

THOMPSON R. BUCHANAN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is March 15, 1996. This is an interview with Thompson Rhodes Buchanan on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. I might mention we are old friends dating back to when I first came into the Service in 1955 in Frankfurt. Tom, to get this thing started, could you tell me when and where you were born and a bit about your family and early childhood.

BUCHANAN: I was born in Beverly Hills, California, where my father, formerly a New York playwright had moved to work in films. We left there when I was three, my mother was divorced at that point, and moved to Chicago. My family on my mother's side were old Chicagoans, my father a Kentuckian. My mother remarried about 1931, marrying a British-Indian Prince who had gone to Harrow and Cambridge and later became a London barrister. Needless to say it caused a little consternation within the family and we moved to Europe. So, from age 8 ½ to 14 I was at schools in France, Switzerland and mostly in England, which is really the genesis for my interest in the Foreign Service, encouraged by my parents.

Q: I am just trying to get a little feel for the timing now. What years would be covered when you were 8 ½ to 14?

BUCHANAN: It would have been 1932-38.

Q: So these were the formative years for the genesis of World War II and all of that.

BUCHANAN: I was supposed to go on to Harrow and Cambridge in my step-father's footsteps, but with the war coming and my mother wanting me to come back to my American roots, we returned in 1938 and settled in New York. I was sent to old family schools, Exeter, and then on to Yale, initially as a civilian and later in the Navy V-12 Program.

Q: The V-12 Program being a Navy Officer Training Program...90-day wonders!

BUCHANAN: I graduated from Columbia University and wanted to go into LSTs, landing ship tanks, the smallest vessel with the least discipline I could think of, but on graduation day they asked if anybody knew a foreign language. I knew French and German and the next thing I knew I was out in Boulder, Colorado, not learning Japanese as I had been told, but learning Russian with Prince and Princess Mestchersky. I met my wife Nancy in Boulder, Colorado, a Philadelphian of Boulder, and we were married in 1945. Actually, I still have the Russian notes of Walter Stoessel who was in the class ahead of me.

Q: Could you give a little feel for Russian training at that time?

BUCHANAN: Totally embryonic. Prince and Princess Mestchersky were wonderful people. He was a painter, she had scrubbed all the floors of Paris to keep them alive after the revolution. We had no regular textbooks. It was not very good. Instead, we learned about the ballet. We were supposed to be giving ships to the Russians under Lend Lease, so we should have been learning something about the vocabulary of a naval officer. We learned about the ballet and opera.

Q: A painter is not exactly the greatest naval linguist.

BUCHANAN: Absolutely not. So, when I graduated and went to Washington I was called over by a captain who said, "I understand young man that you speak pretty good Russian." I replied: "Well, I suppose I speak it no better, no worse than anyone does after seven months of Russian discussing the ballet." This showed lack of confidence and I am probably alive today because of it. He wanted to send me out as a simultaneous interpreter for General MacArthur. He blackballed me, out of the job of Naval Attaché^{1/2} in Istanbul, so I negotiated my own job in naval intelligence in Bremen, Germany, for three months. I was the most overtrained, under used naval officer in the history of the US Navy. After the war I returned to Yale to finish my degree in international relations.

Q: Could you give us a little feel for the period, of how both students and professors, who were almost all veterans, I assume at that time, looked at things such as the US role in the world, the United Nations, and all of that?

BUCHANAN: We were certainly a soberer group than we had been before the war. We were older, of course, and many of us were married. I really had a very short period there, in Yale after the war, basically only one term, since I had been, into an accelerated program under the V-12. We lived in a children's delinquency home where my wife worked 80 hours a week. Generally we felt that Russia was an ally. I had had little sympathy for the naval captain who had run our unit in Bremen, who was preparing for the next war. He brought me one time a document which he had bought in East Germany and said, "Tom, if the KGB knows that you and I have this document, we are dead." I read the document, which was some notes from a KGB informer aboard some little Soviet vessel about what Igor had said to Ivan. Total nonsense and still is probably classified top secret in some naval files, on my captain's orders.

I had thought about going into the Foreign Service, and come down to Washington to talk to Julian Green, the examiner for the Foreign Service, and said I was on my way to Switzerland to the Institut des Hautes Etudes Internationales in Geneva, but would be interested maybe in taking the Foreign Service exam when I returned. "Oh, young man, you don't want to go to Switzerland," he said. What he really meant was we want our new officers to be young and malleable, enter now. But, anyway, I went to Switzerland and after a year my daughter was born, so I had to come back and earn a living. By then I had decided I wanted my children to have more roots than I had had, so I applied to the State Department and different places. Finally the Navy offered me a job as a cryptanalyst working on Russian code at \$5,000 a year, which in those days was a large amount of money.

Q: That was big money. I came into the Foreign Service at \$3,500.

BUCHANAN: Well, I worked one week doing crossword puzzles which I hated and at that point happily Boris Klosson in OIR offered me a job at \$3,500. So, my career started in the State Department in 1948.

Q: You started in OIR.

BUCHANAN: Yes. It was basically the successor of OSS. We had people such as Herbert Marcuse, who may mean something to you.

Q: Oh yes. He eventually became the great intellectual of the left in the United States.

BUCHANAN: Yes. He was used as the advisor on the Social Democratic Left in Germany at the time. My job was to work on US-Soviet bilateral relations, Soviet relations with the UN and Soviet relations with front organizations. I was sort of the ideologue for what was then called DRS, the Division of Research on the Soviet Union.

Q: Could you give a picture of what the Soviet situation was and how we saw it at that time?

BUCHANAN: Well, at that time, DRS was headed by a real Cold War ideologue, Mose Harley, a Georgian who spoke with a deep Georgian accent with machine gun rapidity that floored most of his bureaucratic critics. In varying degrees, I and my colleagues shared Harvey's ideological views. In those days I could quote Stalin and Lenin readily to support my not very sophisticated analysis of Soviet policy. But, then, as you said, the Cold War was upon us and events seemed only to confirm our view of an inexorably expansionist Soviet Union.

OIR was used much more in those days than INR has been used since then to support the 7th floor, partly because the State Department was much smaller, and the fewer desk officers were overwhelmed by the need to service successive conferences of foreign ministers. DRS was constantly being asked to prepare papers at the last minute in support of these conferences. As I recalled we worked twice around the clock, 24 hours plus, breaking around 8 a.m. to go across to Kitty and Al's restaurant opposite the State Department and order a Martini. One such night I had the task of pulling together the whole post-war history of Berlin.

Q: Just a quick question. I was talking with somebody who was dealing with Berlin later on saying nobody could find the original document showing exactly what the agreement with Berlin was. Was that just an apocryphal story?

BUCHANAN: I don't remember if I got the original document. Frankly, I was so foggy by that morning I could not recall much of the substance. One weekend, Saturday morning, I was called and told that Foster Dulles wanted by Sunday afternoon, a study that he could show our allies to demonstrate how the Soviets bluster, threaten, and then retreat. I knocked that study together for him and it apparently was useful. Those were the sort of things that we did in those days.

Q: Going back to 1948, was there any division, as there often is on policy things, of maybe we can do things with the Soviets as opposed to those who felt you can't do business with the Soviets?

BUCHANAN: When Stalin died, because Mose Harvey was such a strong ideologue and respected in the State Department-he had worked on Lend Lease during World War II and had a good bureaucratic record-nothing substantive was written on Russia from an analytical standpoint for months because he and Chip Bohlen were at each others throats. The embassy under Bohlen argued that collective leadership represented a new way of trying to run Russian. Mose argued basically that a Communist is a Communist and incapable of change. Most of us in DRS privately sided with Bohlen. The issue of Negotiating with the Soviets was always highly controversial. I personally always favored testing our opponent through direct negotiations, and I still wonder if we might not have been wise to follow Churchill's advice in 1953 and test the new Soviet leadership following Stalin's death. I felt that way, in part, because I had become convinced that a major policy debate took place on the Soviet side before Stalin's death and may even have played an indirect role in the crisis and threatened purge that preceded his death. Eisenhower was, of course, firmly opposed to negotiating with Moscow, and that was that.

Q: Stalin died when?

BUCHANAN: In March, 1953. I think there were debates on both sides, but both of us were in a pattern of challenge and response that didn't allow us as much flexibility as we perhaps should have had.

Q: How did you go about getting the information you were writing?

BUCHANAN: Oh, it was essentially very Kremlinological for years because Embassy officers had very little chance to travel and interview Soviet officials. When I was later in Moscow, I would with great difficulty arrange an appointment at the Foreign Ministry with someone in an area of my interest and would go and talk to the official. The usual response was, "Well, Mr. Buchanan, you doubtless read Pravda's article of such and such date and so you know our position." They were not very helpful. So, our information came from intelligence sources and much of it came from the reading of the Soviet press. If you read the Soviet press, which was highly structured, over a long period of time, small changes stood out, you detected nuances. You might not know exactly what it meant, but you got a feel that something was happening. Obviously the longer you worked in these areas the more confidence you got in your analysis, but we were certainly not always correct.

Q: When you were OIR were you reading the Soviet press?

BUCHANAN: Yes, but we got much of it from FBIS, the Foreign Broadcasting Intercept Service, which meant we read it in English. If we had a problem and needed to consult a document, we would go to the Russian, but most of it was done in English.

It was an exciting period. Helmut Sonnenfeldt was recruited by Harvey from among his students at SAIS, and he worked for me for a time, as did the daughter of Marquis Childs. We had a lively unit. But I became increasingly restless. I almost moved to UN/P when a promotion was slow in coming. Then Foreign Service friends suggested that I should take the lateral entry exam, and my wife and I decided on our anniversary that I should indeed enter the Foreign Service. The Wriston Program integrating civil servants with the Foreign Service came along at a very opportune time, and I joined the Foreign Service in 1955 over Mose Harvey's complaints that I was a "traitor." The next thing I knew I had been sent to my first overseas post, the Defector Reception Center in Frankfurt, Germany.

Q: Did you sense at that time any sort of divergence between the Civil Service, who were the ones who were staffing OIR, and the desk and embassy both staffed by the Foreign Service?

BUCHANAN: Very definitely. There was a culture gap. There was a sort of snobbiness on the part of we, so called "Soviet experts," because we did have the advantage of specialization. We were dealing often with Foreign Service officers who had just come on the desk and who didn't have our memory and experience. So, it caused a certain sense of superiority on our part. We also felt that the role of the intelligence research area should be to provide objective analysis not tied to policy; that as Foreign Service officer was going to be somewhat biased. This led to a debate later as to what extent should Foreign Service officers be rotated through later INR. Did INR risk losing thereby its objectivity. The problem with INR, however, was that it was too scholarly and objective. The Soviet Desk did not need a 12-page detailed historical essay on an issue. It wanted information that was pertinent to its immediate needs, and in a hurry. So, over time, as Soviet desk officers increased their own expertise, they looked with decreasing frequency to INR for help. As the level of expertise increased in the Foreign Service, it also tended to decline in DRS and its successor successors, with the abolition of the highly detailed National Intelligence Surveys.

Q: You were in this area dealing with Soviet affairs up to 1955, which is also the grand era of one Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin who was running around looking for communists. Did you sense a problem where you were?

BUCHANAN: Since we worked on Communist problems, and some of our older officers had been actively involved in politics in the 1930s, we were inevitably a suspect group. I personally felt a bit insecure because one of the people assigned to work for me, who was from Eastern Europe, appear to have been recruited, or at least to have offered to provide information on the loyalty of INR colleagues. That, at least, was our perhaps paranoid suspicion. A few colleagues lost their jobs, and others were forced to defend themselves against charges of disloyalty. I was too young and inexperienced to be directly affected. But I recall going to one party where I met I believe it was, Roy Cohn. When we got into some sort of argument, he asked me aggressively my name and where I was working. This was a very nasty period.

Q: I would have thought there would be things like taking advantage of books. Wasn't there a bookstore in Washington which was communist sponsored but sort of a communal discount store?

BUCHANAN: Oh, it's there still. Camkin is the successor to that store. At that time it was called the Four Continents Bookstore. We used to go there and that doubtless put us on FBI tape. But we got most of what you needed through OIR anyway. We ordered the Daily Worker, for example, to get the party line and read the foreign communist papers as well. My mother-in-law assumed, since I was reading all this stuff that I must be a communist. This was an attitude that was not uncommon.

Q: Did you feel any cold hand of McCarthyism on you?

BUCHANAN: Personally no, except perhaps in that one conversation where the fellow tried to identify me and I just took off. I was nervous about what I said in front of this colleague who worked for me. But other colleagues, who were usually older and had had some "leftist association" in the New Deal era, had problems.

Q: Did this have any effect on what was coming out of OIR or was Mr. Harvey so dominating that it was immune? I am talking about the good old bureaucratic American custom of covering your ass.

BUCHANAN: Oh, I am sure that, to some extent, that some of the things I thought were highly ideological were Mose Harvey covering his own and our collective ass. At the time I didn't really think so, but then I was a pretty naive young officer and an ideologue myself with no field experience.

I can jump ahead in the story to illustrate this point. After my second post, I was brought back from Paris to be a member of a small group, which I think George Ball organized. He called it a "short haired policy planning staff" to try and do something about communist infiltration of the third world. Khrushchev had opened a new offensive offering aid to the Third World. The Congress and the government knew nothing about the Third World and panicked. They could see the red flag going up all over the globe, particularly in Africa. I was brought back as the so-called Soviet expert to provide some perspective and work on the Soviet aspect of the problem. Working with Phil Habib on Africa, I made all sorts of studies on how the smart communists would infiltrate Africa. Of course, once I had served in Africa I understood why most of my studies were highly theoretical, divorced from African reality, I learned local Africans may be leftists but they are also nationalists, not very easy to deal with even for a dedicated Marxist Leninist. I also learned that the Soviets were even more inept than we are in making friends and influencing people in the Third World. This was reality as opposed to theory, part of the education of Buchanan.

Q: Well, let's go back. In 1955 you were integrated into the Foreign Service under the Wriston Program.

BUCHANAN: Yes.

Q: You went to Frankfurt?

BUCHANAN: George Kennan had set up a small unit in the so-called Defector Reception Center, run by CIA...

Q: You were in Frankfurt from when to when?

BUCHANAN: From 1955-57. We interrogated, debriefed Soviet defectors to see what this strange individual Homo Sovieticus, could be. We really didn't know. We didn't know what was his thinking. I am not sure Uncle Sam got his money's worth out of my reports, but for me it was a very interesting experience. It gave me insights into the Russian character and politics that served me well later on. I was there for two years. The most dramatic time was the Hungarian revolution, October, 1956. We took clothing down to the refugees and stood on the border and watched them going back and forth. I was with a Hungarian lady who had fled the Soviets in 1945. In 1956, her husband, Ralph Jones, was the last American Journalist in Budapest. In Frankfurt, my wife worked with East European refugees, and perhaps influenced by our involvement peripherally with the Hungarians, when we were later stationed in Paris, we took responsibility for two young Hungarian refugee boys and brought them to the US They became sort of foster children and we remain close to them and their growing families today.

Q: What were you getting in your debriefing of Soviet defectors?

BUCHANAN: I learned, for example, how some Soviets reacted to what we consider the amenities of Western civilization, like good service in a store. One defector explained that he found the interest shown in the customer somehow Uriah Heap unctuous and degrading. We were, of course, interested in these differences of value standards, which could affect how we addressed our own propaganda to the Soviets. We were also interested in the attitude of defectors toward their political leaders, toward Malenkov and Khrushchev. The most fascinating person I debriefed was Severyn Bialer, who later became a distinguished professor at Columbia University. A member of the Polish Central Committee, he fled to escape growing anti-Semitism in Poland. From his many contacts with Soviet officials, and access to Party documents, he was a wealth of information. He was the personification of the brilliant professor, pacing up and down the room, articulating points A, B and C, writing my report for me. His great ambition, he said, was to play the stock market on Wall Street.

Among my other interesting defectors, there was a KGB officer from the Caucasus and a Soviet naval officer. We were only given access to these defectors after their Bona Fides had been established by very tough interrogators, whom we did not always feel capable of evaluating some of the more intellectual defectors, one Moscow University student in particular. What was particularly revealing about all these defectors is how little anti-Communist ideology often played in their decision to defect. They had usually gotten in some sort of trouble involving a German girl friend, or some professional difficulty, and had fled in disgust or fear. Not that they were not critical of the Soviet system, having seen the higher standard of living in the West, but that did not seem to be the catalyst usually for defection. Opportunism certainly played a major role in the case of many of the Hungarians who fled. I debriefed some of them in German. They proved to be good bourgeois. When asked what they were doing during the fighting they told me that they used to go out in the evening on the street to see what was happening. They played it safe, letting young kids like our foster children, and the workers, to fight the Soviet troops.

Q: Then you left Frankfurt in 1957 and went to Paris.

BUCHANAN: I was sent as the so-called Soviet expert on the International Staff in the Political Division in NATO when we were in the old Palais de Chaillot. My boss was Bill Newton who had started with the BBC overseas services and served in the US in World War II. Later Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh was my super boss. We held a biannual exercise on the analysis of Soviet/East European relations, with Soviet experts coming from each of the member states, with the text drawn up in French and English. As "international servants," and were theoretically expected to be independent, but all of us went, of course, to check with our embassies once or twice a week to get the party line. But, generally, we were pretty free to do what we wanted. I wrote a number of papers including one I remember on what we should do in the Middle East. I didn't have any personal experience in the Middle East but nevertheless had strong views. I remember Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh saying with a certain amount of delight, "My God, I didn't know we could do this sort of thing," and the paper was sent around to the 15 nations. I had in those days gone back from Class-4 to Class-5. If I had been a Class-5 in our Paris embassy, I would have been doing the equivalent of cleaning the latrines. So, this was a much better experience.

Q: You were there from 1957 until when?

BUCHANAN: To the end of 1959.

Q: How did we view the Soviet Union at that time?

BUCHANAN: I don't think my ideas had changed that much. I still saw myself in a battle to prevent the communists from taking over the Middle East and the Third World. Not too many of us saw any great opportunity at that time to negotiate agreements with the Soviets. But I was beginning to differentiate the essentially ideological dimension of Soviet policy from the more traditional behavior of the Russian State. What was usually referred to as Soviet expansionism was often, I thought, only the traditional behavior of any great power trying to carve out its own sphere of influence. And where do you find your potential allies? Obviously among the enemies of your major enemy, among the more anti-American states in the Third World.

Q: You mentioned you did a paper on the Middle East. In 1958 when you were there was when we did send our troops into Lebanon at the time there was essentially unrest and Nasser, etc. What was your and NATO's perception of Nasser and things that were happening in the Middle East?

BUCHANAN: Depending on the individual, some, of course, saw Nasser as a communist agent, while for others he was an obstreperous nationalist. But in the eyes of many he was what the communists would have called "objectively an ally of the Soviet Union". A very simplistic view. People who had served in the Middle East, of course, had generally a more sophisticated view of Nasser than those who were Europeanists, who like many French and British officials resented Nasser treading on their imperial toes.

Q: Did the civil war that was going on in Algeria intrude on...

BUCHANAN: It intruded a great deal because de Gaulle was coming to power at that time. You had demonstrations in Paris, you had police on each corner with submachine guns, back-to-back. You had threats against members of the NATO staff by the OAS, the Algerian militants, and some of my friends went into hiding.

Q: Oh, yes, the white settlers...

BUCHANAN: Particularly the right-wing military in Algeria who were determined to hold on to Algeria and prepared to trigger civil war in France. They felt de Gaulle had betrayed them, which he did to some extent when he went to Algeria and they were determined to bring him down. There were large rival demonstrations, Left against Right, organized in Paris. On one occasion, Phil Valdes, who was our "peripheral reporting officer," in the Embassy, and I went to a large meeting of some 15,000 Communists in the Vel d'Hiver stadium. The crowd clapped on command and marched out singing "The International." Phil and I were standing in the square discussing the event when we suddenly sensed an eerie stillness around us. Looking up we saw that everyone had vanished except for a three-deep phalanx advanced on us of CRS troops, that the French had flown in from Algeria to ensure order. They were the toughest bunch of thugs I had ever seen. They looked like each had swallowed an FLN guerrilla for breakfast. We thought better of holding up our diplomatic passports, and fled with the rest. On July 14, Bastille day, I remember taking my two kids to the Place de la Concorde to watch the parade, and perhaps see de Gaulle. I pushed then up on the wall near the Orangerie when a policeman came along and began tapping me on the head with his billy club when I tried to explain that I just wanted my kids to have a chance to see the parade. We got down. When my two years at NATO were drawing to a close, the Embassy wanted me to replace Phil Valdes, and my wife and I were delighted at the idea of extending our stay in Paris. But, as I mentioned earlier, Washington had other ideas, bringing me back to work in the recently established planning unit, with the acronym U/CEA, Communist Economic Affairs, to counter communist infiltration in the Third World.

Q: Who was the Under Secretary at that time?

BUCHANAN: I can't recall exactly, but it was probably Douglas Dillon.

Q: I can find that out, it's not a problem. I take it if you were looking at Africa we really didn't have enough African hands to go around?

BUCHANAN: Well, Phil Habib and I had the great advantage that we were assigned Africa. All the other bureaus basically said: "you young whipper snappers keep your cott'n pickin' fingers out of our affairs; don't tell us what to do"! The African bureau was delighted to have any help it could get. So, I wrote a number of papers. One on Guinea and one on Ghana proposing a variety of social and other programs as ways to block off areas of Soviet infiltration, promote development and expand US influence. In the case of Guinea under Eisenhower we couldn't get anything going. When Kennedy came in, Bill Atwood, an old friend of Kennedy's, became ambassador and he would call Jack up and say this is what we should be doing. So, projects at least got off the ground.

I think Phil and I were proudest of our work on the Congo. There we proposed that the UN be used as a type of fire wall to prevent the Russians from moving in with the help of the radical nationalist, Patrice Lumumba.

Q: I'm getting confused with my dates. The Congo became independent in...?

BUCHANAN: It was granted independence in 1960, but already in 1959 the danger signs were clear. The Belgians had panicked and hastened to leave. They had done little to prepare a potentially very wealthy country, two thirds the size of the United States, for independence. There were barely 26 "university graduates" in the whole country. It was obviously a tempting target for Moscow. Through intelligence reports, we began to hear of meetings between the Soviet ideologue, Suslov, and members of the Belgian Communist Party. The potential for serious East-West confrontation was obvious. Secretary Rusk liked our idea, but asked Habib, "Phil, how much is this going to cost." Now if Rusk had asked me, I would have done a bureaucratic waffle, asking for time to cost it out. Phil gave me a good lesson in bureaucratic savoir faire. As a smart Lebanese from Brooklyn, he understood that the secretary simply needed some figure to be able to talk to Congress, so he said with little hesitation (as he described it to me in any case): "Well, I would guess around \$200 million."

Q: You were doing this from when to when?

BUCHANAN: From 1960-62.

Q: Well, this, of course, was a time when all hell was breaking loose in Africa and it was also the hey day of interest in Africa.

BUCHANAN: We also started having seminars for Africanists, so I got myself with people from a variety of agencies on a 7-week African seminar. We started in Dakar. The first night I woke up to find a naked African in my room running off with my clothes. He had already managed to remove all the personal possessions of the CIA and the Defense Department colleagues in the next room. That of shook us up a bit. We went to the Gambia and had dinner there with the Governor General, in black tie, of course. We went on to Ouagadougou where the Chargé who met us there was dead by the time our trip was over. He died from hepatitis. We went on to East Africa. By the end of the trip I was hooked on Africa, an exotic frontier. As a result, when I was later in Moscow and had to submit my wish list, I asked for a sub Saharan, French-speaking post on the water, thinking of Dakar or Abidjan.

Q: When you were working on Africa at this time did you see, note or feel divergence in outlook between the EUR bureau and the new AF bureau on what to do?

BUCHANAN: The EUR bureau tended to take the side of the former colonial power: "Don't rock the boat. So and so is a pretty nasty type and we shouldn't be coddling him," etc. We were much more activist in the African bureau, concerned not to be accused of "losing" Ghana or Guinea. There was definitely a difference in approach.

Q: Did you ever see matters dealing with Ghana or Guinea that couldn't be settled between the two bureaus or was that sort of beyond your ken?

BUCHANAN: That was beyond my ken.

Q: During this 1960-62 period, what was your feeling and maybe the African bureau's feeling about people like Sekou Toure, Kwame Nkrumah, etc.?

BUCHANAN: I, at least, and I think many of us were, much more inclined to see them as radical nationalists who were vulnerable because they were looking for shortcuts to modernization. They saw in Marxism and Leninism a quick way to overcome the enormous gap between their own countries and the Western world. We were in a sense, sympathetic, understanding their aspirations. We did not dismiss them as communists, but saw them as people one could work with. But one had to be responsive in some way to their needs...

In the final analysis we failed in the same way that the Soviets failed. First of all AID was a big bureaucratic organization already and it was very hard to be quickly responsive. We devised a number of programs but not too many of the programs actually went through. Some programs were successful. We helped build the Volta Dam in Ghana, for example, which was definitely a positive achievement that Nkrumah appreciated. It was difficult and remains difficult to get anything done in Africa. You devise programs but to carry them through is often beyond our capacity and that of the local government, and also beyond our financial means.

Q: Did you have any dealings with Soapy Williams?

BUCHANAN: A little. We liked his enthusiasm because he was prepared to get things done, but we didn't really respect his sophistication. His do-gooder approach to Africa didn't always help to sell the programs. Soapy flailed around a bit. We would have liked to have seen a little more professional approach.

Q: Was there anybody who was sort of the person you looked upon to be Mr. Africa at that time?

BUCHANAN: I do not recall anyone who was a recognized Africanist when I began working in the area. Those who had served in Africa had served in a colonial era where stress was on getting along with the colonial power, not the Africans. Someone like the debonair bachelor Tom Castile, who suddenly found himself in the early 1960s with responsibility for dozens of new countries, was assigned to Africa apparently precisely because he was a bachelor with a reputation for doing well in hardship posts like his previous one in Iran. The ambassadors with greatest name recognition, like Timberlake and Gullion, were known, not because of their expertise but because they were on the hot seat in the Congo (Zaire). Many of our future Africanists had served as young officers in African posts in the late 1950s and early '60s, like Steve Low, Ray Perkins, Bob Smith and Willard De Pree. Perkins, Smith and De Pree were all members of my African seminar in 1961. It was a steep learning curve for all of us, dealing with this explosive new Africa.

Q: Let's talk a bit about the Congo. Did you deal with the Congo?

BUCHANAN: Well, we dealt with the Congo at that time only in the sense of trying to block a Soviet power play: Our responsibility was not day-to-day policy but action programs designed to block Soviet moves in a given country. In that sense we were very active in the Congo. We kept heckling the African bureau to set up UN and bilateral programs to provide aid in a variety of fields...in the security field, in the agricultural field, all the logical programs that would interest an undeveloped country that had nothing.

Q: Were we getting any intelligence that you were seeing or analysis from our embassy in Moscow about what Soviet intentions were?

BUCHANAN: Not a great deal. We learned more from CIA intelligence reports describing, for example, the contacts between the Soviets and the Belgian Communists than anything received from Moscow. All the embassy could report was what Pravda or Izvestia wrote about Africa, or Khrushchev said in his speeches, all making it very clear, however, that Africa was seen as a vulnerable target of opportunity. But, in terms of tactics, what the Soviets planned to do, we depended more on intelligence reports.

Q: Did you get any feel that our posts in Africa were using the "communist menace" as a way in getting what any post would want as far as more assistance for the country to which they were assigned?

BUCHANAN: Oh, yes. Certainly. Everybody exploited the Communist threat to get action out of Washington bureaucracy. With some it was just a cynical "squeaky wheel" tactic, but with many it reflected genuine concern that we were in a race for influence in Africa with an aggressive opponent. Over the years people became more cynical because it became clear that the Africans were becoming very effective at playing the great powers off against each, telling them what they wanted to hear. An increasing number of officials in both Washington and Moscow began arguing that we should not give in to this sort of black mail.

Q: Did South Africa play any part in this? This was the time of increasing apartheid in that area.

BUCHANAN: It played only in the sense that the communist press and the Soviet Union tried to paint us as the ally of South Africa, the enemy of Africa. I didn't work on South African problems, but obviously anyone who did would have said that South Africa was also a good target for communist infiltration. As we know the Communist Party of South Africa was very active. The leaders of the Party worked very closely with the ANC, the African National Conference. America was accused of being guilty by association with South Africa. We in turn tried to demonstrate that we were just as opposed to Apartheid as the Communists.

Q: What about pressure from political parties in the United States? I am thinking about Robert Kennedy. During part of this time I was in Yugoslavia and there was this great push to make contact with leaders of youth and I am thinking that Africa would have been a prime place for this. Did you feel that was a tool?

BUCHANAN: Oh, very much so. I felt it even more after I served there. I would often joke that, if I were running Personnel, I would send out young bachelors because they were the age of most of the politburo members in most African states. The place you met most of the wheelers and dealers was in bars in the evening. A stolid old American Foreign Service officer was not the type to make those sorts of contacts. So, many of our younger officers were quite effective. Of course, in those days I was fairly young myself and was naturally prejudiced.

Q: You left in 1962?

BUCHANAN: Yes, in 1962. I was sent to Moscow to head the foreign political section. That was my first embassy experience.

Q: On leaving the Department, from your point of view, whither Africa, if you were doing a straight line projection, or something like that?

BUCHANAN: If you are asking my projection for Africa in 1962, when I left for Moscow, it pointed toward radical turmoil. Pan-Africanists like Kwame Nkrumah were trying to organize a bloc of radical states, the Casablanca group, to confront the West, with Soviet encouragement. But there were states within the Casablanca group, like Morocco that we traditionally think of as conservative. Morocco later became an important moderating force in African politics. In those days, of course, North Africa was still part of the African Bureau. Today, with the end of the cold war, Africa has receded to the back of the stage of world politics. Its social, economic and particularly tribal problems have proven to be more intractable than most people imagined in the 1960s. They are no longer concealed under the veneer of ideological struggle. Africa continues to demand attention, however, by the sheer magnitude of its human disasters.

Q: Did the Chinese play any role when you were there?

BUCHANAN: They were increasingly active. Budging saw Moscow as its main rival in the Third World, and set out to demonstrate that it was the only effective "anti-imperialist" power. The two competed in large foreign aid projects with the Soviets building the Aswan Dam in Egypt, while the Chinese built a railroad from Tanzania to Zambia.. The Chinese were also active in providing aid to the various "liberation" movements, but ultimately they could not compete with Moscow in the delivery of military equipment.

Q: Did we see the Soviets and the Communist Chinese as being one and the same?

BUCHANAN: In the beginning, yes. It took quite a while for the split to be generally accepted. Some officials in Washington and abroad remained skeptical. I recall that we had great trouble on one occasion during the biannual NATO review of East European policy to persuade one Dutch official that we were not all victims of a great Communist charade. My former colleague, Ben Zook, in OIR/DRS was one of the first to argue that there was a genuine and growing split between the two communist super powers.

Q: So, you went to Moscow in 1962 and were there until when?

BUCHANAN: Until 1964.

Q: Who was the ambassador at that time?

BUCHANAN: Foy Kohler. I arrived in time to accompany him on some of his courtesy calls on his colleagues. After being offered cognac at 10 in the morning, he commented once that what you needed to be an ambassador was a modicum of intelligence, but above all a strong stomach.

Q: I would like to talk a little about the embassy first.

BUCHANAN: Well, I took over from Spike Dubs in Moscow. As I said before, I arrived with the arrogance of youth, and of a professional with more continuity in Soviet affairs than most of Foreign Service colleagues. But that as my only advantage. I had to learn from scratch what had become old hat for most of my colleagues, namely, how to write a cable, protocol issues, how to make a call on the foreign ministry, etc. But it was an exciting time. Within the first two weeks, I went on a book buying trip with the publications procurement officer, Bill Morgan. We went to the Caucasus, first to the Baku, where the KGB agent watched us, slipped and fell on his face in the first heavy snow the city had in 25 years. Security kept getting tighter and tighter. We were placed, in effect, in a closet with clothes hung all around us as we flew into Yerevan. We were allowed, however, to take a train along the heavily guarded border with Turkey, with its ploughed areas and border guards on horseback. On the high hill above Tbilisi, Georgia, near Stalin's statue, we suddenly read on a wall poster that five of our Embassy colleagues had been PNGed. The Soviets had finally caught our spy, Colonel Penkovsky. Lovely Taenia, Intourist guide, showed us around town, explaining how a radio commentator, who was a direct descendant of the Kings of Georgia, had recently married a girl of the same sort of noble lineage. At the airport, Taenia managed to get our 40 boxes of books onto Aeroflot, despite the glowering presence of two huge thugs, in green felt hats and comically wide pants, standing over us...Hollywood casting...

Q: Penkovsky was a famous CIA and British agent.

BUCHANAN: My old colleague and neighbor in Moscow, Bob German, was almost PNGED too because the Soviets thought initially he was part of the CIA group working with Penkovsky.

Q: Could you talk a bit about what a book buying trip is?

BUCHANAN: We had an agreement with the Soviets that each of us could buy books of interest to our respective governments, and had officers in our embassies with that function. You would go usually to what was then the union republic's capitals, and visit the main bookstore, look at their list of books and select those you wanted. You would sign a chit and they boxed up the books. What sometimes happened, though, you arrived and discovered that "by chance" it was "inventory day." That was usually a sign that every book store in town was closed to you. If book-buying wasn't always successful, it allowed you to travel and get some insight into the country.

Q: You had been dealing with the Soviet Union for really a considerable period of time, from 1948-62, after being there were there any shocks or changes of attitude about things?

BUCHANAN: Of course, Khrushchev was in power. It was a period of so-called thaw. There was hope and excitement in the air. Unorthodox books started being published, one called, for example, "Not by Bread Alone", by Dudintsev. During my first tour at the embassy we were fortunate to live out on Leninsky Prospekt, alongside Soviets and East Europeans, not in an American ghetto. On my first taxi ride into town I asked the driver how things were now compared to Stalin's day. There was the same nostalgia we hear today. The driver replied: "ah, must worse. In Stalin's day you could buy a bottle of vodka for two kopecks", a gross exaggeration.

It was an exciting period because Khrushchev was a very lively leader and he had no compunction about visiting with foreigners. I remember I was at a businessman's reception and I got into an argument with some KGB type from the Ministry of Commerce. He finally grabbed me (he had had a few drinks) and said, "Here is a man who can answer our argument," and started dragging me across the room. Good grief, he was dragging me to Khrushchev who had just entered. So, it was an exciting time.

Q: Were you there during the missile crisis over Cuba?

BUCHANAN: I was. We were in many ways much more insulated against the panic and fears that one would have had if one had been in Washington. We didn't have the newspapers and TV to alarm us every day. The Soviet press was pretty bland on this issue. I was personally not very heavily involved, the negotiations were very closely held by the ambassador, the DCM, Jack McSweeney, and Dick Davies, Political Counselor. But I also came to Russia with a strong belief that the Russians huff and puff but then retreat. They are not adventurous, but conservative in their policies. So, I was not inclined to be scared.

It was an interesting time on another level. The Robert Shaw Chorale was in Russia at that time. They sang the Bach B Minor Mass, which the Russians had never been allowed to hear. It was a very moving experience. We were present when a young Russian artist, who had managed to get a second black market ticket, and spent all night painting a picture of Christ, rushed up to present it to Robert Shaw the following day after the concert. Shaw told us that the Russians in Leningrad had asked him if he would agree to serve there as choral director, an honor he declined.

Q: What was your impression of the embassy, how it operated, the morale, the ambassador, the staff?

BUCHANAN: It is a very different embassy than now. We didn't have professional area specialists, for example. The most interesting area in those days was in Asia, particularly Laos. So as head of the foreign political section I made myself "the Asian expert," not really knowing much about Asia. I remember once Kohler saying, "I hope you know something about Laos, Tom, because no one else does." The Brits also didn't seem to know a great deal.

On that score, one of the more amusing incidents was in the summer of 1963 when Harriman came to discuss Laos with Gromyko. Gromyko started his usual diatribe, Harriman listened for about a minute and then ostentatiously turned off his listening aid, so Gromyko was talking to himself for 20 minutes. Afterwards we had the usual VIP lunch at the Foreign Ministry guest house. Bill Sullivan and Mike Forrestal, Harriman's aides, were there. Both of them regaled Gromyko by saying that the governor was called "the crocodile". Gromyko was quite amused, but not the governor.

Q: How did you find morale there?

BUCHANAN: I thought that it was good. Any situation where people feel themselves under pressure and isolated, brings out their inner resources and feeling of comradery. These feelings extend to officers in other diplomatic missions during my first tour, the diplomatic colony remained small enough so that there was a good cross section of diplomats from all parts of the globe at social events, contrast to the 1970s when parties tended to be regionally segregated. Morale was better in the 1960s than later, but that may simply be because I was a younger, more lighthearted officer. To hear the old hands speak who served in Stalin's time, that was truly the belle époque of service in Moscow.

Q: What was the view of Khrushchev during this particular time?

BUCHANAN: To some extent the feeling was that this was some one with whom we could do business, and in fact, of course, we did. We negotiated the nuclear test ban treaty and kept up a dialogue. He was a very tough negotiator and a highly erratic human being, so you never knew which way he was going to jump. But, he certainly was the most interesting leader that we had to deal with, and there was some hope.

Q: How was the death, the assassination, of President Kennedy treated?

BUCHANAN: Well, I was at the French commercial counselor's smoking a large Cuban cigar, which was making me increasingly green when the Agence France Press correspondent went to the phone and came rushing back and told us the shocking news. I was happy to be able to dash out of the room at that point. The Russians treated this as though we had killed their leader. In a certain sense he was, for he was their ideal, the sort of young leader they would have liked to have had. So, there were recriminations from people in the streets of how could we have allowed this to happen. Khrushchev came and signed the condolence book at the embassy. It was a very moving period.

Q: Was the Oswald connection...?

BUCHANAN: Consular affairs, of course, had a flap to find out what they could on Oswald, pull out the file. But the Soviet press didn't publish it for obvious reasons. We, on the political side never thought this was a KGB plot to kill Kennedy. We just thought Oswald was a nut.

Q: Yes, because we dealt with these nuts in our business so much that you know that they are out there. Did you and your family have any interesting experiences with the Russians?

BUCHANAN: Let me give you a few examples. Our daughter and a pretty French friend of hers visited us in the summer and very quickly attracted the attention of two, nice looking young Russians, obviously children of the Nomenklatura living in our area. The Russians used to take them out to Gorky Park, where they would sneak into restaurants by the back door, and obviously have fun. The boys would turn up their coat collars to avoid being recognized as they walked by the militia outside our entrance when they came to visit us, but they stood out because they were much better dressed than the American kids. I took my son to Central Asia during his Easter vacation and we visited Frunze, now called Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. It was memorable in part because the police were so obnoxious, blocking everything we wanted to do. It was so bad that when we went to see the Imam (religious leader) of Kirghizia, who had invited us to come and have a real Kirghiz meal, and we saw a car with four toughs sitting outside his door, we told him that another time would probably be better. He was visibly relieved. So instead, we went to a restaurant, with a good jazz band, where a fight broke out between a well-dressed group of Iraqi air force pilots and a drunken Kirghiz, who was almost knifed.

A young Russian, who was accompanying the Iraqis, then attached himself to us, or rather to the attractive, red head teacher from the Anglo-American school who was accompanying us. We said we were going to church because it was Easter. He said he would like to come along, claiming to be an ex-MVD officer who was now studying to become a surgeon. In any case, we got to the church through about a foot and a half of mud, pouring rain and women milling around trying to get into the church. It was the best show in town on a Saturday night, so all the young Komsomol thugs were trying to push their way into the church, and being thrown back down the steps by muscular babushki. It ended up with our self-appointed guide and I standing on steps, helping the ladies. Finally, our "friend" pulled our teacher into the church. She had the impression that he really did want to see the service. At that point the little old ladies all turned on me, assuming that I was a militia officer, saying "aren't you ashamed of yourself allowing these hooligans to behave this way?" When I explained who we were, they apologized, put their umbrellas up over us, and then asked: "Is it true that in America the Easter service is broadcast over television?" Word of the West had traveled even here to the Afghan border. One of our neighbors on Leninsky Prospekt was Victor Louis, a notorious KGB agent coopted 1/2. He tried to ingratiate himself with us by introducing us to Oskar, a dissident artist. When we went back to Moscow on our second tour, we found that he had moved up in the world, with a house in Peredelkino, a fashionable artistic suburb. He had his own ski lift, a Mercedes and Jaguar. We had finally given him a visa to visit the US. An American, whom he had visited, told us that Viktor had asked him to ship back \$1,000 worth of miscellanea that he had bought at Hammacher and Schlemmer. Basically, Viktor was a 19th century buccaneer, who knew how to use the Soviet system to the best advantage of himself and his English nanny wife, Jennifer, who regularly attended Sunday church service with their children at the English Embassy.

Q: Wasn't he also sort of used by us as someone we could talk to?

BUCHANAN: He used us and we used him, to hear what Viktor had to say. It was often interesting, something the Soviets wanted us to know. On one occasion, he basically told our Administrative officer that Khrushchev had been overthrown, but the officer did not appreciate what he was being told and waited a day before passing on the information. The Soviets used to send Viktor off to places like Israel, where they did not have relations, to sort of sniff out the terrain. He claimed to have a in-law in Copenhagen, who was in the rug business, to explain how he was able to bring back large quantities of rugs for all of his Nomenklatura friends. As I said, he knew how to work the system.

You asked about morale. I think where morale wasn't very good was among the children. It was a very difficult post for children. The only place they had to play was in a sort of little playground next to the garbage dump. They were always getting into trouble for obvious reasons. One time they set a fire in the chancery's only elevator. So, it was difficult. Our son went to the Anglo-American School there, which was run jointly by the two embassies. It had some good teachers, but later he said he wished in a way he had gone to a Soviet school. Some people, who sent their children to Moscow schools, found it was a good experience and we had thought about it. But, Campbell had been in a German school in Frankfurt and came away with a heavy German accent in English; then he had been in French school and left feeling more French than American, so we said no, we didn't want him confused again.

My two years flew by and the time came for the April Fool sheet. As I mentioned I had become hooked on Africa and applied to go to a French-speaking, Sub-Saharan post on the water. From a career standpoint obviously, I would have been smarter to have tried to stay in EUR and get involved in "important" political-military affairs. But, I was always more interested in doing what I enjoyed than what might professionally advance my career.

Q: That is one of the great fun of the Foreign Service. You can sort of pick an area of the world and say, "Gee, I would like to go there," and there is a reasonable chance if you try hard enough that you can go there.

BUCHANAN: Exactly. I was thinking about being on the water, Dakar or Abidjan, but I couldn't fault Personnel when they sent me to Bujumbura on the longest lake in the world, Lake Tanganyika, French speaking, sub-Sahara.

Q: Before we move to Burundi, while in Moscow you dealt with Soviet foreign affairs. What was the Soviet policy towards the rest of the world?

BUCHANAN: Khrushchev's offensive into the Third World was still continuing. He was having problems because so many Third World states were becoming disenchanted and the Soviets, themselves, were becoming disenchanted with their greedy "allies". Foreign aid was about as popular in Russia as it is in the Middle West of the United States, with all sorts of anecdotes..."If we get one more ally we are going to go broke." Nevertheless, Khrushchev was an activist and it didn't matter whether you were talking about Asia or Africa, his diplomats and his KGB types were out there, trying to weaken our influence and promote Soviet interests.

In the area of bilateral relations, as I mentioned, we began to do business. Khrushchev was an impressionable person, in the sense that even though he was an ideologue, who felt that by going back to some of Lenin's policies he could revitalize the Communist Party, he was open to outside influences. He was tremendously impressed by his trip to the United States and, of course, very impressed by what we could do in the area of agriculture. He also, I think, genuinely got along very well and had personal respect for General Eisenhower. So, from that standpoint the U-2 incident was a personal disappointment for Khrushchev. It was also a great embarrassment to him to have to admit that the Americans had been able to overfly Russian territory for years and take photographs, and the Soviet military hadn't been able to do anything about it. I think his apoplectic reaction in Paris was basically embarrassment, and an effort to protect himself politically. In retrospect, of course, he was under greater pressure internally than we realized at the time. To be sure, there were rumors that he had his problems, that there was an opposition. A variety of names kept surfacing as potential rivals. But, when he was actually bounced, I had already left, we were more relaxed because that year there had been a very good crop. The previous year, 1963, when we were in Russia, there had been basically a famine. Bread to the Russians is very important and some of the bread you bought in shops was almost inedible. It was a very difficult time. So, logically we thought if Khrushchev was going to be bounced, that he would have been removed in 1963.

In a sense we all found him an interesting person to deal with, yet he made us somewhat nervous because he was, as the Russians accused him, subjective, volatile, and erratic. And quite arbitrary and impulsive. He decided for example, that since the Americans had such success growing corn, it should be grown all over the Soviet Union. It did not matter whether local conditions favored the growth of corn or not. His huge program earned him the name of "Nikita Kukuruznik", the corn grower. He began a similar massive campaign to grow vegetables. He got into much greater political trouble, however, when he decided to split the regional Communist Party organizations into urban and agricultural sections, thereby depriving powerful Party officials of part of their fiefdoms. When he undertook a serious program of arms reduction, cutting the armed forces by over a million men, many coddled officers found themselves sent out to collective farms to become collective farm chairmen. By the time of his ouster, Khrushchev had managed to alienate virtually every powerful group in that population. That made it easy for Brezhnev to topple him.

Q: Then you went to Burundi and you were there from the fall of 1964 until January 10, 1966

BUCHANAN: I went back to Washington after Moscow and was on the promotion boards three months. Then I left for Burundi arriving at a time supposedly there was to be a coup but nothing happened the first two weeks. It was simply idyllic. During the third week, someone assassinated the Prime Minister, Ngendandumwe, who was Hutu. The Government first arrested a Tutsi on our staff, who handled our budget problems, accusing him of the murder. We were told that the screams we later heard from a nearby jail were his, but he was later released. In retrospect, he appears to have been involved in Tutsi emigre politics. Then the Mwami (king) blamed the murder on the atmosphere of violence that the Chinese Communists had helped create in Bujumbura by their sponsorship of radical Tutsi politicians, and he expelled the Chinese. A period of martial law ensued for perhaps eight months

Q: Who was your ambassador?

BUCHANAN: Don Dumont was my ambassador. I must frankly say it was rather difficult. We were an eleven man post and I was always Mr. Buchanan to him as his DCM. He never invited anyone from the staff, so far as I knew to join him on the boat which he maintained on Lake Tanganyika. It was my impression, certainly, that the boat had been provided him by the US Government. We used a tiny, unseaworthy motor boat belonging to the Embassy for weekend picnics, ourselves. In short, Dumont was a complex, certainly quite intellectual, and I sensed perhaps an insecure person, but very much a qualified Africanist. His wife shared his approach to life, or he hers, I do not know, She was a pied noire from Algeria. The fact that he did not want me to have anything to do with the African ministers made life difficult for me on those occasions when I was Chargé^{1/2}. When relations were heading rapidly downhill after the abortive Hutu coup, and I was Chargé^{1/2}, I sought out the radical Minister of Education, whom I knew by reputation only. I asked what we could do to stop this dangerous trend in our relations, and he advised: "you should get your ambassador to go and see Defense Minister Micombero", who at the time was the power behind the scenes and the future President of Burundi. When I told Dumont this upon his return, he said that "Micombero knows where I am, and he can come and see me, if he wants." Whether a meeting would have done any good, I do not know. Probably not, because as you know Burundi is divided into the Hutu serfs, who were 85 percent of the population and have been for centuries, and the ruling warrior class Tutsi...the shorts and the tall. The Tutsis were basically paranoid because in Rwanda, the Tutsis had had eventually risen and massacred, literally cut down to size, thousands and thousands of Tutsis, and they were afraid this would happen in Burundi. The result was the anomaly of a feudal autocracy that allied itself with the communists against NATO, in the belief that NATO powers were on the side of the Hutu serfs. They blamed the Belgians basically for the massacre in Rwanda. It was a time of civil war in the Congo. Che Guevara, the Cuban revolutionary, was based for a time in neighboring Tanganyika, and he used to come across the border and recruit Tutsis in our Rwandan refugee camps to send into the Congo to fight the civil war there, as they saw it, against NATO. There were reports that guerrilla training films were also shown in the main hotel in town, the Greek-run Paguidas.

It was a peculiar atmosphere. My first night in Burundi I went down to the Paguidas bar and found myself, the only white person there. Everybody was sitting around reading the Chinese, Information Bulletin. A man came over to me and said, "Oh, Mr. Buchanan, how did you like Moscow?" This told me that this was a rather small town!

The tension built up as the Hutus won the election to parliament in the spring of 1965, and basically became the predominant political force in the country. The radicals then convinced the moderate Tutsis that either "we hang separately, or we hang together". We were convinced at the time that the Tutsi had plotted to provoke the Hutu-led police to try to overthrow the Mwami in October 1965. The fact that the army arrived within seconds of the Hutu attack on the palace was just too fortuitous. I woke up about 2:30 a.m. to hear firing over our house. The police had retreated to a military camp behind our house, and the army was using our garden wall as protection to try and retake the camp. Happily, the police did not know how to use the mortars in the camp.

The Tutsi radicals used the coup manqué as an excuse to seize every Hutu of any importance: a former Prime Minister, heads of the parliament and trade unions, etc.; officials without any connection to the attack on the palace. They were driven past our house three nights in a row and machine-gunned in the central stadium, where they reportedly stood holding hands and singing Catholic hymns.

Then civil war started in the hinterland. Our main concern was the American missionaries in the interior, who, unlike the Catholic missions, were not part of a radio. There was particularly one attractive couple, whom I had given up for lost, when they appeared under guard in Bujumbura. The Pastor had almost been killed for possessing a hunting bow which his captors were convinced he had imported to give to the Hutus. He saved himself by succeeding, on his second time using the bow, to hit a distant target the Tutsis selected to test him.

The piggy Twa, who had been the traditional allies and "enforcers" for the Tutsi, were now reported allied with the Hutus and advancing on Bujumbura. There was panic and plans were made to evacuate our embassy to the Congo. A period started of threats against the embassy, threats to kill the Ambassador, me or the Public Affairs Officer. Dumont refused to be intimidated and insisted on riding his bicycle to work. The newly arrived station chief then picked up the rumor that the politburo had met and we were to be given 24 hours to leave the country, a day less than the time given the Chinese to leave.

So, on Saturday, January 6, I went over to the Paguidas bar and was lucky to find a Congolese, who worked in the Foreign Ministry, and who had tried to con me into sending him back to the Congo with some immunity. Even the Tutsis' radical friends suffered from their xenophobia. Well, I bought our Congolese friend a drink, he reciprocated, and after a few more he slurred: "Mr. Buchanan, you must understand me. I do not hate America. But if the Foreign Ministry gives me an order to write a note telling the Americans to leave in 24 hours, what can I do." I said, "thank you." went home and told my wife to cancel a party we were giving the following day and to begin packing.

On Tuesday we left, ironically driving between a row of the jeeps, which we had given to the police to improve security. I'm still puzzled why the radical Minister of Education, whom I had visited, went out of his way at the airport to shake my hand. My wife, and my daughter, who had spent the year between high school and college as the only white student at Bujumbura University, and a volunteer at Rwandan refugee camps, stayed on to do the packing..

Q: You were PNGed, or was it the whole embassy?

BUCHANAN: The ambassador, I and the PAO and a Greek employee, were PNGed. We were all accused of being spies. The irony was that the Chargé d'Affaires became the CIA station chief.

Q: When you arrived there, what were American interests there in Burundi?

BUCHANAN: Basically to report on what was happening in the Congo, and to try to prevent Burundi from drifting further left. If you ask me whether we really had any US interests, I would say no. Nor did we in Rwanda. But we had a policy at that time of having relations with all the countries of Africa, instead of doing as the British did, for example, and having regional ambassadors accredited to a several countries. Burundi was basically a listening post and part of our general effort to prevent Africa from falling into the communist lap, as we then feared.

Q: Now you are an old hand with communism, what was your impression while you were there of Soviet influence?

BUCHANAN: The major impression that I had was that the Soviets first of all hated Africa. I used to meet with the Soviet Ambassador on the golf course, which he complained was the only place he could walk in safety. I should say in parenthesis that Burundi was the most overcrowded, perhaps poorest country in Africa where families literally disfigured their children as they did in the Middle East to make them beggars. In our house we had a large metal gate leading into our bedroom so that we could lock ourselves in the bedroom at night. Crime was rampant. From that standpoint, Burundi was not a pleasant place.

The Chinese remained substantially more influential than the Soviets. Before the Chinese were expelled, following the assassination of Ngendandumwe, they would hand out money every Thursday to radical Tutsi politicians. So naturally, the radicals were furious to be deprived of their weekly hand-out, and accused us of having inspired the expulsion order. We certainly weren't unhappy to see the Chinese leave, but if any was behind the expulsion, I suspect it was the Belgians and not the Americans. Since I was not privy to Dumont's discussions with the CIA station chief, I cannot, of course, be sure. In any event, the radical Tutsi continued to look to the Chinese rather than the Soviets for inspiration.

Q: What were the Chinese after?

BUCHANAN: As I commented earlier, to extend their own influence, the Chinese were concerned to demonstrate that the Soviets were a "paper tiger" and didn't know really how to carry on an anti-imperialist struggle. The Soviets for their part were embarrassed. They were not able, or willing, to put the sort of money into Africa that they had originally. And, of course, with reduced money they had reduced influence.

Q: I think the Chinese also had this feeling that they were a poor country and had been raising from the bootstraps, etc. and they were also of a color and thus much more attuned to places like Africa than the Soviets would be.

BUCHANAN: Yes, they certainly did, and many Africans, at least those who hadn't spent extensive time in China, felt the same way, because the Soviets had the reputation among Africans of being standoffish, certainly not proletarian.

Q: What would you be doing? Ten days after you arrived you had this real nasty situation which continued a good part of a year.

BUCHANAN: Well, initially, of course, I was trying to get my bearings in this environment, and make sense of a tumultuous situation: the arrest of our local, who incidentally apparently was absconding with some Embassy funds; the ouster of the Chinese, and the beginning maneuvers in what was to become a rather fatal parliamentary election. Fatal in the sense that it triggered the radical Tutsis.

Once the civil war started, I was preoccupied with trying to locate various missionaries, using a private radio station in Bujumbura. We tried to persuade every missionary we could to leave the country. There was one missionary family from the Congo, with some eleven children, who insisted on returning to the area of Stanley where whites were at great risk following the intervention of Belgian paratroopers sent in to rescue the white population. My wife and I both have missionaries in our family. Her grandfather was a missionary in China and my aunt taught and then ran St. Hilda's School for Girls in Wuchan from 1919 to 1927. But we had no appreciation of missionaries in any contemporary context until serving in Africa. There we learned how important a role they continued to play as teachers and, notably in the case of the 7th Day Adventists, as providers of medical services. In Rwanda, we were invited by a Canadian Adventist doctor to watch a hysterectomy operation on a woman who decided, after three years, that the huge tumor in her stomach was not a baby. It was painful and humbling to see how he was managing to operate, even using string as sutures.

The ethnic violence only intensified after our departure in 1966, as Hutu refugees made forays across the border to exact revenge. Having decapitated the Hutu leadership, the Tutsi radicals escalated their repression, murdering virtually every Hutu of any education. Literally thousands were murdered. When Hutu or Tutsi leaders have tried to overcome the ethnic hatreds and become rulers of a single nation, they have been denounced as traitors, and often murdered by radicals on both sides. It was such a murder that triggered the real genocide in Rwanda.

Q: Did we have any influence there at all? I assume we were trying to cool things

BUCHANAN: Well, not much. We had influence in the sense that we were perceived by the Hutus as supporting them, and consequently seen as a threat by many Tutsis. We tried, of course, through an AID program and through the Ambassador's Self-Help Fund to make friends in Burundi. I developed a rice project and one of giving a trust to a little agricultural cooperative. We failed to persuade AID to rebuild a North-South road, linking the two halves of the country together, after it was swamped by the rising Lake Tanganyika. We also gave the jeeps to the police, as I mentioned. But ultimately, what was more important to the Tutsi leaders was not their appreciation for our limited bit of aid, but their fears of a Hutu uprising.

Q: Were the Belgians playing any role there?

BUCHANAN: They were certainly involved in major decisions like that of the Mwami to oust the Chinese. There were also Belgian troops in Bujumbura to provide security. But it was my impression that the Belgians were much less effective than the French in using their resources to protect their former colonial assets. The largely Flemish colonists were also basically more racist than the French.

Q: Belgium's role has not been very impressive in Africa.

BUCHANAN: It certainly has not. One reason, as I just mentioned, was attitude. The favorite Belgian pastime in Burundi was running down the Africans. We tried at one of our early dinner parties to mix the guests, inviting a very attractive Tutsi Minister of Finance and his wife along with some Haitians from the World Health Organization. The Belgians did not know what to say with Africans present, and the Haitians, who were as black as the Tutsi, did their best to disassociate themselves from Africa by loudly contrasting Africa and Haiti. The evening was such a disaster it was positively funny.

Q: You were very enthusiastic to go to Africa. How did you feel about Africa when you left?

BUCHANAN: I was very happy to get away from Burundi. The British and we had a competition as to who would get thrown out first. They, because of Rhodesia and we, because of the general impression people had of us as the defenders of the Hutu. We won. Well, I still found Africa fascinating but I certainly didn't want to go back to Burundi. Within 24 hours of being PNGed, I was reassigned as DCM to Libreville, Gabon, which led me to believe that this must be one of the hell holes of the world, if Personnel could act so promptly. But, in fact, I found it a very pleasant post and certainly an enormous contrast to Burundi.

Q: I thought we might stop at this point. The next time we will talk about your being DCM in Gabon. You were there from when to when?

BUCHANAN: I was in Gabon from January 1966 until the spring of 1967.

Q: We are back on. We are just adding some notes you have made about Burundi that you might like to put in now.

BUCHANAN: Social life centered around the country club. The most challenging event of that club was the recovery of one's golf balls from the grounds of the neighboring Mwami, or king's palace. Social life also provided us insights into the reality of Burundi. An old time Belgian resident at one dinner party; ruined an idyllic, isolated peninsula where we had picnics on weekends by telling us this was the worse area in Burundi for bilharzia and it was also infested with crocodiles.

Q: Okay, again we will pick this up when you went to Gabon.

BUCHANAN: Okay.

Q: Today is April 5, 1996. Okay, Tom, I guess it is Gabon. You were there from 1965-67. What was your position there?

BUCHANAN: I was deputy chief of mission.

Q: What was the embassy like?

BUCHANAN: It was a very small, equatorial African embassy of roughly 12 people. It was the absolute antithesis of Burundi. Burundi was the most heavily populated country of Africa, with very poor people, a place where people mutilated their children so they could become beggars. Gabon, as not all Americans know, is really the Kuwait of Africa, where American corporations own around 50 percent of the tremendously rich Belinga iron ore reserve and the manganese mines across near the Congo border. At Belinga, 500 miles into the jungle, a shovel full of dirt contained 65 percent pure iron ore. Incidentally, we flew everywhere in little Cessna planes flown by frustrated French fighter pilots, who would ask: "do you want to see an elephant?" and zoom down below the tree tops over the top of a bull elephant, who would flap his ears and run back into the bush. Because of its extensive lumbering operations, its original wealth, Gabon had more small air strips than any other comparable state in Africa. The uranium for the French force de frappe came, in part, from Gabon, and exploitation of onshore and offshore oil was betting seriously underway when I left.

It has onshore and offshore oil. We always used to joke about digging carefully in your garden because you never knew what you were going to find...diamonds or gold. It is understandably an area of very strong French interest. This became apparent as soon as I arrived. On my first day the ambassador, David Bane, took me down to meet the Foreign Minister and the Foreign Minister said, "Mr. Ambassador, as soon as Mr. Buchanan is free, Monsieur Gali would like to meet with him." As we went out I said, "Who is Mr. Gali?" Bane said, "I haven't the foggiest." Mr. Gali came over that same day and it was very clear quickly that this young energetic man was French counterintelligence. The conclusion they had drawn was that, since I had come from Moscow and had been thrown out of Burundi, that I must be the new CIA station chief. What they didn't know was there was no station chief in Gabon because there were no Communist missions there. But, anyway, we used to play tennis regularly and I probably should have made it clearer that I wasn't the station chief, but I wanted to take advantage of the rivalry between the French counterintelligence and the representative of Fouquet from the Elysée, who hated each other's guts. The fellow from the Elysée was right out of Hollywood casting, sinister in appearance with a great limp. The two would compete in telling me different stories about what the Cubans were up to in the neighboring Congo.

The ambiguity about my role also had its drawbacks. For example, Gabon asked for aid at one point. It needed aid like a hole in the head, of course. It was so wealthy and the French put in so much money, but nevertheless, President Bongo hoped by getting aid from us reduce his dependence on France. I went with the ambassador when he was turning down Bongo's request. After Bane had said "no", Bongo then turned to me, i.e. Mr. CIA moneybags, and asked: "And what does Mr. Buchanan say?" at which point I wanted to be seven feet underground. Fortunately Bane seemed to understand the situation.

Q: Could you tell me a little bit about Bane and how he operated?

BUCHANAN: He was very personable and warm. He was very much of an outdoors person, which was very important in a post like ours. He had come from Pakistan, where he used to play polo, and he had taken up water skiing just before coming to Gabon. He believed that all members of the embassy, regardless of whether they were athletic or not, should all learn to water ski, which was not always easy. He was an intelligent man and got along well with his colleagues. He was a very decent human being, which you can't always say about our ambassadors in the Service. I was very lucky in having him.

To cut back to some of the CIA problems. When I was Chargé one time, when Bane was away, I got a call from the palace saying that the President wanted to see me in half an hour at the airport. This was a shock because you never knew when the President was leaving the airport. I dashed over and he drove up in his car, exploded out the rear door, not waiting for the chauffeur to open it. He was a little fellow and had, an unkind phrase, "pig eyes." He was furious and shaking his finger at me said, "va li dedans," as if I were a little boy, pointing to the VIP lounge. He waved a piece of paper in my face clearly written by some French intelligence officer to prove that there was a great plot by the Americans using a Dr. Pope in Schweitzer's hospital in Lambari to undermine French rule in Gabon.

I knew Dr. Pope only too well as an unguided missile. We had been trying to move him out. He was an idealist who, as an Air Force pilot in Korea, had refused to shoot down Koreans. He was trying to reform two of the most conservative organizations in the world, the French medical system and Schweitzer's hospital, which made him no friends, of course. To make it worse, he spoke poor French, and so was easily misunderstood.

I told Bongo that there obviously was some misunderstanding and I chartered a plane, flew down to Lambari and caught Pope just before he was about to take off on a trip. I had him reproduce what had happened. It seems that he had decided to take advantage of the Peace Corps volunteers in the area to develop a village immunization program. Then he needed to have Gabonese counterparts. He said obviously the only people in Gabon who were not corrupt are the Protestants. He neglected (a) to tell either the embassy or the Peace Corps that this was his project, and (b) he knew nothing about the politics of Gabon. Bongo's main political adversary in Gabon happened to be Protestant. So, of course, this lent itself very nicely to this vision of a CIA plot. I am afraid that I was unable to appease Bongo. He assumed that the American ambassador or his representative could, like the French ambassador, order one of his citizens out of the country within 24 hours. The fact that I couldn't and didn't was apparently seen as proof that I wanted to hold on to a subversive asset.

Q: How did something like that resolve itself? In the first place using the Peace Corps, you must have had somebody in charge of it.

BUCHANAN: In the first place, both dialogue and communication was poor. Like many Peace Corps directors, ours was concerned to demonstrate that his volunteers were quite independent from the Embassy. He was often also out of touch touring his various Peace Corps projects. I assume that he had heard that Dr. Pope wanted to use his volunteers to run a village immunization program, and wanted to train honest Gabonese young men to assist him. But all this meant to him was that Pope wanted to help the Gabonese. In a situation like this of bad communications and political sensitivity, a naive American with a mission can really wreck havoc. Happily, we were able to get Pope eventually to return home.

I later learned from the Swiss doctor, who was running Schweitzer's hospital under Schweitzer's daughter's overall supervision, what had apparently happened. Pope had insisted, against the Swiss doctor's advice, in making a speech before his departure. With his poor French, he said something that sounded like, "I will return after the revolution." It was the sort of situation that hostile nurses at the hospital, whom Pope alienated by his attempts at reform, and the paranoid French could easily exploit, and did.

Q: Did you find this type of thing that somebody was whispering in Bongo's ear all the time for the French side saying to be aware of the Americans?

BUCHANAN: Oh, very definitely. While my personal relations with the French officials and military remained very cordial, there were certainly French officials trying to put sticks in the spokes of American-Gabonese relations. Bongo and his ministers were also victims of their own tribal superstitions and suspicions. Incidentally, Dr. Schweitzer understood this very well, and made sure that, in his hospital, patients could be taken care of by their own relatives. Many would have feared to be poisoned if their food was prepared by nurses from a different tribe. Voodoo or spirit worship played an important role among many in this nominally Christian society. I had ministers swear to me that, after drinking some of the aboga root extract, a sort of LSD, they were able to converse with their ancestors. I attended a ceremony once out in the jungle where the witch doctor played the role of psychiatrist with a woman who had been in deep depression since losing her husband. The patient was painted white, the basin, and the woman went into an apparent trance. In short, the Gabonese were less sophisticated generally than the Ivorians or the Ghanians, and I suspect that the French took advantage of this fact.

Q: Could you describe how you and the ambassador saw the political situation in Gabon at the time and President Bongo?

BUCHANAN: In Bongo, we saw a political leader who came from a very small tribe, the Bateke, on the border with the Congo, near Franceville. He was concerned to maintain a balance of tribal power, and, in particular, to prevent the majority tribe, the Fang, and particularly from the coastal Pongwe, who had dealt with the Europeans from the beginning of European penetration, often serving as middlemen sellers of slaves from the interior. Bongo knew, of course, that he was ultimately dependent on French economic and military support, and the numerous French advisers in his ministries. Even the director of the Gabonese economic plan was French, and I suppose that the French still maintain a paratroop brigade at the airport to deter any coup d'etat. Bongo's predecessor, President M'ba was reinstated in 1964 by French military intervention after a military coup. Even though Bongo tried to reduce Gabon's total dependence on France by developing closer relations with the US and Western Germany, Gabon remained a French preserve. The fact that the French population of Gabon more than doubled after independence speaks for itself.

Bongo was happy with the large American role in mining in Gabon, but critical, I recall, of the failure of US Steel to train any Gabonese for managerial roles, was also disappointed that the US Government refused to provide any aid to rich Gabon outside of the Peace Corps. We did try to encourage the World Bank to finance the railroad that was eventually built, with Gabonese money, into the interior, linking Franceville and the manganese mines with the coast. The bank ignored the fact that the railroad would have opened up the great mahogany forests in the interior, and turned down the project on the grounds that iron ore was a glut on the world market.

In a number of ways, the French have been the most successful of the colonial powers in Africa in preserving their influence after independence. One reason was certainly their greater sensitivity on the issue of racial relations. Quite a number of Gabonese ministers were married to French women, a very difficult role for both since a minister is expected to house and feed anyone from his tribe who comes to his door. Our best friend, Pierre Fainguoveny, who grew up with slaves in his family that gave Dr. Schweitzer the land on which he built his hospital, was married to a Swiss lady. He not only spoke some seven Western languages but also some 14 local dialects.

Q: The French have been willing to commit troops, which the British won't.

BUCHANAN: That is right. They have been prepared to commit troops and they are also prepared to put money where their mouth is. They also sent a lot of what they call "coopérants", or alternative service young people, their equivalent of our Peace Corps.

Q: What was our Peace Corps doing there?

BUCHANAN: We were building schools. We did a little bit of language training, but mostly schools. The Peace Corps borrowed the design for their schools from the buildings that Dr. Schweitzer put up at his hospital. They provided virtually no privacy, but were very simple in construction and efficient from the standpoint of air circulation. The areas where a money economy was not well established, the volunteers had success in getting the population involved in the construction, leaving them with an ability to build a school themselves. One volunteer, an architect from Yale, taught himself Bapounou in southern Gabon, and working with three dynamic young chiefs from neighboring villages, ended up building three schools for the price of one. But, in a well-traveled area like Lambariënië, villagers could not understand working for nothing, pro bono. I will never forget the sight of two lonely volunteers on top of a structure they had essentially built themselves, their lone Gabonese helper a tiny boy carrying a bucket of water.

The Peace Corps program was basically very successful. It became a political football in a way because every Gabonese politician wanted to have his own Peace Corps. Bongo was constantly pressing us, for example, to build a school near his hometown of Franceville. But, this, I suppose, is typical of Peace Corps ventures around the world.

Q: Often in these smaller countries votes in the United Nations become quite a factor. Was Gabon pretty much under the beck and call of the French?

BUCHANAN: Oh, yes, it was. We had to go in all the time, of course, on the Vietnam issue and the Gabonese couldn't care less about Vietnam. Now, a lot of the French cared about Vietnam because they had been kicked out of Indochina and Algeria. Unable to stand life in Metropolitan France, they had retreated to Gabon, as their last frontier. Some would urge us to "use the bomb" in Vietnam. Relations between the old timers who grew up in Gabon, the old "colons" with all their inherited racist attitudes, and the Gabonese were curious. The Gabonese would protest promptly what they saw as racial behavior on the part of Frenchmen from the Metropole, often obtaining their prompt expulsion by the French Ambassador, who still played the role of Governor General. But they shrugged off remarks by the old colons..

Q: Were there any other issues or events that happened during your time there that you think we should cover?

BUCHANAN: No, what happened was mostly little ventures. Well, my first assignment there was to write up a justification for a motor boat with twin '40s on the grounds that we needed something so we could evacuate the embassy in an emergency.

Q: Sort of a water skier's victory.

BUCHANAN: Exactly, it was for waterskiing. Probably my greatest achievement was to float building materials across the 12 kilometer Libreville estuary and construct a beach house for weekends, which I must say was better than the one the French embassy had constructed. It was amusing, we built a fireplace because your blood over time becomes so thin on the equator that when the temperature gets down to 80 you are shivering.

On the human side, I learned a bitter lesson. We had a communicator, basically a Pagliacci personality, who hid his great personal pain, he had serious family problems, under a booming laugh. I never saw through the facade. One morning, at 5 a.m. I was awakened to hear that he had committed suicide. Gabon had a rule that anyone who died had to be buried or out of the country within 24 hours, for obvious reasons being on the equator. We managed to get our man embalmed but the plane was waiting to take off at the airport while I was still at the palace, watching a police sergeant typing a long release document with one finger. The moral: look behind an excessively jolly facade for the pain it probably hides.

It was a post where you probably had to be a young man to enjoy it as much as I did, and not be upset by the lack of amenities. We had the giant crabs in my garden that occasionally came into the house, or on one occasion chased my French ladies who were playing croquet. The dining room table would often appear to be in mat(?) from the millions of microscopic spiders on the surface. The air conditioning really didn't work, and I had to watch the staff carefully after a party to see what they might have scrounged away in an apparent bottle of scotch, on one occasion empty into it the dregs of all the glasses left by guests, plus a few cigarette butts. If you went dancing, you went outside after each dance to wring out your shirt. We made some wonderful trips, but probably the most exotic was after Easter at Lamb where we shook hands with the lepers. The laterite mud road home was so slippery that, even with four wheel drive, we arrived too late to go the two kilometer wide Ogoue River to catch the ferry. Under a moonlit night we piled our bags and German chopard dog into a long dug-out log canoe, and prayed we would not upset our very tippy vehicle into the crocodile infested river.

After I left Gabon, Bongo learned that there was no CIA station in Libreville, and he was reportedly upset; "aren't we good enough for the CIA?" Later, when I was Office Director for Central Africa, we finally arranged for Bongo to have an unofficial, business visit with President Carter. I flew Bongo down from New York in a Presidential jet. By then he understood who I was. His main concern was to get on television at noon, Libreville time, meeting with the President. Since the White House strictly limited the number of Gabonese guests, Bongo gave priority to photographer and press corps. This excluded the whole Gabonese cabinet, which Bongo always took with him on his and Mrs Bongo's annual shopping expedition to the West to protect himself against a coup in his absence. I received a frantic call from my desk officer at the airport explaining that the cabinet officers had kicked the Gabonese press out of their cars and had set off for the White House. Happily the White House had accepted the situation and allowed the whole cabinet to enter. They were received by President Carter in the Rose Garden, where they (and yours truly) all had an opportunity to shake his hand. Just one of those Third World anecdotes!

I had written an old friend of mine from Paris, Alan Lukens, who was in Personnel, and told him that, although I had been assigned to the Naval War College, for various family reasons I had to be in Washington with my kids, and could he transfer me to the Army War College. By chance, Alan was trying to go out as DCM to Senegal and looking for someone to take his place. He claimed that he had tried very hard, but the only job he could find was his job in Personnel. I told them that somebody to get me a Washington assignment but the only one, by chance, was his own job in Personnel. I argued that this would probably be a disastrous assignment for someone like myself with a poor memory for names and faces, but beggars in the field cannot be choosers. So I returned home via the Cameroons and some other African posts, where I got a preliminary feel for their personnel problems.

When I got to Washington, Phil Habib, with whom I had worked on African affairs earlier, said, I should forget the Personnel assignment and come help him with his work on Vietnam. Well, I suppose my greatest regret in my Foreign Service career is that I didn't accept his offer. I didn't see myself becoming a propagandist for a cause that I didn't believe in. In effect I preferred to carp rather than to try to make a difference. I was wrong.

In any case, despite my trepidation about Personnel, I discovered that when it was my job I developed a rather impressive memory for names and faces-until the day I left when I went back to my old habits of inattention.

Q: You were in Personnel from when to when?

BUCHANAN: I was in Personnel from 1967-68.

Q: Could you describe how the Personnel system, which keeps changing, worked at that time?

BUCHANAN: Well, at that time the bureaus ran their own...it was not so much of a centralized system. I was chief of African personnel and would meet with my colleagues, people like Lannon Walker, Patricia Byrne and others representing other bureaus. We would try to exchange our "turkeys" for their "turkeys", which sounds rather callous. A turkey was someone whose career wasn't going anywhere very fast. It was often quite unfair, but nevertheless this was a reality of personnel management. You tried to get the best and tried to dump the worst. I had as a deputy, Peter Spicer, who as a junior trainee, a JOT, had had a broad background in administration, about which I knew very little. So he was extremely helpful. It was a busy time. It was the period when the young Turks, led by Lannon Walker, were trying to have their team of reformists, too. Actually I was on a team of reformists but can't remember now what we represented.

Q: I was on one of those. My particular task force was for training.

BUCHANAN: My main project while I was in Personnel was to try to do for the African bureau what the old Sovietologists had done for themselves, namely develop sort of a career service. As it was, if you were a good officer in the African bureau and did well in Central Africa the tendency was to say, "Well, we will send him back to the Chad." My thought was that what we should try to do was to insure that Africanists had rounded experience in all parts of Africa and to South Africa; that they should be rewarded for hardship posts by assignments to pleasanter areas, like North Africa and Western Europe; and that officers should not be sent to South Africa, as their first African experience, but first serve in Black African posts to get a better perspective on the situation in South Africa. Unfortunately, my program never materialized, but I still think it was a sound idea.

Q: What was the rationale for not putting somebody into South Africa first?

BUCHANAN: My reasoning was that South Africa was, in many ways, like the United States. It was too easy for officers to fall into the country club routine, and become more understanding of the Apartheid system than was appropriate for an American FSO. At least some preliminary experience of Black Africa, and of the often very impressive and dignified representatives of Black African states would give them a more sympathetic understanding of the plight of Blacks and Colored in South Africa. That, at least was my prejudice, having never personally served in South Africa. We all understood, of course, that South Africa would one day become the economic dynamo of Africa.

Q: What was your impression of the stable of Africanists at that particular time, we are talking about the mid '60s?

BUCHANAN: Oh, by then our stable of Africanists was really coming of age, all those mentioned earlier, like Low, Perkins, Smith and De Pree. The problem was to ensure that the African Bureau got good officers, and not the dregs, those not accepted in other bureaus. As you can imagine, few wanted to serve in Africa. They found 17 reasons for not going there. I went out of my way to make our Personnel office as attractive as possible, with flowers on the table and exotic pictures of our posts and housing on the walls. I argued what I really believed, that as junior or middle grade officers, they would have much greater opportunity to show initiative in Africa than, for example, either Western or Eastern Europe. They would be involved in foreign aid, and have a chance to meet diplomatic colleagues of much higher rank than in the developed areas. They would also be in a position to meet and influence the leaders of Africa, who were often pleased to meet young Americans of their own age. I think most of the people I assigned reluctantly to Africa all came back and said that they enjoyed their posts and thanked me.

Q: Did you get any feel on where the African bureau rated in things? Of course the Vietnam War was going strongly at that point.

BUCHANAN: The African Bureau rated where it has almost always rated, near the bottom of the scale of White House interest. We had some leverage because of the continuing US paranoia about Africa falling to the Communists. American officials had come more realistic, however, about the "Communist menace," in part because of bitter experience with stubborn manipulative African nationalists, and in part because Russia and China had become better rivals in the Third World, overshadowing our own competitive relationship.

While the African Bureau may not have had much clout in terms of policy making, it was, in my judgement, the epitome of what a bureau should be administratively, under its Executive Director, Ed Dobyms. George Kreiger was the financial officer, and between the two whenever there was a problem in the field, a human problem requiring, for example emergency leave, they would find the money. A small example: when I reached Gabon, I discovered that my predecessor had believed that, because the French never used mosquito screens, we should not have any on our windows. As a result, we had secretaries with bloody legs. The Bureau responded promptly to our request for money to put up screens. This can-do approach to administration is particularly important in an area like Africa, where there can be serious morale problems. I always considered Dobyms a model of a good executive.

Q: Well then you left there in 1968?

BUCHANAN: Yes, I went back into Soviet affairs, on the desk, and became de facto deputy to Spike Dubs.

Q: You were there from when to when?

BUCHANAN: From 1968-70. I arrived just when the Czech crisis was coming to a head.

Q: Explain this crisis.

BUCHANAN: It was the Prague Spring when Communist Party leader Alexander Dubcek, challenged Moscow by a program of radical change in Czechoslovakia aimed at the creation of a "Socialism with a human face." Spike Dubs and I were impressed by the sang froid of the old Soviet hand, Chip Bohlen and Mac Toon, during the tense weeks that led up to the Soviet invasion. While we bit our nails, wondering if Moscow would react, they went off and played golf, convinced no doubt that there was nothing that the US could do, realistically, that would affect Moscow's decision. It was during this period when Spike continued to smoke his three to four packs of cigarettes a day, and I increased my intake from a maximum of ten to a pack and a half, that I made my decision to stop smoking. I have not smoked since.

Q: From the desk, how did we view the Soviet Union during this 1968-70 period?

BUCHANAN: As an assertive, muscular and somewhat unpredictable power. The proclamations of the so-called Brezhnev doctrine, in connection with Moscow's invasion of Czechoslovakia, whereby the Soviets asserted their right to intervene wherever a Communist regime was threatened, introduced an element of increased tension into East-West relations. We felt that we must demonstrate that we were not going to be pushed around whether in Berlin or elsewhere.. But we were also concerned to probe and determine what agreements we could reach with the Soviets that were of mutual benefit. I was head, at the time, of the Bilateral Section in EUR/SOV. The travel program whereby we monitored the travel of Soviet officials in the US, authorizing their on a strict reciprocity basis, depending on who was allowed to travel in Moscow, and what difficulties they encountered. I inherited the program whereby our two sides exchanged chancery sites and agreed on the terms of construction. There was a general impression that the State Department had given away the store in allowing the Soviets to build their new chancery on Mount Alto on Wisconsin Avenue. I learned that this was a distortion of what happened. In fact, the Soviets had tried to purchase two other estates, Tregarin and Bonnie Brae, before agreeing to Mount Alto. In each case, neighbors objected strongly to having a Soviet Embassy nearby. It was finally agreed that we needed to find federal property, over which we had full control. If any exchange was to take place, and the only obviously suitable federal property was the old Veterans hospital on Mt. Alto. Initially there was little understanding among diplomats on either side, I suspect, of the intelligence value of being on high ground. Eventually, of course, Soviet technical experts doubtless reassured their diplomatic colleagues that they had made a good deal, and we, on our side, realized that we had made a mistake. If Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson had been briefed about the potential of radio intercepts in Moscow, he might not have so cavalierly rejected Stalin's offer of some 15 acres of land on Lenin Hills, but he thought at the time that Stalin was trying to isolate the Americans, away from the center of town. We ended up, therefore with a property next to our old embassy on Tchaikovsky Prospekt, which was dominated by higher buildings all around. The Soviets then rejected our request to build a chancery building thirteen stories high, and we had to compromise with eight stories.

I recall being very much concerned with the issue of security in constructing our new embassy. My thought was to try to have everything built off site in Denmark, Germany or in the United States. But our hands were tied because the head of the Federal Buildings Organization, FBO, had been basically nominated by Wayne Hayes, who headed the Appropriations Committee in Congress. Hayes had been told years before that the embassy would cost \$36 million, and no one had had the guts to tell him that that figure was totally unrealistic, particularly if we tried to build much of the embassy off-site. To some extent, therefore, concern to try to keep our budget somewhere with the projected figure took priority over concern for security. But, we were also arrogant in our belief that we could take care of any "bugs" that the Soviets planted during the construction phase. After all, we were technically more advanced!

A major issue was who should be allowed to carry out the actual construction. We insisted that we should be allowed to bring in our own workmen, and do most of the construction ourselves in Moscow. The Soviets argued that this was "humiliating" that they were perfectly competent to do the construction for us. I recall the present Russian Ambassador to Washington, Vorontsov, who was then Deputy Chief of Mission, saying to me: "But Mr. Buchanan, why should object? After all, we don't insist that Cubans build our embassy here, we are prepared to let your construction people build our embassy. I can assure you that your FBI is no less clever than our KGB." Well, actually I don't think it would have made any great difference even if all my plans had materialized, because none of us foresaw the skill with which the Soviets introduced listening devices into the great steel girders, which we would probably have considered much too expensive to import.

Q: At a later date, the '80s I guess, it became quite evident that the new embassy was riddled with listening devices and that...

BUCHANAN: They were so sophisticated that to this day I am not sure we know entirely how they work.

Q: And it has been unusable more or less. I don 't know what has happened to it.

BUCHANAN: Well, it should be used, it could have been used. In fact, when I went there in 1992 for Humanitarian Aid, I thought what we should be doing is putting all the unclassified aspects of the embassy-AID, USIA, Commerce-should have all been put in that building. They didn't need any classified section. But we continued to have different technicians working inside the embassy to uncover the damage, and it remained unused. Finally, as you know we seem to have decided what we are going to do with the building, but it has been a long story. Another big issue on my plate involved the exchange of consulates between Leningrad and San Francisco, notably the definition of our respective consular districts. Our last consulate in the U.S.S.R., in Vladivostok, was closed in 1948. This was an effort, in a sense, to get back to the era when we had some consular listening posts. My major problem was how to define our consular district in the Baltic States without seeming to acknowledge Soviet occupation of the area in 1940. Under the final compromise, the capital cities of the Baltic States, Riga, Tallinn and Vilnius, were placed within the Leningrad consular district, but the remainder of the Baltic territory was the responsibility of our Embassy in Moscow. To avoid appearing to accept Soviet rule in the capital cities, we developed a whole protocol for our visits. When I was Consul General, I was authorized to meet officials up to the Deputy Minister rank, but not above; and I could fly the flag but not when I was visiting an official building like the Foreign Ministry. The local population seemed to appreciate my flying the flag in driving around town, as a symbol of our interest in their future. My French colleague in Leningrad, who was not allowed to visit the Baltic States, correctly, with obvious envy, accused us of "hypocrisy." After the agreement on the exchange of consulates was concluded, I accompanied a CODEL to Moscow, where I was embarrassed to see our representatives silent in the face of Soviet vituperation, on the principle apparently that guests should not talk back to their hosts. They did not understand that Russians only respect people who stand up for their principles. On the way back from Tashkent, where I let the delegation go on to a Parliamentary Union meeting in India, I stopped off in Leningrad to try and identify consular property that would meet our various specifications, I thought at the time that we must have owned Embassy property before the revolution, and I thought that it would be fun to try and rent the same property, if appropriate. I discovered, however, that we had never owned property, that our ministers and ambassadors had always rented their residences and chanceries, depending on their pocket books. The 1914 Baedeker listed our chancery at 11 Million Street behind the Hermitage. Since the collapse of Communism, the street has reverted to its pre-revolutionary name. I thought that it would be appropriate for the great Capitalist power to be lodged on Million Street, but unfortunately the building was too large, too many people would have had to be evicted. As it was the Soviets offered us property on Petra Lavrova, almost opposite our last chancery site at No. 24, as I requested in the note I wrote upon my return to Washington. The Soviets claimed that our last Embassy had been in a building which housed a wedding palace on Petra Lavrova, and told my predecessors that that was the address, but my research showed that not to be the case. George Kennan made a photograph of our former Embassy when he visited it in the 1930s to recover Embassy archives that had been left there by the Norwegians, who represented American interests after we broke relations following the revolution. This search for our former chancery properties became a hobby when I was stationed in Leningrad.

Q: Had we reached a point as far as sort of the way we thought that the Soviets might launch an attack on Western Europe?

BUCHANAN: I was always very skeptical of this scenario. I am not the one to ask. Many of my colleagues were more concerned than I that if we showed weakness the Soviets would attack. I think a greater concern, and one more generally shared, was what was called "Finlandization" - a term which I consider an insult to a very brave and diplomatically adept nation. The fear, of course, was that, through pressure tactics, the U.S.S.R. would so intimidate the countries of Western Europe that they would not have the courage to stand up for their national interests, if they conflicted with Soviet interests.

Q: Having come out of Personnel I guess you would still have an eye on personnel. Our Russian specialists had always been an elite. Was this still the case?

BUCHANAN: Yes, we continued to look to our Soviet hands to staff our key posts in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe. In Leningrad, Culver Glisten was the first Consul General, opening the consulate in July 1973. He lived in the Astoria hotel with his Swedish wife, cooking on a one-burner stove for the whole staff for several months. In the daytime, the staff would go and look at the walls of our future consulate building to spot the wet concrete where the KGB had tried to install its listening apparatus the previous night. It was Culver, who had the sense of style, to select the very handsome residence that we now rent. It was originally a gift from the uncle of the Tsar, Konstantin Konstaninovich, to a ballerina friend. The fact that it was a kindergarten during the blockade of Leningrad helped save the building. The Hermitage agreed to restore it in the style of a typical building of the mid-19th century. My first time into that building, I watched a young girl, who looked as though she had just been milking cows on her collective farm, doing intricate relief work on the ballroom ceiling. In fact, the Soviets selected the best of their construction teams, usually girls from the collective or state farms, to work on the construction trusts responsible for the restoration of historic buildings. I must also thank Culver for having conned the American Embassy program under the very tough Mrs. Llewellyn Thompson to make an exception and provide the consulate residence with paintings from the National Gallery, in view of the imminent arrival of President Nixon in Leningrad. We had four Catlins on loan, plus some wonderful American naives and a huge abstract canvas for the library. When I arrived in the fall of 1977, I began a rear-guard action to delay the return of these wonderful paintings to the National Gallery. Of course, I eventually lost, and the National Gallery was furious with the way the Hermitage had packed our large abstract painting.

In Leningrad, we had a succession of old Soviet hands after Culver. Bob Barry, Garry Mathews worked with Culver, as I recall. My successors, Chris Squires, Bill Edward Hurwitz and Charlie Magee were also Soviet hands, as were their successors. So it was kept very much within the "Soviet family", for the obvious reason that we needed officers with fairly fluent Russian and a working experience of the U.S.S.R. Did we look on ourselves as an elite? Probably, after all we were dealing with Enemy No. 1. In fact, of course, we were probably no more an elite than the hard language specialists who staffed our posts in the Near East and the Far East, or for that matter, any other part of the globe. Perhaps it was our compensations for a life style that was substantially less pleasant and relaxing than that in most other parts of the world.

Q: You left the Soviet desk in 1970. Where did you go?

BUCHANAN: Then I was sent to Moscow as political counselor.

Q: You were in Moscow from when to when?

BUCHANAN: From July, 1970 to June, 1973.

Q: Who was the ambassador at that time?

BUCHANAN: The ambassador was Jake Beam. For quite a bit of the time the DCM was my old boss, Boris Klosson. Spike Dubs was later DCM and Chargé ½ for a long time.

Q: What were the political developments during this period?

BUCHANAN: When we arrived, relations were very tense because of Vietnam. We had periodic demonstrations, the usual Soviet, carefully planned demonstrations. You probably remember the story of demonstration outside the British embassy. The British Ambassador went out and asked the policeman how long it was going to last. He looked at his watch and said another half hour. The crowds were always well controlled for the good reason that any damage to our embassy had to be paid for by the Soviets. So they were very careful. They might throw some ink at the embassy, but that was about it.

On one occasion, however, the Chinese students from Moscow University and Lumumba decided they would show these bourgeois traitors, the Russians, how to run a really good anti-imperialist demonstration. They came and broke windows and threw things at the embassy and we ended up with a great melee outside where we watched the Soviet cops beating up on the Chinese students to our great delight.

In 1970, when Boris Klosson was Chargé ½, we had one of these cases where a plane with some American military, including a general, flew by error or was lured across the Turkish border into Armenia, where it crashed. They apparently wanted to show the general Mount Ararat near the border. We had great difficulty in sending an officer down to Armenia to repatriate the bodies.

It was in this period that President Nixon and Kissinger were developing their strategy for dealing with Russia, using the opening of relations with China as leverage to persuade the Soviets that needed to protect their flank by becoming more cooperative with the United States. Unfortunately, the Embassy played the role largely of a bystander throughout this period. My only substantive contribution was a lengthy analysis of the politics of detente within Soviet leadership circles that Sonnenfeldt passed on to Kissinger. He would flit in and out of Moscow, and, as he was departing, would phone Ambassador Beam to tell him what he thought he should know about the meetings had taken place with Brezhnev at the guest house on Lenin Hills. This was a highly embittering experience for Beam. The culmination, of course, was the first Nixon Summit in Moscow in May. The White House advance party setting up the meeting was typically aggressively obnoxious and rude toward the ambassador and our whole Embassy staff. It appears to be a congenital disease with these parties regardless who is President. Our little chore involved counting the number of steps in the Kremlin that Nixon would have to take to walk from his apartment to where he would meet with Brezhnev. As part of the agreements that Kissinger wanted to sign with the Soviets, to link them to the United States, I was asked to check the text in Russian of an agreement on the protocol of polar bears, which I had never seen before. The high Point for all of us was the dinner held, as usual, in the vaulted hall of the Kremlin Palace of Facets. I think anyone who didn't know the players and looked at our two leaders would have concluded that the man who passed expressionless, stiff legged along the reception line, as though wrapped in a glass cage, was the Communist; that the red-faced jovial soul, slapping backs, shaking hands like the mayor of any American city, was the Capitalist, the American. Despite my very negative feelings and impressions of both Nixon and Kissinger, I voted for Nixon in 1972. I was impressed that, perhaps for the first time, we had such a thoroughly articulated foreign policy, with a program of stick and carrot in dealing with Russia. But what happened. The carrot was supposed to be trade and once again American domestic politics got in the way and we were left with primarily the stick. Under the Jackson Amendment, the carrot was linked to the number of Jews who were allowed to leave the Soviet Union, and this reduced substantially our flexibility. I know the amendment complicated life for many Jews in the Soviet Union and did not necessarily help them to get out.

A little footnote on Kissinger. He was always very well informed about what his colleagues were doing in the bureaucracy, and he evidently learned that when Secretary of State Rogers had come to Moscow he had never bothered to come to the embassy and see the rabbit warren conditions in which we worked, and this had caused some unhappiness. So, in a rather typical move, he made a point himself of coming to the embassy on one of his trips. He met with us in the secure "box" and said, "Of course, there is nothing I can tell you, you are the experts." And, he, of course, didn't tell us anything.

One of the nicer aspects of detente. Perhaps because I was still involved in authorizing Soviet travel in the US, advising the Soviet desk whether to approve or deny travel depending on how we were treated in Moscow, or perhaps simply because it was the year of detente, the Soviets decided to honor a long-standing request from my wife and me to ski on Mt. Elbrus in the Caucasus, the highest mountain in Europe. We were the first foreign diplomats, to my knowledge, to be allowed to ski there. The Austrian Ambassador had tried, as I had, in the 1960s, and again now as Ambassador. I suppose the facilities were not quite up to Ambassadorial standards, and he was also not American. Our first night in the A-frame hotel at Itkol near Elbrus, a young ski instructor had obviously been given orders to put on a good party. He invited all the golden youth of Moscow and Leningrad in the area, and later, learning of Nancy's interest in art, introduced us to a local Carbadinian artist, who, as it happened, hated Russians. I should note that we were in the Balkar-Carbadinian Autonomous Republic, an area from which the inhabitants had been exiled to Central Asia during World War II, and only amnestied after Stalin's death. Well, our skier instructor had obviously gone beyond his instructions, and we did not see him again, and only briefly the artist who had spent all night pounding out a metal bas relief of a leopard rampant, the symbol of his people, which we still treasure. We were then put in charge of a senior Party official, an engineer who was building all the hotels and ski lifts in the area. He had spent two years in the Antarctic, and ten years on the Soviet downhill ski team. We actually became good friends, as much as one could in Russia where one always wondered whether one was being set up. For example, after one late party, we found the hotel locked, and ended up sleeping in their bed, waking up to find people sleeping in the apartment, whom they barely knew. Such was Russian hospitality in a resort area. Was this all by accident? We will never know. We used to exchange dinners later when they came to Moscow. And when I went to Russia in 1994, his very attractive wife, now divorced and married to an American in Yukon, Oklahoma, arranged for me to go to the Caucasus, where she still had contacts. She claimed that she had refused to cooperate in the old days when the KGB had requested her to report on our meetings- which, I, of course, do not believe.

On the social side, life was, of course, very busy. Unlike our first tour in Moscow we lived now in a representation apartment in the Chancery building.. Our guests had to pass the scowling guards at the Chancery gate, and we were also more exposed to microwave bombardment, living permanently in the Chancery.

Q: Will you explain what you mean by microwave ?

BUCHANAN: When I was on my first tour I heard of something strange called TUMS and TUMS. It appeared that the Russians were bombarding the embassy with microwaves apparently to disrupt certain types of communications in the embassy, at least we think that was the purpose. When I was there in the '70s, it was still not general public knowledge. Once it became public knowledge, it became policy that anybody being assigned to the embassy would be briefed and given an option of going to Moscow, or not. It became very controversial. Many of the women and wives, particularly, felt there was an undue high incidence of breast cancer resulting from living and working in the embassy. To this day we will never know whether the leukemia that killed Ambassador Walter Stoessel was provoked or aggravated by the microwaves, as his wife certainly believes.

Q: Could you just give me an idea at this time how political officers, yourself and other officers in the political section, went about doing their job of political reporting?

BUCHANAN: We were under constant pressure from Washington to analyze the Soviet reaction to virtually any development of any import occurring around the world and within the USSR itself. This left us less time to explore the Moscow scene and meet with Soviet contacts than we would have liked. The Soviet press, radio and public lectures remained important sources of information. Depending on the official at the Foreign Ministry, access had improved. I could have a civilized dialogue with Fedoseyev in the USA Section; I always wondered how he managed to survive among acerbic colleagues like Komplektov. We tried to travel as much as time and travel restrictions allowed. When we did, we asked to meet with the local Party or Government officials, and to visit agricultural and industrial projects in the area. Time usually prevented our trips from being as well researched before departure as we would have liked. Our military colleagues would also ask us to keep our eyes open for specific information of interest to them, and we would return the favor, asking for their assistance when they traveled. On that score, when I arrived in Moscow I found that the political section and the military were not talking but rather spitting at each other. Fortunately the new Defense Attaché and I arrived at about the same time and we both agreed that this was nonsense. We went out of our way to set up briefings so that members of the military would feel more at home in an embassy, and when we traveled we would consult each other in an effort to try to improve the mutual take. Relations warmed somewhat.

There were certainly differences in evaluation between the embassy and Washington. The Pentagon and Washington had often what we considered an exaggerated view of the Russian military threat and what the Russians were doing. From our viewpoint, we saw a great deal of inefficiency and internal weakness. For example, Washington was convinced that the Russians had set up a vast underground civil defense program that was going to be able to save millions of Russian lives in case of nuclear attack, providing them with real leverage in a crisis. We accordingly attended local lectures on civil defense and we looked for underground civil defense installations, but apart from the Moscow subway, which of course had extensive antiblast and radiation doors, we didn't see the evidence for this extensive network. We also thought that, given the inefficiency of the system that it was unrealistic to think that literally millions of Russians could be evacuated in a crisis.

Our ability to gather information varied, not only depending on the target, but from region to region, the farther you went away from Moscow. When you went to Siberia, for example, and you talked to people you often got a much straighter story. The Siberians were rather more like our Westerners, more open. You could ask a question and get something closer to an honest answer. When I traveled with Ambassador Toon to Khabarovsk in the late 1970s, for example, we were both impressed by the self-confidence and frankness of the regional Party secretary.

Q: Was the art of Kremlinology still weaving the exquisite changes in the major newspapers, or had things opened up a little more and a little broader than they had been?

BUCHANAN: It was certainly broader. We had access, of course, to many dissidents, and some of them offered insight into attitudes and intrigue in Communist Party circles. A disproportionate amount of our time continued to be taken up with the issue of Soviet Jewry. Our contacts with leading Jewish dissidents provided an interesting, but not always balanced view of what was happening in Soviet society. What was unfortunate was that the various dissident groups, in rather typical Russian fashion, did not cooperate with each other. If the Jewish, Sakharov and other critical strains of Soviet social life had managed to be less parochial, and more willing to work with one another, they might have been able to exert more effective pressure for reform, at least in the field of human rights. Soviet officials remained very sensitive, of course, to the appearance of knuckling under to outside pressure, whether from abroad or from within their own dissident community.

Kremlinology was less important, but it continued to be a helpful tool of analysis. It was not by chance that one prominent would be named ahead, or behind another official the press; or that the portrait of one leader would be placed ahead or behind that of another. Differences in wording and emphasis between the public statements of Party or government officials also provided us with esoteric clues to what was really happening behind the facade of Party unity. I was not always privy in Moscow to some of our most highly classified intelligence sources. I only became aware after my return to Washington that we had been listening in on the conversations in Brezhnev's limousine. It was certainly thanks to the revelations of Colonel Penkovsky that we became aware the much-publicized "missile gap" was much over-blown, and the Soviets much weaker than we had feared.

The longer one worked in the U.S.S.R., the more convinced one became that the Soviet mania for secrecy, and concern to limit our access to other than the capital cities of the union republics, was intended to conceal, not so much military information, as the sheer backwardness and internal weakness of our "super power" competitor. Soviet officials were ashamed to reveal the extent to which Russia remained an undeveloped country, with enormous disparities in living standards between the capital cities and their hinterland. And afraid that we might conclude that Russia was a giant, with feet of clay.

Inevitably when you deal with a country as long as all of us have, you develop a certain instinct, a certain feel. You could tell a little bit about the political atmosphere simply from the attitude of your contacts. I used to meet with Victor Matveyev, for example, of Izvestia, a very sophisticated journalist. I remember we were discussing Somalia and Ethiopia one time and he finally said with a smile, "You know Tom, we have Somalia and you have Ethiopia. Maybe tomorrow it will be the other way around. Relax." What was certainly true in my day is that the Soviets, like ourselves, were becoming increasingly aware of how we were being played off against one another by the Third World states as suckers. In my reading of Soviet theoretical writings on the Third World, it was interesting to see how analysts, like the present Russian Foreign Minister Primakov, were hinting that blind support of Third World states was not always in the USSR's interests, just because they happened to be anti-American.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to cover during this tour in Moscow?

BUCHANAN: I don't think so.

Q: Oh, just one other question. What was your impression of the American press?

BUCHANAN: The American press was pretty knowledgeable, particularly about the dissident community. The embassy was criticized for not being sufficiently in touch with that side of life. We thought, however, that they exaggerated the role of the dissidents. Hedrick Smith's "The Russians" is based on very much the same dissident sources and research as Bob Kaiser's "Russia: the People and the Power." Smith got his book on the market a couple of weeks before Kaiser, and received the Pulitzer Prize.

I feel, in retrospect, that I did not take as much advantage as I should have of the old timers among the press corps, who had married Russian women and lived for years in Moscow at a time when Stalin would not allow Russian wives to leave the country. While Ed Stevens had won a Pulitzer Prize in 1948, for his series of articles on the USSR in the Christian Science Monitor, he had lost much of his drive by the time that I had met him. He and his shrewd and energetic Russian wife, Nina, had moved from one of the lovely three story log houses, that Khrushchev was tearing down in Moscow as unsuitable for a modern capital, to a large house and garden nearer to the area where Westerners lived. Their frequent salons for the diplomatic corps, and operations in the dissident art world encouraged speculation about their KGB affiliations.

Then there was Henry Shapiro, who was sort of the Dean of the American press corps. lovely Russian wife used to show mine around town, pointing out the handsome old busses that were still to be found in the back streets of Moscow. Lick Ed Stevens, Shapiro remained quite close-mouthed about sensitive issues in Soviet society, always concerned not to jeopardize his relations with Soviet officials. Shapiro claimed, for example, he had had a 4-6 hour interview with Khrushchev, which he had never published. When Shapiro finally retired to Wisconsin, an old friend of ours, Mark Hopkins, a former VOA correspondent, who was giving a course on the USSR at a local university, used to ask Shapiro leading questions and tape record his answers, to get him to open up to the students. So far as I know Shapiro never wrote any memoirs but I heard only recently from a former Moscow journalist that there is an oral history that someone extracted from Ed Stevens. These old timers had so much more to say than most Western journalists, who focused on the dissident communities.

There were, of course, in addition extremely knowledgeable non-American journalists, with good connections in leftist circles, like Michel Tatu of Le Monde. It took intervention at the highest level in the French Government to persuade the Soviets to let Tatu leave with his Russian wife and child, typical petty harassment of a vocal critic of the regime.

There were other long-time residents of Moscow outside the circle of journalists who were good value for their insight into the local scene. The Greek employee of the Canadian Embassy, Caustics, who assembled one of the finest collections of avant garde Soviet art in the world, comes to mind. After years of negotiations, he was allowed to leave with perhaps one third of his collection, donating the balance to the Tretyakov Gallery. We had a variety of sources to which to turn for information, but all suffered from the same difficulty of obtaining accurate information in a closed society.

Q: You seem to believe that the activities of the dissidents made for good headlines, but these people by their very nature were not as well plugged in as others.

BUCHANAN: Absolutely. It is sort of like saying the protesters of the '60s were all typical Americans. Dissidents were even less typical in Russia. To be sure, many educated Russians like Gorbachev, held many of the same critical vices of Soviet society as the dissidents, but it would never occur to them to articulate these views outside of a snail circle of friends. Some probably even admired the dissidents, but considered them "nuts." "Why stick out your neck' in a society known for chopping off heads." In short, the views of the dissidents were perhaps more representative of the views in critical intellectual circles in Russia than their behavior. In this sense, dissidents were a useful source of information

Q: You left Moscow in 1973 and you went where?

BUCHANAN: Well, I got a phone call from an old Moscow hand and friend, Bob German, who was political officer in Norway. I had hoped, of course, and it would have been logical, to go to a DCM position at a post in Eastern Europe. Bob was calling because Walt Stoessel had given Ambassador Philip Crowe in Norway my dossier along with others, and Phil Crowe wanted me to come out for an interview for the DCM job. As it turned out I was given the job without going to meet him. So on June 10, 1973, Nancy and I landed in Norway, on one of those early spring days when the sun was out and Norwegians everywhere were sitting with their faces up to the sun, after their long winter. Since there had not been a DCM in Norway for six months (John Aslant had retired earlier in Oslo with his wife-to-be), I was charged with putting the Embassy into shape for the new Ambassador, Tom Byrne, who was the AFL-CIO representative in the Foreign Service. By the time that I returned from the DCM course, Phil Crowe had already been named as Ambassador to Denmark. He still considered, himself, however, as Ambassador to Norway, when he returned briefly to visit old friends. He insisted accordingly on signing off on cables that I planned to send to the department. A confrontation was avoided when Joan Clark, the Executive Director in EUR, phoned me early in the morning to tell me to let Crowe sign the cables, if he insisted. She had been adamantly opposed the previous evening.

I was very happy that I did not have to serve under Crowe, because our political views were far apart. But on a personal level, I found him very congenial. He had an engaging, adventurous spirit. I truly believe that he considered his time in the OSS during the war as the high point of his life. He was particularly proud of a picture he hung in his office of himself with the toughest bunch of Southeast Asian ruffians you would ever want to meet, all stripped down to the waist. Discussing Crowe with staff members, who had served with him, we could not agree whether he was more suited to the 18th or 19th century, leading a charge of some light brigade.

Q: What was his background?

BUCHANAN: Oh, business. He claimed he had given \$5,000 to the Republican Party and had personal means. Like my Nancy, he was a fox hunter from Philadelphia. He promptly tried to persuade me that the only people worth dealing with in Norway were the shipowner, magnates, who had fishing and hunting rights, and that I should join this particular Conservative club in Oslo. He had no use for the Labor Party which, of course, was in power and had brought Norway into NATO and was the political force of any significance in Norway. When I was in Washington for the DCM course, Nancy stood in the receiving line with Crowe for the Embassy's July 4 party, which Crowe insisted on holding in late June, while he was still accredited to Norway. Nancy was shocked to see that Crowe did not recognize Prime Minister Bratteli, when he walked down the line.

Upon my return from Washington, I took advantage of my position of Chargé d'affaires and traveled much as I could, not knowing whether I would have much opportunity under a new Ambassador. I went up to northern Norway and looked at Russia from across the border near Coercions. It was a strange feeling, standing on Norwegian soil watching the Soviet border guard in the distance. The Norwegian Colonel, who accompanied me, said that they had distant but relatively cooperative relations with the Soviet border guards, to a point of occasionally fishing together in the river that runs along the border. A young Foreign Service Officer and his wife, stationed in our USIA post in Tromsø, north of the Arctic Circle accompanied me on this first visit to North Norway. My wife told me that I was rather patronizing toward the very pretty blond wife, and she must have felt it, for upon their departure from Tromsø, she presented me with the computer analysis of the Aurora Borealis, which she had prepared working at a local institute. I did not understand a word!

The Norwegians felt very militarily exposed in Finnmark, across from the Soviets on the Kola Peninsula. They were accordingly concerned lest the big money to be made in the oil business in southern Norway act as a magnet, attracting the farmers and fishermen away from the North, denuding the area still further. I accordingly made a point of visiting Stavanger, the oil capitol of Norway. As a gesture of hospitality, the local mayor invited Nancy and me to spend a day sailing on what was a replica of the tiny boat that brought the first Norwegian emigrants to the United States in 1834. (When they reached New York, the first emigrants were arrested for crowding 50 people on a boat built to handle 29). What a day we had! By the time we left port, everyone had drunk so much beer and aquavit, to accompany the traditional herring and potatoes, that the crew was besotted. We had to recover the sailing charts, lost overboard, with the help of rakes. It was a great introduction to Norwegian hospitality.

Oil had become a burning issue in Norwegian politics. I met with Prime Minister Bratteli and he explained that he had come from a little town in Norway that had lived off of whale oil, and that when the whales were basically extinct, the town just shriveled on the vine and everybody suffered terribly from unemployment. Basically he was saying that he would not let this happen to Norway with the oil. He was explaining why Norway was resisting pressure from the West to increase its oil production to offset the oil boycott in the Middle East. We thought of Norway as an ally that would help us fill the gap. But the Norwegians were very reluctant to increase their production of oil beyond a certain point.

On the managerial side of the Embassy, I was very concerned with staff morale, and such issues as defense of the Embassy against such a possible terrorist attack. The Red Army had struck in neighboring Sweden and there was concern that it might choose an American target in Norway. Our interesting chancery building, designed by the Finnish architect Saarinen, remained extremely vulnerable. The lattice-work in the central hall provided a natural ladder to the upper floors for any athletic terrorist. We brought in the regional security officer from Copenhagen to advise us, but quickly discounted his expertise when he suggested using a fire alarm to alert the staff in the case of attack, bringing them out of their offices when they should have been locking their doors and isolating themselves, depriving the terrorists of any easy target I must admit that issues like the Embassy budget, did not fascinate me, and I focused more than a DCM probably should on the territory of the Political Counselor.

In fact, I did much of the reporting on Soviet-Norwegian relations. In that connection my first meeting with the recent Norwegian Ambassador to Washington, Schell Vibe, at the time the main policy officer in the Foreign Ministry, was traumatic. Used to uncommunicative Soviet officials, I was amazed when Vibe proceeded to describe in detail the major points of friction between Norway and the USSR, but also the differences in view on these issues within his Ministry. He was much franker than most American diplomats. He is a brilliant man, and he and his lovely wife are much missed by their Washington friends.

Soviet-Norwegian relations in the Bering Sea and Spitsbergen, or Svalbard as the Norwegians call the archipelago, which lies about 600 miles from the North Pole, became my special interest. The Norwegians administer Svalbard on behalf of the international community under the Treaty of Paris of 1920. Since before the war the Soviets had a coal mining concession on Svalbard, and even though the mines are largely exhausted, they have retained a mining staff at Barentsberg and Pyramiden, large enough to take over the islands in the event of war. They do not want a repetition of WWII when the Germans used the islands as a weather station and base from which to attack allied convoys supplying Murmansk.

I was invited to visit Svalbard by the enterprise that basically runs the place, the Store Norsk coal company. Talk about a company town: it even used to print the Svalbard currency. I met with the Sussclman, or Norwegian governor of Svalbard, and flew over the island in a home-made plane built by its Austrian pilot. To take off, we had to shake the plane loose from the icy runway. The Soviets chose not to answer any request to visit Barentsberg until the day of my departure, too late, of course.

My major achievement in a sense was to persuade Washington, indirectly as I will explain below, that we should organize regular bilateral consultations with the Norwegians regarding Svalbard, and their various problems with the Soviets, everything from oil drilling in the Bering Sea to Soviet refusal to obey Norwegian procedures on Svalbard. Henry basically ignored our many messages on the subject, until a German diplomat, whom I had briefed in detail, met Henry in Bonn and repeated what we had told him. In typical fashion, Henry did not believe his own staff. But, at that point, he said, "Oh, really", and agreed to the idea of consultations.

Henry's behavior on the issue of Norwegian production was also typical. We were bombarded with messages requiring demarches to the Norwegians, urging that they increase their production from their North Sea wells. But, for the occasion I discussed earlier, Ambassador Byrne made little head way with Foreign Minister Fridenlund. Accordingly, when Fridenlund was scheduled to meet with Kissinger in New York, we urged Henry to use his great persuasive powers with the Minister, who had been one of his students at Harvard. When Fridenlund returned, he chided his good friend Byrne for making such an issue of oil, which Henry had dismissed as essentially a bureaucratic fetish. Byrne had greater success in his efforts to encourage the Norwegians to produce the F -16 fighter under license, and to preposition military supplies in Norway for possible emergency. In contrast to Washington, that leaks like a sieve, only a very few Norwegian officials were informed about the more sensitive areas of our cooperation. In many ways, Norway was our most enjoyable post. The DCM residence, a former ship magnate's house, was very comfortable, and good for representation. Contrary to what we had been told, we found the Norwegians extremely hospitable, inviting us to their homes and hyttes by the sea. By the time of our departure, I had become moderately fluent in Norwegian, a necessity when traveling outside Oslo. We took full advantage of the skiing and the sightseeing in this most beautiful country. We became foster parents to a tiny Golden Retriever, that we were supposed to prepare for a life as a seeing-eye dog, but ended up purchasing and taking home to Washington.

I was looking forward to our consultations with the Norwegians on their relations with Moscow, and to our last six months in Norway, when I was called by an old friend, Bill Schaufele, who was Assistant Secretary for Sub-African Affairs. He asked me to come back to head the directorate for Central Africa, which, at the time, included Angola. I told the head of Personnel that I thought that I had served my time in Africa, and asked that I be granted consultation orders to allow me to return and discuss this next important phase in my professional career. He finally told me: "well, you can come back if you like", Tom, but you were paneled last week". I was indignant. At a time when we were bending over backward to respond to the wishes of junior officers, a fairly senior officer was to be given no choice.

I later learned the reason for my premature reassignment. On the one hand, Jerry Bremer, Kissinger's primary aide, couldn't take it any more and said he wanted out. Henry said he could have any post he wanted, and Jerry vacillated between Consul General in Munich and my job, and decided on my job.

The fact that I was a Soviet and African hand facilitated the shuffle. Henry had become convinced that the African Bureau was sabotaging his African policy. Nat Davis had resigned as Assistant Secretary because of his opposition to Henry's Angola policy but the Office Director responsible for Angola remained in place, and Henry wanted him removed. By the time that I took over as Office Director in late December 1975, the die had already been cast. Congress had passed a resolution on December 19 cutting off all aid to Angola. I was left to fight a rearguard action, trying to delay recognition of the leftist MALA government in Luanda, and build up pressure on the Soviets and Cuba to restrain their military buildup, and negotiate a coalition government as provided in the Alvor Agreement. Ten to twelve hours a day, seven days a week for months, sending endless cables putting pressure on this government and that government. It was a fascinating but very frustrating time.

Without the threat of an escalating American involvement in Angola, it was a helpless cause. Our credibility with the Africans was destroyed when the South Africans moved in to redress the military balance. The fact that the South Africans provided assistance to Jonas Savimbi's UNITA movement, and to the FILA, also destroyed their credibility as partners in a coalition government. Mediators like Nyerere of Tanzania and Kaunda of Zambia dropped their insistence on a coalition government. We were convinced that Henry, with his global confrontation policy and profound ignorance of tribal politics in Africa, had encouraged the South Africans to intervene. But my desk officer, who was asked to sort Henry's papers on Angola in the National Security Council, after his departure, could never find the smoking gun. To the extent that a message was conveyed, it was presumed done through CIA intelligence channels, to leave no traces.

Q: I think we may break this off at this point. You have explained much of what went on with Angola. Next time we can talk about the role of Congress as you saw it and what were your other issues while you were in Central Africa. You were in Central African Affairs until when to when?

BUCHANAN: From 1975-77.

Q: Okay.

Q: This is May 15, 1996. Tom, we mentioned those two things and then we will talk about a delegation. Was there anything else about Angola that you wanted to add?

BUCHANAN: I am not sure I mentioned Stockwell. Ed Mulcahy was my boss, he was Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, and he and I would go over to be briefed by CIA in the Angola Task Force on what was happening. They were trying to persuade us that we could still win the war, or at least block what was perceived generally to be a Soviet-inspired Cuban takeover of Angola. We normally were fed a bill of goods that had not too much relation to reality. We did not know exactly what sort of material was still "in the pipeline" from before the cutoff of our aid, at least that was the claim. We were briefed by a very energetic, earnest young man, Stockwell, who was born in Zaire of missionary parents. He was sent into the bush to talk to Savimbi, provide military equipment to UNITA and the FNLA, and come back and tell us what was happening. He, of course, gave us the CIA version of events, but underneath it all he was disgusted by what he considered American exploitation of Africans for selfish national motives. He later resigned from CIA and wrote an expose of our Angola policy.

I was also disgusted, not so much by our exploitation of the Africans, which I suppose as a somewhat old cynical FSO didn't surprise me, but by what I considered the foolishness of our policies. I felt that Nat Davis had been absolutely right in arguing against our involvement in what was essentially a tribal war in Angola, under its veneer of ideological labels. Without CIA's heavy involvement, there would have been no pretext for Moscow or Havana to send a large expeditionary force to Angola. We had essentially allowed ourselves to be manipulated by African leaders, on ideological grounds, to support their aspirations for tribal power. Henry was, of course, convinced that any failure to support those who claimed to be anti-Communist would signal weakness to our enemies, and a shift in the global power balance, and result in an unraveling of our alliance systems.

Viewed in hindsight, the massive Cuban intervention had the positive effect of forcing America to look more seriously at the problems of Southern Africa, and in particular of Rhodesia. We began playing a more active and creative role in helping bring about a peaceful transition to independence in both Rhodesia and Namibia. In that sense, an essentially foolish policy had what the Communists would call "objective" virtues. In the final analysis, it accelerated the process of change within South Africa itself, which was very far from Henry's initial intention.

Q: You mentioned the CIA. We are talking about 1976. When you went over for CIA briefings and other times to get CIA documents, what was your attitude for what you were getting and the other people in the African bureau, about what the CIA was giving you at that time?

BUCHANAN: After the meeting with CIA, Ed Mulcahy and I would go back and wonder what really had taken place, what really had been sent in. Ostensibly we had a congressional cut off, Congress had said no more aid shall go to this conflict. We were pretty convinced that we were clandestinely still supplying Savimbi, in effect prolonging the civil war in Angola. As I said before, we had no way of knowing what precisely remained in the pipeline before the cutoff in aid, and what was provided in direct contravention of the will of Congress. Even if we had not withdrawn our Consul in Luanda, Tom Killoran, who was back in Washington helping me on the desk, we would not been in a position to monitor what was being delivered to UNITA in the Ovimbundu territory far away from Luanda.

Q: From the CIA and from whatever sources you had, were you getting any feel about what was in it for the Cubans and also how the Cubans were seeing this...the troops, the morale, etc.?

BUCHANAN: There are, of course, different theories. What I do know is that Cuba sent in a small group of advisors in 1975 to provide support and training, sort of like our sending in the Green berets early on in Vietnam. Fidel certainly did see the civil war in Angola as a liberation struggle, and when the South Africans threatened to drive all the way to Luanda, I suspect that Fidel put pressure on Moscow to provide the airlift for a Cuban relief force. There were certainly reports of debate within the Soviet Politburo over the question of whether or not to risk confrontation with the US in Angola. The action of Congress in banning US military aid to Angola removed any hesitation that Moscow might have had. The rest is history.

So far as the Cuban presence in Angola is concerned, it reportedly aroused increased resentment over time. The Cubans were accused of being arrogant, and of interfering in Angolan internal affairs. The Cubans, with or without Soviet approval, reportedly intervened militarily to crush an attempted putsch within the MPLA by a dissident nationalist faction. There were also numerous reports of friction between the MPLA leader and poet Angostino Neto, and the Soviets. When Neto died on the operating table in Russia - I suspect from medical incompetence - it was widely believed in Angola that the Soviets killed him. The Cuban troops, for their part, were unhappy at being kept so long in Angola. And again, there were rumors that Castro was concerned to bring them back to Cuba, that they might prove to be a dangerous source of dissatisfaction.

To make this complicated story even more bazaar, there was the anomaly that the pro-Communists MPLA was defending American oil operations in its enclave of Cabinda against attacks by America's ally, Zaire, which wanted to take over Cabinda itself. As you can imagine, Congress and Henry Kissinger were very unhappy with American oil companies that were helping finance what they regarded as a Communist regime.

Q: Well, you mentioned that you were involved in a delegation. Could you explain what that was?

BUCHANAN: Well, partly as a result of the Angolan civil war, some para-military groups from the Katangan tribal area of the Shaba in Zaire fled to Angola to get away from Mobutu. Since Mobutu had supported the FNLA insurgency in Angola involving the Kango tribe, the MPLA saw opportunity to strike back by retraining and arming these Katanga refugees. You will recall that there were two invasions of the Shaba, in 1977 and 1978, spearheaded by the Katangans. The Zairean army behaved very poorly and had to be rescued by French paratroopers. So, we faced the eternal problem in Zaire of what to do to help Zaire become a viable nation-state, capable of defending itself. While this country, two-thirds the size of the United States, remains potentially very wealthy, it is continuously, and again right now as we speak, being riven by tribal conflict, and sickened at the top by the pervasive corruption of the Mobutu regime.

In response to the first Shaba invasion, it was decided (I don't remember if it was initially my idea or someone else's) that we should try to get the Belgians and French to cooperate in providing military training to the Zairean forces. As a result, I led a very small delegation to Brussels, where the Belgians were very cautious about getting deeply involved once again in their former colony. The French seemed more receptive to my arguments, and, as I recall, both the Belgians and the French ended up providing some military training. Some Zairian units became more professional, but the military, like the government itself, remains basically corrupt and incompetent.

Q: The Shaba business, as I recall, was connected to attempts at various times to get Katanga out of this. And in many ways the Belgians were supportive in getting them out because this is where their Union Miniere was involved and at least they would have control over this rather than this amorphous Congo.

BUCHANAN: Well, there were certainly some Belgians, and local Shaban politicians who saw some economic and political advantage in an independent Katanga. On the other hand, the invasion of the Shaba by radical Katangan "gendarmes" also threatened their interests. When the issue of an independent Katanga was first posed in the early days of independence, we determined that it should be Western policy to keep Zaire an integral country, and not allow a process of disintegration to gain momentum. The "liberation" of Eastern Zaire at the present time by a motley army of Tutsi led rebels confronts both Kinshasa and the West with this recurring dilemma.

Q. Weren't we faced with a very similar problem in Biafra?

BUCHANAN: That is right. No one knows better than the Africans themselves the danger of allowing any of these artificially constructed African states to fracture into their separate tribal groups. Even though they have inherited all these arbitrary colonial boundaries that often bear little relationship to tribal divisions or geography, "you shall not touch African borders" has been enshrined as one of the sacred principles of the Organization for African Unity, the OAU. So, in a sense, we are on the side of the angels and motherhood on this issue. But, it is not an easy policy to implement in any large African country, where the central government has been unwilling or unable to respond to the needs of its different tribal peoples.

Q: I have just been interviewing someone dealing with the Biafran thing. Did you in Angola have the problem of true believers and, you might say, the one side or other of the Angolan conflict in Congress or outside who were basically opposed to what we were doing? Often there are staffers who get involved.

BUCHANAN: Oh, very much so. In fact, to deal with the problem Bill Stuffle, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, invited staffers down from the Hill on several occasions, after work, just to sit around, have a drink and a bull session about what we were trying to do in both Angola and Zaire, and why we were trying to do it, and what were the options. You did have very strong people with very strong views on the Hill. Many of them, of course, opposed our Angolan policy and almost all of them were opposed to our Zairean policy. Mobutu was a villain personified.

Q: When you would talk to the staffers... I mean as we are speaking now in early 1997, Mobutu is still there.

BUCHANAN: I always tell people who start talking about Hussein in Iraq, or Yeltsin in Russia, or someone in a highly unstable "developing" country, "Don't jump to conclusions that they are going to topple easily. Corruption, fear, power, security forces, apathy, all provide for longevity. Also, you have to ask yourself, if they go, who is going to take their place. Is it institutionally likely that you will get a better government?"

Q: Well, this is the question. When you were looking at the Mobutu business and the horrible corruption in the Congo and what it was causing at that time and it has just gotten worse, could you come up with any "what if" answers for the staffers or in your own internal meetings?

BUCHANAN: Well, we have moments of hope. For example, the former Foreign Minister, Karl-I-Bond, had a reputation for integrity. We were all quite impressed by him, by his excellent English and his ability to lobby the Congress. The problem was that he lacked the power and probably the killer instinct of Mobutu, who also was concerned to rein in anyone whom he considered a potential threat. One moment Karl-I-Bond would be a minister, and the next we would hear that he was in jail, condemned to death. Sentence commuted, he would pop back up again in an official position. Mobutu is a master of divide and conquer and in a tribal society this is not too difficult. We were all tempted at times to try and play the game that we have played elsewhere: saying to ourselves: "well, obviously our man is a crook (or an ideological enemy, or incompetent) and we to find someone else to take his place. But we all knew where this policy let us in the past. CIA placed "our man" in power in Guatemala; we got rid of the nationalist Mossadegh in Iran, with disastrous long-term results in both cases. In the eyes of most Africans, CIA is also responsible for the murder of Lumumba in the early days of the Congo. The image, carefully nurtured by Communist propaganda, of the CIA as the destabiliser of revolutionary, nationalist regimes, remains an albatross around our necks in Africa and elsewhere.

Q: And, Vietnam, I suppose, was very much hanging over us. Was this part of our thinking process?

BUCHANAN: The thinking process kept coming back to "yes, he is a bastard, but he is our bastard" and we should try and reform him. An amusing conversation with Pat Derian, who was in charge of human rights under President Carter, illustrated the dilemma of reform. I had to brief Derian, who was going out to Zaire. She was convinced that Zaire was an area of major genital mutilation of women, and for this reason we ought to cut off all aid. My argument to her, and it was an argument I made also to a lot of people on the Hill, is that the things we are complaining about are the result of underdevelopment, the result of lack of institutional safeguards. By cutting off aid, cutting off the programs that are designed to create institutional safeguards, you may be satisfying your conscience but you certainly are not bringing the day closer where there will be institutional safeguards to prevent these things that we are rightly condemning. This remains a general problem in American foreign policy: we like to get on our puritanical high horse and preach. But as a practical measure, it takes years to change societies and we generally don't have the patience to wait. If nothing happens in a three or four-year program, then we say it obviously is not working and should cut it off. From a Foreign Service viewpoint, of course, this is naive and shortsighted.

Q: I just want to quickly go back to this delegation that you led. Did you find that the French and the Belgians were looking upon you as sort of newcomers to this whole area?

BUCHANAN: Well, of course, it was on a specific issue of military aid and doing something in the wake of Shaba, so the broader questions of attitudes of colonial regimes, etc. didn't come to the fore particularly. I had some advantage since I had served some years in Francophone Africa, in both Belgian and French areas. And, because of my childhood background, I spoke at that time almost bilingual French. So that helped. But there was always a little bit of the attitude, "we have been through this before"; and a certain paternalism, but that is the general European paternalism toward those wealthy but somewhat naive people from across the ocean.

Q: Did you get any feel for the African expertise credentials of the people you were dealing with, the Belgians and the French?

BUCHANAN: The heads of both delegations certainly had them. I don't remember in detail. They both had served in Africa, some of the military people anyway. The French, of course, maintain a presence in a number of African states, so they have through that both experience and a continuing military input of some consequence. I will turn it around the other way, I didn't at any point feel "Gosh I am talking to European idiots who don't know what Africa is all about." It had all come down to just a few practical questions-How much money? How many guns? How are we going to transport them? Who is going to pay for the transportation? This is a Belgian airbase, will it be under French or under Belgian control? That sort of practical questions.

Q: What was your impression of the reporting and the presence of our embassy in Zaire?

BUCHANAN: Impressive, although we didn't always agree with it. You had Lannon Walker as DCM there for quite a while. There was always the question of how responsive you should be to a Mobutu request and how much muscle you should apply or no. There was the usual tendency for the embassy to be more protective, with a lot of good arguments (that they think are good anyway), and for the desk under pressure from Congress to say, "Well, we need to apply a little more muscle." The reporting was pretty good. It was a very activist embassy. Walter Cutler was ambassador. So, you had two high power people, Walter Cutler and Lannon Walker. When I went out and met with Mobutu, he obviously had great respect for them. Of course, behind the scenes, as you know, a lot of what took place in Zaire was funded by CIA. Larry Devlin was sort of the second ambassador there for years. I think I mentioned before that this particular inheritance, the vision of the CIA's wealthy, manipulative hand operating in all of these African states was a major handicap to our policy. Even if there was no CIA presence, as I mentioned in Gabon, high officials were convinced that it was taking place. So, we remained an easy target for communist propaganda. The CIA doubtless did some good things, but in Africa at least, I suspect that we might have had an easier time with a less activist policy.

Q: We have talked about Zaire and Angola, what other countries...?

BUCHANAN: Well, I, of course, took the usual trips around the parish. I met with Biya in the Cameroon, who contrary to expectations has hung on and has become a pretty corrupt leader in the footsteps of a man of much greater stature, Adoula. The most amusing trip was back to Burundi. David Mark was ambassador, an old Soviet hand. He had organized a dinner for me at 8:00 in the evening. At 4:00 in the afternoon, the head of state, Micombero, the former defense minister who bailed me out when we were under virtual house arrest when I was in Burundi, came, rather drunk. He stayed on until 10:00 at night constantly trying to persuade me that he really loved Americans and he wasn't the one who threw me out, it was the King. This was a patent lie and I knew it, but you can't throw the head of state out, even if he is drunk. Shall we say that it slightly ruined the dinner party! That brief period when I returned to Burundi and Rwanda was one of relative calm, with heads of state in both countries trying to contain ethnic tensions. There were, of course, the usual problems facing any embassy in Central Africa, of morale and maintenance. In Burundi, I encountered a new phenomenon in the Foreign Service, the husband accompanying a Foreign Service wife. In that particular case, the husband was a mechanic, and he kept the Embassy's motor pool operating. At a staff meeting later with our Ambassador to Rwanda, Dave Krieger, he exhorted the several single ladies on his staff to go out and find a comparably useful husband to help resolve some of the plumbing and other logistic problems of his Embassy. In Central Africa, I was very favorably impressed by Bill Swing. What struck me about Bill was that he was from the Deep South, and very much at home in Africa. I had noticed this before, that Southerners, who grew up in racially mixed societies, were often much more comfortable and effective around Africans than some of our Northern "liberal" officers. Africans are very sensitive, and easily see through the white man, who is basically uncomfortable in their presence. Bill enjoyed the humor that is almost endemic, at least in West and Central Africa, and was filled with humor himself. He and the German Chargé got along very well with the "Emperor" Bokassa, who used to invite them virtually every weekend on his boat, or to his weekend house. I rather indelicately asked Bill if he was sure what he was eating on those weekends, given the many rumors of Bokassa's fondness for human meat! I was not surprised when Bill went on to be Ambassador to Liberia, and then Haiti, a testimony to the effectiveness of a liberal, Southern education. I was rather saddened by my return to Gabon. It was clear that Bongo was trying to do for Libreville what Houphouët-Boigny had done many years before in Abidjan, to make it a modern city with tall buildings, destroying many of the charming old French colonial houses with their wide verandas. Otherwise, little had changed. The Peace Corps remained essentially our only aid problem. Bongo was still trying to find financing for a railroad to open up the interior. Eventually he funded it himself from Gabon's extensive resources. It went to his hometown of Franceville on the Congo border, but not, as he had hoped, to the iron ore reserve of Belinga. My trip began in Gabon on a sour note. The Chargé had organized a dinner for me in my old DCM house. I visited my former Vietnamese neighbors before dinner, and suddenly realized that I was 20 minutes late to my own dinner, I rushed out in the dark and fell into a concrete culvert that I had forgotten was there. I chose to ignore the wound in my leg during the dinner, and it rapidly became infected on the trip. On my return to Washington, I staggered out of the airport with a tremendous swollen, infected leg, to meet a wife who had fallen that morning in the basement and had a black and blue face. We were both quite a sight!

Q: Bokassa, who eventually became quite a scandal in France...His supporter, was it Pompidou?

BUCHANAN: No, Giscard. He gave diamonds to Giscard d'Estaing.

Q: Bokassa was one of those people who at a certain point got beyond the pale as far as public acceptance of him, along with Idi Amin, etc. But, during the time we are talking about, was Bokassa just somebody else's problem?

BUCHANAN: Yes, Central Africa is essentially a French problem. But, like Gabon, Central Africans would like to diversify their sources of aid, and the programs that the Central Africans asked for made a certain amount of sense. We were trying to help in the educational area and in rural programs, as I recall. But it was small scale aid.

I should say as a footnote in all of this, I came away from my African experience of both serving there and as office director with a great deal of irritation about the procedures of AID. Their slowness of response, their tendency to spend most of the project money on feasibility surveys which were very good for their stable of consultants but did very little for the country. I came always convinced, particularly in the small countries of Africa, where we had very little money for bilateral aid, that what we should have done is increase substantially the Ambassador's special fund, which at the time was \$25,000, because that was untied money. The Ambassador could travel and find, for example, that a bridge was out and go to the local chief and offer to rebuild that essential bridge. By contracting to have the work done by a local small firm, he also put money into the local economy. We would thereby show ourselves responsive in a short time frame, to a real need. What we did cost the American taxpayer was pittance, and it had an impact which was far more effective in public relations than most AID aid. Obviously, if I had a choice, I would be pleased to see my country making a major contribution to resolving some of the basic infrastructure problems of the African continent, in conjunction with the World Bank. But that is another dimension of aid, in a very different time scale. And, in the present climate of neo-isolationist opinion in America, quite unrealistic. You asked whether the Belgians were a little snotty about our lack of experience. They had some reason to be in the case of Zaire. With our fascination with technology and our concern to tie our aid to American exports, we undertook a quite ineffectual road development project in Eastern Zaire, to help farm products reach the local market. What we should have done is study, and develop a version of the old Belgian system for maintaining the roads in the interior. Under the admittedly harsh Belgian rule, villages were required, under what I recall as the "corvée 1/2e" system, to maintain a specific section of the road in their area. We would have been wise to have provided a less arbitrary, more incentive-oriented system to encourage villages to upgrade the roads around them. Instead, we established large depots for mechanized road equipment, in a country where fuel was very expensive, and the population lacked the skills to maintain the equipment. Ultimately, the old pick and shovel system, would have proved more efficient, enduring and much less expensive. But, to be sure, the firms that supplied the road maintenance equipment would not have made the same money.

Q: You left African Affairs when?

BUCHANAN: I left in the spring of 1977. I had been told by Bill Schaufele when I came into the African bureau that he would take care of me. The executive director told me, and this was fairly standard for office directors, after all Africa is not a place where most political appointees want to go as ambassador, that there were three posts for which AF was prepared to support me...Guinea, Gabon or Burundi. Well, Guinea at that time had a curfew and I would not have been able to go outside the city limits of Conakry. If I wanted to be confined by travel controls, I would much rather be confined by Russian travel controls than Guinean travel controls. I would prefer to be tied to the city of Moscow or Leningrad than Conakry. Gabon had very bad associations for my wife, which I won't go into. And, Burundi had very bad associations for me because of my memories and the subsequent history of ethnic conflict. The Cameroon was the only post open in which I would have been interested, but it was put aside for a political appointee, an Afro-American lady, wife of a former Ambassador to Syria, who had some experience of Africa. If the Consul General post in Leningrad had not come open at that time, I would probably have opted to return to Gabon. But, as it was, Leningrad was one of my favorite cities, in my area of specialization. When Bill Schaufele was ambassador to Poland he told one of his staff that he never understood why Buchanan turned down a post in Africa to go to Leningrad, but it was a decision that I never regretted.

Q: Well, Leningrad is big time.

BUCHANAN: Yes. I had five people in the consulate. Leningrad was the main game in town with my background. I suppose in the back of my mind I thought perhaps after Leningrad something would come up. But, by that time all of my contacts in the African bureau had gone, and when I talked to the new Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Bill Harrop, after Leningrad he said, "I understand you don't want to go to a post in Africa." I said that that was not quite accurate. It was just that the posts at the time did not compare in challenge and interest with Leningrad.

Q: You were in Leningrad from when to when?

BUCHANAN: I arrived in Leningrad around October, 1977, after doing several weeks brush up course in Russian at Garmisch, which was a great experience. I understood the shock that all our language officers who go to Garmisch must have experienced when they go from this idyllic little mountain resort, with a view of the Zugspitze out their apartment windows and arrived in Moscow in a grimy apartment. Garmisch is a beautiful spot, with a great school run by former dissidents. All the lectures were in Russian. You wrote in Russian. It was a very good brush up course for me and a very pleasant break. The work in the African bureau had been pretty tiring, and it gave me a little vacation before going to Leningrad.

I arrived pretty much in time for the Marine Ball. At the Marine Ball the most attractive couple there was the young Russian lady who worked in our general services office-and her husband. She was the daughter of the leading cultural honcho of Leningrad. She arrived in a very décolleté Western dress with her husband, supposedly a scientist, in white tie and tails. She made a pass at me during the party and I realized I was back in the old Russia. She was, I suppose, one of the arguments that our security people made for getting rid of Russian employees. At the same time she could be very helpful and you knew with whom you were dealing, you just had to be careful. When we got rid of Russian employees, we hired a lot of Americans about whom we knew very little. I would prefer, myself, to deal with Russians who give you some feel for the country and what is happening, because over time many Russian employees developed a little bit of mixed loyalty. They liked working for Americans and they liked working in the embassy or consulate. You got to know them and could ask them provocative questions to get a feedback. With Americans, you never knew with whom you were dealing, and some of them were certainly good bait for the KGB because they were just there for the money. We have seen in the Walker case and other cases that American patriotism is skin deep sometimes.

Q: And also there is much more the ability to get into trouble. This would be true anywhere. The local employees belong to the country and you know who you are dealing with. I found this in Yugoslavia. When you get an American clerk you get an American clerk who is a fish out of water and either needs a lot of hand holding or taking out of trouble or are much more susceptible to outside pressures.

You were in Leningrad from when to when?

BUCHANAN: From October, 1977 until August, 1980.

Q: How long had the consulate general been in existence?

BUCHANAN: It opened in July 1973 with Culver Glisten and his wife living in the Astoria Hotel for many months while our construction crew rebuilt our future consulate. As I told you, the Soviets responded to my request for a building on the former Furchtatskaya, then Petra Lavrova, and now again Furchtatskaya street, opposite our former chancery before the revolution. The man I replaced, Joe Neubert, had formerly been on the policy planning staff. He made a major effort to get to know and understand the Russians. After his retirement, he became the American representative in Moscow of the Soviet-American Trade Council.

With my background I tended to see the Consulate General more as an important intelligence and political reporting post than a consular post. We certainly could not compare with visa mills like Frankfurt and Munich. Leningrad provided a different vantage point from which to view this vast country. If Leningrad lacked the dynamism of Moscow - a "Museum city" as the Muscovites called it - it had a more civilized atmosphere. For some reason, the series of lectures in the so-called Znaniye or Knowledge Society, and particularly the questions and answers were more revealing than in similar lectures in Moscow. And it was the base of a vast consular district extending from the Baltic States to Murmansk and Archangel on the Barents and White Seas, offering other insights into this great land.

Q: When you are talking about lectures, what are you talking about?

BUCHANAN: On weekends, partly because my Russian was better than that of some of the staff members, and they often had children and I didn't, I would take the weekend shift and go to these lectures on different aspects of Soviet life organized by the Knowledge Society, lectures delivered by very experienced lecturers who were specialists in their own fields. The lectures might be on anything from the Middle East to the economy, to agriculture, etc. The Bermuda triangle was one of the most popular lectures in Russia. "Is there life in outer space?" was another popular theme. There were lectures on civil defense, you name it. As I say, these lectures would last two or three hours and the lecturer often would not look at a note. Very impressive. After the lecture we would write a cable summarizing the main points, particularly the questions and answers. That was one of my more time-consuming activities.

The issue of Soviet Jews was very important at that time. We kept getting messages from the Department saying, "Would you please check into what happened to Abramowitz? We understand he is in jail." And very often they were correct. We would send somebody down to the local synagogue and check with one or two of our regular contacts down there. We knew Washington had heard about it because the relatives in Leningrad would phone to their blood relatives in New York and tell them. It was curious that these phone calls from this police state could still go through. The Soviets were very frustrated for they didn't know how to handle the whole Jewish question. It remained a thorn in their side and was to some extent a constant irritant in our relations. They tried to deter us from having contact with Jewish or other dissidents.

One of my consular officers was a regular source of contact with the various dissidents. He was a little guy who was a marathon runner. He used to run about 18 miles about three times a week. The Russians, of course, wondered what this American was doing running all over Leningrad. They were highly suspicious. They didn't have anybody who wanted to run and keep up with him. But, what they would sometimes do, would be to wait until he was crossing a street and then run a car at him which would come to a screeching halt about three feet from him in an effort to intimidate him. And, at least, on one or two occasions, "citizens" beat him up after he had visited a dissident, but very professionally with no visible damage, nothing very serious, but just a "don't come back" message. That really didn't work because we, of course, had our orders to continue to maintain these contacts. But it was a game, an irritant.

Q: One thing about being a consular officer is you have much more access, you can go to anyone you want, as opposed to being an embassy officer where you are sort of trapped by working through the foreign ministry, the rules of the game are different. Did you ever feel that you could go to say the head of the KGB in Leningrad and say, "Come on, cut this out. You know what we are doing and we know what you are doing, can't we stop this before it turns...?"

BUCHANAN: Well, I would do that to the foreign ministry, too, in Moscow. But, yes, I complained.

Q: But you can go more directly as a consular officer sometimes too.

BUCHANAN: Oh, I was constantly protesting to the Diplomatic Agency about one problem or another. The head of the Agency, Yefimov, was, as far as I knew, a former political hack from the Leningrad Oblast apparatus, not KGB. But his deputy was certainly KGB. Koslovski was a very sophisticated agent, who had served in East Germany. I became aware within the first weeks of my arrival that he was KGB, by accident. The diplomatic corps was invited to the celebration of the ... I am not sure, perhaps the Brezhnev version of the Soviet constitution. As we entered October Hall, Koslovski met us to direct us to our seats. As he passed the security guards, he was greeted as an obvious colleague. He scowled and pretended that he had not heard. They blew his cover, not that I had any great doubts. In fact, he was not only a civilized person with whom to deal but, on two occasions, extremely useful.

On one occasion, we had a Fulbright scholar, John Pratt, sent to us as lecturer American literature. The fact that he was a colonel in the Air Force, who had served in Vietnam, disturbed me. We had problems enough, including friction regarding Vietnam, without his presence. The Soviets would, of course, assume that he was a spy, which they did initially. I agreed to have him come because my deputy PAO, Criss Arcos (incidentally, a tremendous officer, who had an impressive career later in Latin America), reassured me: "When I was in Portugal," Criss said, "Pratt came and lectured and he is superb, don't worry." When Pratt arrived, he was promptly taken in hand by the professor of American Literature at Leningrad University, as I recall a tiny, little man, very bright, called Kavalyov. John told us that he felt like he was defending his doctoral thesis during his first dinner at Kavalyov's house. Kavalyov asked him about the most obscure American writers of the 19th and 20th centuries. At the end he was apparently convinced that John was the real thing and not a CIA agent. John had lectured on American literature at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, and is a prolific writer himself, Kavalyov warned John, however, that Leningrad was not the US and he should not expect the sort of professor-student dialogue to which he was accustomed. John bet Kavalyov that he would get the students talking, and he won. Actually, while John lectured in English, and no Russian, he had people coming out from the suburbs, who were English speakers, to listen to him. He told me how amazed he was by the knowledge of American literature on the part of his students. Some would walk with him after class and ask him questions about the latest book by, for example, John Updike, which they were not supposed to have read, but somehow, presumably as children of the Nomenklatura, they had managed to get hold of.

Well, back to the point of my story about Koslovski. At around 11 p.m. one night I got a call from my consular officer saying, "John Pratt is in the hospital here. I am calling from the hospital. John has apparently a kink in his colon, and they will have to operate very quickly or gangrene will set in." The consul described the hospital room as being, as usual, "pod remontom" (under construction), with large, dirty blankets hung as curtains over the windows. I arranged a three-way conversation with our doctor at the Embassy in Moscow. The doctor explained that what was most important was that the operation should take place in a sterile environment because the intestines would in fact, be exposed. The description of the operating room was not reassuring. We did not know what to do. Happily, at that point, an older, more senior doctor appeared, looked at the X-ray and said that this was not a kink in the colon but a tumor in the lower bowel, what he called the "lucky tumor", because it is easily operable. Since there was not the same urgency to operate, we had time to get John out to Helsinki. The embassy doctor said he assumed that plastic tubes would be inserted into John's extremities to relieve pressure during his transport to Finland, but the Russian doctor claimed his hospital had no plastic tubes, probably because he was hoarding the few that had and had no confidence that they would be replaced. I then arranged to have John sent with a couple of our consular officers up to Helsinki. The problem was that it was by now 1:00 in the morning, and we had to open the frontier. This is where we will get back to Koslovski in the KGB. I called him and in half an hour he had opened the Soviet-Finnish border, which is closed at night. The problem then was that, on the Finnish side they had all gone to bed. And so, in fact, when our people got there they had to wait until the Finns appeared at work about 5 or 6:00 in the morning. This was the first of two times that Koslovski opened the border. Footnote: John was tremendously impressed by the operation of the Finnish doctors, as we all were. Finnish doctors and dentists were superb. And John is living happily now in Fort Collins, Colorado, teaching at the university there. He keeps in touch with Koslovski.

The other occasion was when General Rainey, the right-wing general put into the SALT delegation, by consultation in Congress, came to Leningrad, I thought this would be a good opportunity for me to be briefed since we were not on distribution for SALT traffic. So, I took the general into our little secure room and he gave the most pompous performance I had ever seen. He told me less than I could read in the New York Times. "It is very secure, you know." Well, that same evening, also late, about 11:00, he was called from Washington and told that he should be at a noon briefing the following day in Washington. Now there was one possibility of getting him there. He could make a plane connection from Helsinki, which would get him on the Concorde out of London. Frankly, after listening to him wondered if it was in the national interest to get him on that plane. But, I decided it wasn't my job to make that decision. Our administrative and consular officers drove him up to Helsinki. Again, Koslovski came through and opened the Finnish border, again the Finns couldn't be found, and they barely made it to the airport. An amusing footnote: On the way, nature called but the General refused to stop the car, asking, "don't you have a Pepsi Cola bottle or something that I could use?" When our staff returned from Helsinki, we debated, given the General's pompous concern for security, whether we should not have sent the bottle and its contents, "Top Secret" to the Pentagon!

Q: Did you find the Leningrad society different from the Moscow society?

BUCHANAN: There is something you could call old Leningrad or St. Petersburg manners...more gracious, better mannered, less likely to knock you down standing in line. Yes, there was a difference. Leningrad treasured its historic cultural traditions. Within a week or two of our arrival, I heard there was going to be a concert at Catherine's Palace: an amateur choir was singing to do a Schubert mass. I felt that sounded interesting, so my wife and I were driven out. This took place in the outer hall of the chapel there. The ladies in the choir came in silver lamé ½ evening dress, the men were all in tails. It was a superb choir. The choir master worked at the professional Kapella, the choral group founded in Moscow by Ivan IV and transplanted to St. Petersburg. On another occasion, we attended an Italian baroque opera sung in the green marble room of Pavlovsk, with all the singers and ushers in period costume. If the plays put on at the Gorky theater were not quite as avant garde as those at the Taganka theater in Moscow, the choreography and acting were superb. At the Kirov theater, we never missed a performance when our friend, Valiya Galibalovna, danced. Her Giselle was a delight. With her help one evening, we put on six hours of American ballet at the residence on video. Bolshoi ballerina Maksimova was among the 16-odd leading lights of Soviet ballet who attended. We were, of course, quite spoiled by the cost of attending the theater or musical events, the equivalent of \$3-4, and correspondingly shocked when we bought tickets for Kennedy Center upon our return.

Petrinin, who was number two in the Gosispolkom's cultural section, was not a particularly cultivated gentleman himself, but he took pleasure in showing off his city. Knowing my wife's interests, he arranged one weekend for us to visit a man who was a restorer of icons. We went there, however, not to see his icons but his collection of paintings and engravings of the pre-revolutionary nobility and Royal family. We were told that he had been essentially a worker at the time of the revolution, who took advantage of the New Economic Policy period to buy up some of the great Russian painters like Repin and Serv, as well as ceramic works and silver from the impoverished aristocracy. In the '30s he inexplicably decided to get rid of his Russian masters and concentrate instead on an area that no one was collecting, He told the story of one choice small engraving of a countess, which he spied in an apartment when he was walking. The old woman who owned the engraving resisted his argument that her countess would feel more at home in his apartment surrounded by noble friends, until one day she knocked on the door, and was ready to sell, sensing perhaps that she did not have long to live.

Another time we were taken to the home of an elderly lady who had relatives in Paris, and who obviously had political connections because she went out to Paris periodically. She had created a total Parisian apartment. She was living in the past. She reminded me of the time that we attended a concert in Moscow given by Prince Volkonsky, who had studied in Paris and returned from emigration with his father after the war. When permitted, he gave concerts of his modern compositions. That particular evening, he performed with his baroque ensemble. What was fascinating was to hear elderly couples behind us, dressed in what had been once well-tailored clothes, introducing friends to one another...Count so and so, you must know Baron X, etc. People who had obviously survived under Socialism by keeping their head down. In Leningrad, this lady who had been a member of the old nobility, was allowed to live a Bourgeois existence, and keep up her relations with France, in exchange perhaps for providing information on her contacts.

More moving in many ways were our visits to dissident artists, often arranged by a good friend the sculptor Grisha Israelovich. He had apparently some political protection, as a member of the Artists Union, since his father had been in charge of sanatoria on the Black Sea. His former wife and daughters had emigrated to the U.S. After we left, the authorities took away his wonderful gate house studio.

To get some feeling for the religious life of Leningrad, I attended, of course, special holy days at the synagogue and the various Orthodox churches. On one occasion a Baptist church service began with my being introduced to the bearded 18 members of the Council, who all insisted on kissing me, Russian style!

Life in Leningrad was not, of course, all fun and culture. There were problems with our Soviet staff. We felt that we should treat the daughter of the cultural honcho of Leningrad with kid gloves, despite her fairly obvious efforts to entice her American GSO boss into bed. She would sit so provocatively in her office, I learned, that the wife of the GSO brought in a screen to put between them to reduce temptation. On the other hand, we had one lovely lady, who was enormously helpful whenever visitors came to Leningrad. She knew many of the artists and what was worth seeing around town- the sorts of things that no American local would ever know. Unfortunately, she apparently became too visibly fond of her job and Americans, without perhaps adequate reporting on her part, so that she was suddenly removed on day and demoted to a menial job with Intourist.

Our biggest problem in 1979 was handling the 8 CODELS, congressional delegations that descended on Leningrad, typically on weekends. Each delegation usually consisted of two plane loads of congressmen and senators and their wives and staff, none of whom was often very interested in being briefed about Leningrad. They were there for a good time. They offered an opportunity, however, for us to meet local officials, who were otherwise unapproachable. I took particular satisfaction in persuading the Ribicoff-Bellman delegation that it should try to meet with the First Secretary of Leningrad, Grigoriy Romanov, a tough little ideologue, very combative, a Napoleonic disposition. I knew him only from occasional verbal bouts with him on November 7, or May First. The Politburo obviously wanted the delegation to meet a much smoother member, Masherov, of Bylorussia, but, on my urging, the delegation pressed to meet with Romanov. Ambassador Malcolm Toon supported my request, and accompanied the delegation when it met with Romanov. What Romanov told us about his personality during this visit suggested that, had he won out in the power struggle that followed Brezhnev's death, rather than Gorbachev, we would not have had an end to the cold war, but rather the reverse.

Small examples. Ribicoff spoke without notes, just off the cuff. It was always rather difficult for an interpreter to follow. In the middle of a long speech by Ribicoff, our interpreter instead of referring to the "tomb" of the people who had been martyred, if you will, in World War II, he referred to the "grave". In the middle of the speech Romanov interrupted and chastised the interpreter saying, "If you are an interpreter you should know the difference between a tomb and a grave." He was feisty and bad mannered.

Bellman started talking about trade, trying to be polite to supplement what Ribicoff had said. Romanov interrupted saying, "We don't need your trade." After dinner, where Romanov had all the fine artists of Leningrad perform for them at the guest house, I heard him talking to the senators saying, "And you mustn't believe the things your Consul General writes about me and about Leningrad."

Well, I knew that we were probably bugged because my French and German colleagues had warned me saying they had found bugs in their offices in the ceiling. I had, in fact, requested Washington to "debug" our consulate. The operation happily took place when I was on leave; my poor deputy had to suffer through all the dust. Our people didn't find that bug until long after I left. The Soviets were obviously monitoring what we wrote about them and they didn't like it.

Some of the things they probably didn't like was the accuracy of our reporting on their economy. Moscow was reporting the economy was in fairly good shape. We had, I think, a more realistic view from lectures that were franker than those in Moscow, and from little incidents like the time one of our Russian speaking wives was standing in line and the woman ahead of her was weeping and telling a friend that her daughter had called that morning and had said, "Mother, you know, I was able to find some kasha (a cereal) for the family for breakfast, but I don't know what I am going to find to feed them for the rest of the day." From these little incidents, one knew that life out in the sticks, what the Russians call the "periphery", was a far cry from what it was in Moscow or Leningrad. So, we were reporting that there were more economic tensions in the country than perhaps were generally admitted.

The Soviets also, of course, didn't like the role the consulate played in trying to monitor the shipbuilding activity in Leningrad. Our naval people would come up, or British or Canadian naval officer. In a sense, we represented the Commonwealth, and we provided what assistance we could.

Q: They didn't have posts there?

BUCHANAN: No, they didn't. There were some nasty incidents. The Russians seized our naval attaché who was clandestinely photographing a new cruiser that was being built in the shipyards. We naturally protested their uncivilized behavior in seizing this naval attaché and removing his camera.

So, there were lots of little tensions, and the Soviets got back at us in their own way, sometimes personally. For example, we had a wonderful chef from the liner Pushkin who had been provided to my predecessor. Because he had been a chef on a liner you could call up and say, "Sasha, tomorrow we are going to have a cocktail party for 150 people," and it didn't phase him at all. He also took the side of my wife against the two women harridans on the residence staff. One was an embittered old woman, who had lost all of her family during the blockade. The other, a rather plump version of Marilyn Monroe, was a slick KGB operator, but a very good housekeeper who loved the residence and took a lot of pride in it. My wife thought that she went out of her way on one occasion to demonstrate the speed of her hands, to warn us not to leave things around. When Soviet-US relations were particularly tense, the two ladies might claim to be sick and unable to work. On one such occasion, Sasha insisted that he would vacuum our "palace," rather than my wife. We should have known better than to tell the walls how highly we thought of Sasha, instead of cursing him for his protection.

So one day, just on the eve of a large delegation coming, Sachs came to me with tears in his eyes and said he had a better job. I took him out in the courtyard and said, "Sasha, what happened?" He said, "They didn't tell me, but let me go quietly." Then he said in French, "c'est la vie." I didn't let him go quietly, I complained bitterly. The Russians made it very plain that they assumed that I would get another Russian chef, but I said, "No, I am not going to be dependent on you people. I am going to get someone from Finland." They said, "What? That is going to be very expensive."

So, we got probably the finest chef we ever had. He had been chef to the Finnish ambassador in Paris and we have never eaten better in our life. Pretty soon, he was being importuned by our Marilyn Monroe lady, who wanted to marry him so he would take her out of the country, and apparently they were quite close. But, ladies were not our chef's primary interest, so it didn't quite work out that way.

Another time, just to be nasty, we suddenly found the residence had only boiling water coming out of all our faucets. This went on for three days. The "diplomatic agency" would send over a "plumber" who came up with a lot of ridiculous suggestions. Our whole furnace area was about the size of the Queen Elizabeth's engine rooms, so an amateur couldn't go in and figure out what valves were what. I finally was able to get a local city plumber to come and it took him about 30 seconds of looking around to say, "Who was the idiot who turned that valve?" Just petty harassment.

Q: We are talking about a difficult period with the Soviets. I would have thought Leningrad in some way a bad place to monitor what was happening, it was a sophisticated area close to Western Europe, etc., when all hell was breaking loose out in the hinterland. Did you find in many ways it might have been better to have somebody in Volgograd or some place like that?

BUCHANAN: Oh yes, but we had no option. Officers traveled, of course, to the extent they could to places like Volgograd, but Leningrad remained our only permanent outpost.

Q: Well, were you seeing the real Russia or not?

BUCHANAN: Oh yes, we were seeing small bits of the real Russia, although they tried to prevent us from doing so. We had a somewhat different perspective on Russia than the one obtainable in Moscow. In some ways security controls were tighter than Moscow but in other ways we were better off than Moscow. The lecture series, for example, were flatter. The consular district was also very large, extending from the three cities in the Baltics north to the Barents and White Seas, with a variety of places in between that we managed to visit at least once. Our visits to enterprises and institutes and meetings with local officials were, of course, rather controlled and formal, but they nevertheless provided some insights into Soviet life, adding small pieces to the much larger jigsaw puzzle.

One could also do some investigative reporting in Leningrad itself. We had serious friction in our administrative office between the Administrative Officer and his new GSO, who was the wife of the consular officer, and an economist, who considered herself much smarter than her boss, and told him. I accordingly converted her into an economic officer and had her do a study of unemployment in the city. There were notices all over Leningrad of people seeking employment. By pulling this together, she was able to identify areas where there were shortages and what appeared to be under-employment. Administrative officers had probably the best opportunity of anyone to experience the frustrating, seamy side of Soviet bureaucracy. If they had served in the Third World, they tended to be more effective. My first administrative officer, an African hand, apparently understood that, if he wished to get our shipments through customs he would have to pay off the appropriate officials. I assume that vodka, cognac, jazz tapes or "Play Boy" passed hands, but I never asked. I suspect that the reason we began having problems after his departure was because his successor, a quite competent Europeanist, insisted on operating by the book.

Q: You left when in 1980?

BUCHANAN: That summer.

Q: So you were there at the time of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Were any of you ready for it? Were there any signals? What was the reaction of the people in your area to this?

BUCHANAN: Well, to cite an example, at one lecture, at a factory, the lecturer was speaking about historic military figures. At the end of the lecture a workman got up and basically said, "Comrade lecturer. Can you tell us what the hell we are doing in Afghanistan?" Stories began to spread around about the number of bodies coming back. Definitely there was all sorts of exaggeration about the number of coffins. But it was a sign of the times. There were stories about discrimination in the sort of people they were bringing into the military to fight in Afghanistan, for example, Jews or people from the Baltic States.

There was a very interesting woman who ran the Dostoevsky Museum. Her husband, I never knew exactly, but I think was a leading doctor in the Soviet Armed Forces. He would travel surveying military establishments. They were obviously in shock because a doctor friend of theirs was sent out to work with Amin, the Afghan leader (somebody had reportedly tried to poison him.) I don't know. But when the Russians decided to knock off Amin, and their paratroopers attacked the palace, they killed the doctor friend along with Amin. By then I had gone up to Moscow and we had all discussed with Ambassador Watson and particularly Mark Garrison, the DCM, what should be our reaction. One of the proposals which we made strongly against our personal self-interest-because all of us were looking forward to seeing the Olympics-was that we should boycott the Olympics because we knew how important they were psychologically to the Russians. All of these measures were announced: the trade cut off, boycott, etc. I had a cocktail party and very few people came. But this Russian lady came, despite a bad. She spoke to me privately, virtually in tears, saying "what do you think you are doing? When you push the bear in the corner, he will fight back." She seemed genuinely upset and quite frightened of where the confrontation would lead. I still believe that it was a genuine response and not a KGB-orchestrated scene, but who knows. In fact, everyone was upset, and nobody was more upset than all the Intourist guides, because suddenly there would be very few. The reason they had selected to become Interest was to have a feel of the West and an opportunity to travel to the West, or at least to meet Westerners. But our boycott meant that they weren't going to meet any Americans. Instead, they were given jobs translating obscure texts into English.

I had gone down to Tallinn where the Mayor had taken Nan and myself on a boat races. We visited the very fancy marina which the Estonians had built for the occasion, which we later visited ourselves after I retired, and we went sailing in the Baltic Sea with an FSO friend. We had looked forewarn to returning to Tallinn for the Olympics.

So, I was directly involved in the Embassy recommendations how to respond to the invasion of Afghanistan. President Carter's decision has certainly been much criticized, with hindsight, notably his embargo on grain shipments to Russia, perceived as an inequitable burden on the American farmers. Others have attacked the mixing of sport and politics. But I still think that our boycott of the Olympics served its purpose to underscore the inadmissibility of a great power invading its neighbor. On the other hand, I did not agree with the commonly held view that the invasion represented an offensive move toward the Persian Gulf. That seemed to me to be nonsense. I saw the invasion as primarily a defensive reaction by a paranoid regime with a 1700 mile border dividing a Muslim fanatic state from its own Muslim areas of Central Asia. Soviet lecturers claimed that the decision to intervene was only undertaken very reluctantly following fourteen pleas for assistance by the desperate leftist regime in Kabul, as it lost province after province to the rebels. Talk about a cloudy crystal ball, or wishful thinking. At the dinner given for me by the head of the Diplomatic Agency, Yefimov, before our departure, he assured me that, "don't worry, Mr. Buchanan, in a few months all will be quiet in Afghanistan." To the extent that the much touted "convergence" between the US and the USSR was a reality, it was in our mutual Great Power arrogance. At least the Afghan invasion spared us a continuing deluge of delegations overwhelming our poor little consulate.

Q: Yes, with the Olympics coming.

BUCHANAN: It would have been terrible. I should have mentioned the most amusing delegation I had. Soon after I arrived in Leningrad, we got a message that Mrs. Mondale wanted to come to Leningrad on an unofficial visit to see the avant-garde art collection that the head of the National Gallery had described to her. This resulted in a three-day negotiation by me with the head of the city government

Q: Mrs. Mondale, by the way, was the wife of the Vice President.

BUCHANAN: She was given very bad advice by her staff. You can't be the wife of the Vice President and sneak in and have an unofficial visit. Certainly not in a highly protocol society like Russia. What she chose to visit was closed off to everyone except a few Russian art students. I had tried to visit the avant garde collection a number of times and been refused. Selfishly I was delighted that she was asking for this, but it was not an easy thing. She also wanted to have a private meeting with someone who produced ceramic work. We had a three-day negotiation arguing whether this should be an official-unofficial visit or an unofficial-official visit. We finally agreed, I think on an "unofficial-official" formula.

The issue of what was official or unofficial was joined right at the outset, on the way from the airport to my residence. It was an almost hallowed tradition that visitors stopped on Victory Square to pay their respects to those who fought and died to save Leningrad. Victory Square contains an enormous monument with some interesting figures, and a museum underneath where a very moving film is shown, depicting the suffering and heroism of the population during the blockade. While I would have liked Mrs. Mondale to see the film, it was not on the schedule for what was supposed to be this "unofficial" visit.

Q: This was a traumatic time for Leningrad.

BUCHANAN: It was indeed. Everybody in Leningrad still relived those days, just as so many of the older generation of Russia continued to relive, throughout all the time that I was in Russia, World War II, which for the men was their heroic period and the period that had most meaning in their lives. The war was constantly on films, plays, you name it, and in the minds of the people. As a result the word "peace" had enormous psychological significance for Russians, stronger than for most Americans.

To return to Mrs. Mondale, standard practice is that you lay flowers at the eternal flame at this monument. Mrs. Mondale was determined not to do this. She had been told to do nothing official. I tried to persuade her, but the issue was taken out of our hands. I had planned to drive Mrs. Mondale in my official car, but the Soviets offered their own much more luxurious Zil, which meant we were essentially in their hands. So when we came close to the monument, our Zil slowed and stopped. We were faced with a fait accompli. If I had known Mrs. Mondale had a bad cold I could have argued that she should not be standing in minus 30 degrees weather in this open air monument. But she had to go through a ceremony which lasted much longer than it should have outside.

When I talked about ceramic works I could see the eyes of the city officials sort of roll. I was convinced that they were going to show us the ceramics but not the artist. To my pleasure and surprise, we were taken to a six story building. The Secret Service that was accompanying Mrs. Mondale refused to let her go up the elevator so we walked up the six flights of stairs to the apartment of a very attractive couple with a large brown poodle and a very pretty young daughter, with her little pigtails. They were both ceramicists who had exhibited at the Bisnale in Venice. They weren't on our list of local artists. It was the best part of the whole visit. They served cognac and coffee and showed some quite interesting ceramic pieces. The couple would occasionally accept invitations after that but not often. They were pretty cautious about their relations with Westerners.

The high point, of course, was the visit to the basement of the Russian museum where the paintings of Malevich, Kandinsky, Popova, Chagall, Goncharova, etc., all these forbidden artists, were hung one on top of the other on panels. We wandered down narrow corridors between the panels, looking at all these treasures. What was interesting and touching was the knowledge and pleasure with which our guide talked about the paintings and the authors. The museum obviously highly valued its collection of avant garde art, and was just waiting for the day when it could be brought up from the basement-which happened with "perestroika". The museum to the great Russian basso, Chaliapin, tells another story of Soviet intolerance. After Chaliapin emigrated to Paris in the 1920s, he became a persona non grata. His secretary, however, remained in Leningrad and looked after Chaliapin's apartment, which contained all his memorabilia. When the secretary died during the blockade, the neighbors went to the Theater Museum, told the officials there that Chaliapin's apartment contained all his costumes and music, and asked what could be done to protect them. The staff of the Theater Museum, who were doubtless on the verge of starvation like the rest of Leningrad, went to the apartment and loaded all the singers' effects on sleds and dragged them across town to their museum. It was only in 1975 that they finally received permission to open a museum dedicated to Chaliapin where all his memorabilia could be shown. When you visited the museum you heard Chaliapin's voice played on his huge, golden Victrola with its funnel speaker.

Q: Did you in this late, late Brezhnev time feel that when you came back to the Soviet Union that there was any change?

BUCHANAN: Yes, there was some physical change. A little better choice of clothes. Some of the things in the theater were perhaps a little more daring. But the difference between 1973 and 1977 was not a great. There were the same smells. The same old ladies were breaking up the ice. No, not a great deal of change, and in some ways, the atmosphere was more depressing. With the negotiations over SALT and the meeting between Brezhnev and Carter in Vienna, there was some improvement in our bilateral relations, but then came Afghanistan and our relations went rapidly downhill.

On the business front, however, there was some progress. The Swedes built a huge hotel, the "Prebaltiskaya" on Vasiliyev Island, in the area where Romanov was rumored to have his mistress. And business tycoons like Armin Hammer, were able to exploit their long-standing relations with the USSR, going in his case back to the time when he met Lenin, to negotiate profitable contracts. Ever the shrewd entrepreneur, Hammer arranged to exchange a not very good Goya painting, since the Hermitage had none at the time, for a more valuable Malevich. One of his big projects, with which I became involved, consisted of exchanging potash fertilizer from mines, which I had visited south of Murmansk, for urea, which he imported from Florida. When I decided to visit the huge warehouse, which Hammer was building in Ventspils, Latvia, I do not believe that I knew about the poor state of morale on the part of the young, American construction crew. I quickly learned, however, that the local police were harassing the Americans when they tried to meet Latvian girls. I told the local political boss at the warehouse that the men were simple Joes, who had been there a long time and needed a bit of recreation, and he seemed to understand. In fact, one of the men eventually married the girl, whom he had been dating, who was perhaps unjustly described as a prostitute. We failed to discourage him.

My meeting in Ventspils was discussed in a two part article entitled "the Mask" which appeared in Leningradskaya Pravda. The article purported to be an expose of our consulate as a nest of spies. The official in Ventspils protested over my effort to browbeat him, to facilitate spy activity on the part of the local American workers. A close reading of the article made it clear, it seemed to me, that the real target of the article was not our consulate but Soviet scientists, notably nuclear scientists, who were being warned to stay away from the Americans.

I was as also accused in this article of trying to bring in Zionist propaganda. At issue was a Jewish student at Leningrad University, who had had most of her personal books confiscated, including numerous books on Jewish history. I had protested to the authorities that she had come to Leningrad as an American student, who had a perfect right to keep books for her personal use. It was not like the Jewish visitors who came to the USSR with quantities of Jewish literature for distribution to the Jewish dissidents. If the Soviets had really wanted to discredit me as a spy, they could have made a much stronger case. Their purpose rather was to warn Soviet citizens against having too close relations with the consulate.

I am afraid that the Soviets were not the only ones who became paranoid in Russia. It was a bit of a professional disease among old Soviet hands, as I will illustrate. I developed a hobby in Leningrad of looking for the properties that our former ministers and ambassadors had occupied there before the revolution. Since we had never owned property, each envoy had rented a residence that fitted his pocket book. I spent quite a bit of time at the Saltykov-Schedrin library looking into old Baedekers to locate the addresses of the American chiefs of mission, and into old city maps to find the streets. Since both the names and the numbers of the streets had changed at least twice, this was quite an enterprise. At first they were very cooperative and prompt in the library, bringing me old books from 1813, containing maps. But when I went back to ask to see the same books, they seemed to take hours to find them. I suspect that certain people were convinced that I must be leaving messages in the books, using them as a sort of "drop", and they were frustrated searching for the evidence. In any event, I worked late one weekend when the temperature outside was minus 42-45 degrees. I was driving myself, wearing an expensive mink fur hat to keep warm. When I came out of the library late in the evening, there was no sign of my hat. Since this was a time of considerable harassment, I concluded that the KGB wished to pass me a message, not to play games in the library. So I made quite a stink, carrying my protest even to the Foreign Ministry in Moscow. The Soviets apparently decided eventually to get Buchanan off their back, and several months later I was presented with a new mink fur hat, better than the one I lost.

I came away with a new hat, but a bad conscience. In the meantime I had visited the library wearing another fur hat, but instead of giving it to the cloakroom on the left, I handed it to the old "dezhurnaya" in the cloakroom on the right. I told him that I expected to find my hat when I came out; telling him what had happened before. He was shocked, asked where I had left the hat, and told me that I should never leave things with the young dejhurnaya across the way, implying clearly that nothing was safe over there. I concluded that probably someone saw my warm hat on that very cold evening and made a deal, perhaps for a bottle of vodka. Given the story from Moscow of the guests who lost their fur coats at a Western Embassy reception, I should not have been surprised, or so quick to blame the goons we loved to hate.

Q: You left there in the summer of 1980. By the end of the 80s the Soviet Union was in the process of dissolving. What did you think about whither the Soviet Union at the time you left?

BUCHANAN: At the time I left I was quite disturbed about the thrust of our policy. I thought it had gotten too negative and shortsighted. I wrote a very long two-part cable regarding our policy toward the USSR as I had watched it evolve over the years. Marshall Shulman, who was then I recall Under Secretary for Political Affairs, described my cable as "sort of useful," obviously concerned by its implied criticism of administration policy.

Q: The Carter Administration had gone in with great ideas of how sweetness and light would open up the Soviets and then had been hit in the face and it was almost like a lover rejected and turned things around too far.

BUCHANAN: Let's see, when did I send that? Yes, it was before I left Leningrad because my deputy had to finish getting it out after I had already left.

In any case, many people liked it and my neighbor, Chalmer Roberts of the Washington Post somehow heard about it and said I should write it up. In any case, I ended up writing an article for Foreign Policy called "The Real Russia," (which was not my title and one I didn't like), which came out in the spring of 1982.

I argued in the article that "detente" was a more subversive policy against the Soviets than a crude hard line. I wrote at the time out of concern that an ideologue like Romanov might come to power, who would seize on a hard line American policy as justification for his own internal crackdown. In the longer term, I did postulate that reform might come to Russia, as it had historically, not as the result of any mass movement but as the result of the efforts of a reforming Tsar. But I certainly did not anticipate in the article that this reforming Tsar would come so soon, in the form of Gorbachev. It was Gorbachev's ill-conceived program for reforming a system, which he understood was increasingly unable to compete on the world scale, that destroyed the Soviet system. Reagan's military buildup did not bring down the Soviet Union, but it was seen by Gorbachev, I believe, as "objectively" helpful to his efforts to argue with his hardliners that the USSR could not compete with the US and required a quite different approach in Central Europe, Gorbachev apparently hoped to persuade the West that "we are no devils bent on aggression, but a civilized state with which you can negotiate in safety." Shevardnadze claimed, and probably he did understand, that the policies of concession and perestroika would lead to the unraveling of the Soviet empire. But Gorbachev apparently dreamed, like Khrushchev before him, that he could reform the Communist Party and revitalize the USSR and its alliance system, without fatally undermining the whole communist structure. History can only bless him for his huge miscalculation

If I was unhappy about the trend of our policy toward Russia, I was equally unhappy with the trend in the Foreign Service itself. It no longer seemed the career serve that I had been so proud to serve. I was admittedly influenced in my feeling by a nasty personnel quarrel at the consulate. Our GSO had organized a vendetta against the Administrative Officer, dividing the consulate into factions. In an earlier era, I would have sent the couple home, when it was clear that they would not control their feelings. But I was concerned that defending myself against a grievance suit from a minority woman would lead to endless litigation, and a drain on my time and energy. I should have simply soldiered on, knocking heads together, and forcing people to behave civilly to each other. Unwisely, I informed the EUR Executive Director, who visited Leningrad, of the problem. He concluded after talking to the parties that the GSO should be moved to other work. I was pleased to use her as an economist, but this required permission from the Director General. I accordingly "made waves," reflecting on my ability to manage personnel. The next thing I knew, the Director of Personnel, Bob Brewster, announced that he was coming to Leningrad on Sunday. Saturday night I got a call from the airport where Brewster was mad as a hatter because he had not been met. At the time I was giving a reception to which he refused to come. I showed the incoming cable proving that it was his mistake, but he never had the manners or courage to apologize. If Brewster had had Eastern European experience, he would have known that there were always morale problems, particularly with non-Russian speaking members of the staff, and I had acquired a particularly cantankerous lady in place of her delightful predecessor. This was further proof to him that something was wrong. He could not understand how this could be, since he acknowledged that Nancy and I apparently went out of our way to do things for the staff. In my perhaps glamorized memory of the old Foreign Service in Moscow, officers did their duty without whining and complaining.

John Ausland, the former DCM in Norway, had tried to persuade me that I should have retired many years earlier; that I would quickly earn more in retirement than I was working. The fact that I had been frozen at the Class I level for years made the idea of retirement even more attractive. That, and an idea I had to write the history of the American diplomats and residents of St. Petersburg before the revolution. So when it was clear that there were no posts opening up in the foreseeable future, I applied for retirement in June 1981. At the time, I was doing research on Soviet policy in Africa at the National Defense University. In retrospect, I made a mistake. Not only was the salary ceiling broken shortly after my retirement, which would have helped my pension, but I was not really ready to retire. Impatience has always been a failing. That summer after retirement I got a message, while in Europe, asking if I wished to do some work on what they called Soviet "active measures" in Africa for INR. Active measures means political warfare. As a result, for several years, I did studies for INR, which were always very highly classified because they were based usually on CIA reporting of what the Soviets were doing in the way of political warfare in Africa. After several studies of Soviet behavior in various African states, I undertook to analyze the 60 or so Soviet officials, who had been sent as Ambassadors to Africa. What was their background? Why were they selected? How many of them were Communist Party officials in disgrace? The assignment of the number two in the KGB to Ouagadougou, for example, as hardly a promotion. Soviets were clearly Africanists in the Soviet foreign service, but others were clearly in political trouble. Certain key posts...Ethiopia, perhaps Algeria and Angola were reserved for trusted Party officials, usually with Central Committee status. This work as a WAE (when actually employed) kept up my security clearance and involved me, at least indirectly, in Soviet affairs.

I became more directly involved with Soviet affairs in 1986, outside the INR context. You will recall the flap over the Marine guard, Sergeant Lonetree, who supposedly allowed the KGB in Moscow to enter our Chancery building. This issue contributed to the decision to get rid of all our Soviet employees. Gene Boster, an old_Moscow hand and I were brought back to assess the potential damage of this suspected security leak. We read files for three months to determine what the Soviets might have read if they had had entry to our files, and finally we were sent to Moscow, and in my case on to Leningrad, to make the same assessment there with the Embassy and consulate files. We concluded that the worst damage would have been what they might have overheard if they had managed to put a bug in the secure "box." But the more that I looked at the likelihood that the KGB actually entered the Chancery, the more unlikely it seemed. I tended to agree with the analysis of some retired CIA "beltway bandits", who had briefed us before our departure, that the KGB would have needed to neutralize probably three not two guards to be sure they could enter without being caught. Of all the hours that Lonetree was on duty with his suspected accomplice, they were only together on duty a total of 8 hours. Burned by the Walker case, Naval Intelligence was apparently just too eager to demonstrate that it was "vigilant" and eventually concluded that no entry had taken place. Their mistake bought a new Honda and a trip to Moscow, so I could not complain.

In 1990, I went back to Moscow working for INS, Immigration and Naturalization Service, as an interviewer of would-be refugees. I spent six weeks in Rome waiting for a visa, which was hardly a hardship, and then stayed at the Ukraine Hotel across the river from the embassy while I interviewed would-be refugees. Under the Frank Lautenberg amendment to the 1980 Refugee Act, there were certain categories of people who were given special dispensation. They were considered by definition to be persecuted...Soviet Jews, Evangelical Christians, notably Pentecostals, Ukrainian Uniats and Ukrainian Autocephalous. Jewish applicants, notably from Moscow, were obviously well briefed on what to say to demonstrate a fear of future persecution. Some incidents of anti-Semitism certainly contributed to genuine panic among some of the applicants. It was virtually impossible, to reject even the most well-established Jewish applicant claiming persecution, and with them, all the members of their extended family. The Pentecostals were naively honest in what they had to tell us, but they came with huge, uneducated families, and we could anticipate that they would soon become a burden on our welfare system. As Pentecostals, they had refused to let their children join the Communist youth organization, the Komsomol, a requirement for higher education. As a result, they remained essentially manual or collective farm workers. Instead of being tied by these discriminatory criteria, we interviewers would have liked to be able to emulate the Canadians, who would look at a family and decide by more objective standards: how is their English? Will they assimilate easily in our country? Do they have skills that we need?

Under our program, many of the people accepted as refugees are old and difficult to assimilate. Brighton Beach in New York is an example of a community composed of dissatisfied immigrants, many of whom have made no effort to assimilate or even learn English. The Jewish community, however, has been very effective in providing a support system for its immigrants so that the percentage on welfare is lower, I believe, than with most other immigrants. We now have the phenomenon that Jewish refugees, who have become successful in America, are returning to Russia, protected by their American passport or at least Green Card, to show the Russians how to run a market economy. The efforts of our applicants to prove that they qualified as refugees was sometimes hilarious, if also touching. Some Russians, whose parents had probably hidden the fact that they had Jewish blood by changing their names and documents, now tried desperately to find proof of their Jewishness. Or simply to invent the fact. Others discovered that if you couldn't claim any Jewish parentage, maybe you could prove that you were a Pentecostal. I had a lovely young couple and child, would have liked to have let in. They had good English, were very attractive, had the right attitude and you knew they would have done very well in the States in a short time. They came in and said they were Pentecostals. I asked since when, and they gave me a date, which was fairly close to the time when the decision was made to make Pentecostal one of our special categories. So, I asked some questions to determine whether they really were Pentecostal. "Were you christened?" "Oh, yes, of course." And they gave me a date when they were christened. "By water?" How about "spiritual christening?" Well, "spiritual christening" refers to the moment when the spirit of the Lord is said to descend upon you and you speak in foreign tongues. Unfortunately, they didn't know what spiritual christening was. They looked up to heaven, but heaven didn't help them. And so I would have been overruled had I accepted them, but we would have liked to have had more flexibility.

Q: I know, as an old visa hand, exactly what you mean.

BUCHANAN: So, I was there in the visa mill churning these things out. It was always very sad because, under freezing conditions, you would find lines and lines of people, many with children, extending out to the street. Some of them had come from Central Asia and were dirty, often very smelly and some of them had very sad tales to tell.

I went back for six weeks in 1991 and had the luck to be living in the Ukraina Hotel in a room on the 21st story, opposite the "White House," the parliament building, when the attempted putsch took place on August 21. I was awakened at 4 a.m. by the rumble of tanks coming down Kutuzovskii Prospekt under my window, fortunately to help and not attack Yeltsin and his supporters. It was a moving sight to walk across the bridge through the barricades to our Embassy on the other side. A lot of the young entrepreneurs and students of Moscow suddenly realized that their future was at stake and came to defend the White House. But the majority of Muscovites waited, in typical Russian fashion, to see what was the "correlation of political forces, " Kto Kovo."

Four days after the abortive putsch, an older INS man of Russian parentage and I went down to the Caucasus. We were in Pyatigorsk and watched an open air meeting called to discuss the failed coup. It was obviously a time for a settling of accounts among local politicians and the citizenry. The Cossacks were very visible and vocal, The local Party bosses were shouted down as they tried to explain why they had waited so long before jumping on the Yeltsin bandwagon by sending a message of support. Speakers cited all sorts of misdeeds and corruption, including how city hall had sold licenses to friends to open offices in city hall itself.

We returned to Mt. Elbrus, where Na and I had skied in 1978. We took the gondola ride to the top and then rode a chair lift that looked as though the metal chairs had been welded together by someone in their back garage. We said "What are we doing on this?" Anyway we survived, but as we got off, a little old lady came up and handed me a tiny little booklet published by a German Protestant sect basically praying for our souls. I think, perhaps, she thought we would be vulnerable after our chair lift experience. A company in Washington interested in doing business in Russia asked me to look up a particular lady who was proposing to sell a variety of raw materials like marble. She proved to be a very impressive woman who was an official in one of the more progressive districts (raions) of Moscow. Although she was Jewish, she was determined not to emigrate but to remain and fight for a better Russia. In 1992, an old friend and Leningrader, Bob Barry, who was then Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, asked if I would help out the Embassy in Moscow with humanitarian aid shipments that were getting underway, consisting of military surplus supplies from Europe. Beginning in February, I became the liaison between the Embassy and the Russian organization that handled the receipt of aid. I was given room 401 in the Russian aid headquarters, the former Gorbachev press center. As an illustration of the times, I ran one day into an interesting young man, who was a deputy in the parliament. He was red in the face and spitting mad. It seems that he had arranged to get our building for the aid organization, with Yeltsin signing the proper decree in January. Suddenly an official from Yakutia in Siberia appeared with a document, also signed by Yeltsin, giving the building to the Yakuts. Naively I said: "oh, I didn't know that the Yakuts had so much influence." He replied, "influence Hell, diamonds." Like South Africa, Acadia is rich in gold but particularly diamonds. It has ties with the South African diamond firm, De Beers. The Yakuts had obviously paid off someone, who probably forged Yeltsin's signature, to get our building. In a typical bureaucratic compromise, the Yakuts ended up with two floors, including my room, while the aid organization retained floors one, five and six.

The hard-driving Richard Armitage ran this humanitarian effort. For State, I helped his representative in Moscow decide what Russian organizations would receive what supplies and monitor the arrival of those supplies at the airport, and their receipt by the agreed organizations. We sent Russian-speaking American students with the supplies to monitor their actual delivery to the needy recipients. A number of times I stood for six or seven hours at the airport in freezing temperatures, while we wondered where the trucks were that were supposed to meet the shipment. I personally accompanied only one delivery of supplies, in this case to a prison about five hours from Moscow-the only time we made such a selection. We arrived late at night. Our packages were supposed to be for the young men in the prison, many of whom had been cooped up 29 to a room for as much as two years, with very little food.-not for the older male inmates. To my embarrassment, most of our boxes said "women" on the side, containing everything from tampax to facial cream. The rather fatherly officer in charge of the prison reassured me, saying that the 256 women on his staff would greatly appreciate the shipment. And since the wardens in prisons in Russia often do not live much better than the prisoners, I didn't mind.

As part of my liaison function, I was invited to accompany the Minister of Social Affairs, a very attractive lady, to Frankfurt, flying on an AN 140, the largest transport in the world at that time. The Russians wanted to show that they were helping with the shipment of humanitarian aid.

Q: What about military supplies?

BUCHANAN: We liquidated many of the military warehouses in Western Europe for dairy products, food, clothes, canned goods, chili (the Russians didn't know what to do with it and didn't like it), and things like that. A lot of the stuff you had to cook and we had a little brochure on how to do this. A great deal of what we sent was of very little direct use to the Russians. It was symbolic more than practical aid, often probably being used for barter or sale.

Q: This was because of the basic sort of collapse of the internal system of the Soviet Union?

BUCHANAN: Yes, that is right. It followed the release of prices when everything became tremendously expensive and people couldn't afford to buy very much.. It was not famine yet, but people were hungry.

We had a query from Montclair, New Jersey, regarding the situation in its sister city, Chenopovets, northwest of Moscow, so I went up there on a weekend. What I determined, as in most of these places, the people were not starving. What they really needed was medical supplies. I went to a 1,000 bed hospital there run by a very impressive surgeon. Among other things I said to him, "You know Westerners are concerned about going to Russian hospitals it is weeks before they are released. Why?" He said, "In all of my hospital I have one EKG machine. That is the only apparatus that I have. I have to keep people a long time in bed to get some idea what may be wrong with them. I don't have any equipment. We would give anything for even secondhand equipment."

That was really my major push when I came back. I wrote a long report on Chenepovets stating they could use notably medical equipment, funneled through some of the private organizations that were beginning to be established in Chenopovets. The USSR, as you know, had no tradition of charity; in fact it was forbidden for non-state organizations to do charitable work. But charity organizations, both church and private, were slowly beginning to be put in place. Some of our aid could be channeled through these organizations. That was one of the conclusions of my visit.

The most interesting visit that I had was to Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan. Secretary of Defense Cheney's daughter worked for Ambassador Armitage, head of our humanitarian aid program: she was in charge of conversion of military industry to civilian use. She asked me to go out to Semipalatinsk to prepare the way for two members of the Executive Corps to go there to see what they could do to convert the Russian "Nevada testing grounds", if you will, to peaceful use. The idea of dropping a couple of American businessmen with no Russian on the cold plains of Kazakhstan didn't seem to make a lot of sense to me, but I went out anyway. I went out prepared for a warmer climate and arrived in a blizzard and practically went into shock I was so cold.

The mayor of Semipalatinsk had just come back from a year in a business school in Tokyo. He had all sorts of bright ideas of what he thought could be done for his town. There is the town of Semipalatinsk and then there is what they call the "polygon" or military research complex. When I was in Semipalatinsk, I learned that there was a delegation of American high temperature experts visiting the polygon. I concluded that, where there is something of serious scientific interest in Russia, American corporations will send out their own delegations without any nudging from the US Government.

Among my more interesting visits in Semipalatinsk was one to a factory producing amphibious vehicles, and other small vehicles for the military. It was a caricature of a filthy Russian plant, with debris strewn all over the place. The youngish, arrogant director had his own ideas of what he wanted to produce in the new market economy, namely, an amphibious, all terrain vehicle that he planned to sell on the world market. He was totally scornful of the suggestion by the mayor of Semipalatinsk that he convert his plant into the first vehicular industry of Kazakhstan. His clearly racial reaction to a proposal by a Kazakh, much better educated than he, belied the frequent claims made by Kazakhs regarding the racial harmony pervading in their country.

From the military vehicle plant we visited a Kazakh plant for cutting marble. The contrast was striking. The Kazakh was immaculate. I had seen this in Central Asia where the Russian quarter was dirty and the native quarter was kept clean and neat. Different cultures and traditions. The marble plant manager complained to me because some fellow from New Jersey had swindled them. He had promised to do all sorts of things, and he had a contract, but he wasn't following through, etc.

My visit to Semipalatinsk told me a little bit of what we needed to do in Russia as a whole, namely, do something to promote local small industries-for canning, producing bricks or glass factories-enterprises that would provide local employment and also provide the consumer goods that Russia needed. AID was not doing this. That became a main theme of an article I wrote after I came back.

The most difficult part of my trip, besides persuading, particularly the Russian military that was very suspicious of my whole mission, was hospitality. The great thing in Kazakhstan, is horse meat and horse sausage, which I found virtually inedible. The mayor invited me back for potluck dinner. The advantage of potluck was I was not the honored guest and didn't get the sheep's eye. But what I did get was an enormous platter of very tough pasta with piles of this inedible sausage on top. Aside from the fact that the lady of the house insisted that I take a second helping, they were a charming family. They insisted that their son be present to learn how to behave in public.

I came away from Kazakhstan with a variety of ideas of what could be done and what I would suggest that our Executive Corps guinea pigs look at. First, I suggested that they choose men who grew up in desolate areas like Cheyenne, Wyoming. My whole trip proved to be academic, or worse. I was told when I asked when the executives were leaving, that it had been decided that the radiation level in the Semipalatinsk area was too high to risk sending someone there. Thank you very much.

Q: And would you mind standing a little away from the desk!

BUCHANAN: On the basis of that humanitarian aid assignment, I wrote an article that appeared in the April 1993 Foreign Service Journal concerning the type of aid that we should be trying to provide to Russia, and how we needed to understand that Russia would work out its own path to development in its own good time. What was required of America was patience and understanding-not an American forte. 1992 was my last professional contact with Russia. In 1994 I concocted a project which would have provided me with an excuse to keep going back to Russia, namely, promoting a sister resort relationship between Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where I vote, and Teharda, which is a nature reserve near Dombai, which is an Alpine ski and climbing resort, both in the Karachai-Cherkess Autonomous Republic on the Russian border with Georgia. This spectacularly beautiful area was former Premier Kosygin's favorite retreat and the most luxurious hotel inn in the area is still referred to as Kosygin's dacha. A local businessman is trying to convert it into a retreat for the rich and famous. I went there with letters from the mayor of Jackson, and a box of medical supplies for the local hospital. I arranged the trip through the divorced wife of our former Elbrus friends, now remarried to an American in Oklahoma. Her friends in Moscow must have thought that I was coming with big bucks, because they arranged for me to meet upon my arrival with a Vice Minister of the Economy. My most intriguing contact claimed to work for the Federation of UNESCO clubs, one of whose functions was to promote sister city relations with the West. This supposed school mate of the vascular surgeon-alpinist, who was accompanying our small delegation of three Americans to Dombai, was quick to tell me that he had retired from the KGB only two years before. He said that he was now a member of the international organization of retired intelligence officers founded by Bill Whipple of CIA, and that he had toured 33 cities in the US lecturing about the CIA. He was presumably coming along to see what this old "cold warrior" was doing at his age, trying to set up some project in an ethnically sensitive area of the Caucasus. He had done his home work, reminding me, for example, who had been my station chief in Leningrad. Actually, he was a quite amusing and helpful fellow, a former dean of the consular corps in, I believe in Osaka, Japan.

As the oldest man present, I was regularly named "Tamadan" or master of ceremonies Caucasus style for our evening banquets. To judge by my frequent hangovers, I was not the drinker of vodka that I used to be. The skiing in "Dombai also left something to be desired: ungroomed slopes and a chairlift that broke down, leaving me freezing, floating in air for two and a half hours, unlike my companions too high to jump. A young lady seated in the chair beside me probably saved me from hypothermia by periodically rubbing my back. Dombai has great tourist potential, but the facilities for the 600-800,000 Soviet tourists who used to throng there are now virtually empty as Russians who can afford to travel, prefer to go to Switzerland. I did not generate much interest in my project when I returned to Jackson. The mayor who sponsored me had been fired, and I doubtless deterred skiers by my overly frank description of what needed to be done to make Dombai a modern ski resort. I have not returned to Russia since 1994, but I am again planning a trip there, this time via Anchorage, Alaska, to explore Siberia and the Maritime Provinces. I cannot explain this addiction for Russia. It is rather like reading a fascinating, disturbing novel that you want to put down but can't. The Foreign Service is not the career that it used to be. But still, life in the Service can expose you to a language and culture, and human experience that can become your life passion, if you are as fortunate as I was. It is worth the gamble.

End of interview