

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

WILLIAM N. STOKES

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INTERVIEW

[Note: Transcript was not edited by Mr. Stokes]

STOKES: I came into the foreign service in a way that may have implications for the remainder of my career because it was from a very improbable place. I was a student of mathematics and physics during World War II. That was used through my service as editor of a technical publication in meteorology for the all the allied forces, not only the US Air Force but also the Commonwealth and even the Soviet Air Force.

Q: Where was this?

STOKES: The publication was in Asheville, North Carolina. I had been trained as a dynamic meteorologist, that is the theoretical foundation for meteorology, by the Air Force. They brought together learned professors from all over the country to Grand Rapids Michigan and trained us in the course for a year, and from there my colleagues were sent all over the world to combat assignments, many of them behind Japanese lines. And in the course of the assignment I received a phone call from the weather service headquarters selecting me to do this work because of my experience in journalism as well as science. While I was in North Carolina I took the foreign service written examination.

Q: '46?

STOKES: '45, because it just seemed like an interesting challenge in the abstract. My motivation wasn't yet formed. As the war in Europe came to an end, the Air Force offered a program for career service for people they wanted to retain, that you could go anywhere in the world for any degree on any subject as long as it could be related in some way to the future needs of the Air Force. And I went to the University of Chicago, chose that for studies in physics, mathematics and meteorology. That was the leading center of the world. The atomic scientists of Chicago were there, the founder of dynamic meteorology, Dr. Rosby, was there. It was at that moment under President Hutchins.

One day in my mailbox came a notification that I had passed the written examination and was invited to appear at the oral exams and I wrote back saying, "I'm sorry my career has taken this other turn, thank you anyway." They said there is going to be a traveling board in Chicago, why don't you tell them what has happened and they will arrange it administratively. Well a few months went by and at this time I was living in International House and my roommate had been a Dutch physicist under the Nazi occupation. My neighbor across the hall had been a judge in the Weimar republic, my girlfriend was a student of international affairs. I'd been invited to join the atomic scientists of Chicago that was concern that civilians would make a mess of the world and that scientific discoveries would be turned to mass slaughter. So when the time came to have this administrative conversation with the board, new horizons and the importance of foreign affairs and our role abroad had come for the first time to the forefront of my mind. But

this certainly hadn't changed my thought of career at this point. I remember going into the room to meet the board, and there's a circle of people and they began asking me questions and it's my nature just to rise to the bait instinctively. Those people want me to talk, I'm overjoyed. Well, this went on for about an hour and finally a person who didn't speak at all, didn't ask any questions, was in civilian clothes, leaned forward and said, "I'm General Arthur Harris, United States Air Force, and Captain Stokes, I want to know what you're doing in this room when you've signed a commitment to serve five years to the United States Air Force." Everything went silent. And something within me lead me to reply, "General, I certainly am committed to the US government to serve it in any role it considers most useful to it. Another silence and then I was excused and the next thing I know there was a letter in my mailbox a week later from the Director General to the Adjutant General of the Air Force asking for my release. And then for the first time I had sole searching to do because up to that point there had not been a decision of any kind. But the idea that the atomic scientists had raised in my mind was something I couldn't put away. How do you want to spend your life, developing more scientific insight, or dealing in some way with how it's applied to the affairs of the world. And that lead me then to commit in my heart. But I was totally unprepared in the conventional way. I had never studied international law or economics or political science. All these questions on the examination on these subjects I just went at doggedly without preparation and had the minimum passing grade on the written. In fact to this day I don't know how I did but apparently the oral balanced it.

Q: The word was in those days, as I recall, that if they liked you in the oral they gave you enough of a grade to give you the average which was required which was 80. 70 was passing in the written, but then if they liked you I think they'd give you enough to average the 80. That happened with me I got a 74 and they gave me an 86, which gave me the 80.

STOKES: Incidentally, there was a small portion of the examination on mathematics, only 2 points or something, but still I thought, oh, this is my meat, finally something I really know something about. And do you know I got the lowest grade on that and the reason, in retrospect, it was a sometimes always never, the person writing the examination had in mind Euclidean geometry, linear algebra. There are branches of mathematics in which anything is sometimes true, and I always thought, oh I know this true in the far out reaches of imaginary variables, oh boy. But that isn't the way it was graded.

Q: The examiner didn't know about that.

STOKES: Well, whatever. But anyway, I think the important thing here is that I began as a maverick in the foreign service. I always felt myself a maverick.

Q: You mean all the way through?

STOKES: Yes, because the patterns of thought, the ways of thinking, the motivation just all seemed to me that I was never quite in sync with what the mainstream of the foreign

service was. But it was a creative tension. I was accepted. I felt accepted and I felt I had a contribution, but I always saw it as something which would be like a grain of sand in the oyster. I think in retrospect the foreign service might have been more open to the utility of making use of persons of scientific attainment, not in some highly specialized job, necessarily, but in ways of thinking about broad issues of foreign affairs in which scientific elements would have some point. In any event, at the Foreign Service Institute we were asked what assignments we wanted, to illustrate this maverick sort of thing, I asked for Mukden, China because I saw it as a place where five or six cultures were in contest and very likely the flash point for the conflict of great power interest. Again as it had been before.

Q: Now those were China, Japan, Soviet Union, who else?

STOKES: The United States, Korea, Mongolia, not as great powers but as participating cultures that would be effected by what happened in that cockpit. I was the only one in the class to get the request fulfilled because people had asked for Paris, Rome, London. In any case it was a time of enormous shortage of personnel so that there was no time to train me at all in language or anything.

Q: So you had zero Chinese at that stage.

STOKES: Zero. I remember a seminal month spent in Chinese Affairs with Art Hummel's cousin, I forget his first name, John Carter Vincent and Jim Penfield and many of the greats and I remember being given an old desk and when I opened it to get a piece of paper I saw George Atcheson's commission that he had forgotten, left there.

Q: You mean Dean?

STOKES: George Atcheson. He was political advisor to MacArthur. In any event, the only way to get to China in those days, well let me back track. I have a wonderful memory of being entrusted with the great seal of the United States and a book of drafts on the Secretary of State and I was free to write a check in any amount at any time theoretically. It was an enormous sense of power to have been selected to go forth and to accomplish this. It was the fulfillment of my hopes. And there had even been some semblance of that in my trainee status. I remember one night John Carter called me in and said the President wants to release the Pauliy report about Russian removals of equipment in China. I'd like you to look through it and by tomorrow morning tell me if there is anything that we ought not to release. This was a 1500 page report, so I stayed up all night feeling very powerful and significant and at 5:00 a.m. as I was rushing back to the State Department to deliver my report, I heard the newspaper boy saying extra, extra, read all about it, President releases the Pauliy report. So that's a metaphor for a lot of things that happened between the White House and the State Department.

Q: So you returned to your usual height, you were no longer a giant.

STOKES: Right. We had to arrange our own travel to China in those days all I could find was a freighter leaving New York via the Panama Canal and the whole trip took 32 days. I remember as we pulled away from the pier I went down to my little midshipman's cabin there was a one-armed gentleman there. He asked me who I was and where I was going and he said "Your going to China", and he addressed me in Chinese. And I said, "I'm sorry I don't know any." He said "You don't know any Chinese and you're going to northeast?" He said, "Sit down in that chair over there" and for the next 32 days I received non-stop force feeding in Chinese. I hated that gentleman's guts when the ship was tilting 30 degrees and wallowing in heavy seas and my stomach wanted to go one way and I the other. On and on it came, but I revered that man. He transformed my life in China from being one of a bored outsider to being one of a participant and it heightened my awareness and gave me eyes to see with and ears to hear. It was a priceless gift.

Q: He was another passenger?

STOKES: Yes. As I learned later, Dr. Rubin Torre. You see what an impression I made in me. He was a famous, renown Presbyterian missionary in China. He was returning after a long period of prison camp under the Japanese and he's widely known and I'm happy to record my thanks to him.

Q: Is it '45 still or '46 now?

STOKES: '46. I landed in Shanghai. I remember getting up before dawn and standing in the bow of the freighter coming in up the Hwang Pu. And before we hit land you could see the dark fishing boats go by with the great big eyeballs on the prow, and as we came up the Wusong in front of the Bund in Shanghai I could see the relic of the scuttled Italian battleship, the Balboa. In Shanghai I was asked to remain for three months to issue visas to the German Jewish refugees in Hong Kong. That was a crash program. We issued a thousand emigration visas a month. John Stegmaier, John Stutesman and J.B. Pilcher was the Consul General . We all lived together in a flat underneath T.V. Soong's flat in a development building because at that time the power of the dollar was such that when even six impecunious American Vice Consuls pooling their dollars could buy a good portion of the city. But there again since I spoke some Chinese I could immediately make Chinese friends and began thinking as the Chinese would think or getting an insight into how they would think. At the end of three months I flew up the coast in a Navy plane, stopping at Tsingtao at the naval base and Dick Service was Consul there of the famous Services and I became just airsick and he took me in and we spend some time there at his home, I think two or three days, memorable days. The Navy then flew me up to Mukden on a regular supply run. I remember being met at the plan as we landed by a young American lieutenant who leaped into the plane and looked around ignoring me and looked at the cargo and said, "Damn it, where's our beer, what's all this stuff?", kicking the personal effects of the Consul General that I had carefully seen was loaded on board instead of his shipment of beer. That lieutenant was John K. Singlaub who later became Deputy Commander in Korea and was canned by President Carter for insubordination and became leading spokesman of the American right wing. More about Singlaub later. He

was commander of external survey detachment number 44 which anybody can guess correctly what that was. Mukden turned out to be everything that I had hoped for in terms of strife and struggle. At that time the American consulate had been open for only about six months. Because while the Soviet Army had occupied Manchuria it refused to allow American representation there. The Soviet Army was obliged to withdraw by United Nations remonstrations and the National Army had been flown up into Manchuria and brought up by rail with US Marine guards and was in conflict with the Chinese communist armies that circled around from Yen'an through the provinces bordering on Mongolia and had to fill the vacuum left by the surrender of the Japanese.

Q: Exactly when are we taking about now?

STOKES: We're talking about the period immediately following VJ Day and the Japanese surrender.

Q: The Fall of '45.

STOKES: Yes. When I arrived, the Civil War was in full tilt. The Chinese armies were the American-trained crack armies from the Burma road, the Stilwell trainees and American equipped armies and the Chinese communists were not yet fully understood to be as redoubtable as they later proved to be. But in any case my entire assignment there was in the midst of civil war which, as events turned against the government, became more and more in the immediate environs of the city in which I was living and working.

Q: What were you actually doing in the office?

STOKES: I began as Administrative and Consular Officer and then later became Economic Officer and then as our staff dwindled, I was really the right hand, or in effect if the consulate has a DCM, that's what I would have been considered. You remember in those days career officers succeeded one another in charge of the office without regard to the seniority of staff officers and I was after the Consulate General, Angus Ward. I was the only career officer there, I was brand new. In any case, I should mention that Secretary Acheson, and this was highly classified at the time, certainly cannot be now, was interested in exploring the possibility of a Modus vivendi with the Chinese communists when it became evident.

Q: He would have been Under Secretary then wouldn't he?

STOKES: I think he became Secretary of State by that time.

Q: Still in '45?

STOKES: No I arrived in December of 1946. I've skipped over a lot of time. So Acheson is Secretary at that time.

Q: So then you had Burns, and then Marshall...

STOKES: So then the Marshall executive headquarters team was there while I was there and General Wedemeyer came. As the national armies and government experience was turning sour, there were more and more high level American missions trying to ascertain why this was the case. Incidentally, I studied Chinese assiduously at this time informally, at my own expense and my teacher was the daughter of the Kuomintang mayor in absentia of Harbin. She was a very gifted woman, by the way, very gifted, and she made learning Chinese a delight. Entirely platonic, of course, I don't say of course, but it was. In any case, to illustrate something of the tenor of the times, she said "have you ever thought of holding a dance in your house?" I said "Well, I don't know." She said "There are a lot of Chinese who would like to come." and I said "Well what would I do, just play these records?" She said "Yes, that's all, move the furniture back and so forth." So I did this thinking of maybe 10 or 12 people and she said "I'll invite my friends." Well about the time of the party all of a sudden limousines and all kinds of vehicles began appearing in front of my house. There was the Garrison Commander, a three-star general and his wife, the president of the central bank and his wife. It was something absolutely incredible, and they seemed to have some arrangement themselves where they rotated through the house. By midnight we must have had 200 people at various times in this little, modest, rundown house, and what I realized later that the Generalissimo had decreed that in time of civil war there would be no frivolous activities like dancing. The leadership's families were very restive under this, but then they decided in a very Chinese way that well, of course, they were absolutely dutiful to the government's instruction. The government had also instructed them to be nice to the Americans. And so they felt that the greater good was served in this way.

Q: But weren't there a lot of American military units around?

STOKES: No, no American military units.

Q: So you were the only American, official presence, the Consulate was?

STOKES: Yes, except for this shadowy external survey detachment which we can all guess what it was. In any case, Secretary Acheson had wanted to seek a Modus vivendi or explore the possibilities of a Modus vivendi with the Chinese communists. So we were all secretly asked if we wanted to volunteer to remain behind in case the city should fall to the communists. And I volunteered. In the Fall of 1948 I was on a mission to Shanghai and I remember being hospitalized there for some attack of nausea, something I ate I guess. In the middle of the night I remember seeing a light coming down the hall and it was the orderly and an MP and there was a telegram from Consul General Ward asking me to buy \$12,000 worth of foodstuffs and to fly them up the next morning to Mukden. The MP gave me a message from the naval commander at Tsingtao telling me that C-46s would be landing at first light on the Shanghai airport. I had four hours to spend \$15,000 dollars. I got the Navy OD and we raced in a truck to the warehouse and I went through saying \$1,000 worth of that, \$1,000 worth of that, \$1,000 worth of that. This convoy of

trucks arrived at the airport just as the planes were coming in. It was all thrown in. We flew to Tsingtao, and then on to Mukden. At this time the city was falling and at the pre-flight briefing, Admiral Badger appeared on the flight line to the consternation of the pilots and he put his nose about one inch away from each pilot's nose and turned and said "You are not to be captured on this flight, do you understand me lieutenant?" And they said "Yes, Admiral, Sir!" So we got in the plane, and we were flying there, and the pilot said to me, "I'm going to give this sucker once quick once over and if the agreed flare signal is not fired, I'm turning around and coming back and not even poking my nose in there. I looked down as we arrived and I could see there was my wife and Reeberg, the Administrative Officer there on the field, I said "It's all right, go in, go in." He said "Not until I see the flare." No flare, but to make a long story short, I prevailed on him to make a touchdown at least, one plane, and as we were rolling along, Reeberg came standing up in the jeep at a braked neck pace and he said "The damn thing won't go off, you see" and pulled the trigger, and a green flare went between the engine itself and the pilot's right ear. Well, this tape would not stand a reproduction of what the pilot said. But anyway, we got in. In pursuit of our instructions from the Secretary to try to make an opening to the communist authorities as soon as the hubbub died down of the occupation by the Chinese, I telephoned the mayoralty and I managed to raise a clerk or some appropriate person and to my astonishment they accepted the offer of the Consul General to call on the mayor.

Q: The communist mayor.

STOKES: The communist mayor. We were not at all sanguine that there would be any willingness on their part to do this because we had the optic of the monolithic world communism and the subservience to the Soviet Union of all communist parties everywhere. When the Consul General and I arrived there we were ushered into a waiting room and we saw on the couch opposite us the head of the Soviet Trade Commission and his deputy who was the senior Soviet official there. And there were a lot of cigarette butts around showing that they'd been there a long time. We thought we're in for one of these interminable waits. Well, the door opened to the mayor's office, and the Russians all stood up and the man in the mayor's office walked right by them as though they didn't exist and said Mr. Consul General and Consul Stokes, would you please come in. Well, you should have seen the look on them. I could hardly look at the Russians as I went by because they'd have spit nails if they could have. The mayor said yes, we are interested in a reasonable, mutually respectful relationship. We have to rebuild this country, most of the equipment is Japanese, you are occupying Japan. The reality is we need to get along. So the Consul General pressed his luck and talked about a diplomatic courier and talked about the rights of American businessmen and there was a reasonable response to all of this. So when we came back to the consulate we could hardly contain our euphoria and we sent off reports of just exactly what had been said. Then the phone rang and to my astonishment the mayor wanted to pay a return call on the consulate. And he did come. The conversation continued. And the next day, we wanted local currency, so I went down to the central bank and asked to speak to the new head to the central bank and he gave us more of the economic reasons for collaboration and promised to expedite our reasonable needs. So when we went back to the consulate we

were making all kinds of plans and in came a special messenger with a notification from the Garrison Commander to surrender all of our radio equipment. And we thought, well, you know, that's in the context of what's happening, this is nothing threatening, but we sent the proper reply as requested but explained that we could not release the equipment because it was the property of the US government and we needed to ask instructions and see that this was the right thing to do. Following which came a phone call telling us that the former Consul General must appear within 30 minutes before the Garrison Commander. And we went over wondering what was happening. What did this mean, former Consul General? The Garrison Commander turned out to be Wu Shu Twang, who later was the foreign minister of the communist government and the man who at Lake Success threw the riot act. He looked at the Consul General. "You have one hour to have all the radio equipment in your office in the hands of my staff." The Consul General remonstrated, at which the Garrison Commander got up and walked out. So the next day was a work day, we were all fully at work, at noon, there were visitors to the consulate, and staff was fully at work.

Q: You didn't deliver the equipment?

STOKES: No we didn't, but the Consulate General said I promise to send a message reporting this to my government and the governments will speak to each other. The next day as we were at work, someone excitedly came up to me from USIS, saying some of our guests in the library went to walk out and there were troops there forcing them back in. And then someone came in saying there are commissars here to see you and we were informed that we were violating the laws, we were under house arrest. And there began 13 months incommunicado. The lights went out, the telephones went dead, the water stopped, and there we were 75 people in an office building. Chinese, foreigners, locals, Americans, anyone who was there, an 85-year old money trader named Bodinghouse, I remember him very well. And he said "On my way home for lunch, I thought, I am five minutes early, I will stop in and read that article in the Atlantic Monthly that I could not finish last week. And then I will be just in time for lunch." So he put it down and said "Ach, das is a gut article." And he went out the door and a bayonet was in his stomach. That was 13 months that you'd just sit there. He and I played thousands of games of chess, it got so that when he raised his right hand I could tell where he was going to move. But in any case, what I was able to put together after the whole event was that a great struggle was going on in the central committee of the Chinese communist party. On one side the President Yu-Xiao Ji and Zhou En-lai, the moderates, and Mao on the other.

Q: Was Zhou a moderate, theoretically, at that point.

STOKES: Yes.

Q: So he represented what the mayor had told you.

STOKES: That's right, exactly. And the overall commander in the northeast at that time, military and political, was Gao Gang who was a member of the central committee. And

the new mayor of Mukden was the personal assistant of Gao Gang. He was certainly not acting on his own. Chinese never act on their own. In this case we could trace why. Gao Gang was later imprisoned and executed and one of the reasons was related to this, I'm sure. And what had happened was that Mao Zedong I believe aspired to leadership of the communist world to succeed Stalin. He was planning a visit to Moscow to arrange this with Stalin because, triumphant after the victory in China, he felt this was what he was entitled to. I won't go into all of this because I wrote it in extent in an industrial college paper called the Future between America and China.

Q: So that is available in that library?

STOKES: That is available in the Industrial College library. There are also articles based on that in various places including one in the Foreign Service Journal in about 1965.

Q: By you?

STOKES: Yes. But the key thing I wanted to point out is that the struggle that came out in the open once again on the death of Mao the Deng Xiaoping reforms of 1978/79 and what has followed, the anti-Mao campaign. All of this had its roots in that period, it had its forerunners. It was a constant struggle that was going on within the Chinese leadership and it was manifested in the events that we were encountering.

Q: Is it your impression that that same struggle is still continuing basically?

STOKES: Yes, I think Li Peng and Yang Shang Kun are now presently in power are clearly the inheritors of the Mao tradition. In fact, when Ed Vig and I were in China last January and we were in the city of Si Xian, we were accompanied by two members of the Chinese travel service, who were always employees of state security.

Q: This was last year?

STOKES: In January 1991 and I deliberately engaged them, though I could have traveled on my own, because I wanted to avoid any sense that I was up to anything. Because I have a long history going back that we'll see later. I remember reading with consternation one morning that the general secretary of the party Chang Zse-tun had spoken to the leaders of the Liberation Army and said it's important that the Army follow the dictates of the party and the way you can do this best is by following the thoughts of Mao Zedong. If I'd had false teeth I'd have swallowed them because nothing good had been said about Mao Zedong for ten years, the ten years I'd been working in China for AT Karney as their director. It's as though the Pope had suddenly exposed Marxism. It was the way you'd think of it. And the members of the China travel service, when I asked them if they'd seen this, and I told them what it was, they looked as though I'd gone out of my mind. And when I showed them the paper they talked excitedly for half an hour in Chinese about what did all that mean. It was as unthinkable to them as it was to me. So we're going back again. It's a constant back and forth. I'd like to return for sake or orderliness the narrative

to this period of house arrest which to shorten things, when on for some thirteen months. Later when I asked the people, Mr. Butterworth, the Assistant Secretary, what there feelings had been when they had heard that we were under arrest, he said, "Well, we didn't want to act too stridently because your reports of your success in creating a Modus vivendi were so exciting, so promising, that we didn't want to act in the dark until we knew better." But then of course after several months of absolute silence and no communication of any kind.

Q: You weren't permitted any communication?

STOKES: No, even if you came near the window a sentry would point a rifle at you and arm the device.

Q: No additional food?

STOKES: Nobody in or out, nothing. They took out the Chinese one by one and gave them a going over, and finally ordered them all under pain of whatnot, not to have anything to do with us. So at that point I had to do all of the interpreting between the Chinese and Consul General.

Q: He did not have Chinese?

STOKES: No, he didn't know any. Trained language officer, Ralph Rinden had, the day before the last plane went out, just left on the last plane without orders because he could see that things, I guess, were just going bad. Again, this was very helpful to me to gain some insight into the Chinese way of thinking. The Consul General found it frustrating that they were speaking in a language that he couldn't grasp so I remember at one crucial moment he addressed them in Russian, which he spoke fluently, having been Consular in Moscow, and Consular General in Vladivostok. And you can almost never see the Chinese blush. I mean that's very difficult, I mean that's very difficult for a westerner to recognize but I could see the ear of the leading Chinese redden when he heard the Russian. Whether he understood it or not he turned to me and shifting from polite to very vulgar Chinese he said something in the effect of "What is that old son-of-a-bitch trying to say to me?" So the issue of language and rapport was really very crucial.

Q: So he was blushing with anger, not with embarrassment?

STOKES: No, fury, I think. October first, 1949, the Chinese communists set up a government of the people's republic. We remember that we could see what was happening in the streets although we were under house arrest and there were great parades and everything else. We had no radio but I could tell from the Chinese papers generally what was happening and they sent a circular note to the Western missions in Beijing asking for recognition. The United States organized a response saying not as long as you are holding diplomats hostage.

Q: Where there other foreigners being held hostage in Mukden?

STOKES: No, the French were free, the British were free, you could see them walking in the street. I'm sure they were followed and harassed but they were free. So just about this time an old Chinese who had been caught asleep by the Consul General and was ordered out to some remote part of the consulate came in one day to ask for his retirement money. I was talking to Mr. Ward at the time in his office, he got up, he was told that this man was coming and Ward went out and took him by the ear and led him down the stairs and the Chinese was frightened and began screaming and when Ward got to the bottom of the stairs, there was the mass Chinese staff confronting the Consul General and the door then burst open and in came the Chinese guards and they arrested Ward and any Americans that were close to him, carried him off to jail.

Q: Because of that incident, or did they use that incident just as a pretext?

STOKES: In the context of the Chinese desire for recognition in Beijing and the response in retrospect the Chinese decided, okay we're going to get rid of the Americans. Now this isn't worth it any more, its been going on too long, and what will we do with them anyhow, eventually. So they wanted some kind of pretext in order to get rid of us. And here's how it happened. Ward was in jail and there was going to be a trial and I was in charge of the office, such as it was, while he was away. For a year we had been sending messages of protest signed by the Consul General addressed to the Secretary of State with succeeding numbers and everything else and what we could do is give them to the Chinese to send.

Q: To the officer outside the door.

STOKES: Yes, you would never hear anything, they were never sent. So I wrote a message saying all is well and I am confident that the Consul General is being well treated, signed Stokes and I give it the next number. And this one, unaccountably, they sent. So the State Department when they got it, that it was signed by me and not Ward and that my statement that I'm sure the Consul General is well, it looked innocuous, I guess, to the Chinese but it said a lot to the department. In any case there was then a trial, the Consul General was sentenced to ten years at hard labor.

Q: That was all public then, his trial would have been public so people in Washington knew about it right?

STOKES: Well there were no reporters or anything, but I kept sending reports, because I was invited to be an observer at the trial. I went and they were now sending what I sent, although what I sent was meant trying to get through the censorship.

Q: But they did send them to Washington?

STOKES: Yes, and I'll never forget they were giving the sentence in Chinese and then it was being translated in English and while they were reading it in English for the detainees they were reading the next in Chinese at the same time. And Ward said "I heard my being sentenced to ten years at hard labor and I saw a silly grin appear on your face, Stokes, I thought, this kid will do anything to earn Chargé pay." But what I was hearing in Chinese was that but because of the particular heinousness of the office the additional penalty of immediate expulsion from the peoples republic is levied and we were. In fact, when the Consul General got back the next day, a Chinese came to the door and said there is going to be a trial of American spies, do you wish to attend? You're free to attend or not. And I checked with Ward and he said well why not go and see what it's about. And there was a trial of personnel who were allegedly left behind by the external survey detachment headed by Lieutenant, then Captain, Singlaub and they had masses of one-time pads, gold rings, Army/Navy type transmitters and camouflage gear and everything else you could imagine. The attempt was made to sort of link the consulate to this work. We were then taken by truck at midnight to the railway station and put under guard on a train and it took us three days to reach the city of Tianjin. We were turned over to Al Wellborn who was Consul General there and then sent out. While we were hostages, Mao made his famous visit to Moscow for his meeting with Stalin in which I think we had this contributory role in some way. Stalin treated him very shabbily and the agreement that came out of that was even worse for the communist government than the agreement in 1945 that Stalin had negotiated with Chiang Kai-shek. So the myth of Chinese/Russian solidarity and eternal friendship under the banner of communism was to my mind absolutely unraveled by the time all of this experience had come to a head. There is and always has been a latent hostility between the Chinese and the Russians. It's cultural, it's visceral. It goes way back.

Q: Old fashioned nationalism, a contest over territories?

STOKES: I think it has to do with it, like the relationship between the British and the Irish in many ways. History has poisoned us in so many ways that it's hard to say what comes first, but certainly the Chinese feel that Siberia was seized from them when the Russian Army came to Manchuria. Just before we arrived there they seized all kinds of Japanese assets and they transferred then to Russian ownership, put Russian signs on them and tried to keep it as property.

Q: They physically shipped them out too.

STOKES: Well then factory equipment they stole, the Chinese don't have to invent any reasons to. But Mao was prepared to swallow all of this until his confrontation with Stalin. And then when he came back, of course, it was such a loss of face because he had put down Zhou En-lai and put Gao Gang to death. The people that wanted to work with the Americans, to build up Chinese industry when we had promised to do that, and probably would have, and of course the chairman of the communist party is never wrong, so Mao then felt the need to move on to things like the Great Leap Forward and the

cultural revolution, all the final errors that demolished the last vestige of his historical reputation in an attempt to salvage the earlier mistake.

Q: What was the year of the Great Leap Forward?

STOKES: '62. And by that time they had asked the Russians to leave and when Khrushchev replaced Stalin there was the final split between the two. The ironic thing though is that the split had been with Stalin. It's just simply that Khrushchevism, that is the idea of a movement to demystify and expose the faults of the great leader, was something that Mao Zedong could only view at with horror because the exposure of the faults of Mao would have been the analog to that and of course we had the great expose of the faults of Mao in 1978 and '79 when Mao had died and Deng Xiaoping came in. We had the same kind of Khrushchevian thing Chinese style. But now poor Li Peng and Yang Shang Kun are trying to put all that back again, it won't work. And in talking to Chinese at all levels of life in 1991 and today I can tell that is not going to wash. I think the present situation in China is like the situation follow the death of Brezhnev. The series of meaningless, statureless figures trying to pursue a moribund policy that has utterly no credibility even in the party. So you say what is holding it together? It's inertia. A Gorbachev hasn't surfaced yet. Zhao Ziyang who has all of the tremendous qualities of Gorbachev is a prisoner. It's important, I think, useful to recall how things appeared in June of 1990. China had introduced private enterprise into agriculture successfully, China had become self-sufficient in grain. Remember how it used to import millions of tons from the United States. It had a reform program to invite foreign capital, it was succeeding in building up its exports. Gorbachev came to China in order to try to gain lessons, would never say so because the Russians presume themselves the elder brothers, but there was everything to learn. All that Gorbachev wanted to do in a communist context while keeping a communist regime in political power was being done in China. However at the same time without Gorbachev knowing it, the leaders of the great state enterprises that were being threatened by Zhao Ziyang of curtailment of their subsidies mounted a palace coup and succeeded in getting Zhao Ziyang secretly deposed as General Secretary of the party in May of 1990. When this happened, some of his followers sent word to the students, you're free to express your frustrations in the street, and so the demonstrations that lead to the Tiananmen massacre were not the pivotal event which caused the change in China, but they were only a kind of post-event manifestation, the part of the iceberg that could be seen above the water. Zhao Ziyang, when he appeared to the students in Tiananmen said, "It's too late, I've come too late". The full meaning of that wasn't understood by the students because there is an absolute rule of Omerta or silence in the Cosa Nostra vein, which is the communist party leadership of China. So now China is a house of cards waiting for some kind of collapse.

Q: Do you have any personal guess as to the time frame towards further major changes in this scene?

STOKES: Well, anybody could give a number, but it will depend on factors of readiness and the like, I think. It's widely said that the death of Deng Xiaoping will do it. That's

possible, but I can't really attach a lot of significance. I'd like to add here for the record that following my release from being a hostage I went on, Ural Alexis Johnson invited me to go to Tokyo to do peripheral reporting on China and I spent two years there, among other things, being interested very much in that I never lost an interest in China.

Q: So that took you to '51 more or less?

STOKES: '52, yes and I'm trying to center this around China and not talk about career movements. But I then went to Thailand as head of the counterinsurgency effort and was dealing with a manifestation of Maoism because the insurgency was Chinese sponsored, had Mao badges and Mao books and all of that, so that was another seven years of study.

Q: Bill, what was the level of your Chinese as this story played itself out. Did you reach an S4 level for example?

STOKES: Can I pause in answering that to just sort of finishing the sequence. I'd like to just outline my interest in China as they unfolded. After that experience in Thailand, you know we were inspectors together, and one of my assignments was to inspect.

Q: But the inspection was '72 - '75, it was a lot later.

STOKES: Well I came out of the six years in Thailand, ended in '73, then I became inspector. But one of my inspection assignments was to inspect the liaison mission in Beijing. Now President Bush was the head of it. When they submitted my nomination at the State Department they were wondering what, in light of all the previous excitement, would be the Chinese reaction because this was the early period, Mao was still alive and the Chinese said why do you send us someone connected with former events of this kind. They said, well we have confidence in Mr. Stokes, and they accepted me then, for this limited purpose. But when I left, the day I left was the 30 anniversary of the trials in Mukden, and so on. This was printed in the Chinese press and you could see it seemed to be another manifestation of the struggle of two groups within China whether to let me in or protest it. The hard-liners and the cooperators were constantly manifested. Not long thereafter, I left the foreign service and then I spent five years in China traveling to China frequently for AT Karney and its industrial development work, and wrote a book about manufacturing equity joint ventures in China. I visited some 200 factories and spent days at each and all over North China, gave seminars in all the big Chinese cities on how to modernize industry and develop a market economy. I must say this was a priceless way and period to get to know what is going on in Chinese society below the surface and I think that some way we need to think of innovative ways to conduct diplomacy on many planes other than just contacts with a foreign ministry, and to do this by providing services and information. I have some ideas. There's no time here to present them, but the idea of assigning this to intelligence services and having people operating in a clandestine way I think is totally discredited. It has residual toxins in it that lead, as did our experience in Mukden, to poisoning the possibility for other collaborations. But we can find overt and open ways to conduct diplomacy on many different functional levels so

that we are building something that can endure rather than hiding things that for short term gains lead to long term loss. So the whole relationship between China and America is an absolutely fascinating one and I think in the long run is going to be pivotal in determining the future of the Pacific Basin. I have great reservations about the concessions to the paper leadership that's in power now. I don't feel that we need to go out of our way to pick quarrels, I think we should have a clear idea that China is not represented by the individuals that are being sent abroad by this regime. I feel very uneasy about sending Eagleburger and Scowcroft clandestinely to Beijing at a time when the publicly announced policy of the government was not to have any contact with the Chinese leadership at or above the Assistant Secretary level. All this meant is that we were telling the Chinese that we will tell our own public one thing and do other things with them. That idea of clandestine maneuvering has profoundly adverse long-term implications for our real interest. And the Chinese don't listen to what you say, they listen to what you do and they draw conclusions from it that we don't intend them to draw, but they do. So the important thing is not knowing the Chinese language, it's understand how the Chinese interpret what happens. As far as the level I attained, when I was using it in China, it was good, there was never any chance to measure it, but I felt perfectly free. It was doing all it needed to do and I had never a moment's classroom instruction. I think the big thing in the language for me is to feel free to use it and there didn't seem to be any hang-ups over misinterpretation of words.

Q: We're now resuming on the 12th of February 1992 and so we'll go on from there.

STOKES: I recall that in our previous session we were interpreting the experiences that I had in Manchuria with the divisions within the leadership of the Chinese communist party. Although it was a consulate and not the embassy we were pursuing as the lead office Secretary Acheson's desire to search for a Modus vivendi with the Chinese communist leadership and Shenyang or Mukden was the first city to fall under the Chinese communist sway. So, consequently, we were dealing with the Chinese leadership as an object test on both sides of what would be possible in terms of a Modus vivendi.

Q: The US embassy was already in Beijing at this point?

STOKES: No, it was in Nanking while I was in Shenyang. There was a Consulate General in Beijing under Edmund Club. The Ambassador, Leighton Stuart was in Nanjing credited to the national government. We recall that what we perceived was at first in Shenyang was the friendly manifestation and expression of desire for defacto relationships including businesses and courier and exchange of visits between the Consul General and the mayor. The mayor was the right hand man of Gao Gang who was the overall military and political leader in northeast China, the most important part of China economically and politically, and the place where the victory was won that broke the back of the national government on the mainland, in fact, in the Daudung marshes. So we were not dealing with some local uninstructed functionary. Gao Gang was a member not only of the central committee, he was one of five of the top leaders. Gao Gang in retrospect, and is manifested to us, clearly represents the international wing of the party which

included President Yu Show Gee and Zhou En-lai and the sudden reversal of Gao Gang's policy that had us suddenly, one day without warning, surrounded by troops and the electricity and water cut off and the beginning of an incommunicado arrest, was clearly the result of Mao Zedong's personal decision and stemming from his desire presumably to prepare for his meeting with Stalin and his desire to obtain the overall leadership of the world communist movement as a result of his successful revolution in China. But in an internal sense, Mao has always represented the leader of what I would call, as opposed to the internationalist wing, the continental wing. Someone who always saw the peasants as the basis for success of his party and the idea of movements within China was his expertise. The little red book is all about how to conduct guerrilla warfare against a major land power that was in charge of the territory in which you were located. What was very interesting was to see how adroit Mao was in areas that involved awareness of international realities - for example, what broke the back of the Chinese economy was the Great Leap Forward which was Mao's belief that the whole array of economic problems that China faced and this desire for modernism could be addressed purely by the will and the discipline of the people as guided by the central committee, mainly Mao himself. So the Great Leap Forward was manifested largely by an order from the central committee, that every village would have its own steel mill. And so crudely they began everywhere throwing scrap iron onto fires stocked with soft coal. It produced unusable stuff, of course. Tremendous pollution and diversion of effort and everything else. It was at that time that the Chinese Air Force began reporting a breakdown in its Soviet provided air fleet and Chinese copies of MiGs needing spare parts, maintenance, supplies and lubricants and so on and Mao's reply to that was, that isn't the way you solve problems, read the little red book and apply the thoughts of Mao Zedong and don't ask us these things. So with this background I'd like to recall some of my experiences beginning in 1964 that dealt with an external view of the struggle within the Chinese communist party. Experience in Mukden was seeing it from the inside of the country, the other was from the outside.

Q: Just one question before we go on to that phase. In the period when the local communists were first making their approaches to you, were your activities under the close guidance of the embassy in Nanking and was there any difference of view as to how the approach should be handled.

STOKES: We had very little guidance from the embassy. We had guidance but Consul General Ward was not really interested in following it. Mr. Ward had made the friendship of Mr. Bullet during the Hoover relief mission in Russia. And Mr. Bullet was Thomas Dewey's choice to be Secretary of State and Mr. Ward expected to be the leader of the department under Bullet that is the top career man, so he took a very reserved view to guidance he got not only from the embassy but from the department. Mr. Ward's Consul Generalship sort of was a constant running battle with the department and the embassy over a whole range of things including whether his wife should be there or not, including matters of policy as well.

Q: I wondered particularly because the embassy would still be in close contact with the Nationalists and the Nationalists might have been twisting their arms as to what you should or shouldn't do with the communists.

STOKES: Yes, although by that time the administration was even more convinced that the National Government was going to collapse. Mr. Ward represented the conservative wing of the Republican party which felt more that the National government should be strengthened at all costs, and General Wedemeyer came out to regulate this issue or to investigate this issue and there were divisions within the consulate over this of course. Mr. Ward was the boss, but if you asked the young officers like Al Sebens and myself what our view was. Interestingly Mr. Ward let us go on and write dispatches and so on. In fact, with the defeat of Dewey he rather lost interest in what was going on. And by that time it was very close to the actual collapse of the government so there was very little guidance that Nanjing could provide anyway by that time.

In 1964 I was assigned to the Industrial College of the Armed Forces for senior training and the centerpiece, as you know Bill from your experiences, is the time you have to write a thesis. Although I had been in the meantime in Japan and then in North Africa, I never lost the fascination for what was happening within China and I wrote my thesis on the future between America and China involving a study of what two great powers facing each other over a whole array of divisive issues. What, underneath all the tactical differences, was there in the way of a common interest that might be explored in some reopening because the mutual hostility that had dated since the Korean War obviously brought a sterile deadlock on both sides on what they were able to accomplish.

Q: You probably could not do a field trip to China in connection with that thesis.

STOKES: No, I wouldn't have been personally welcome there at all. As later events turned out because, just parenthetically I mean, that when the department wanted to send me to China as Inspector during the time of Mr. Bush's tenure there were remonstrances from the Chinese foreign ministry which were overcome by the way, but that's for a later part of the sequence. The thrust of this thesis was that, in fact, there were major interests on both sides that had manifested themselves earlier at the time Secretary Acheson's desire for detente and that as China was also in a cul-de-sac and Mao had in fact been gravely disappointed in all the reasons that he had had for frustrating this Modus vivendi, he had been repelled by Stalin, and so forth. Interestingly, when I asked permission to publish this article and send it to the Department for review, the Voice of America with my permission, in fact my enthusiastic preference, for that rather than publication was to translate it into Chinese and then broadcast it in installments to the mainland.

Q: Did they do that?

STOKES: Yes they did that, I still have the text, and later, when I was in private business with AT Karney, I met two Chinese officials who had been part of the external political interpretation apparatus that said that they recalled such a broadcast and a general

conclusion of the party that the United States was signaling a desire for better relations and looking for the beginning of the resumption of some talks about a new relationship. That was really quite satisfying and I think Dick Donalds who was in the VOA picked up this idea and saw it through deserves a lot of credit for that.

Q: Has that been cleared with the Department of State so that in effect there was a deliberate decision.

STOKES: Yes, well, all that I know is that I saw a copy of a decision by the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs approving a request by VOA to do this. To what extent they had an ulterior motive or whether they just saw that no harm would be done. I'm inclined to think the former because there was a general disbelief among career officers that the systematic hostilities at China was the right idea.

Q: A disbelief in that.

STOKES: Yes, and a desire, other things being equal, to find a relationship, but an unwillingness to be seen as the author as an initiative to this effort because so many China service officers have been crucified by McCarthy and others.

Q: This was only 10 years after McCarthy, wasn't it.

STOKES: Yes, but there was still plenty of that around. Mr. Robertson, and there were many who were important political figures that had been assigned in Asian Affairs, held that same view. So I think it was seen as a harmless way to try to do something, that is, an undangerous way, to start to do something to cast bread on the waters and see what would happen. Following that year at the Industrial College I was assigned to the Air Force planning staff on loan from the State Department. And one of my early duties I recall was to assist in the negotiation for base rights in Southeast Asia and East Asia as a result of the needs rising out of our increasing involvement in Vietnam. And so I was involved in the negotiation with the Taiwan government for the Taichung airfield in Taiwan. It was to be used by B52s for the Utapao base in Thailand. One of the most interesting and ultimately significant assignments for me was to plan the response from the Air Force's point of view to the Thai government's request that a United States helicopter fleet of 100 Hueys and pilots be sent to Northeast Thailand to help the Thai government deal with the Chinese sponsored insurgency in Northeast Thailand, which coincidentally was just in the, not so coincidentally, but was in the same vicinity as the place where our air base network in Thailand was being located - near the Lao frontier which is an easy reach of the Ho Chi Minh trail. At this time the State Department manifested the beginning of what was to be the core of what I'd like to talk about. An unwillingness to see reproduced in Thailand the same kind of direct involvement and direct assumption of military responsibility that the United States was conducting then in Vietnam.

Q: US military?

STOKES: US military. And the Thai request was in fact for a beginning of a direct US military involvement in Thailand against a domestic threat. So at the same time the US military wanted to be certain that its bases were secure and it was perfectly ready to use its own military force for this purpose, and if the Thai would invite us, so much the better. In fact, there were many low level indications that I came across that the Thai and the US military saw eye to eye on this issue. Whether the inspiration for the idea was purely Thai or a mixed Thai/US military agreement, that was the thing that the Thai should ask the US political leadership, I think is an open question.

Q: What was the basis of the junior officer's opinion that in Thailand the military should not ideally take over as in Vietnam?

STOKES: Well I think I've tried to ask who in the US State Department was one of the principal sources for this kind of what I consider trenchant and significant and wise points of view. Leonard Unger who was Ambassador in Thailand through most of this time, and DCM before, told me it was Marshall Green and I planned to ask Marshall about this part of the piece that I'm trying to do on the Thai insurgency. I should say at this point that the Thai insurgency unquestionably was a Maoist insurgency inspired by Mao Zedong and his followers. The insurgents were trained in China, they were Chinese or Sino-Thai. The little red book was everywhere in their camps, and pictures of Mao were worn on caps by the insurgents when they wore uniforms or insignia of any kind, and the insurgency was supported from China by a clandestine radio broadcast that put the whole thing clearly in a Maoist context. So this is really not an arguable point. The insurgency was an eternal manifestation of Mao's continental policies and the way he saw it, the Vietnamese were up again to their historical tricks of creating areas of uncertainty on China's southeast frontier and China needed participation in that area to stem the increase of Vietnamese influence. The Mekong River and Northeast Thailand was clearly the frontier of Vietnamese expansion. Ho Chi Minh, by the way, lived for many years on the Thai bank of the Mekong, in Mekong Phnom which was the key air base for fighting for interdicting the Ho Chi Minh trail.

Q: When we come down to the present I want to have you cover that same point about the present situation in Cambodia, the Chinese position towards the Pathet Lao and the rest of it. But continue.

STOKES: So my perspective on this and I'm trying here to concentrate not so much on what I think as what I immediately saw and the Air Force asked me to be the action officer for this whole request of the Thai for the helicopter fleet. I had served in the Air Force during World War II as you recall from the earlier tape in the Air Weather Service and many of the colonels who led the Air Weather Service and who were my immediate superiors had become lieutenants and four star generals in the Air Force and were the Air Force leadership. So although I was a simple exchange officer I was on close terms with people who were in the high stratosphere and otherwise untouchable by people I normally dealt with on the planning staff. The Air Force did not participate with the Army and Navy and the Marines in thinking always in terms of direct US involvement. The Air

Force was the exposed service in Thailand and would much prefer to have been protected by means that did not involve combat operations on the perimeter of their bases. The department succeeded in obtaining an agreement within the US government on a compromised reply to the Thai request for the helicopters - that we would provide the helicopter capacity but it would be to exclude actual combat operations. It would simply ferry Thai officials and groups into certain areas

Q: US pilots and crews?

STOKES: US pilots and crews, and it would only be for a period of 120 days and on the condition that the Thai nominated a sufficient number of pilots and ground crew personnel for training at Fort Rucker in the United States, fly and maintain the aircraft, following which the US pilots would be withdrawn, and all US personnel would be withdrawn from the insurgency and the aircraft would be turned over to the Thai.

Q: That's very interesting, we were reluctant then. We were not reaching out to grasp this?

STOKES: I think the US Army that did the training would have been very happy to be directly involved, but Marshall Green, who at that time I believe was already Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs, and if Mr. Unger is correct. In any case, the State Department's voice was heard in the US government in the decision to arrive at a compromise that we would provide the airlift but for a brief period only. And it became the fundamental idea that what's happening in Thailand is a Thai government responsibility, we would help them but not take on their responsibilities.

Q: Are we still in 64?

STOKES: 1964/65, the training I think was in early '65. I beg your pardon, in late '65 I was assigned to the Air Force planning staff so that this must have been in '66. On this assignment I went out to Thailand to be present at the ceremony in which the Thai pilots came back from the United States and there was a turnover of the helicopters and the responsibility to the Thai. I went out there early and flew on several of the missions of transportation to make certain that the condition that there was no combat hazard involved. This whole ceremony occurred at the Mekong Phnom air base which is right on the Mekong, you can see Laos from there and the Ho Chi Minh trail was barely over the horizon.

Q: So the Thai base already existed, it did not involve building a new base?

STOKES: There was a rudimentary base there. The US bases in Thailand represented a massive construction effort. Astounding. From little airfields were made monstrous bases.

Q: But that was later.

STOKES: No, this was at the time, remember my first duty was to develop the base rights and we began building B-52 basin U Tapao where there had been nothing, and greatly expanding the flights. See the US Air Force was flying into bombardment missions in Vietnam from these bases by late 1964. So when I went out to Thailand it was to an established US base from which there were combat operations in Vietnam plus helicopter missions in Thailand in support of the Thai, but transport missions, not combat missions. These were unarmed helicopters, by the way, no mini guns or anything

Q: So it was involvement in internal conflict that was the question?

STOKES: That was the issue. The involvement in Vietnam was already heavy, so in any case the main point I'm trying to report here is the way in which China was trying to manifest it's Maoist continental thrust through the insurgency in Thailand and the way our reaction to it was firm but guarded so that from the Chinese point of view we were not involved in a resumption of the direct hostilities with China. We were both acting through surrogates, so to speak, behind surrogates.

Q: Was that part of the deliberate plan, or intention or wish that we not sidle into an open conflict there with China?

STOKES: My impression is that the overriding objective was that we would not expand to Thailand Vietnam-type hostilities. That it was not necessary or appropriate or useful for our purposes. Much lower down on the scale and related to it was that we did not want to be directly involved in hostilities, not only with the Viet Cong or North Vietnam, but with China either if this did not involve damage to a profound interest or a major US interest. Moreover there was the wise and far-seeing historically supported or proven later belief that the best way to deal with the insurgency in Thailand was to help the Thai government focus on its own inadequacies and the inappropriateness of its policies in the effected rural areas and by the making of Thailand, transforming it from a city state based around Bangkok, to a nation state that incorporated effective presence in its outlying areas, especially its frontiers with Laos and China and Burma, that there would emerge a linchpin against the domino theory. In fact that is in the hindsight now of 15 or more years, it's 25 years rather, it is perfectly evident that Thailand has fulfilled all those hopes and objectives. The Thai economy has prospered. The thrust of our policy was to help them develop an academy to train their district officers, help them develop a system to build roads into these areas, to help them with modernizing the police, creating adequate compensations and rewards so that the systemic exploitation of the local economy would not be really necessary, that there were alternatives to it. During this ceremony of the turnover to the Thai there was also present Ambassador Graham Martin who, while seen as pro-military, was really much closer to the US Air Force than to any of the other branches. He had been faculty advisor at the Air War College at Maxwell Field, and developed a lot of those relationships. So that between the chief of staff of the Air Force and the air planning staff and Ambassador Martin and Marshall Green and the State Department there was a kind of community of a weight that could deal with the hard-liners and CIA and the US Army and the Marine Corps after I returned from Thailand.

Q: Bill, in that reference, what were the particular battles that were being fought with these alignments of people.

STOKES: I'd like to come to that, may I, because I'm coming to how I went to Thailand and then I can tell you about things I know first hand about. I came back and was sitting at my desk in the Pentagon and I picked up the phone there was a very soft voice, I could hardly make out, best as I could hear in all that noise, he says (muffled) "Stokes, this is Graham Martin."

Q: The spider.

STOKES: And I didn't know what to say, I thought someone must be pulling my leg and I didn't want to say "Who?", but I managed somehow to keep my equanimity and he said I would like you to come out to Thailand and head our counterinsurgency program. He said Peer DeSilva from the agency is heading it now but he is not well and we need to be thinking about ultimately a successor. And I told him I'd be delighted to do that. In fact I was blown off my feet because I didn't expect anything like that. The job is one that had to be approved by the Joint Chiefs and the CIA and the national security apparatus and a foreign service officer was not really seen as a candidate. Generals were, and Peer DeSilva had been in Vietnam, and so on. In any case Graham Martin in the mean time was transferred, Leonard Unger was named and he decided that he would keep the assignment and that I would work for him in the same capacity that Graham Martin did.

Q: So Graham Martin was in Bangkok at that stage?

STOKES: Yes, in Bangkok.

Q: It was later that he went to....

STOKES: Yes, as a result of his transfer, he was succeeded by Leonard Unger. When I came out to Bangkok to work in this capacity, it was sometime before it was finally realized that. That's unimportant here. The State Department and the office of counterinsurgency in the embassy was determined to pursue the policy earlier identified in connection with the helicopters, that there would be no direct US involvement, that we would help strengthen the Thai and everywhere manifest the Thai responsibility. Before I get deeply into that I want to tie up this whole question of what perspective did all this offer on what was happening in China and the Chinese leadership. The Maoist insurgency in Thailand was as I say a pluperfect Maoist operation from beginning to end. It did not represent a desire for an opening to the outside which is the tendency that we had first encountered and we were looking for a revival of. So the fact that the insurgency was frustrated at every turn successfully by the American policy as the Thai successfully carried it out, was in fact a severe frustration of the Maoist tendency in China, and represented a on a much smaller scale of course. But it was another one of the series of failures of Maoist continental thought to further Chinese aims. So that by 1976 when Mao

had died and Deng Xiaoping had come into power, in the whole array of things, this failure of Maoism was one of the many, many reasons that led Deng to feel that the internationalist point of view, in fact the Modus vivendi with the United States, was one that would better serve China's interest than what Mao had been pursuing.

Q: I would assume that this cockpit was one of the major fields of Chinese interest and activity in the foreign field at that time?

STOKES: Yes, I think so, because remember the continentalist concept - Mao was most interested in things to which he had a direct land connection. And its important to remember that Thailand has an intimate historical connection with China. The Thai are originally from the Yellow River Basin and there are more than a million Thai residents in China right now. They are one of the most significant minorities in Thailand.

Q: But they don't have any citizenship in China, they're not Thai citizens in China?

STOKES: No, they're regarded strictly as Chinese, absolutely. And of course the main Thai exodus was back to the 13th and 14th century. But in China that's not ancient history. Its relatively modern history.

Q: Do they still speak Thai?

STOKES: In China, oh yes, absolutely. And on top of that, almost the entire commercial life of Thailand which is thriving is ethnic Chinese who have come to Thailand by way of the sea from Fujian and Swatow and the South China ports, and have settled in Thailand and intermarried. And the Thai, unlike the other southeast Asian nations, have accepted the Chinese providing that they follow three main themes, that is they will revere the king and speak Thai, use Thai language publicly and will support or acknowledge or at least make some arrangement with the Buddhist religion. The Chinese have done this. As a result you don't have any of the pogroms at all; in fact the Thai king is himself a Sino-Thai in that General Taksin that overthrew the Burmese invaders and whose son was the first monarch in the Chakri Dynasty, General Taksin was half Chinese. So that's simply a symbol of all this. So that Thailand represents for China not merely another southeast Asian state, it is a place where China, its an overseas, it can be seen by the Chinese as one of its most important overseas Chinese areas of interest, so that the insurgency there represented rather big and interesting stakes.

Q: The Chinese are not excluded from some areas of activity in Thailand as they are in the Philippines?

STOKES: No they're members of the cabinet...

Q: I know in the Philippines, because of this, overseas the Chinese have almost a monopoly of retailing. They are by law excluded from retailing in the Philippines. Noting like that in Thailand?

STOKES: On Chinese New Year, which has nothing to do whatever with any Thai holiday, every store is shut. The city shuts down commercially and no issue is made of that. That's the way the Thai succeed, they don't make issues where issues are not necessary. I'd like now to come to your very interesting question of whether and how this military desire for direct involvement manifested itself. One day, a report was received that there would be a Viet Cong attack on the US air bases and in fact the attack did manifest itself in a preliminary way by confirmed intelligence that it was coming, misproduced a tremendous flap. We had 41,000 Americans in these bases at this time and crucial operational interests. The Joint Chiefs wanted to send a regimental combat team of marines to guard in the Mekong Phnom especially which was to be the target for this attack. Remember, it's just across the river from Laos, practically on the river. This would have signaled the end of the department's policy because one thing leads to another. You know how those things go. Use of force provokes force then there's no way to stop it, you're down the ski slope. So the Ambassador, with the support of the department...

Q: Unger, now?

STOKES: Yes, put his foot down and said, absolutely not, and he said that he was constituting a committee that would consist of myself as chairman and the Air Force Commander and the Army Commander as members. We called on the Thai Chief of Staff of the armed forces, General Surakut, and the Ambassador went to the Prime Minister Thanom and made it clear that this would be a Thai responsibility and that it was a grave and imminent danger and that we wanted to know what they needed to do this properly.

Q: Before the Ambassador made that approach I would assume that in Washington this had probably gone to the President for final approval that there would not be the regimental combat team?

STOKES: I would imagine that it went to the Secretary of Defense at least. And that if I have no knowledge that the Joint Chiefs exercised their corporate right to go directly to the President over the Secretary of Defense's head. But remember, in all of this the Air Force chief of staff would be unwilling to override the Ambassador.

Q: The Ambassador couldn't have taken that position without Washington approval?

STOKES: That's right, and remember the CIA was very much opposed, and USIA and USAID, to involvement of the US military there. So you had a shifting coalition behind positions but it was successfully orchestrated by the State Department. On the other hand there was great danger in this because if a Viet Cong raid had succeeded in a crippling attack on one of the bases like their successful crippling attacks on the US bases in Vietnam they would have been murdered over this and hell to pay. So we really worked tooth and nail day and night and everything else to get the Thai the radio and signal equipment that they felt was necessary to do this and to make sure that the Thai were doing an effective job because the key idea was intelligence. That's what we wanted to

know, if we knew when the attack was coming and we were ready for it inside the wire. To give you an idea of the degree of control, I had a red telephone by my bedside and no US armed personnel could do anything outside the wire of the base without approval over this phone. So there were very trenchant and stringent rules to follow and the phone would ring often during the night with reports of this threat or that threat or something else, it was like a combat control center.

Q: Did you have a coterie of officers with you?

STOKES: Yes, military, CIA, USAID, USIA, and other foreign service officers, many who have gone on to be key people including Kelly. So to come back to this crucial point, though, the Thai police notified Thai villagers that they were apprehensive about Vietnamese coming across the river and urged them to inform the police if they had any idea about this or saw anything. And in the old days, the old ways the Thai police behaved, they would never have been told anything by the peasants. But as the result of the years of effort to try to clean up the Thai police operation and to create a rapport with the people there was some hope that this would be done. And one day a Thai village head man called the Thai police on one of the radios that we had provided to village head men and said, "my villagers have seen a group of 60 people heavily armed and speaking Vietnamese and going on the road in such-n-such direction toward one of the bases." The Thai informed us immediately, the base was put on red alert, and that night at 2:00 am one of the sensors in the outer perimeter was tripped and with night vision an American MP saw someone cutting the wire and fired a rocket propelled grenade because they were authorized, once there was immediate intrusion, and we had authorized the red alert, which gave them the right to shoot. As luck would have it, the first rocket propelled grenade fired by the MP hit in the chest the lead Vietnamese who was carrying what must have been about 100 pounds of plastic explosives and there was the most horrendous explosion which wiped out the Viet Cong invaders.

Q: Really, en masse, the whole group?

STOKES: Well, maybe not in that one shot, but then once that went up, then everything opened up from within the base. This was the first of eight Viet Cong efforts to attack various US air bases.

Q: So the Thai really did not succeed in blocking that particular infiltration.

STOKES: No, but you see the distances are so short you could hardly expect it. And that really wasn't what we were seeking so much. We didn't want massive Thai shield. And this leads to all kinds of other issues about what was happening in Laos and where was the Thai Army and what was a Thai Army and what was a Lao, or things like this, also, but the point was here is that there were 8 major Viet Cong attacks in force on US airbases including the B52 base at U Tapao. And in the entire war not a single American was injured not a single combat aircraft was put out of operation and this is an astounding record and a wonderful vindication of the policy. There were many other vindications of

the policy and just last January before this I was in Thailand and I had dinner at the home of the man who had been supreme commander of the Thai Armed forces and who was the general that I was advising in this insurgency suppression headquarters at the years we're talking about and we reviewed what had happened and it was just a litany of successes of this indirect policy culminating in where Thailand is today, by the way. So that you contrast this with the domino theory which was erected to explain why we should fight in Vietnam because everything else would just fall automatically if Vietnam fell. This was the rebuttal of it and the rebuttal of it was due, I think, to this kind of far-seeing policy and its rigorous implementation by Leonard Unger and Marshall Green and the support of the Air Force. And it was the Air Force that stood to lose most by this of course because it was Air Force assets that were at risk.

Q: Bill, could you briefly cover the personal aspects of performing this role? How did you, in day to day form, interact with the Thai officials in pursuit of these policies?

STOKES: My official role was as advisor to the Thai ministry of the interior. The Minister of the Interior of that time, General Praphas Charusathien, was in fact the strong man of the regime and Vice Premier. The Premier was General Thanom Kittikachorn but Praphas was the man who controlled the armed forces, the police and the governors.

Q: Armed forces, too?

STOKES: Yes. He was also minister of defense, you know the real power there was Praphas. And I had a very good relationship with Praphas and I was advisor to him in his role as Minister of the Interior which included control of the police and governors. The Thai invited me to attend meetings of the governors in the outlying areas addressed to dealing with the insurgency. I frequented police headquarters. If we had advice to give them about police organization or police armament or tactics training I could freely go to the Thai at any level and discuss it. The Thai were not at all closed to that.

Q: Your office was in the embassy?

STOKES: It was in the embassy.

Q: You would you go down and see this power, this person, or would you typically, day to day, be going to see members of his staff on particular problems. Praphas Charusathien his name is?

STOKES: Praphas Charusathien, the strong man of the regime.

Q: I'm just asking a question of the simple procedures of performing your role in this scene.

STOKES: The most regular and obvious role in relating to the Thai was with what was called the Communist Suppression Operations Command under Lieutenant General

Sayud Kurdpong which was a Thai coordinating agency of the civil police and military elements engaged in the counterinsurgency efforts or in supporting it. He had an interagency staff like I had and he would have his meetings and we would have our internal meetings. The way we were organized within the embassy was that I had an interagency staff of people delegated from the US Army and Air Force and CIA and USAID and USIA and foreign service officers.

Q: Full time with you?

STOKES: Yes, and then we could draw upon the consulates for people in the field as necessary.

Q: You said that staff was about 40?

STOKES: Yes, and we had a big conference room with audiovisual systems and everything and the whole wing of the embassy all dedicated to this purpose.

Q: So they were physically together, you had a section of the embassy?

STOKES: Yes. And we developed the guidelines for the conduct with respect to the insurgency by all American personnel. The central theme of it was don't just do something, stand there. In other words, it absolutely forbade Americans, if they saw or encountered some kind of emergency, from taking steps to deal with it. They were to observe and see how the Thai dealt with it. If it was going wrong then they would just later report and that would be a bad object lesson and we would modify our advice to the Thai accordingly.

Q: Were the Thai trying to involve Americans?

STOKES: I come to a key point on that in just a moment but I should finish your earlier question. In addition to dealing with General Sayud which was like a foreign ministry, a point of formal contact that might shield you or prevent you from dealing with the rest of the Thai government. It didn't work that way, at least in my experience, because I was invited by the Thai governors to attend meetings that they held in the affected areas to consider their policy. I had the ready access to the Thai police headquarters, and very often advice or suggestions I was making that were not entirely easy to take but it was very open. They recognized that we were well intentioned, that they were in charge, that it was their responsibility. And so I give them a lot of credit, quite open to what we had to say. I remember we often had outings together and just friendly get togethers with key people in the Thai Ministry of the Interior which is normally a very closed organization to outsiders in any country including Thailand.

Q: This was all in English?

STOKES: For me, yes. We had many young people who spoke Thai but English is the Thai's second language. I never encountered any problem of communication. I tried to study Thai just for the cultural insights and so on, and even people who spoke beautiful Thai like Al Francis never really used Thai in these general meetings. They might personally, I'm sure it was valuable, I don't want to say that it isn't. It was not a barrier.

Q: A local police chief would speak English?

STOKES: Yes. A district officer or anything else. The Thai University has English courses. Not everywhere. There was great antipathy between the Thai formal military, that is the Thai Army which was the core of the strength of that government and is still a dominant figure in Thai politics today. Thai Army is an institution that has brought political significance to Thailand. It represents the guarantor of the Thai people, vis-a-vis Chinese and other influence. It's the core of the ethnic Thai strength in the country. But I would frequently call directly on the Chief of Staff of the Army and have a regular review with him of what was going on in the insurgency. And one day the Chief of Staff of the Army hit me between the eyes, he said "Mr. Stokes, you know very well that one of the key strongholds of the insurgency is among the mountain tribes and it's on the key ridges of these high mountains that they have their bases and your B-52s are flying back from Vietnam anyway, why couldn't they, when they have extra bombs, just dump them on these mountain tops?" It took my breath away because it is so contrary to all elements of our policy I wondered why Surakut, who's a smart man, would have developed this. The military people on the Joint Staff were really very loyal to the idea of what we were trying to do and one of them told me that he had reliable evidence that the US commander of Mac-Thai the Army general had put this idea in General Surakut mind and Surakut had relayed it as a request to us. Although I didn't usually, the...

Q: You learned that later?

STOKES: No, after coming back. And after we had reported it I went immediately to the Ambassador Leonard Unger with this information because it represented a case of one of the lions coming off his stool and biting the hand of the trainer, and it was to my mind one of the great moments in the foreign service to see Leonard Unger, normally a mild man, respond not with shouting and pounding the table but he picked up the telephone on his desk and got CINCPAC on the phone and insisted on speaking to CINCPAC himself. He told him what had happened and said "I think this is a direct insubordination to my role as Ambassador and I know that you have instructed US commanders to the contrary and I feel I should inform you of this and ask you to take immediate and urgent corrective action." And CINCPAC said "Ambassador, it's three hours flying time, in about three hours and fifteen minutes let's meet again in your office on this subject and we'll get to the bottom of it." And within a day or two, in the time prescribed, in the Ambassador's outer office were some ten white uniformed Navy admirals averaging three, four staff, and General McGowan was called over and I have never seen such a.... Meanwhile CINCPAC must have satisfied himself that this was a true report. If it had not been, Bill Stokes would have been peering out from behind bars I imagine by now. But CINCPAC

put his nose about one quarter of an inch away from General McGowan's nose and gave him the most excruciating going over you'd ever want to see and McGowan disappeared from the scene.

Q: Was he transferred?

STOKES: Yes. To an undisclosed reassignment. And his deputy was made Acting Commander and I remember not long thereafter Mac-Thai gave me an award of a Mac-Thai flag on one side and "great job" on the other. It had a brass plate with my name on it so it was kind of peacemaking and I think the great majority of people in the Mac-Thai headquarters believed in the concept by that time because it was working. But it was a constant effort to keep the discipline. It was not merely the Army. The day after I left Thailand finally on reassignment I read in the New York Times the most unbelievable story. The head of the CIA station in Mekong Phnom had faked a letter purportedly from the Chinese communist party to the head of the insurgency. I forget exactly the gist of it but it was a provocative letter designed to promote a direct Thai involvement against the insurgency on the military side. Heavy use of the military, or greater Thai direct involvement in this, and the person I had been advising had discovered that it was a fraud and had publicly...

Q: You mean the Thai?

STOKES: Yes, the Thai and had publicly denounced it. This was on the CIA side, a complete violation of the rules as well. But by and large except for these egregious examples, the rules were consistently followed, and of course they were never really broken because both of these were nipped in the bud - one by the Thai and one by us. But there was a case of collusion by a US military officer to sow ideas among the Thai that were contrary to the ideas we were trying to sow. But by the way in which it was handled, the role of the Ambassador as the true leader in the foreign service as the accepted field leader of a policy that was essentially peace preserving and classical diplomacy, so to speak, in the best sense, although in an operational context was executed with the loyal participation of the whole American establishment. I was in Thailand for six years in this work. It became awkward to think of a substitution because then the whole question of who would be the Counterinsurgency Coordinator, the military always felt that it should be a general, the CIA had felt that they would naturally do it because they did it in Vietnam, had had the credit. Peer DeSilva had been a CIA, top CIA, may had been fifth or sixth in the whole CIA setup. But by the time I left six years later...

Q: Which was when?

STOKES: In 1973, in October, the insurgency was down to a whimper, it was clearly not a significant threat.

Q: Do you have any impression of where it stands at the moment, does it continue in some way?

STOKES: Yes, I mentioned that in January of 1991 I returned to Thailand and had a dinner with General Sayud who later had become supreme commander and so on. And on that day, the very last Thai insurgent had surrendered and was returned to China. The Thai commander along the Malay border lasted five or six years longer as an insurgency than in the parts of the country that I had been mainly concerned about. That is the north and northeastern parts. I don't want to say by what time it had entirely disappeared but under Deng Xiaoping by 1979 China had withdrawn all support of this insurgency and had sought good relations with the Thai government and the Thai reciprocated. So the Maoist-inspired insurgency in the north and northeast had evaporated by that time. It took another 10 years in the south because it was involved there with Malay irredentism and a lot of local matters that had nothing to do with what we're talking about.

Q: Or had an indigenous substance of its own in the south, you're saying?

STOKES: Yes, that's right.

Q: So I gather in the north it did not, it was mostly pump priming from China?

STOKES: Yes and this whole Thai effort to deal with the insurgency in a positive way was focused in the north and northeast. The Thai attitude in the south to these essentially Malay provinces...by the way, in the north and northeast the Thai emphasized that this is your country, you are Thai and we are Thai and the insurgents are Chinese. In the Malay provinces, the Thai had no ethnic appeal to the populace at all. They were just really Malay provinces, in their manner of speaking and everything else. The Thai didn't have the attitude of wanting to win over those people either. They were just outside our perspective and I think are another question altogether. This I think is one of the great success stories of what I might call the making of unhistory. The anticipation of a threatened disaster, the painstaking development of policies to forestall that disaster, and their success in such a way that nothing happens. That is recorded in history which usually pays attention to disastrous wars and the killings of vast numbers of people, great ebbs and flows of power. But if you build up the strength and forestall and nip in the bud efforts by a great power to foster surrogate insurrection in a smaller neighboring state and finally cause that great power to withdraw from the effort, then unhistory fills the interim. So the history will talk a great deal I'm sure about the Vietnam War and the covert war in Laos that was related to it, Cambodia, but very little about the Thai wing of what could have been more dangerous because it involved a great power, namely China instead of just a local strong second rate power like Vietnam with no real capability of going very far with anything that it succeeded in exploiting.

Q: I don't know where you'd like to go from here on. Are you sort of finished with the Thai phase?

STOKES: Yes, I thought of very interesting things since we've included some foreign service lore or concepts that might effect the way the foreign service organizes itself. I'd like to say a few things about that.

Q: Alright, let's stay substantive for this one last element of your impression of the situation in Cambodia vis a vis Chinese policy right now. I know you're not currently expert in it but is it your feeling that the Chinese are still pursuing Mao's old continental policy in Cambodia with the Pathet Lao?

STOKES: Well not with the Pathet Lao, with the Khmer Rouge.

Q: Khmer Rouge, yes.

STOKES: Well, China has historically, long before the communists, under the various empires and continuing on, has felt that it should have a direct and important role and influence in all the countries that were part of its sphere of influence, and Cambodia would be one of them - although far from the most important. The reason it comes to the forefront right now is of course that Cambodia is weak and divided and this is in a way kind of left over from an earlier period. When Norodom Sihanouk was king of Cambodia, he and the Thai had endless battles along their frontier. The Thai frontier with Cambodia consists of provinces in which the population is largely Khmer so the Thai organized its own insurrection called the Khmer Rouge or Free Khmer that did bring an insurgency along the boundaries against Cambodia when Sihanouk was there. When Sihanouk fled to China and lived in China for many years after he was overthrown by Lon Nol it was at that time that the Chinese took up an interest in his cause and began developing a policy of direct involvement in Cambodia through Sihanouk on one hand and Phrapas on the other. It's a question of what works. In other words, I think they would have pursued support of the insurgency in Thailand if it had been successful, but it wasn't. In the case of Cambodia they still had instruments to play, and they're still playing them. But they're playing it in a nuanced way. They're trying to balance water on both shoulders, they don't want to give up their hand in the game and on the other hand they don't want to make themselves pariahs in Accion - nor have it envenom their relationships with the rest of the western world so I expect that they would be reasonable within a degree but not give up support for elements that have been dependent on them.

Q: And do you think Praphas is really quite dependent on the Chinese?

STOKES: Yes, I think I don't know enough to say anything very profound on this subject, but he's gotten his arms from the Chinese and he clearly seemed to be someone who is, it may be a little embarrassing to some of the, probably was embarrassing to the government in China of Zhao Ziyang who was focusing on the internationalist point of view. Now you have a continental crowd back in charge in China again, and the continental crowd would be more open to Praphas. Zhao Ziyang would have sold him down the river by now. Again you see that ebb and flow of the Chinese communist leadership between internationalists and the continentalists and Zhao Ziyang looked with

his enormous success in promoting agrarian privatization in China and an astounding ability of China to go from being an important importer of US wheat to being self-sufficient in food by Zhao Ziyang's policy of giving the peasant the use of fruit of his own land, even tenure over it, if not amounting to ownership. And then Zhao Ziyang wanted to apply the same purposes to industry. And this, of course, brings me to my next involvement in China that doesn't directly involve the foreign service, but it was certainly a wonderful perspective on what is happening in a country, that I was regional manager for AT Kearney of our industrial modernization work in China. I visited some 220 Chinese industrial establishments ranging from incredibly vast first auto works in Chong Chun with a work force of 475,000 as you can imagine to small factories in the countryside. And each day, 2 or 3 or 4 days with the factory staff and leadership talking about the problems of their factory and their relationship with the authorities and transportation and what life was like. So there all holes are no longer barred, you're not seen as an outsider, you're one of the family and I think there's a dimension there of diplomacy that really ought to be explored.

Q: You mean people to people?

STOKES: Yes, for example, the armed forces have what they call fast students, those that go to study a language, foreign area specialist training, they spend time doing things like this. But I wouldn't copy that, it's just that it suggests the idea that a foreign service career ought not to be entirely one of issuing visas, doing economic reports, and so on. You should have periods in which you are really exposed to the life of the country on a full time basis in some kind of constructive role.

Q: You ought to have lunch with Brandon Grove and chat about these things. He's the head of FSI now.

STOKES: Yes, there are many ideas about that. I feel very strongly that the tremendous events that have occurred in the past few years should lead to a reorganization of our concept of what the foreign service should be doing and what kind of people we need in it and how they should be trained and what they should be doing. It should be a radical kind of zero based budgeting concept and yet when ideas calling for change are raised in the foreign service day lunch by Bob...his name escapes me, the former Inspector General. The response by the Director General in the department...

Q: Bob Sayer?

STOKES: Yes, Bob Sayer, was sort of embarrassed as though he had farted on the stage or something. It's discouraging. We really need to be thinking this through because the armed forces are going to change. The whole needs of America are going to change. We have to change in the foreign service. My career was one in which every place I was I had an irregular type of assignment. It was a wonderful kind of assignment, and all of that, every one of them, but it involved contacts with parts of foreign governments that never paid any attention to the foreign ministry. Foreign ministries almost always, and certainly

in the countries I've been in, shield diplomats, and their job is to keep diplomats away from messing around in the country, and so you're isolated. Very isolated. The metaphor for it was once the Thai dedicated a new university in northeast Thailand and the Ambassador couldn't go, the King had invited them, so I went. To get up there, the Ambassador provided his plane and all the diplomats were there and we were on this secret US air base in which all kinds of crazy aircraft were flying missions. We were waiting for the change of planes and these planes were coming in and you could see the Ambassador's eyes opening wide and I knew from my work exactly what was going on and none of them had the faintest clue about anything of this sort and neither would anybody in the American embassy on the foreign service side have known anything about it. But that was the major reality of what was going on in that part of the world at that time. The foreign service should not be excluded from it, we should not be creatures only of the foreign ministry of the countries that we're assigned to, and we should not be shunted aside like the Department of State is often shunted aside even within the US government. And we need to work toward building up our role in this way to the kind of role that we had in Thailand, in China, in other places where the foreign service was at the heart and soul of what was going on.

Q: I think the problem is that that kind of assignment as you were saying between tapes is not typically terribly useful for advancement in the old-fashioned career sense. It may lead to promotion okay but as far as moving up the ladder in functional terms, it doesn't seem to me it typically helps.

STOKES: No, it doesn't help and people will never be trained for roles like this if those who have the power are not interested in those roles. If they want to reward people who know how to take a paper out of the in-box and scribble on it and put it in the out box and get through all of that in the course of the day, then that's what going to be rewarded. And we'll just never have the other role because we won't want it effectively. If we want it effectively, we will promote people who are able to seize those roles and run with them. Now, where, for example, does a person who is the President's Chief Advisor on International Affairs, his National Security Advisor, where does he turn for members of his staff? Marine Corps lieutenant colonels? Navy admirals? Why not? If you have an activist concept of what constitutes real achievement and you don't turn to the foreign service, if the foreign service has eschewed that role and despises it and won't encourage anyone to do it. That's what Bob Sayer wasn't very explicit about in that speech but that's I think one of the elements of what he had in mind and Bob Sayer knows what operational involvement is because he was with CINCSOUTH in Panama and has been through all this, we've often discussed it he and I.

Q: Are there any other fields of your foreign service experience that you want to touch on?

STOKES: Well, in relationship to China when I came back from having been under incommunicado arrest in China the Department said, "Well, what would you like in the world as an assignment that would give you, within reason, anything you want." This was

bewildering to me and I remember getting a call from Alex Johnson who was then Director of Northeast Asian Affairs and he said, "Bill, we'd like you to go to Tokyo and do a peripheral report on China, reporting on China in the embassy, and I had two wonderful years in Tokyo in which that was part of the assignment. And the Zaibatsu never forgot their interest in China and their roots there, interestingly enough the head of MITI had been in Manchuria when I was there and he had been President of Manchu heavy industries and we befriended him in the consulate and we helped arrange the evacuation of terribly mistreated Japanese civilians to Japan and his name was Tagisake. And when we came out of China he arranged a reception for us in Japan and so my whole assignment in Japan I had free access to the Zaibatsu through Tagisake. It was also the time of the negotiations for the peace treaty. John Foster Dulles came out and I was assigned to assist him in various ways, there were many others, Bill Sullivan was there, we had neighboring homes. I remember one day hearing from Bill of the replacement by Truman of General MacArthur. MacArthur, of course, was unapproachable, nobody ever got near him and, however, I had a chance to meet him. We were coming out of China having been expelled, and all the world was noticing this and there were headlines in all of the papers. We landed in Yokohama, I mentioned that Tagisake greeted us, we were driven in his limousines up to Tokyo. We were invited by General MacArthur for lunch. We were on our way back to the United States, Mr. Ward and myself. We came, General MacArthur was late and when he came in, we all sat down to lunch and we thought the purpose was that the Consul General had briefed General MacArthur about all the events in Manchuria and what it actually was that General MacArthur gave a long account, it must have been 25 minutes long, of what was happening in China to Mr. Ward. At the end of which he turned to Ward and said, do you agree, Mr. Consul General? And I'll give Ward a lot of credit, "Not really, General, not really." And you could hear a pin drop. I thought the generals were not even breathing then. And after what seemed like an interminable silence MacArthur stood up and said, "Well, back to work." and turned and walked through a door.

Q: Closed mind.

STOKES: So, I contrast that with one day when I had been in Tokyo about 18 months and MacArthur had been removed and General Ridgway was the new Supreme Commander, the phone rang, it was Bill Sebald who was the Chief of Mission.

Q: My Ambassador in Canberra.

STOKES: And he never spoke to me, I mean I'd been to his home and all of that, but the idea that he would call me on the phone, the political section, was very unusual. He said, "Bill, there is an officer from General Ridgway's staff here and General Ridgway wants to see you" and I naturally went with the man, I think he was a colonel of some sort and I went in his staff car over to the Daiyichi building, went through all these corridors and finally came to this door and the colonel said go in. I opened it, it was General Ridgway alone at a desk. "Oh, you Stokes? Come on in. I want to talk to you." I sat down, he said,

"Look, you were in Manchuria, right, for four years?" I said "Yes." He said, "Well, you know there's a lot of people who say (the Korean war was in full tilt at this time) that we should bomb the Chinese side of the boarder, especially the railway to interdict the supply of the Chinese armies." (Every Chinese had nearly at the gates of Seoul at this time) He said, "What do you think about it, what is your experience say, to this question?" I said, "Well, General, during the fighting in Manchuria, as we both recall, the national government armies, American trained and equipped had removed by rail with the US Marines as their guards, and supplies transported by rail supported the National armies. They were beaten by armies that had operated for 15 years without access to any rail lines of any kind at all. And never in my experience did I see any significant tactical resupply of the communist armies by rail. And I've also seen the rail lines lie devastated for nearly 10 years. When we were leaving Mukden they had barely restored the main rail lines up from mainland China. I doubt that communist commanders ever paid much attention to railroads or are deeply reliant on them. I said, if they are they certainly feel perfectly comfortable with alternative means of supply, and I think if the railroads magically could be erased tonight it wouldn't probably affect, from what I can tell as a lay person, that the Army's performance on the ground much at all for any length of time." "Okay, that's what I wanted to hear, thanks Bill." He got up, shook my hand, walked with me to the door. I thought, this is quite a guy, Ridgway. I did as it turned out have something, I'd done a report on the Chinese railroads in Manchuria and that was probably as good information as you could get.

After Japan and the negotiation of the peace treaty I was assigned to in a routine way to Rabat, Morocco. And by this time, I wanted to stay in East Asia and Ambassador Robert Murphy had written several nice things about dispatches I'd written so I was bold enough to go and ask him if he would keep me on in East Asia. And he said "I'd be willing to do that Bill," but he said, "You know, I have some experience in North Africa myself, he said, I think you would find this absolutely fascinating" and he said "I'll make a bargain with you, you go to Rabat as the Department wants, and if, in a year, it isn't what I've said it is, write me and I'll ask for you to come back." So with that I went off to North Africa and I certainly never regretted it. The day I arrived there was a strike in the local rug factory which was the beginning of the revolution against the French by the Moroccans.

End of interview