer of 1947, before I had returned from the US.

*Q: You know, it is hard to recreate the time, but it really took a decade or so for the real enormity of what had happened to the Jews and others in Europe during the war to really sink in. The Foreign Service came pretty much from the educated class in the United States and was not particularly responsive to the Jew in the United States. I can recall hearing, not so much in college, but in prep school, anti-Semitic jokes. At that time, particularly with turmoil obviously beginning to come with ships docking all the time, was there an annoyance with the Zionist movement?*

STABLER: For one thing, for those of us who were serving in Palestine, it was clear that in demographic sense that the majority of the residents of Palestine were Arabs. There were about a million and a half people in Palestine of which about a million were Arabs and roughly 500,000 were Jews. So in the demographic sense, the majority was clearly Arab. On the other hand, as you drove around Palestine, which I did extensively, at all hours of the day and night, you couldn't help but marvel at what the Jews had produced in

their part of Palestine along the coast in particular. It was a miracle what they had done agriculturally and to some extent industrially. They, of course, had done this aggressively because it wasn't easy to do. They worked terribly hard. They were aggressive, of course, in terms of what they hoped to ultimately achieve. One probably didn't know at the outside a great deal of what had been happening in terms of the genocide in Germany. I happened to live part of the time in Jerusalem in a small apartment in a Jewish house. The owner was a marvelous woman who was a Dutch Jewess, and who, after I left, unhappily was killed in one of these horrible terrorist actions where the Arabs shot up the bus in which she was in. You couldn't help but have great admiration at what they had done, but also you recognized that there was this constant encroachment on what was a demographic majority in the area. You couldn't help but be rather disgusted by some of the terrorism they pulled off in Palestine. A lot of one's British friends were killed as a result of incidents like King David, etc.

*Q: Which includes some of the people who later, like Menachem Begin and the present Prime Minister, Shamir.*

STABLER: Yes. Menachem Begin at that time was someone who had a big price on his head. There was the Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Stern gang. There was someone - I think his name was Sartori - who was the Ford representative in Jerusalem and also represented, I think, the Palestine Potash Company at the Dead Sea. He was socially everywhere. Everybody knew him. The day the British left Jerusalem, May 15, 1948, he turned out to have been all that time one of the important members of the Stern gang. Various Jewish leaders with whom I eventually dealt - like Moshe Dyan who was a very aggressive, abrasive individual, very difficult to deal with, but at that particular point fighting for Israel's survival - were all deeply involved in making Israel a going concern.

There was this constant sort of friction involving British, Jews and Arabs which got fairly tiring. I have to admit it was very hard to be entirely neutral. You invariably felt more one way than you did another way, although our official position was that of being entirely neutral between the two. I always cite what happened to me on the 15th of May, 1948 when the British left as evidence of my following instructions to the letter. When I was caught in the crossfire between the Jews on one side of the street and the Arabs on the other side I ended up with 37 bullet holes in my car, and still being alive at least I was neutral to the extent of saying, "Who shot at me?" It was very tense. You had the feeling that the British administration was more sympathetic to the Arab cause than the Jewish cause. And the Jews knew that.

We had difficult moments. The Consulate General was not very far from the building of the Jewish Agency. One morning there was an enormous explosion. It was quite clear that it had come from the Jewish Agency. One was sorry that this had occurred but we were even sorer when we realized to our absolute horror that the Consulate car had disappeared. What had happened was that one of our Arab drivers had taken the Consular car, had it loaded with explosives, drove into the Jewish Agency courtyard (allowed in because of the Consulate plates), got out, disappeared and the car blew up. So it was the

Consulate car that was responsible for a lot of damage, fortunately nobody was killed. Our driver vanished and eventually we learned that he had ended up in Honduras. I went there some years later and discovered there was a large Palestine population there.

So there was this constant tension that existed which took its toll on people. It was hard on people - there were curfews, bombings and god knows what. After the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry those things went on, and the British finally said enough is enough and turned the Palestine problem over to the UN.

*Q: Did a new Consul General come out before the British left?*

STABLER: Yes, he did.

*Q: Was there a change in the atmospherics within the operation? You knew you were getting ready for a cataclysmic event.*

STABLER: Yes, there was because Pinkerton went off as Minister to Beirut before we had embassies. Robert Macatee came out from the Department. I don't now remember what other jobs he had had. I knew him before when he was Assistant Chief of Personnel in 1941. We are talking about five or six years later. I think he came from Washington at the time. He was quite different. By that time I had been there for going on three years and was probably, with the exception of the OSS fellow...

*Q: He was the equivalent to our CIA people later on.*

STABLER: Yes. There was just one man who was dressed as an American major. He was known by the British, obviously, for what he was.

I had been there for quite a few years by then and had become more involved in the substantive side of things and would do occasional political reporting. Although I must say I didn't do a great deal when it came...well, now that is not true, I did do a great deal more, and then became sort of the political advisor, if you will, along with the OSS fellow who became political advisor to Macatee on a great many things.

Yes, he was there before the UN General Assembly Partition Resolution of September 1947 because I remember that shortly after that Resolution had been approved Frances Bolton, who was then a Member of Congress from Ohio, came out on a visit to sort of test the waters. She was rather pro-Arab basically and was somewhat annoyed with this Resolution because again we were talking about a country which had a majority of Arabs and here they were dividing it up and giving part of it to the Jews. So Macatee was there at the time because a few of us, including one of the Macatees' daughters, went in Mrs. Bolton's US Air Force plane to Cyprus for two days.

Partition came along because the British said, "We have enough of this. We are getting out in 1948 and you had better do something before then because, if you don't, there won't be anybody here and there will be total chaos."

*Q: Was this really in a way a message to the Americans. I mean to say, "Here you Americans have been talking about Jewish homeland, etc. and this is your problem."*

STABLER: The Jewish homeland was what the British, themselves, had been talking about, the Balfour Declaration of 1917. But by 1947 there was clearly increased pressure in the United States because of what had happened in Germany which by then was fully known. There was real pressure of what do you do? We were not prepared to open up our immigration to let them all come into the States, so the next question was, "Where do they go?" By this time clearly the Zionist movement had decided that Palestine must become the national home for the Jews. Everything that they did was aimed at that time in terms of immigration to get them into Palestine. This was becoming a tremendously difficult thing for the British who had a large army, several divisions of troops, in Palestine. After all it is not a very large country, about 140 miles long and 70 miles wide. They had a tremendous concentration of first- class British troops. And a fairly sizable police force which was composed of British, and both Jews and Arabs, but the leadership was all British.

I think you are quite right that part of it certainly was directed to the United States. The British said, "We couldn't find anything through the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry; no one can come up with any solution; we don't want to have anything to do with this; we can't cope with it; we are getting out; so do what you will, we aren't going to be here."

The UN came up with the Partition Resolution which, of course, was strongly resented by the Arabs. I was advised - again I would make a good many trips across the Jordan to Amman to see what was happening there - by the British that when I went over there I should take my car and have two Arab Legion soldiers with submachine guns sitting in my back seat. I did this and got over to Amman and my Jordanian friends asked why I was doing this as I was well known and no one would do anything. They thought it was sort of an insult to come with two Arab Legion guards. So, I never had them again and nothing happened.

But there was very strong resentment. Time bombs increased and we recognized, of course, that the day would come before very long, this was 1947, that the British would be out and where would we be. So we decided that in terms of safeguarding the Consulate we would have the British come and give us an expert estimate as to what it would need to guard the Consulate. They came up with a figure of 285 marines, which would be 24 hours guard service plus road escorts. Macatee sent a telegram to Washington saying that, in terms of the future, here is what has been recommended. Washington obviously went into a dead faint because they never answered it.



In their wisdom, of which there wasn't any - literally I think it was about a week before the British left - the Department suddenly threw on top of us something like 30 civilian guards - young men who after the war, not knowing what to do, had answered some sort of ad and signed up as embassy guards. They came from all walks of life. One man had ended up as head of the commissary in Rome, but still was a guard and found himself in Jerusalem wondering what the hell he was doing there. None of them knew how to shoot a gun. I had to take them out personally to a range, although I had never shot a Tommy gun, to teach them how to shoot Tommy guns. They were totally undisciplined. In addition to that, all of a sudden Washington sent us a 10 or 12 man Navy communication team, which was very useful, and which turned out to be the only way we could keep communications with Washington going. I think we had in the Consulate General 15 of these civilian guards who were very nice young man but who were basically undisciplined. They drank quite a lot, one of them got mad at me one evening and chased me with a machine gun. It was really chaotic.

We had asked for an armored vehicle for the Consul General - a United Nations Security Council Truce Commission had been set up which was made up of Consul Generals from France, Belgian and the United States. The meetings were usually held at the French Consulate General, which was right under the walls of the Old City. In order for our Consul General to get back and forth he had to go in a car without armor or walk. So we requested an armored car. They said they couldn't send a car but could send an armored personnel carrier which doesn't have any armor on top, it just has armor on the side with a canvas top. We never got that either. The result was that the Consul General was killed coming back from a meeting in the French Consulate general. So, the fact of the matter is, that the Department of State was totally unprepared to deal with anything of this sort.

*Q: After Mr. Pinkerton left you were able to get a little better feel for the relations. Were instructions coming in from Washington?*

STABLER: We were rather left out of the loop on these things. There were a lot of conversations between London and Washington to which we were not privy . So a lot of these things were being done without our knowing what was going on.

*Q: Just as an aside because people sometime forget how things are. There was no embassy in Tel Aviv, there was no embassy in Amman or anything like that. You were it.*

STABLER: I jumped ahead a little bit because I talked about the Consul General being killed by sniper fire. In February or March the Department had decided that married men would not stay in Jerusalem and that a new Consul general, Tom Wasson, who was single would be transferred from Athens. He arrived on April 1, 1948 and Macatee and family left on April 16. It was not Macatee, but Tom Wasson who was killed. The irony was that Wasson was wearing a bulletproof vest, but the bullet went into the side of his arm and through his body, but was prevented from coming out by the vest.

But no, Tel Aviv didn't exist as far as a US post was concerned. There wasn't a Jordan because we had never recognized Jordan, or Transjordan as it was then still called.. I was the only contact with Transjordan. I was no longer accredited to Transjordan because it had gained independence and there was an accredited Diplomatic Corps in Amman. I traveled there as a friend.

*Q: There was no mission in Jordan?*

STABLER: There was nothing at all. The only thing that existed was the Consulate General in Jerusalem. I don't have any recollection that we were really consulted a great deal on these things or that we had much of an input on Partition or were asked very much about what we thought about these things. I don't recall that we were kept up on the happenings in the UN. Things would happen and we would not have had advanced knowledge of what was going to happen. So we were really cut out of the loop. I suppose the High Commissioner was being queried because the British are better about these things than we are, I think. Most of what we knew was gleaned from the British.

*Q: During my last job I was seconded to the Historian's Office. Among other things I did a history of our Consulate General in Jerusalem. In the 1920s after the Balfour Declaration had come out, our officers there...the Jewish community was small and I think there was a certain antipathy towards the Zionist movement, a pro-Arab feeling ...were reporting again and again saying, "Zionism is all fine, but a homeland here means blood on the streets, and this is just not going to happen." Their predictions, of course, are true, there has been a tremendous amount of fighting which continues really to this day. Were you able to give reports saying that this was going to be a blood bath?*

STABLER: Yes, one was giving Washington reporting of the views of various communities on this subject--the Arabs and the Jews and some of the religious leaders who have an interest in all of this, and also the views of the British. We reported on what was actually happening there--the various acts of terrorism, the strong feelings of the various Jewish and Arab communities who foretold the events as well as they could - keeping Washington not only abreast of what was happening, but what probably would happen if certain things were done.

Again, Pinkerton, I don't know what he said. I do know - because we did do a lot of reporting after Macatee got there in which I was involved giving various points of view and letting them know actually the tensions that were existing between the communities and what might happen if certain things were done. And then, of course, after the Partition, we brought them up to date on that.

*Q: Prior to Partition. In your reporting did you feel any concern about...okay, if you report this, this report might be looked with disfavor by both the Jewish community and those sympathetic, there was still a residue of the New Deal Administration which had had very strong Jewish support...did you feel any constraints?*

STABLER: I think Pinkerton may have felt some constraints because he was a very cautious man and didn't want to upset anybody particularly. It may be that some of that could have come through in his reporting. After him there was a greater openness in expressing points of view. I mean not worrying about the political side. One tried to call the shots such as they were. The Arabs expressed very strong views about things, those views would be reported without regard to whether they would upset somebody or not. By the same token the views of the Jewish Agency, the official Jews, were also reported, plus the British who were more apt to favor the Arab cause than the Zionist cause. But I don't think political considerations entered into this reporting at all. Although one knew what the feelings were in Washington with the Department of State on one side and the political aspects on the other side. But when the time came for Truman to make his decision to recognize Israel de facto on the first day the British had left, I can assure you that we were neither consulted nor informed.

*Q: I don't think anybody was informed.*

STABLER: I don't think anybody was. Although the effort was made at that particular time to persuade the President that if he was going to recognize Israel de facto that he could temper it by recognizing Transjordan de facto, even though Transjordan had been independent since 1946 and we are talking about 1948. The President declined to do so.

*Q: Was there a problem about not recognizing Jordan then? Was it budgetary or was there...?*

STABLER: No, I think when Transjordan became independent no one in Washington really bothered to think about recognizing it, regarding it pretty much as a British affair. In 1948 it was entirely a political thing. The President made the decision that this would have to be aimed at Israel and not be tempered in any way by also recognizing an Arab state. By that time the general outrage of the Arab world had already been felt with respect to what was happening with Partition. Therefore it probably would have been regarded by the Jews as insulting if we had tried to balance their recognition by recognizing an Arab state. So he declined to do that and it was only in January, 1949, when we recognized Israel de jure that the decision was made to recognize Transjordan de jure at the same time.

*Q: I want to stop at the Partition time where we will pick it up later. One last question. What was your feeling and those at the Consulate General about the British letting go? Were you thinking, "Oh my god, they have a responsibility, and shouldn't get out." or "Obviously they can't control the situation and lets see where the chips fall."?*

STABLER: Obviously everybody recognized there would be utter chaos and almost anarchy once the British left. It was well known as a result of everything that had transpired before--the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry and then various UN studies, etc. and the British statement that they were getting out. One can sympathize with the British because this had become an enormous burden to bear, extremely expensive in

terms of money and lives with no returns, which they had been carrying on for a great many years. There was no way that they were going to be persuaded to stay on. Pressure was brought to bear on them to stay on. They may have considered it for a while, but by that time the Labor Government had come in and I think that they finally just realized that there was no way they could do it or really wanted to do it.

We all knew that Partition wasn't going to be viable because everybody was against it. It was a big unknown that we were embarking on the day that the British pulled out. But the political situation had reached the point where there was no alternative. They wouldn't stay and the UN had no ability or capacity to put a force in there. It was just one of these machines that gathered speed and there was no stopping it. The United States had no power to stop it either because we were behind the Partition scheme. We certainly weren't going to take over from the British. Domestically it was quite clear that this was what the Jews wanted because this was the creation by partition of the homeland. As it turned out they got the whole thing.

We knew in the Consulate General that there was the Hagganah.

*Q: That was the Jewish army.*

STABLER: Yes, that was the Jewish army. It was illegal, but the British didn't do much about it. They knew it was there and had some utility in the defense of kibbutzims and things of that sort. They got their arms helter-skelter by stealing from British ammunition depots and things of that sort. That was sort of the unofficial army. Then there was the Stern Gang and the Irgun Zvai Leumi. The Irgun Zvai Leumi was the larger group and the Stern gang the smaller group. They also existed. One knew that the Jewish Agency ran a fairly efficient operation and the assumption was that the Hagganah would acquit itself pretty well in the struggle against the Arabs.

But as you added up the Arab manpower - the armies of the Arab countries - it was hard, frankly, to see how in the final analysis the Jews would be able to withstand this onslaught. Added to this, of course, was the view in all the Arab capitals--American representatives in all the Arab capitals were reporting that this better not happen because the Jews would be pushed into the sea. At times the war between our representative, James McDonald, in Tel Aviv and our representatives in the Arab countries was worse than the fighting because those in Arab countries took one side and McDonald the other.

*Q: What was in Tel Aviv?*

STABLER: On the 15th of May when Truman recognized Israel de facto, we set up a diplomatic representative's office in Tel Aviv. James Grover McDonald came to Tel Aviv as the first American representative. Although he was not an ambassador in the strict sense of the word, he was the American Representative in this de facto situation. The office was set up in Tel Aviv indeed as if it were an Embassy with communications.

Messages would be repeated from Tel Aviv to our Embassies in Arab capitals and often to us.

As I say, on paper it certainly looked as if there was no way the Israelis could withstand the Arab onslaught.

*Q: Why don't we stop here and we will start again with May 15.*

STABLER: Good.

*Q: Today is March 19, 1991. This is a continuation interview with Ambassador Wells Stabler. Mr. Ambassador, we were last time talking about the Partition of Palestine. Can we focus on what you were doing at the time of the Partition, on May 15..?*

STABLER: No, May 15 was when the British left in 1948. Partition was the previous year in September 1947.

*Q: Well, then when the British left, because I...*

STABLER: They are two distinct things. The Partition was the United Nations resolution to divide Palestine into two Jewish and two Arab states. Maybe we went over that last time. If we did, then lets take it up from May 15, 1948.

When the British pulled out of Jerusalem - they pulled out of Palestine a day or two later because they moved with the High Commissioner up to Haifa and had an enclave there and then they shortly afterwards pulled out completely.

In any event, May 15, 1948 I was at the Consulate General. The staff there by that time had been reduced by many. Those of us who were there were all bachelors including the Consul General, Tom Wasson.

*Q: I might mention at this time that it was the policy in those days that when trouble started you got rid of the families and also, if possible, you put bachelor officers into a place.*

STABLER: Yes, it certainly was the policy as far as Jerusalem was concerned. We had a number of married officers there and they were all transferred. Those of us who remained were bachelors and there were, I think, several officers who were brought from other posts for temporary duty who were bachelors. For example, Stuart Rockwell, who also became an Ambassador later on, was in the Embassy in Ankara and was detailed as one of the officers to augment our staff. And then there were one or two others, but I don't offhand remember who they were.

In any event, early on the morning of May 15, Major Andronovich - Nick Andronovich - who by then was the CIA representative in Jerusalem, and I drove out in my personal car.

The Consulate General by that time had no car because it had been blown up--I think I mentioned it last time. We drove out to a little airstrip called Kalondia between Jerusalem and Ramallah and found there a small plane and British troops drawn up in battle array with a battery of field artillery with guns aiming in the direction of Jerusalem. In due course the High Commissioner arrived - Sir Alan Cunningham, who was a friend. He was received with full honors at the little airstrip. After saying good-bye to me and Andronovich and to his staff, he took off in his little plane headed for Haifa. The guns were hitched up and bit by bit the British forces also departed.

In a very short period of time Andronovich and I were left standing on an extremely empty airfield feeling really quite lonely, because with the departure of the British forces all public security in Jerusalem had come to an end. There was no neutral police force, no security provided by a third element, that is to say, Jews, Arab and the British.

Andronovich and I drove back into Jerusalem and I came to the Consulate General and found sitting on the steps going up to the office a group of members of the staff including civilian guards who had recently come in and one other officer, Bob Houghton, by name, who is dead now. They were all rather irritated because they had wanted to go up to the hotel which was not too far from the Consulate General on the main streets near the YMCA. When they had walked in that direction they had been shot at. The British had gone, and public order had completely collapsed. They went back to the Consulate General and asked to borrow a car which was refused them. They didn't want to risk walking up there again and being shot at.

I said, "Look here, I have my car with a couple of flags on it. Hop in the car and I will drive you up there." This was around noon time on the 15th. In they got along with me and my little dachshund. We drove up the street around the corner from the Consulate General and almost in no time we started getting shot at. I drove the car right up on the sidewalk and let the people in the car get out. They almost fell into the hotel.

As soon as they had gotten out I started driving up the street towards the YMCA. At this point I was taken under machine gun fire--on one side by the Jews and the other side by the Arabs. I decided it was a no-win situation and backed my car down again on the sidewalk and came really within a hairbreadth of having a bullet right through my head. It was scary. I was able to get out and fall into this hotel, literally.

There we were stuck for over 24 hours. That night--there was virtually no food in the hotel, there were no lights and we were concerned that during the night that either a Jewish or Arab patrol might come in to this hotel and shoot first and ask questions later. Things were very tense at that time and the Jews and the Arabs were really after each other.

It was while we were all sitting in that hotel--we did have a battery radio or some sort of communication--that we learned that Mr. Truman had announced the de facto recognition

of Israel, which made us all even more nervous because this was the area where there were quite a few Arabs around and we didn't think that decision would be very popular.

In any event while we were there one, possibly two, of the men who were with us there, part of the Consulate staff, got rather antsy about being cooped up and without my knowledge or permission - I was the senior officer there - went out onto the street and were promptly shot. Fortunately, neither of them were killed and were picked up by Red Crescent ambulances (very brave ambulance people indeed) and taken off to hospitals. One of them was a civilian guard who was well into his 60s by this time.

*Q: This was the type of person they sent out?*

STABLER: This was the sort of harebrained scheme they thought up in Washington. Ages went all the way from the 60's down to the early 20's. This gentleman was in his 60's.

Anyway, he was taken away and, of course, we had no idea where. At that point we didn't know whether he was dead or alive. I think there may have been two, certainly there was one.

In any event, in due course, the people at the Consulate General were able to arrange with the International Committee of the Red Cross, which had people in Jerusalem at that time trying to help in keeping some semblance of humanity in all of this - they were able to arrange with them to come down to the hotel from the YMCA and under the protection of a Red Cross flag--I think these were mostly Swiss and extremely brave men because this was a wide open street absolutely visible from any sort of sniper's post. They came down by small groups and began removing the people in this hotel. Being senior officer I was the last to leave. Just before I left they started mowing the streets with bullets of one sort or another so we had to hold up awhile.

We all got out and went back via the YMCA to the Consulate General. Those were the events of May 15.

There then began a period of one month in which really we were under siege--the whole of Jerusalem really. The Arab Legion had occupied the Old City and were lobbing mortar shells into the New City. We lived there at the Consulate General with our own generator. We had a naval communications unit which was just across an alley way in a convent. We had this sort of guard force that would shoot street lights out and do all sorts of things.

During that period we had a number of casualties. One of the naval communicators at one point was walking behind the Consulate General, I don't know why he was there after dark, and, of course, ran across a patrol, we don't know whether it was Jews or Arabs, and was shot. He eventually died. Two of the guards, two young men, heard screams and went out behind the Consulate into this no-man's land and brought Walker, I think that was his name, back into the Consulate. We had a US Public Health doctor, Jeff Freyman,

assigned to the Consulate General at that time. He was able to give first aid and got him into a hospital. Eventually, I am sorry to say, Walker died.

The Consul General, Tom Wasson, was a member of the Security Council Truce Commission which was composed of the United States, France and Belgium, as I remember, and was suppose to keep in touch with the Jewish and Arab communities with the idea of somehow getting a truce from the fighting that was going on, which was very wide spread. The Egyptians had come into Gaza, the Iraqis had marched a division into Palestine, the Syrians had fiddled about a little bit up in the north, the Arab Legion had occupied the West Bank and the Old City. The Truce Commission met in the French Consulate which was just under the Walls of the Old City. I think earlier I had mentioned that we had asked the Department to send an armored vehicle and it chose not to. So Wasson was obliged to walk this distance, which was relatively far and fairly open between the Consulate General and the French Consulate. On his way back from one of these meetings as he was crossing a street just behind the Consulate - and the irony of it all was that he was wearing a bulletproof vest - a sniper, and to this day no one really knows whether it was Jewish or Arab, shot him in the arm which was the one area that was not protected by the vest. We got him to the hospital, but he died very shortly thereafter.

At the time Wasson was hit I was in the Consulate General, the only officer there at the moment. We had a number of communications facilities at that point. We had the navy and a special CIA/OSS operator who had a post on the roof of the building. Incidentally, he was also later wounded in a mortar attack. I had to decide who was going to be the acting Consul General. We had Bill Burdett who was assigned there and was next senior to Wasson on the Consulate staff; we had Stuart Rockwell from Ankara who was on temporary duty but senior in rank to Burdett. But I made the decision that the officer permanently assigned to Jerusalem, although junior in rank to Rockwell, should be the acting Consul General. I sent the message informing the Department that Consul General Wasson had been shot and seriously injured and that "I have assumed charge", signing it "Burdett". So Bill Burdett indeed was acting Consul General for several months until a replacement came.

So, during that period we were pretty much holed up. You could get around and some people lived outside the Consulate General. I lived in the Consulate General and slept with telephone and Tommy gun by my bed. We ate "Ten-in-One" rations that had been brought in before.

*Q: Ten-in-One rations being a military combat type of ration.*

STABLER: Yes. Enough food for one man for ten days or for ten men for one day, something of that sort. The US Air Force had flown in a supply from Germany, I recall, some days before the British left.

*Q: I might add, not the greatest food in the world.*



STABLER: Not the greatest, but it was the only food we had because all the markets were closed.

Finally in mid-June 1948 the UN was able to arrange a 30-day cease-fire and Count Bernadotte, the UN Mediator, came to Jerusalem. The guns were silenced and people began to go out in the streets. I made a quick trip to Amman, using a rather circuitous route around behind the Old City. During the month of cease-fire, Washington finally decided that the US should have some form of representation stationed in Amman. Even though I had been in Jerusalem going on to four years, it was clear that I was the only person who had the contacts in Jordan, starting with Abdullah. Consequently, I was detailed to Amman. Since we had not recognized Jordan, I could not go as a US diplomat. The Department came up with a ridiculously long and complicated title "The Liaison Officer to the American Member of the Security Council Truce Commission". I only used the title once in Amman, and after that I was always known as "The American Representative".

In any event, in mid-July I packed myself and my dachshund into my car and headed off to Amman. Again I had to take a long route because the Allenby Bridge over the Jordan had been closed. After a long drive I arrived in Amman and immediately went to the Palace to see the King and to report to him that I would be in Amman permanently. I told him what my title would be. As it turned out, when I arrived at the Palace, Abdullah was in conference with the Prince Regent of Iraq, Emir Abdulillah, and with the Iraqi Prime Minister, Nuri Said Pasha. These gentlemen had just returned from Cairo where the Arab League had decided to resume the war with Israel that very day. Abdullah was distraught. He implored me to inform Washington that it must do everything to stop the fighting, since, as he put it, if the Arab Legion should be mauled and defeated by the Israelis, his position in Jordan and the Arab world would be destroyed. I promised that I would transmit his views, although at that moment I had neither codes nor any form of communication with Washington. As I recall, a US plane, either Air Force or Navy, came to Amman the next day, and I was able to get them to take my message to Cairo to be repeated.

Incidentally, the next morning after my arrival, I went to see Sir Alec Kirkbride, the British Minister, whom I had got to know well, along with his family, during my many previous trips to Jordan. I told him that I would be living permanently in Amman and mentioned my title. Yes, said Kirkbride, he had seen the King a few hours earlier who had told him of my visit the previous evening and that, yes, I had mentioned some sort of title. The King said he could not possibly remember what it was, but that he was glad that I, as the American Representative, had come to Amman for good. My position there used to irritate some of the accredited diplomatic representatives, particularly when I would show up for official functions. Some of them complained, but were sharply told that the King would have whomever he wanted at Palace functions and that I was welcome.

And so began a thirteen month tour in Amman. For the first months I was all alone, living in the Philadelphia Hotel. Ultimately, I was able to get a house which also served as an office, and a male clerk was detailed from Jerusalem. It was a most interesting period for me, since, in effect, I was, at a fairly young age, a Chief of Mission. I saw a great deal of Abdullah and his Government, and formed a close friendship with the Crown Prince, Emir Talal. I also met Talal's son, the present King Hussein, who was then about eleven.

*Q: Abdullah hadn't been around a lot but seemed to have more of a world view than many. Did he use you as a sounding board to find out what this peculiar place, the United States was? Because America really had very little influence in that area, the Middle East, at that time.*

STABLER: There wasn't a great deal. We began to have a good deal more. We had some degree of influence, but not north because obviously Iraq was the British sphere, and Lebanon and Syria were more or less the French sphere. Very shortly after I got to Jerusalem there was the uprising in Syria and the French were eventually pushed out.

Abdullah was interested, of course, in the political views of the United States. I don't think he ever quite understood why he wasn't regarded more favorably by the States. The fact there was no recognition obviously galled him. He assumed, in a way - as he regarded the American President as an important figure that the American President by like token regarded him Abdullah as an important figure, which of course obviously wasn't the case. He had that sort of a vision of the world where he saw himself in a larger role than he really had. This also was somewhat likened to what he regarded as his role vis-a-vis the British Queen. The British did look upon Jordan in their way as an important element and he looked at the Queen as a fellow monarch.

*Q: Actually it would have been the King.*

STABLER: Yes, you are right. I was flying across the Channel in 1950 when I got word that the King had died. So it was the King.

He had very little idea of what made our country tick. I think that he was well aware of the rather strong domestic political influence of the American Jewish community which, of course, distressed him.

*Q: Did he talk to you about this?*

STABLER: He never really took me to task about the general Arab view that our policy in the Middle East was dictated by domestic considerations. I don't ever remember him talking a great deal about that. He was apt to talk about the larger picture of how he viewed and looked towards the future and some peaceful arrangement where Jordan would be a bigger state and Israel would be there, etc. He obviously very much wanted to have a formal relationship with the United States.

In January 30, 1949, I went down to the Cable Wireless office, near the central Post Office, where I had to go to pick up my messages--by this time I was alone again, I didn't have any clerk--and found a USINFO message in the clear put out by USIA which declared that the United States had recognized Jordan and Israel de jure. Then there was a coded message. I had to go back to the house and get my one time pad out and laboriously decode the message which said exactly what the message had said that was in the clear. I was to inform the King that Jordan was recognized de jure. Then I had to sit down and type the message out, sign it, get into my car and drive to the Palace, see the King and hand him the note. This was about 11:00 in the morning. He said, "Yes. Where have you been? I have been waiting for you since 8:00 this morning." It had been on the BBC. Yet, the Department had seen fit to give me no warning or opportunity to have at least the advantage of appearing to be on the inside. It had all been made public-yet I had to go through this business of decoding this stupid message which said all the same things as the public message.

The King was pleased but I think he would have been more pleased if I had been able to go in the night before and say, "Your Majesty, I just have come to inform you that we are announcing tomorrow morning that we are extending de jure recognition."

*Q: When you went back to Washington afterwards, did you ever find out why this happened?*

STABLER: I am afraid it is just our system which never really functions terribly well with these things. Part of it comes from the White House which sometimes doesn't tell the State Department when it is going to do something. The State Department is frightened to death of sending any message ahead of the White House. Nobody in the White House stops to think about the other side - that maybe some foreign policy advantage could be gained by doing some of these things in a slightly different way.

*Q: I might add that I have had some interviews with people who were in the middle of a civil war where we recognized one side or the other in Africa leaving our embassy extremely exposed because they were under the power of the group not accorded the recognition.*

STABLER: I think, as a general rule, we have been extremely lacking in using our information sometimes to our best advantage. We don't tell our people in the field sometimes what they ought to know. We don't tell them in a timely enough fashion. We generally view the ambassador as someone who is there but not really considered as a priority matter. The British are much better than this. They consider the ambassador an important person and a priority member of the team. He is told what he has to know in plenty of time. I don't mean to make a capital case of it that our relations with Jordan were forever compromised by that. All I am saying is that it would have been a good gesture to have told the King in advance, but we didn't do it.

He was pleased and we set up the Legation in Amman. The British Royal Air Force sent an honor guard to the Legation the morning I raised the flag, which was in February, - a month later - because I think it took Washington a month to get all the staff out and formally set up the Legation.

That year, the Fourth of July, the first one where we had formal relations, the Arab Legion sent a brass band to play at the reception that I gave that afternoon. It was all done with good humor. The King was obviously pleased to have the United States finally a member of the diplomatic corps in Jordan. It didn't change a great deal because I had already worked as a Mission.

Nothing really spectacular happened during that period. A lot of it was dealing with the question of the future and how to settle the problem with Israel. What to do, etc. Then, internally, the King spent some time trying to decide...I spend a certain amount of time with him. We discussed and debated what we should call Transjordan. It was called the Kingdom of Transjordan and he wanted to change it. The discussion was whether we call it the Hashemite Kingdom of the Jordan, or Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Ultimately it was decided to call it Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. While I was with him we would spend time trying to design a new decoration. Things of that sort. Just sort of amusing household details.

*Q: I take it much of the relationship you are talking about. You were there more because of the long term visiting and all as a friend...although there was quite a difference not only obviously in rank but also in age. Do you think he was reaching out to you in some of these ways either as a counter or just a difference than with the British, because the British had been there so long?*

STABLER: I don't think as a counter force. I think he obviously enjoyed the idea that he had a "special relationship," if you want to call it that although it really wasn't, with representatives of the great powers. To him the French were not very important and they had all been involved in the business of denying him the Kingdom of Syria; the fourth Republic was a mess and were not to be taken very seriously. Obviously he had nothing to do with the Russians; they weren't there and they were bad. While he had had all these years of close relationship with the British, now suddenly the United States had become a friend too. I am sure that going back to what I mentioned very early on when I first went over to Amman in early 1945, with Pinkerton who had been criticized for not taking an interest in the Emir, and took an interest, and although I was only a vice consul that seemed to appeal to him too and for some reason we struck it off quite well personally. But certainly there was no question that I represented his contact with the other great power. It was never a counterbalance to the British because there was nothing we did. The British provided arms for him, they provided military officers, and trade, etc. And we provided nothing.

We did, however, recognize that he was a force for stability in that part of the world and that view is still held today. In spite of the fact that King Hussein, for his own good reasons, did what he did at the outset of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, he remains an asset.

*Q: To put this in context, we are talking about just after what was called the Gulf War between the United States and its Allies and Iraq in which Jordan and King Hussein were at least verbally giving a great deal of support to the Iraqi side which was not appreciated by the United States at all.*

STABLER: One has to remember that King Hussein has a great many Palestinians in his Kingdom and at that time Saddam Hussein was trying to use the Palestine ploy to garner support and Hussein has to be somewhat a survivor. The fact is that Jordan does represent an element of basic stability and we are not just about to abandon them, and certainly in the period I am talking about, 1948, Jordan was the only country that showed at least some degree of sensitivity and rationality when it came to Israel.

During that period I saw a lot of the King. He gave me a horse that I used to ride. I used to play polo in Amman with Arab Legion officers which was fun but dangerous. One had really an interesting time with not only the Jordanians and Palestinians but with the foreign community. It was a very small town. Everybody knew what everybody else was doing. There was a lot of intrigue and things of that sort. But it was a wonderful experience. King Abdullah was really a very nice person and I was very fond of him.

I remember one episode when I thought my career might come to an abrupt end. While I was in Amman, I had with me my small dachshund. One evening I went up to see Abdullah and left the dog in the car (which I drove, not having a driver), with one window slightly open - I thought. As I sat with the King, I heard a yelping and was horrified to see my dachshund, which had escaped from my car, chasing the King's cat through the room where we sat. Fortunately, the cat escaped, and every time I saw Abdullah after that, he inquired as to the welfare of my dachshund. It might have been disastrous.

I was amused at one point when Stanton Griffis, US Ambassador in Cairo, came over to Amman. I showed him around and took him down to the Winter Quarters in Shuneh to have dinner with the King. He was quite taken with all this performance and apparently wrote to Bob Lovett who was then the Under Secretary of State, recommending that I be made the first US Minister to Jordan. Well, I was only 28 or 29. That fell, as you can imagine, not only on deaf but scandalized ears in Washington...the idea that someone at the lowest grade in the Foreign Service should suddenly become a Minister. Of course some of my colleagues in the Middle East like Keeley, who was US Minister in Damascus, didn't think it was a very good idea either. Anyway, it didn't get very far. So I became the first Chargé d'Affaires in Amman and then in August, 1949 I was transferred. David Fritzlan came out as the Chargé d'Affaires.

*Q: I have done an interview with him.*

STABLER: You have done an interview with David?

*Q: Yes.*

STABLER: Then, as you know, the Minister was selected, a man by the name of Maynard Barnes, I think it was. He suddenly disappeared from sight and didn't go. The first US Minister was Gerald Drew who came out in early 1950.

I came back to Washington in the usual performance. I was told to return to Washington without delay, the fastest possible means. I rushed back, rushed to the Department to the greeting, "Oh, you are here? Why did you come back so fast?" No one then knew why I had been told to come back so fast.

I worked on Palestine Affairs for a while. Then in January, 1950 became Political Advisor to the US Representative to the UN Trusteeship Council (Francis Sayre who had been at one time Governor of the Philippines). The Council met in Geneva from January, 1950 through the middle/end of March, 1950, to draft the statute for the international city of Jerusalem--the Corpus Separatum. This was an interesting three months of activity where the Trustee Council very seriously went through step by step, chapter by chapter, setting up the regime for the international city of Jerusalem and for the Holy Places in what had been Palestine, so that Bethlehem, Nazareth, etc. would be under the control of the administrator of this international city with an international police force.

That was pursuant to the Partition Resolution in 1947. At the end of the session, the plan was given to the representative of Israel and the representative of Jordan, which then controlled the Holy Places in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Within a matter of a very few minutes those representatives, on instructions from their governments, turned the whole project down. And that was the end of that.

I then returned to Washington and became the officer in charge of Egyptian and Anglo-Egyptian Sudan affairs. That was in the middle of 1950. I remained there until I went to Rome in 1953.

*Q: I assume when you came back you must have, having been at the far end connected by a one-time pad and all...I have the impression from the way you have been talking and referring to things, that Secretary of State Acheson, of course very busy with the Marshall Plan and all, that our Middle East policy, what there was of it, was being pretty well called by the White House and dictated more by going after the Jewish vote. Did you have that feeling, or was there really more to it?*

STABLER: I think during the period in which I was in Jordan, the policy was probably largely determined by the White House. We talked about the recognition of Israel and the eventual recognition de jure of Jordan. I think one has always understood that there was a certain resentment in the White House towards people in the State Department who were

considered to be Arabists and who regarded our Israeli policy as being seriously, if not fatally, flawed in terms of the over all future of our relations with the Arabs. But when I got back in 1959, I guess by then Acheson had taken over as Secretary of State. George McGhee had become Assistant Secretary for the Near East and Southeast Asian Affairs. George had visited me in Amman and we had become friends. On his return to Washington he began his stint as Assistant Secretary. In one of the books he wrote much later, he mentioned his meeting with Abdullah, and my role in Jordan, etc. We were, of course, very much aware of the domestic political considerations affecting our Middle East policy.

When I got into Egyptian Affairs, at the beginning there was no particular high-level interest in what went on in Egypt. The Arabs were still being difficult about Israel, but there wasn't a fighting war. Egypt only became a matter of serious consideration when the British began having increasing troubles with the Egyptians over the maintenance of their military bases. By the same token we were having the trouble in Iran with Mossadegh and all of that. It was only at this particular point that Dean Acheson became intimately involved in these two questions, both Iran and Egypt. I had the greatest admiration for Acheson and I always regarded it as a great privilege to work closely with him, which I did for a year plus or so,

We tried to think of ways that we could have some cover organization to make possible the maintenance and continuance of British bases in Egypt. The Director of Near Eastern Affairs was Lewis Jones, who is now dead, who was an imaginative sort of fellow. He came up with the idea of what was called MEDO, the Middle East Defense Organization which would go from Turkey through to Egypt. It would act as an umbrella to which various countries could belong, so that it wouldn't appear that Egypt was being occupied, if you will, by British forces. It would be a sort of NATO for that part of the world. It was an idea which simply wouldn't fly because the Egyptians at that point were getting very nationalist and wanted the end of British influence and British military bases.

*Q: This is, of course, part of the pull out of the Suez Canal.....*

STABLER: Well, that was 1956. I am talking about 1951-2 when there was a lot of national pressures. The people were getting disenchanted with Farouk. He was getting more difficult for the British and ourselves to deal with because he was recognizing some of this pressure.

We would give the British lots of free advice on what they might or might not do. They didn't particularly care for this. One of the areas where it would seem possible for some compromise was the Sudan, which was a condominium called the Anglo/Egyptian Sudan. While the governor of the Sudan was British and all the best administrators were British, there was a small Egyptian presence and Farouk, technically speaking, was King of the Sudan, although he shared that sovereignty with the British.

It was argued at one point that if somehow one could recognize Farouk's full sovereignty as King of the Sudan that would give him something which would permit him to diminish Egyptian insistence that the British close their bases. Ultimately it was decided in Washington...one of the difficulties was that we didn't have any representation in the Sudan, so I was instructed to go and visit the Sudan and come back and make a report to the Secretary as to what I thought should be done. The idea behind this still being that somehow the recognition of Farouk's sovereignty would be helpful.

By this time Dean Acheson was taking an increasing interest in all this. In early January 1952 I was attending a meeting in Secretary Acheson's office with Anthony Eden, British Foreign Secretary, discussing the Egyptian question and Eden was complaining that we were constantly giving the British advice on Egypt and the Sudan but no one from Washington had ever been to the Sudan, so how did we know what we were saying. Secretary Acheson was able to say, "Well, Anthony, I can tell you that Stabler is leaving, actually tonight, for the Sudan." Which indeed I was.

I went down there and had three very interesting weeks of visiting all parts of the Sudan, part of the time with the Counselor of our Embassy in Cairo, Gordon Mattison. He was with me part of the time and then he went back and I stayed on. On the way back to Washington by plane I wrote a report in which I in effect said that the Sudanese were not really interested in having the British continue in the Sudan and certainly weren't interested in having the Egyptians there either. Ultimately what they wanted was independence. I was interested in the fact that it was almost exactly a year later that was exactly what they got.

*Q: When you went there, the British had their Sudanese service running things, which had the reputation of being the best of all the British colonial services. How did you get around? How did you find out that you could come and say that the Sudanese feel this or that?*

STABLER: Obviously one was the guest of the British. I stayed with the Civil Secretary, John Willy Robertson, who later became Governor of Nigeria. I also stayed with Sir Robert Howe, who was the Governor. I stayed in various places with British district officers and governors of provinces. I nonetheless had free rein to see people I wanted to see. That meant the Sudanese political leaders in Khartoum and in other parts of the Sudan that I visited. I went down west, up north, and to the southern part, which is in such contention today.

*Q: Which is the difference between Black and Arab.*

STABLER: It was the difference between Moslem and Pagan. I would go out into the bush. Once I spent the night in a little place called Turit which was in the Latuka tribe area, and spoke with many of Latuka tribe. I talked to a lot of people, lots of Sudanese. There was simply no doubt in my mind that independence was what they wanted. You can't talk to everybody but you can form impressions, and if you have had any sort of training, background of this kind of thing, you get a feel. One could be wrong, but that



was my very distinct feeling. I was amused last year when some professor of political science at the University of Texas called me up to make a lunch engagement because he had just gotten through the Freedom of Information Act the report I had written on the Sudan. He is writing a book, or something, on British policies in the Middle East. My report was in February/March 1952, and it was just about a year later that it was decided to hold a UN-sponsored referendum in 1954 in the Sudan. This then led to their independence shortly thereafter, on January 1, 1956.

I also recommended that we set up an office in Khartoum because of the situation in the Sudan. I think only the French were allowed to have a consulate there because of French Equatorial Africa, therefore we couldn't do that. So I suggested that we set up a liaison office. We did and, if I remember correctly, my friend William Burdett who I mentioned before, was the first officer there. This occurred before the British left. Ultimately that led to setting up a US Legation or Embassy.

The upshot of all this was that we were never able to come up with a particular solution to the Egyptian question. The British then decided to go. I went to talk to the British Commander-in-Chief at his base on the Suez Canal and I think the writing was on the wall. They recognized it. And then, of course, in July, 1952, Farouk was forced to abdicate by the Colonels.

I went over to Cairo shortly thereafter and was the first foreign diplomat to talk to Naguib, who was then the front man for the Colonels, down in Alexandria where he was. Caffery was the Ambassador at that time.

But throughout that period, Acheson maintained a very close interest in all of this. I traveled with him a number of times. One was at the time of the contractals in Germany which was sometime in 1952. Then we had a meeting with Eden again in the British Embassy in Paris, again discussing all these particular questions. I had many meetings with British officials in London in connection with these various trips and things that I had done.

Then, in the latter part of 1952, I was called into the office of one of the Deputy Assistant Secretaries for Near Eastern Affairs, Burton Berry, who I believe is now dead. He asked me if I would like to have a break from Middle East affairs for a couple of years and go to the embassy in Rome. I said I would.

*Q: Let me go back to cover this Sudan/Egyptian thing. When you arrived, what was your impression of how we viewed the Egyptians, Farouk situation there?*

STABLER: When I first got back I think the general feeling was that Farouk was a total disaster. He had allowed himself to go to pieces and lose control of things. It wasn't until 1952...remember in 1952, when I was in the Sudan, there were the riots in Cairo--sort of anti-government riots.

*Q: This was when they burned down Shepherd's Hotel.*

STABLER: It was a total mess. I had to go back from Khartoum to Cairo, but I did it the long way, in part because I think I am a coward when it comes to flying and I did not want to fly with the Egyptian airline, AirMisr, or more often called Air Misery. I flew via Tripoli where I had a nice lunch with my friend, Sir Alec Kirkbride, who was the British Ambassador, and then had to fly from Tripoli to Athens and from Athens down to Cairo.

These riots troubled a great many people, Farouk included. Caffery took the view that all was not lost if we could take Farouk in hand and get him really to pay attention to what was happening. He had the power. He wasn't just a constitutional monarch, but he was a playboy. Lots of people talked to him about taking charge, including the British.

We did something at that time which was really quite unusual. It was felt in Washington and in London that we needed an assessment of what was happening in Egypt...what people on the spot thought would be the future, politically. The Foreign Office and the State Department instructed the American and British Ambassadors, Jefferson Caffery, and I think Ray Stevenson was the British Ambassador, to undertake a joint assessment. They prepared a joint assessment, which was signed by both of them, and sent to London and Washington. Part of assessment was that if they could get Farouk in hand and provide him with good personal security apparatus and some good advice maybe he would be able to pull this thing back into shape. We did.

CIA was very active at that time and I am sure the British services were too. We tried to train a small security group for him and sort of prop him up a bit with the idea that if he really could gain an active interest again in what was happening in his country some good would come out of it.

But it was already too late because this was January 1952 and by July he was out. One anecdote about his departure which I think is interesting. Farouk was down in Alexandria and there was a great deal of discussion among the revolutionary command council as to what to do with him. A young man by the name of Bill Lakeland who was political officer in the Embassy had become conduit for messages between Caffery...

*Q: He was one of our imperial ambassadors.*

STABLER: Very much so and a good one. He had his own idiosyncrasies and so forth, but he was imperial and the Ambassador didn't plunge into the business of contact with little colonels, etc. So Bill Lakeland was the conduit. Caffery in effect said to them, "Look, you will do yourself irrevocable harm internationally if you murder Farouk or put him on trial. There is no reason to do that, there is nothing he can do, let him go." They agreed so his yacht appeared on the scene. But shortly before this Farouk decided that it was rather dangerous to go to his yacht and he sent word through Caffery, and Caffery felt he had no choice but to transmit it, a request for a US warship to take Farouk off.

The message came into me. I decided that, although I knew the answer, I couldn't take the responsibility on my own and went to see Hank Byroade, who was my Assistant Secretary at the time. He knew what the answer was but he decided he couldn't take the decision on his own, so he and I went up to Acheson's office. Acheson thought this was a matter relating to a head of state and he couldn't make that decision, so he picked up the phone and called Truman. He said, "Mr. President we have a situation here and my recommendation is that we shouldn't do it, but I want you to make the decision." Truman, in fairly strong language, allowed as how that in no way would he send a warship to take Farouk off.

Farouk went off in his yacht. Caffery went down to see him off. Apparently there was not a very high Egyptian functionary there to see him off. Caffery let the Colonels know that their whole behavior had not done them any credit. Then, as you may remember, Farouk apparently loaded his yacht with some gold bullion, which the new regime discovered. They sent some planes out to try to bomb the yacht but they didn't find it and Farouk made it to Italy.

It was in Italy when he came to see me one night to talk about the Palestine fiasco.

*Q: What were you getting back in Washington about the new colonels. This became sort of the prime example of every time there was a coup thereafter we tried to figure out whose behind it. They were Lt. Colonels weren't they?*

STABLER: Yes, indeed. There were some majors too.

*Q: It was some majors who were really running the show. Nasser suddenly appeared. From that time on this is a set piece, "Well, who is really doing this?" But at that time this is brand new for us. How did we look at this?*

STABLER: I think that at that time there wasn't any question in people's minds that Naguib was the front man. He was an older General and had been put in because...you remember they did not rid the country of the monarchy right away. Immediately Abdel Moneim who was, I think, an uncle of Farouk became the Regent and Aly Maher became the Prime Minister. Shortly after that they got rid of Aly Maher and Naguib was brought in. I think the Embassy was fully aware at that time that it was not Naguib but these colonels and majors who were running the show. It was with them that most of the negotiations and contacts were done, although we had to keep in touch with Naguib too.

One of the great problems was that they wanted to have arms and military equipment. The equipment that the Egyptian army had was not very high grade and they wanted very much to re-equip the army in an effort to erase the stain on the country from the miserable performance of the Palestine War. It was felt that probably one ought to do something of this sort in order to establish a bond between the United States and this new Egypt. But we, in terms of the grants that we made and in some instances sales and others, but principally grants to begin with...we of course always demanded that they sign all sorts of

binding agreements about not using any weapons without consulting with us. A lot of us felt that that was a mistake at the time because it sort of limited their sovereignty and made it appear that we didn't trust them. The law was the law and we had our hands tied sometimes quite needlessly. That fell through. That created tensions with the Nasser and the Colonels right from the very beginning.

Shortly thereafter I left the Egyptian scene and went to Rome. But one saw the effects of this as time went on. It got worse and worse with Nasser - we know about that. But the feeling of a lot of us at the time when I was still working on this was that it was necessary to show some form of trust and collaboration which would make this group, which was suspicious of the United States role with Israel, but would make this group look to us as their friend, as they no longer looked to the British that way. One wanted to keep other busybodies out of the area.

*Q: At the point the Soviets weren't particularly menacing.*

STABLER: No, they weren't at all. They played virtually no role in the Middle East, but people were beginning to think in terms of: We want nothing to do with the British or the French; the United States is our friend but if they are not our friend, we have to have a friend. That, I think, was the beginning, that very episode of this agreement which they wouldn't sign, of their beginning to think in terms of perhaps looking in the direction of the Soviet Union.

*Q: Were you there when the Dulles administration came in?*

STABLER: No, I had left in early 1953. There had been the inauguration of Eisenhower and Dulles had become Secretary. I was in Rome just at the beginning of the Dulles regime in the Department, although I came back to Washington in 1957 with Dulles still there and much to my irritation and annoyance found myself right back on the Egyptian Desk once more.

*Q: I thought we might call it off at this point. We will start the next time with your time in Rome.*

*Q: Today is April, 5, 1991. This is a further interview with Ambassador Wells Stabler. Mr. Ambassador, we are going to your time when you went to Rome--1953-7. Could you say how you got the job of going to Rome and what you were doing?*

STABLER: I had been in Near Eastern Affairs for quite a few years--1944-53. Sometime in the fall of 1952 I was called in by the then Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, Burton Berry, who asked if I would be interested in an assignment to Rome--sort of a long service and good conduct award for the years that I had been in the Middle East. I think they offered it to me with the idea that I would be in Rome for three to four years and then return to the Near East. But that was never stated. So this came right out of the blue. I was surprised and very pleased. I had visited Rome for the first time on the way

back from Jerusalem in January 1947 and thought that it would be a wonderful place to be.

So, obviously, I accepted with enthusiasm and set off in February, 1953 via Madrid and then by train to Rome. At the time I arrived there, Ellsworth Bunker was the Ambassador. He had been there only for about a year. He had come, if I recall correctly, from Argentina. But then there was a change of Administration.

*Q: This would be the change to the Eisenhower Administration.*

STABLER: Eisenhower became President and Dulles, Secretary of State. One of the early appointments of General Eisenhower was Clare Boothe Luce as Ambassador to Italy. So very shortly after I arrived in the middle of February, I was with Bunker only for possibly a month, Mrs. Luce appeared on the scene early in the Spring of 1953.

When I first arrived we had in the Political Section the Political Counselor, Francis Williamson, who was not actually a Foreign Service Officer. He had served in the Department, I believe in German Affairs, and had then been sent to Rome as a Foreign Service Reserve Officer. I was very fond of Francis. He had some of the drawbacks of someone who has never served abroad in such a capacity and who did not speak Italian. I think he had some problems adjusting to the requirements of the job.

*Q: Could you spell that out a little more, what you mean?*

STABLER: What I mean was that most Political Counselors have come up through the ranks and have served in a variety of capacities--consular, economic, administrative, junior political officers, etc.--developing the background of how to run a section; what a political section should do; and the role of the political counselor in establishing important contacts with the political leaders, shakers of activity, in the country and also, obviously, with their colleagues in foreign embassies. I think Francis was fine when it came to establishing contacts with foreign embassies, but he didn't speak Italian and was not terribly comfortable in trying to establish contact with some of the Italian politicians. Obviously his inability to speak the language was a considerable drawback to him.

*Q: I might add that the Italians are on par with the French as far as not learning other languages.*

STABLER: Yes, that is true. The Italian political leaders that I knew, as well as the rank and file, seldom spoke English. To be effective in the Italian scene you simply had to know the language because, as we all know, you lose a lot in translation. It wasn't Francis' fault. He was given this assignment and was happy to have it. But I think he was not really up to the task and I think this took a toll on him physically. He eventually became quite ill and was transferred. Then we had a career political counselor, Niles Bond.

When I first arrived in terms of the Political Section, Francis really hadn't thought out what it was I should be doing. That made it very awkward. I was Second Secretary and

way down the line, but I did speak some Italian before I came and in a relatively short time became relatively fluent in it. I did some things for the Ambassador, but there was no structure so far as to the role I was going to fill.

In due course, it is one of these things that happens, I began cutting out a niche that I thought would be interesting and useful and started covering in the internal political section some of the political parties--center parties, right wing party, etc. We didn't have anything to do with the MSI, (Movimento Socialista Italiano), which was the Fascist Party. I also worked with some of the Christian Democrats. So in time I sort of really developed these contacts on my own and reported on these parties.

As time went on I became more and more involved in the internal political side of things. We had one man who did the Communists. In those days the Socialists were considered to be an ally of the Communists. We referred to the extreme left as Social/Communists, they were lumped together. He covered them, although we had no contacts with the Communist Party nor the Socialist Party at that time.

*Q: What was the feeling within the section about no contact? This meant that at least a third of the populous of Italy was off limits, so to speak.*

STABLER: At that particular time, a time not so terribly long after the war and where the Communists had gained a considerable amount of ground, we, the United States, had put in a great deal of effort and money into trying to build up the democratic element in Italy, which meant the Christian Democratic Party and the three small so-called lay parties, the Liberals, the Republicans and the Social Democrats. The Christian Democratic Party was the largest party in Italy but constantly under attack by this increasing success of the Communists. The Socialists were relatively small, perhaps 13 or 14 percent of the vote, and the Communists were beginning to go on up into the high 20s and eventually got into the low 30s.

The attack on this democratic element in Italy was a fairly great one and supported, of course, by the Soviet Union and by the Eastern European Soviet Bloc. Great effort was expended, for example, in bolstering the democratic trade union confederation, the so-called CISL. The effort to block the left trade union confederation, CGIL, in the progress they were making in taking over the various labor unions and shop stewards in the factories was a major item.

*Q: When you say efforts on the part of the United States, what does this mean?*

STABLER: Well, it meant in many instances, financial support.

*Q: Was this from us or through the AFL-CIO?*

STABLER: Well, it was done partly through them, sometimes more directly through CIA. This is now history and a lot has been written about what was done at that time. Tom

Lane, who was the Labor Attaché at that time, was very instrumental in carrying out this program, one in which Mrs. Luce took a very great interest. One of the methods of dealing with this problem was through our Offshore Procurements program, which was a very large item at that time. It was made a condition for certain factories that in order to get Offshore Procurement contracts their union elections had to vote in the democratic trade unions.

*Q: What does Offshore Procurements mean?*

STABLER: NATO had been set up and components of required military hardware were manufactured in some of the NATO countries. So we would put out contracts for the manufactured delivery of certain components from factories in Italy. But in order to obtain that contract, there had to be clear indications that the trade union situation in that factory was a democratic one. If it was heavily CGIL, then no Offshore Procurement. And those Offshore Procurement contracts produced sizable sums of money for Italian industry, which was recovering of course from the blows of the war. There was a lot of hard ball played over this as it was felt that this was a major element in the campaign to try to block the Communists. It was fairly successful. There was no question that these industrialists clearly saw dollar signs which was important and they did what they could to try to build up the labor in their plants coming from the democratic side.

*Q: To put this in context, in a later period the Communist movement in Italy was seen as sort of a national communist, an almost benign movement. How did we feel about it within the Embassy?*

STABLER: This wasn't the case then, because this was full-blown cold war where it was generally believed that the support that Communists/Socialists had came directly from the Soviet Union or one of the Eastern European countries. So this was really another front, basically, in the Cold War with the Soviet Union at that time. It wasn't until later...one of the first indications of a break in the picture came early in 1956 with the Soviet crushing of the Hungarian uprising. The Italian Communists took a position against what the Soviet Union had done. This put the Italian Communists for the first time in a dilemma: whether to simply blindly support everything the Soviets did, or to indicate that they had a somewhat more independent view about some of these things. Since the Soviet action in Hungary was immensely unpopular, it wasn't, perhaps, too difficult for the Communists in Italy to indicate that they too disapproved of it.

Of course, as we recall, one of the great difficulties at that time was that the universal disapproval of what the Soviets had done in Hungary was somewhat tempered by the considerable disapproval of what the British and the French did in Suez.

In any event, the Embassy considered - Mrs. Luce was very strongly anti-communist, as indeed was Dulles, and so any indication of an Embassy contact with a communist would have flown directly in the face of the policy we were carrying out at that time. So I think

that everybody agreed that that probably would have been a mistake to start any contacts with the communists at that time. They developed later.

*Q: How about after 1956?*

STABLER: It seems to me...I'm a little vague now on dates...I don't think anything was done immediately after 1956. I think it was considerably later that the first contacts took place. I can't remember now exactly when, but I don't think it was until into the 60s. Because even after '56, although it was a political gesture to disapprove of what the Soviets had done in Hungary, they rapidly returned pretty much to being what they had always been and continued to grow in strength amongst the electorate. Partly when it came to regional, local elections, where they always did well. That came from the fact that in a predominately Catholic country, the Vatican was extremely active in opposing the Communists at election time...their would be homilies from the pulpit urging the faithful not to vote for the Communists. This unquestioningly had some effect in blocking the continuing rise of the Communist Party in last elections.

*Q: You said as a political officer you carved out your own bailiwick of the center parties. What were you after, and how did you operate?*

STABLER: One was trying to first of all...when it came to the Christian Democratic Party obviously since they formed the government and when they had the absolute majority, which they did have when I first arrived - De Gasperi was still Prime Minister - of course, they held all the portfolios. The Ambassador and the DCM has the contacts, obviously, with that level and one tried to establish contacts at my level with some of the deputies who were important in Parliament and really to try to find out what they were thinking, how they viewed the development of the political situation. Let me say that at that time also, there was a fairly active program in support of the Christian Democrats. So the principal players were people who were known to the more senior people at the Embassy.

But there were the other parties, the lay parties and at that time the Monarchist party had some strength which ultimately had views to express. So that was a party that I was also in touch with, but with absolutely no expectation of being part of the government but had a certain number of deputies in parliament and one wanted to encourage them to support the democratic process. I had vague contacts with the Fascist part of the MSI, they also sat in parliament, they were a legal party. We felt that it was a mistake to cut them off totally although we didn't approve of their politics. But by having at least a point of contact, one was able then to bring forth directly to them the American point of view on things. It was one of those things that was really neither particularly a plus nor particularly a minus. The contacts were very limited.

When it became clear that the Monarchists were not going to go anywhere, that became less important and the contacts with the lay parties with Christian Democratic deputies were the principal focus of my activity.



I had some rather interesting developments. One of them related to the President of Italy, then Giovanni Gronchi - he was elected to the Presidency I would guess in 1956 - he was regarded as a left wing Christian Democrat and was seen by many in the US Government, including some in the Rome Embassy as being somewhat perilously close to the left and perhaps not overly friendly to the United States. But in the complex picture of Italian politics, there was a constant sort of balancing of forces, right wing one time, center, left wing. It was something that was necessary for the internal workings and harmony of the Christian Democratic Party. Gronchi who had been President of the Chamber at the time, was clearly in that rank where he could become President. He was eventually elected and the Embassy, Mrs. Luce on down, was not very happy about it.

In any event, it was decided to ask him to come to the United States on a State Visit in the hopes that by paying some attention to him we would have him as a player in terms of how we felt political development should go in Italy. I had received a letter from a colleague in the Embassy in Caracas some time before all this mentioning that a good friend of theirs who was in the Papal Nunciatura in Caracas, Monsignor Mariani was returning to the Secretariat of State in the Vatican and we might find it useful to establish some contact with him, which I did. We became quite friendly. I saw him from time to time, he was in the Secretariat of State and seemed to be remarkably well connected, although he was not a particularly senior member of the Secretariat of State. At one stage before the visit of President Gronchi to the United States, Mariani got in touch with me and asked if it would be of interest to me to meet with the President of Italy. Well, this was rather a strange situation because I was still a Second Secretary and was not Political Counselor. But it seemed to me that there was some indications that the President of Italy wanted to meet with someone at the Embassy but did not want to meet with any of the senior people because it would attract attention. So I decided that even though it was rather unusual--Mrs. Luce was not in the country, I think she had gone home, Jack Jernegan was then the DCM--without complicating things too much I would just go ahead and do it. I guess that by this time it had clearly been conveyed to me that President Gronchi would like to have it work out this way.

I met Monsignor Mariani and we were taken to the Quirinale, the Presidential Palace, to a private part of it where the President lived but which was not in the public eye. I had about two hours with the President. It was rather unusual. There was the President, myself and then this Monsignor Mariani. In this conversation, I must say Gronchi opened himself rather fully as to his political views and was very much aware of the American suspicions and doubts. He was really quite persuasive in what he had to say. When this was over I went back to the Embassy and went to see Jack Jernegan who at that point was in his apartment at 21 Via Pinciana, but in bed with the flu. So I went by to see him and explained to him what had happened and how it had happened and that I felt I really had no choice in the circumstances but just to go ahead and do it. I gave him my full report and this went in to Washington and formed one of the principal papers for the Gronchi visit. I will say in full regard for my bosses in Rome, they were very understanding of what had happened. They could have been really quite annoyed that a Second Secretary

had been received by the President. But it was a chance I took, a chance, I think, that paid off in terms of getting the first indication of Gronchi's thinking as he described it.

*Q: But you felt that he was going through you because this was a quieter channel to get this in rather than to be talking to somebody who would leave him more open for showing a change in policy?*

STABLER: The Ambassador would have obviously attracted attention if she had gone and then it would have been much more formal. The Minister, Jack Jernegan didn't speak Italian. The Political Counselor at that time may have been Niles Bond, but I am not sure. It was known in Italian political circles that I spoke Italian and therefore the decision apparently was made...you know the way these things are done it is quite possible that Mariani told Gronchi that I wanted to see him and then told me that Gronchi wanted to see me. But however it came out, it worked out, I think, pretty well. I think it did go a long way to reassure people. It ultimately turned out to be the case too, that Gronchi during the years that he was President, never really did anything which was inimical to the interests of the United States.

During the years that I was in Rome, which was 1953-57, my role obviously as time went on became increasingly active in the political field. I was never number two in the section, but I ran the internal political unit and became rather closely identified with the development of political thinking in Italy, that is to say the reporting of political thinking in Italy. I did a lot of work with Mrs. Luce. When she had political leaders to lunch I very often was invited because I knew them and I could help in interpreting. I was included in most of the big meals and receptions given by the Ambassador that concerned the political side of life.

I found it all very interesting because Italian politics, although at time frustrating, have a sort of dynamism of their own. One was very much aware of the fact that although they were...well, during the time I was there I don't remember how many now...but many changes of government. But the background music was really basically always the same. They changed the players, musical chairs, but as Italians would often point out, "We may have changed our government many, many times, but frequently the Foreign Minister is the same. We probably have had fewer Foreign Ministers than you have had Secretaries of State over a comparable period of time. There were some players that just shuffled around. The present Prime Minister of Italy, Giulio Andreotti became a friend of mine in the 1953-57 period and remained a friend. Of course, when I went back as Minister in 1969, a lot of these people I already knew. So the many changes in what the Italians call "i giuocchi politici" - the political games, really concerned the political class. The people of Italy didn't really care much about all this. They paid very little attention to it. Life went on, the economy boomed and the standard of living greatly increased. As long as these political games didn't interfere with this, fine. So the difficulty, of course, was that in the democratic setup, the Christian Democrats had the biggest block of votes. If they lost their absolute majority this would mean that they would have to depend on the three smaller parties to provide the majority and as the smaller parties were really awfully

small, the majority was pretty thin. But the policy to support - the American policy, to support what was called the Quadripartito which was a four party arrangement - Christian Democrats, Liberal, Republicans and the Social Democrats - we helped those four parties considerably in an effort to maintain stability in Italy because the Quadripartito could not draw from the right--the Monarchists and MSI--nor from the left--because the Socialist Party had not yet begun developing a more independent view and were pretty much in the pocket of the Communists.

*Q: How did people in the Embassy feel about the changes in government? It seemed the Embassy people got so involved in the Italian game of politics--constant shifting of the same players--which in many ways had almost no pertinence due to the stability of their outlook towards things. Did you feel that sometimes you were getting sucked into this vortex?*

STABLER: To some extent. But mind you, the time I am speaking of there really was a major threat from the Social/Communists who occupied a pretty large space in the political spectrum. The Soviets were spending much treasure in trying to subvert Italy and bring them totally into their orbit. That would have been an additional plum for them to have a communist majority and government in Italy.

*Q: In the same context, there was exactly the same problem, which remained much longer in France.*

STABLER: That's true, though that was somewhat less of a threat because the communists never had quite as large a share of the electorate as they did in Italy, as I recall. When I was in Paris later on, 1960...de Gaulle had just taken over and so the situation shifted rather radically. It is true that a lot of these political games that the Italian played were frustrating, annoying, and it seemed that a lot of it was counterproductive. By the same token that was what was going on and therefore we had to stay on top of it and see to it that Washington was kept fully informed as to what actually was happening in the political body. The principal theme we were focusing on was to make sure that the democratic parties remained in control and that the Communists were blocked. ....to try to persuade the Italian politicians not to be quite so fickle when it came to all these crises, many of which were totally unnecessary. We were afraid that the electorate would tire of the endless games and look to the Communists to form a more stable and efficient government situation. One thing that was quite true and was constantly a concern to us was that those major cities, and even some of the small ones, where Social/Communists had the majority, were usually very well run. Florence, was one; Bologna was another.

The mayor of Naples was a monarchist...

*Q: When I was there he was a Communist.*

STABLER: Really?

*Q: Yes, Valenzi .*

STABLER: Achille Lauro was the mayor. He was the head of the National Monarchist Party. But it is true that in the cities where the Communists and Socialists together had a majority they were pretty well run.

At that particular time, 1957, things were still sufficiently uncertain that we had to work hard to keep the democratic center on a stable course.

One other amusing thing, and again somewhat anecdotal - Mrs. Luce left at the end of 1956 and James David Zellerbach arrived as the new Ambassador. He had previously been in Rome immediately after the war as the AID Director. Around January of 1957 we had the announced visit of the then Vice President and Mrs. Nixon. The drill was that the Political Counselor was to go from the place that he was about to visit to the place that he was then visiting and accompany him on the flight to the place he was going to visit. The Political Counselor at that time had apparently experienced Nixon in Korea and absolutely refused to go to Tripoli to meet Nixon. Although I was number three in the section, the number two dealt with foreign matters rather than the domestic area. So I was then instructed to proceed to Tripoli to pick up the Vice President and come back with him. I found it an interesting thing to do.

We flew back and I took Nixon around in Rome, with the Ambassador, of course, but I went as an interpreter, to meet various functionaries of the Italian government including at that time the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Giovanni Leone. That night there was a big dinner at the Ambassador's Residence to which my wife and I were invited.. Before dinner a picture was taken of me with Nixon and Leone. I sort of put that picture away. But shortly after I came back to Rome as Minister in 1969, Leone became President of Italy and Nixon was President of the United States. My picture then came out and was displayed in my residence in Rome. But you can well imagine that once Nixon was forced to resign for reasons we know, and subsequent to that Leone was forced to resign for corruption, the picture was put away again.

*Q: What was your impression on briefing Nixon? Did you have problems?*

STABLER: No. Flying back from Tripoli to Rome it was really pretty much towards the end of the flight that his staff decided he might be briefed on what was going on. So I was called back into the cabin where I spent 15 or 20 minutes bringing him up to date on what was going on, who was in the government, what the general circumstances were. There was interest and, as I recall, good questions. He also, of course, had a briefing book, etc. There wasn't any great length of time spent on it. But I don't think there was any lack of interest. It was simply that perhaps he was sufficiently knowledgeable about what was going on not to require a lot of updating.

Then while he was in Rome, certainly as he went and made these various calls...he was good at it. He certainly showed an interest in what he was being told. As you well know,

there are times you have visitors who appear to be totally disinterested in what is going on and in the people they are seeing and they behave like they really didn't want to see them anyway. That was not the case with Nixon at all. The Ambassador and Mrs. Zellerbach had a big dinner with all the big luminaries of the Italian government present. That is the sort of thing the Italians like a great deal. They were seeking high level contacts with the United States and over the years...I have had a lot to do with Italian affairs over a good many years in one form or another from 1953--I had Italian affairs twice in the Department and went back as Minister. So during that period every time there was a conference involving the British, French and Germans, for example, the Italians would be very upset if they hadn't been included. They spent a great deal of time and effort in trying to persuade us that they should be included, and very often because of that they were. They were playing catch-up all the time and this was difficult for them. So high level visits were very important to them to demonstrate to themselves and to the world that they were major players in the political chess game.

*Q: I think it was Henry Kissinger in one of his books made the remark that essentially going to Italy on a high level visit really played little role in anything because there was never a person you would really talk to. It was a collective government, has been a collective government and continues to be a collective government. Was this a fair assessment?*

STABLER: Probably fairly accurate because you might deal with a prime minister, foreign minister...the president played more of a ceremonial role...and everything would be fine with him. But it is true that he would not be able to say, "Yes, we will do it this way." And he might not be prime minister tomorrow. You did have that feeling that you were sometimes talking into a vacuum. This is, I think, true even to this very day. Although people like Andreotti - he has been around so long and knows where all the levers of power are. There are lots of things that the Italians have done, however, that one mustn't underestimate...for example, when it came to deciding what to do with that part of the 16th Air Force that was stationed in Torrejon, Spain...

*Q: We are talking about in the late 1980s.*

STABLER: Yes, when we renegotiated the facilities agreement with the Spanish they finally said to get out. The Italians agreed to base the Air Force facilities from Torrejon. This had been a pattern. The Italians earlier had agreed to house our cruise missiles. They undertook to take on quite a few things of this sort.

*Q: Including sending a force to Beirut when we needed a multi-international force there in the early 80s. A lot of things.*

STABLER: A lot of things. The Southern European Task Force up in Verona where they had the nuclear artillery is another thing. In spite of the Communist influence and strong opposition to any of these things, the Italian government was able to pull itself together, was able to accede to our request and we have many facilities in Italy. During the time I

was Minister there and Chargé (1969-73), one always had the greatest cooperation from the Italians. So in spite of their shortcomings, and their unstable governmental system, they were able to produce decisions that were difficult for them. But, generally speaking, the development of relations such as we have with the Prime Minister of Britain, the President of France, the Chancellor of Germany, was not the sort of relationship you really could develop with one of the Italian leaders. He just simply didn't have the authority. Part of it, of course, comes from the fact that in England you have a two party system, in Germany you have a two party system with one coalition partner but the majority is pretty well defined, and that has pretty much been the case in France, not always, but so under the Fifth Republic. But you didn't have that situation in Italy with all these parties that would have to form a government. They were all equal parties even though they don't have an equal number of votes.

*Q: Whatever happened early on with the Socialists didn't develop a being of their own. They, unlike other countries in Europe where the Socialists became a major, somewhat to the left party, got gobbled up by the Communists.*

STABLER: Yes, that was immediately after the war and lasted pretty much into the 60s. Then you had the opening to the left which was a much discussed policy because to some people opening to the left meant moving the center towards the left and to others it meant bringing what elements you could from the left towards the center. It was much after this period we speak of where this began to develop and we can perhaps come back to it at another time.

*Q: Before we leave your time in Rome, would you describe a bit about Clare Boothe Luce? How she operated? How you saw her? She was a major figure in the diplomatic world of the Eisenhower era.*

STABLER: You may recall when she was assigned as Ambassador to Italy, the Italians were anything but pleased because it was pretty much a man's world in Italy and there were very few women to play a role in the body politic. There was the famous cartoon in one of the leading Italian magazines showing the facade of the American Embassy in Rome with the American flag hanging out in front etched in lace. There was the general attitude that they had been downgraded because we were sending a woman.

It took her a little time, not terribly long, to persuade the Italians that she was an extremely capable and tough woman. She ran really a very good Embassy. She had no experience in this type of thing, but she had been involved in so many things that she knew how to run things.

As a DCM she had Elbridge Durbrow who actually had a Soviet background and with whom I think she got along pretty well. She had a clear view of what it was she wanted to do in Italy, and that was to block the Communists. The principal theme that ran throughout the Embassy was to block the Communists and support the democratic

center...to keep Italy fully in the democratic camp and make it a useful, viable part of NATO. Everything she did, the speeches that she gave were aimed at these central points.

She obviously was controversial at times because she had a very strong personality and wasn't at all reluctant to express her point of view. There were times that she was criticized for making speeches which were regarded as pretty close to the line of interfering in domestic, internal matters. But one had to remember also that in this period of time the Americans were the principal factor in Italy. The British, French and others played relatively minor roles compared to the American role, where the Marshall Plan, Offshore Procurements and all the things I have talked about, were playing a major role in the economic recovery of Italy. So the American Ambassador had a very prominent position and she, being a prominent person, played a very important role in Italy.

Even though she had a very tough side to her, there was also a rather gentle side to her...a rather thoughtful side to her. She'd had, as we all know, personal tragedies. I think this made her within...although the exterior seemed cold, the interior at times really could be very warm. I cite this one example of that. My wife and I were married in August, 1953 and we started our married life in Rome. Shortly after we were married in October, my mother died here in Washington. I simply didn't have at that time, having just gotten married and everything, the money to even think of coming home. Mrs. Luce suspected this might be the case (it was known through the telegram that came in that my mother had died) and I had a call from her secretary, Dorothy Farmer, who had been her secretary before she came to Rome so was very close to Mrs. Luce. She called me and said that the Ambassador was sorry to hear about my mother's death; that she wanted my wife and me to go home; that she had bought airline tickets for us and that whenever we could pay her back, fine, but not to worry about it. That was really an extremely warm gesture and after all I had been with her only since February. However, because of the role I was playing in the internal politics at that time because I spoke fluent Italian, I was thrown with her more than I would have been otherwise. But I don't think it made any difference because she would have done that for anyone else in the Embassy. That was a very human, thoughtful thing for which I was always very grateful to her.

There were other instances...at one point I got fed up with the whole thing, this was some years after this, and decided that I would get out of the Foreign Service and be done with it. She was out of the country at the time. I decided that I would just resign. I wrote a resignation telegram which had to be approved by the DCM. She was in London at the time and called in to see what was going on and was told that I had done this. She sent word that she would like very much if I did not send the telegram until she came back. She would like to talk to me. On her return I was asked to come out to the Ambassador's Residence. All the senior staff had gathered there to meet with her. She kept them all waiting and called me in and we had a long talk. She persuaded me not to do this.

*Q: May I ask what prompted this on your part?*

STABLER: Yes. What prompted me I think was that I had...going back to the time I was here in the Department and in Middle East affairs, had really occupied positions considerably above my rank and had worked closely with the Secretary of State and had done things that were already rather senior, but, for whatever reasons, one never seemed to get promoted at all. I was occupying a position in Rome which was really above the grade I was and I was just getting fed up with it. I had been passed over once again, and decided there was no point in carrying it on if this is the way it was going to be. So in a moment of frustration I did this. The result was what I told you. But it was one of feeling frustration and dissatisfaction over what I felt was a rather curious disregard of what I thought I had done.

I think it was Ambassador Luce's interest in the matter that prompted me to give it another try. And then, of course, the next time I was promoted.

*Q: Did you get involved in the Trieste negotiations at all?*

STABLER: No, because that was something that was considered to be on the foreign affairs side of things and as I was doing strictly the internal side I didn't get involved in that at all. She did that pretty much with the Political Counselor and the number two in the Political Section at that time, a fellow by the name of Lansing Collins, who handled foreign affairs matters and was involved with the Foreign Office. Also, there was another officer, Jim O'Sullivan, who also did some of these things. I think she worked with him on that as well. But I was not involved in that at all.

I will say that she was really a very good Ambassador, and when she left, she gave a huge dinner party at the villa and had the Prime Minister and all the people there. My wife and I were there. She was just heaped with honors and farewell presents...she was given the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of Italy, and then they produced a perfectly beautiful antique large crucifix which had been put into a beautiful box for presentation. They were really very sorry to see her go because they knew that they had a friend. They knew there was somebody there who spoke directly to Eisenhower and to Dulles and had influence.

It is true, you know, the story about probably lead rather than arsenic poisoning that took place. That was a true story and one that was actually fairly simple to explain once they realized what had happened. Villa Taverna, which was the Ambassador's magnificent Residence, was an old house and the floors were not always absolutely immobile and before she came everything had been painted. In those days I guess they used paint with lead in it. Her bedroom was directly beneath the room that was used for ironing by the staff. As the floors were not rigid when people walked on them there was a certain amount of motion. Over a period of time bits of paint flicked off the ceiling and landed in her morning coffee and things that she ate. She would always have breakfast in bed and there were times when one was summoned to see her at the villa and you would go up to her bedroom and conduct business with her there. Over a longish period of time she was hit by this.



*Q: There was a good solid reason for the old canopy bed, I guess.*

STABLER: You know, a lot of people tried to say that this wasn't true, that this was a sort of subterfuge, that she had been poisoned by the Soviets and the communists, etc., which was all totally untrue. In fact the matter is that her social secretary, Letitia Baldrige, who later became the social secretary for Mrs. Kennedy, also had a minor case of this poisoning. But she had an office in the Villa and it was the same sort of thing.

*Q: You left there in 1957, is that right?*

STABLER: We left in '57. When I had left Washington in '53...

*Q: What rank were you by this time after you got your promotion?*

STABLER: I guess I must have just made Class 3, as I remember.

*Q: In other parlance it would have been equivalent to the rank of colonel in the military.*

STABLER: I guess so. Then I would have become a First Secretary, although not yet confirmed by the Senate by the time I departed Italy.

When I left Washington in '53, I was acting Deputy Director of Near Eastern Affairs. The reason that I wasn't full Deputy Director was because in those days a Deputy Director, which was set at a civil service grade, had a certain salary. As a Foreign Service officer you had a set salary and if this salary was commensurate with the salary fixed for the Deputy Director then you got the job paid at that level. I was only a class-4 which was not very senior, but was made acting Deputy Director, but because my salary was too low they couldn't give me the full title of Deputy Director. It was one of those ridiculous things...I did the job of Deputy Director without the title for many months.

In the latter part of '56, I had been home on leave and had come back to Washington and run into my friend, Fraser Wilkins, at that time Director of Near Eastern Affairs, who said, "We are going to call you back to Washington and put you on the Egyptian Desk." I said, "Fraser, I think that is eminently unfair. I had the Egyptian Desk before I went to Rome--1949-52. I had done that. Then I became acting Deputy Director of Near Eastern affairs, I would have been Deputy Director if it hadn't been the salary thing. And now you are asking me to come back at a lower grade than I was before and do the same job I did for three years before." "Well," he said, "I know, but we can't find anybody who is as qualified as you to do the Egyptian Affairs." I said, "That is nonsense. I just refuse to accept that reasoning. I think it is the sort of thing that you really cannot do, to make someone do the same job over again at a lower grade than when he left."

When I went back to Rome I thought this had been settled. I was absolutely devastated when I was told by Jack Jernegan that I had been summoned back to Washington to be on the Egyptian desk. I must say I went back with very ill grace indeed. I thought it was a

very low blow and was absolutely furious. I made it very clear that I believed that this was something that should not have been done. But I had no choice. I had to come back and go in to this. I frankly went out of my way to be so difficult about it that I received an incredibly bad efficiency report. It couldn't have been any worse. But I didn't care because I decided that if this was the way they were going to play the game I wasn't going to play it their way.

That ultimately held me up quite a number of years in promotion. But so what. It came out all right in the end.

So I was a year in that job which I thoroughly disliked. It was after the post-Aswan period when Dulles had sort of destroyed our relations with Egypt.

*Q: Would you explain what you mean by the post-Aswan period?*

STABLER: It was our refusal to consider being of any help to the Egyptians in the building of the Aswan Dam and providing credits to do that. As a result of that and President Nasser's desire to do this, he then turned to the Soviets who jumped into the picture with alacrity. The United States' position in Egypt absolutely shot down to the very bottom and the Soviets became the great friends. This was a period also when we sent marines into Beirut in July, 1958, and I was indirectly involved in that, as we all were in Near Eastern Affairs.

It was in this period and quite well known to those who follow these things that I was anything but pleased with what had happened. Findley Burns, who at that time was in Personnel, later became Ambassador to Ecuador and Jordan, decided that there was enough of this and arranged a transfer for me from the Near Eastern Affairs into European Affairs where I became the Officer in Charge of Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg. Just before this happened, I was summoned to Loy Henderson's office, he was then Deputy Under Secretary for Administration, and he acknowledged that I had not been treated very fairly in all of this and indicated that Bob McClintock, who then our ambassador in Beirut and with whom I had worked very closely in my previous stint in Egyptian Affairs when he was number two in Cairo, was looking for a new DCM and wanted to have me. If I would do this and the end of perhaps a couple of years he would see that I was sent to Paris. I told him that I thought as long as...I was then just a new class 3 officer and there were several people in the Embassy in other positions who were senior to me by two grades...we had a hierarchical system in the Foreign Service it made very little sense to pick out a class 3 officer and send him as DCM above the heads of several people in the Embassy and that there must be plenty of 2's or 1's who would like to have the job. I really felt that under the circumstances I was just not going to do it. I guess I was being difficult, but I thought in a sense they were sort of bribing me, which I didn't particularly care for. So I said I would prefer not to do it, but if I was ordered to do it, I would do it.

They did not pursue the matter and the curious thing was, this was 1958, that in two years time I went to Paris anyway, so it all worked out.

*Q: I would like to go back to the time that you were on the Desk, that year. You had some obvious perspective in this. You had been away and often you come back with a clear view. Had you felt there was any change in both Dulles and also NEA or a view of Nasser over this time? Or had it just been a steady downhill?*

STABLER: Mind you I had left just shortly after Farouk had disappeared from the scene, when Naguib was President in 1953. During the time I was in Rome I had very little or nothing to do with Egyptian affairs. The only thing that happened when I was in Rome was that Hank Byroade, Ambassador in Egypt, tried to get me to come Cairo as Political Counselor. Mrs. Luce refused to release me at that time, with my concurrence. So when I came back in 1957, it was really sort of a new ball game as far as I was concerned. One was always generally aware of what was happening and that the situation had radically changed and we were viewed with considerably suspicion, and hostility by the Egyptians. I can't recall, frankly, that very much really went on. I could never understand why it was necessary to have me, who had been dealing with the thing in quite a different context before, come back into a situation where there was really nothing much one could do. Anybody could have done it. As a matter of fact my replacement had very little knowledge or background on Egypt at all. There wasn't anything of importance that happened during the year I did this, maybe less than a year, that I did very little, indeed there just wasn't much to do.

*Q: Were you involved in putting our troops in Lebanon right after the upheaval of July 14, 1958 after the coup in Baghdad and the unrest in Lebanon when we sent the Marines in? Nobody was saying, "What are the Egyptians going to do if we do this?"*

STABLER: I can't remember anything like that. We were involved as we all were in things like that. It was, of course, very clear to all my colleagues at that time, we found this whole thing very excruciating. I think I went to Dulles once, which I found an unpleasant experience, this old man who totally ignored subordinates, he did not even bother to say "Good morning". I guess Ray Hare was the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs at the time. I really draw a blank on that period. I do remember being active in terms of the Beirut landing, but I think we all helped in what was going on in that situation. I don't recall anything of major significance involving Egypt.

*Q: Then you served a relatively short time again within Benelux affairs.*

STABLER: Then I went in early '58 to Swiss/Benelux Affairs which was interesting but relatively calm with no emergency that I can remember doing at that particular time.

Then I was shifted and became Officer in Charge of Italian/Austrian Affairs at the end of 1958 or 59 which was quite congenial to me because of my knowledge of the Italian

situation. I don't recall any outstanding specific questions that we dealt with. I dealt mostly with routine matters.

*Q: Did you notice any differences in how these two bureaus operated?*

STABLER: Not really, because in both cases the leadership...I think when I first joined the European Bureau in Swiss Benelux, as I recall the Assistant Secretary was a career man. The deputies all were. Frankly, I found both Bureaus basically well run. Perhaps the only major difference was that in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs because there were crises, one had a bit more contact with some of the people on top. While on the Swiss Benelux desk there was little contact with the people in the front office, more so when I came to Italy and Austria. There were Italian problems or Italian visitors or whatever...some crises occasionally over the Alto Adige between Austria and Italy.

*Q: This is over the German-speaking population.*

STABLER: What used to be the South Tyrol of the Austrian empire. The breakup occurred after World War I and remained a sore point between the Austrians right on through to post-World War II. And there were still efforts by the Austrians to get it back. The Austrians always point out the differences between Italians and those former Austrians living in the area. It is called the Alto Adige by the Italians and the Sud Tyrol by the Austrians.

But none of these were major problems requiring much attention at the Assistant Secretary level..

To go back a bit at the end of 1956, possibly early '57, I was instrumental while in Rome in bringing about change from a Social/Communist government to a democratic government in the independent Republic of San Marino which was in our jurisdiction, although the Consul General in Florence was formally accredited also as Consul General in San Marino. But I had been up to San Marino a number of times and found it amusing and got to know the people up there. At one stage in 1957...it was during the post-Hungarian Revolution of October 1956] ...and there were indications that one or two of the Socialists deputies supporting the Communist majority in San Marino were having some doubts about communist policy and their association. I was asked by my friend, Federico Bigi, who was the head of the Christian Democratic Party, to come up there and perhaps meet with a couple of these doubting Thomases and see if I could persuade them to leave the Social/Communist majority.

I went up there and went into a smoke filled backroom with a couple of these people and talked to them at some length. The two did leave the Social/Communist majority and for the first time in post-war Europe, a Social/Communist majority was thrown out in a democratic process. And for the first time since the war the Christian Democratic government supported by a couple of these deputies got a majority and became the government of San Marino. In '59, Bigi held the position of Foreign Minister in San

Marino and came over to this country. One of the reasons was that under San Marino law San Marino citizens who have become American citizens can vote in San Marino elections. He would come over to see San Marino communities, Sandusky, Ohio, is one. What he really wanted to do was to meet the President in order to show at home how important he and San Marino were.

I was told I could have three minutes with the President and would be drawn and quartered if I went over that time. So I took Bigi over myself, again for interpreting. So we were taken into the President. I had been told that he was extremely busy. I was able to take a look at his schedule and there wasn't a thing on it except a golf game. He became quite fascinated in the conversation and we were there for 15 or 20 minutes.

So, in any event in 1960, Bob McBride, who had become the Director of Western European Affairs, in which office I served, asked me if I would be interested in going to Paris to take charge of the Political Internal Unit there, to replace Dean Brown who later became Ambassador to Senegal and Jordan and Deputy Under Secretary for Management, I guess at one point...he had worked with Bob McBride in Paris.

*Q: Why don't we stop here. We will start with your going to Paris in 1960.*

*Today is May 6, 1991. This is a continuing series of interviews with Ambassador Wells Stabler. Mr. Ambassador we stopped the last time with you leaving Italian/Austrian Affairs (1959-60) and just getting assigned to Paris where you served for almost five years.*

STABLER: I was there from September, 1960 to July, 1965.

*Q: How did you get the assignment and what was it?*

STABLER: Well, in early '60, the question came up about the replacement of the officer in the Political Section in Paris who dealt with internal political affairs. At that time I was serving in the Office of Western European Affairs and Bob McBride was the Director. One day, out of the blue, he asked me one day if I would be interested in being the head of the Internal Political Unit in the Embassy in Paris. Obviously I thought that would be quite an interesting position and accepted with alacrity.

We then took off in September, my wife and four small children ranging from the ages of 1 to 6, I think it was at the time, for Paris. I then took over as head of the Internal Political Unit which consisted of myself, an assistant, and an officer who did purely biographical work. I had a secretary who was an American who had lived in Paris for years, spoke fluent French and who was really an absolute gem as far as Foreign Service Secretary are concerned.

At the time that I got there Randy Kidder was the Political Counselor and John Bovey was the number two man, who also did African affairs. Amory Houghton was the

Ambassador. He was a political appointee of Eisenhower and was only there a few months after I arrived. He left Paris the day before John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as President. Shortly thereafter Kennedy named General James Gavin, the President of Arthur Anderson Associates, as US Ambassador to France.

*Q: What was the political situation when you arrived, because this was a very turbulent period. If someone wants to report on French internal politics, you probably picked the greatest period since 1789.*

STABLER: Of course, by the time I got there de Gaulle had been firmly entrenched. The Fifth Republic was then underway. So many of the old line political leaders of the Fourth Republic were out of office. About all of them were studying ways and means whereby somehow they could get back into power. The Gaullists, so-called UNR -

*Q: That was his party.*

STABLER: Well, that was the Gaullist party. It was one of these organizations that was put together because of the position of de Gaulle. A great many people rallied around. There were other political parties represented in the Chamber of Deputies, but the Gaullists were by far in the majority.

My job really was to report on what was happening in the internal political picture. I spent quite a lot of time at the outset in establishing contacts with some of the leading Gaullists - not at the governmental level because those Ministers and so forth were dealt with by more senior officers in the Embassy. But I established contact with a group of some of the younger Gaullists who apparently wanted to establish communication with the Embassy. It was interesting because quite a number of these people, although they looked upon the United States with a certain degree of hostility because - my theory has always been that de Gaulle in order to revive the glories of France, etc. had to demonstrate France's total independence from the policies of any other country. But to be credible he had to demonstrate independence from the country which perhaps mattered most to the Western world at that time and that was the United States. So some of de Gaulle's attitude and that which was echoed by his followers was one of putting the United States at arm's length. They were very critical of American policy. I never had any personal problems with them and they seemed to be quite anxious to talk. I met with a lot of them over a period of time. I found particularly interesting that a great many of these, I don't remember the numbers now, had at one time had Leader Grants to the United States. So they were very familiar with the country, basically admired Americans and benefited from their stay in this country. In fact, in some of the political organizations of the Gaullist party they tried to copy some of the things we did in political campaigns - the idea of door-to-door canvassing at the grass root level. Some of these young Gaullists endeavored as time went on to get out amongst the people and establish a much closer identification between the party and the grass roots during campaigns, which was never the case at all in the politicking of the Fourth Republic.

De Gaulle was very much in the ascendancy and one of the reasons that General Gavin was selected as Ambassador was the fact that he had been a young General in World War II, had parachuted into France with his airborne division at some stage during that war, and had replied "Nuts" when at one point, possibly at Bastogne, the Germans demanded surrender. The thought was that as a World War II General he would get along well with General de Gaulle.

*Q: I think he came in on D-Day. I think he was one of the first people to land.*

STABLER: Maybe so. I think it was the 101st. Although he spoke no French at all and absolutely no previous experience in diplomacy, the theory I assume was, although it was never specifically stated, that here was a General in France that anticipated the liberation of France and you have a General as President of France and the two ought to get along very well. Well, that really didn't prove to be the case since he spoke no French. That, I think limited the ability to have direct, one-on-one conversations with de Gaulle and I just don't think that he was obviously up to the stature of de Gaulle in terms of international relations. In any event he was only there for a little over a year--I can't remember exactly how long, but it wasn't all that long.

Then Chip Bohlen came and things changed because de Gaulle had very great admiration for Bohlen and Bohlen spoke fluent French and he knew what he wanted.

It was a fascinating period. I got to know many of the leaders of the Fourth Republic--former Prime Ministers, etc. who were extremely anxious to maintain contact with the United States. They, obviously didn't play the role that they used to and therefore the Ambassador and DCM didn't really have time for them. Therefore, they were not only willing but very happy to have contact with even as modest a figure as a First Secretary. I found it most interesting. I kept the Department informed of some of their thinking, but the fact was that they were by that time completely out of the game and had really no influence whatsoever in what was happening in the Gaullist government.

One of the people that I used to see very regularly was the Secretary General of the Socialist Party, the SFIO, Guy Mollet who had had a considerable political career and been Prime Minister at the time of the British-French invasion of Egypt back in 1956.

But as an aside...I always found it a little strange with the way we do business. A lot of these people, such as Guy Mollet, and there were others who were leaders of the Fourth Republic, had had what you might call a fiduciary relationship with the United States and they indeed received some financial support from the US government. I would go to visit Guy Mollet and we would have a nice chat. The telephone would then ring and he would look up and smile at me and say, "Well, one of your colleagues is here to see me." We would have this revolving door act between myself and someone of the CIA station in Paris. He wouldn't know that I was there and I wouldn't know that he was coming. I found it quite frankly a rather embarrassing situation that the United States government would do well to avoid.

*Q: Was there any discussion about the CIA doing this type of thing...they were still politicians weren't they?*

STABLER: Yes, they were. Some of them, if not all of them, were in the National Assembly as the Chamber of Deputies was called in the Fifth Republic. I don't know for a fact whether they were still being kept on the payroll or whether the previous relationship enabled them, the CIA people, to receive perhaps a better degree of information than I had. I really never knew. I am not sure to what extent the Political Counselor in Paris knew all the details. I wouldn't necessarily tell the Political Counselor that I had an appointment with Mollet or former Prime Minister Antoine Pinay or whoever it was I was seeing, even with Francois Mitterrand with whom I had some contact, not much, but some...he was not my favorite in any event. I would go about my business as part of my mandate. But even after this occurred there was no coordination. It was one of those awkward things that I have always thought about because I always felt somehow one could avoid that type of embarrassment, at least not do it on the same morning.

*Q: You mentioned Francois Mitterrand was not one of your favorite people. He is now the President of France and has been for some time. How did you feel about him?*

STABLER: There was the feeling that he was somewhat of an opportunist; a bit "tricky"; now on this side of the situation, now on the other side. At the time I would see him he was not a Socialist. I think he was what was called a Radical, but certainly not in the Socialist camp. Later on he became a Socialist and their leader. I think the feeling was that his position on matters was never very clear and you were never really entirely sure where he stood on issues. People such as Guy Mollet, a Socialist; Pinay was in Independent; Maurice Faure was a Radical; Jean Lecanuet who was Christian Democrat, people of that sort you knew where they stood because they were what they were and in the political groupings they had been in for a long time. It was always my impression that they were much more solid than Mitterrand. The only difference is, of course, that the other gentlemen I speak of--Mollet is dead, Pinay may be dead - the last time I saw him he was a very old man, Maurice Faure, I guess, is still around--only Francois Mitterrand is President of France, so whatever he did, he obviously did quite successfully.

*Q: You were there during the very last part of the Eisenhower Administration.*

STABLER: Yes.

*Q: Did you get a feeling how Amory Houghton and others felt towards the Gaullist government and all at that time and was there a change when Gavin came out?*

STABLER: I don't think there was a great deal of change. I was there only the last months of Amory Houghton and he didn't speak French either. He had an extremely able DCM, Cecil Lyon, who spoke very good French. I wouldn't say that there was a great deal of difference in the relationship between the US and France, Eisenhower and de Gaulle, if



you will, and the beginnings of the Kennedy-Gavin-de Gaulle relationship. At least it wasn't obvious that there was any change. I think it became somewhat more critical later when de Gaulle marched out of NATO and when he refused the British entry into the Common Market. But then also a very significant point - when, in spite of all the differences we had with de Gaulle, he did stand up and was counted during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

*Q: October, 1962.*

STABLER: Dean Acheson came over to brief de Gaulle and de Gaulle in effect said, "We are with you." And I think that made a big impression. Also de Gaulle's personal participation in the Memorial Service in Paris for Kennedy and I believe he also came to the United States for the funeral. So in spite of all these major political problems with the French, the basic alliance, this sort of love/hate relationship that has existed between the United States and France was reconfirmed.

Jumping ahead a little to the assassination. It was interesting to see the lack of certainty on the part of the Gaullists as to what they should do. I happened to be in Nice at the time that Kennedy was assassinated attending the Gaullists' - UNR's - National Congress and was at a cocktail party given by some of the UNR members when I got word that Kennedy had been assassinated. The American Consul in Nice, Paul DuVivier I think it was at the time, and I immediately withdrew from the cocktail party. The next morning I went to a plenary session of the UNR in a huge big hall and as I walked down to my seat it was interesting to me to see who amongst my French Gaullist friends would stop and say something to me and which would somehow look the other way. It was surprising that some of the ones I thought the least friendly turned out to be the warmest in their expressions of sympathy and some who I thought were friends turned out to be rather chicken-livered.

*Q: Why would there be a problem?*

STABLER: Well, again, it was the whole question of the relationship of the United States. They were mixing up their human sentiments with their belief that somehow the Gaullist party was not all that close to the United States. This was even more apparent on the stage of this hall where there was a flag pole of one sort or another. When I came in the French flag was flying right up at the top. One could see that there was a discussion going on, which seemed to relate to the flag. It was only during the course of the morning that they apparently resolved their problem and brought the flag down to half staff.

Again this was this sort of love/hate relationship. Some obviously said what did this have to do with us, this is the Gaullist party congress and why should the French flag take into account at all what's happened. They did resolve this but it obviously took them some time to do so.

This, I think was not untypical of the dichotomy in their thinking in terms of the Gaullists at different levels. I think in the case of de Gaulle that he would not stoop to be quite so petty about something of this sort. I mean the grand gesture was part of his make up. There was an extraordinarily beautiful Memorial Service for Kennedy in the Cathedral of Notre Dame which my wife and I attended. De Gaulle came and it was really a very emotional moment in which de Gaulle most willingly participated. Of course that was in 1963.

*Q: Can we go back then to an earlier period?*

STABLER: Yes, I want to go back because it was a very important development. In the fall of 1961...because all during this period, from the time I got there in 1960 and '61, one of the major issues that de Gaulle had to deal with was this problem of Algeria. That had become an amazingly difficult thorn in the French side, the rebellion in Algeria, the inability of the French, in spite of large French forces, to bring it under control. There were very strong feelings on the part of many Frenchmen that it must always be "Algerie Francaise." Finally de Gaulle, recognizing that this was certainly not going to be resolved by force of arms, declared that he was going to leave Algeria for the Algerians. He had gone down to Algeria at some point and had made a speech from a balcony and, of course he was rather good sometimes with conundrums and the famous statement he made as he addressed the crowd, mostly French settlers or "pieds noirs" and said, "Je vous ai compris," -I have understood you. Well no one to this day really ever knew what he meant by that...I have understood that Algeria must remain French or I have understood that we aren't going to win this one and Algeria will become independent?

As a result of all this tension, there was the famous revolt of the generals in Algeria in the early fall of 1961. This was a very serious matter because these five generals and a good many of the units in Algeria turned against de Gaulle and rebelled against the central authority. That night Michel Debre , who was then the French Prime Minister - a Gaullist, of course, and a very faithful servant of de Gaulle - appeared on television...it was a wild appearance, he was unshaven...and urged the citizens of Paris to go by whatever means, horseback, car, whatever, out to Orly and Le Bourget, the two big airports, to prevent the landing of the aircraft that was expected to bring troops from Algeria to seize power in Paris. It was a very tense moment. I was in the Embassy and we heard noise of tanks coming across the Pont de la Concorde by the Assemblée Nationale on the Place de la Concorde . One really didn't know at that point whether these were tanks of the forces loyal to the generals or what they were.

It turned out that they were tanks and armored cars of the police forces and other forces loyal to General de Gaulle which had simply come into the Place de la Concorde to establish positions there. The night was extremely tense. I will mention one particular incident that I mention because it was perhaps not untypical of what happened.

There was a gentleman by the name of Maurice Ferro whom I had known in Washington when he was a correspondent for the great French newspaper, Le Monde. When I got to

Paris I resumed my contact with him. He was an avid Gaullist and he was instrumental in introducing me to many of the younger Gaullists who at that time had no ministerial positions but who were movers and shakers in the UNR and with whom I met many times. A number of them became good friends and some of them became Ministers later on. One of them became Minister of Interior, another a Minister of Posts, I think one of them became Secretary General of the UNR. All of them were dyed-in-the-wool Gaullists.

That night of the generals' revolt, I had a telephone call from Ferro asking if he could urgently meet me. I suggested that we have a drink at the Crillon bar and talk about things there. The thrust of his message was, "I am, of course, a loyal Gaullist; the generals are about to arrive in Paris, they obviously will arrest me and my family and goodness knows what will happen. Could you give me asylum?"

I said that unfortunately the United States had a policy against that, but that I would at least offer him and his wife safety in my house. My wife was away at the time. So they came to my house and spent the night there. By the time I got up at 6:00 the next morning, they had left because by that time it was known that the generals had failed to rally the citizens of France. They had not been able, therefore, to transport their rebellion to the mainland and it was already beginning to peter out even in Algeria.

I mention this only because as a result of this action by Mr. Ferro he was finished. The Gaullists said they wouldn't speak to him again. He had shown lack of faith and the white feather had been exhibited and he had denied his master, in a sense, believing that somehow de Gaulle wouldn't triumph. I don't know how many Gaullists suffered this way, but he certainly was finished. I never saw him again.

*Q: From your point of view how did the Embassy react to this situation? How did they see it? How were they calling it?*

STABLER: Well, of course, it was difficult because the only information that we had came really through the French television. I don't remember what was coming out of the Consulate General in Algiers. It was very timely as they knew what was happening. So, all we could do was to report what it was we were seeing and hearing in Paris. I think, if I recall correctly, the general view was that de Gaulle would probably carry the day because of his extreme basic popularity in France. While there were many Frenchmen who probably were - whom they used to call "pieds noirs" in Algeria - or had served in Algeria and had strong feelings in that direction about Algeria, but they didn't represent the majority of the French people. I think most of us probably felt that it was most unlikely that the generals would carry the day and that de Gaulle would be successful in putting this down. I don't recall now and I can't tell you because again the Ambassador was around...

*Q: The Ambassador was whom then?*

STABLER: Gavin. I don't recall to what extent we really did anything or said anything beyond letting it be known that our support was with de Gaulle. There was no question about that. I don't remember what may have come out of Washington at that time, but I seem to recall that the French government, de Gaulle and Gaullists, were very appreciative of what they considered to be our support for de Gaulle at this particular time.

*Q: France was still in NATO at the time.*

STABLER: Everything happened very quickly. Everything was over very quickly. The tense moment was that night and once nothing developed there then it was sort of down hill as far as the generals were concerned. The only way they could have imposed their will was by pushing de Gaulle out of office--by capturing de Gaulle. That didn't happen. Once that failed, then the rebellion, itself, began to peter out as far as Algeria was concerned.

There was no question then that they would have been able to set up a regime in Algeria and have it stick for very long without the support of the Metropole, supplies and what not that would be needed. Plus the fact that there were many units in Algeria that didn't respond to the generals' call. So I don't have any knowledge of what, if anything, our military...or NATO would have done. As I recall the Departments of Algeria were included in the original NATO boundary, because that was one of the things the French demanded.

It was relatively short-lived and you remember the generals were ultimately arrested and put on trial, etc.

This incident of course enormously strengthened de Gaulle's hand. He then was able to carry out domestically a number of things. It seems to me that at this point that there were then certain constitutional developments that took place in France which more or less perfected the Constitution of Fifth Republic in terms of the direct election of the President and things of that sort which, up to that point, had not been enshrined in the Fifth Republic.

*Q: After the 1961 night of the generals and all that, the next thing that occurs to me would have been the Cuban missile crisis where the United States and the Soviet Union were nose to nose. It looked like there was a very strong possibility that it might result in a nuclear war. How did we view that from the Embassy at that time?*

STABLER: The news coming out of Washington was increasingly threatening in terms of what seemed to be building up. The Embassy role in this at that point became one of being sure that the French were aware of what actually was happening. Of course, this type of situation was handled, obviously, at the very top level and beyond the news reports coming out of what was happening, the recognition in Washington was that it was

important that we bring all our allies on board and make them aware of actually what U-2 pictures showed. That, I think, was the mission that Dean Acheson had in coming over.

It seems to me that at the time the missile crisis took place Bohlen was there. I think that was true. He hadn't been there very long. So he then accompanied Acheson on the call on de Gaulle. The object behind this was, again, as I say, to take to de Gaulle the evidence we had. My recollection is that he rather pushed the evidence aside and said that we could be sure that France will stand shoulder to shoulder with the United States in a war situation. I think this was a very important aspect of the US-French relationship to know that in spite of all his varied differences with us and many other areas of the world on how things were being done...the idea of US hegemony and the like, which was part of the reason they left NATO...on major questions of war and peace the French remained our loyal ally. I don't think that anybody had any doubt that what de Gaulle said was what he meant. That was one of the very important milestones in the French-American relations.

*Q: In your dealing with the politicians, was this reflected too?*

STABLER: Yes, don't forget that the Fourth Republic politicians deplored everything that de Gaulle did. Therefore, they took the view that de Gaulle was mistaken in his attitude on everything. They obviously supported the United States. They probably didn't pay much attention to what Europe would do when he said they were with us. The Gaullists, themselves, I think were guided by what the General said. So some of them may not have been so much with us, but they obviously followed the leader. I think on the whole that you would say that the French political class, in any event, was clearly behind us and were supportive in this particular situation. I am not sure, now that I look back on it, to what extent the French people were really aware of the gravity of the situation.

Again, it came and went with a certain amount of speed --about a week. Then the horizons cleared again and we got back to business. Then it was after that that de Gaulle began taking positions with respect to NATO and keeping the British out of the Common Market. So his major blueprint carried on in spite of these various ups and downs--the Algerian thing, the missile crisis, the assassination of Kennedy, and the like. One has to draw a distinction here between the Gaullists and their attitude towards the United States and policy followed by de Gaulle and the attitude of the Fourth Republic politicians all of whom were, of course, increasingly frustrated because the years of participation in the goodies of government were gone. They were essentially non-players. De Gaulle paid little attention to them.

In all of this there appeared to be an increasing public dissatisfaction with the somewhat imperial nature of the Gaullist regime. And in spite of at least one assassination attempt on de Gaulle which I recall, which rallied people around a little bit, as the elections approached for the National Assembly in 1964, there was a very strong feeling...because one of my functions was to keep in close touch with the so-called political journalists, many of whom were products of the Fourth Republic...most of these commentators had

the feeling that as the elections were approaching the dissatisfaction with de Gaulle was increasing and that there was a good likelihood that the Gaullists would not get a majority in the next Assembly and would have to make some sort of a deal with some of the parties of the Fourth Republic who might begin to show life again.

The Political Section of the Embassy was fairly convinced that the Gaullists would not demonstrate the strength they had before. There was, however, a group which was a public opinion group, IFOP -"Institut Francais d'Opinion Publique" - run by a man named Sadoun, a very nice fellow, whom I knew well. Apparently the Gaullists had commissioned rather secretly a public opinion poll in connection with this election. Again, it is one of those things that is sort of regrettable, but there we are. At the time that I was preparing messages that would seem to indicate that possibly the Gaullists wouldn't do very well, the CIA station had managed to get a copy of the public opinion poll which they didn't share with anybody, which showed that the Gaullists would really do much better than expected. I wasn't made privy to this, so I went out on a limb somewhat and called it wrong.

The Gaullists really did extremely well which was a great surprise to most of the political commentators. But I will say that most of the political coverage was done by people who were fashioned, brought up in the Fourth Republic and who perhaps didn't have a great deal of love for the Gaullists because they were not as privy to what went on as they were during the Fourth Republic.

So the upshot of all this was that the Gaullists did quite well which was foreseen in this opinion poll. The polling institute was fashioned largely on the model of American public opinion institutes--Gallup and others--and introduced a whole new element into French political life because they turned out to be remarkably accurate.

That only demonstrates that the talk that one heard from many who were believed to be well in touch with what was going on reflected a dissatisfaction to what was happening in France...the character of the Fifth Republic. The dissatisfaction with the somewhat patronizing attitude of some of the Gaullist party leaders who were in the saddle and nothing else was riding except that. This irritated people. It cast over the situation the feeling, in any event, that there was growing popular dissatisfaction.

Well, that was 1964. It was so many years after that...I think it was about '66 or '67...when indeed all of this erupted and the students began to demonstrate. So, it was there, but hadn't yet simply come to the surface. I think some of us who dealt with these issues...I found this message I prepared on what I thought might be the outcome of the elections was one obviously which I didn't sign off myself...and I don't mean to say that anybody else shared the lack of vision that perhaps I had... but there wasn't any strong objection on the part of those who read the message--maybe that was misplaced faith in my abilities. But there didn't seem to be any strong sentiment that perhaps that wasn't correct.

But it did again show the unfortunate lack of coordination that exists in embassies between various units. If I had had access to the public opinion poll, in light of my recognition that the polling organization was pretty good, I would have been forced to take another look at what I thought was the situation.

*Q: How did Ambassador Bohlen operate and how well did he use the Embassy? How effective was he in dealing with de Gaulle and the French government?*

STABLER: I think when Gavin left and Bohlen came there was a general feeling that the Embassy was now in the charge of a real professional and would pull together in a much better way. I think that by this time--I can't remember if Randy Kidder was still there, about to go or had gone--we had a new Political Counselor, Norman Anschutz who had not had much experience in that particular area. Cecil Lyon was there as DCM with Bohlen for a while. When he left Bob McBride, who was very much a professional, came. The general feeling was that the Embassy would pull together and it operated in a much more coordinated way with some of these institutional imperfections that we don't seem to be able quite ever to deal with.

Bohlen turned to his staff. He knew who they were and used them. He also knew what he was doing. He had good relations with the French government and clearly had the respect of de Gaulle. So, while the circumstances basically didn't change, the ability of the United States to report, to influence to a certain extent, improved. Any foreign government is certainly inclined to deal with an embassy more effectively when it knows it is well lead. When the ambassador is not quite up to task then things begin to fall apart a bit and more is done in Washington, or what ever. One felt that when Bohlen came that things would concentrate more in the embassy. Bohlen was there during the missile crisis, when Kennedy was assassinated, etc. The fact was that he was there was an important factor in the stature of the Embassy vis-a-vis the French government.

We had very good relations with the Foreign Minister, Couve de Murville who was obviously an instrument of de Gaulle, there was no question about that. Eventually, I guess, he became Prime Minister at one point. Michel Debre was a tough character. He was enormously loyal to de Gaulle and carried out de Gaulle's wishes. I met him much later when he was no longer Prime Minister and found him delightful...very intelligent person and at that time no longer in office and able to take a slightly different view of things. I guess he was succeeded by Pompidou who was an enormously intelligent man and later became President of France. [I will go into that later on. I was assigned by the Department to accompany Nixon when he went to the Pompidou funeral in Paris--he was President and died in office.]

There was not a great deal that the Embassy could do in trying to shift de Gaulle away from certain basic things. De Gaulle decided in order to demonstrate French independence and his position as the glory of France that he would leave NATO. That was a policy that he was going to follow and there was not much that could be done by anybody to keep him from shutting the British out of the Common Market. At that

particular time we were still very much in support of the idea of a United Europe and the Common Market was part of that so the extension of the Common Market to include the British would be very much part of our policy line at the time. But those were problems on which de Gaulle was adamant and there was nothing that anybody could do to talk him out of it.

Although there were difficulties created for us by de Gaulle's rule in France, still France became a much more formidable ally and a better country as a result of what he did. After all, France was at the very bottom as a result of the war and their whole behavior and performance of that. De Gaulle brought France back up to a position of certain strength and prominence in world affairs, which I would think would be a much more valuable asset than a France that was totally divided under the Fourth Republic. That France could never make up its mind about anything, and the musical chairs that they played, which in that instance was a great deal more important than, for example, the political games that are played in Italy and haven't made a great deal of difference. In France they were simply wishy-washy and couldn't make a decision about anything.

*Q: Within our Embassy, economic and political reporters, maybe even CIA and military, did you find a division? De Gaulle raised a lot of hackles in the United States and people can't help but every once and a while not look at the great good even though they are professional Foreign Service officers, but to personalize these things. Was this a problem of having Gaullists and anti-Gaullists within our Embassy?*

STABLER: There was a great deal of frustration and annoyance with de Gaulle over some of the things that he did. No question that the military found it quite exasperating when it came to their efforts to have the same type of relationship with the French military that they had with the British military, for example. It became increasingly difficult as de Gaulle's policy changed. You couldn't find a great many prominent military people who thought that de Gaulle was their idol by any means. And, I think that also on the political-economic side there were certain divisions within the Embassy as to whether this was a good or bad thing. I think those of us in the purely internal side of the Political Section...as far as I was concerned, it was my feeling that what de Gaulle was doing in terms of building up the Fifth Republic was a good thing. Even though de Gaulle caused some problems, still his creation of a system which showed some stability and which was rationalized so that you weren't having these perfectly horrible political games with all these parties and inability to keep a government together, etc. was a very positive development.

His system came closer to our system. The difficulty was that in the French system there was the Gaullist party and then all the other parties. The lack of stability came from the fact that you had no alternating majorities--which may be the trouble in Spain today, the fact that the Socialists are in power but there really isn't a viable alternative. In the case of France, you had the Gaullists, which didn't have any meaningful opposition - that came later, of course, when the Gaullists unhappily fell apart. Now you have the Socialists in



France that are relatively well knit, but you did not have a viable alternative at that moment.

So, for the internal political side of France, I think the Embassy as a whole believed that this was a good development. Those dealing with external affairs would, of course, find considerable frustrations in terms of French position on foreign policy matters which very often didn't coincide with others. We have talked about the military side.

On the economic side, there were problems in French relations towards their colonies in Africa. We had problems with the French concerning economic bilateral relationships. They were perhaps not as serious as the military side. So what went on in the Embassy was a reflection of what was happening in France itself in the different positions that they took on different questions. There were many of us there who had to admire de Gaulle's ability to run an extremely difficult country.

I, of course, had nothing to do with de Gaulle, but just an amusing episode. When the Kennedys came to Paris in 1963 for the State Visit - I had known the President before and had known, perhaps slightly better, Mrs. Kennedy - but this doesn't matter, I think all the diplomatic officers were asked to the huge big white tie reception at the Elysée Palace following the State dinner. My wife and I went through the line and the Kennedys were very nice and greeted us warmly, particularly Mrs. Kennedy. Then we went into the large reception hall. The waters of the Red Sea parted as the two Presidents walked along, stopping every so often to speak to someone. I was standing at the corner where the line had opened up. As they walked down the corridor, Kennedy stopped to talk to somebody and de Gaulle who was a little ahead of him happened to stop where I was standing...we were shoulder to shoulder. So, I said a little something to him. I may have even said something to the effect that it was a little hot in there, which it was. He said he thought it was too and something to the effect that "tout le monde est ici" - everybody in the world is here. That was the extent of our exchange.

Out in the corridor just by the front door as we were leaving you have no idea the number of diplomatic colleagues, foreigners and Americans, who rushed up to me and asked what de Gaulle had said to me. I said, "Well, he said it was quite hot." They obviously thought I was getting the latest and last word on the Common Market or NATO or something. I was sorry to have to disappoint them.

*Q: Dealing with internal affairs, what were our standing orders as far as dealing with the Communists?*

STABLER: We had, of course, an officer in the political section who handled communist matters which was not only involved French relations with the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc countries but also reported on what was happening in the French Communist Party. We had somebody with both Soviet Union and Eastern European background. At that time the standing order was no contacts with the diplomats of the Soviet Union. Maurice Thorez was then secretary general of the French Communist Party. As I recall, at that particular time, there was no contact with the Communist Party. I must say that my

mandate as head of the internal political situation covered everything but the Communist Party. That was always dealt with by a different officer. So what was reported was what observers said, what Thorez said, and what could be learned from whatever source about the French Communist party.

*Q: What was our feeling about the whole communist threat of France? Did we see it as a viable, political threat?*

STABLER: No. I think that the days of the communist threat had been years before. By the time the Fifth Republic had come into being and de Gaulle was firmly in power the Communist Party was not a major threat. Of course, the Communist-controlled labor confederation- the CGT- was big and had great influence in the various trade unions. But the whole thrust of the Fifth Republic had been to diminish the position strength of traditional parties and the communist control of the labor movement. The Communist Party was not, at the time I was there, a serious threat. There were strikes, but I don't recall anytime during the five years I was in Paris when one was concerned about the potential of the Communist Party to do any serious damage. The elections results gave them small numbers. They were stronger, of course, than the Socialists at that time. They still were watched with considerable attention because they were clearly a Stalinist party, supported by the Soviet Union and therefore represented potentially a threat. But not a serious threat during that time.

*Q: ....I can remember we had youth officers who were to make contact with the youth of the country because they were considered to be the people who were to come up. And we did this in 1967. How did this kind of approach affect your work?*

STABLER: Let me just say one more thing about the Communists. One always has to remember that the entire Communist Party position to take over Western Europe, had been also considerably compromised by the uprising in Budapest. So that still had a considerable effect on the activities and strength of the Communist Party. There was disillusionment on the part of many who had been in the Communist Party by the Hungarian events. Perhaps a little bit less than in Italy because the French Communist Party was much more Stalinist, much more rigid than the Italians who after Budapest were more disillusioned by Communism.

I don't really recall that in France, at the time I was there, that the Bobby Kennedy syndrome had really much effect on what went on in France. I don't recall, for example, that any youth officers were specifically designated. I had an assistant, Francis de Tarr, a Foreign Service Officer who had studied France in the previous Republics and who had as an undergraduate written a book on the Radical Socialists. He was somewhat younger and kept in touch with some of the younger political people. He was very much affected by his own intimate knowledge of the Radical Socialist leaders of the Fourth Republic. I think he had some trouble in equating with de Gaulle because he had an in depth knowledge of one of the major elements of the Fourth Republic.

I don't recall that he was designated to deal with youth, so-called. We had a very active Leader Grant program. One's efforts always were, of course, to try to identify potential younger leaders we thought would have a future and bring them into the Leader Grant program. The thrust of it all was not to preach to the converted but to find people who had serious misconceptions about the United States. We believed - and this was a principal objective of the Leader Grant Program - that by inviting such people to the US, by letting them travel around and see the country and meet a whole range of Americans, the Grantees might come back with a better appreciation of our country. We aimed at people in their middle 20's and 30's who perhaps would play a leader role in the future in France. I think that on the whole we had considerable success with the Leader Grant Program. I know that several of those Grantees became Ministers in a Government under de Gaulle and that their attitude towards us was much more friendly than if they had never been to the US.

*Q: One more thing before we leave France, I never served in France and like other places except even more so in Europe, the intelligentsia, which we don't have in the United States, at least one that plays a role...within Europe everybody knows what/who it is. Could you talk a little about our dealings with it and how they looked upon the United States and how we evaluated this?*

STABLER: There was a division within the intelligentsia--those who supported de Gaulle and those who thought he was an aberration. You would see this reflected in *Le Monde*, which is an interesting and thoughtful newspaper. The writers had mixed feelings on the subject of how France should be governed. Also mixed feelings in terms of relations with the United States. There was no difference between them and other elements of society with equal levels of education. When I traveled in France I never experienced any degree of hostility about the United States. I think the average citizen looked upon the United States as a friendly country.

The intelligentsia regarded de Gaulle as somewhat of an upstart and not quite in their sort of mold. Bohlen, I think had a certain contact with a lot of these people. But, again, I am not sure to what extent they really influenced the course of events. They wrote an enormous amount of literature, of course, about every subject known to man, but I don't think de Gaulle was to be dissuaded from what he thought was the right course of action by the preachings of some of the intelligentsia who didn't agree with his views at all and others who did. They didn't play a very significant role in terms of what de Gaulle was trying to do. He set his course and on he went.

But I think those five years were very interesting years because of the position that I occupied most of the time that I was there--head of the internal political unit. Towards the end I was acting political counselor for a short period of time. I left in July, 1965. I didn't sit in the councils of the Ambassador, in terms of being head of a section. Apparently they were satisfied with what I was doing, but it was largely a reporting responsibility and not one of collaborating with the Ambassador and setting or recommending policy. I worked hardly at all with Gavin. I worked more with Bohlen because, again, one was dealing with

a professional. And Bohlen was personally responsible for my promotion from FSO-3 to FSO-2. He went to bat for me and I received it.

*Q: A very important promotion under the old system. The equivalent of going from a colonel to a brigadier general.*

STABLER: Bohlen apparently was amazed when he learned I was not a FSO-2 (I didn't know this until later) and personally went to bat for me. So I think I got FSO-2 just shortly before I left Paris--then FSO-1 followed fairly quickly there after.

*Q: The surprising thing is that you keep going back to where you started. You keep getting promoted but you were sent back to the Italian, Austrian and Swiss Desk--1966-69.*

STABLER: Yes, although that was slightly different then. From Paris I went to Senior Seminar and by that time you were called Country Director--they changed the titles. I think I got FSO-1 when I was doing that. It is quite true I had had Italian Affairs before, but that I didn't mind because it was an interesting area of Europe and I ended up as Minister in Rome.

*Q: Just to touch on this and then we will stop. So really from 1967 to '69 you were dealing with Italian, Austrian, Swiss affairs. What were your major concerns?*

STABLER: I want to mention just briefly my time at the Senior Seminar because it was really a very worthwhile experience. I was uncertain when I was chosen as to whether it was a plus or minus. It was presented, obviously, as being the equivalent of the War College, as it was then called. The head of it, the Coordinator, was FSO Lewis Jones, with whom I had worked very closely in the early 50's when he was Director of Near Eastern Affairs. He was a man of quite vivid imagination. That year we spent in the Senior Seminar was the time that civil rights was very much on the table and we did a lot of traveling in this country. We went a great deal into this question of civil rights. It was a marvelous eye-opener -- learning something about your own country. We had many different aspects of it. People would come in and talk about modern American art, about music, about literature, an extensive review of what was happening in this country.

In the winter of 1966 we were given the opportunity to visit parts of the world we didn't know. I had an absolutely fascinating month-long trip to the Far East and did a paper on the strategic circle around China. Then we all went to the White House and were given our diplomas by President Johnson in an effort to maximize this particular course. It is one that I am sorry has perhaps lost some of the respect - even glamour - that it should have had..

*Q: I took it almost exactly ten years later--1974-75. It was still a very good course. I learned a lot about the United States, but we didn't see the President. Money was cut so there wasn't as much travel, although you could move around quite a bit.*

STABLER: It is just one of those things. I think the Department always makes a mistake when it creates something of this sort. It ought to then stick with it and decide that that is a good thing and make the money available so that those who are taking this course are in effect recognized for what they are supposed to be. Not have it cut back all the time and lose its stature with other branches of government and vis-a-vis the War College.

Anyway, I wanted to mention that because I felt it was a great year.

In 1966, I was then asked if I would be interested in being Country Director for Italy, Austria, and Switzerland. I felt that was fine because I wanted to remain in Western Europe. So even though I had done somewhat the same thing before, I didn't have the same feeling that I had had previously about having to go back to Near Eastern Affairs.

It was an active period because during that time, from the fall of '66 to the summer of '69, when I went back to Rome as Minister, we were taking more seriously in Italy the question of enlarging the base of democracy. It had always suffered because although the Christian Democrats remained the biggest party in the Italian political spectrum, they never had enough to really form an absolute majority so they were always dependent on the three so-called lay parties, the Liberals, Republicans and Social Democrats, who were very small in number. The question was could you not somehow encourage a further development of the Socialists - away from the Communists - and bring the Socialist Party into the democratic spectrum, and thus make it possible perhaps ultimately to have a Socialist Prime Minister, but where the base of the democratic system would be larger than it was. This was debated back and forth and ultimately it was decided that we could support this opening to the left--"Apertura a Sinistra", as it was called in Italian. Of course, those who didn't favor it at all regarded it as moving the Christian Democrats to the left and those of us who believed that you were working toward increasing the democratic base argued that .by opening to the left you were opening the opportunity to the left to move to the democratic center. Ultimately that was the policy that was approved.

I can remember at that point there was a very complicated hierarchy at the National Security Council consisting of different types of committee. I don't remember all the various ins and outs of that, but all these things went through the whole stage of National Security Council consideration and ultimately approval. This was one of the principal matters that we dealt with.

Also at that time it seems to me that we also agreed that there could be limited contacts, very controlled, with the Communist Party. That was then endorsed. Not a National Security Council decision as I recall, but simply a determination made, perhaps at the level of Under Secretary for Political Affairs, to make possible at least some form of contact with lower level members of the Italian Communist Party.

And, of course, during that time there were the usual visits of Italian Presidents, and the unending effort to try to satisfy the Italian desire to participate in different things. You would have these four-power meetings before the talks with the Soviets on Germany. The Foreign Ministers of the four Western powers would get together, the Germans, British, French and ourselves and you would have these angry screams from the Italians saying, "What about us?" We would scramble around to try somehow to keep them happy because in spite of the fact that there were those who, not incorrectly, believed that the bilateral talks with the Italians never produced anything particularly, Italy had been and still was an extremely good ally. There was a lot of real estate in Italy occupied by US troops. They had access to various ports in Italy--the Sixth Fleet. We had Air Force units, even our atomic artillery, in Northern Italy. They were a loyal member of NATO.

*Q: I might add, this has continued to this day.*

STABLER: It has indeed. They acted immediately to take in the Air Force units coming out of Spain. So I think those of us dealing with Italian affairs spent a lot of time during that period of trying to get the upper levels of government to recognize that while in some instances this might be a nuisance, there was a very good political reason for making the Italians feel that they were participants on the same level as some of these other countries.

*Q: Almost built into your job was that you had to be kind of a prickly character within European Affairs--to be watching all the time that the Italians weren't slighted.*

STABLER: There would be situations where without any consultation with me decisions would be made--we are going to have this quadrilateral meeting. Then the Italians found out about it. The Ambassador would come rushing in to see the Assistant Secretary and the Minister would come rushing in to see me. I would then be called by the Assistant Secretary asking what we could do about this. Then I would have to write memos and lobby round to get the people up the line to recognize that they just had to do it. One also had to be careful that you didn't wear out your welcome and still make clear that this was a serious problem touching on genuine US interests - that you were not just regarded as an agent of the Italians, but that there was a good justification from the US interest point of view to do this. Those were the major things with the Italians.

I don't remember a great deal that went on with respect to Austria. During that time we did have a visit of the Chancellor of Austria, Chancellor Klaus . Relations were on the whole on an even keel. I think the Chancellor's visit was part of the effort to have various European leaders come. There wasn't much that developed from that trip. The only thing I found rather surprising was that we had asked the Chancellor to come to New York and fly to Chicago and then out to California as part of the trip. The Washington and New York visits went well.

Then I was absolutely horrified to discover before it all took place that for the portion from here to Chicago, California and back they had given the Chancellor a rather small propeller driven plane. I got in touch with the White House and asked why we were insulting this gentleman, a guest of the President, by sending him on an executive

propeller plane that is going to take a month of Sundays to go from point A to point B. Well, they said they didn't have any planes available, they were all being used. I said that perhaps some general would have to give up his jet. They then offered a jet without windows. I didn't think that was very nice to ask this man to come to the United States, fly across it and not be able to look out a window while doing so.

The upshot of it was that nothing worked and they produced a propeller-driven plane that took us from Washington to Chicago and then we had to borrow a Gulf Oil executive jet to do the rest of the trip. I never got over that. Again it was one of those things that was so unnecessary. And again where one branch of government doesn't care much about what another branch is doing.

Most of our problems with the Swiss at that time had to do with two things. One was the drafting of Swiss citizens into the US armed forces--Vietnam was still on. The other was the cooperation of the Swiss with us in tracking organized crime through Swiss banking accounts.

The first problem was of interest because there was a Treaty of Commerce, Friendship, and Navigation between the United States and Switzerland that went back many years--maybe as far back as the late 1800s--which clearly exempted citizens from service in the armed forces of the other nation. The Swiss would say that they had a treaty with us and that Swiss citizens could not be drafted into the US armed forces. We would say that that was very nice of course, but that there was an act of Congress that required all permanent residents of this country to register and be subject to the draft. The Swiss would reply that that was domestic legislation while this was an international treaty. We would say that under our system a subsequent law overturns a previous law.

We found ourselves in a total bind. Congress was not the least bit sympathetic to the fact that we had a treaty, so we continued to draft Swiss citizens who had green cards, were permanent residents in this country but not US citizens. I think some were sent to Vietnam and one killed there. We never resolved it in my day. I always felt it was strange that a treaty could be overturned by a subsequent purely domestic law which does not take into account the treaty obligations.

*Q: A little background on that. I went out in 1969 as Consul General in Saigon. We had some of these problems. There was the element that a person who said he was a permanent resident, which meant they could live in the United States forever, could say that he didn't want to be a permanent resident anymore, I want to go back. They would then give up all chance of becoming an American citizen, which, of course, was not what they wanted to do. There had been considerable problems with this. It all started with a singer called, I think, Dick Haynes, who was born in Argentina and stayed out of World War II because of this. It was not as clear cut. It was used by a good number of people to avoid the draft.*

STABLER: There is no question about that. The only thing is that the treaty very clearly said that the citizens of one country do not have to serve in the armed forces of another. These citizens were still citizens. They lived in this country permanently, but they didn't have the vote. They had the advantages of everything but voting. We should have demanded the renegotiation of the treaty to cut this out, which, of course, would have meant American citizens ultimately would have been put into the Swiss armed forces. But I always thought it rather strange that you could unilaterally legislate a change in an international treaty.

*Q: This, of course, has always been a problem. We have had a running one with France. Were there any problems with Austria?*

STABLER: No, not really that I can recall. No major problems. I really didn't spend a great deal of time on Austrian affairs because the situation was on the whole fairly normal. The state treaty was carried out quite faithfully. The only thing that I found nice was that the Austrian DCM ultimately became my colleague in Madrid when he became the Austrian Ambassador.

*Q: Then why don't we leave it here and we will start with a tour that I am anxious to talk about, particularly your Ambassador while you were DCM in Rome.*

*Q: Today is June 26, 1991 and this is a continued interview with Ambassador Wells Stabler. Well we are now coming to the period of 1969-1973 when you were Deputy Chief of Mission in Rome. How did you get that job. You had been in the Italian, Austrian and Swiss desk which was sort of a repeat for you. You must have looked forward to getting out.*

STABLER: I had always enjoyed the close association with Italy and while at the Senior Seminar I was offered the Country Director of Italy and Austria. As I wanted to stay in Western Europe at that particular point in the game the offer seemed fairly good. So I was in that job from 1966-69. In December of 1967 Lyndon Johnson decided to remove Freddy Reinhardt as Ambassador to Italy.

*Q: What was behind that removal?*

STABLER: He was a career officer and had been in Rome already for I think four or five or maybe more years. Johnson had gone out to the Far East to be with the troops in Vietnam over Christmas of 1967 and on the way back he wanted to go to Rome to see the Pope. That was, let's face it, sort of a political stop.

Freddy Reinhardt sent a message indicating that in light of our relations with Italy it was absolutely unthinkable that the President of the United States should come to Rome to see the Pope only and not to call on the President of Italy. He made this argument with some force and obviously was backed up by the State Department. So Johnson did it, but was apparently annoyed that he had to do so. A call was arranged on the President of Italy at



the Castel Porziano, which was the country place outside of Rome which was reserved for the President of Italy. Johnson out there, spent a relatively short time with the President and left. Then, of course, he also saw the Pope.

Apparently Johnson, who liked to have things done his way, was irritated with Reinhardt that he made him also go to see the President of Italy. It was within very few days after Johnson returned to the States that he determined that he was going to remove Reinhardt. I had the somewhat unpleasant task of calling Reinhardt up in the mountains of Italy where he was skiing over New Year's. - I think I had to call him New Year's Eve - and tell him that the President was going to request an agrément for a new Ambassador who was going to be Gardner Ackley.

Gardner Ackley at that point was the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors to the President. Gardner had been a Fulbright professor in Rome quite a few years before that. While he was there, and he told me the story a number of times, he and his wife did a good deal of walking around and they used to walk around the outside of the grounds of Villa Taverna which was the residence of the American Ambassador in Rome. They fell in love with Rome and fell in love with the idea of Villa Taverna. So as the time came to move along from the Council of Economic Advisors he sought the appointment as Ambassador to Rome. This happened to fit into Johnson's plans to get rid of Reinhardt and give something to Ackley.

So that is what happened. I then was very much involved in the early part of 1968 in the briefing of Gardner Ackley. We became good friends. In early 1969, after Nixon had been inaugurated, one of the first appointments that he made as Ambassador was that of Frank Meloy who was DCM in Rome. He was named as Ambassador to the Dominican Republic. The reason for that was that when Frank Meloy was DCM in Rome, Nixon visited there as a private citizen and in some missions that he visited not much attention was paid to him. But Frank Meloy made a particular effort to be nice to him and to brief him and to have something at his house in his honor that paid him a compliment as former Vice President. This made a great impression on Nixon. Those who had not been nice to him quickly found themselves out of office, those who had been nice to him quickly found themselves either with a better Embassy or as in the case of Frank Meloy with their first Embassy.

So that position of DCM Rome became vacant. Because of my association with Italy and my friendship with Gardner Ackley...he obviously had something to do with my assignment as DCM in Rome. That is the background of how I got to Rome.

I went to Rome in June, 1969. Frank Meloy had already left. Ackley was still Ambassador. It was in August of 1969 that we received a message at the Embassy announcing the request for agrément for Graham Martin as Ambassador. I had the sad duty of informing Gardner Ackley that this was the case.

*Q: Well, he must have been prepared for this with a change in the Administration.*

STABLER: He was dreading this because he had only been there about a year. He was looking for possible ways to stay on.

*Q: I remember later I was there when Richard Gardner was Ambassador and he somehow hoped he would make it through with the Reagan Administration. Of course, it never would have happened.*

STABLER: All do. John Volpe thought the same thing. There are many instances in which it is quite clear they are not going to stay on because they come from different parties.

As always the Department said they must have the agrément immediately. I think I broke all records and got it for them in three hours. That was done by calling one of my friends and contacts at the Quirinale, Palace of the President of Italy. It was Piero Marras who was press spokesman to President Saragat and also very close to him. He made an end run and personally called Saragat who was out of Rome and obtained oral agreement. So within three hours I was able to cable back that agrément had been given. Then we did the more formal request through the Foreign Office.

*Q: For the record I might just mention that before any country sends an ambassador they get an approval (agrément) before any announcement is made just in case for some reason the ambassador might not be receivable at the other place, which happens from time to time.*

STABLER: Basically it is a courteous request for acceptance of an Ambassador by the foreign country.

*Q: Graham Martin certainly later in his career had a controversial reputation about being a difficult man to work for. At this time, before he arrived, how was the news that he was going to be ambassador received by you and by others in the Embassy?*

STABLER: I can't remember now whether I have been over this before, but when I was in Senior Seminar in '65-'66 I made a trip for the first time ever for me to the Far East. Among the places I visited was Bangkok where Graham Martin at that time was the Ambassador. I remember going to lunch, my wife and I, with the then DCM and his wife. The entire meal was spent first by the wife before her husband returned home and then by both of them at lunch, in telling us what an extremely difficult and disagreeable person Graham Martin was and how impossible it was to work with him.

This meant nothing to me then. I had met Martin briefly when I was there as part of my paper I was preparing for Senior Seminar. But one files these things away in one's memory and so, of course, when I was handed the telegram asking for the agrément for Graham Martin, naturally all of this fluttered back into my memory. My first reaction was, "Oh, Lord, what have I done to deserve this."

And in fact, of course, much of what the DCM in Bangkok said (Jim Wilson) turned out to be true. The betting in Washington was about 99 to 1 that I would be out on my ear within a very few days after Martin arrived there. But that didn't turn out to be the case. I was there before Martin arrived, I was there during his entire time and I was there after he left. We had a professional relationship in which we each did our job. But he was an extremely difficult person.

More interesting perhaps than that is the political equations of that time. I think I mentioned this previously - the view in Washington up until early '69 was that democracy in Italy would only really be consolidated if somehow the Socialist Party, which in the immediate post-war period was so closely linked with the Communists that we referred to the two parties as the Social Communists, could be brought within the democratic majority. This meant that the Christian Democrats, which was the largest party, at times had an absolute majority but at other times it didn't and depended upon the fortunes, sometimes rather low fortunes, of the three lay parties--the Social Democrats, the Liberals and the Republicans--which were all very small parties, but which provided that little bit that was necessary to give the Christian Democrats at least a working majority in the parliament. The feeling was that the opening to the left, which some people, of course, believed meant moving the Christian Democrats and everybody towards the extreme left, whereas a lot of us, myself included, thought that phrase meant opening the situation to a point where the Socialists would be gradually brought into the democratic camp. You would have, thus, a center/left government where the Socialists would become another version of the Social Democrats.

This had gradually taken place over a period of time and so when I went to Rome we had that situation. Previously when I had been in Rome we had virtually no contact with the Socialists, but now we did because they had become players within the democratic arena. We extended, enlarged and improved our contacts with the Italian Socialist Party. It was something that was also agreeable to the Social Democrats with whom we had had a very close relationship.

But the Republicans took quite a different view of this thing. In September or early October, 1969, before Graham Martin came but after Gardner Ackley had left, I was for a period of time Chargé d'Affaires. John Volpe, who was then Secretary of Transportation, came to Rome as local boy makes good. He originated from the southeastern part of Italy. He came to Rome in a kind of triumph as Secretary of Transportation. They gave him a medal and wined and dined him. He was in seventh heaven. But he was very critical of the policy of the opening to the left. He made it very clear that he didn't think that was the right policy to follow. In his view he was also abetted by a man named Pierre Talenti, an American of Italian origin who lived in Rome and was very wealthy. He had somehow become the representative of the American Republican Party in Italy and had early on in the Administration formed a linkage with the White House through Al Haig, then deputy to Henry Kissinger, who was the National Security Assistant.

Talenti was quite right wing and he assumed a role in Rome with respect to US policy, curiously enough an unofficial emissary. He was very critical of me because he believed I was betraying the cause by supporting the notion of this opening to the left.

It turns out that Martin, who had not had an Embassy since Bangkok, he had been in charge of the Alliance for Progress under Johnson which was an effort to improve relationships with the other American republics, had persuaded the powers that be that he was just the man, because he was tough as nails, to bring about a shift in Italian politics and put things back on the track of center/right and to remove the Socialist from their position of participation in the government. He was given the mandate by Nixon apparently to go to Rome and correct the situation. So that was the situation when he arrived at the end of October, 1969.

*Q: I might just parenthetically say that there is an interesting parallel for anybody who is studying this period. I was in Athens about this time, 1970, and there was a man in Athens who more or less had the same role your Talenti had, named Tom Messeri. He was of obvious Greek origin. He was very close to at that point the dictatorship of the colonels. He was in many ways also an unofficial emissary of the Republican Party. I later served him a subpoena during the Watergate thing because of this. This represents an interesting look at the Nixon foreign policy in Europe.*

STABLER: Yes, I remember the name Tom Messeri, but I can't remember now what the circumstances were. It may have been in connection with Athens, but...I guess maybe it was because he was there for some time.

*Q: Oh, he was there for a long time. He was extremely powerful. Well, how did you deal with this situation--a difficult Ambassador and you were following a policy which obviously was opposed by the President?*

STABLER: Well, what happened, of course, was that Martin arrived and he made very clear that that was what his mission was. But he had an unusual way of going about these things. Rather typical of Martin was the fact that he arrived in Italy on an Italian ship while American ships were still going in to Italy. But he was able to wangle on medical grounds permission to travel on an Italian ship. My wife and I went down to meet them. But he was not one given to easy conversation, so what we did was to put them in their car and my wife and I in our car. We didn't ride together. I was able to get up to the Villa Taverna, where they were to live, before they arrived so I was there to greet them when they came.

To continue, his method of operation was to deal with relatively few people. On the whole he more or less kept me informed of what was going on, although there were instances when I was not. He controlled everything even to the point of how had I allowed them to paint the fountains in front of the Chancery some color. Actually I had not been consulted about it and made the mistake, for example, of saying that I assumed he had given the approval. Well, he said I shouldn't assume anything.

My point is that he was so involved in certain details that I had every reason to believe that they wouldn't have dared paint...

*Q: He came from an administrative background.*

STABLER: Well, he was the first person to receive the rank of Counselor for Administration in Paris when he worked for Jefferson Caffery, and his one point in life at that point was to make the Ambassador happy. With Caffery it was not always easy. I am very fond of Jefferson Caffery who with his wife was actually in Rome retired and living at the Grand Hotel at the time we speak. Martin was something of a wheeler and dealer in that area and obviously did all sorts of things which made the Ambassador's life in Paris comfortable, etc.

So he was involved in minute details. But on the more important side, the political side, he chose not to learn any Italian, he chose to have very little really to do with the leaders of the political parties. The Secretary General of the Christian Democratic Party, who is a person of great importance in Italy, he chose to meet maybe once while he was there and that was in my house. He didn't even want to ask him to the Residence. There was just the three of us and I did the interpreting.

He closed off lots of people to a point I found embarrassing because foreign ambassadors would indeed ask me-- "Are you in fact the ambassador? We think you have an ambassador, we never see him, so we wonder if perhaps you really are."

He would chose certain people whom he thought had particular power in wheeling and dealing basically. And amongst those were Pierre Talenti, whom I have spoken about; Michele Sindona who was an Italian financier; General Miceli, who was the head of the Italian counterpart to our CIA; and Archbishop Marcinkus, the Vatican's banker. Of those people, Pierre Talenti was eventually forced to flee Italy because of involvement in things he shouldn't have been involved in. Sindona was ultimately arrested for financial speculation of one sort or another and then committed suicide. Miceli was arrested and put in jail for illegal activities. Archbishop Marcinkus was under all sorts of investigations as to some of his dealings involving the Vatican's Bank.

But these were all people who had at that time certain degrees of power. In the case of Talenti, of course, because of his links with the White House, Martin felt it desirable to get close enough to him in order to try to prevent him from doing things behind Martin's back. The fact of the matter was that Martin discovered he did do things behind his back in the White House, which of course infuriated him.

In connection with the elections, I'm jumping ahead but this is sort of the overall picture I am trying to give you...in 1972 national elections were held--previous to that there had been elections for the presidency which came out all right. Then there were national parliamentary elections. At this point Martin decided that although we had long since

ceased to have any fiduciary relationships with some of the political party (there had been from the immediate post-war through the 60s a very large CIA program in Italy which had come to an end), if he was going to give effect to the President's mandate, then he must have a program.

So he went back to Washington and received authority to commit up to ... I forget the exact figure now but I would guess under \$25 million program in Italy. He was able to persuade those who dealt with these things in Washington to give him the sole authority to handle the program. This, of course, was a great blow to CIA which always under previous situations through their station chief had the authority to make the final sign off with, of course, the approval of the Ambassador. But in this instance the chief of station had nothing to say with respect to the final sign off. That was to be done by the ambassador.

So money was distributed around--quite a lot of it, I may say, going to General Miceli, for whatever uses he felt he should put it to. As luck would have it, and I say luck really in a way because I don't know that the program made all that much difference really...as luck would have it the elections turned out in a way that the majority could be formed by the center/right. In other words, the Christian Democrats formed a government with the Liberals, the Republicans, and the Social Democrats. The Socialists were out. Christian Democrat Andreotti became Prime Minister. He was a person who some people believe was center/right. Others thought that he played in whatever areas were necessary to give him the Prime Ministry. He happened to be a very good friend of mine. I had known him since the early 50's when I was in Rome the first time. He is a very astute person.

*Q: He is still at the very center of things.*

STABLER: When I say I knew him in the 50's, he was influential in the early 50s with de Gasperi and we are talking now almost 40 years ago ... he has played an important role in Italian politics for 40 years in one form or another. He plays the game of Italian politics. I have no doubt that all Italian politicians, no matter what their stripe, have had dealings in parliament with the Communist Party.

In any event, Andreotti became Prime Minister and I am only amused by an incident - there was an American sculptress in Rome who was a medalist making medallions, plaques, etc. Under Andreotti's commission she had sculptured a little plaque with the Trevi Fountain, one of the monuments of Rome. She struck it in gold and silver and Andreotti would give these things to departing Ambassadors, etc. I was pleased to note that when Martin left he was given the silver plaque, when I left, Andreotti gave me a gold one.

Just to finish that up, it wasn't very long thereafter that then the situation reverted and that center/right government didn't last a very long time. By the time Volpe came as Ambassador in January, 1973, very shortly thereafter the thing moved back to the center/left, and ultimately, of course, an Italian Socialist became Prime Minister.

*Q: A little about where this money was distributed. You mentioned this General Miceli. If I recall, he was involved with what amounted to a rather right wing secret military intelligence organization, or something.*

STABLER: I must say that developed more or less after I had left, but there was the whole thing involving Masons, and I don't know what, a sort of secret group. Some people were concerned that they might have been involved in trying to pull off a coup d'etat or something of that sort. Actually while I was in Rome there was a bungled effort by an Italian war hero of World War II, a former Naval officer, Valerio Borghese, who had the Medaglia d'Oro which was the Italian equivalent of our Congressional Medal of Honor.

*Q: Was he the one that blew up one of the ships in Alexandria harbor?*

STABLER: He may have been. He was very right wing. At one stage, maybe 1972, I don't remember the date now, but we had wind of some plot, some coup organization being put together. It was never very clear to me just exactly what went on there. My recollection is that Pierre Talenti was involved in some way. We, to my knowledge, were not, although Miceli probably knew about it. We also had an Army Attaché, Clavio by name, who was very close to Martin, and who was close to Miceli and acted as a conduit for Martin and Miceli. It is possible that somehow information concerning this coup came through that channel. It may have been one where these people were trying to involve the Embassy in it because of what they believed to be Martin's right wing tendencies. That cast some questions around as to what exactly we were up to. This never really amounted to anything. The thing was discovered and people were arrested and it came to nothing. But it did raise questions in one's mind as to what people like Miceli and Talenti were up to.

*Q: I find it interesting. Martin was not an Italian expert.*

STABLER: Not at all.

*Q: He apparently wasn't relying on his staff, including you, to get briefed as well as one might.*

STABLER: Well, don't forget that he had sold himself on the basis that he could change things around so he was going to do that irrespective. He had certain people he listened to. He was not one who easily accepted advice when he thought he was right - and he indicated to me more than once that he was most always right in his judgments. He then moved ahead on this particular political line. It was very difficult to argue with him on the subject because he was determined that this was what he was going to do.

He, of course, also devoted a lot of time to considering and dealing with matters relating to US military presence in Italy. And I will say this for him, I learned something from him which I found useful when I became an Ambassador. That was how to deal with our

military. They soon came to realize that they had better not cross him. He played to the hilt the business of being the President's personal representative. "You may be the military here and under the command of European Command but as long as you are in Italy, I want to know what you are doing and why you are doing it. I am the President's man." This meant that the military were frightened of him and therefore very clearly toed the line when it came to doing things and would not go off the reservation in things that might embarrass him.

I found that very useful. I had a very large military presence in Spain and we on the whole got along very well, but it was necessary to make clear basically to them who was boss there.

He really didn't see many Italians. I think much of what he understood about Italian politics came to him ... of course he read the CIA stuff and also the political reporting that was done by his staff and he approved it, etc., although it always conformed to his particular view of what he wanted to do. But this business of being the personal representative of the President had a sort of funny quirk in it too because he would ... for example, when he had a dinner party, he would see to it that at the end of dinner he would leave the dining room first before his guests as the President's personal representative. When Secretary of State Rogers came to Rome the first time there was a little tiff over who would sit on the right seat of the car. The Ambassador, believing that as the President's personal representative he should sit on the right, and that Rogers should sit on the left.

This ultimately led to bad blood between the two to the extent that one evening when Rogers was there for a NATO meeting - we had been up to the Villa Madama which was the Italian Government's guest house, for a buffet supper and during the supper Rogers came to me and said, "I thoroughly dislike buffets, can't we go downtown, have dinner in an Italian restaurant." I said, "Sure, just wait a little longer to make your presence known and then you could leave." He said, "Well, that is fine. You make the reservations. I would like my wife and myself, Marty and Faith Hillenbrand (Assistant Secretary for European Affairs), and you and your wife." I said, "Well, Mr. Secretary, that is fine but I find it a little awkward because the Ambassador and Mrs. Martin are also at this reception - it would be difficult for me to go off with you like this without inviting them as well." So with much reluctance he said, "Okay, you can ask them too." Eventually we left and got outside and the Secretary's car came up immediately, but Martin's car was nowhere to be found. Finally Rogers said that my wife and I should go with them and the Ambassador could follow. As we drove away I watched the Ambassador standing their looking daggers. The next day Martin said, "I just want you to know one thing. From now on, when the Rogers come to Rome you and Emily will look after them. I will have nothing to do with them." So that was what happened.

What this really meant was that Martin had decided that in the power equation he would throw his lot in completely with Kissinger, who was then National Security Assistant to Nixon, and there was a constant back channel flow between him and Kissinger. He



basically simply ignored Rogers. The Rogers thoroughly disliked the Martins and that was reciprocated. When the Rogers did come to Rome, my wife and I would look after them and go out to dinner with them or whatever. It was a very weird situation.

*Q: These insights to some of the people who rose during the Nixon Administration are very interesting, but what do you attribute this almost unerring focus on this sort of nasty lot of people as his closest advisors on the Italian scene?*

STABLER: Let's look at it from a different point of view. He had this mandate to change the focus from the center/left to center/right. Who are the important players in this development? Who exercise certain levers of power from outside the strictly orthodox political parties? Money talked big--Sindona. Covert action of one sort or another--Miceli. The Vatican, although the Vatican by then had very little influence on what was going on politically, but still they had a traditional role--here was an American Archbishop close to the Pope, the Vatican Bank. Then there was this other element which was not really power structure so much as it was the containment of Pierre Talenti who had certain political relations in Italy with right wingers.

It was these sort of levers that he regarded as important in manipulating what was going on. All spoke English except Miceli which is why Army Attach Clavio was useful because he was his sort of contact, interpreter, what not with Miceli--he was the conduit really to Miceli. So he looked around and sought what he thought were major levers of power-moving and that is why I think he established these particular contacts.

Obviously there were others he knew, but to my knowledge there was no particular effort to meet with a lot of these Italian political people to give the word, so to speak. They hardly knew him. I can't tell you, because I don't know, whether for example in Bangkok this was his way of doing business there.

*Q: Apparently when he was in Saigon this was more or less his way of operating.*

STABLER: Probably so. He was not an outgoing individual. He said that he must conserve his energy and not waste his time. This was true of a number of things. Some time after he came I thought it would be nice to give a dinner for them to have some fairly senior Italians that he ought to meet. He said he would be willing to do it. Then I put together a list and sent it in for his approval. Nothing happened. Finally one day he came to my office and asked if he really had to do this. I said that it was entirely up to him. He said he had to conserve his energy and didn't want to do it. And that was the end of that.

There was this constant business of not wanting to deal with people who were in the power structure of Italian political life. But that was not the way of his dealing with things.

*Q: How did you survive with him? You already had your contacts, you spoke Italian. Italian politicians do reach out and want to keep in contact. This so often breeds*

*tremendous tension between the DCM who knows everybody and an ambassador who doesn't. I am surprised you were able to survive.*

STABLER: I think that he found that I was useful to him because I could do that--see people and report to him what they were saying, etc. I wasn't threatening him because he didn't want to do that. I obviously had to keep him very closely informed of what I did because anything that I did and didn't tell him about made him quite angry. And we had our run ins at various times. Something came up once involving my wife and Mrs. Martin. I don't know, she chose to take something wrong and I finally went in to him and said, "Obviously if it is your belief that we are willfully trying to insult Mrs. Martin then the best thing to do is to ask for my transfer because if that is the way you view it, we obviously can't survive." Well, that passed over, there was no problem. There was little or no social exchange between us. He had as his Political-Military Counselor a young fellow who had worked for him in Bangkok and who he had been brought to Rome. Martin and his wife saw a lot of them. This sounds perhaps slightly immodest, but he also had some respect for my professionalism and for the fact that I didn't let grass grow under my feet and that I had a good relationship with the staff and could deal with them--because he didn't want to, although he wanted to know everything that was going on. He was totally involved with the Administrative Counselor because all of that area he loved. So I suppose one survived because I filled a gap of things that he didn't want to do.

*Q: How about the staff of the Embassy, particularly political and economical reporters? Did you have a hard time keeping them to the task because they felt that there was a barrier between them and the ambassador, or not?*

STABLER: Not really. They would go ahead and do their reporting. It was something that he frequently looked at. He wanted to know what was going on. I don't fault him in that respect at all. I had to make the decision of what I would sign and what I would send on to him. Certainly I sent more on to him than not because I, myself, felt that since it was going out under his name and he was intensely interested in what was going on, both economic and political side, and particularly on the military side he should see them. We had a lot going on. Trying to sell things to the Italians, problems involving Italians selling American equipment to third parties, that type of activities interested him.

We did all sorts of strange things. I remember one particular instance and some question about some military hardware of the Italians. He had to go home to the States and it was important that something be done at a certain time so he then authorized me to deal with it and actually sign his name to it even though he wasn't in the country. We did things like that. He had clearly a certain confidence in me. It was a strange relationship, but it was a professional one. And while I have to tell you that I used to deplore suffering the things that he did under that rubric, he was the Ambassador and I found no particular reason during the time I was there to feel that I simply couldn't accept what the policy was. I mean, if that was what the Administration felt they wanted done, I didn't feel that the national interests of the United States was so threatened by that that I couldn't accept it. The center/right was a perfectly acceptable formula because it was a democratic

formula too, so there was nothing wrong with that. What was wrong was only a question of nuance there as to whether you wanted to enlarge the area of democracy and as to whether the Socialists would provide that enlargement in a perfectly safe way. There was a disagreement of view on that, but it was not a question of major adverse effect on national interest.

So we had a working relationship. It was strained though, because at the end, when he left, in the latter part of 1972, although he made such a point about administration, he was extraordinarily neglectful of things like efficiency reports. When he left he didn't do one on me. Finally the State Department got after him. I was in the States, I had come home, and he was in the States. He called me up and said, "Why don't you just write your efficiency report and send it to me and I will sign it." "Well," I said, "Mr. Ambassador I will think it over." I wrote to him and said, "I attach great importance to the efficiency report system and have spent a lot of time over the years during all the reports I have had to do. I think it is something that one just has to take seriously. I am sorry but I simply cannot accept the notion of my writing my own report. If you feel you do not want to write one, or don't have time to write one, that is up to you. But I am not going to do it." And eventually he did, and it was quite a good one.

Again he got the job in Saigon because he threw his lot in with Kissinger. Kissinger told me later, after the whole Saigon thing was over, that he had intended at one point to make Martin the Deputy Secretary of State. But he said he was glad he didn't because he was clearly a sort of a psychotic case. That was after the whole business of his leaving Saigon.

Those four years that I had in Rome ... I had a short time with Ackley and then three years with Martin and then a bare three months with Volpe. During the time that Volpe was there I really spent most of my time helping him through the early days and then writing efficiency reports, so I really didn't get much involved in the Volpe administration which had become rather strained in a way because he had brought with him a political appointee as a special assistant who rapidly began playing almost the role of DCM and who was given the apartment usually reserved for the Consul General in the apartment house where the Minister, the Political Counselor, the Economic Counselor and the Consul General traditionally lived. So I really don't have much to say on the Volpe period because I wasn't there that long.

All things considered, I suppose one can't say that Martin did irreparable harm to the US-Italian relations. One can't say, I don't think, that he did them much good either. It was a role of the power behind the throne type of operation. He certainly was activist in the sense that he was trying specifically to coax a political move in the direction opposite to which the situation had been moving. But, as I said before, not one which had any real consequences for US interests one way or another.

*Q: One last look at this period. The United States was tremendously involved with Vietnam at the time, but also we were trying to change our relationship with the Soviet*

*Union and there was the opening to China too at the time. Were the Italians pretty much along with us on this?*

STABLER: On China, again I am a little hazy on the dates, but it seems to me that most of the question as to the business of what the Italians would do with regard to Mainland China occurred during the time I was Chargé d'Affaires. I made a big, but what I knew would be a losing effort to persuade the Italians not to recognize Communist China. Other countries had already done so, the British and even the French by then. As long as the Italians had the comfort in numbers it was fairly clear that they were going to do it too, although we did make a valiant effort. I went to see as many people as I could on the subject, but I recognize that they did not think, in light of the recognition by other countries friendly to the United States, that their recognition was going to cause them any serious damage when it came to relations with the United States. And they were quite correct in so believing.

That really was a major question at that time. They had, of course, quite good relations with the Soviet Union. Obviously the Communist Party was quite important at that time. I think it reached the largest percentage of the vote at that time--close to 23 percent. It was frighteningly large. So that had to be taken into account. Although, of course, in that period of time the Communists were, even though their vote was large, less of a threat because they had changed their spots to some extent from where they had been in the 50's as a result of what had happened in Hungary and then Czechoslovakia. All these incidents had had an effect on the Communist Party, but in terms of percentages it was way up there. Obviously the United States' policy continued to be aimed at trying to cut back the influence of the Communist Party. But this wasn't an easy thing to do because some of the best-administered cities in Italy were communist-administered--Bologna...

*Q: Florence was one.*

STABLER: Florence had a Socialist mayor, but he had become more respectable. But these cities were very well administered.

We had a very low key relationship with the Communist Party. Junior political officers had contacts with the Party. I personally met the Secretary of the Communist Party, Berlinguer, one evening at the National Day of Hungary. The Hungarian Ambassador asked me if I would mind meeting Berlinguer, and I said I had no problem. So we exchanged a few words. Very shortly thereafter the Hungarian Ambassador defected. He re-defected some time later.

I can't think of any other major things during that time. It was a strange period. I was never totally comfortable because one never quite knew just exactly which way Martin was going to spring in terms of personal things too. He had a habit of coming into my office and if I was on the phone he would go to my extension line, put his fingers to his lips and pick up my extension phone and listen to my conversation with whomever it happened to be. This at times was awkward because there were times, at least once or twice, when the person on the line was saying not very complimentary things about

Martin and somehow I had to get him off the subject. He considered that to be his absolute right to know what I was doing.

*Q: I can't help but every time Martin comes up I get the impression of the Spider King--the former king of France--lurking around the corridors and listening in at key holes.*

STABLER: There was a certain degree of that, but he didn't put an extension of my line in his office so he could listen without my knowing--at least I wasn't aware of such an extension. But he wanted to know what I was doing.

*Q: In this time you say the CIA station chief was put out because he couldn't control this somewhat less than \$25 million that was being distributed by this rather peculiar crew of Italians...*

STABLER: No, don't misunderstand me. A certain amount, I can't remember how much, was given in a lump sum to Miceli. The others had no role in it--Sindona and Marcinkus. Talenti had no role in that although I am sure that he knew about the program. To what extent he may have been consulted about it, I don't know. But a considerable sum was given to Miceli to be used as he saw fit in trying to influence...

*Q: Then what was the relationship with the CIA and Martin? I would have thought Martin would have found almost a blood brother in the CIA.*

STABLER: But his point was that "I am the Ambassador and I am not going to have a subordinate decide where this money is going to go. I am the President's personal representative and I am not going to have them do something and not show me what they have done." As you know, that is one of the great problems. If they had had the authority that they normally have they could have decided to give a hundred thousand or two hundred thousand to somebody, report it back to Washington as an operational matter and wouldn't have had to show the message to the Ambassador.

What we would do, and I would attend some, if not all, of the meetings, would be to meet in the back room with the Ambassador, myself and the station chief. The Ambassador would decide that he wanted this done and that done. Some was given to the parties, some to individuals. Sometimes the station chief or myself would recommend something, but it was the Ambassador who would give the approval. It was not the station chief who said what we were going to do. The Ambassador directed it all.

*Q: One last question on Italy. When you were there how were our consulates viewed? I am speaking as a former Consul General in Naples. Often you had the feeling that Rome was considered inside the Beltway. There was this wonderful game going on of political switching back and forth, but it really had no pertinence to anything outside of Rome. There wasn't much real contact between the consulates and Rome. How did Martin feel about the consulates?*

STABLER: Well, he took considerable interest in the consulates. For example, he fought very hard to keep Trieste and Turin going. He won those battles. You had Homer Byington in Naples, sort of his fiefdom really. There wasn't a great deal of exchange there. I would go down every so often. Was Outerbridge Horsey still in Palermo? I am not sure. Bob Gordon went up to Florence. I can't remember who was up in Milan. A short fellow.

One of the problems, as Italian used to call them, was the political games - and that was what all this business was about - the constant shifting around of coalitions and cabinets and prime ministers--they were political games that were played mostly in Rome. The rest of the country didn't seem terribly interested in what was going on. They had their own political games in their regions. So therefore the consulates were somewhat limited in the sort of information they could produce which would really make much difference with respect to the overall assessment of the political situation as seen from Rome.

Their economic reporting was more useful. Every so often the consuls did come down. Martin was basically rather supportive of the consulates. He thought they had a role to play beyond just the role of purely consular work, which was important in itself.

But he also had rather a curious view, and I think I may have mentioned this to you. The Consul General in Rome was Jack Kuhn and he had been on the consular side of things for quite a number of years. I thought that he had done a good job in Rome in running the consulate which was a big one, keeping everybody happy and being on top of what was going on, and providing the services that were required and in such a way that brought credit to the US. He was an FSO-2. I wrote an efficiency report on him which was a very good one and which made the point that this fellow had been in important consular positions and that he merited on the basis of his performance a promotion to Class-1. My feeling very strongly being that if you are in that work, it is important work, it should be recognized. The chances of him going beyond that were slight, but he should be recognized for what he had done.

Martin in effect said in his reviewing officer report that it would seem too bad to deny to a political officer promotion to class-1 through giving it to this fellow. What could one say. I didn't agree with him, but that was his report and I couldn't do anything about it. I thought that was entirely wrong because I think that the people who do the consular work should be encouraged in every way possible and the only way we have to do it is through promotions. But Martin took a different view.

*Q: You left Rome in 1973. When in 1973?*

STABLER: Walter Stoessel, who had, I think, been named Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, came to Rome, it seems to me, in early 1973 or late 1972. He asked whether I would be interested in going back to Washington as one of his deputies--Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs. That was a good job so I agreed with appreciation. So we left, I think it was in March of 1973, just short of four years, and

came back to Washington. I became Deputy Assistant Secretary with responsibility for Western Europe. I was the number three, I guess. George Springsteen was the principal deputy and Jack Armitage for Soviet Affairs. I can't remember who was deputy for NATO and things of that sort, but maybe it was George Springsteen who did that.

That was fairly routine. One of my first jobs was in connection with the visit of the Italian Prime Minister, Andreotti, who came with his wife. We went to various things for him, because Rogers was still Secretary at that point. I don't remember during that period any particularly outstanding issues that came up. It was all fairly routine.

Then Kissinger became Secretary of State in the fall of 1973, if I remember correctly, or the summer of 1973. It wasn't so very long after that that Kissinger decided he wanted to make a change. He wanted a younger, perhaps a slightly more dynamic person. I was very fond of Walter Stoessel and a very great friend so I don't say this in any derogatory fashion, but Walter had a very low key style, you know, and Kissinger liked him because he had him made Ambassador to the Soviet Union. However, Larry Eagleburger was quite instrumental, I think, in pointing Kissinger towards Arthur Hartman, who was then DCM at our Mission to the Common Market to be Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs. So Arthur came back to that and the betting was about 90-10 that I would not last very long with him. That was also proven not to be true because eventually I became his principal deputy.

I continued as Deputy Assistant Secretary until maybe a month or so after Arthur took over at which point George Springsteen left to become Executive Secretary at the State Department. Arthur then appointed me as his principal deputy. There weren't any things particularly overwhelming until, I guess April of 1974 when the Portuguese revolution took place. I had a great deal to do with the various discussions on it and was in large measure responsible for at least proposing to Kissinger that Frank Carlucci be made Ambassador.

*Q: I have heard this from some other interviews that on the Portuguese revolution there was some unhappiness with the team we had there which just was not responding.*

STABLER: I think the Ambassador's name was Scott. A very nice gentleman who was, I think, in his early seventies, and who was a lawyer in New York and who had been a law partner of Tom Dewey. The President, with the acceptance of Rogers, had appointed him as the Legal Adviser of the State Department. He had not yet taken up his position when Kissinger was named Secretary of State. Kissinger wanted his own Legal Adviser who happened to be his own attorney in New York, Carlisle Maw, who is now dead. Therefore something had to be for Mr. Scott and he was offered what was considered to be the pleasant, not terribly controversial Portugal, although somewhat difficult because of our relations of Portugal over their African territories...

*Q: And our ties with the Azores which always...*

STABLER: But Portugal was a member of NATO and so long as they were in NATO the Azores and so forth fell under that umbrella. But the more difficult subject was their attitude in the UN on their colonies in Africa. But it was felt that Scott, and whoever his deputy was, could handle it without a problem. But then the revolution took place. Salazar had already gone and Caetano had taken over as a dictator. Then the troops came back from some of the African colonies and they were the ones who mounted this coup. I remember calling Mr. Scott one day and saying that we hadn't really heard what was going on. He said, "Well, I don't quite really know yet. I can't read the newspapers and no one yet has reported to me what is happening." There was the element of possible Communist involvement in this thing and we felt that this was too ticklish a situation to leave in basically amateur hands. The staff didn't seem quite capable of dealing with it or lighting a fire under the Ambassador. So it was determined that we really had to make a change. The question then was who? So I had the Department's personnel people run off a computer check of senior officers, FSO-1s or above, who spoke Portuguese. Of course, Frank Carlucci's name popped up.

*Q: He had served in Brazil.*

STABLER: Yes, and he had been under fire in the Congo. He spoke Portuguese. At that point he was Deputy Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, and it was understood that he wanted to make a change. So this was put up to Kissinger and he agreed that he was probably the right man. So in point of fact ... let me think, my timing seems to be off here because this happened in 1974 but Carlucci went to Portugal some time later. He went to Portugal not a very long time before I went to Madrid and I went to Madrid in March 1975. I think what we did was to recall...I think he must have gone there sooner. We recalled Scott, but then the great question came up as to what you do about the Portuguese Socialists. Kissinger was a man, and this goes back a little bit to the Italian days, who was very leery of Socialists. He may well have had that influence on Nixon over the Italian Socialists. When I went to Madrid he had a bit of a thing about the Spanish Socialists until I explained to him what that was all about. And this was what Carlucci did when he finally persuaded Kissinger that we had to recognize that the Portuguese Socialists were not in bed with the Communists - they were really Social Democrats and that we ought to work with them, help, and support them. The Socialist leader, Mario Soares came over here as did some of the other democratic people and greatly helped their cause.

After some tough exchanges Kissinger finally agreed that we ought to pursue the policy of supporting the Socialists, which was absolutely the right thing to have done. But it was Carlucci, really, who persuaded Kissinger to go along, and Carlucci's judgment turned out to be absolutely on the mark.

*Q: What I understood was that it took a strong man like Carlucci to really stand up to Kissinger on this initially. This was one of those cases where it was the Ambassador on the spot who really made a difference.*



STABLER: I think that is absolutely true and I think this was one of the things with Kissinger that if you stood your ground and believed you were right and were persuasive in your presentation and wouldn't permit yourself to be brow-beaten by him, he would listen to you and respect your judgment. This was what happened to Carlucci. He didn't go down under the first onslaught from Kissinger who was very quick to put people down. He hadn't been in the Department terribly long and had not had, before coming into the Department, a very favorable view of Foreign Service people anyway. So I think one would say that there was no doubt that Carlucci was largely responsible for saving the day for us in Portugal.

That was in April/May/June period of 1974. Then in July of '74 ... to go back a bit, some time in the spring of 1974 Kissinger had decided that he didn't see why when he traveled through NATO areas he had to have the Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, and the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, particularly when he went to Greece and Turkey, travel with him. Why couldn't all these countries be under one Assistant Secretary? So in May, or perhaps June, of 1974 he decreed that in the future Greece, Turkey and Cyprus would become part of the Bureau of European Affairs. They fell to my lot as countries of Western Europe.

Then in July, 1974, the Greek military undertook a coup against Archbishop Makarios, the President of Cyprus. The Greek colonels, of course, were involved. There was a strong body among the Greek military who thought that there should be a union between Cyprus and Greece, Enosis and that Makarios was not furthering this aim and therefore should be deposed. In the morning hours, of whatever day in July it was, the Greek military staged this coup and Makarios was forced to flee.

Normally that would have been something that the Assistant Secretary for European Affairs would have been called upon to go to Kissinger's office and discuss the implications and possible policy steps. It just so happened that on that particular day Arthur Hartman had had a long standing engagement to meet and negotiate with a team from East Germany on the conditions for recognition of East Germany by the United States and the establishment of diplomatic relations. It was not something in which I had been involved and therefore he felt that he absolutely should do that. I, therefore, should be the one to deal with the Cyprus problem and go to see Kissinger. That actually was the first time that I had had any contact with Kissinger. This was the beginning of that long period of dealing with Cyprus, the relationship with Kissinger, and ultimately the appointment to Spain.

*Q: Let's stop here for now.*

*Q: Today is July 19, 1991 and this is the continuing interview with Ambassador Wells Stabler. Mr. Ambassador I would like to start with the situation that blew up in July of 1974 with Cyprus. European Affairs had just absorbed Greece and Turkey in April and all of a sudden you are faced with a major problem with two NATO allies pointing guns*

*at each other. Could you describe how this hit you and some of the personnel in the Washington area when you heard about this Cyprus business?*

STABLER: Yes. It was about in April of 1974 that Secretary Kissinger decided that he didn't see why he had to have two Assistant Secretaries traveling with him when he went to NATO conferences--Greece and Turkey were under the Near Eastern Affairs. So he made a decision to transfer Greece, Turkey and Cyprus to the jurisdiction of the Bureau of European Affairs. Very few of us at that time in EUR had a great deal of knowledge of what was going on in Greece and Turkey, except as it related to NATO matters. The regional questions were, of course, not dealt with by the Bureau of European Affairs. So this was somewhat of a surprise. The officers handling Greek and Turkish Affairs in NEA came into EUR and it fell to me as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs who mostly handled Western and Central European Affairs, to take on Greece, Turkey and Cyprus.

It was all relatively calm and no one thought a great deal about problems that might come about as a result of this. Although the reasons for the coup had been bubbling up for a number of years there was no particular crisis at the time. At any event, in July, 1974 the Greek military, with the Colonels in charge in Athens, decided that the time had come to carry out the policy of enosis which was uniting Cyprus with Greece. They mounted a coup in Nicosia which was aimed at Archbishop Makarios. He was forced to flee and a major crisis suddenly presented itself. This was putting the heat on as far as Greek and Turkish relations were concerned.

Normally in a situation of this sort the Assistant Secretary of European Affairs would have handled the matter directly with Kissinger who, of course, was much concerned about this as it related to two important NATO allies. But Arthur Hartman had had a long standing engagement to negotiate with a delegation from East Germany on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and East Germany. This delegation had come especially from East Germany for this. Arthur felt that he had to meet this particular engagement. It was not one that I as his principal deputy could have easily taken over because I had not been involved in the earlier discussions leading up to the negotiations.

So he then asked me to go up and deal with Cyprus with Kissinger, whom I hadn't dealt with before. I went up and from that day forward until I left EUR to get ready to go to Spain, I saw Kissinger many times a day, traveled with him as far as India to be with him to deal with the Cyprus question. He, of course, was very troubled by all of this, recognizing that this was going to upset the Turks and that we would soon have a Turkish reaction...which indeed we did.

The Turkish army very shortly thereafter invaded the northern part of Cyprus and annexed that part of Cyprus that had predominantly Turkish population...as well as some areas that had a large Greek population. It was quite clear that this could lead to a very serious confrontation between Greeks and Turks not only on Cyprus but on the mainland as well.

So he set about trying to calm the waters and to restore some semblance of peace in the area. This was not an easy thing to do at all because the animosity between Greeks and Turks was such that it was almost impossible to get any moderation, plus the fact that we had the junta, the Colonels...

*Q: Actually I think it was the Generals by that time. The Colonels had been overthrown by their Generals. It was still a pretty inept crew.*

STABLER: I guess they were still called the Colonels...

In any event, this was a crisis that started in July and continued with great intensity throughout the summer and into the winter months. A great deal of effort was put in to this business, trying to appeal to the Greeks and then to the Turks to calm the situation down.

Now Secretary Kissinger had, as you remember, taught one time at Harvard and had a seminar for a variety of up and coming political leaders. He felt that this gave him a special bond. Prime Minister Ecevit of Turkey had attended his seminar at Cambridge. Thus there was a relatively easy access channel. The Greek situation was really quite different, because it seems to me that sometime in the period from July to the fall, the Generals had been toppled.

*Q: Yes, they were. The leader, although he never had the official name, was a man named Ioannidis who was sort of the military policeman--a very, very difficult character. During the summer, because the coup instigated by the Colonels had brought such a disaster on the Greek cause, the Colonels were put out and Karamanlis came out of exile and formed a government, a democratic government.*

STABLER: Yes, I remember that because the access to Ecevit was a very easy one, the access to Karamanlis was not an easy one. He didn't speak English and Kissinger had a predilection for calling these people on the telephone. Ecevit he could talk with but with Karamanlis he really couldn't.

[Former King Constantine of Greece became a friend of ours when we were in Rome and he was in exile there. I used to see him there from time to time. ( I also saw him every so often in Madrid. He was the brother-in-law of King Juan Carlos, whose wife, Queen Sofia, was Constantine's sister.) He always told me that he felt that Karamanlis had betrayed him. He had talked to Karamanlis when he was in exile in Paris and understood that if Karamanlis was ever restored he would bring about the restoration of the monarchy. He had expected a call from Karamanlis when he got back to Athens, which never came.]

Both the Greeks and Turks were very unbending in this whole thing. The situation was compounded later, after the July landing of the Turks, when the Turks felt threatened again and landed additional troops on Cyprus which then really tore things apart because

the Greek lobby in Congress was extremely strong. There was no Turkish lobby but a strong Greek lobby with Paul Sarbanes of Maryland and John Brademas of Indiana and a number of others who were very, very active. They then started a campaign in Congress to cut off military aid to Turkey on the grounds that US equipment had been used for other than NATO purposes which would require specific consent of the United States government. The Greeks felt that Kissinger had misled them and his relations with Congress over this became very intense.

As a result of all this, you may recall, an arms embargo was placed on Turkey--this being '74 or early '75--and wasn't lifted until the fall of 1978. This, of course, seriously hampered our relations with Turkey.

In any event, during this period, I was constantly in Kissinger's office. Of course, Art Hartman and others came into it too. There was Bob McCloskey who was special assistant to Kissinger at that time and was there a great deal of the time. Bill Casey, Under Secretary of Economic Affairs, was in and out.

*Q: He later became the head of CIA.*

STABLER: There were a number of people involved, but I really basically became the coordinator of the Cyprus situation.

*Q: In some other interviews that I have done and am doing --I am picking up some of the people who were either the Turkish Desk Officer or the Greek Desk Officer or the Cyprus Desk Officer. One of the minor legends of the Foreign Service is the clash between Tom Boyatt, who was a rather junior but a very outspoken officer who was the Cypriot Desk Officer, and Henry Kissinger. More than just that, I wonder if you could give an idea of Kissinger's reaction to this? Did he see this as an East-West problem that was screwing up the NATO works, or born in Europe did he see this as almost one of those tribal animosities or did he understand... How did he relate to the expertise in the field?*

STABLER: I think his main concern at the outset was the fact that it was a clash between two NATO allies, thus disturbing the tranquility of the Eastern Mediterranean at a time when we were still thoroughly engaged in the business of the Soviet Union being our principal enemy. You have the Turks and to a lesser extent the Greeks, looking elsewhere than NATO and this was a concern to him. Basically the context of the East-West relationship became a serious matter. It didn't really have many overtones with respect to his other great interests--the Middle East. It didn't spill over very much into the Arab-Israel problem. So it really was a question of these people not focusing on their principal responsibility and that was what we had to deal with.

Of course, the British were much involved too because of their own situation in Cyprus. They have a major air base there which was important. Various noises were made by the

Greeks of possibly closing that in annoyance over the attitude of the British who were totally opposed to what the Greeks had done.

That is why he spent as much time as he did on it, trying to find a way to bring equilibrium back into the area and get the Greeks and Turks thinking about NATO and their responsibilities rather than fighting each other. This I think was his principal point.

There certainly was a clash with Tom Boyatt, but I honestly can't remember all the details now. Boyatt was ultimately removed. But there were a lot of people involved in the clash. It got to the point where Kissinger believed that Ambassador Tasca in Athens was nothing more than a spokesman for the junta.

*Q: Henry Tasca had been Ambassador there from about 1970-1974. He was sent by Nixon to try to work with the junta. He saw a lot of Papadopoulos, Pattakos, Ioannidis and the others trying to work with them.*

STABLER: But this became really something in which Kissinger believed--that Tasca was in fact not a great deal more than the spokesman for the junta--to the extent that there really was no communication between the Secretary of State and the Ambassador in Athens. It was done largely with Monty Stearns, the DCM. When I was sent out to talk with Ecevit in Ankara and the Foreign Minister or some other official in Athens, I stayed with Monty. I knew Tasca, we had been in Rome together, but I didn't see him at that point. He was holed up in the Residence and in effect I was advised not to see him as he was on his way out. Kissinger was determined to get rid of him as quickly as he possibly could and did. He sent Jack Kubisch there as the Ambassador. So Tasca, also, was one of those who fell in this situation.

Bob Dillon was the Turkish Officer and for whom I have the greatest admiration and liking. I worked very closely with Bob. It seems curious that I can't remember now who the Greek Desk Officer was at the time. But I just don't. I'm a little confused now because there was what they used to call Greek-Turkish Affairs...I don't know if there was an office and then separate desk officers or not. Bob Dillon certainly did Turkish Affairs and there must have been somebody else who did Greek Affairs. Ultimately Bob left and Bill Eagleton came in as the Office Director.

The fact was, I suppose I could say, that even though I was Deputy Assistant Secretary, I in effect became the Desk Officers for Greece, Turkey and Cyprus at the time. It was curious. Kissinger had very strong views about all these things. He was apt to decide exactly how he wanted to play something and it often fell to me to put it into words for him, make changes that I thought should be done.

At the very outset, Joe Sisco, Under Secretary for Political Affairs, was dispatched almost immediately to the area as Kissinger's emissary to see what he could do to patch the thing up. He came back basically empty handed. Then in due course other emissaries were sent, including Art Hartman.

*Q: I recall in one interview with Bob Dillon saying they sat in the plane in Ankara and they didn't know where to go. Things were falling apart.*

STABLER: Yes, I remember that. They weren't really quite sure what came next. That was put together almost immediately so it wasn't really clear what it was they were expected to do except to try to calm the situation down as quickly as possible.

I know that when Arthur Hartman went over on a mission and reported back what he had done, Kissinger went up in smoke because Hartman had apparently not said exactly what Kissinger had told him to say.

I was sent out and remember going one Sunday afternoon to a house on Nebraska Avenue that belonged to Wiley Buchanan, who had been Chief of Protocol. He used to lend Kissinger his house in the summer when the Buchanans went up to their house in Newport. I went over there and we went over exactly what I was to say to Ecevit and to the Greeks. I must say on the plane over I carefully noted down exactly what it was that he wanted me to say, which I did. I reported back practically verbatim what I had said, and of course what had been said to me. This made him happy because he felt his instructions had been carried out to the letter.

All of these things really...it was a constant sort of dialogue but with the attitude in Congress, which was really in favor of the Greek situation, and the Turks clearly having no intention of giving up their military occupation of a certain part of Cyprus, nothing really could be achieved. Certainly the government of Karamanlis was more disposed to reason than the junta, but the Turks were in occupation and by this time Makarios had been restored. Clerides who was the leader of the Greek community in Cyprus and Denktash, the leader of the Turkish community, would have talks. And there were talks in Geneva. There were talks everywhere. But no one could find any solution beyond basically what has now become the status quo. The Turks, of course, declared the independent Turkish Republic of Cyprus, which no one recognizes, except them.

We had great tragedies there because of the Cypriot population's view that we favored the Turks in some way. There would be demonstrations and you remember the tragic killing of Rodger Davies who was our Ambassador there.

*Q: He was killed by Cypriot police, I think.*

STABLER: I don't remember now exactly how that happened. It was one of those tragic things where the mob stormed the Embassy shooting and he was unfortunately a victim of it. I would guess that today the situation is largely what it was a number of years ago.

*Q: A little of the thinking at the time. You had two mixed populations on the island, the Greeks and the Turks, and things weren't going well. They were shooting at each other and it was all mixed up and the fact that there had been essentially an exchange of*

*population and there was a clear demarcation between what was under Turkish control and what was under Greek control. Was anyone saying, "Well, you know this is a bad spot to get over, but in the long run it is going to be a lot better than having these two people living cheek to jowl and really not being very nice to each other." Were you getting any of that?*

STABLER: There was a certain feeling of *fait accompli* because with the Turkish army in northern Cyprus, no one believed that it would be possible to get the Turks to withdraw their army. One tried at the time to get the Turks to at least reduce the number of forces, but I don't think anybody really expected the Turks to give the whole thing up. There was some hope that possibly the communal negotiations between Clerides and Denktash might...this was really after Makarios because he wasn't disposed to be reasonable about anything. Their whole effort was to get the Turks off the island and get back to where they were before, which I think no one really felt was a viable possibility. But at that time, less thought was probably given to how this would evolve in the future. Of course it was not possible for the United States to take a position or appear to take a position which in effect accepted the status quo. That was something you couldn't even think about because with the bad blood between the Greeks and the Turks the effort was to try to find some formula that would in effect reduce the Turkish presence and hopefully through the communal negotiations reach a point where there could be perhaps a restoration of the Republic of Cyprus as before with greater autonomy for the Turkish population.

As you remember prior to the coup there was a Greek President of Cyprus and a Turkish Vice President. The Greeks were clearly in the majority. But there was some hope that somehow through these communal negotiations you could get an improved situation for the Turks and hopefully the Turkish army would go away.

*Q: But in your heart of hearts though did you think anything would come of this? Was this something you really had to do but thought.... ?*

STABLER: I think probably most of us at the time recognized that in a sense what the Turks had done would probably in the long run ease the situation because you then have a division between these two groups and less possibility in the long run of communal clashes. And that in fact is what has come about. Quite clearly when you are dealing with this sort of a problem you never can take the position...but somehow we have to get fully involved. So, no, I don't think anybody would put down on paper let's let this thing just hang out and take care of itself. The main thrust really of what Kissinger was trying to do was to try to reduce the level of animosity between Greece and Turkey as much as possible and, as I said before, let them get back to their main task. Although this was very complicated because the whole discussion all the time between the Greeks and Turks was about the air control area and what was Greek and what was Turkish, what islands would ....

*Q: And mineral rights which still is going on today.*

STABLER: Yes. President Bush is in Greece at the present moment and is facing violent demonstrations because the Greeks think we are more friends with the Turks than we are towards the Greeks.

*Q: Another thing on this issue, I may be over-dwelling, but I think this brings so many things together--how we work. In one interview I did the interviewee spoke with Senator Javits, who was from New York, Jewish and an ardent proponent of Israel, telling him: "You think the Jewish lobby is a problem in the United States, wait until the Greek lobby gets going because the Jewish concentration is in New York, California, and Florida, but there are Greeks spread out throughout the United States and also in positions of considerable political importance. Just wait until this gets aroused." I think this issue sort of proved the value of what had been said prior to this. Did the Greek lobby catch the Department of State by surprise as to how powerful it became? This was the first time it really became organized.*

STABLER: I think it was a matter of some surprise to see the lobby as well organized as it was. I had this brought back to me once again when in 1978 after coming back from Spain. I was helping on the Hill in talking to Senators and Congressman about the importance of lifting the arms embargo against Turkey. I went to see the Congressman from Maryland, who died shortly thereafter, and talked to him about the importance of our relations with Turkey. He said, "I absolutely agree with you. I don't think Congress ought to be nickel and dime-ing the State Department on all these things and getting involved in all the nitty gritty of day to day operations. I think the Turkish arms embargo should be lifted, but I intend to vote against it for the very simple reason that my main fund raiser in the State is a Greek-American and therefore there is no way that I can vote in favor of this matter even though I fully agree that it should be done." So again, that showed the power of the lobby even years after the intensity of the thing had died down. As I said earlier there was absolutely no Turkish lobby whatsoever. Consequently the Greek lobby did get Congress to do pretty much what they thought it should do and there was tremendous pressures on the State Department, the Secretary to take a more pro-Greek line.

I think it is to Kissinger's credit that he...although it caused him a lot of trouble because, as I said earlier, there were Members of Congress who believed that he had outright lied to them on the business of the original question of should we not impose an arms embargo on the Turks because all these US arms are going into Cyprus. I think there were many of us who felt that the Turks had enormously complicated our task. It was at least understandable, the first wave of invasion, because there was aggression in protecting their population in Cyprus. That could be argued, if you will, under the rubric of self defense. But then when some weeks later they sent in the second wave, there was no real justification for so doing. That enormously complicated our task.

*Q: Why did they do that?*



STABLER: I think they did it because they wanted to consolidate their gains and to make it absolutely clear that they had no intention of giving up. I think this was actually done after the Colonels had been thrown out. I think they were concerned that the Greeks might try to launch some military operation.

*Q: Well, there certainly were some noises about the Greek military talking about fighting there and sending in an expedition.*

STABLER: They sent naval vessels and there was the famous episode where in the middle of the night...I was down in the Operations Center and there were all sorts of alarms and excursions about the Greek naval force and then the Turks announced with much pride that they had sunk a Greek destroyer. Then it turned out that they had sunk one of their own.

I think it was also part of the domestic problems in Turkey that was responsible for this. Their economic and the political situation was always in turmoil. The Prime Minister of Turkey and the army gained considerable popular support because they were defending the Turkish population in Cyprus.

So I don't think any of us felt that the second invasion was really necessary. They had frankly sent in enough in the first place to defend the population and the second invasion was just a grand stand play which caused us many problems.

In any event, I think from a personal point of view, I found it a fascinating experience being able to work as closely as I did with Kissinger and seeing what a difficult person he could be on these things. I found that those who permitted themselves to be brow beaten and simply accepted it, soon fell by the wayside. Those who stood up to him, but were not right sometimes in their advice, also fell by the wayside. Those who stood up to him and knew their dossier fared pretty well.

*Q: One of the points about Kissinger that is raised again and again is that he tended to do things by himself with foreign leaders and that those working to support him, such as you, often would find themselves dealing without quite knowing what the game was. Was this a problem in this case?*

STABLER: I never felt that. I felt that I knew what he was doing because I often did it for him. I often was in the room and sometimes on the telephone listening in when he was talking to these foreign leaders. I wrote most of the messages, obviously not 100 percent, but most of them that he sent these people. And I went to the White House with him on some of these things. So I felt that on the whole I had fairly good knowledge of what he was doing.

Mind you, there were...Arthur Hartman and I had a very good relationship. For example, when I went on a trip with Kissinger to India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, when we got to Rome where he was going to have talks with the Italians, Arthur Hartman came on board

and I was finished, because at that point there wasn't room for both of us. But Arthur pretty much kept me abreast of what was going on and as the year wore on...I went over to London a few times to talk to the British about the problem... I never felt that Kissinger was trying to exclude me or that he was not keeping the Bureau of European Affairs through Arthur Hartman and myself, pretty much informed of what he was up to. He believed, I think at times erroneously, that his superior intelligence would easily win over some of these people. They just couldn't resist the force of his logic and therefore they would soon see that he was right and they were not. But, I think, at times we ignored some of the realities of the situation. But in each instance it was worth the try. You couldn't go wrong in putting forward your own point of view to these people.

*Q: Sort of the other shoe. While this was going, one of our major concerns was that you didn't want to have two NATO allies fighting each other because NATO was the bulwark and here was the southern flank against the Soviet Union. You must have been monitoring very closely what the Soviet Union was doing. Did you get any feel that the Soviets were going to try to take advantage, or were they taking advantage of this?*

STABLER: I don't recall any situation where the Soviets seemed to be a threatening factor in all this. Obviously there were Communists in Greece and some of this carried over into Cyprus I am sure, but I don't know that this was necessarily as a result of any Soviet doing. I can't recall now that this particular aspect entered into the equation in any important way. The real concern, of course, was that...and then there were alarms and excursions throughout this period of reports that the Turks were massing to invade Greece or that Greece was reinforcing their forces along the border and there soon would be problems. There were a lot of rumors in those days. I don't recall that there was any serious information at any time that the Turks and Greeks were about to clash.

*Q: I remember I had left Greece within a week or two of the coup in Cyprus. At the country team meetings, the military attaché used to say that if the Greeks and Turks were at each other they will have ammunition for about one week and then they will basically run out. Turning away from this particular thing but talking about your role in dealing with Western Europe, were there any major problems that you had to deal with in the 1973-75 period--West Germany, France?*

STABLER: No. I think we have covered previously the coup in Portugal and I don't remember that there were any major problems that came up during that period.

*Q: Those seem to be sort of on both flanks, the peripheral of NATO.*

STABLER: You had the usual political turmoil in Italy which wasn't all that important really. There was always the question of Berlin, but I didn't get much involved in that. I just don't recall at the moment. It seems there was a period when I was fairly active on German Affairs. A fellow by the name of Jim Sutherland was at that time in charge of Germany, but I can't recall that there were any major problems such as the Cyprus problem.

*Q: One last question on this European affairs business. How did you and people around you view the development of the Common Market. Was it seen as something that was going to go anywhere? Was there concern that this might prove to be a problem with our getting into the European market?*

STABLER: At that period, I think we were still very much supporting the idea of a common market because we were trying to bring the Europeans more closely together...this went back to the Treaty of Rome, which I guess was in the middle 50s...hoping that this ultimately would lead to a European political community. I don't think there was any recognition or concern yet that the Europeans had reached the stage when they would basically threaten our economic situation. So I think it was viewed in political and economic terms as a desirable policy. There may have been some at the time who worried a little bit about what ultimately might be the economic consequences of all this, but this was certainly not an important element at that time.

*Q: While the Cyprus thing was going on we were going through the Watergate trauma and the slow political demise of President Nixon. Did this have any impact on our operations? Henry Kissinger, obviously, was the number one man in foreign affairs and also, really in a way, almost a surrogate president.*

STABLER: Yes, he was in a sense almost what you might call a Prime Minister. Curiously enough, Watergate didn't impact on our operations really. However, when Nixon resigned we were extraordinarily busy for a couple of days writing up letters for Ford to send to Heads of State saying, "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose" - nothing really changes.

*Q: But, you didn't have the feeling that things were at a standstill or anything?*

STABLER: Nothing really was at a standstill because we continued to operate. Kissinger was running the thing as far as policy was concerned.

*Q: Did you have the problem of trying to explain to Europeans who are very sophisticated what this Watergate thing was all about?*

STABLER: Not particularly. I think the people abroad had more of a problem there because I think a lot of the people in Europe didn't understand what the fuss was all about. But I wouldn't say that Watergate really affected the conduct of foreign policy in any important way. Things went on. I don't recall that it diminished the importance of what we had to say on various subjects. Nixon resigned in August, 1974 and I made a number of my trips after that alone and with Kissinger. Things went on the same. It was curious. You might have thought that an upheaval of that sort would have created some troubles, but...

*Q: We come to the time when you served as Ambassador to Spain from 1975-78. How did you get this appointment?*

STABLER: Well, during the Cyprus affair Kissinger decided whether he liked people or not who were involved in some way or another. He decided that he liked Jack Kubisch and sent him as Ambassador to Greece. At one point somebody said to me, "Oh, Kissinger is thinking of making you Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs." I said, "Well, I'm not really wild about that. Frankly, I don't think I particularly want that." That amused me because years before somebody told me that Dean Acheson, when I was a very junior officer was thinking about making me Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs. That didn't come about either, but in any case I wouldn't have wanted the ARA one.

Time went on and I got involved as Deputy Assistant Secretary in some of the discussions with the Spaniards in Washington on the base negotiations which had begun. McCloskey had been made the chief negotiator and I knew him very well and had worked very closely with him on Cyprus. Indeed he had been Ambassador to Cyprus for one very brief period when Kissinger called him back to handle press matters for him. There was clear evidence that Kissinger did not care for or think that the Ambassador to Spain, who was a former Deputy Chief of Naval Operations and the Commander-in-Chief, Southern Area, Naples, CINCSOUTH was doing a good job and wanted to get rid of him. I was told that Kissinger was thinking of sending me to Spain but that this depended on whether or not Peter Flanagan would get the job. Peter Flanagan had been in Nixon's White House and involved in the recruiting of political ambassadors of people who were Republicans and important contributors to the Republican Party. Peter had pretty much the say of who would and who wouldn't be appointed an Ambassador. I had known Flanagan in the latter part of 1968, I believe, in Washington in connection with his interest in US relations with the Vatican. In fact when the Department was slow in obtaining for me a letter from Nixon according me the personal rank of Minister in Rome, I went to Flanagan to ask him to expedite it - that was in 1969 before I left for Rome. When Flanagan came to Rome shortly after I had arrived, he brought with him the letter from Nixon. The department never got over this maneuver, but there was nothing they could do about it. The only thing I had to do was to date the letter - that had been forgotten in the White House.

In any event Peter came to Rome for discussions with the Vatican on how to reinstitute US relations with the Vatican without going to full diplomatic relations. These talks led eventually to the reinstatement of the Office of the Personal Representative of the President to the Vatican. Henry Cabot Lodge was appointed at that time and took up residence in Rome for periods several times a year.

Because of Flanagan's service to Nixon, I think that President Ford may have been asked by Nixon to look after his friend, Peter Flanagan. So Ford sent Flanagan's name up to the Senate as Ambassador to Spain. Peter had a lot of good friends in Spain. He had been a banker before and had many friends abroad.

Senator Eagleton from Missouri decided that he didn't like what Flanagan did in the White House--selling embassies and what not. Eagleton got the Foreign Relations Committee aroused about all this and at the end of the Senate session...

*Q: I might mention that some of the Nixon appointments, particularly towards the end had been a little bit rank.*

STABLER: I think it was fairly blatant. They said, "You hand in a big check and we will probably get you a good job." In the case of Flanagan he came from a very wealthy family and I am sure he got the job through his father. This was the reward Nixon was trying to give him.

By the end of the Senate session that summer the nomination lapsed. That fall I was told by Larry Eagleburger that Kissinger still intended that I should go to Spain but that Ford felt he had to make another effort for Flanagan. So when the Senate reconvened in January 1975 Flanagan's name went up again. At the end of a week, one of those curious instances, I was in the Department on a Saturday afternoon and the telephone rang. I answered it and this voice said, "This is Peter Flanagan, is Arthur Hartman there?" I said, "No, he is not. This is Wells Stabler." He said, "Well, I was just calling to let you all know that I have asked to have my name withdrawn from the Senate." Needless to say it was all I could do not to say, "I am glad to hear that."

Then I was told later that at some point that fall, I guess after Flanagan's name had been withdrawn, Ford flew over to Japan and on the plane was Eagleburger, Kissinger, Donald Rumsfeld and the President. On the way over the President, Kissinger and Rumsfeld were talking about various things and the question of appointment of ambassadors came up. Kissinger said that he wanted to propose me as Ambassador to Spain. Donald Rumsfeld said he didn't really agree with that, that he had a man working for him who was a Foreign Service Officer by the name of Gene McAuliffe who had been DCM in Spain for four or five years, and he was the one who should really get the job. So at that point Kissinger said, "Well, why don't we call Eagleburger in because he knows both of these people and let's be guided by what he says." So Eagleburger was called in and they said, "Eagleburger, it is between Stabler and McAuliffe. Who would you recommend?" Fortunately Eagleburger said me. So they said, "All right, he will be Ambassador to Spain."

So then I was told that I was definitely going to have the job. The papers were sent out to Ford who was then skiing in Vail. This doesn't seem possible, but it happened--the papers got lost. So they had to start the whole process over again. Eventually the papers were approved and the agrément requested. So it was late January, 1975 before I was formally nominated...the appointment had leaked and was in the press in December. In due course, possibly February, I had my Senate confirmation hearing presided over by John Sparkman, the Senator from Alabama who was then somewhat in his dotage. Curiously enough I think I appeared on the same day that McCloskey appeared to be Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs. The only question Sparkman asked me was whether I was related in any way to the University of Alabama football star. This was not something I would

immediately know. But I somehow knew through my younger son who was an aficionado of professional football that the person he had in mind was the quarterback of the Oakland Raiders, Kenny Stabler. So I was able to say to him that if I hadn't been related to Kenny at the beginning of the season I certainly was by the end of it. That satisfied him and he went off to sleep. Then I was asked other questions, but very few about Spain. Javits, whom I knew quite well, and Hubert Humphrey, whom I also knew and in fact had traveled twice with him when he was Vice President, were very friendly. Humphrey was the only one who got into substantive discussions about the Mediterranean. I was somewhat concerned that I would be asked awkward questions about the Franco regime which would be difficult to answer because you certainly didn't want to say something unfriendly and then find yourself in Spain a couple of weeks later.

Time was moving on, the former ambassador had already left. So I had to step on the gas, particularly as the Spanish had told us that if I arrived prior to the middle of March I could present my credentials immediately. Otherwise I would have to wait until after Easter. I arrived in Madrid on March 11, which was very quick, and presented my credentials to Franco on March 13, 1975.

*Q: Before you went out...the bases agreement has always been a problem but that was being covered by a special setup wasn't it?*

STABLER: The first phases of the negotiations began in 1973 in Washington--I think Bill Porter was Under Secretary for Political Affairs. Then it got going more actively in 1974 and McCloskey was named special negotiator. I became more involved in that because of the European's Bureau interest in it. The man who was sent over by Spain was Juan José Rovira the Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs. He ultimately became a very close friend of ours in Madrid. So the negotiations took place now in Washington and now in Madrid. I didn't come back for the Washington ones, but I played a very active role in the negotiations in Madrid. Ultimately I directly negotiated three or four of the chapters without McCloskey. It was a question that the Spanish were beginning to feel rather strongly that we had too much for too little and they were particularly concerned over the presence of...well, they weren't "bases" - they were called "facilities" because the fiction was that these were Spanish bases on which Americans had facilities. So the flag at the entrance to the base was the Spanish flag not both flags, although there were American MP's along with the Spanish.

*Q: This was at Torrejon.*

STABLER: This was at Torrejon. We had a big facilities at Torrejon and we had another one at Zaragoza which was basically an all-weather bombing range which was used by our squadrons from Germany. We had another big standby operation in Moron, not too far from Seville. And then we had a large naval base in Rota, where we also had nuclear vessels.

The Spanish were troubled by this large facility in Torrejon so close also to the main airfield of Madrid, Barajas, which was practically on the same pattern. In the air you could see the two airports side by side practically. They were also a little concerned by some of the tankers that we had up at Zaragoza and by the Polarises at Rota.

But the main concern was Torrejon. So they pressed very hard indeed for the elimination of the facility at Torrejon. The negotiations in 1975 were tough ones because of all of this.

During that time I would see the Spanish Foreign Minister, Pedro Cortina Mauri, quite frequently on a whole series of things. In May, 1975, Ford chose to make a visit to Spain. It was one of those rather curious things where the decision is made in Washington and the Ambassador is simply told that he is coming. I guess, in all honesty, I wouldn't have tried to oppose it, although at that time--I digress a bit here--there was the feeling on the part of quite a few Spaniards, particularly those in the so-called democratic opposition, which existed but was very closely controlled by the Franco government...but there were stirrings, the Socialist party was around, it wasn't legal, and there were others who were taking views that were somewhat different than the Francoists on the political constitutional construction of the country. There was some feeling that we were unnecessarily supporting Franco. That we were the big friend because we had these facilities.

When I heard about the visit I suggested to Kissinger and the President that while the President was in Madrid he ought to receive a number of the so-called democratic opposition, but not going as far as the Socialists, which would have been a bit more than the traffic could have borne. I got the green light to set this up and I went to see the Prime Minister. My strategy had been to wait until the Foreign Minister had gone out of town. He had gone to Paris to an OECD meeting. I thought the Prime Minister, Carlos Arias Navarro, would be perhaps a bit more receptive to this idea.

So I went to see him and told him that the President would like to meet with this group when he was in Madrid and showed the Prime Minister this highly innocuous list - I pointed out that they were all people who freely expressed their views and were well-known to the Government and to the Spanish people. He blanched and quickly gave me the list back and appeared horrified and immediately got in touch with the Foreign Minister who was in Paris. The Under Secretary called me and asked what was this that was going on. Then the Foreign Minister got in touch with Kissinger in Paris and said there was no place for this kind of meeting in the State visit.

I regretted very much that we caved. It is difficult for me to put myself in Kissinger's shoes, he had supported this thing, but he obviously didn't want the Spanish visit to go awry. I think, myself, in retrospect, I could have perhaps been instructed to say to the Prime Minister: "The President really wants to do this, there is ample room in the program for it, they are all Spanish citizens and the President would like to meet with them. If this doesn't seem possible, then perhaps he had better not come to Madrid." It would have sent a very good signal to have done that. Instead I was told to drop the whole

thing. Later, I sat next to the Prime Minister at lunch with the President and raised this matter. He said it was not a question of the people but that it just wasn't appropriate in the context of a State visit. Well, of course, that was ridiculous. What it really came down to was that they didn't think Franco would accept the idea of the President seeing anybody who was even remotely associated with what might be called an opposition.

The Socialists, particularly, were very resentful that we had the visit. They felt we were propping the regime up. I feel myself that if we had had this meeting it would have sent a good political signal that we were open to other points of view. This was almost as bad when several years later--I will come back to the bases in a minute--when Adolfo Suarez, the Prime Minister of Spain, came to this country for a visit. Carter was then President and received him and riding over to the White House with Secretary Vance and George Vest, I was told out of the blue that the President was about to tell the Spanish Prime Minister that Vice President Walter Mondale, who was going to Europe shortly after this, was also going to Spain. This was prior to a Spanish election and I told Vance and Vest that I thought this was an overkill. We really shouldn't appear to be selecting a chosen instrument and that Mondale could perfectly well go somewhere else and not come to Spain. We just had the Prime Minister in Washington. We did not have to have the Vice President in Spain. And they agreed. But, of course, by the time they got to the White House, the Prime Minister was already there and in Carter's office. Carter told Suarez that Mondale was going to Spain and that was that

Later I recommended that when Mondale was in Madrid a reception be held at the Embassy to which I could invite leaders of the democratic opposition parties. The Communist Party leader would, of course, not be invited, since Embassies abroad were under strictures to have no contact with that party. The Prime Minister was the head of the Union of the Democratic Center which was a coalition that had been thrown together. But there were other legal opposition parties, including the Socialists. This would have been the first time many of these people would have been able to meet one of our two principal elected officials.

I couldn't believe my eyes when I got a message from Washington saying, "This has been turned down because it would be considered undemocratic for the leaders of the democratic opposition to come excluding the communists. And although we had a very strict policy of not seeing any communists, as the communists couldn't be invited you cannot do the rest of it."

*Q: Where was that coming from?*

STABLER: I sent a message to London where Vance and Vest were. I said I could not believe that this could be correct and gave the reasons why. I got a message back saying that it was. Still to this day I do not know the rationale for it. David Aaron who was the Assistant National Security Adviser to National Security Assistant Zbig Brzezinski, apparently made the decision that you couldn't do something of this sort that didn't have all of the political parties. Yet only a short time after all of that happened, we got a



message from Washington saying, "You are strictly instructed not to have anything to do at the ambassadorial level with communist parties although you might be able to have some contact at a lower level." When Aaron came with Mondale, I asked him about this, but he just didn't have a very good explanation. So it was that sort of thing that drove one wild.

*Q: Sort of a tinkering by people who really didn't know what they were doing.*

STABLER: Basically again where you have a professional ambassador on the spot he knows what the situation is, he knows what should be done, he knows we don't have any relations with the Communist Party. No one in Spain would have had the slightest concern at the fact that the communists hadn't been there. The others would have come, they wouldn't have minded. They wouldn't have boycotted the thing if the Communists were not there. At all the receptions and things that I had at the Residence I never had a communist at them and all the others all came.

Anyway, what started me on this long digression was the reference to Pedro Cortina Mauri, the Foreign Minister, with whom I had many talks concerning the negotiations. In these discussions with him, he was trying to present the idea that in our negotiations on these "facilities" we should set up a structure which would in effect duplicate the structure of NATO. Spain, obviously couldn't be a member of NATO as Franco was still around, but they wanted to have something which was more than just an arrangement on facilities. In Spain you had...in the NATO you had a council, a political committee, an economic committee, a military committee etc. He would draw a diagram of the NATO structure and then he would draw a little diagram, little boxes, etc. with all the structures he wanted on the Spanish side and then there would be a line between the two which would be the US. In other words the US would be the link between NATO and Spain.

I used to tease him about this because one day he repeated his diagram drawing circles rather than boxes. So I said, "Oh, Mr. Minister, I am very interested to see that your policy has totally changed." He looked terribly surprised and said, "What do you mean?" I said, "You are talking about circles today, not squares." Cortina, who was quite serious and of whom I was quite fond, had to smile

The negotiations went on and we got into tough discussions because the Spanish in effect said, "No agreement unless you leave Torrejon." We were not prepared to do that. Then came the fall of 1975 when Franco had decided to execute five or six Basque terrorists who had killed civil guards and policemen. This caused an enormous storm in Europe. Most of Western Europe withdrew their ambassadors, etc. I happened to be in the States at that particular time so there was no question about my being withdrawn.

This was the time that the General Assembly was starting and the Spanish Foreign Minister came over and asked to see Kissinger. We met in Kissinger's suite in the Waldorf. The thrust of all this was-- "My mission from Franco is to get agreement, get something signed. Therefore we are prepared to let you keep everything that you have.

The only thing we ask is that before I leave to return to Madrid we sign a framework agreement which can then be fleshed out into a formal executive agreement."

So we sat down and with circles and boxes we created with the Spanish exactly what Cortina had originally talked to me about. We met in Washington at the Spanish Embassy and Kissinger and Cortina initialed the framework agreement, which set up this new sort of structure for the facilities agreement. It was understood that we would keep everything that we had in Spain, including Torrejon.

I went back to Spain and shortly thereafter Bob McCloskey came to have another round of negotiations. We sat down in the conference room in the Foreign Ministry and the Spanish delegation started again with extremely stiff statements about the need to get out of Torrejon, etc. So McCloskey and I looked at each other in considerable surprise. We said we really couldn't understand this because this was exactly diametrically opposed to what the Foreign Minister had just said in the States and indeed which had been incorporated in a document. We, therefore, requested a suspension of the session and requested an immediate meeting with the Foreign Minister.

We went to see him and told him what had happened. He told us that he was embarrassed to say that he had not told his delegation anything of this yet and they didn't know what had been agreed to. The only thing that he would ask of us was to perhaps give up Moron, the standby base. We said we saw no problem with that, if that was what they wanted.

We didn't resume negotiations immediately because the Foreign Minister had to inform his delegation what they were to do. So far, I think this had been between himself, Franco and the Prime Minister.

Shortly after that Franco became ill and everything stopped. It wasn't until after he died and after the King had taken over in November that a new government was formed and José Maria Areilza, the Count of Motrico, became Foreign Minister. Areilza requested an urgent meeting with Kissinger. Both Kissinger and Areilza were in Paris for an OECD meeting. I had been at a Chiefs of Mission meeting in London and went down to Paris for this meeting with the Spanish Foreign Minister and Kissinger. At that meeting the Foreign Minister said that it was important for Spain to have an agreement with the United States just after the King's advent to the Throne to show that the United States was fully in support of the new government.

He asked only three things - one, that we turn the previous Executive Agreement into a treaty, secondly, that we remove the Polaris submarines from Rota, and thirdly, that we somehow manage to appear to be giving Spain a billion dollars. He said that in return for that Spain would agree that we could keep everything.

The Polaris submarines was due to return home anyway, so that was no problem. Kissinger felt that, in light of the change in the regime with the King taking over and the possibility of a democratic government, we probably could do a treaty. He said we would

certainly examine how much we could come up with to satisfy the third request. It was agreed that Kissinger would come to Madrid on the January 24, 1976 to initial a paper along the lines of what had been discussed. It was to follow the framework which had been previously agreed with then former Foreign Minister Cortina Mauri.

So we set to work in early January with the Spaniards in Madrid. McCloskey came over and worked closely with the military side. The cultural, political and economic parts of the agreement I did myself. By this time the Spanish delegation was aware of what had been agreed to with regard to our keeping the facilities.. The only thing was the question of Moron again. We said that we had agreed to give that up and wanted to point out to them that, in agreeing to give it up, we were no longer responsible for its maintenance, physically or financially. At this point, the Spaniards said we could have it back again. They didn't want to have to pay the maintenance. So the result was that we kept everything we previously had.

Then we set about putting it in treaty form and agreed to a phased period of removing the Polaris. Then we went about trying somehow to establish the billion dollar figure. We did everything, including practically adding in the page numbers, just to reach that figure. There was some grant military assistance, some military sales guarantees, and a whole series of things. So when you put it all together it looked like a billion dollars, but in point of fact we gave them basically a few million in military grants with the rest in military sales which they got at a reasonable rate but for which they paid. But somehow it looked as if we were giving them a billion.

Kissinger appeared in Madrid and on January 24, 1976 initialed the Treaty which had been prepared. In due course it was sent to the Senate.

In early June, 1976 King Juan Carlos came to the United States on a State Visit. When Ford was in Madrid in May 1975 we tried very hard to arrange it so that the President would meet with Juan Carlos with only Kissinger and me present. This was to take place after lunch at the guest palace, the Moncloa Palace, where Ford was staying. That Palace is .now the Residence and office of the Prime Minister, or as he is called in Spain, President of the Government.. After lunch all the Spaniards left including the Foreign Minister, my friend Pedro Cortina Mauri. We thought this was fine and could now have the meeting, as we had planned. But much to our horror, Cortina returned just in time for the meeting with the Prince. I told Kissinger that the only way we were going to be able to deal with this was that he would have to stay out of the meeting, and obviously I would too, because that was the only way we could keep the Foreign Minister out. That would be the only way that the Prince would feel he could talk very freely. So that was what happened. Kissinger hated it, but he realized that if he went in then so would the Spanish Foreign Minister, and the Prince wouldn't say a thing. The Prince made a big impression on Ford and spoke very freely and frankly. Kissinger ultimately became quite a close friend of the Prince. I should add here that before I went to Madrid I was given briefings in Washington to the effect that the Prince was a handsome fellow but pretty lightheaded

on top. After I got there and had talked with him a few times, I told Washington that wasn't true.

*Q: Where was this type of information coming from do you think?*

STABLER: It came largely I think from the trips the Prince made overseas and when he had to be terribly careful what he said and did, so he didn't talk much.

*Q: Was he sort of playing Prince Hal waiting to become Henry V?*

STABLER: I think to some extent. He also realized that he was created by Franco for this and therefore publicly had to be very, very careful. So he was all smiles and dances, charming and glittering and lightweight most people thought. I don't know to what extent my predecessors really got to know him because I would have thought if they had they would have realized that there was a good deal more than met the eye. So the conventional wisdom of my briefings in Washington was that while he was a nice fellow, he was sort of a lightweight with no particular role. Fortunately, he was very outspoken and used to talk very freely, which used to surprise me at times. But it all led me to believe that he had a certain amount of native intelligence, that he was no one's prisoner and that he had many people that he knew from his travels with whom he kept in touch. People like Bob Mosbacher, Secretary of Commerce. They were both yachtsmen. He used to talk to Kissinger on the phone. All sorts of people that he would meet and talk with and get ideas. By the time he became King, Kissinger realized there was someone here of considerable substance, so he was invited to the States very quickly after he became King.

Juan Carlos prepared a speech for him to give before a Joint session of Congress in Washington. This had been written by a variety of people, including members of his staff. The King sent it to me to help with the English translation. I took it as my cue to make suggestions on it, which I did. In the draft the first part went on at enormous length about the history of Spanish-US relations. The second part, relatively brief, concerned the events in Spain and his vision for the future

I recommended to him that he flesh out the second part and cut down the first part. I also suggested that At the outset he say that his speech would be in two parts, the first on history, the second on current events in Spain. I said that without that preamble he would simply lose his audience who would think it was going to be a lightweight speech about the history of US-Spanish relations.

He did that and the speech was a remarkable one and very well received. He outlined in the second part the democratic Spain he envisioned. It was partly, of course, for the US Congress, but basically it was for the audience at home. He felt that he could more safely do that sort of thing abroad rather than at home, because he was a constitutional monarch and was not supposed to be involved in the political evolution. Let me add parenthetically that the King said to me more than once that he had to be careful, because he was not only once a Bourbon, but twice a Bourbon. This, of course, referred to the fact that his

grandfather, Alfonso XIII, had meddled in politics and had been forced to abdicate. Juan Carlos was a Bourbon through his father and through his mother.

The speech, delivered by the King in his excellent English, also the added effect of making the Senate pro-King and pro-treaty. So when the Treaty finally came to the Senate it was approved by an overwhelming majority. For the first time we had a Treaty rather than an Executive Agreement incorporating the facilities and setting up this structure which was somewhat of a carbon copy of the NATO structure.

*Q: Sort of a shadow NATO.*

STABLER: A shadow NATO. Of course, now Spain is a member of NATO. The Treaty has been written with that in mind and we had not given up Torrejon.

*Q: Continuing with the treaty business, was there the feeling that when Franco goes that Spain very likely will go under NATO?*

STABLER: Well, I don't think so. I think there was a lot of misgivings. A lot of people in Europe and elsewhere felt that the King simply would continue the Franco regime...the Franco structure would remain in place and he would simply be a figurehead of the Franco regime, version II. In fact, when he came to this country in June, 1976, he had a meeting with newspaper publishers, etc. here in Washington and they said to him; "Well, we don't see that anything has changed in Spain. You still have Arias Navarro as Prime Minister. He was Franco's Prime Minister. You have this, you have that and you have the other thing. You don't seem to have changed anything." The King replied, "Well, I will also say to you that you don't seem to have changed your people. The newspaper people reporting on Spain today are the people who reported on Spain under Franco. They don't see what is going on, what is changing." That was in early June and on July 4, a month later, he dropped Arias Navarro and brought in Adolfo Suarez. This was all being done in steps. It couldn't be down overnight.

He had to feel his way. Suarez had been brought up as a functionary in the Falange, which was the Franco political structure, and had followed a career up the ladder as a Franco functionary. Suarez had no idea basically what a democracy was. He was young, attractive, a good TV personality, liked the King, the King liked him, and he was ambitious. There were many people associated with some of these younger Franco people who recognized that you couldn't carry on the regime without Franco and that indeed you could, without too much difficulty, modify the Organic laws of the Franco regime as a transition towards democracy by simple changes. And that is what happened. By simple changes, they maintained the same structure with a new Prime Minister, ultimately leading, of course, to rewriting the constitution and leading to elections. The constitution wasn't finally finished until sometime in 1978, so the first elections under the new constitution was in '78 or '79. But in the meantime, Spain had moved from the dictatorship of Franco into a democratic regime without changing any of the laws. I mean

without revoking these fundamental Organic laws - they were simply adapted to the new situation.

That was one of the big arguments I used to have with some of the members of the democratic opposition, particularly the Socialists and the Christian Democrats who said that the slate needed to be cleaned. It was essential to start from scratch. I would say that that was a very dangerous thing to do. You had to have something in place and work on that and gradually work into the next phase. But don't just destroy everything and start from the beginning, because that would lead to immense trouble because you would have no reference points. Now you have a reference point which with certain changes will lead towards what you eventually want to do. Fortunately that is what they finally did. Some of them recognized that it was far less dangerous to do it gradually than to try to do it all over night.

*Q: I would like to go back to one final thing about the base negotiations. How did you find...often the hardest thing with the base negotiation is not with the foreign government but with that other foreign government, our Department of Defense...they dealt...after all if you had a standby base and you had a base Torrejon which has high visibility close to Madrid, wasn't there a feeling on your part or someone else's part of "Oh, hell, let's just move it over to Moron and put it there and not"...did you get the feeling that once our military gets established and used to a place for perks or other reasons or were there substantive reasons?*

STABLER: I don't think Moron would have been able to handle the type of thing that existed in Torrejon. Moron base was a standby base which had hospital equipment and things like that. It was not up to the standard that we had at Torrejon. It would have meant basically an enormous structural job and I don't think the Spaniards would have been wild about having it that close to Seville either. The alternatives were keeping it or getting out.

I think when our military had to examine what the Spaniards were demanding they had to make then the decision of which was more important--Torrejon or Moron. You could have Rota and Zaragoza. But you couldn't have Torrejon. Zaragoza was the only all weather bombing range we had in Europe. It was essential.

At that time we had not told the Spanish that we were prepared to go from Torrejon. Obviously blood, sweat and tears were being produced in Washington over getting the Pentagon to agree that's what they would probably have to do. I wasn't really involved in that. It was all done in Washington.

I was very fond of Bob McCloskey. It never struck me as if he had a great grip on all of this, but I may be wrong on all of that. Obviously here in Washington when it came to the business of dealing with the Pentagon, it wasn't just Bob McCloskey who got involved. There was the Deputy Secretary, the Assistant Secretary of EUR, Political Military Bureau, etc. So it was then the weight of the institution that was being brought to bear on the whole Pentagon. I don't doubt but that they had quite a time to get the Pentagon to

agree to this. But I always found these negotiations frustrating because again to try to get our government organized into action with somebody making a decision about something could be awfully painful.

We had not yet gotten to the point of telling the Spanish we were getting out of Torrejon, and when the time actually came to do it, I don't know what would have happened-- whether we would have done so or not. If the Spanish had said that there would be no facilities agreement of any sort unless you do this, that was the price we were apparently prepared to pay. But in the final analysis at that time we did not have to make that agonizing decision. Indeed, it is the price we are prepared to pay today but in different circumstances because Spain is part of NATO. The Italians rallied around and gave us additional facilities and now you have the whole changed situation in Europe anyway.

But I think one of the most difficult things of all is that negotiations with foreign governments are difficult enough, but negotiations within one's own government are sometimes hopeless.

*Q: This is a continuing interview with Ambassador Wells Stabler. Today is July 30, 1991. Mr. Ambassador we covered a good number of things in Spain already. Particularly the bases issue, how you or one dealt with Juan Carlos, etc. I wonder if we could talk now a little about the period when Franco fell ill. There was sort of a death watch. Was this as the Spanish would put it a parenthesis in the Spanish political developments--everybody was waiting for the shoe to drop? How did you deal with that?*

STABLER: I had seen him at the "Dia de La Raza" (Columbus Day in Spain) ceremonial function at the Institute of Ibero- American Relations, which was a creation of Franco. Apparently at that function on October 12, 1975 he caught a chill. Four or five days thereafter he had a heart attack and was extremely ill.

*Q: This was when?*

STABLER: In October 1975. As I said earlier, we had still been negotiating the base agreement. When Franco fell ill, basically everything stopped in Spain. The whole system of government just came to a halt. No business was conducted. Indeed, there was this incredible sort of death watch that went on as the man lay ill and was then operated on two or three times. There were incredible tales about the operations being performed in the El Pardo Palace where he lived and how a room had been turned into an operating room and how all the hangers-on gathered in the room right next to it. Doors were swinging open between the reception room and the operating room with people going in and out. It was utterly chaotic. But, of course, this was an enormously traumatic thing in many ways. He had been in power since 1936. That was 39 years and everything had rotated around him. The process of government halted.

Of course, at about that time there was one major development which caused problems in Spain and also basically for us. That was the famous Green March in Morocco where the Moroccans had started a march to take over Spanish Morocco.

*Q: This was led by the King.*

STABLER: Well, essentially led by the King. The problem here was that, with Franco lying gravely ill, there was no one clearly in charge and the Spanish were nervous about it. The military wanted to take military action. Others felt this would be a very serious thing and in any event Spanish Morocco wasn't all that important to Spain, far more important were the enclaves in the northern part of Morocco, Ceuta and Mellila.

Then the TV programs, of course, showed this Green March and showed at one point a man struggling along carrying an American flag. So the Spanish became very suspicious that we were involved in some way behind it. I, of course, assured them we were not. I had some residual suspicions that in some way we may have given some logistic or planning support to King Hassan of Morocco with respect to the Green March. It was quite a few miles from the Moroccan border to the capital of Spanish Morocco. We had some very difficult times with the Spanish over this. Then at one point, Juan Carlos, as Prince of Spain, made a visit to Spanish Morocco to show the flag and assure the Spanish residents that Madrid was standing behind them. I don't know if he was able to do a great deal, but it is quite possible that he played even more an important role than was known at the time.

We, of course, tried to urge calm and that they not take up arms. Interestingly enough, that was what happened. I say interestingly enough because obviously the Spanish felt rather strongly that the Moroccans were taking advantage of Spain at a moment when Franco was ill. They had all sorts of delegations, negotiations involving people from the government, private emissaries. In any event this all got by without any serious consequences.

*Q: How does one operate in this? Here you are the American Ambassador. You know we have had very close relations with Morocco since 1796 or something like that. You have this lurking suspicion that perhaps at least somewhere within our government, by either CIA or military or something, may be giving some underhand assistance there. Did you go back to Washington?*

STABLER: In something of this sort instructions were received from Washington. I reported obviously what the Spanish were telling me and the conversations I had had with the government, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Chief of the Military Command, the Minister of the Army, etc. who all had this suspicion that somehow we were involved. I was instructed, of course, to go in and tell them that we were absolutely neutral in this thing. We had nothing to do with it. It was hands off. We just didn't take sides.



It was a little difficult because the Spanish felt that they had a right to some support from us since this was, if you will, an aggressive act by the Moroccans. It had not been brought about by any action of the Spanish. It was entirely a Moroccan thing to take the Moroccans' minds off their local problems and the Polisario who were the rebels supported by the Algerians who were trying to take away some of the Moroccan territory. This was really, basically as I looked at it, a move which was started entirely by the Moroccans.

*Q: Did you at some point call in your station chief, CIA man, and the defense attaché and say, "Now listen, are you sure there is no monkey business going on?" Or in a way did you not want to call them in?*

STABLER: I didn't, although in point of fact I had a daily staff meeting of all the heads of sections which met in my office around 10:00 for the purposes of finding out what was going on, and giving them my instructions of what I wanted done. If it had been something that was a CIA operation, we wouldn't have been told that. Maybe the station chief would have been told, but he would have been told not to tell the Ambassador. In saying this, I don't say that I have any fixed knowledge that we were involved except it seemed to me that shortly before this began, Dick Walters, who at that point may still have been Deputy Director of CIA, made a visit to Rabat. Whether it had anything to do with it or not, I don't know. Whether the Spanish suspicions were founded, I do not know. They couldn't come up with anything very specific. The only thing that they came up with really was why was the American flag being carried in the Green March.

I pointed out that it also might have been in the Moroccan interest to have it appear that we were behind this. It would not have been too difficult to give the flag to a Moroccan or whoever, and tell him to wave it so that the cameras would pick it up. So I told them that I didn't think that was a very valid point. I made very clear to them, as I was instructed to do, that their protests were really groundless and this was not something that we had anything to do with and that we were urging, as we usually do, tranquility and calm and moderation.

In any event, this was all overtaken by the death of Franco. It was one of these things where there had been many reports that he had died, which proved not to be true. One of them, for example, which I cite because it seems to me a good object lesson of what should not be done.

One afternoon there were reports around town that he had died. I had checked these reports and touched base with a number of people I had confidence in who had told me the reports were not true. But the Defense Attaché, whom I had kept on--he had been the Army Attaché under the previous Ambassador--came in to see me and said he had heard reports. I said that I had heard them too but was absolutely certain that they were not correct and therefore was not going to send a message. I thought I might, in due course, telephone to tell Washington that the rumors were not true. He agreed and left the room.

I called the Assistant Secretary, Arthur Hartman, in Washington and told him that there were a lot of rumors around and he may have seen tickers, etc., but I could assure him they were not true. He said that he couldn't quite understand this because he had just gotten from my Embassy a CRITIC message --which stops everything...

*Q: Designed to report coups, deaths of chiefs of state, outbreak of war and this type of thing.*

STABLER: It is the top, priority emergency message and gets distributed in a flash around Washington.

He said that the message said that Franco had died. I said that I didn't know how that could be because I certainly sent nothing and it is not true and I was calling to tell him this.

Well, after digging into this a little bit and asking my station chief to find out for me what sort of message it was, it turned out that the Defense Attaché had gone directly from my office, up to his office and had sent without any authorization from anybody the CRITIC message saying that Franco had died.

*Q: I find this incredible.*

STABLER: Well, it was incredible. It made me absolutely furious. I called him in and ripped him over the coals and said that if he wasn't about to be leaving anyway and retiring, he would be out of Madrid that night, because I would not keep him. I made it clear that he would send a message to Washington and take full responsibility for the telegram which he did without any authorization. He did this. The Defense Department was rather angry with me for making him do it, but I said that this was exactly the sort of thing that is intolerable in an Embassy--someone who can send wires on his own.

I think this is one of our great weaknesses that everyone from a different agency has access to their own communications and can send any message they want on their own.

At one point CIA wanted me to agree to combine the State communication center in Madrid with the CIA communications unit which would be run by the CIA. I absolutely flatly refused. They said, "What, don't you trust us?" And I said, "It isn't a question of trust. If I could be assured that I would see every message going out of that communication center no matter what it was, I would agree to it, but I will not agree to something where I do not have total control over my communications and I do not want ever a situation to arise when I am sending a message and am told it can't be sent because the station chief's message takes priority." So I said, "I refuse flatly. I will keep my State Department communication and you keep yours. I am not going to have a situation arise where the Ambassador's messages are put to one side."

*Q: What was the motivation of sending a CRITIC message?*

STABLER: It was very clear to me what it was. He thought that he was getting a scoop and he would be the one who scooped the Embassy by getting the message in first. He was convinced that he was right, although he didn't say he disagreed with me when I talked with him. But it was true, he went directly from my office upstairs to send his message.

*Q: But he knew what would happen.*

STABLER: He thought he was right, but he wasn't. It was a very undisciplined effort by him to gain glory. That was all there was to it, very simple. As I say, if it hadn't been for the fact that he was leaving, I would have asked for his removal at once.

*Q: What happened to him subsequently?*

STABLER: He eventually left and retired. He was teaching somewhere in a college somewhere in Pennsylvania. He was a very nice fellow, but I was terribly disappointed to think that he would do something of that sort.

I mentioned it because it just seems to be an object lesson in a way. You run an embassy, you work...I did not ever agree to the use of country team in the embassy because I didn't consider it a team. The Ambassador was the ambassador and everyone worked for the ambassador. We had very close communications via staff meetings, etc. But I didn't want anybody to feel in a sense, as this fellow apparently did, that you are all part of a team and maybe there is a *primus inter pares* but you are a team member and go and do your thing.

*Q: I find this interesting because I served in embassies where I was part of a country team, but it never occurred to me that we were there to do other than contribute.*

STABLER: Well, I wouldn't even let the name be used because I didn't really, frankly, believe it was necessary. I will say this and I have talked about Graham Martin and how difficult a person he was when Ambassador in Rome, there were some things that I thought he was right about. He was the one who actually used the term Diplomatic Mission and would not use the term of Country Team. I thought he was right on that, so I copied him when I went to Madrid. And it worked, I think it worked well. It wasn't that I was aloof because I had these daily meetings with all the top members of the Mission and once a week a much larger meeting involving section heads and all the peripheral people.

*Q: What was the reason for having these larger meetings?*

STABLER: The larger meeting, once a week, was designed to bring in elements that were in Madrid and had functions, but who were not strictly speaking part of the Mission, such as the 16th Air Force and the Office of Special Intelligence of the Air Force. This gave the possibility for these other elements to be plugged in to some extent as to what we

were doing. They very rarely offered any comment of particular interest, but it was an opportunity for everybody to get together.

Of the two I found the morning meeting most useful. We tried to keep it to no more than 15 minutes. This was an opportunity for all the principal section heads, including the head of MAAG -

*Q: Just to give an idea, who were the principal section heads?*

STABLER: Well there was the DCM, the political counselor, the economic counselor, the political/military counselor, the consular counselor, the head of MAAG, the Defense attaché and other military attachés, and the station chief. At the bigger meetings you added the FBI man, the Narcotics man, Agriculture, etc. At that time the economic counselor also covered the commercial side of things, otherwise there would have been the Commercial man as well.

It was a way that I could then find out from them what they were doing and what was going on; and then I could say what I was doing this and to give, my guidance on how certain matters should be dealt with.. It was a very useful coordinating tool and I think it worked well.

Franco finally did die. I had been at a dinner party the night before. There were some Franco relatives there. They were called to the telephone during dinner and then disappeared. Well, one obviously couldn't ask what had happened, but I had arranged with someone who was well plugged in to call me the minute that he heard that Franco had died. About 4:30 or 5:00 the next morning I got a telephone call from this friend who said the end had come. That ended this era. I immediately informed Washington.

Then, of course, the question was who was going to represent the United States at the funeral. Because he was Franco, although there were a lot of people who didn't want to come, there were many who wanted to. President Ford took quite some time to decide. But they made the wise decision that they would appoint Nelson Rockefeller, then Vice President, and me as the US representatives. In spite of a lot of pressure the President and Kissinger wisely decided that they were not going to make a circus out of this thing. They were going to limit it to just two people.

Franco died on the 20th and I think the King's swearing in took place a couple of days later. Rockefeller came right over. Then we had rather an amusing thing. In the parliament building there was very limited space so it was agreed that only the principal delegate from each nation would be allowed to come to the parliament for the swearing in. I was rather indignant about the whole thing because it seemed to me that I was not only delegate but Ambassador. A lot of my colleagues were both Delegates and Ambassadors so they all could go. At one point Mrs. Rockefeller thought she might want to go so I got two tickets for the Vice President and Mrs. Rockefeller. When I said I was not able to go she decided that perhaps she shouldn't go and I should take her ticket. So I

did. Of course the Spanish protocol people were upset. I was the only non-chief Delegate Ambassador who had been able to attend. But I was determined that somehow I would participate in this event.

That went off very well. The King became King. There was no crowning. There was a crown on a stool representing the monarchy, but he wasn't crowned, but sworn in. He made a speech and I congratulated him on it and he said, "Yeah, but I wish you could have heard my knees knocking." Then, several days later there was the formal funeral in front of the main royal palace in Madrid. To appease my Spanish Protocol friends I agreed that I would not sit with Rockefeller, but with my Ambassador colleagues. Afterwards we all drove out to the Valley of the Fallen which was a huge underground basilica where many of the fallen in the Civil War were buried, including a few of the Republicans, and, of course, the main leaders of the Franco period. And that is where Franco was buried that day.. Rockefeller was there, of course, for that. We both went to that. Others there included Pinochet of Chile, King Hussein of Jordan. I might add that on the way out with the Vice President and Mrs. Rockefeller in the Vice President's car flying the American flag and his Vice Presidential flag, he was greeted quite warmly by the crowds lining the road.

*Q: Pinochet was President of Chile*

STABLER: King Hussein of Jordan was there and a lot of others. But most of the European countries were represented by their ambassadors. We, obviously had a special relationship with Spain because of the military facilities and that is why Rockefeller came.

Rockefeller stayed on during the week. The next event was a week later. It was to be the King's Day--a mass at the Los Geronimos Cathedral in Madrid, at which many foreign delegations would come, including Prince Philip of the UK and a lot of the European royalty and leaders who were acknowledging that there was a new Spain after Franco's death. During the week before the King's Day I didn't see much of Rockefeller because he wanted to be left alone. He and his wife went on their usual buying sprees. He was a compulsive buyer and bought everything in sight, not one but dozens of them. My wife and I did have lunch with him and Mrs. Rockefeller one day, but that was it.

Then came the King's Day and we went to the Cathedral. The Cardinal of Madrid, Cardinal Tarancon. who was quite a liberal Cardinal...at one time Franco support depended on the Catholic Church, the military and the wealthy class. The wealthy class and military remained supporters, but the Church had begun to change and take strong exception to the dictatorial form of government. At this service Cardinal Tarancon delivered a homily which was nothing short of a political statement. It was quite democratic and liberal in terms of what had been going on. I mention this because I was very much interested that after the service, Rockefeller, who was always regarded by some as being fairly liberal, was absolutely aghast to think that the Cardinal had given

such a liberal homily. I think those who thought Rockefeller was a liberal were perhaps rather wrong. Basically he was very conservative.

Then we went on from there to the Royal Palace - the Palacio de Oriente, as it was called. There was a big function there. It was amusing because, of course, I, as a Delegate went into the part of the Palace where the foreign delegations were--Prince Philip, royalty from Liechtenstein, everywhere--(I must say that I discovered there that Prince Philip has a good sense of humor. He was very funny talking about various things in Spain and what not.) Rockefeller and I stood together. After the King and Queen came in and greeted each one of us, I went scooting through various back ways of the Palace, which is a very big one, to another part of the Palace where the King and Queen were receiving ambassadors accredited to Spain. So I took my place there, and when they came by they did a double take and said, "Haven't we just seen you some place else?" It was quite an occasion and the Spanish did it extremely well. It was a joyful moment when the King took over, although at that point no one really knew where this was going to go.

*Q: During the Franco death watch, and during the period when the King took over but was obviously the new boy on the block, etc., what were you looking at? Were you looking at the army, etc.?*

STABLER: I had felt long prior to Franco's death that there was a tendency in Spain to move towards an updated concept in the political system and the recognition by a great deal of the younger people that Spain had to move on and catch up in the 20th century to where a lot of other countries were and had been for many, many years. It was also fairly clear to me that the creation by Franco of a middle class in Spain had brought about a rather moderate attitude. There were a lot of people who had made great improvements in their standard of living and didn't want anything to happen that would interfere with that.

I also had come to recognize that the military as such was a fairly disciplined group and probably would not take any action on their own. And then it was also clear to me from talking with Juan Carlos, as Prince before, that he was on the right track with all this and it was likely that the transition would go peacefully.

So one was in very close touch with the King, with the government, with leaders who were coming into the new government. For example, before the new government under the King was announced, I went to see Count Motrico, who had been Spanish Ambassador to Washington, and who had been in almost every part of the political spectrum at one time or another, was regarded as a mild opposition to Franco. It wasn't very severe. He had been, after all, Franco's Mayor of Bilbao, and Ambassador to Washington. I went to see him and he gave me the list pretty much of people who were going to be ministers in the new government. He became Foreign Minister.

Now Juan Carlos did the intelligent thing. He kept Franco's Prime Minister, Arias Navarro, as the Prime Minister. He did not want to oust Arias immediately because he did not seek a confrontation with the loyal Franquistas which would cause a great upheaval.

But he brought people in who had been somewhat in opposition to Franco, such as the Count of Motrico, José Maria Areilza.

*Q: The King, by the way, under the former government could form the cabinet. It wasn't a parliamentary democracy as such.*

STABLER: He was Chief of State. All of Franco's Organic laws were still in force. So the Chief of State could appoint the government--the Prime Minister, and see to it that the right people were brought into the cabinet. And he brought in a number of younger men who were more modern, if you will, in their approach. The people believed nothing had changed because here was Arias Navarro, the Minister of the Army was the same, etc. Therefore, what had changed? It was just a continuation.

But it was a clear strategy to not upset the apple cart right away and there was a lot of nostalgia for Franco who, after all, had been around for a long time - forty years. So throwing everybody out on the street would have been more than the traffic could bear.

My object in this period...and let me say here that in those situations, you don't get instructions as to what to do. You pretty much do what you think should be done and tell Washington what you are doing. But no one says you should go in and do this or that. My effort in all this was to encourage democratic elements in playing the game and trying to persuade those people who had been strong opposition to Franco, the Christian Democrats, the Socialists, not to try to force the issue to the point of throwing everything out and making a new beginning. And not go through a period when nothing was on the table as you try to write a new constitution. Not to turn the thing into a trauma. It was important to believe that the King was going in this direction and to play the game along with him and not to rock the boat in the extreme sense.

And, of course, we did what I mentioned to you before regarding the facility negotiations. When Kissinger met with Foreign Minister Areilza in Paris in December, 1975, we disagree to the treaty and things of that sort so that it would demonstrate that the United States was backing the new government. The whole aspect of this was really to support the King and the forces that wanted to change the system in Spain, but to change it gradually and in a rational way. I mentioned to you earlier that part of this was the negotiation of the Treaty, part of it clearly was inviting the King to make a State Visit to Washington in June, 1976.

And, of course, an extremely important part of this process also was the support, advice, counsel, etc. that came from the Europeans who felt that with Franco gone it was a new situation and that some of these new parties should be supported. As you know, there are the various political foundations, particularly in Germany, representing the different political parties.....

*Q: Each one representing...the CDU, the SPD .....*

STABLER: Then there was another one the name of which I can't remember the, a liberal one. They had representatives in Madrid and a lot of money passed through those people to help the various political parties. Willy Brandt was very helpful in terms of the Socialist Party in trying to convince the Socialists not to do anything drastic. The Christian Democrats were sort of at sixes and sevens. Even today they don't have much of a role in Spain.

It was interesting because one of the leaders of the Christian Democrats, Ruiz Jimenez, had been Franco's Ambassador to the Vatican. He had even been Minister of Education under Franco. Then he went totally in opposition and, of course, those parties were legally banned.

So this was my main preoccupation to support the elements that wanted to move towards a democratic system. The King's speech before the US Congress was all aimed at that. I mentioned my role in that. It really went, I think, quite smoothly.

The King recognized, of course, that he couldn't go on for very long without dismissing Arias Navarro. He was a very nice man but had also been a Minister of the Interior, in charge of the secret police and the security police in Spain. It was in the air that the King had to make a change. He called Arias Navarro to the Royal Palace in Madrid and, I think, totally shocked him by telling him that he was finished. It was a courageous thing to do.

It was unknown before that he was going to be called in so a new Prime Minister hadn't been designated. It was rather amusing that I had separate visits from three or four gentlemen, each one of whom thought he was going to be named Prime Minister - each one assuring me of that fact. One was a man who had Christian Democratic leanings although he had not been a member of the Christian Democratic Party as such. Another was former Foreign Minister Areilza. I was quite sure that none of them would be Prime Minister, but they thought so.

Much to everybody's surprise came the appointment of Adolfo Suarez, who had been in the new government, although at the moment I can't remember exactly what he was doing. He was young, he had no background in democracy whatsoever. I talked to him many times. He had no particular grounding. He came up the ladder as a functionary of the Franco party - the Falange. But he was young, attractive looking. He obviously got along well with the King, the King liked him and the King picked him out of the young element and made him the Prime Minister. It came, as I say, as a great surprise to most people. I had a call from someone in the Palace while I was having the 4th of July reception, telling me that the new Prime Minister had been chosen. They wouldn't tell me the name, merely that it was someone that I knew and somebody who was an insider and I would probably like it.

Then the King in July, 1976, about a month after returning from the States, took the occasion to shuffle the thing around. Some of these people who had thought they would be Prime Ministers found themselves with no jobs at all. My friend Areilza wasn't



anything. His Under Secretary, Marcelino Oreja became Foreign Minister. He was a young fellow, also with Christian Democratic tendencies.

All of these people were part of the democratic element and I mentioned this before. When Suarez took over it became clear that eventually there would have to be an election, certainly within a year's time, even though the new constitution hadn't been written. So Suarez and all his friends created the Union of the Democratic Center - the UCD -which was a collection of people from all walks of life, but who were not the nostalgics, who believed in the consolidation of a democratic state. There was the Alianza Popular which was created by Manuel Fraga who had been Minister of Interior in the first government of the King. He created this rather right wing party. Then there were the Socialists who had social-democratic tendencies, but who were regarded by many with deep suspicion as a stalking horse for the communists. On the far left there were the communists led by Santiago Carillo who had, with official but unacknowledged concurrence, been allowed to reenter Spain sub rosa after years spent in exile. The center party became quite important because as we went towards elections, there was a strong feeling that the Socialists were going to do extremely well and this frightened lots of people. So lots of people in this right wing party of Alianza Popular voted with the Union of the Democratic Center out of fear that somehow the Socialists might get in. And the Socialists were regarded as the nemesis of all the vested interests in Spain because they had been associated with the communists during the Civil War and were considered basically the enemy. So that's what happened in the elections of 1977--the Union of the Democratic Center won a landslide majority.

About this time, or just before the elections took place, the decision had to be made as to what to do about the Communist Party. The Government decided that it simply couldn't declare nonexistent a certain element of the population. So they waited until Good Friday, when all of Spain ceases to function for a whole week, the military and other public opinion leaders go out of town, papers do not publish, etc. They selected that moment to legalize the Communist Party to try to reduce to the extent possible the outcry of some parts of the press and military, etc. It really worked remarkably well because by the time some of these people got back into town the thing had been done and there was no time to organize anything. So the Communist Party was legalized.

The Prime Minister asked me once at a long lunch I had with him before he went to Washington about the whole thing. I said, "I suppose officially speaking I would have to say that we don't approve of the Communist Party, we don't like them and don't think they should play any role. But if you ask me privately, I would say that it was the only thing that you could do. You could not declare them nonexistent and therefore you did the right thing because you minimized the dramatic effect by legalizing them. If you had banned them you would have made a crisis out of it."

But this Union of the Democratic Center was a bastard type of organization. It had all sorts of people in it. They tried to structure it as a regular party and ultimately, after my time, it fell apart. The Socialists came in and that was that.

This was a fascinating period to be there because to watch a country that has been almost 40 years under a dictatorship gradually turn itself into basically a very successful democracy is, from a professional point of view, a fascinating thing to watch.

*Q: We are so used to dealing with the exact opposite.*

STABLER: Exactly. So the creation of a monarchy to boot was quite astounding.

During the early period I was involved rather heavily in all of this. I do not mean to suggest that I was writing constitutions and that sort of thing, no. But trying to encourage this process. Trying to facilitate it. Trying to keep us from being too much in bed with one group, which I wasn't always very successful in because of the strange way we do business in Washington. And supporting this whole process in one form or another...through visits, the Leader Grant program and that type of thing which was useful.

As time went on it was quite clear to me that my particular role in this was coming to an end. It is never very desirable in these situations to have a terribly close involvement of the American Ambassador in these things. We had situations where when Suarez was Prime Minister I was in Washington on consultation and the word came to me that the Station Chief wanted to have direct contact with the Prime Minister and understood that the Prime Minister would like to have regular contact with him. I went to see whoever was head of CIA at that point, Stansfield Turner I think it was, and said absolutely not. I was not going to have the situation where we had two channels into the Prime Minister. There was no reason for it.

*Q: It is also dangerous. All of this comes out later on.*

STABLER: Also in our system where the CIA chief can do things and write messages which he doesn't have to show to the Ambassador you lose control. To my knowledge it never occurred. He didn't like it, but I made it clear that this was not to be. If they thought they were going to do this then I was going to resign. I just think that it is a very awkward situation. We had no Spanish programs in Spain. I could see from the Prime Minister's point of view that he wouldn't mind that sort of thing, having little back channels and so forth.

You get to a situation in this type of setup where eventually one party believes that you are being unfriendly to them and too friendly to the other party. And that began to be the situation. Suarez began to feel that I was being too friendly to the Socialists, and the Socialists thought I was being too friendly with Suarez.

As 1977 rolled along I felt that I had probably done all that I could do and was beginning to spend an awful lot of time fighting with bureaucracy in Washington. I was getting very tired of it. There comes a point where if you are spending most of your time trying to get Washington to do things, to focus on things, a sort of diminishing returns set in.

*Q: What type of things were...?*

STABLER: Well, personnel for one thing. Secondly there was one rather difficult case involving a contract we had with the Spanish through the Defense Department and, I think, General Electric, to establish a whole communications network for them for their military, a sort of command control structure which they didn't have and contracted with us, involving quite a bit of money, to do. We didn't do it very well. It didn't pass any of its tests. We kept charging more money and the thing became intolerable. I got thoroughly involved in it. Just the business of trying to get the Department and the Pentagon to focus on the damage that this was causing us was absolutely monumental. It was the type of thing that drove me wild because I couldn't get anybody to focus on it and take seriously what it was that we were doing and where we were wrong. We documented it in every way and eventually they did.

The Department imposed personnel appointments on me which had no reason.

*Q: Madrid is one of those places where you send either lower level or politically connected people. The cultural officer who is a friend of so and so.*

STABLER: We didn't have much of that really. But for instance, I wanted a certain person who spoke Spanish for my political counselor and had thrust upon me a man who spoke excellent Mandarin and had been in the National Security Council who had no more reason to be in Spain than the man in the moon, except that they had to park him somewhere. It was quite clear that they were only going to leave him there for a short time and this was purely parking. I objected to that but was told that this was going to be it. So he came and he wasn't very good. I got tired of that sort of thing.

So eventually I told George Vest, Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, that come 1978 I thought I would be quite prepared to move on. As it turned out, of course, I probably would have moved on anyway because then they had to find a job for Terry Todman, who was then Assistant Secretary for American Republic Affairs and who had fallen afoul of the Carter Administration over his, I believe, decision not in some cases to make the human rights thing a make or break issue. Other things have to be considered too. But he was considered rather weak on that so they decided that they wanted to get rid of him. Spain was in the cards as I would have been there for three years. I had gone back to Washington in '77 and thought that the thing to do was to call on the Secretary Vance and was told by the staff that he couldn't possibly see me. I went to see Phil Habib, who was then Under Secretary for Political Affairs, and talked to him about some of the things that were going on in Spain and he said I should see the Secretary. I said that I had tried to but was told no way. He simply picked up the phone and said to the Secretary's Assistant, "You make an appointment for Ambassador Stabler." It was to be on a Saturday. I was called Saturday morning and was told that the Secretary was preparing to go to Moscow and there was no way he could see me. So I called Phil Habib and told him the situation.

He said I had to see him. He called back in ten minutes and said, "The Secretary will see you."

*Q: This is sort of the gatekeeper complex.*

STABLER: Yes, the gatekeeper complex--You are an Ambassador so what is important about that.

And there were certain things. There were things about the visit of the Prime Minister that was coming along, there were things about the base negotiations, there were a variety of things that had to be discussed. And also what were their plans for me, which I think I had every right to have some idea about.

So finally I went in to see Vance and had a good talk with him. He said they would like to have me stay on for another year--this being in '77. So that was about it--I left just about a year later.

In the first few months of 1978 Frank Church, a Democratic Senator from Idaho, who was about to become Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, decided he wanted to come to Spain. He had been invited by the Basques, there were a lot of Basques in Idaho, to come to Bilbao, which was a very important part of the Basque country--big industrial center up there--for the ceremonies which were being permitted for the first time celebrating Basque national day. In Franco's day it was absolutely banned.

*Q: Because there was a very strong Basque separatist movement.*

STABLER: Very strong Basque separatist movement with a terrorist organization.

But this was to be a civic, civil ceremony in Bilbao and Church had been asked to come to it. When I heard this I called Church and said, "Frank, please come to Madrid first. The government is very sensitive to all these things. While this ceremony is officially sanctioned, Madrid still is the capital and the government is there. Even though it is a new government, they are sensitive to anything that appears to delegate from the authority of the central government. So please come to Madrid first." He said, "I understand that and I will. I am glad that you told me. I will come to Madrid first and then go up Basque country."

Well, that was the time that the Panama Canal Treaty was being negotiated in the Senate and Church was very much involved with it. He was held up and had to go to Bilbao first. I had an appointment for him to see Foreign Minister Oreja. When I had heard that he was going to Bilbao first, I called up the Foreign Office and said, "This has happened. He was going to come to Madrid first, but he has been held up. He has got to go to Bilbao, but I want to make sure that everything is still in order and we still have the appointment." I was told there was no problem.

So he went to Bilbao and then gave an interview to the press which was very innocuous and not unfriendly to the central government. He arrived in Madrid and we drove down to the Foreign Office. We sat in the antechamber; we waited; we waited 10 minutes; we waited 15 minutes. Finally I got up and said that I wanted to know what was going on here. They came in to me and said that they were sorry but I didn't have an appointment with the Foreign Minister. I said, "Now, wait a minute. I went all through this and was told that the appointment had been confirmed. No one had called me to tell me it had been called off. We came down here and this is an enormous insult. I will see to it that my displeasure is reflected."

We returned to the Embassy and I called the Foreign Minister and couldn't get him. Then I called the Under Secretary and absolutely lashed into him. At this point I had also been told that the Prime Minister would not see Church. So I called a man who was very close to the King and who had absolutely direct access to him whenever he wanted it. I said, "Here is this man who is going to be Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the United States Senate. You want friends there. You are just in the process of making an enemy of somebody who will never forget this sort of high-handed rude insulting treatment, not only to him but also to me as the American Ambassador. I am frankly extremely displeased with this thing. The only way to save it is if the King sees this Senator."

It wasn't 15 minutes later before this fellow called me and said that the King was very upset by what happened. He was extremely annoyed and would, of course, receive Senator Church. Frank Church was, I must say, very good about the whole thing.

*Q: He was politically savvy about understanding...*

STABLER: He understood what was going on. He understood what I said to him about coming to Madrid first. He realized what I was trying to do to rescue the situation. He did what I asked him to do.

So we went to the King. The King apologized for this. Later I understood he ticked off both the Foreign Minister and the Prime Minister for their behavior. Everything went off very well. Then I had a call from the Foreign Minister saying that he was sorry things hadn't worked out, etc. He asked if Mr. Church would come to see him at his residence. Well, I said, "I don't know, I will have to see if he will or won't." I told Church this and said, "Obviously we mustn't play their game. We must go down to see them and not give them the satisfaction of refusing to see them because that plays into their hands." So we went down and it was all right.

They were foolish, overly sensitive to the Basque business. Of course, they have had some terrible times with the Basque business. My very good friend, the Duke of Veragua whose real name in life was Cristobal Colon or Christopher Columbus, was assassinated by the Basques. He was an admiral in the Spanish navy and they made a mistake thinking he was somebody else and assassinated him. A lot of people were killed unnecessarily.

It was this sort of thing, the Church episode led one to believe that Suarez had been there too long. He had hung on too long. He was finally dropped by the King, I think before I left, and a new man Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo, was put in. That may have happened actually after I left.

I left in May, 1978. When I heard that Todman was coming I told George Vest that as far as I was concerned I would stay for another month, I wasn't going to wait forever for him to come. I would just as soon go.

At that time the Union of Democratic Center was still in power with Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo who actually had become secretary of the party before that and who had been in the first government of the King as Minister of Commerce. He had been an industrialist in Spain and well connected. A member of the somewhat privileged group. But then things began to disintegrate in terms of this Union Democratic Center. When the constitution was written which was completed in December 1978, there were elections in the spring of 1979 under the new constitution. The Socialists won hands down and have been in power ever since.

*Q: One of the elements, before we leave Spain, you mention that the wealthy class were one of the pillars of the Franco regime. This is also a problem for an ambassador and embassy. I mean this group can over embrace you and all. They have the money, the social know how and end all. It is very easy to become captive of them. Did you have a problem with this?*

STABLER: I didn't have a problem with that because I spent really a lot of time on the political side. One had to keep in touch with them, no question about it. I met them all shortly after I arrived in Madrid. The American Ambassador was a personality and these people were used to knowing the Ambassador and they were all very friendly. I must say we had a lot of good friends amongst this group which were by no means parasites. They were hard working people. But they had made a lot of money. They had been given various facilities and income tax was not very great and they had prospered well under Franco.

Franco had reintroduced into Spain the nobility which is a very complicated thing in Spain and taken very seriously. The book of peerage is a huge thing...and there are different degrees. You have dukes, marquesses, counts, viscounts, barons, who are Grandees of Spain. and you have the same titles, except for dukes, who are not grandees. All dukes are automatically Grandees. So you have someone who is a marquess who is a grandee and one who is not a grandee, the one who is a grandee sits ahead of the one who isn't. There are lots of Spanish nobles. That had been facilitated by Franco and played an important part. As you know, Franco was a monarchist and it was his decision that he would be succeeded by a King.

Under those circumstances one must never allow oneself to be captured by any particular group. When one entertained in the early days that I was there, you entertained the power structure. You could not entertain the power structure of any banned political party, that simply didn't work. If you tried to have Felipe Gonzalez, which you wouldn't dream of doing, with the Duke of Veragua or somebody, it simply wouldn't...

*Q: Felipe Gonzalez was at that time...*

STABLER: Leader of the Socialist Party, which was illegal. They didn't know any of these people and it would have been a scandal. You would have had an illegal politician with a member of the establishment. Now, interestingly enough, when Franco died and new government came in, we began to have functions where you would have some of these people and some of the political people. You would have a useless duchess or something, but you would have people who had an interest in what was going on in Spain. They were fascinated in meeting some of these people on the political spectrum they had never, ever laid eyes on before. Sometimes that worked very well.

But I spent a great deal of time in getting to know the political and the economic side as well as the intellectual side, although to a lesser extent because they didn't play any particular role, curiously enough, in the development of the society. But some of the intellectual people who had been exiled during the Franco period and came back, people of that sort, I made a particular point of meeting as they presented a different approach to the situation. They were not sort of the element that had supported Franco. The Franco period when I was there for me only lasted until March, 1975 to November, 1975, and then it began to develop into the new thing. So by the time that I left you had a whole new structure. You had had elections, although under the old laws because the constitution had not been finished. Some new people were coming into this picture. People who had been exiled. The King had the power to appoint a number of royal senators to take into account some of the people who were distinguished in life and many who had been exiled who then came into the picture that way. So you had an opening of the situation. A whole new element had come in which made it more interesting. So, of course, it was essential to try to keep in touch with all these people the best one could.

*Q: I had a rather bizarre story told me by Jack Binns, who was DCM under Tom Enders, about an American woman who was married to a count, Count Romanones who tried to destabilize Enders because she thought she might even get the job. Do you know anything about this?*

STABLER: Well, I knew Aileen very well. Aileen Romanones came to Madrid during WWII, possibly in 1940 or thereabouts. She came from a small little town in New York State. She was a secretary in the OSS Office in Madrid. A very pretty, tall woman. She got around Madrid society. She fell in love with a grandee, Count Romanones, who was a very wealthy person and who apparently had other sexual preferences. His father said to Aileen when she was going to marry him, "You understand about my son, don't you?"

She had built up over a period of time a position in Madrid and all the nobility. She had an attractive house in Madrid, a lovely place out in the western part of Spain - the Extramadura - a beautiful house down in the Costa del Sol. She made it her business to know people and when we arrived, we were immediately asked to quite a few things. I have to say it was very helpful because she knew all the power structure of the Franco regime and in a very short period of time...mind you I arrived in March and had Ford arriving in May so it was essential for me to know who the players were. Through her and these dinner parties and so forth I met a huge number of the principal players in the Franco regime, including Franco's daughter, granddaughter and people like that.

As time went on, of course, the situation changed. She had a little problem making the transition because she was closely linked with the Franco power structure. Then she became very friendly with the Alianza Popular, Fraga's thing. She would come over here and give lectures and talk to right wing organizations here in Washington. Then she began to find it amusing to meet some of the new breed of political people. She was very much the figure of the ancien regime, but she found it amusing at political salons to gradually meet some of these other people who had been out of the political picture because they had been banned and got to know a number of these type. I am sure she met Gonzalez and others in the political spectrum.

She knew Todman. I don't suppose she was of much use to him. Don't forget that by that time the new Spain was well on its way. The Socialists were in power and she was less relevant. She would come over to this country and made a lot of money going around the rubber chicken circuit giving lectures about the American wife of the Spanish count. In Peoria this beautiful woman with all her emeralds describing the life of Spain and her part in it was fascinating. She got involved a bit in the political thing too on the right wing, the Alianza Popular side. She has written a couple of books which most people agree are highly fictional, although they claim to be real, about her exploits in the OSS, etc.

I can't answer the question specifically as to whether or not she tried to destabilize Enders. I just don't know. He may not have paid much attention to her.

*Q: I think he was warned not to, or something like that before he went to Madrid.*

STABLER: I think that may have been right. If I had been talking to someone going to Madrid at that time I would have said to meet her but then steer clear.

*Q: According to the story she tried to absorb him very quickly into her social group before he got his feet on the ground. He cut that off. But she had a direct line to Nancy Reagan and enmity was built up.*

STABLER: That I have heard. And I have heard that Enders basically left Madrid because Nancy wanted him to. It certainly was true that Aileen Romanones was at the White House quite frequently under the Reagans. I don't doubt that that might have been a



true story. But I think that Tom Enders did absolutely the right thing and anybody in their right mind would not have permitted themselves to be consumed in this manner.

When I first went to Madrid it was just the opposite way around. It was extremely useful for me to meet the Romanones. As time went on one saw less and less of Aileen. She had become decreasingly relevant.

*Q: I think this is very interesting because it helps show social life for an ambassador is not social life. It is a working function and quite rightly so and you have to figure out how goes the social play as far as whom you meet, the influence you have, etc.*

STABLER: Yes, that is about it and I think you have to be very careful to balance it. When I first went there a lot of these people...the sort of social, social people...had a role and one, therefore, couldn't ignore them. You didn't want to antagonize them, but it didn't mean you had to climb in bed with them. But you did include them, and you did have dinner parties. But as time went on it became less relevant.

I had an interesting thing that came up and made a decision which I know was the right one, although I am sure some of the Spanish didn't like it. I had a lunch or dinner, whatever, after the election, the first popular election, where people were elected to the parliament representing a constituency rather than a particular walk of life or organization as in the Franco days. When one had a function you had members of parliament and then maybe a grandee or two, people who had some function and were not just grandee do nothings. Well my protocol person said that the grandee had to be put first. I said, "Absolutely not. I am going to establish a new thing. You have an elected member of parliament and quite honestly I think he rates being the top of the heap." So I did it. Certain eyebrows were raised, but then of course, it became fairly normal, that was what was done.

I think any ambassador in a situation which has been fluid has to keep changing with it and adapt to the new thing. At no point should one ever allow oneself to be regarded as a captive of a group. It is sometimes unfortunate when you are regarded by one group as being too friendly with the other group, if the other group thinks the same thing. It means that you are in the center.

I was told, for example, that my immediate successor was regarded as being unfriendly to the Socialists. I don't know why they hold that. But his successor then passed the word along that the Socialist Prime Minister had said to Todman's successor, "Oh, let's get rid of this fellow." What is true there?

In any event, I put this in because I think that the one thing that an ambassador should not do under any circumstances is to speak ill of his predecessor. I think it is a cardinal sin. You can simply say you don't know. But don't spread stories about a person, it doesn't help.

I think that the Binns tale is fascinating.

*Q: You left in 1978 and were looking for another assignment.*

STABLER: Before I left Secretary of State Vance came to Madrid to attend the biannual session of the US-Spanish Council which was set up under the new treaty. Before he left I had an occasion to have a walk with him during which he said, "Would you be interested in Venezuela as an Embassy?" I said, "That is very interesting because I spent quite a few years of my life growing up there." I indicated that I would be interested, although I had pretty much made up my mind that I was going to retire. I had been in for 37 years and I wanted to spend more time at home with the children, etc. But I didn't tell him that at the time.

I came home in May, 1978 and in talking with the Director General he indicated that there was no embassy available at the present time. However, he offered Political Adviser in Norfolk or the Inspection Corps. I said that I wasn't interested in either and would probably retire. Then I was asked to help do the lobbying on the Hill for the removal of the arms embargo on Turkey. That went back to my days in 1974, the Cyprus issue.

Somewhere during this time which may have been August, I had a call from the Director General who said that they were doing a list up for possible ambassadors for Venezuela and that the Secretary had wished my name to be included on the list. I told him to thank the Secretary very much, but I didn't want my name on the list, I was going to retire. At that particular point they produced the State Department budget which had in it the provision for the high one retirement.

*Q: The high one meant that instead of basing your pension on the three highest years it would be on the highest year. The idea was to encourage people to retire.*

STABLER: I decided that I would take advantage of that but didn't set any particular date because it was there. Then, as you remember, the White House had to sign it, although they didn't like it. The minute it became law the White House started with Congress to produce another bill that rescinded it. One Friday afternoon, October 15, 1978 at 5:00 I received a call from Personnel saying that it looked as if the President was going to sign into law the provision rescinding the high one sometime Saturday morning and that I should retire in half an hour. So I said, "All right, consider me retired at 5:30." The President did sign the law. There wasn't a very large group but we hired an attorney because the question was, having rescinded the high one could it be retroactive or not. After a long period of time Justice finally rendered a decision that once the President had signed the original high one law it became an entitlement and could not be rescinded by a subsequent law.

So I retired as of October 15, 1978.

*Q: Well, this has been an absolutely fascinating series of interviews Mr. Ambassador and I really appreciate this.*

STABLER: Well I have enjoyed talking about this. I am sure there are probably lots of things I have left out, but to recreate some of these things off the top of my head is sometimes difficult.

*Q: It is an excellent series of interviews.*

STABLER: I think there are probably many other things that went on in Spain, but I think I have covered the principal areas. I will just add that professionally it was rewarding to see a country move the way it did. My feeling was that when the first government came in democracy in Spain wouldn't be consolidated until you reached the situation when you could alternate majorities. I thought that to me the greatest vignette of a changed Spain was when a Socialist Prime Minister took an oath of office in front of the King with a table which had a crucifix on it. That summed up the whole thing. Now the only problem, not in my time, of course, is that the Socialists have been in power for 12 years and there doesn't seem to be a valid alternative at the moment. So that is another problem.

*Q: Thank you.*

*End of interview*