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

JOHN A. BUCHE

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is the 3rd of August, 1999. This is an interview with John A. Buche, and this is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. John, let's start at the beginning. Can you tell me when and were you were born and something about your family?

BUCHE: I was born in Richmond, Indiana, on January 13, 1935. I was the first of five children. My father was at the time working for a wholesale food company, a locally owned company. He attended Earlham College for two or three years and then dropped out. My mother had graduated from Earlham. I was raised in Indiana.

Q: Earlham is what sort of a school?

BUCHE: It is a Quaker school. It is a liberal arts school, probably never went beyond 3,000 students. My grandparents on my mother's side were both graduates of Earlham, and my grandfather, Rufus Allen, was chairman of the board for many years at Earlham. After I finished grade school in Richmond, I went off to study for the Catholic priesthood at Saint Meinrad Seminary, in southern Indiana. I stayed there for about six years, and after deciding I did not want to become a priest, I left and entered Purdue University. I graduated in 1957, with a Bachelor of Science degree (summa cum laude) and was immediately drafted into the U.S. Army.

Q: I'd like to go back just a bit. Where were you?

BUCHE: I was in St. Andrew's School in Richmond. It was a Catholic parish school, taught by the Franciscan nuns of Oldenburg, Indiana.

Q: Well, I was wondering, we try to grab some social history whilwe're at it.

BUCHE: Fine. I was focusing on what I did later.

Q: I know, but I feel that I would be delinquent if I didn't, as our cadre comes from quite diverse backgrounds. What was your impression of going to a Catholic school run by nuns? This would be in the 1940s.

BUCHE: That is correct. I had nothing to compare it with. If I had not gone to St. Andrew's Catholic School, I would have gone to public schools. My friends who were not Catholic went to those schools. We competed in basketball, school to school, and then during the summer, we competed one neighborhood against another neighborhood in baseball. Richmond was a typical small Midwestern town of about 35,000. What I remember of Richmond is that school was enjoyable. I always did like school. I also enjoyed the vacation times because we went on small excursions around Richmond, fishing and sometimes picnicking. But I was looking for other things - not that I really disliked Richmond, but I was eager to see what the rest of the United States had to offer. That may have been subconsciously an attraction for going to Saint Meinrad. I am pretty sure at the time, at the age of thirteen or fourteen, I really wanted to become a priest. I was a devout, serious kid, and also one of the best students in the grade school. I think those qualities brought me to the attention of the assistant pastor, who then encouraged me to think about the priesthood. Since I had an uncle who was a priest and an older cousin who was studying at St. Meinrad to be a priest, I thought it would be interesting to follow their example. I could thus get away from Richmond and live in a boarding school. Also, in our small-town family and parish circles, there was some prestige in being a seminarian.

Q: Where was this located?

BUCHE: It is in the town of Saint Meinrad, Indiana, in southern Indiana, close to Jasper, Tell City, and Ferdinand. It is twenty miles north of the Ohio River, and if you keep going north you will hit Indianapolis. The institution was run by Benedictine monks and comprised a high school, college, and school of theology, plus the monastery for the monks.

Q: It sounds like you get away from Richmond, but it doesn't sounlike you're getting away to the big city.

BUCHE: No, it certainly was not the big city, but I heard it was a place where some good minds went and also where there was an active intramural sports program and that I would like it. And I really did. I found life as a seminarian at St. Meinrad to be everything I had hoped for. The academic standards were demanding, but I was always at the top of my class. The religious life was quite different from what I had experienced in Richmond, but I assimilated the discipline and instruction and earnestly sought to advance my spiritual development. Participation in athletics was mandatory, and that suited me well, since I was a good athlete. While I was quite happy as a young seminarian for the first four or five years, it was becoming apparent to me when I went home at Christmastime and during the summers, that there were other attractions in the world beyond St. Meinrad. While the priesthood was my goal as a young teenager, once I approached twenty, I saw more interesting options for my life. I decided in my second year of college at St. Meinrad to give up the goal of becoming a priest and to go to Purdue University to study for a secular career. (My family had moved from Richmond to West Lafayette, Indiana in 1954.) I was attracted to women and found the idea of a celibate life as a priest more and more unappealing. I had no girlfriend at the time, of course, since it was forbidden to date or even think about dating. The monks of St. Meinrad strongly encouraged us to work during our summer vacations at jobs where there would not be women present. Factory jobs or construction work were considered ideal. I worked two summers in a factory, one summer on a highway survey crew, and one summer on the New York Central Railroad as a track repairman.

Q: Yes, a gandy-dancer?

BUCHE: I was a gandy-dancer, believe it or not, and I could keep up with the others in hammering the spikes into the ties after about four or five weeks of on-the-job training.

Q: That's quite an art.

BUCHE: It is; it requires rhythm. I found out that to be an effective member of the four-man team, I should not hit the spike with full strength, since we worked an eight-hour day, and there was not much shade around. We had to pace ourselves and keep the rhythm. The four men on the team rotate every quarter hour. Two men pound the spikes, and the other two do what is called "nipping". One person uses a crowbar to raise the wooden tie up a few inches and the other tamps gravel with a shovel in underneath the tie.

Q: This is quite an art. In the old days, one could say "a gandy-dancer," and everyone would know what it means, but this is an unfamiliar term to many people today. There was a song about the gandy-dancer.

BUCHE: Oh, there must have been a lot of songs about them. We certainly did not sing any on the job. It was too hot, and the work so strenuous that we needed all our energy to get through the day. I did not like the work, but it was very well paying. When I returned to school and the monks learned where I had worked for the summer, they told me I had the ideal job for a seminarian - hard manual labor, exclusively with men. I said there were other aspects of working with gandy-dancers which were not so positive. They were at the bottom of the working class, and in most cases were men who had problems holding other jobs. Their language was filled with profanity, and the stories they told about their women, their drinking and fighting, their encounters with the law, and other aspects of their life were not what the good monks had in mind for a young seminarian to hear.

Q: Well, I would think that you would have felt rather constrained at a certain point. How much theology were you hit with at Saint Meinrad? Did you also have classes in English, history, and the other usual subjects?

BUCHE: This was the thing that surprised me more than anything else. We had morning mass and evening prayers, and some devotional reading, but it was a very heavy academic schedule of liberal arts subjects such as math, history, science, English, Latin, and Greek. It was an old-fashion classical school, and the monks' approach was "to form the mind" during the high school and the first two years of college. This was known as the minor seminary. The next two years of college and the four years of theology made up the major seminary, where the emphasis was on studies and spiritual formation directly relating to the priesthood. The idea was that a student had to have a broadly based education to be able to understand the philosophy and theology concentration of the major seminary.

Q: Where would you say the faculty, the priests, and nuns, werfrom?-

BUCHE: There were no nuns. The only women we ever saw at St. Meinrad were the families of the students who came to visit. The faculty was entirely male, and they were all Benedictine monks.

Q: I was going to ask -

BUCHE: All Benedictines. Q: Benedictines. Where were they from?

BUCHE: They came in 1849 from Einsiedeln in Switzerland. Their mother abbey is near Zï¿½rich. There is still a very close relationship between the two abbeys.

Q: So you weren't hit with what became the predominant strain in thUnited States, which was a sort of Irish Catholicism.

BUCHE: No, this was Swiss-German, and it was very much of that culture. Most of the monks were of German background, but were born in the United States. I entered St. Meinrad in 1949, and there were still a few monks who had come over before World War II from the mother abbey. Where St. Meinrad is located is an area in the U.S., where there was a heavy immigration from southern Germany and where the older people still spoke German among themselves. The area was predominantly Catholic. German was, of course, the preferred modern language for the students to study. There were a dozen or so in my class who spoke German in varying degrees at home. The school did make a concession and offered French, but we were encouraged to choose German. There was no Spanish taught. There was a very disciplined Germanic approach in the school, not just to religion and theology, but to everyday living. Our day was modeled to a certain extent on the monastery. One got up at 5:25 A.M. for mass on weekdays, and at 5:55 A.M. on Sundays. After mass, we had breakfast together and went to our various classes from Monday through Saturday. We ate lunch and dinner together. During one meal each day we remained silent and listened to a reading from scripture or from a spiritual work. The Prefects made sure that our table manners were correct, that we were properly groomed, that our cassock (the long, black robe we wore) was clean and our shoes shined. Almost every activity was programmed, and bells would ring to announce the commencement or termination. We studied together in large halls, and at the end of the day, a bell would announce that it was time to go from our study halls in complete silence to our dormitories. Each dorm contained about thirty beds, head to foot, with a yard of space on the sides. Our bed had to be made properly each morning and all our clothes stowed in a locker. The disciplined, communal life at St. Meinrad prepared me well for basic training in the U.S. Army.

Q: While you were getting your history and all, were you learning much about the world? Was Indiana or the U.S. the prime focus, or was it broader?

BUCHE: Oh, no. Although it was a very small settlement isolated on a hilltop, Saint Meinrad was cosmopolitan in many ways. They had visiting priests constantly from other abbeys throughout the United States, and they encouraged one or two of the students to come from Einsiedeln or other abbeys outside the United States. I recall that we did not have any courses in Indiana history or government. Our history courses covered America and the world. We had a heavy dose of classical Greek and Roman history to complement our study of Greek and Latin. Our professors had studied elsewhere for their advanced degrees, since at that time, St. Meinrad was accredited to award only a BA. Interestingly, many studied outside of the United States. Some of the monks completed their theological studies at Saint Meinrad and then went elsewhere for graduate training; usually to Catholic University (in Washington, DC) or to Notre Dame. Others went elsewhere for theology after completing their undergraduate work. Mainly, they went to Rome, Paris, Louvain (in Belgium), or Innsbruck (in Austria). The latter was a favorite because it was German-speaking. Those monks who were considered by the abbot as not having the ability to become teachers or canon lawyers remained at St. Meinrad for their entire education.

Q: St. Meinrad Seminary was of Swiss origins with connections to Austria and Germany. While you were there, not too long after World War II, were you getting any sort of reflections about Germany and what happened in Germany during the Hitler time?

BUCHE: No, we did not, as far as I can recall. We knew about the camps and the extermination campaigns, but there was no emphasis given to the subject. It was treated as part of history. We did not have any exhibits or any special lectures on the holocaust. There were, however, no efforts as far as I know to turn students away from the subject.

Q: But this was only one part of a whole.

BUCHE: What was more threatening to the Western world, as far as some of the monks were concerned, was Communism. I recall at the time we were told to pray for the Croatian priests and hierarchy who were being "unjustly" jailed or executed by Tito. Also the subject of our prayers were the Catholic priests in Eastern Europe who were persecuted by the Soviets. In later life I was quite chagrined at my naï¿½vetï¿½ when I realized that many of those priests were pretty nasty people who were guilty of collaborating with the Nazis in persecuting Jews and others.

Q: Yes, yes. I spent five years in Yugoslavia, and I learned a loon that subject.

BUCHE: There was this feeling of solidarity with Catholics, wherever they were, and so we were to pray and participate in special novenas for the persecuted church in Eastern Europe. Several cardinals were high on our prayer list, [Cardinal] Mindszenty of Hungary and the Yugoslav, St-

Q: Stepanic.

BUCHE: Stepanic. I wanted to say Stepanovic. Stepanic was one wwere all supposed to pray for.

Q: When did you decide to make a turn away from where you were going?

BUCHE: As I said, I went home every Christmas and during the summer. I think it was in 1954, during the first summer I spent in West Lafayette, when I began having serious doubts about my vocation to the priesthood. I took a job in a factory making pre-fabricated houses, and worked the second shift from three o'clock in the afternoon to midnight. I had every morning free and decided to take some courses at Purdue University. I took two courses which were not offered at St. Meinrad, an economics course and an advanced German literature course. (I decided not to ask permission from St. Meinrad to take the courses, since the answer would have been negative. The monks would not have objected to the courses, but to the fact that I would come into contact with coeds.) And I did come into daily contact with coeds, as I was the only male in the German class and one of two or three males in the econ class. I began thinking whether I really wanted to become a priest. At the end of the summer, the answer was still yes, so I returned to St. Meinrad. I continued to think about that all-important question and to pray for guidance. At Christmas time, I participated in a wedding of a close friend from grade school, looked up a few of my classmates from the summer session, and met the sons and daughters of some of my parents' new friends and acquaintances in Lafayette. The question of my future became more acute. I was leaning toward abandoning the goal of priesthood, but decided to return to St. Meinrad to discuss the issue with my confessor.

Q: You were about how old then?

BUCHE: I must have been about 20.

Q: Well, what did you do?

BUCHE: I told my father confessor at Saint Meinrad that I had some doubts, but I thought the best thing to do would be to stay at the school - I was very happy there - and wait until summertime to make up my mind. I did not think there was a real need to make a quick decision. That was not, however, the way the monks approached the issue. All I had to say was, "I have some doubts," and the way the Saint Meinrad mind worked was if you have doubts, you should not stay here. You can resolve your doubts better by leaving immediately for two reasons. One, you think you know what the priesthood is; you do not yet have the experience of living as an adult lay person. Leave now, and if you wish, you can come back in four or five years. What Father Adelbert told me seemed logical. He also told me the second reason: "We don't want a lot of doubting, conflicted young men around here because they would infect others." I agreed to leave, but I first had to finish some term papers and a few other projects. Father Adelbert said to forget the papers and the projects and call my parents to tell them I planned to leave in two days. I called up my father and said, "Dad, I'm leaving and coming home." He asked what made me change my mind, since I had said nothing to my family during the Christmas break. I told him we could discuss that at home. And so after some hasty farewells to my classmates and professors, I left. During the six-hour bus trip home, I was filled with sadness and a fear of the unknown, but also with great relief that I had at last made a decision. When I returned to St. Meinrad for my first visit some eight months later, I then knew I had made the right choice to leave. I have remained deeply appreciative of what I learned at St. Meinrad, from the classrooms as well as from the way of life of the monks. I have visited St. Meinrad dozens of times and have remained in contact with some of my classmates and professors. I was delighted to have been invited to teach at the College after I retired from the Foreign Service. I retain a very fond feeling for Saint Meinrad. Father Adelbert's advice was sound: I had doubts and resolved them, and I did come back, as an adjunct professor for two years.

Q: So what did you do?

BUCHE: I went home to West Lafayette. I already had a taste of Purdue, so I thought I would like to go somewhere else to study. My father said I could go to any college which awarded me a full scholarship, since he could afford to send me only to Purdue. He was concerned about the costs of college for my four siblings. He suggested I start immediately at Purdue and explore scholarships from there. I could transfer only about two-thirds of my credits from St. Meinrad, but I was determined to graduate from Purdue at the same time as if I had stayed at the seminary. (Purdue would not give credit for my classes in Latin, Greek, Church History, Biblical Studies, and Gregorian Chant.) I told my academic adviser I intended to take extra classes to compensate for the non-transferable credits. He was strongly against the suggestion, since I had a heavy load of required science courses to make up. I persisted, so he had me sign a paper that I had been warned.

Q: That good Germanic training!

BUCHE: I found the science courses difficult at first and much more demanding than what I had experienced at St. Meinrad. That should not have surprised me, since Purdue was a technical university (The Boilermakers). I continued with extra classes, another session of summer school, and passed several course equivalency tests to obtain credits for English composition and literature. We had covered that material in high school! I still ended up having to take some basic science courses in my senior year to fulfill all the requirements for the Bachelor of Science degree. Nevertheless, I graduated on schedule with a 3.9 average and the citation summa cum laude.

Q: This was when?

BUCHE: June of 1957. I graduated and went into the Army severaweeks later.

Q: This was the draft, wasn't it?

BUCHE: Yes, I was drafted.

Q: So this was not God's will, but Uncle Sam's will.

BUCHE: It was Uncle Sam's will. While I was in Purdue, I was trying to figure out what I really wanted to do, since I was not going to become a priest. I thought of becoming a lawyer or a professor, but in the back of my mind was the idea of doing something that would involve working or traveling overseas. My study of German and classical languages and European history sparked that interest. I did not think becoming a lawyer or college professor would necessarily lead me in that direction. Faute de mieux, I figured becoming a college professor would be better than being a lawyer. As a lawyer, I could occasionally travel overseas, but if I chose to become a college professor, maybe I could study abroad, as some of my classmates were doing, in Innsbruck, Paris, or Rome. I told my parents I had decided to become a college professor, although I was not sure in which discipline. Then one afternoon I had a class canceled, so I decided to visit a professor in his office. Outside his office there was a month-old notice on the bulletin board that the State Department was sending a recruiter to the campus to speak about careers in the Foreign Service. The meeting was for that very day and hour. I was intrigued with the idea, since I had never heard of the Foreign Service. So I went to the lecture, picked up application forms, and decided that this is something to pursue on the side, since it was an option for going overseas and would not interfere with graduate work. I discovered that the way to get into the Foreign Service was to take the written examination, which I could do if I got the application in pretty quickly, which I did. I drove down to Indianapolis to take the exam. I think it was six or seven weeks after I had heard about it. I came very close to passing the test. Failing by such a narrow margin was a challenge and a goad to sign up for the next exam.

Q: Oh, yes, with a 3.9 average and your record at St. Meinrad

BUCHE: I had never flunked an exam in my whole life, and I got within one point of passing, so I said to myself "I've got to pass this - if for no other reason than to prove that I could have entered the Foreign Service if I had so desired." I did not realize that few undergraduates in their junior year even took the exam, much less pass it. So I took it the following fall, and passed. I was invited to sit for the oral examination. My attitude was, "Well, why not - my favorite cousin lives in Cincinnati, so I'll drive down, take the exam, and visit her." It never occurred to me that I would not pass it, and so I went in completely relaxed and very confident. I had nothing to lose. I even corrected members of the examining panel. One examiner noted that I had studied German literature and made some comments about Schiller and Goethe. He mixed up the two, so I corrected him. Another panel member, noting that I had been studying in a Catholic seminary, made a comment about the popes in Avignon that was wrong by about a century in his timing. So, I corrected him, too. I thought that was what was expected of me. I apparently answered their questions and defended my positions to their satisfaction, since at the end of the exam, they came out and said, "Congratulations, we want you in the Foreign Service." And I said, "Oh, that's fine, I am going to finish my senior year and then go to graduate school. After I get my doctorate, I would definitely consider the Foreign Service." They looked at me incredulously and said they wanted me as soon as possible and that the Personnel Department (PER) could probably process me in time for the March A-100 class for newly-entering FSOs. As far as graduate work was concerned, that was out of the question. I had to accept the offer or decline it. I was taken aback, since I did not realize there was any urgency in actually joining the Foreign Service after passing the exam. I was on the spot. I quickly made up my mind. I dropped the idea of graduate school, since I did not even know what specialty I wanted to pursue, but I was determined to graduate. I told them my sine qua non of accepting their offer was that I be allowed to graduate first.

Q: No, I'm not surprised.

BUCHE: The panel chairman replied "Is that your firm sine qua non?" And I said, "Ita, vere." And he said, "That sounds like yes." I replied it was. He smiled and offered me his hand in agreement. So I was allowed to finish my senior year. I thought I had really pulled off a coup, because I knew I was going to receive a draft notice from Uncle Sam in the next month or so telling me to report for induction shortly after I graduated. I began scheming how I could use the Foreign Service appointment to avoid the draft. I planned to write to the draft board and say I cannot serve in the U.S. Army, since I am going to the Department of State. So when I got my notice that I was to report on such and such a day, I called the State Department Personnel Office. I told an officer in Personnel about the induction notice and asked him to call up the appropriate office of the Department of Defense and tell them that I was needed in the Foreign Service and so could not serve in the army. He listened patiently and then completely demolished my scheme. He said I was of marginal value to the Foreign Service at this stage of my life. You are going to learn a lot as an Army draftee. You will probably go overseas and learn something there, so when you finish your military obligation, you will be of much more use to the Department. You will also be more mature. I was really deflated by his response, and terribly disappointed. I now had no alternative but to show up at the induction center.

Q: When did you show up?

BUCHE: It was July of 1957.

Q: Where did you serve in the military?

BUCHE: After basic training at Fort Hood in Texas, I served in a small town in Germany, called Crailsheim. The town was about half way between Stuttgart and Nuremberg and was located on a major east-west highway and along a rail line. It was an ideal location as a staging post for armor.

Q: You were in an armor unit?

BUCHE: Yes, it was the Fourth Armored Division. The Fourth Armored Division had stationed its tank battalions and mechanized infantry in that region of Germany, so that we could quickly move eastward if the balloon went up. I was trained as a tank commander in Fort Hood, Texas, which is nothing more than being in charge of the tank. Each M-48 tank had a gunner, a loader, a driver, and a commander, but that did not mean that I commanded anything other than the tank itself. I took my orders from the platoon sergeant or lieutenant. After five months of basic and armor training at Fort Hood, we were given leave for Christmas and told to report to Fort Dix, New Jersey for transport to Germany. Several thousand of us were crammed into an aging troopship, the U.S. Geiger, for a ten-day January crossing of the Atlantic to Bremerhaven, Germany. From there we went by railroad to Crailsheim. I was ecstatic to be in Europe, even though it was as a draftee. We had our first field training exercise a week after arrival. Training and driving conditions for the tanks were considerably more difficult in Germany than in Texas. At Fort Hood, there were hundreds of miles of open range for the tanks to use. Around Crailsheim, the secondary roads were twisty, narrow, hilly, and at this time of year, icy; there were fruit orchards and cultivated fields; there were buildings; and to add to the difficulties for the tank drivers, the German populace were going about their everyday business. Our battalion caused considerable property damage on the first day as tanks skidded into parked cars, trees, fire hydrants, and even a few buildings. Since my file indicated I could speak German, I was summoned by the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel George Redheffer, from my tank and ordered to report immediately to a Lieutenant Evans, who had been given responsibility for the battalion's liaison with local civil officials a few days before the exercise.. The lieutenant had come over on the Geiger with us and knew nothing about civil affairs. His primary task was platoon leader for the mortar unit, and he spent his first week in Germany making sure the unit's men, vehicles, and weapons were combat ready. I certainly did not know anything about the U.S. Army's handling of civil affairs, but I could see what had to be done. Our immediate task was to placate some very angry Germans. Evans and I consulted the instructions and forms from the European Command about how to initiate the claims process. Lieutenant Evans was delighted that I was willing to take the lead, as long as he was seen to be in charge. After the exercise was ended, there was an enormous amount of work ahead of us with the claims process. I was officially transferred to the mortar platoon and told to assist Lieutenant Evans. He still had the full-time job as platoon leader, so I was given de-facto responsibility for civil affairs and maneuver-damage control and compensation and completed the work by myself. Since I was an enlisted man, I could not sign anything. I had to do the work in the field and then bring it to Lt. Evans to sign. Within a few weeks, we had the first reaction from EUCOM. A colonel in Heidelberg wrote a complimentary report to the Battalion Commander Redheffer on Lt. Evans for his sensitive interaction with local German officials and the expeditious and correct handling of the maneuver-damage claims. Our battalion commander was, of course, greatly pleased, since he was ultimately responsible. With those two officers content, I was left pretty much on my own. Our next field exercise was a two-week NATO maneuver involving several army divisions, including Bundeswehr units. Weather conditions were almost as bad as in January at the beginning. Then a sudden warm spell descended, and the fields and dirt roads were no longer firmly frozen. The tanks chewed up the roads and fields. A new flood of angry officials and farmers and damage claims. I was fully employed for months. I had a great deal of freedom. I had my first taste of interacting with another culture and bureaucracy. I was delighted with the experience.

Q: Were you in Bavaria?

BUCHE: We were on the Bavarian border, between Bavaria and Baden-Wï¿½rttemburg. The first town to the east of us was Ansbach, in Bavaria. The people of the Crailsheim area, even the ones who lived a short distance over the border in Bavaria, tended not to speak the Bavarian dialect, but rather Swabian (Schwï¿½bisch as it is called in German). There was also a sub-dialect that was called Hohenlohisch, which was spoken by the older generation. The town (and castle) of Hohenlohe was the ancestral home of Price Phillip of Britain. I was interested in such things as German dialects. Although I could not speak either Hohenlohisch or Schwï¿½bisch, I eventually learned to understand a little. I made a lot of inquiries about what was the meaning of this and that word or phrase. I was a source of amusement to many of the farmers because I spoke a German that was not at all colloquial. It was a classical German. Of course, they understood it, but they thought it was amusing that I would use some words that had dropped out of modern German or had taken on different meanings, - and some of them were just plain wrong for the context. Some, however, were pretty elegant, but just no longer used in everyday speech.

Q: And how long were you in the military?

BUCHE: About twenty-one months. I was able to get an early discharge based on "hardship" because I wanted to go to Tuebingen University in Germany. I wrote the Department of Defense that if I were not discharged by a certain date, I could not go to that university and thus my future career in the Department of State might be harmed. There was no emergency situation that demanded my presence with the battalion, so I thought my chances were good. I had worked closely with officers in our battalion headquarters during my assignment in Germany, and my successful results made them look good, so they were willing to endorse my request for an early discharge. My request was approved. I later learned that in peacetime, such requests were quite frequent and were routinely granted on the basis of having to do farm work or seasonal labor or for family problems.

Q: You say that you wanted to go to a German university.

BUCHE: That was my desire. When early in the training cycle at Fort Hood I learned that our entire unit was to be sent to Germany, it was the best news I had since induction day. The news made up for the loss of what I would have much rather been doing, namely training with the State Department instead of the Army, with so many boring hours marching, saluting, firing the rifle, plus KP and endless inspections. But the fact that I was going to Germany was a goal I was about to achieve- not through anything on my part, however. I happened to be assigned to the right unit at the right time.

Q: While you were in the Army in Germany, did you ever get to ouConsulate General in Stuttgart?

BUCHE: I went there once to get a passport, but the Vice Consul would not issue me one. There was a regulation stating that U.S. military personnel stationed in Germany could not be issued passports unless they could prove that they were going to visit a country, where the US military ID card would not be recognized. And the only place I could think of was East Germany, and that was off-limits to us. I told the Vice Consul, Barney Stokes, I simply wanted a passport. I had never had a passport. He said to come back within 90 days of being discharged, and I would be eligible for a passport. Although my request was denied, Stokes did accept my application. He said it would be kept for a year in the files. I was already contemplating applying for an early discharge overseas.

Q: Well, about the time when you were there, I was a passport officer in Frankfurt, and we sure as hell didn't want to have the whole US Army getting passports. I mean it's just an awful lot of work for no useful purpose.

BUCHE: I have a theory that the Army did not want the soldiers to have passports because if they were out late at night or drinking too much and the MP's came into the bar to check on them, the G.I. could just flip out his passport and say, "I'm a tourist here, so move on!"

Q: What university were you going to?

BUCHE: Tï¿½bingen.

Q: How long were you there?

BUCHE: I was there for a semester and a summer. Because of my work in civil affairs and the fact that I could not take leave, I was able to go to Tï¿½bingen University about a month before I was actually discharged. I used my accrued leave and some passes. I worked this out with my commanding officer, who was very supportive. He and his boss were grateful, because my work with the maneuver damage problems and with the German authorities brought them praise on several occasions from the Commanding General of the Fourth Armored Division in Gï¿½ppingen. The US Military Command in Germany placed high priority on good relations with German officials and civilians, so commendations along that line really helped the careers of the two men. My commanding officer also cited me for my outstanding work in civil affairs.

Q: So you were at Tï¿½bingen in 1959 to about 1960?

BUCHE: I enrolled as a regular student at Tuebingen in January 1959, and hoped to stay for several years. I took all my courses for credit because I thought I would continue for another year at least. I was not going to take the visiting student approach. I chose Tï¿½bingen over Munich or Heidelberg because Tï¿½bingen did not have a visiting student program. Both Heidelberg and Munich had exchange programs with US universities, and so attracted hundreds of American students for one or two semesters. I also chose Tï¿½bingen because it was small and relatively isolated. There were few foreigners there. It was reputed to be one of the most traditional German universities, and several German authors whom I admired had studied in Tï¿½bingen or had taught there. I did not start classes until late February of 1959. I stayed in Germany until August of that year. I went through the semester and that summer. I had wanted to stay for the fall semester and the following year, but an officer in the Department's Personnel Office called me around June to tell me that there was an opening in the A-100 class for new officers and that I had to make that opening in September. (Apparently there were extra funds that had to be spent before the end of the fiscal year.) Otherwise I could not be assured of a Foreign Service appointment. I think that if had said I could not make the September class, but I could make the next one, they would have agreed. When I said I was thinking about the fall semester, he said there was no obligation under law to keep my appointment open. I had to make an important decision. After a few moments, I replied I would be there for the September class. I could not resist telling him that when I wanted the Department to take me, after I graduated and before I was inducted, the response was "Go to the Army and get some experience overseas; now that am getting that experience in Germany, the Department urgently wants me." He laughed.

Q: Ah, you're learning, you're learning.

BUCHE: So I said, "Fine, I'll be there."

Q: Could you do a little comparing and contrasting, Purdue witTï¿½bingen, as far as education?

BUCHE: Well, Purdue was a typical American university, where the classes were a mixture of lecture and discussions. There were also workshops and labs. The professors and particularly the graduate assistants were accessible and encouraged us to meet periodically with them. We had tests or quizzes throughout the semester, and in the upper level classes we had term papers to write. The library was open, and we had access to the stacks. There were also staff counselors or advisers for the students, plus a clinic for minor illnesses. Attendance was taken in many of the classes. Attendance and absences were noted; the students were on a short leash. The American universities today are quite different, but this was mid-1950. In Tï¿½bingen, there were many differences. Class attendance was optional. There were large lecture halls packed with more students than available chairs, and where the professors spoke without questions from the students, The lectures were fascinating and showed the erudition of theprofessor. I had the impression they were addressing their colleagues and not the students around them. I was quite surprised at my first lecture. The professor entered exactly fifteen minutes late; the students arose and began stamping their feet; he surveyed the hundreds of assembled students; made a slight bow which instantly quieted the hall; and began his lecture. At the end, the process was repeated. I made a special effort to meet with my professors several times during the semester, since I thought that was expected. I learned, however, that for the first several years in a German university, one short, formal meeting was the norm. Graduate assistants helped the professors do research; they did not have much to do with the students. The library was not user-friendly. I had to order a book and wait for several hours before it was delivered. There was no browsing. Fortunately, I did not get sick, for there was no student health clinic. I realized I was on my own at Tï¿½bingen. No one was going to force me to go to a class or take my attendance. The idea was that the students were capable of making their own decisions. They could finish their work in five, seven, or even ten years if they so chose. There was little pressure to take a minimum number of classes. It was up to each student to set the pace. I had a paper to write in each class. I took four classes, and so worked awfully hard. My results were not bad. The students did not receive a letter or number grade on the paper or for the class. We were given a notation such as good, outstanding, or acceptable. I had not heard of anyone's paper being marked "failure." Sometimes the professors would add other comments on the paper. At the end of the semester, the student would collect a certificate that he or she had successfully participated in the course. These were called Seminarscheine. When a student had a sufficient number of Seminarscheine, it was time to begin the process of writing the thesis. That meant finding a professor to direct the research and to help with admission to other higher level seminars.

Q: What was your impression of the German students you were icontact with?

BUCHE: My initial contacts were with several students who were not very serious about their studies. They were intelligent and had surmounted the difficult entrance requirements, but they were not yet prepared to devote their time to scholarly pursuits. That would come later. Life as a university student was pleasant for them. They were planning to spend seven or eight years of their lives at Tuebingen, with perhaps one year in between at another university. Rushing through their university phase in five years was not their intention. They liked parties, drinking, travel, and socializing. They were the first students I met who showed any interest in me. We first met not in a classroom, but in an old, traditional student restaurant called, "Tante Emelia," where I ate regularly. They were curious about an American who spoke pretty good German, knew something about their country, was Catholic, and was not a socialist. They were kind enough to invite me to some of their parties at their student fraternity, Burschenschaft Borussia. At Purdue, I had experienced students whose idea of college life was fraternities, football games, and beer parties, but my Tuebingen colleagues seemed to be more interesting. I enjoyed their parties, although the heavy drinking and rowdiness did not sit well with me. It became clear to me that I was in with a group whose life style and outlook were quite different from my own. They were from wealthy families, very conservative in their politics, strongly nationalistic, not very critical about the Third Reich, and disdainful of any students who espoused radical or socialist ideas. Too often I heard their lament that if only the West had early on joined with Germany to fight the Soviets, everything would have worked out well. There would be no Soviet Union, no iron curtain, no divided Germany, but rather a successful modern crusade against Bolshevism! I thought their version of recent German history was completely wacko, but found them interesting interlocutors. After we had been together for a few parties, they told me their fraternity still practiced dueling. I was shocked, but fascinated. I knew that dueling fraternities had been forbidden by the Occupation Forces after World War II, but with the return of German sovereignty, there was a quiet resurgence among some of the more conservative Burschenschaften. My hosts probed me about my reactions toward dueling. Completely against it, I responded. They tried to convince me otherwise and praised the virtues of dueling...develops discipline, skill, self-confidence, courage, etc. They explained that the modern version of dueling is different from what their fathers' generation experienced. There are masks and heavily-padded clothing; no one gets hurt. It is even an Olympic sport. I was unconvinced, but I decided to keep an open mind. Gradually it dawned on me they were probing to determine whether to ask me to join Burschenschaft Borussia. (Since I was enrolled as a normal student, they assumed I would remain at Tuebingen for a couple of years. I did not disabuse them of that assumption, since I hoped to remain at least until the summer of 1960.) They mentioned that after the War, the fraternities were encouraged by the universities and the government to become more open and democratic. Many fraternities, including Burschenshaft Borussia, took in a few, carefully-selected "internationals". It was about this time that I was beginning to meet other students who were more my style. I was eager to expand my social circle. My newer acquaintances were serious students and seemed determined to finish in five or so years in order to begin their careers as lawyers, journalists, doctors, or whatever. I did not break with my friends from Burschenschaft Borussia, since we still ate daily lunch and dinner together at "Tante Emelia," and occasionally met for a few beers in the evenings. I believe they came to realize I was not the type of "international" they wanted to tap for their fraternity.

Q: Had they gotten away from the scars?

BUCHE: Before the second World War, a dueling scar had long been a badge of honor in certain levels of German society. After the War, there was practically no way to get such a scar because the duelers wore masks. Some men still wanted a scar, so they would go to a surgeon who used a scalpel under anesthesia to cut the scar in just the right place.

Q: What about politics?

BUCHE: This was the Adenauer era, CDU time. I was fascinated by German national politics, and was staunchly CDU. I thought Adenauer was a great leader. My professor for a German history course for the period between the two World Wars asked me in my first meeting about my views on German politics. I told him I was deeply impressed by Adenauer and the CDU. He asked me whether I had ever studied the Socialist Party of Germany.

Q: The SPD.

BUCHE: I said, "Well, not much at all, were they not close to the Communists in the Weimar era and are they not opposed to NATO and for closer relations with East Germany?" He had a look of disgust on his face and asked which party forced the Communists out of the German labor unions. I had no idea, but from the way he asked the question, it must have been the SPD. I hesitatingly replied, the SPD? Of course, he said and added that I apparently had much to learn about the last forty years of German history. He said he expected me to take the opportunity while in his class to make up for my past deficiencies. End of discussion! I was humiliated, but resolved to make up for my lack of knowledge of this area. I immediately went to the library and ordered several books on the Weimar period to see what the Socialist Party had done. It was clear that the Socialists were much more committed to democracy and social justice than the Catholic parties and the rightists. It was the Catholics and the rightists who played key roles in sabotaging the Weimar Republic and assisting the rise of Nazism. I recalled a course at St. Meinrad on modern European history, where the professor repeated castigated the Socialist Parties of Europe for their opposition to the Catholic Church and the Papacy. I even recalled having to study several encyclicals from the late 19th century strongly condemning socialism. My history courses at Purdue did not cover that era, so I had no counterview.

Q: And they got quite close to Hitler.

BUCHE: Yes, it was the Catholic parties and others on the right who held their nose and voted for Hitler. Some of the first victims of Hitler were not the Jews, but Communists and Socialists. Although my first meeting with the professor was embarrassing, it turned out to be a positive experience. I spent many hours reading about the Weimar Republic and the role of the SPD. That was the theme of my paper for his class. He marked it ausgezeichnet, (outstanding)! I also read about the SPD in contemporary German politics. Later, when Willy Brandt became Chancellor, I felt I knew all about him and his Party, thanks to the professor's challenge to my one-sided educational experience.

Q: Normally one thinks of college students as going through theiradical stage as part of their development. Did you find much of that?

BUCHE: Yes, there were some, but I believe they were the minority. Tï¿½bingen was probably the most conservative university in Germany. It was in a conservative area (solidly CDU). There were two highly renowned faculties of theology, Catholic and Protestant. I understood at the time they were both conservative, although that certainly changed. There were many theological students there, mostly on the Protestant side. I was told the best and the brightest of the would-be lawyers were not choosing Tï¿½bingen. There were no economics or sociology departments, and the science faculties, other than medicine, were not particularly noteworthy. The history department was more focused on the distant past rather than modern times, and the political science department was only a few years old. There were excellent departments of classical languages and archaeology. Tuebingen did not have the faculties or the tradition which would attract many students on the left. It was home to the conservative elements, at least when I was there. There was a small Communist student group and a somewhat larger Socialist student group. They put up a lot of posters, held rallies and debates, and ran candidates for student offices, but they were a minority. Often they attacked each other with more vehemence than was directed against the conservative groups. Prospective students with a leftist philosophy would find the universities in Heidelberg, Berlin, or Munich more in line with their way of thinking. I really liked the institution and the experience. I was not interested in getting into student politics. I just wanted to study and attend the lectures and seminars. I had friends and acquaintances from a broad political spectrum.

Q: Well, you left there at the end of the summer of 1959. You entered the Foreign Service when?

BUCHE: In September of 1959.

Q: Then you went into the basic officers' course.

BUCHE: The A-100 course. It was held at the time in Arlington,Virginia, in the old Foreign Service Institute.

Q: Yes, it might have even been in the garage.

BUCHE: It was the garage, yes. That is where it was. The garage of the old Arlington Towers Apartment Building. It remained there for three or four years and then moved to the high-rise. I remember the windowless rooms.

Q: What was your impression of your class that came in with you?

BUCHE: I was impressed with them. I was wondering how I was ever going to compete against these very bright people. There were twenty five of us, all male, all white, all Christian (whether they practiced or not). There were no Jews. Oh, I forgot - there was one Jew. This is interesting. I did not make any comparisons at the time. It was perhaps several weeks into the class, when someone commented about the class composition: "There are no Orientals, blacks, or females, and Bob Kaufman is the only Jew." That was a typical Foreign Service A-100 class.

Q: Oh, absolutely, yes.

BUCHE: I assumed this was the way it was. I was very impressed with the quality of my classmates. I thought they were all going to do very, very well. Most had advanced degrees; several were lawyers; about ten had served in the military as officers. I was the only one who had served as an enlisted man. About half were married. I liked most of them from the first day, and I still count a half dozen of them among my friends. Surprisingly, in my thirty-five years of the FS, I did not serve together with any of my classmates. I was one of the youngest in the class, just twenty-four at the time.

Q: How did you feel about what you learned about the Department oState and the Foreign Service? Was it useful?

BUCHE: I did not find it terribly useful. It was fascinating, but I can not say it was useful. It was often too academic. Our lecturers were mainly from the Foreign Service Institute. Occasionally, a Desk Officer would come over for two hours from the Department to discuss an issue or a region. I found the Desk Officers interesting and what they had to say germane. We could identify more closely with a Desk Officer's message than with a historical survey by one of the scholars on the FSI staff of an area covering several centuries. We heard dozens of examples from the Desk Officers about what their work was. It was 99% operational: solve this or that problem; write a memo to the Assistant Secretary or occasionally the Secretary; arrange a meeting with the Assistant Secretary for an ambassador and take notes; expedite a visa; brief a Congressional staffer or a newly assigned officer; speak to A-100 class.

Q: Well, of course, that's the State Department.

BUCHE: That's correct. That should have told us something. The work of the Foreign Service was not about the "Big Picture". There is no time for that at an embassy or on a country desk. We did not spend much time on learning how to draft a good telegram or what should be put into an airgram. How an embassy or a consulate functioned was covered in two lectures. We were told there is such a variety in the overseas missions that we would have to learn the particulars at post. Also, we were told very little about airfreight, estimates for packing charges, pay advances, temporary housing benefits, etc.

Q: Yes.

BUCHE: The practical side of Foreign Service life was hardlmentioned. But it was a very pleasant 60 days - or was it 90 days?

Q: I think about 90 days.

BUCHE: I looked forward every day to coming to the classroom. It was exciting. My career was about to begin. I even had to admit to myself that what the Personnel Officer told me when I telephoned him requesting his intervention with the Pentagon was correct. My time in the Army and my experiences in Germany did make me a better candidate for a successful career with the FS.

Q: While you were doing this, what were you thinking about doing?Where and what type of work seemed to appeal to you?

BUCHE: I wanted to go back to Germany and work in the political section of the Embassy or in one of the consulates. My German was pretty good, and my Army and Tuebingen experience gave me confidence to request an assignment to Germany as my first choice. Also, I had become interested in a student at Tuebingen and wanted to pursue the relationship. My FSI adviser encouraged me in my choice of a German assignment. I was really delighted when an officer from PER told me I was to be assigned to Stuttgart, Germany. Since it was a first posting, I would be on a rotation, starting in the Visa Section. I was assured that there would be plenty of time to do political reporting and toward the end of tour, I would actually work in the Political Section. I concluded that all the rumors we had heard about the unpredictability or irrationality of the assignment process for an A-100 class were highly exaggerated. Some of my colleagues received postings which were not asked for, but there was some logic to them. I could not have been more pleased. We still had two weeks of A-100, but I began making preparations for Stuttgart. I wrote the obligatory introductory letter to the Consul General and even made it personal by saying that my passport had been issued by him as a special favor. When I returned to the Consulate General after receiving my discharge from the US Army, I reminded Barney Stokes that I had passed all the entry requirements for the Foreign Service and would begin my career after another year at Tuebingen. He asked one of the Foreign Service Nationals to prepare my passport. Then he asked, "Would you like to meet Consul General Moorhead?" I said, "I would be honored." I thought that would be a greater thrill than meeting an army general. And so we went together to the CG's office. After chatting for a few minutes, he said, "I understand you're here to be issued a passport. I would be pleased to sign it for a future colleague." I went back downstairs took the oath of allegiance and soon had my first passport in hand. That was in the spring of 1959, and now in December of 1959, I was going to be serving in that very Consulate General. I did not have to go to a language class, since I tested well in German. I did not go to Stuttgart, however! Three days before I was supposed to fly out of Washington, another officer, Charles [B.] Schaller, and I were urgently summoned to EUR Personnel from the A-100 class. (Charles was supposed to go to the CG at Frankfurt.)

Q: Oh, out of class?

BUCHE: We were in the last day of classes at FSI. Charles and I had no inkling why we were being summoned. We assumed it was for some last minute administrative requirement. The officer, an Irishman from New York, sat me down and told me I was not going to Stuttgart; but rather to what sounded like "Taranna." So I thought for a moment and replied, "Sir, I did not realize we had diplomatic relations with Albania." He said, "Who said anything about Albania? You're going to Taranna - that's in Canada. Don't you know where Taranna is?" And I said, "you mean" Toronto," but what happened to my assignment to Stuttgart?" He said, "We're canceling that, since two officers didn't get off language probation after four months of training, so they have to go to a German-speaking post to improve their German if they are to be promoted. I told him switching assignments did not seem logical or fair. He responded that I did not have to worry about language probation. "That's the reason you and your friend out there are going to Taranna and Southampton respectively." So I asked when I had to go. He said, "Well, you're all packed to go to Stuttgart, so leave for Canada in a few days. You are needed there urgently." I told him I had already sent my airfreight to Stuttgart." He said, "Don't worry, we'll have the Consulate forward it to you in Taranna." I was deeply disappointed, but I saw no alternative. So I said, "Well, what do I do now? Do I have to write another letter to the Consul General in Toronto?" He said, "No, pick up the phone and tell him you're coming. He already knows about it since we sent him notice of your assignment. I went right down to the transport office in the Department, canceled my Pan Am flight, and got a ticket on the New York Central Railroad to Toronto. I decided those rumors about awful assignments of officers from the A-100 class had some foundation after all.

Q: I'll go get my calendar, and we'll pick it up later. I like to quit at a post, so we are going to Toronto in December of 1959. I can't think of any great political crises at that time in Toronto, but maybe we'll find out what happens.

BUCHE: Canada was not only completely devoid of political crises at the time, but the Consulate General was about to close for the holidays. I called Consul General Robert Memminger from the Department, but did not get through to him. His secretary said it was really not necessary to speak to the Consul General to say I was coming, since they had been informed of that. She would tell him of my call. The most-recent arrival at the post, Jim Marshall, would meet me at the train station. He was there to greet me. He took me to the hotel. He said "I suppose you are going to go home now. I understand you are from Indiana." I replied I planned to stay in Toronto since I had been told by the Personnel Officer in the Department that I was urgently needed. Jim seemed puzzled and replied that the Consulate was closing for the Christmas holidays. "We can not take leave during the summer because of the rush of visas, so we close the Consulate from the 20th of December to about the 10th of January, so everyone can take leave. There will be only a few of us in town, but you are welcome to stay in your hotel and get to know the city." Jim urged me to go home to spend Christmas with my family in Indiana. I decided that was a good suggestion.

Q: So we'll pick it up at that point.

BUCHE: Since this was my first assignment as a Foreign Service officer, I was on a rotational basis. I started in the Visa Correspondence Section working for a Canadian national employee who taught me what I needed to know. I just kept thinking if I had just had her in the visa course at the FSI, I would have learned a lot more. For about a year, I answered correspondence from people wanting to know about the status of their case, whether they were eligible, what to do about the various types of INS petitions, checking employment certifications, etc.

Q: These weren't Canadians, were they, for the most part?

BUCHE: A good part were Canadians, since most of our correspondence concerned immigrant visas. Abouhalf of our cases were Europeans who had come to Canada, and had decided they would like to move to the United States. We had some correspondence involving non-immigrant visas, but that was perfunctory. Canadians did not need a visa just to visit the U.S., but if they wanted to work, they needed an immigrant visa. I spent a year doing that. Since I was interested in political and economic reporting, and there was no political officer, I was able on the side to cover the developments in local politics. Canada was going through a nationalistic phase at the time.

Q: This was when to when?

BUCHE: I was at the Consulate General from December of 1959 until January of 1962. Canada was going through a phase of trying to distance itself politically, to some extent, from the United States. They were tired of being taken for granted. When I arrived, there were several issues in the air. One was a sudden cancellation by the U.S. of a large defense contract. One of the Canadian companies was to be a subcontractor to a US manufacturer for bomber parts or sections. For some reason or other, the Pentagon decided to cancel the contract. I am not sure which U.S. company was the prime contractor, but for them it was only a minor problem. They would just put more resources into another plane or weapons system, but for the Canadian company, it meant bankruptcy. The company had staked everything on being an important subcontractor to an American weapons system. That was just one event, but there were a lot of others. There were disputes about television advertising of American products, the flooding of Canada with American publications, American content on Canadian television, and the reception of American TV in Canada. It was an interesting time, and I did some reporting on the latent anti-Americanism. One of the constant messages from the Canadian business world was: we love the United States; we spend winter vacations down there, but you really cause us problems with your policies and laws. Also there were numerous auto manufacturing facilities in Canada, subsidiaries of Ford, GM, and Chrysler. We were in the midst of an economic downturn, and the clichï¿½ "the United States catches a cold, but Canada gets pneumonia" was once again evident. There were layoffs in the U.S., but the headquarters of the American car manufacturers would shut down entire plants in Canada. The feeling in Canada was that American management felt no loyalty to Canadian workers, regardless of the economics involved. This was not only in the auto industry, but in most of the Canadian subsidiaries of American corporations. It was nearly impossible to prove such a case, but the Canadians believed they unfairly were the victims of economic imperialism and bullying by the U.S.

Q: John Diefenbaker was the prime minister?

BUCHE: Yes, he was the big winner in the election. He and his Progressive Conservative Party came into power after many years of Liberal control because the Canadian voters saw Lester Pearson, the incumbent Liberal Prime Minister as just too internationalist, too liberal, too much in the pocket of the Americans. Reality may have been otherwise, but that's basically the way the Canadian voter saw it. Diefenbaker based his campaign on an appeal to Canadian emotions, pride, fear, and nationalism (read veiled anti-Americanism) and won. He was never a beloved figure, but he was a clever politician who knew how to manipulate the issues, especially the appeal to Canadian nationalism. We covered the Ontario by-elections (held when a sitting Member of Parliament died or retired).

Jim Marshall and I reported on the 1960 parliamentary election for the Province of Ontario. This taught me a lesson I remembered for the rest of my Foreign Service career. I spent lots of time trying to figure out which of the five candidates would be successful in winning the Progressive Conservative nomination to run against the Liberal Party's candidate. It was the Canadian equivalent to the American primaries, except the choice was made at a convention rather than by a popular vote. Since Ontario was traditionally Progressive Conservative, the winner of the PC Party nomination usually won the ensuing election. While the outcome of the PC Party convention was of some interest to the Embassy, it was fascinating and important to me. I attended some of the preliminary rallies and met the candidates. I decided who was going to win, who would come in second, third, fourth, and fifth. The actual process involved a series of votes by the convention, with the candidate receiving the least number of votes being eliminated until there was only one candidate remaining. Two days before the actual convention vote, I put my predictions and the reasoning behind my choices in a telegram to the Embassy and to Washington. I followed the proceedings at the convention carefully. When the results came out, they were exactly as I had predicted. I had hit the jackpot; I had correctly picked the double Trifecta. I was elated. The Consul General congratulated me, but I wanted also to get some kudos from the Embassy. A day later, the Counselor of Embassy for Political Affairs called me with some questions about the convention. He opened the conversation by saying "We noticed you called the winner." And I replied, "I called not only the winner, but I called the correct sequence of elimination of the other candidates." He replied "You know, John, that's all fluff. You were rather foolhardy to do that, though. We don't care who's going to be the first of five eliminated or the next. We want to know who the winner is likely to be. Very often, if you want to be so clever and try to call them that way and you are wrong, you might be criticized for the secondary miscalls, even if you call the winner correctly. Don't be a show-off. In the future, concentrate your efforts on who is going to win an election and what it means to the United States or what it does not mean to the United States. Pay attention to what is important in political reporting. You are not paid to be a handicapper for a horse race." By this time I was standing at attention holding the phone. I said "Yes, Sir, Yes, Sir." He said, "Well, you're new at the game. You were just damned lucky." I replied, "Well, I guess I was." He closed by thanking me for putting in the effort, but told me to rememberhis advice.

Q: It was a good lesson.

BUCHE: I agree.

Q: A good lesson to be learned, because I think this is sort of the psychic prizes you get if you can call elections, which sometimes doesn't really make a hell of a lot of difference, but we spend an awful lot of time at it.

BUCHE: I also came to realize it really did not matter that much in the big scheme of things who won the parliamentary nomination of the Conservative Party in Ontario. Well, in any case, I learned a lesson. But I still was pretty proud of what I had done. Q: Of course you were. One has to set these things up. You had your own little reward system.

BUCHE: Then I went back to visas and passports. I eventually went from the Visa Correspondence Section to issuing passports to the large number of Americans in Ontario. I was not thrilled with consular work, but I knew this was part of my training, something I had to go through, like being a novice in a monastery, or a pledge in a fraternity. What really began to interest me, although I had no interest whatsoever before Toronto, was Africa. Africa was just coming into the headlines - the independence movements and the retreat of colonialism. I got involved in a fund-raiser to set up scholarships for African students to study at Canadian universities.. The project was the idea of a Canadian business man, Jim Grant, and was taken up by a consortium of Toronto churches. One of the fundraisers came to the Consulate and asked whether one of the officers would volunteer to call on American businesses. I asked Consul General Memminger whether I was allowed to do that, and he said, "Why are you asking me?" I replied I did not know whether I was permitted to call on American companies and ask for money for a registered Canadian charity. He said, " John, you can send a request to the Ethics Office in the Department of State, along with written disclaimers, or you can just go out and do it." "I'm going to tell you a story, John. There were two monks in a very strict, isolated monastery who had spent their whole adult lives there. On the day they were celebrating their 50th anniversary of entering the monastery, they were invited to the abbot's quarters. One monk went in, spent some time there, and came out. Then the other went in, sat down, and said to the abbot, "I've been a good monk for fifty years and on this special occasion, I want your permission to do three things that are not allowed by the Holy Rule of the Order: smoke a cigarette, drink a Coca-Cola, and read a newspaper." The abbot replied that such things were not morally bad, but were not allowed by the Holy Rule, so he said, "Permission denied!" The monk was shocked and hurt, and he blurted out, "I know my confrere did it, because I can smell the cigarette - there's the butt - and there are two empty Coca-Cola bottles over there in the corner, and I see some newspapers around. How come he got to do all those things and I can't?" The abbot looked him in the eye and said, "He didn't ask!" So I solicited money from several American corporations.

Q: Did the issue of Quebec come up in Toronto? Were we monitorinthat at the time?

BUCHE: The prevalent attitude in Ontario in the early 1960s was "those dumb Frenchmen in Quebec wouldn't dare to break off from Canada." The Ontario people did not take the threat of Quebec independence seriously. "It will never happen," and "They'd be stupid to even consider it." We reported the prevailing feeling, but were not doing any special monitoring. The Embassy was covering the issue from a national perspective. One issue we did follow was the debate over the sale to the U.S. of oil and gas from the western provinces. The headquarters for many Canadian natural resource companies were in Toronto. They wanted to sell petroleum products to the U.S. on a log-term basis, with dedicated pipelines and refineries and processing plants. Canadian national policy at that time was against long-term arrangements. They could sell certain amounts on a spot or short-term basis, but no north-south pipelines from some of the fields directly down to Kansas, the Dakotas, or Chicago. The U.S. would welcome new supplies of energy for some of our northern states. Most of the American oil companies had Canadian subsidiaries, and were eager to direct production southward. The western provinces of Canada would also have benefitted. The national government was mindful of the U.S. auto industry's damaging practices in Canada and was determined to keep the energy sector from falling into American hands. Ottawa also wanted an abundant, secure, Canadian source of energy for the eastern provinces, where the bulk of the population lived. While the prairie provinces were not talking secession, they were upset at Ottawa's policies. I think this showed up in the election results later on, in the mid-'60s and '70s. The western provinces protested the policies of both the Conservatives and Liberals by voting for what had been previously splinter or protest parties, the New Democratic Party and the Socialist Party. That was something normally not associated with farmers and businessmen out in the west, but they were really upset with the policies of the eastern-oriented government.

Q: Also regarding anti-Americanism, the Canadian version thereof, I understand that Ontario was the hotbed and it was a residue left over from the loyalists who left the United States. The people in other parts came to Canada with well-developed ties backwards and forwards and did not get as upset over America as they did in Ontario.

BUCHE: Well, I think there are other reasons, too. One of the economic reasons is that manufacturing was centered in Ontario, and it was also where the financial interests were. The banks and insurance companies were headquartered in Ontario. This was the heart of British Canada, and the big money was in Ontario, at least the headquarters. The headquarters of Bell Canada was across the street from the Consulate General. The Canadian companies welcomed capital from the U.S., but they preferred loans rather than equity investments. American companies were so much larger and better capitalized, and often took over Canadian companies and made them American subsidiaries. They had previously been independent, but ended up as a medium-sized subsidiary of an American corporation. I think there were other reasons for the recrudescence of nationalistic emotions. The fact that Ontario was such a predominantly English-speaking province meant they could understand the nuances of what the Americans were saying or not saying. Sometimes the fact that the Americans across the border did not say anything about Canada and simply ignored its presence may have hurt as much as actual criticism. Ontario, and particularly Toronto, was the center of the anti-American sentiments.

There was a differentiation, however, regarding the feelings toward the U.S. between the "old Canadians" and the "new Canadians (those who immigrated after WW II). The new Canadians had come from Eastern and Southern Europe and were very active in their ethnic associations, strongly anti-Communist, and favorably disposed toward the United States. We were seen as the liberator of Europe, the bulwark against Communism, the great leader of the Western world. The Consul General often would receive invitations to participate in the Latvian, Estonian, Lithuanian independence day celebrations, or the 200th anniversary of such-and-such a battle in Poland, Hungary, or Yugoslavia. Memminger had a standing order for his secretary to regret for him, but to pass the invitation to Jim Marshall or me. He joked that we were both bachelors and might meet a nice, attractive Croatian, Latvian, Polish or Macedonian at one of the celebrations. Whoever went in the place of the CG would always be called upon to speak a few words. We were often the fourth or fifth on the roster of speakers and well-wishers. We had a set speech. It was along the lines that the United States has long been a strong supporter of name the country. Our Congress has recently passed a resolution in behalf of name the country. Read the resolution. Offer congratulations for whatever the occasion was and end with a rousing, "Long live Latvia (or whatever)!" My horror was that I would at some time say the wrong country, so I carried a three-by-five card with "This is your host", "This is the occasion", and "This is the country." Fortunately, I did not make that error.

Q: Did you meet that young Latvian girl?

BUCHE: I met young women from Latvia, Estonia, Poland, and from all over Eastern Europe. I mentioned in passing one day to Bob Memminger that I had just met a young woman from Estonia at one of the celebrations and was somewhat interested in her. Bob looked at me and said, "You know, of course, you will have to resign from the Foreign Service if you marry her." I looked at him incredulously. He said, "Didn't they tell you in the A-100 course that if you married a foreign national you had to resign. The Department could either accept your resignation or not depending on how the security clearance came out? As far as I know, John, the Department is not going to allow you to marry anyone from the Soviet Union and probably not anyone from Eastern Europe, either. Can't you see the blackmail possibilities?" I said, "Oh, my God!" He said, "Well, I just wanted to let you know before you get too serious with her or any other foreign woman. Fortunately, we had just recently met, so we remained just good friends.

Q: You were there 1960-62. Was there a comparable interest in Canada as in the United States to the election of Kennedy and the young couple taking over?

BUCHE: He probably would have gotten a majority in Canada, too, at least in Ontario, where polls showed that he was quite popular. Despite Kennedy's popularity, there was heavy criticism of our policy toward Castro and a lot of gloating on the part of the Canadians regarding the differences in our two approaches to the Castro regime.

Q: The Bay of Pigs.

BUCHE: That, yes, but even before the Bay of Pigs, there was delight on the part of the Canadians on how Castro was tweaking the nose of the United States. The Canadians took delight in describing the terrible conditions of Cuba in the 1940s and 1950s, the gambling, the prostitution, the corruption, the terrible health conditions, and the huge gap between the elite and the peasants. They were cheering Castro because he was targeting American investments and was careful not to do very much against Canadian interests. Then came the Bay of Pigs, and the Canadians could really gloat over an American humiliation.

There was also a cultural issue involving our China policy that caused the Canadians to ridicule the U.S. When the Beijing Opera Company came to Ontario, we were ordered by the Department to publicize the fact that it was breaking American law if an American purchased a ticket to the Beijing Opera, because we had the boycott against China. Some Americans who were interested in the Beijing Opera ignored the notice, and some attended just to show their opposition to the boycott. Of course, the Canadians made a big thing about the Opera and packed the halls. They thought our China boycott was short-sighted and stupid, but what angered them was the U.S. Government's attempts to enforce our laws extraterritorially by preventing Americans in Canada from going to a cultural performance there. These were really irritants in American-Canadian relations, and almost daily something new would come up.

Q: You were in a place, where at one level, things were going well, but at another level, at whatever would pass for the intelligentsia, I would assume that they were definitely not pro-American.

BUCHE: No, they definitely were not. They recognized some great accomplishments that had been done. The intelligentsia recognized and admired much of our literature and music, our inventions and scientific discoveries, our efforts in the two World Wars, Presidents Lincoln and FDR, but there were so many aspects of the United States they just could not stand. I do not know whether they spent much effort in analyzing exactly what they disliked about us and the reasons why. I suppose many accepted it as a given. If you were a native-born Canadian and considered yourself an intellectual, it was de rigueur to be critical of the U.S. The Canadian intellectuals whom I met were apparently able to compartmentalize their feelings against the United States without antagonism against individual Americans. I detected no personal enmity toward me, but rather an open and welcoming attitude. They were able to distinguish between the person and the Government I represented. My posting to Toronto was interesting more for the political and economic work I did outside the office than the visa and passport tasks performed within.

In my second year of Toronto, I began to think about my next assignment. I was influenced by the frequent messages from the Department pleading that if an officer volunteers for Africa or for African-language training, he or she will be given priority consideration. I told Bob Memminger about my interest in learning an African language and a posting in Africa. He advised me to learn French and to think long and hard about requesting hard language training for Africa. "Don't waste your time on one of those languages you can't use anywhere else in the world."

Q: Like Twi or Fang.

BUCHE: He insisted that I request training in a language that would serve me well. I agreed and said I would probably ask for French training. I had already started studying French on my own. Not only was I interested in Africa, but also in the Middle East, Turkey, and Iran. I went back and forth in my number one preference. I was attracted to the idea of learning a hard language, but did not want a language with limited use, unless that country was of strategic importance to the U.S. Arabic, Turkish, Greek, and Persian met my criteria. Of the African languages, Swahili seemed the only one to fit my set of conditions. I asked Bill Eilers, the Commercial Officer at the Consulate, for his advice. Bill told me there were plenty of Mideast specialists in the Department who studied Arabic. He also said the Middle East was a tough area to serve in. He suggested I focus on Iran and learn Persian, since there were not many officers who knew the language or the area. I knew it was a key country in a strategic region. I sent in my request for hard-language training with Persian at the top of the list. Since I had to submit several alternates, I added Greek, Turkish, and Swahili. Within a few weeks, I was told I had been selected to study Persian beginning in January of 1962. I was just delighted. I drove down to Washington to check out apartments. I decided I would live in the same building where the FSI language classes were held, Arlington Towers. I would be in Washington one year before going to Iran. I bought a dozen books about Iran. Psychologically, I was beginning to phase out of Toronto and Ontario and concentrating on my next post. I learned this is a tendency in the Foreign Service

Since the consulate closed at Christmas, I went back home to West Lafayette, Indiana. My family was supportive, as always, of my decision to study Persian and spend the next three years in Iran. The prospects were very exciting for me, so I did not pick up the nuanced reaction of my parents who were hoping I might be posted somewhere closer and safer. I returned to Toronto to pack up and depart post for Washington. There was a message waiting for me at the Consulate saying that I was to study Amharic instead of Persian. My first reaction was, "My God, Personnel strikes again"! I called PER/Training and asked what was going on. The reply was circuitous and involved transfers, an illness, a shift of priorities, and other factors. The net result was that I was to study Amharic. The training officer assured me it would be an excellent boost to my career.

Q: So you took Amharic for a year?

BUCHE: Yes.

Q: This would be what, '62-63?

BUCHE: No, it was just 1962. The class started January 20 and ended December 20. I was to report to the Embassy at Addis Ababa in late January 1963.

Q: How did you find learning Amharic?

BUCHE: I found it difficult. Amharic is a member of the Semitic language family. It was the first non-Western I had studied. I had to suspend almost all the rules or paradigms I had learned in studying Greek, Latin, German, and French. Also there were sounds in Amharic that were particularly difficult for me to replicate. We had three Ethiopian graduate students, who were picking up some extra money by working as the native speakers. Our linguist, Professor Obolensky, was a Semitic language scholar, but admitted on the first day of class that he did not know much Amharic. He said, "I'm a Semitic language linguist. Amharic is a Semitic language, and I understand its structure. I will use the native speakers in such a way that you will learn the correct accent and use of the language." He was able to help us correct our mispronunciations and help us in so many ways. I was not accustomed to the Foreign Service Institute's language teaching method, namely a heavily oral approach, stressing repetition of memorized sentences or dialogues. I was accustomed to the reading approach, where I learned vocabulary, declensions, conjugations, and rules of grammar. We started the first day with simple phrases, constantly repeating after the native Amharic speakers. I wanted a text before me so I could "see" what I was trying to say. I also wanted to have explanations of how the words fit together grammatically. We had a phonetic text, but it was not in the Amharic script. It was just a peculiar mixture of Roman-alphabet symbols. We memorized sentences; then we memorized simple conversations. I, of course, went along with what the class was asked to do, but I was convinced I could learn faster with a combination of the FSI method and my traditional manner. Dr. Obolensky counseled patience and trust and assured me that the missing elements would be addressed in a few months. Now my task was to do my best to imitate the Ethiopians without thinking of grammar rules or gender and case agreements. "Be like a child and mimic the teachers."

I was the only person of the four in the class who seemed to have mental block against the method, although I was probably the most determined to learn the language. There were two officers from the Department of Defense who were going to Addis Ababa as attachï¿½s. They were to study Amharic in Washington for about two months, just to get started and then continue at post. The other person in the class was a first-tour FSO, Bill Womack. He was a natural linguist. I was uncomfortable at first that he was so quick to pick up the language. Bill understood the language so much better and faster than I did. At St. Meinrad and at Purdue, I had always been the best student in the language classes. I, of course, realized it was better for me that someone was ahead of me rather than holding me back. I was determined to keep up with Bill, so spent more and more time at night and on the weekends studying the language. I was a bachelor with no Foreign Service responsibilities other than learning Amharic. I was concerned also that I not hold him back. Bill was scheduled to remain only six months in class, the maximum time allowed for language courses for Junior Officers. When Bill left, he had reached the FSI's goal for a full-time hard language student: speaking and reading at the 3 level (with 5 being native speaker). I then had the three Ethiopian instructors to myself for the last five months. Thanks to Bill's torrid pace, I was also ahead of the normal schedule. I began to ease back a little on the weekends, especially since in September, I had met a management intern at the Department and was very interested in her. During the week, however, I pretty much maintained my schedule of eating dinner in my apartment in Arlington Towers and then taking the elevator to the language labs for an hour or so a review.

Q: The classes were in the basement.

BUCHE: In the basement of Arlington Towers.

Q: About this time I was taking Serbo-Croatian down there, too, ithe garage.

BUCHE: Although the classrooms and labs were not fancy, they were certainly convenient for me. I could use the elevator, which meant no commuting. It also meant that at lunch time I could go up to my apartment and have a sandwich and just get a change of scenery for a half hour. Concentrating on just one subject for an extended period was something I had wanted to do in my life - not necessarily study Amharic, but to study one thing, whether it was mathematics, history or a language. This was my opportunity to concentrate 100 percent on one discipline. I really enjoyed it and was grateful the Department had chosen me to study a hard language. As it turned out, learning Amharic not only was a career boost for me, but the assignment to Addis Ababa led to lasting personal friendships and professional developments that have greatly enriched my life. Incidentally, I also scored S/3 and R/3 on the FSI Amharic test at the end of the course. (That means I was able to speak and read at a minimum professional level.) I think that was what PER had expected when I was selected for hard-language training, partly as a result of my score on the MLAT taken during the A-100 training and the fact that I had tested well in German..

Q: Modern Language Aptitude Test.

BUCHE: After I took the MLAT, I did not think I had done very well.As I later learned, I was in the top quartile.

Q: Often in taking a language, you learn quite a bit about the society by your interaction with your instructors. Were you getting anything from instructors about Ethiopia?

BUCHE: We did, and largely through observation and informal chats after class and during breaks. There were no structured talks on Ethiopian culture, history, or politics. They were there to help us learn how Ethiopians spoke Amharic. I absorbed cultural practices and traits through close proximity with my instructors over an eleven-month period. I did not realize how much I had unconsciously taken in, until I was already in the country. In speaking or interacting with Ethiopians, I caught myself reacting with body language similar to Mulugeta, Debebe, or Alemayehu in analogous situations. What I learned about Ethiopian history was from reading on the side. I was told many times, not only by Professor Obolensky, but also by other FSI staff to learn about the history and the politics of the country when I got there. I was in a language class, not an area studies class.

Q: You were in Ethiopia from 1963 to when?

BUCHE: From January of 1963 until July of 1966. I finished Amharic class in mid-December, spent some time with my family in Indiana, was married on December 29, 1962, spent our honeymoon en route, and arrived in Addis Ababa in mid-January.

Q: You mentioned that you got married. Where did you meet youwife, and what was her background?

BUCHE: My wife, Anike, was a management intern at the State Department. I met her through my roommate, Richard Kochan. He was a close friend of mine from the Army, and he needed a room in Washington for two or three months. He shared my apartment in Arlington Towers. Rich was working in the Personnel Section of the Department, processing incoming Foreign Service officers, interns, political ambassadors, et al. He was the key person for the initial paperwork. He helped process Anike and enthusiastically described her to me. Anike Verhoeff was born in Indonesia of Dutch parents. She spent the war years in a Japanese internment camp with her mother and brother. Her father was in a POW camp. After the war, they returned to the Netherlands, where her father worked as a physician with KLM. The Verhoeff family then moved to Curacao and later immigrated to Vancouver, Canada, before moving to North Carolina. She graduated from Duke, spent a year in Europe, and came to Washington to work. Richard asked whether I would like to meet Anike. I really was not sure, but replied affirmatively. I warned him, however, I could meet with her only within a limited time because of my classes. I did not want her to take up my weekends or interfere with my evening tape labs.

Q: Oh, heavens, no!

BUCHE: So he arranged for me to telephone her around Labor Day. I met Anike and was instantly impressed. We saw each other more and more frequently. Since I was going to Ethiopia, we had to decide rather quickly about our future relationship. Our Charge in Addis Ababa was in Washington on consultations in November. He asked to see me. I asked whether I might bring Anike along. He agreed. He and I spoke about my progress in Amharic and a little about the situation in Ethiopia. Toward the end of the discussion, he asked whether I planned to marry Anike. I told him I was not sure at that point. He jokingly said that if I married her before going to Ethiopia, the Department would pay her fare; otherwise she would have to buy her own ticket. Anike and I, however, realized that a long-distance relationship would be nearly impossible to maintain. We, therefore, decided to marry. It has been an extremely happy marriage.

Q: You got to Ethiopia in '63. What was the situation there? Whawas your impression of Ethiopia when you arrived?

BUCHE: Well, I had some ideas about what to expect, but was quite naive and completely unprepared for other things. I had some short briefings by the Desk Officer in December, but no African Area courses at the FSI. As I mentioned earlier, I did some reading on my own, but I did not often go over to the Desk to read cables and airgrams. Professor Obolensky and other staff members were firmly opposed to taking time out from class, although other language trainees would insist on taking off early on Friday afternoons to read in on their next country of assignment. I think it was my monastic and military training. When someone tells me this is what I am supposed to do, I do it. Also I was the only student in class for about five months.

When I got to Ethiopia, I really was not aware in any detail about the political problems. I knew in general about the overarching role of the Emperor, the wealth, influence, and conservatism of the Orthodox Church and the noble families, the failed coup d'ï¿½tat and the aftermath, the unrest among the students, the abject poverty, the urgent need for land reform, the stirrings of Eritrean independence, and the potential effects in Ethiopia of the African independence wave from reading and from stories after class by the instructors.

Of the three, the most astute observer and also the most critical of the regime was Alemayehu Wondimagegnehu. He was an NCO in the Imperial Body Guard, and served for years as the driver and an aide de camp in Korea and Ethiopia to the Commanding General of the Bodyguard. He left the military in his mid-thirties to study in the U.S. shortly before the December 1960 coup attempt. He was personally very close to the general who had led the coup. Alemayehu wanted fundamental changes in the way feudal Ethiopia was governed, so I had an early taste of what turned out to be similar sentiments among the university students and young military officers. The other two instructors were critical of the regime, but were more inclined toward incremental reforms.

I knew from reading about Ethiopia's gross national product, literacy rates, infant mortality, miles of paved roads, kilowattage generated, and other assorted statistics that Ethiopia was one of the poorest countries in the world. When I arrived, however, I was stunned by the sight of the diseased and maimed beggars, the open sewers, the dirty, overcrowded health clinics and hospitals, the rags people wore as clothing, and the hovels where they lived. My reading and discussions with my instructors had not fully prepared me for my first experience in a third-world country. My first job at the Embassy was a temporary assignment in the General Services Section for about a month, until I could get my feet on the ground. Although we had met for an hour in Washington, the chargï¿½ wanted to find out what he was dealing with, what I was like, and what I had to offer. He was not going to put me into a sensitive position immediately. I was happy to help out the GSO for a while and to learn a bit about how a-n embassy works. I knew I was eventually going into the Political Section, but not sure when. I made arrangements for Amharic lessons an hour a day, but I had many opportunities to converse with Ethiopians in my work as the Assistant GSO. I was so pleased at the way I could speak with them. The first time I spoke with an Ethiopian in Amharic outside the FSI was on the Ethiopian Airlines plane. It was just polite chatter. When Anike and I arrived in Addis Ababa, there was no one to meet us at the airport from the Embassy because of a mix-up. I had to go through Customs/Immigration with loaded suitcases and a new bride, who still had her tourist passport in her maiden name and no visa. The conversation with the Ethiopian officials followed fairly closely what I had learned in one of the classroom exercises, Lesson X "What to do at the Customs and Immigration." One official asked me a question in Amharic. (In the early 1960s, very few Ethiopians at such a level could speak English.) I answered back in Amharic. He and the others were quite surprised, so they asked more questions in Amharic, and I responded in that language. They were impressed and warmly welcomed us to Ethiopia. Anike was very impressed.

Q: Who was the chargï¿½?

BUCHE: Sheldon Vance.

Q: Sheldon Vance, oh, yes.

BUCHE: He had replaced Ambassador Richards. Sheldon had come under Ambassador Arthur Richards and took over when Ambassador Richards retired. The new ambassador was to be Edward Korry, but he did not arrive until April of 1963. Sheldon Vance went from Ethiopia to become Ambassador to Chad and then to the Congo. He then became the Department's Coordinator for International Narcotics Control. I am not sure what the exact title was then.

Q: What was the political situation in Ethiopia when you arrived?Really, we're talking about early 1963.

BUCHE: The Emperor had survived the 1960 coup, and there was a slightly faster pace of reform. The coup was still on peoples' minds, although it took place in December 1960, and the last executions were completed by mid-1961. It was a bloody coup, and there were deaths on both sides, not only from the fighting, but also the killing of hostages by the Revolutionaries and then the executions by the Government. The coup punctured the mystique surrounding the Emperor, damaged the relations between Haile Selassie and his son, the Crown Prince, revealed the bitter rivalries in the military and security forces, demonstrated the extent of hatred toward the reactionary nobles around the Emperor, and inspired other opponents of the regime to continue their fight. A pesky insurgency was festering in Eritrea. The common wisdom in Addis Ababa was that the insurgency was not going to amount to very much, because how were the Eritrean guerillas going to stand up to the Imperial Army? The rebellion did not have to happen. Haile Selassie made a strategic miscalculation. After WWII, there were years of discussion at the UN on what to do about the former Italian colony of Eritrea. Italy was our ally, so we and the Brits were willing to listen to what that country advocated. On the other hand, Ethiopia had been abandoned and betrayed in her time of desperate need by the West (with the exception of the U.S.) The UN had to grapple with the hard question of what to do with Eritrea: independence, complete amalgamation with Ethiopia, or a federation with Ethiopia. Haile Selassie wanted complete amalgamation, but he saw that proposal was not going to fly. He was absolutely opposed to independence, so he accepted federation. In 1951, the Federation came into being. From the beginning, the Emperor and the Ethiopians, with the support of some influential Eritreans, set about to destroy the Federation. The means were classic: threats, intimidation, bribery, flattery, loans, gifts, assassinations, marriages, awards, etc. By 1961, Haile Selassie had the Eritrean Parliament under his control. He gave the signal and the Eritrean Parliament voted to abolish the Federation and join "Motherland Ethiopia". The rebellion began a few months later.

While there was intense interest within the Palace and in several Government ministries about the momentous changes in Africa, the man in the street looked down on the dark-skinned Africans and did not want anything to do with them. The Emperor had the foresight to use the burgeoning African independence movements for the benefit of Ethiopia. He had decided that if there was going to be a large number of newly-independent African states, he was the only logical choice for the role of the Continent's "father figure". So he laid the groundwork for an organization (to be sited in Addis Ababa) to serve the new Africa. His vision created the Organization of African Unity. How did he bring it off? For years he had supported independence movements, not with large sums of money or arms shipments, but by personal contacts with the various leaders. Many, while still engaged in the struggle for independence, had been invited by the Emperor to visit him in Addis Ababa. The Emperor feted them lavishly and bestowed generous gifts on them. They would leave Ethiopia, pleased with the Emperor's recognition and generosity. The Emperor sent the draft OAU charter to the leaders of independent African states and invited them to meet in Addis Ababa in May 1963 to sign the document. They came, and after several days of oratory and festivities, signed the Charter.

I had been alerted by conversations with my instructors to an antagonism between the younger, educated officials in the Government and the traditionalists in the senior Government positions and at the Court. Most of the college-educated people in Ethiopia at that time had been selected or approved by the Emperor. Many had studied abroad, since the national university (Haile Selassie I University) was just developing. All the grads with higher degrees had to study abroad, since there were no post-graduate degrees awarded at HSIU until around 1964. He chose prospective students largely on the basis of grades and performance in high school. A high percentage was from the low and middle class. The Emperor did not favor the sons and daughters of the nobility. He probably envisaged the hundreds of future university grads as a long-term counterweight to the nobility. The Emperor made it clear to the students that he was choosing them to play an important role in Ethiopian Government and society. The Emperor spent considerable time on education and took a personal interest in it.

The 1960 coup had wide support among the college students, not only the undergrads in Addis Ababa, but many of the graduates who had benefitted from going abroad and studying under Haile Selassie's patronage. Many of the latter came back with ideas and hopes that clashed with what they were experiencing: poverty, injustice, favoritism, in brief, a traditional, semi-feudal aristocracy. They had been introduced to democracy, either experiencing it abroad or reading about it in classrooms in Ethiopia. There was a Parliament of two chambers that was created by the Constitution, which was given to the people by Haile Selassie. So Parliament was created, and the first parliamentary elections for the Lower House were held. The Senate was appointed by the Emperor. Political parties were not allowed, and candidates had to stand as individuals. It was pretty much a Parliament of landed interests, as one would expect. There were a few exceptions, namely schoolteachers, small businessmen, and minor officials who somehow got elected. They were not opponents of the regime, but on the other hand, they were not subservient to the landowning class or the Orthodox Church. While the Parliament was under the control of the Emperor regarding what legislation it could enact, there were opportunities for the members to criticize (obliquely and gently) actions of the Government, as long as there was no direct mention of the Emperor, the Ministers, or influential persons. Amharic is quite subtle and flexible, with double and triple meanings to words, so a clever, but careful person could criticize without too much concern about going to prison.

To go back to your question how did I find things. The university was a sort of "warm-bed" of rebellion. Americans were looked upon as the supporters of the status quo, which we were and were not. Internally, we were in favor of progress and development; externally, we wanted the Ethiopians to be strong enough to defend against Somali irredentism. We were beginning to bring in more weapons for the military to oppose Somali attacks in the Ogaden. The USG wanted to expand the base in Asmara, Kagnew Station, which was a key monitoring and communications station. We did not pay much rent. I think we paid only $100,000 a year, which was the actual going rental price for the land. The real "price" for Kagnew was in economic and military aid. The fact that the U.S. military was at Kagnew infuriated many students. They were attuned to the anti-colonialist rhetoric of the African independence movements and looked upon Kagnew as symbolic of our manipulation and interference in Africa. They also saw Kagnew as the guarantee of our support for the Emperor. So all these things were festering in Ethiopia when I arrived.

I forgot to mention there were also non-Somali ethnic groups in Ethiopia who were very unhappy with the way they were treated by the Government. It did not start with Haile Selassie, but by his immediate predecessors who conquered the people beyond the Amhara heartland, took their land, and imposed the imperial system on them. The conquered people were from various ethnic groups, but the Amharas often lumped them together under the pejorative term of "Galla."

Q: For the darker people?

BUCHE: They were sometimes darker than the Amharas or Tigreans who comprised the ruling elite of Ethiopia. The "Galla" were Hamitic people. They spoke languages which were from a different linguistic family than the Semitic languages of Amharic or Tigrinya. They had not been converted to Christianity until after they were conquered. They were either Muslim or animist. These were conquered peoples, although the Emperors tried to sweeten the situation somewhat by inviting the traditional chiefs to become Christian and marry Amharas. Haile Selassie played the game as well as his predecessors. He would throw a rebellious chief into prison, and then arrange for an Amhara woman, often from the nobility, to marry the chief's son. The son would be expected to become Christian, learn Amharic, and transfer his loyalty to the Imperial Crown.

Q: When you went into the Political Section, what were we lookinat? How did you operate?

BUCHE: Since I could speak Amharic, I was assigned by Sheldon Vance to reporting on Ethiopia's internal developments. My beat was the Parliament, what was happening in the provinces, the university, and the "young elite." Bob Wenzel arrived as the new Political Counselor, and Don Junior came in to take charge of reporting on the OAU and African issues. After his arrival, Ambassador Edward Korry reviewed what the Embassy officers were doing and made changes in priorities. He realized from his briefings in Washington that we knew little of what was going on Ethiopia outside of Addis Ababa and Asmara. With me he emphasized more travel to the provinces. "That is your bailiwick. You are to travel anywhere in Ethiopia, and I want you out of the Embassy for a minimum of one week every month. We will make money available to you for transportation. Take Embassy jeeps, an Ethiopian Airlines plane, or go along a team from our Military Advisory Assistance Group, the MAAG. When military training teams come from the U.S., go along with them." I was delighted with the order to do more travel to the provinces. I found provincial travel was personally fascinating and politically productive. The rest of the political section did the traditional work of bilateral relations and reporting on Ethiopia's relations with the rest of the world. There was a CIA station with three officers. We had many political issues: OAU, UN, Kagnew and military assistance, insurgencies, domestic opposition, etc. With the founding of the OAU and the upgrading and expansion of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, Embassy Addis Ababa took on additional responsibilities. Ethiopia was becoming more important in Washington's eyes. We were making a political commitment to Ethiopia with military training and weapons and increased economic assistance. The Somali insurgency was active and was getting a lot of attention. Its aims, source of support, and the stakes involved were fairly obvious. On the other hand, the nascent insurgency in Eritrea by the Eritrean Liberation Force (ELF) was not so clear to us regarding the depth of its support among the populace, the effectiveness of the Government's counter-insurgency measures, the staying power of the ELF, and what it meant to Kagnew. In January 1963, when I arrived, we were focusing primarily on the Ogaden, not Eritrea. We did not recognize at the time the deep intensity in Eritrea of the anti-Amhara, anti-central-government feeling. Our post in Asmara was not staffed to do in-depth political reporting throughout the province on Eritrean attitudes, developments, and leadership. The Consulate General had heavy obligations toward Kagnew, serving the base's public affairs needs, plus providing political guidance and consular services.

Q: Probably to service the military.

BUCHE: Exactly.

Q: Consular services for the military at Kagnew Station.

BUCHE: Yes, that was one of the Consulate's duties. The new ambassador changed priorities for the Consulate, too. He was told in Washington that Kagnew Station was one of our most important overseas strategic assets. He agreed that what the Consulate General was doing regarding services to Kagnew should be continued, but he insisted that it was critical to learn more about what was happening outside the Government offices in Asmara. Ambassador Korry was not a career ambassador. He came out of journalism. He was with UPI and then with Cowles Publications, before being asked to become Ambassador to Ethiopia. What he saw in Ethiopia was a country of extraordinary potential and an immense potential for things to go wrong. He believed one of his major tasks was to make sure that Washington comprehended Ethiopia's problems and potential as these elements affected American interests and to devote the necessary resources to working out possible solutions. I know early on in his posting, Korry saw major disconnects between Washington's professed doctrine of the acknowledgment of Kagnew's short-to-medium-term and Ethiopia's long-term strategic importance to the USG and the resources our Government was willing to make available to the country. Kagnew's vital importance was the key focus in Washington.

Q: This was an article of faith, I think.

BUCHE: It was an article of faith; it really was; and we were putting enormous amounts of equipment into Kagnew. We were monitoring the Soviet space shots and their development of rocketry and satellites. We had some assets in Iran and elsewhere for this purpose, but because of geography, Kagnew was of strategic importance. Kagnew Station also was electronically monitoring what was happening diplomatically and militarily throughout the Middle East. Kagnew was also a relay station for diplomatic and military communications for the USG. It was one of our primary stations for communicating with our submarines and strategic bombers in the Indian Ocean. It was an article of faith that Kagnew was strategic, and we had to defend it. The Emperor had to be on board if we were to maintain Kagnew. He was under pressure regarding Kagnew from some of his own advisers and Ministers, but also from the other Africans and the leaders of the Non-aligned Movement, the G-77, who were pushing for a neutral, non-aligned Africa. There were many resolutions on African non-alignment in the UN and the OAU. The Emperor finessed them. The Emperor or his representatives would say, "Yes, we should work for a neutral, non-aligned Africa. Ethiopia is neutral and non-aligned. We have no foreign bases on our soil. Kagnew is not a foreign base, since there are no heavy weapons or military aircraft there. Kagnew is only a communications station." We were concerned that the ELF might decide to blow up some of our antennas. There were antenna towers scattered over hundreds of acres. They were guarded by local contract guards and were surrounded by a Cyclone fence. We knew the antenna fields were extremely vulnerable, and could be blown up by a determined group of soldiers. As the clashes between the Ethiopian military and the Eritrean insurgents became more frequent and bloodier, we were concerned how the struggle would impact on Kagnew. There were over 4,000 Americans there. I think there were about 1,200 to 1,500 uniformed, mostly Army Security Agency personnel, but also small contingents of communications and intelligence units from the Air Force and Navy. There were also large numbers of American civilian employees working for various U.S. intelligence agencies. There were probably a thousand dependents. Some of the families were living in Asmara, in rented houses. They were "on the economy". These were just a few of the issues confronting our new Ambassador.

We were curious how ordinary Ethiopians would react to the increasing numbers of African diplomats and officials coming to Addis Ababa in connection with the OAU and ECA. The ingrained Ethiopian politeness and hospitality toward guests overcame their cultural antipathy against dark-skinned people. They swallowed their cultural prejudices and treated the Africans with respect. What their thoughts may have been when the Africans badly misbehaved in public is another question. Many of the Africans in the numerous delegations or new embassies in 1963-66 had suddenly gone from being students or clerks to being ambassadors, junior ministers, and the like. When they came to Addis Ababa, there were Ethiopian officials to open doors, limos with chauffeur at their disposal, easy access to booze and women, and attention from journalists and diplomats. It was a heady time for the newly-independent Africans, and more than a few disgraced themselves and their country with their public antics.

Q: Well, did you find in your reporting that you had to keep in mind that you had a very pro-African bureau, G. Mennen Williams and his deputy, Wayne Fredericks.

BUCHE: Very definitely yes.

Q: Yes, and also that this was not a Bureau at the top that wanted to hear about antics; it wanted to hear about very serious things, and probably much more was expected from the Africans than actually the Africans were being able to deliver at that time.

BUCHE: Yes, the antics never found their way into the Embassy reporting. We had enough sense not to report the disgusting public behavior of some of the Africans. Our reports were timely, accurate, substantive, really high quality. I did not write them because I did not report on the OAU or the ECA. Don Junior was responsible for OAU issues; Art Stillman covered the ECA. When there was an important OAU or ECA conference, and there were many of the former in the first several years, the entire Embassy got involved. Ambassador Korry did much of the spot reporting, folding our bits and pieces into what he had picked up from the principals involved. He was an experienced, resourceful, competitive, and effective reporter by profession. He brought these traits with him to Addis Ababa. Korry wanted to be the first into Washington and our embassies with reports on important developments from the OAU and ECA conferences. (Developments in the former were much more important and time-sensitive than the latter.) He wanted Soapy Williams and Wayne Fredericks, plus our embassies, to hear from him first before they saw the results on the news tickers or had read-outs from interested governments. Korry regarded the BBC, Reuters, AP, and Agence France Presse as colleagues and competitors. He knew the top reporters and had excellent rapport with them. They had useful contacts among the African delegations from the capitals and were willing to trade information with Korry. Being the American Ambassador, but more than that, being Edward Korry, meant that he quickly established effective relations with the key Ethiopians. The OAU sessions were closed to the public, including diplomats and journalists, but Korry and his Embassy team learned from various sources what was happening inside. I met a French interpreter through Anike, who proved to be an excellent source. As soon as a session was over, Korry and team would confer with our contacts and then rush back to the Embassy. Korry would sit down at a typewriter and type the report on the green telegram form. He would hand the finished product to Sheldon, Bob Wenzel, or Don Junior to read in case he had forgotten something, and then give it to the Communications Officer to transmit. This was often at midnight or later. When the Department of State and our embassies opened the next day, Ed Korry's cable was in the take. While I enjoyed assisting with the OAU conferences, my primary task was internal Ethiopian reporting.

Q: Well, I thought we might stop at this point. We will pick it up again while you are in Ethiopia. You have talked about Kagnew Station, the general political situation in Ethiopia, the Emperor, and Ed Korry. I'd like to ask you what you were finding out and how you operated as the internal political officer, traveling around the country. Let's pick that up the next time.

***Today is the 17th of August, 1999. All right, let's start. You were there in Ethiopia from when to when?

BUCHE: I arrived in January of 1963 and left in July of 1966.

Q: How did you get around as a political officer? The Emperor wathe name of the game at that time, right?

BUCHE: Right, everything was highly centralized around the Emperor. Issues or questions were routinely taken to him for resolution. He held court every morning when he received ministers, governors, judges, generals, and ordinary citizens. This was also the time when he summoned persons to reward, punish, warn, praise, assign, transfer, or retire. He seemed to prefer the face-to-face approach rather than through memos. The provincial governors and also the district governors came to Addis Ababa from time to time to communicate with His Imperial Majesty. He appointed them, so they were responsible to him. In their areas, they conveyed the Emperor's will to the police, the judges, the administrators, and the public and were responsible for seeing that his will was carried out.

And following up on where we left it last time, how did I get around and what did I do? I had the responsibility from the Ambassador to learn and report on what was happening internally in Ethiopia. There was practically no media coverage of the provinces other than PR for the Government. We had few sources of information on what was happening or likely to happen in the provinces. Our intelligence people or the MAAG would sometimes pick up information about the Eritrean or Ogaden insurgencies, but this was usually about skirmishes, ambushes, casualties, and other conflict-related information. I do not recall ever reading any CIA reports on causes of the discontent in the provinces, where land was taken illegally by the governors, judgments were handed down in civil and criminal cases and licenses and concessions awarded or withdrawn on the basis of bribes or at the direction of the governor, or persons arrested and detained according to the desire of the police chief or governor. We had a good handle on what the Ethiopians were doing on the international scene, but were in the dark internally. I drew up a plan of where I wanted to go, when, why, and how. Bob Wenzel, Sheldon, and the Ambassador reviewed it, made suggestions, and approved. In addition to the means of transportation I mentioned earlier, we also had a U.S. Army Mapping Mission. There was a military officer in charge, and a mixture of military and civilians under him.

Q: Well, there is an Army Mapping Service, which is really quitcivilian, I think.

BUCHE: The Mapping Service had helicopters. There was, of course, the Ethiopian Airlines, which had DC-3's which could fly all over the country. The Embassy and AID Mission had Land Rovers and Jeeps, so I had a wide range of transport options. On one occasion, I was met at a grassy landing field in Gojjam Province by mules and guards dispatched by the district governor to transport me the last few miles. (It was too muddy for a Land Rover.) I made a special effort to contact Peace Corps Volunteers and American missionaries when I was in the area. The PCVs were not supposed to be used by Embassy officers for intelligence gathering. I agreed with that prohibition and certainly did not pressure any of the Volunteers to tell me anything of a sensitive nature. When I visited with them, I usually sat and listened to what they wanted to tell me of their own volition. They would tell about the corrupt police chief, or how the governor took land away from so and so on false charges and how the judges were bribed or ordered to render a verdict. They knew what was going on in the town and surrounding area and were delighted that someone from the American Embassy was interested in hearing their views. The missionaries were an excellent source of information. They knew the local officials and languages. They were not allowed to proselytize in the Christian regions (Amhara/Tigre areas), so they went into the peripheral lands where Islam and/or animism were the predominant religions. These were the areas of the greatest exploitation by the Amhara/Tigre conquerors. Many had lived in a mission station for years. An American Lutheran missionary, Reverend Don McClure, had been born at the station, grew up there, and succeeded his father as pastor. I found that the missionaries with their long residence in an area tended to put things into perspective...things are bad now, but they were worse in the mid-1950s, or the current governor is the most capable man we have seen since our arrival in 1948, or similar comparisons. Sometimes I would have introductions from students or officials in Addis Ababa. I made a special effort to meet the university students. I invited small groups to our apartment. We lived opposite the main campus of the University. Twice a month we had open house and several dozen students would come over for beer and popcorn, and the local food, wat and injera. I would mention I was planning a trip to a district and ask whether anyone was from there. Fairly often one or two of the students were from that area. I would ask whether they wanted me to take anything to their family, and the answer was usually affirmative. I delivered parcels and usually was asked by the family to carry back something for the student. I enjoyed meeting the families of the students. They ranged from governors to peasants. On my return to Addis Ababa, I would relate some of my impressions to the student whose family I had visited to see his or her reactions. Before each trip, I had to obtain written authorization from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior. The latter would inform the provincial governor and the district governor of my visit. Without the impressive-looking authorization paper with its seals and stamps from Addis Ababa, I could not have met with any local official. Also there would have been difficulties from the police for the Peace Corps Volunteers or missionaries with whom I met. I was often surprised to find how much the top officials were willing to tell me about the local problems. They were quite forthcoming in describing events and conditions. Where they and the PCVs and missionaries often diverged was in describing the causes or sources of the problems. The younger officials, schoolteachers, and National Service Volunteers (from HSI University) turned out to be excellent sources of information. Their views and goals were in opposition to the higher ups. The National Service Volunteers were the most critical. For the most part, they were in the provinces against their will. The National Service was created in 1964, and one year of service in the provinces was made a condition for graduating from the University. They were critical of the regime while in the university, but their demonstrations and oratory in favor of land and tax reform probably had limited effect in the capital. In the provinces, they saw up close what was happening and used their positions as teachers, health workers, engineers, et al to spread their views among their secondary-school students and coworkers.

Q: Now let's take a city out in the hinterland somewhere in Tigre.You arrive. Do they know you are coming?

BUCHE: Yes, let's take one of my visits to Makeli, the capital of Tigre. Ras Mengesha Seyoum, the Governor (and married to a granddaughter of the Emperor), would be told, by telephone or by radio, that John Buche from the American Embassy will arrive by plane or by road on a certain day for a visit of a week, and please give him all appropriate courtesies. I would often be received by a representative of the Governor, taken to the Governor's Office where I would meet him (if he were in town) and then introduced to the police chief, the army commander, the top officials in health, education, public works, telecommunications, and other ministries. On one occasion, I was invited to dinner by the Governor; on the second visit I was invited to dinner by another senior official. I would usually be escorted by a police or military officer when I traveled outside the town. Since I knew Amharic, I did not have an interpreter. I never had an interpreter. This was such an advantage, particularly in the provinces, where not many people spoke English in the early 1960s. Even in Tigre, where the mother tongue was Tigrinya, the officials had to know Amharic. Although I suspected my movements were monitored, I could call on local officials as I pleased. Sometimes we met along with their staff and sometimes alone. Spending a week in Tigre or in another province observing and conversing gave me an impression of the officials, the politics, the problems, and the potential of the area. I was not trying to be a junior CIA agent by calling on people at midnight asking what is the real scoop. Just by talking to a wide variety of local people, I could piece together enough to draw some conclusions. I believe my travels and reporting helped our Ambassador and policy-makers in Washington to understand with greater depth and more specificity what was happening outside of Addis Ababa and Asmara. My reporting was not much different than what most outside observers and analysts felt instinctively regarding the Imperial Ethiopian Government's administration in the provinces. I provided multiple and specific examples of the corruption, human rights abuses, and exploitation by the Government officials and the power structure (usually Amharas or Amharacized locals). I highlighted instances where officials and local notables seemed to be doing their jobs in a responsible manner. I reported local history, how and why certain events occurred, how certain families gained or lost power, why there were unusual ethnic mixtures, what was taking place on the economic development side, how a new all-weather road was changing the dynamics of an area. I also reported on some armed clashes, raids, and uprisings which had occurred from a year to a few weeks before my visit to the local scene. We were aware of some of these events (from electronic monitoring from Kagnew and from the CIA, MAAG, and AID), but not many details or the causes. Some of my reporting covered areas or fields which journalists, academicians, or government offices should have published, but had not done so at that time. My reports named names, so we also expanded our biographic files considerably.) My work helped us understand the complexities and fragility of provincial Ethiopia a little bit better. In some cases the situation was better than we had imagined; in others it was much worse. At least, we had some notions of where the major problems were and the enormity of the Government's task to bring about reform, should the Emperor give his approval to move forward. In the mid-1960s, the hottest and most controversial subject was land reform. We were convinced there could be no lasting political stability or agricultural progress in Ethiopia until the land problem was resolved. There were numerous variations on the land-grab theme, but the largest chunks of land were those taken by the Government from the conquered peoples on the periphery of the Amhara/Tigre heartland and partially distributed to the Church, the victorious forces, and the ruling elite. Another category was the land taken by the power elite from the weaker parties, including Amharas and Tigres, through such means as corrupt courts, illegal seizures, or tampered documents. I had a feeling that meaningful land reform was not going to happen under Haile Selassie, despite the blatant wrongs and the seething resentment. Control of land was one of the keys to political power in Ethiopia. I did not see the Emperor as willing to take on the nobles, the generals, the Church, and other big landowners over this issue. He, however, wanted to give the appearance of doing something about the problem and set up a Government organization to collect data and study the issue. It was called something on the order of the "Institute for Cadastral Surveys and Land Reform". Funding and some technical assistance for the Institute came from the UN Development Program, the World Bank, and some national donors. Even the limited surveys and studies by the Institute began to document some of the past abuses. The students and other critics of the regime were not mollified by the creation of the Institute. The students took to the streets on several occasions for land reform. They carefully avoided directly criticizing the Emperor, but cited the Institute and some of the Emperor's own words to demand action. The students wanted fundamental change. The most frequently mentioned idea was a parliamentary democracy for Ethiopia, with the Emperor as titular head of state. This sounded progressive to the students, and was in line with what was happening in many newly-independent countries of Africa. Few students, however, seemed to think that there was any chance that the Emperor lead in that direction. For a student to speak publicly about such a change was simply too dangerous. They largely kept their revolutionary zeal under control because they did not want to be jailed or killed. They instead latched onto the theme of "land to the tiller," as a relatively safe (physically), but sufficiently progressive rallying call. There were a half dozen demonstrations by the students on that theme: "take the land away from the Church and nobility; give the land back to the tiller; set a maximum amount any one person could own." (The students during my time in Ethiopia were careful about not mentioning the Emperor in their sloganeering. Blaming the Ethiopian Orthodox Church or "the nobility" was sufficiently provocative to cause a strong reaction from the police.) A thousand students holding banners or placards would march out of the campus toward the Parliament or the Prime Minister's Office. The police would eventually go charging in and bash them with batons. Then the students would flee, and the police would chase them down and arrest those they caught. They usually arrested several hundred.

The next day, a group of students would present a petition to the Emperor for the release of their colleagues. Haile Selassie would use the occasion to chastise the students for their disorderly conduct, their ingratitude for the reforms he instituted, and the dangerous example they were setting for the less-educated and less-privileged; commend the police for their restraint in the face of terrible provocations; and appeal to the students' parents for better control of their children. Often a delegation of parents or elders would also show up at the Palace to plead for the release of the students. Sometimes a contingent of police would be summoned and publicly praised for the exemplary performance of their duty. Usually the arrested students were released several days later. The Emperor sometimes used the occasion to make pronouncements along the lines of "We are in favor of land-reform. That is the reason We have set up the Institute to undertake surveys and to study what needs to be done. When the studies are completed, We will redistribute the land." I am not sure what the Emperor really had in mind, but my guess is that any real reform was far down the list of HIM's priorities. The students were demonstrating for land reform and had quiet, discreet support from many of their professors and from some government civil servants. (The students could demonstrate openly, with minimal consequences, but any public show of support from other elements would have been regarded as subversive.) Land reform (and the concomitant issues) was a subject we followed closely. I wrote a dozen or so airgrams on this theme. Land reform also caught Washington's attention, and the policy makers began to think about the implications for the US. They liked the idea. USAID began thinking what they could do to help. These are some examples of what I was reporting.

There was also the requirement to purchase public documents from the Ethiopian Government and send them to Washington. I also collected information from public sources about Government officials, academics, businessmen, and other leading or potentially leading figures.

I was tasked with improving the Embassy's biographic reporting program. I was fascinated by the intricate family relationships among the Ethiopian elite and realized how critical blood and marriage ties were to understanding the Ethiopian power structure. Sheldon Vance realized this and gave more attention to biographic reporting. Unfortunately, the Embassy bio files were pretty sparse when he arrived, except for the top hundred or so officials. He told the Embassy officers to concentrate on the next layer. I was told to study what we had in our bio files and to map out a plan to expand our coverage. I quickly noticed there was little information on the wives of the men covered by our files. I later learned that in some cases, those officials gained their positions through their wives' family ties. One of the reasons for the lack of information about the wives was obvious. No one at the Embassy knew enough Amharic to speak with them. When Ed Korry arrived, he insisted we give more priority to bio reporting and also tasked the USAID and MAAG officers with contributing. I spent a large amount of time working out the multilevel family ties and writing biographical reports as well as coordinating and editing the input from the country teaWhen I left the Embassy, there were bios on over a thousand Ethiopians.

As I followed developments in Ethiopia, initially as the Desk Officer and subsequently from other positions in the Foreign Service, I observed the accomplishments and careers of the students, junior military officers, young academics, and civil servants whom I had come to know, had picked as potential leaders, and about whom I had written extensive bio reports. Ethiopians were not only quite knowledgeable about family ties, but usually were willing to speak about such relationships. It is a subject of importance to their culture. They needed to show family relationships in order to gain access to communal land (in the traditional Amhara regions) through their ancestry. They would use family ties, even very distant ones, to seek jobs, favors, influence, etc. Also of enormous significance was the issue of family relationships and lineage in marriage, both pro and con. Ethiopians traditionally are not allowed to marry anyone closer than the fifth degree of consanguinity, and the really devout make it seven degrees. That means they had to know who their cousins, nephews, and nieces were at least to the fifth-degree of consanguinity to avoid being guilty of incest. They were very knowledgeable about their families and often about the families of friends, neighbors, classmates, and colleagues at work. It really was not too difficult for the Embassy to chart family relationships. It required time and access, plus some knowledge of the culture. Of course the Imperial Family's relationships were well documented and publicized. Of greater interest to the Embassy were the nexus of relations several levels down

Whenever I traveled, I made it a point to find out as much as I could about the governors, the deputy governors, and the district and municipal officials, how they were related, where they were born, where else they had served, their education, and importantly, their views. The former were usually well known, and I could discuss such "facts" openly with them. Often they were flattered to think that someone from the American Embassy even cared about the curriculum vitae. Concerning the latter, namely their views, that was the tricky part if they were not solidly in the Emperor's camp. On the other hand, there were some officials who had been exiled to the boondocks because they were suspected or proven to be critical of the Emperor. Family relationships protected them from prison, if the charges were not too grave. A few of these fellows were willing to share their opinions with me to a certain degree. Given the flexibility and the subtlety of the Amharic language, what they told me could be understood in several ways. It was clear that they were in "exile" and not thrilled about living away from their normal environment. Once I knew the family connections of an official, I could place things I had heard about him or her in perspective. For example why he could take away land from the people in his area with impunity. Simple, his uncle was the Minister of the Interior and his wife's sister was married to a close relative of the Emperor. One of the most difficult aspects of following Ethiopian lineages is that names "disappear" after three generations. For example, the son and daughter of Mr. Abebe Getu would be named Berhe Abebe and Almaz Abebe. Berhe's son and daughter would be named Hailu Berhe and Saba Berhe. Almaz's children would follow the same paradigm and be named after their father. Females kept their own names after marriage, but there was no indication of the mother's name in her child's name. That is the Ethiopian naming system, so it is almost impossible without a chart to figure out from the name alone the person's more distant antecedents or descendants. There were also numerous divorces and sometimes "natural offspring" who were later recognized.. We could really have used a computer in those days.

Q: We're always looking for places of power. That's what political observers do. Did everything flow down from the Emperor, or were there perhaps other areas where the Emperor was not interested in exercising power or where the governors were influential in doing something or other, or did it all keep coming back to the Emperor and the court?

BUCHE: Without sounding too naive or too prone to oversimplify, the Emperor was the source of almost all power. His ability to move ministers and governors around, which he did periodically, so that they could not build up a power base or could not get any expertise was one way he exercised power. He moved governors and judges around, moved generals out to be governors, governors in to be ministers, shuffled the military and police constantly. He had three or four intelligence systems running concurrently, spying on each other and spying on everyone else. In his prime he was able to keep the many balls in the air. He was pretty busy keeping things in motion, but that was a source of power. There was an inherent instability to the system, since he was the only person who had the full view. While he would occasionally tolerate and even praise independent initiatives by subordinates, such actions were usually viewed negatively and punished in some way. Officials in Addis Ababa or in the provinces learned that it was safer to consult with the Emperor before undertaking an action that was not routine. We heard of many sudden assignments to the provinces or from one province to another, where the rumors had it that the cause was displeasure on the part of the Emperor at an action by the official. I can imagine a typical scenario where someone from the Imperial Palace telephones the official along the following lines: "His Imperial Majesty has graciously decided that you would be better suited to become the district governor of XYZ (about 500 miles away from where he was currently working). As of today your appointment as district governor in ABC is terminated. You will report for duty in seven days. His Imperial Majesty regrets that in this time of national austerity, there will be no funds available to cover your moving expenses." The Emperor grabbed power as a young man and held on against many rival contenders for decades. He was shrewd, cunning, far-sighted, and decisive in his prime. In 1963 when I arrived in Ethiopia, I believe the Emperor was about at the zenith of his mental abilities. What he accomplished on the international scene over the next several years was most impressive. The fact that he held the country together in the 1960s as well as he did, given the many internal and external challenges, demonstrates his extraordinary talents. By the late 1960s, however, it seemed to me that his powers began failing him.

Q: You're talking about mental powers.

BUCHE: Both his physical and mental powers began to weaken., and the system became unglued. You could see in the late '60s, early '70s, that things were coming undone. He could no longer juggle hundreds of important issues, keep up a heavy schedule of foreign and domestic travel, decide on the numerous personnel appointments, and continue to dispense instructions, rewards, and punishments through face-to-face meetings with his officials. He was aging and showed signs of mental and physical weariness. Concomitantly, the Ethiopian internal situation was developing in ways detrimental to the continuation of the Emperor's traditional way of ruling. Ideologies advocating basic changes in Ethiopia's political, social, and economic relationships were gaining adherents. The critics and enemies of Haile Selassie and imperial rule were becoming bolder in their opposition, as they saw the increasing support for change among the educated elite in the military and in the civilian bureaucracy.

Q: The Emperor had a pretty good run for his money. He started out,I think, as regent in 1913 or thereabouts

BUCHE: Yes, he had a remarkable run for his money. Haile Selassie began accumulating power already as a teenager. In 1913, he was made Regent and recognized as the heir apparent. He was crowned Emperor in 1930.. He showed his political genius in the way he advanced toward his goal of becoming Emperor. He had some advantages because of his father, but he had to outwit or defeat several formidable rivals before he could gain the crown.

Q: It sounds like on anything government to government that therwas not much need for going to ministries.

BUCHE: We went to the ministries because that was where the decision-making process began. If a minister had not already received instructions on the issue from the Palace, he would know how to respond within a few days because the Emperor had ministerial meetings almost every day. I think once in a while the ministers would meet together with the Emperor for ceremonial reasons, but they usually just sat outside his office in the Palace, until he called them in one at a time. They would have ten or fifteen minutes to explain to His Imperial Majesty the issues involved. Sometimes the minister would get a quick decision, and sometimes he would be told to leave the papers for further study. The minister would then call up Ambassador Korry and say, "His Imperial Majesty has conveyed through me the following decision, or His Imperial Majesty is still studying the matter." Of course, there were some issues that our Ambassador had to discuss directly with the Emperor. The American Ambassador could get an appointment with the Emperor on short notice.

The Emperor seemed to be near the height of his mental powers during my time in Ethiopia. When I came back from Ethiopia, I was on the Ethiopian Desk for three years. As I recall, he still was still pretty sharp mentally. He was juggling new considerations, however. One was the rise of the independent African states and the OAU. He decided that Ethiopia was not going to be swept up in the flood of popular democracy, anti-colonialism, and "African" socialism. He saw the dangers to his power from the ideologies of Sekou Toure, Nasser, Jomo Kenyatta, et al. Haile Selassie had impeccable credentials as an anti-colonialist, but he also had excellent relations with the colonial powers. He had invited many young nationalist leaders to Addis Ababa when they were sorely in need of a little bit of money and some stroking, and he treated them magnificently. He was able to use the African independence movement to his and Ethiopia's advantage. We were amazed at how cleverly he handled this whole thing. He brought the African leaders together and persuaded them to sign the charter of the Organization of African Unity. He had set up the diplomatic work several years in advance and brought in a Chilean expert to write the charter (based to a large extent on the OAS). The Emperor was able to bring regional enemies and rivals together from the rest of Africa - the Moroccans, Tunisians, and the Algerians, Nasser and Sekou Toure. It worked, and they sat down and signed the Charter of the OAU in 1963. The Charter was not something that they saw for the first time in Addis; it was circulated much earlier. It was very cleverly written, so there was a very strong emphasis on "pre-colonial borders." There were some countries that did not want that concept included, in particular, Somalia. The Emperor cleverly isolated the Somalis before the conference, and they had to go along. Most African countries wanted pre-colonial borders. There was no alternative to the concept, but war.

Q: It's been an article of faith with us, anyway, that once you uncork this - whoosh - I mean, the whole Continent would fall apart into a thousand little tribal enclaves, and so like it or lump it, there it is.

BUCHE -The Charter did allow an escape clause, something along the line that these unjust colonial borders shall remain, unless mutually agreed to by all parties concerned. That could mean the barrel of a gun, but it was enough to allow everyone to sign. Also there was a dispute-solving mechanism. The Emperor figured that his prestige could be enhanced if the OAU became the venue for intra-African dispute negotiations. The OAU had a crisis on its hands within months after the Charter was signed. It was the Moroccan-Algerian War. That crisis was followed by others throughout the Continent with numerous assassinations and coups d'ï¿½tat in dozens of African countries. Many of the disputes did end up at the OAU in Addis Ababa. The Emperor almost always was involved in some way in seeking a resolution of the disputes.

Q: Well, the borders have been really quite stable, when you think about it, particularly because they're so artificial. You talked about the students. I was in Yugoslavia as chief of the Consular Section during this time you were in Addis, and the African students who had ended up in Bulgaria basically revolted, and they came out through Yugoslavia. They felt they had been badly mistreated by the Bulgarians, and there was much of this from coming out of Lumumba University in Moscow. Were you getting any reflection of the Soviet attempt to educate Ethiopians during this time?

BUCHE: Well, the Soviets recognized the potential of the students, and they were trying to get a foothold at the Haile Selassie University. The University was heavily American-oriented. This was something that upset the British enormously, because they had played a key role in liberating Ethiopia from the Italian occupation and had provided the Royal Family of Ethiopia with asylum during the war years. The British thought they would be asked to set up an African Oxbridge in Ethiopia. The Americans were also eager to help the Ethiopians to establish a university, with US Government funds and foundation money, particularly the Ford Foundation. Several American universities were seeking to set up cooperative arrangements. The Emperor took his time to weigh the options. He probably also considered the state of the UK's finances and concluded that Her Majesty's Government would not have much money for a non-Commonwealth country. He chose the American concept. The Soviets were basically left out. Since Ethiopia was officially non-aligned, the Emperor had to balance what he was doing with the Americans by something for the Soviets. They were allowed to set up a technical institute in Bahir-Dar, which was a small town, a rough day's ride from Addis Ababa on the southern shore of Lake Tana. They set up an institute in Bahir-Dar as part of the University, but it conferred only associate degrees in the technical fields. The Soviets were also allowed to place a few professors on the main campus of Haile Selassie University in Addis Ababa. There were, if my recollection is correct, maybe two or three Russian professors. I think they were on the medical or the mathematics faculty.

What the Soviets did at the time was to offer scholarships to Lumumba University in Moscow, and lean on the East Germans, the Bulgarians, and other Eastern European allies to offer scholarships. The Ethiopian Government did not turn these scholarships down. There was not a long line of Ethiopians waiting to go, but if they were turned down by the Americans, the Brits, or the Canadians, they applied. Maybe their thinking went along the lines that it may not be too bad to go to Lumumba, particularly when word began circulating in Addis that if they went for a year or two and then "defected" while on vacation in Western Europe, they were almost sure of getting an American scholarship. I do not know how many Ethiopians tried the "defection" gambit, but about a hundred Ethiopian students departed the country annually for study in the U.S.S.R. and in Eastern Europe. Ethiopian policy was that undergraduates should go to the local University. At first, the USG financed some undergraduates for US colleges, but as the Haile Selassie University developed, we stopped that policy and funded only graduate students.

The Soviets were playing that game, too. They were offering scholarships on the graduate level, but were at some disadvantage: the students had to learn a new language; Moscow was cold; and the prospective students were not sure what type of education they would receive or what their job prospects would be if they returned to Ethiopia. AID had a hefty budget for scholarships at the graduate level, and there was also the Fulbright Program under the US Information Service, but not enough to meet the demand. One day, a dozen unsuccessful scholarship applicants came to the Embassy and asked to see Ambassador Korry. He met with them, and they told him that if did not arrange for scholarships to the USA, they would go to Lumumba University. He responded, "Well, that's wonderful! We think you should go to Lumumba University. They can offer you an opportunity for a good education." They were shocked at his response, but he was not going to yield to threats or get into a bidding contest.

In a similar fashion, the Prime Minister and the Minister of State for Education, the Aklilu brothers, at a social occasion, confronted Ambassador Korry and pleaded for another hundred scholarships through the USAID program. They threatened to send some excellent students to the USSR if they did not obtain the additional scholarships. Korry asked them whom they planned to send to the USSR. They replied they would send the most conservative students to the Soviet Union and the more radical ones to the United States. He said, "You're doing it all wrong. What you ought to do is send your most radical students to Moscow." He then proposed a plan to the two Ministers. "I can get you some money, so that you can fund more students for the USSR. (The Ethiopian Government had to pay transport and some other expenses for its students going to the USSR.) Korry's idea knocked those two Ministers for a loop. He said he would try to get some money from Washington to send more students. The condition was that the Ethiopian Government had to agree to start sending the most radical students. The two Aklilu brothers thought that he was pulling their leg, but Korry was really serious.

The next day he expounded on this at the Country Team meeting, and the reaction was along the lines of, "Ed, you're absolutely out of your mind. Those students are going to come back and start a revolution." He retorted, "No, they 're going to come back, and they're going to work against a revolution, because they will have seen what Russia, what the Soviet Union, is all about." He put his request in writing, and Washington thought the plan was crazy, so it went nowhere. Korry was certain his idea was sound, and after the initial shock, several of us were also convinced this is what we should do. Help the Ethiopian Government (covertly) to send the radical students to Lumumba University, where they would be offended by the Russian racist attitudes, shocked at the low living levels of the people, and disappointed by the quality of education. The other side of his proposal was for the Ethiopian Government to send the more conservative students to the USA and to Western European universities. He reasoned that by continuing the current policy of sending the leftist students to the United States and Western Europe, they would be encouraged by their radical American professors to become even more revolutionary. When the army mutinies and revolts started in Ethiopia in 1973, many of the civilian leaders who joined their cause were students who had studied in the United States and France. Not many of the Soviet-trained students were involved in the early days of the revolt. The real leaders had trained in the USA and Western Europe.

Q: Yes, like Nkrumah.

BUCHE: Yes, and some other African revolutionaries. The Ethiopian students were seen as a critical group, along with the young military officers. Both groups were courted by various embassies. There were four Amharic speakers in the diplomatic corps at that time, one at the British Embassy, two at the Russian Embassy, and myself. The two Russian Amharic speakers were very good. We ran into each other occasionally on the campus.

Q: How important was the army?

BUCHE: It was an article of faith that as long as the army stayed united and loyal to the Emperor, his throne was secure. There could be insurrections, but the army could put them down. The police had only some light weapons, so they were not a real force. We were trying, through our Military Advisory Assistance Group (MAAG) and our Defense Attaches, to learn more about the younger army officers. It was difficult to get close to the group. Neither they nor their superiors (nor the Ethiopian security officers) wanted the MAAG officers or the attaches from any of the embassies to get very close. The job of the MAAG was to train the Ethiopian officers in tactics, command structure, communications, maintenance, and other military skills. They were not trained to gather intelligence on how the Ethiopian officers regarded the Emperor, their superiors, their colleagues, those advocating reform, or to how to make informed estimates regarding personal or unit loyalties. We realized we would have to help the MAAG in this endeavor. A partial solution was for me to accompany the MAAG training teams as they went out into the field. I would try to get to know some of the Ethiopian officers, to see who they were, what they were like, and to try to help the MAAG officers to do the same. After a half dozen trips with the MAAG, I concluded I did not learn a great deal about the thinking of individual Ethiopian officers, but I obtained a much better feel for some of the many, many problems of the country. About all I could get from the officers was their career path, where they had served, their education, and something about their family. It was better than nothing - which was what we had in our files on most of the young officers. The big plus was to spend several days with the Ethiopian military in the far reaches of the Empire (the Ogaden, the southern provinces of Bale Goba and Sidamo, and near the Eritrean border) and to observe their interaction with the local people. We really needed some MAAG officers who were interested in the political developments in Ethiopia and who would over several years get to know a dozen Ethiopian officers well enough that they could share with the Embassy something more than raw data of a CV. From Korry on down to me, we were convinced the military, and especially the younger officers, the captains, majors, and colonels, largely controlled the direction and fate of the Ethiopian Government in the near future. It was frustrating that we knew so little about this potentially key group, but what was even more maddening was that we could not adequately take advantage of a superb entrï¿½e into the group, the MAAG. Despite Korry's efforts with the MAAG CO and several senior officers, we did not get very far. They promised closer cooperation, and in some cases did so (allowing an Embassy officer to accompany field training teams), but they did not see the task as a priority. The MAAG was in Ethiopia to train the Ethiopian military. The individual U.S. officers would be evaluated and promoted on the success of their achievements in the training area. They did not see gathering political intelligence as their job. They so often replied to Korry and others at the Embassy with some sort of variation of that was the military attachï¿½s' job. The military attachï¿½s in my time in Ethiopia did not do much in the line of political intelligence gathering among the Ethiopian military. They followed the order of battle, location of units, collected names and biographic data. Who were the major unit commanders, the deputy commanders, the company commanders? What was the status of the two officers going to Fort Leavenworth and who is going to Fort Benning, and who will be going to learn small unit tactics or communications at this or that school? I remember one session in 1964 with the attaches when Korry and Sheldon prodded them to learn more about morale problems of units or individual officers. Korry said there must be some colonels who are unhappy, or some majors and maybe some brigadier generals, or maybe even some generals who are discouraged, resentful, or frustrated. Do you know of any or have you heard rumors of such? Their answers were negative, and the discussion ended soon thereafter. About a month later, there was an attempted coup by a dozen middle-level military officers, all of whom were in frequent contact with the MAAG. One (Lieutenant Colonel Imru Wondie) was known to the Embassy, since his wife worked at the USIS Library. The coup was unsuccessful. (One of the co-conspirators betrayed the plot to the Government.) The local CIA Station was also focusing on the military and had developed some sources. The CIA learned about the 1964 coup while it was still in the late planning stage. I was asked to translate some of the documents the CIA had acquired. The CIA had penetrated some elements of the military and were getting some information. What was interesting about the 1964 coup attempt was the fact that the CIA had subsequently learned that several of the plotters were known by their fellow officers to be outspoken in their criticism of the top generals (and by implication, the Emperor). This was not picked up by the MAAG or the Attaches during their contacts with the individuals.I learned from one of my acquaintances at the University that a dozen Ethiopian Air Force officers were taking evening courses there. I mentioned this to Sheldon Vance, and he passed it on to the Ambassador. Korry called me to his office and suggested that I should enroll. You will get to know not only the Air Force officers, but other students and some faculty members. So I became a student for four evenings a week in courses on political science and Ethiopian geography. The Political Science course was taught by a young Ethiopian Ph.D. from an Ivy League school, Amare Tekle. He later became the principal political advisor to the OAU. The geography course was taught by Mesfin Wolde Mariam. He was a well known critic of the regime at the time. (He eventually became critical of the Mengistu and Meles regimes and was arrested by both!) In the political science, we were given reading assignments from Plato, Aristotle, Montesquieu, the American Constitution, and Wilson's Fourteen Points. In the Ethiopian context, such ideas were bordering on the revolutionary. There were interesting classroom discussions. The students were careful not to criticize the current Ethiopian political situation directly. They, instead, expressed their admiration for the ideals contained in the readings and realized to varying degrees in Western states. There were always several agents from the Security enrolled in each University class taking notes, but the professors and the students were clever enough not to say anything personally incriminating. I had had the political science material in greater depth before, but the content of the geography class was almost entirely new for me. I entered into class discussions at times, but preferred to listen to others express their views. I took both courses as non-credit, so that if there were a grading curve, I would not be competing against the Ethiopians. I got to know some of the other students, as well as my two professors. I also realized that my fellow students, Air Force Officers and young bureaucrats and businessmen, were highly critical and resentful toward the regime, even though they were careful in their actual words. They were not as daring or as rash as the full-time students of the University, but they were probably just as angry and frustrated. And in the case of the Air Force officers, they were potentially in a position to do something other than a protest march. The following semester I took courses in Ethiopian constitutional law from Professor Berekete-Ab Habte Selassie and in Ethiopian ethnic groups from Dr. Fekadu Gedamu.

To answer your question in another way, we were convinced the military was the key to Ethiopia's future. We did not know how long the Emperor could hang on, and what would be the circumstances of his removal from the scene - death from natural causes, an incapacitating stroke, assassination, arrest, etc.? Who would make the successful move? Would the move or action come from the top generals and their civilian allies because they were threatened or felt that they had to take pre-emptive action? Or was the action to come from the brigadier generals, colonels, and the lower ranks? The permutations were endless, so we watched, took notes, and did our best to get to know as many potential future leaders as possible. Ambassador Korry made that a top priority in the allocation of our resources. We even formalized our priorities under the Department's "Policy Planning and Resource Allocation Program." (This was a novel program for the DOS, although in the Pentagon and in many large corporations, it was a fundamental management tool. Addis Ababa was one of the first posts selected to inaugurate the program, largely because Korry saw the potential benefits and asked to be included in the experiment. We were extremely fortunate to have Jack Gloster assigned to the Embassy to help us get started.)

Q: Did we get involved with the Ethiopians over relations witSomalia, over the Ogaden?

BUCHE: Yes, we did not only for strategic reasons, but also because we had a clause in our agreement with them about the use of our military equipment. They could not use the equipment we provided outside of Ethiopia, and they could use it only inside Ethiopia to repulse or to defend the country against "external forces". The Ethiopian Government interpreted that to mean Somalis, whether internal or external, since they regarded any attacks on Ethiopians in the Ogaden as basically supported from outside. The Ethiopian Government maintained that the weapons and support for the attacks in the Ogaden were coming from the Somali Republic. We basically acquiesced in the use of USG-supplied weapons, planes, and ground equipment against Somali forces inside of Ethiopia, but were strongly opposed to their use outside of the country. Despite the agreement, the Ethiopian military crossed the borders. They bombed Hargeisa on at least one occasion with our planes, and took our tanks and APCs into northern Somalia in pursuit of Somali forces or to make a show of force. Once they went across the border into the territory of Djibouti while pursuing a Somali force and ran into a French Foreign Legion unit on maneuvers, but the Ethiopians retreated rapidly back to their country.

Whenever we learned that the Ethiopians crossed borders, we raised hell with the Prime Minister or the Defense Minister. Their response was usually, "we went only a couple of kilometers inside and were in hot pursuit". I remember one time when Vance heard from the MAAG that an Ethiopian unit had crossed the Somali border. He got on the phone to the Minister of Defense and told him, "You had better get those APCs back on this side of the border immediately." The Minister replied, "I think we've accomplished our mission." So he ordered them to return. We kept saying to the Ethiopians not to overreact. There were some Ethiopian officials who had a fixation on bombing Mogadishu. We, of course, told them it was unwise to consider such an action. We all knew that it was not possible for our F-5 fighters to reach Mogadishu from any existing base in Ethiopia. That was a real problem, so the Ethiopian Government decided to build an airport deep in the Ogaden at a site called Gode. We told them they should not do that, but they persisted. They remonstrated that they were a sovereign nation and could build an airport wherever they desired. That was, of course, true, but we also held some trump cards. We told them we would refuse to give them navigation equipment and spare parts; we would forbid our MAAG teams from going to the new airport to provide technical assistance; and we would hold them accountable if any of our planes crossed a border. We could not persuade them to abandon the idea, but the Embassy successfully delayed any concrete actions. They eventually wasted money and built an airport. They did not station our planes there, however, possibly because of the vulnerability of the planes to ground attacks. The Ethiopians would have needed several battalions of troops to protect the planes from a mortar attack.

Relations between Ethiopia and Somalia were tenuous, at best. There was constant strife, friction, and fighting in the Ogaden. While I was at the Embassy, there were ambushes and small-unit attacks by the Somalis. The Ethiopians would sometimes succeed in intercepting raiding parties or engage the small units in battle. More often, however, the Ethiopians would suffer casualties and not be able to locate the aggressors. They would then retaliate against civilians, by taking away their livestock or vehicles or burning their tents. It was constantly attack, counter-attack, and reprisal.

The situation in the Ogaden was deteriorating, and both the Ethiopian and the U.S. authorities were concerned. We were asked by the Ethiopians to send Special Forces to provide the Ethiopian military with counter-insurgency training. There was some squeamishness on Washington's part about where the training would be given, but the decision was made to do it in the Ogaden. The sites selected were major Ethiopian military outposts. Washington was afraid of an attack by the Somalis on an Ethiopian unit while the Special Forces were around. The Special Forces might get caught up in the fighting. Maybe there would be a casualty or two. Then the American public would ask what were the Special Forces doing in the Ogaden? Fortunately, there were no incidents. I was pleased to be allowed to accompany one of the teams for about a week of their usual month-long training sessions. Not only did I get an up-close view of the Ogaden, with its harsh environment, but I got an earful of the views of the Ethiopian Army officers who were confronted daily with a hostile, armed population. The officers seemed to regard the Somalis the way I imagined the U.S. Cavalry thought about the American Indians in the post-Civil War era. The Special Forces team, however, told the Ethiopian military that to defeat the insurgency they had to improve their anti-guerrilla tactics and also to convince the local population that it had more to gain from cooperation with Ethiopia than supporting the insurgency. The Special Forces spoke about winning over the Somalis. For a day and a half, the Ethiopians just kept their mouths shut and listened to the Americans speak about hearts and minds, building bridges to local Somali elders and leaders, treating the sick Somalis, giving inoculations, avoiding reprisals, etc. The Ethiopians were resigned to putting up with that. Then the good stuff began. How to set an ambush, how to defend against an ambush, how to develop local intelligence sources, how to interrogate captured fighters, etc. The Ethiopians were really interested, and the sessions lasted into the night. The Special Forces trainers were real professionals. Most of them had experience in Vietnam, and some of them also had been active in Latin America and the Congo, so they were knowledgeable. The Ethiopians I observed respected the Special Forces team and listened to their advice on tactical issues. The Ethiopian army officers, however, were unconvinced about the "hearts and minds" aspects of the training.

Anike and I departed Ethiopia in July of 1966. We were looking forward to living in Washington and seeing our families more regularly. My parents were living in Indiana, and Anike's parents were in Huntersville, North Carolina. We were also looking forward to consulting top-notch medical specialists about Anike's inability to carry her pregnancies to term as a result of our RH incompatibility. As we said good-bye to the many Ethiopians whom we had met and had grown to like, we wondered when we would be seeing them again. Since I was assigned to the Ethiopian Desk in the Department, I was confident I would be seeing many of them when I returned in a year or so for consultations with the Embassy. Anike had made a lot of Ethiopian friends on her own. She worked with Don Paradis and Seyoum Haregot in the Prime Minister's Office for over a year and with Habte Selassie Tafessa, the head of the Ethiopian Tourist Organization, for about two years. As I had assumed, I did return. Anike did not return until 1970, when we stopped in Addis Ababa for a week en route to a posting in Blantyre, Malawi.

Q: All right. I was just thinking that this might be a good place to stop.

BUCHE: Yes, I think so.

Q: We'll pick it up the next time, when you were on the Ethiopian Desk, in '66-69. Any developments then as far as how we saw things moving at that time, and was there any particular change in our policy at that point?

BUCHE: There were some changes, some big changes. We'll talk about it.

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Q: This is the 25th of August, 1999. John, you were on the Desk.Which Desk?

BUCHE: I was on the Ethiopian Desk, and we had a mix of countries and responsibilities within our office. There was a Somali Desk officer (Gordon Beyer), a Sudanese Desk officer (Ned Schaefer), and an Ethiopian Desk officer (at first it was Peter Walker, and later it was Jack Gloster), who also served as the Deputy Office Director. I was the Assistant Ethiopian Desk Officer. We were all under the Office Director for Northeast Africa, Matthew Looram. The acronym for our office was AF/NE.

Q: I would have thought the Sudan would have been more logical undethe Bureau for Near Eastern Affairs.

BUCHE: One time it was, but when the African Bureau was created in 1961, the responsibility for Sudan was placed in AF. In much of our work, we had to coordinate closely with the Bureau for Near Eastern Affairs (NEA). The impetus for the move was the rush of newly independent African states. I suppose the idea of consolidating all of the Continent's independent states into one Bureau made sense. There was an exception for Egypt; it remained in NEA. The countries that were still under colonial status, such as Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, and Angola, remained under the European Bureau (EUR). The Assistant Secretary for AF when I began in AF/NE was Joseph Palmer. He succeeded Williams and was succeeded by David Newsom.

But going back to what I did on the Ethiopian Desk, one of the first things was to prepare for the official visit of Haile Selassie to the United States in February 1967, and what we wanted to do in relation to that visit. The protocol aspects or the guest lists were no problem. The problem was to find agreement in Washington on what we would tell the Emperor and what we would promise to provide regarding military and economic assistance. The Embassy and Washington regarded this visit as crucial for Ethiopia and our interests in that country. Korry had been speaking to the Emperor, to cabinet ministers, military officers, and Members of Parliament, and to persons and groups outside the Government such as businessmen, professors, and on several occasions to the students at Haile Selassie University about what was needed to improve the Government's ability to function more efficiently and to provide a better and more secure life for the Ethiopian people, including more schools and health clinics, a less corrupt judicial system, meaningful land reform, and better military security. Our motives were both altruistic and calculated self-interest.

Korry had almost convinced Washington that our long-term strategic interests in Ethiopia were more than the unimpeded use of Kagnew Station. The State Department was beginning to win the argument with DOD that the United States had much to gain strategically from a long-term cooperative relationship with Ethiopia, even without Kagnew Station. It was also in our interest that Ethiopia develop economically, that the military become better trained and equipped, that the government become more efficient, that basic services be provided, and that festering land issues be addressed. Washington was leaning toward more economic assistance to Ethiopia (partly in response to the recommendations in the Korry Report on economic assistance to Africa), as well as increased and better-focused military assistance. We knew the Emperor would ask for both. There were major differences, however, between the Emperor and the U.S. Government in the desired composition of the two packages. We wanted to increase the efficiency of the military forces, not increase their size or provide new weapons systems. We also had some ideas about increasing the efficiency of the Ethiopian Government, starting with the Ministry of Finance. This was a necessary first step in increasing the overall efficiency of the Government, and one that would least upset the internal political balance.

We thought it could be sold to the Emperor in part as a technological advancement. The Ministry of Finance (as with most of the Ethiopian Government ministries) had grown like Topsy over the years from a small group of trusted officials who were empowered by the Emperor to perform certain functions as part of his personal entourage, in this case to collect taxes and customs duties and pay out whatever he authorized. The ministries eventually moved out of the Palace, but they were still regarded as extensions of the Emperor's personal domains. There were laws promulgated by the Emperor defining the organization of the various ministries and the their competencies. There were also laws regarding tax rates, custom duties, et cetera, but they were selectively enforced. The wealthy and powerful of the Empire paid little taxes. The civil service, military, persons working for a salary in private firms, and peasants were the source of much of the revenue. The Ministry of Finance in the mid-1960s was still following many practices of the Menelik era. Employees were still going around tying up bundles of documents with red ribbon and depositing them in archives. Each office had its own storage or archive; the key was held by a guard. When an official wanted to retrieve a file, he or she had to request the guard to do so. If the guard was not available, it was difficult to obtain the file. Taxes were "negotiable" for those who were not on a salary (and the withholding system). There were many officials in the Ministry who could decide on the level of tax owed by a party. Thus there were many opportunities for bribes. If a person could not work out an acceptable level of taxes within the Ministry, the Emperor became the final arbiter. Until His Imperial Majesty decided, the parties did not have to pay.

Our Embassy and, of course, our AID Mission discussed reform of the Ministry at length with the Emperor, the Prime Minister, the Finance Minister, and the Director of Customs. The latter was theoretically subordinate to the Minister of Finance, but in reality, he reported to the Emperor. We had great support and valuable "intelligence" from the technocrats in the Ministry and elsewhere in the Government. As Korry and colleagues, along with the World Bank representative in Addis Ababa, Mahmoud Burney, (he was not given strong backing from his headquarters in Washington), began to lay out the case for modernization, no Ethiopian official came out directly in opposition to a reform of the Ministry. They all agreed it was an archaic institution and had to be modernized. They then quietly went to work to protect their own spheres while supporting "reform" of the other parts of the Ministry. They succeeded in killing any meaningful reform. The Emperor could have decreed a reorganization, but he went along with the higher officials and decided to "study" the issue. Korry also had spoken several times to the Emperor suggesting that he devolve more power to the Prime Minister by giving him the power to select his own cabinet. Although the Department thought this concept was a necessary aspect of reform, it was too early to raise the idea in Washington during the visit.

Regarding the military, MAAG and Ambassador Korry thought a smaller, but better-trained and equipped force was essential to Ethiopia's security and our long-term interests. Washington debated whether to recommend to President Johnson that he encourage the Emperor toward reform in general and specifically the Ministry of Finance and the Ethiopian military. The Washington bureaucracy could not agree on any details so the policy makers decided on the easiest approach, namely to recommend that the President suggest to the Emperor that he seriously consider reforming his own Government and making his military more efficient, better led and trained. We all knew this was a cop-out, but there were too many disagreements within the USG to do anything else but offer platitudes. For one thing, our Department of Defense did not have an agreed position on the optimum level or distribution of Ethiopian military forces. AID and State did not have the answers regarding the ability of the Ethiopian Government to support financially force levels at varying strengths or mixes. There was no agreement on the threat level to Ethiopia. There was disagreement among State, the CIA, and the DOD/DIA on the nature of the threat from Somalia and the role of the Soviet Union in arming Somalia.

There was also no agreement within the intelligence community on how much of the Ogaden insurgency was home-grown and how much was externally instigated. The insurgency in Eritrea was turning ugly, but the Ethiopians seemed to have it fairly "well contained" according to some of the intelligence analysts. There was, however, no agreement in Washington on how serious the Eritrean insurgency was to be regarded. The Ethiopian Government seemed much more concerned about the Ogaden than Eritrea. Since Kagnew was in Eritrea, there were deep differences of opinion on what the USG should do to safeguard that installation. We in AF/NE wrote and re-wrote position papers for the Assistant Secretary and the Under Secretary for Political Affairs to discuss in Inter-Agency meetings in preparation for the visit. Ambassador Korry had strong ideas on what the President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and Assistant Secretary Palmer should say to the Emperor and why. Korry expected at a minimum that we would not undercut what he was telling His Imperial Majesty and HIM's ministers and generals about the need for reform and modernization. The Emperor was suspicious of any advice from the USG that involved reducing the size of his military. He wanted to expand the military to meet the threats in the Ogaden, in Eritrea, and possibly from the Sudan. Korry reported that he agreed with the Emperor there were threats from Somalia, but he tried to convey to him that there were also threats to the stability of Ethiopia from within, such as delays in land reform and modernization of government institutions.

Q: How did we feel about the Emperor at that point? Were we feelinthat he was getting pretty old? Was he able to concentrate?

BUCHE: The Emperor was still sharp and lucid. He was not, however, thinking in the way that we were hoping. He did not want to think new thoughts or consider new ideas. We believed that his Government was beginning to come unglued. He apparently did not see any deterioration, and was not about to change the way he had governed Ethiopia for nearly forty years. If he had been less alert, maybe there were ways of achieving some of our goals. The Emperor came to Washington confident that he would obtain essentially what he sought.

The visit started off on a discordant note. There was a sit-in by Ethiopian students at the Ethiopian Embassy. This had not been done before. The students in the two previous state visits had welcomed him at the airport and at Blair House. From written accounts, they cheered him when he came, and he received them en masse. If they had petitions, he would accept them. He then ordered his private treasurer to give each student some fresh $20 bills. In 1967, the welcoming by the students was hostile and even insulting. He was embarrassed. Most of the Ethiopian students in the US were not financed by Ethiopian funds, but by US Government contracts through AID and with various universities. He blamed the Ethiopian Ambassador for not keeping the students under better scrutiny. So he got off to a slightly less than exuberant start, but he recovered quickly. The official welcoming at the White House by President Johnson was an impressive ceremony. The official talks began the following day.

On a personal note, I served as an interpreter during some of the meetings and was a note-taker in others. I was primarily the interpreter for Ras Mesfin Sileshi, the Emperor's longtime comrade in arms and supporter. The Emperor used Dr. Minassie Haile, the Foreign Affairs Advisor in his Private Cabinet, as interpreter. Dr. Minassie had received a Ph.D. from Columbia University in political science and was married to an American. The Emperor understood English fairly well and spoke it haltingly. His French was excellent.

I was sharing interpreting duties with an ex-Peace Corps volunteer who was working at Peace Corps Headquarters and had a security clearance. I thought his Amharic was better than mine. We were splitting interpreting duties, so both of us were invited to the White House for the formal dinner. Since Dr. Minassie was assigned to a table some distance from the Emperor, he could not interpret during the meal for Mrs. Johnson and the Emperor. I handled that task. The Peace Corps fellow sat behind Ras Mesfin and interpreted for him and Assistant Secretary Palmer. As the meal came to an end, either of us were prepared to read our Amharic translation of the President's toast and short speech in honor of the Emperor. In fact, I had worked on the early drafts of the speech and had been asked to provide the White House with some additional historical facts and personal bits of information on the Emperor. We had the final text beforehand and worked with the Ethiopian Embassy to obtain a polished translation. We knew that when the Emperor formally replied to President Johnson's toast, Dr. Minassie would come to the head table and translate it into English. We also had an advance copy of the Emperor's reply and an English translation, just in case. We thought we had everything under control.

President Johnson stood up and, to our horror, immediately deviated from the text. He began telling a humorous story replete with double meanings and Texas slang. Both of us instantly realized we could not adequately translate that story into Amharic with any pungency or humor. The Peace Corps fellow and I looked at each other in shock and then imploringly to Dr. Minassie. Since the President was speaking, we could not say anything or move. Minassie suddenly stood up at the end of the President's speech and made the Amharic translation. He simply paraphrased the story and concentrated on the substance that followed. Either of us could have done similarly, but we thought we had to translate all of the President's words. As Dr. Minassie was rendering the President's statement into Amharic for the benefit of the Emperor, President Johnson glared at both of us. He expected an American to translate his words! Both of us continued our translation services after the dinner for Ras Mesfin. Minassie stood by the Emperor's side for the rest of the evening.

I translated the next morning for Ras Mesfin when the Imperial party met for breakfast with the Supreme Court justices. There was nothing that our Supreme Court really needed to talk to the Emperor about, but he wanted to meet them. It was basically a social call. We did talking points for the Chief Justice and suggested that he impress upon the Emperor the independence of our judiciary from the other two branches of government and how this separation of powers was not only in our Constitution, but was an essential element of our country's political core. We hoped the Emperor would note the contrast that the Ethiopian Constitution also called for an independent judiciary appointed by the Emperor, but in fact the judges were controlled by him. The breakfast at the Supreme Court was the last event on the program. The Emperor departed shortly thereafter. Matt Looram and Joseph Palmer thanked me on my contribution to the visit. They both complimented me for the interpreting duties. State Magazine, the Department's monthly news publication carried an article about the visit and mentioned my interpreting. The Director of the School of Languages at the Foreign Service Institute, where I had first begun my study of Amharic, telephoned me to say how pleased and proud he was with the progress of one of his alumni.

Q: Was the issue of Kagnew Station raised during the visit?

BUCHE: Yes, it was, but the issue was not discussed in crisis terms. We had expanded Kagnew Station a few years earlier and had what we wanted. The Ethiopians kept talking about the added visibility of our expansion - which was true. The big saucers and dozens of high antennae were quite visible. The Ethiopians spoke to us frequently of how severely they were coming under criticism from other African countries for their "alliance" with the United States, when Africa was supposed to be neutral and alliance- free. The Ethiopians constantly asked for more military and economic assistance in return for our expansion and continued use of Kagnew. We replied with the boilerplate line that there was no connection between Kagnew and any bilateral assistance from the USG, because we paid for Kagnew at a fixed fee in rent (which was ridiculously low, several hundred thousand dollars annually). It was a fiction that both sides maintained. The reality was that we "paid" for Kagnew through our military assistance program. This was an on-going negotiation, and involved not only dollar amounts, but also types of equipment, delivery times, and levels of support. Ambassador Korry tried to reach agreement with the Ethiopians before the visit about the dollar levels, mix, and timing of our military deliveries and economic assistance for the next two years. Since the Emperor was not satisfied, the subject had to be dealt with during the visit. The Emperor spoke to the President about the threats to Ethiopia's security and requested more American assistance. Kagnew was mentioned only obliquely, but everyone in the room knew the connection. The President used the talking points we had prepared and replied along the same lines Korry had used. Johnson offered about the same amount of assistance that Korry had been told would be available. The Emperor was too proud to haggle. He just said that his Minister of Defense would stay behind and work out the details. In the subsequent discussions, we sweetened the pot to a small degree, so that the President would appear responsive to the Emperor's request and to allow the Emperor to believe that his personal plea was effective. The Emperor ended up getting his minimum demand, and we did not exceed our maximum. Both sides knew Kagnew Station was critically important to our security at the time. We also knew the technology was moving very fast and that Kagnew was not going to be as critical in the future as it was then. I had seen intelligence reports at the time indicating that by the mid-1970s, satellites and other means would be able to take over most of Kagnew's functions. In 1967, the station was still a very valuable asset. We did not want to lose it or be thrown out, but if the unthinkable happened, we would not be without possible fallback positions within a few years, as we would have been two or three years earlier. The U.S. Government was looking realistically at an asset that was still critical, but we were not going to be panicked into paying too much. The Emperor and his advisors also sensed that.

Related to Kagnew and our close relationship with Ethiopia were agreements which dated to the early 1950s. The Ethiopians were asking for renegotiation of the agreements. They had discussed the issue with Ambassador Korry and the MAAG Commander. Both had recommended that we agree to sit down and re-negotiate the agreements. There was a type of status of forces agreement and also a treaty of friendship and commerce which applied to rights of American civilians. Both were very much colonial-type arrangements in which US citizens had some rights of extra-territoriality. The soldiers had full extraterritoriality which meant that they could not be prosecuted by Ethiopian authorities for any offense committed in Ethiopia. There were no horrific, outrageous crimes committed by the soldiers stationed at Kagnew that outraged Ethiopian sensitivities. There was, however, the perception by the Ethiopian authorities that these agreements had been negotiated years ago under quite different circumstances and that it was time to bring them up to date in the face of changing conditions in Ethiopia and Africa. The extraterritoriality section of the friendship and commerce treaty had a provision that American citizens (civilians) could demand that they be tried in an Ethiopian court by judges who met Western educational standards and where Western-type procedures were applied. There was no record that this provision had ever been invoked. In 1966, however, an American citizen in Addis Ababa demanded this right in a dispute over rental payments. He had been arrested and was charged with a crime involving failure to pay rent and trying to leave the country while under a court order. He learned about the extra-territoriality section of the agreement, and in accordance with rights enjoyed by American citizens under the treaty, demanded that he be tried in a court with Western-educated judges. The local court authorities and the persons pressing charges were surprised and outraged, but the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice upheld the validity and interpretation of the agreement. Since there was no way the local court could comply, the American was free to leave the country. (The facts of the case were suspicious from the beginning. The man claimed he had paid the rent each month as it was due and that the receipts for about a year's rent had been stolen from his home by the landlord a few weeks before his scheduled departure from Ethiopia.)

The U.S. Government was currently involved in re-negotiating status-of-forces agreements in Europe and Asia, and so the idea was not unacceptable. We told the Emperor we would be prepared to re-negotiate the agreements. The negotiations were actually done in Addis Ababa by the Embassy and the MAAG under instructions sent from Washington. We would have preferred to have the negotiations in Washington with the Ethiopian Embassy and a team of specialists from Addis Ababa. The lack of adequate communications capabilities between the Embassy and Addis Ababa and the dearth of Ethiopian legal officials who could be spared for the long negotiations made this a non-starter. Soon after the visit, actual negotiations began. I was asked by Matt Looram to be the point man for AF/NE. The negotiations lasted about six months. In Washington, we developed a mini-team in the Department and in the International Security Affairs Directorate of the Department of Defense to coordinate our responses to the on-going discussions in Addis Ababa. After receiving a telegram from Addis Ababa reporting the latest state of play, I would confer with my counterpart in DOD, Lt. Colonel Kennedy. (Years later I worked closely with him again when he was the U.S. Representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency.) We would follow up on the recommendations from Korry and obtain the necessary concurrences from the lawyers and policy makers in State and DOD. I would draft instructions to the Embassy, in effect telling them that Washington had approved their proposed plan of action and the wording we wanted them to use. Sheldon Vance was a lawyer, and there may have been a lawyer on the staff of the MAAG, but the Embassy depended on the legal expertise of Washington for exact terminology. We reached an agreement that satisfied both sides. The main change in the status of forces agreement was to acknowledge (with some safeguards) that if an American soldier committed a crime that was not related to the performance of official duties, the Ethiopian authorities would have jurisdiction.

There were continuing disagreements with the Ethiopians on the levels and composition of our military assistance package and regarding our economic assistance. That was the background for another visit by the Emperor in July 1969.

Q: This would have been an official visit.

BUCHE: It was called an official visit and touched on similar issues raised in the 1967 visit. In 1969, however, Kagnew was less important to us. The DOD and NSA had already begun to picture a phasing-out of Kagnew Station, something that many of us in 1967 did not realize was moving that fast. We were aware of plans in 1967 for a probable phasing-down of Kagnew Station in the mid-1970s, but not a phasing-out. Satellite technology and reliability had progressed so fast that the technicians and budgeters in DOD and NSA were beginning to advocate a phase out within five to seven years. Kagnew was an expensive operation. The cost of transporting and maintaining 4,000 Americans in northern Ethiopia, plus the payments to the Ethiopians, was in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Q: And there is always the drag on relations when you have military installation in a foreign country.

BUCHE: There were big problems for both sides. Kagnew was an embarrassment for the Ethiopians, and they received a lot of criticism from Africans, the non-aligned group (the so-called G-77), and the Soviets. The university students used Kagnew to attack the Emperor as a lackey of America. The Eritrean insurgency was gaining momentum. We did not know whether the Eritrean Liberation Front would decide to attack American military personnel, blow up some antennae, or lob a mortar round into one of the parabolic dishes. The ELF was certainly capable of doing all of the above. There was no feasible way to defend Kagnew. The station was by 1969 a useful, but declining asset, yet, the Ethiopians were upping their demands. Whereas four or five years earlier, if they figuratively pounded on the table and said "We've got to have this or else", we would have tried to see how to work it out. We did add a little extra in 1967, but in 1969, we told the Emperor in very polite language that what we had offered was final. And we meant it! The Kagnew equation had changed significantly. On the other hand, if the Ethiopians had come forward with a well-reasoned request, we might have once again added a little sweetener. There were some extra funds available. The Emperor, however, despite the Embassy's advice, asked for an aircraft carrier! President Nixon explained that the upkeep would consume almost half of the Ministry of Defense's budget to maintain the ship. We knew where this absurd idea had originated, from the Commander of the Imperial Navy, the Emperor's grandson, Iskinder Desta. The Emperor lost many points in Washington over that request. He also asked for some advanced planes. We were talking about providing more F-5s, but the Emperor was pushing for something newer and more sophisticated. (I do not think that the US Air Force ever used F-5s, although they were reportedly sturdy and reliable planes.)

Q: No, they were so-called "Freedom Fighters." They were a low-maintenance, pretty good plane, but they were given to countries other than NATO countries, I believe.

BUCHE: We had promised the Ethiopians some more F-5's, and their potential enemies were the Somalis, who did not have anything as good. (The Somalis had some old MIG's, but the F-5's were superior.) The Ethiopians were not pleased with our response. We were becoming more concerned about the insurgency in Eritrea and in the Ogaden and the effects on the stability of the Ethiopian Empire. We were also concerned about the safety of our 400 plus Peace Corps Volunteers scattered throughout the country. The numbers were down from the peak of 500. We agreed to tell His Imperial Majesty in response to his anticipated request for a substantial increase, that we thought it advisable to reduce our numbers of volunteers. Our briefing papers for the Peace Corps Director, Joseph Blatchford, were written in conjunction with his staff. They carried the message along the lines of "Your Imperial Majesty, Ethiopia is now at a point where your educational system is graduating large numbers of well-trained teachers who can go into secondary schools. There are talented potential teachers who need jobs. It does not make any sense for us to send over PCV's to fill teaching positions in your secondary schools in the provinces, when your own people can do the job." That was buttering the sandwich in such a way that national pride should have kicked in, but the Emperor saw it quite differently. He persisted in asking for around 200 additional positions for new Volunteers, while we were talking about cutting back some 100, by not replacing them when they finished their contract. So there was no meeting of the minds on that issue either.

I should have mentioned earlier that we had a new Ambassador in Ethiopia, William Hall. He had come from the Agency for International Development (AID). Ambassador Korry was asked by President Nixon to serve as Ambassador to Chile. It is the responsibility of the Desk to prepare a new ambassador for the post. We worked closely with Bill to explain what we were trying to accomplish in Ethiopia and why we were having problems. Bill had vast experience in working with developing countries. He was easy to work with and seemed to take a real interest in people. Both Jack Gloster and I spent many hours briefing him on the problems he would face in Ethiopia. The old idea of strengthening the Ethiopian Ministry of Finance to enable it to serve as a fulcrum for reform and modernization was once again being discussed. Bill Hall was intrigued with the idea and convinced his colleagues in AID to come up with potential funds to make it possible. The World Bank was also more favorably disposed toward the idea than previously. There was now a chance to put some money behind our exhortations. We worked with Bill and his AID colleagues to devise a plan for him to present to the Emperor. We also had advice from the Bank, as well as discreet input via our Embassy from several Ethiopian officials (U.S.-trained economists). The concept was simple, but to achieve acceptance would take great insights and skill on the part of Ambassador-designate Hall. We finally worked out a half dozen reform measures for the Ministry. If the Emperor accepted them, we would respond with extra development funds. We knew it would not happen all at once, so we came up with milestones, which when reached would trigger the release of a certain amount of funds. What we were advocating was for the Emperor to allow the laws and regulations on taxation which he had promulgated to be carried out by the Ministry without interference and intervention from the Palace in favor of powerful friends and allies. Government receipts would thereby increase substantially. We also advocated a reorganization of the Ministry, including more auditors and modern equipment. Jack and I warned Hall that the Emperor would not reject outright the "sticks", and would thus expect the "carrots" immediately. Hall assured us he understood the conditions. Implementation, not promises alone, would bring the added funds. This was a point our Ethiopian reformer "allies" had repeatedly stressed. They also told us they would arrange some informal get-togethers for Hall with other like-minded reformers. Some of the reformist leaders were Bulcha Demeksa (Minister of Finance), Teferri Berhane (lawyer in private practice), Wondwossen Mengesha (National Bank), and Dr. Mengesha (Development Bank). Don Paradis (an American lawyer in the Prime Minister's Office had some practical advice to offer.)

Ambassador Hall prepared the groundwork carefully and spoke to the Emperor about the concept. Haile Selassie was so clever. He thanked Hall and said he welcomed the advice and would consider the proposals. HIM told Hall how difficult such a move would be, especially since it was widely known to be from the Americans. It would be better to allow the Ethiopians to work out their own reforms. The Emperor told Hall that he was constantly reforming Ethiopia's institutions and would, of course, give attention to the Ministry of Finance. He let it be known that an early release of the extra funds would help him to overcome the expected difficulties. We had anticipated this response, so Hall offered funds to purchase new equipment for the Ministry. (This was only a small portion of the package.) The reform proposals were dead, but the Ethiopian Government pressed hard for the rest of our funds. The Department held firm, but the Ambassador was caught in the middle. The Ethiopian Government was in deep financial and political difficulties and threatened to backslide on other development projects of interest to the U.S. The Embassy began pleading for a relaxation of our original strategy. Eventually, Washington gave in. There was no real reform of the Ministry of Finance in Haile Selassie's time.

Q: Well, how about the Ethiopian Embassy? Was it sort of the same ilk as you found the Ethiopian Government, that they could not play much of a role because everything came from the Emperor?

BUCHE: Yes, the Embassy was seldom told by the Foreign Ministry what was happening within the Government. We got nothing of value from them. If we did not tell them what was going on in Addis, they would have been in the dark. We liked the Ambassador and his staff and felt sorry they were kept out of the loop by their Government, so we kept them informed of what our Embassy was negotiating or what we were discussing in Addis Ababa with the Government. They had their own private sources on internal developments in Ethiopia, but what I was trying to keep them informed about were official negotiations and what was happening between our Government and their own.

Q: Were you dealing with a new breed of Ethiopian student who was getting trained in the United States, and were you finding some staying on here in Washington and calling for the removal of the Emperor and all that?

BUCHE: That was a new thing, yes, because traditionally every Ethiopian student, except I think maybe one or two, went back to Ethiopia after he or she trained in the United States. There were more and more who were staying in the United States. They just did not want to go back to their homeland, where everything was, in their opinion, medieval and backward. They wanted to stay here for various reasons: jobs, personal relationships, better living conditions, fear of retribution for their political activities, etc. Others made the decision to stay to develop an anti-monarchist movement. They were hooking up with their compatriots in France, Germany, Canada, England, and Italy. There were also ties with Ethiopian students in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Ethiopians are usually not terribly good at organizing, but they had some sort of umbrella Ethiopian Students Association. It was a loose association, but the message was consistent: Ethiopia is ruled by a corrupt, feudal government, a creation of the Emperor and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church; the government oppresses the people; the government must be overthrown. The students also accused the Ethiopian Government of being subservient to the U.S.A. (Kagnew!). I met with Ethiopian students informally. Unlike in Addis Ababa, I did not arrange parties at our apartment. We usually met in restaurants or at student conferences/meetings held at several of the local universities. I listened to what they had to say and did not feel it was my duty to defend the Emperor. When the subject of U.S.-Ethiopian relations came up, I told them the facts and let them draw their own conclusions. Needless to say, few of the students had bothered to check the accuracy of their assertions regarding the levels and mix of our military or economic assistance, how many MAAG personnel (several told me there were over 2,000; usual number was under 100!), or whether there were "tanks and cannons" in Kagnew (there were no weapons heavier than rifles!). There was the wide belief that most of the PCV's were CIA agents, especially those teaching at the University. Another widely-held, but factually erroneous belief was that an American company had discovered oil in the Ogaden, but kept this a secret from the Ethiopian Government in order to avoid paying royalties. The company allegedly had made a deal with Mogadiscio and was waiting for the Somalis to take over the Ogaden and in return would not have to pay as much! The students were so opposed to the Emperor and to any assistance to the Ethiopian Government (it props up the Emperor!), that the U.S.A. was also an object of their scorn. Some students saw us as the main obstacle to their crusade to get rid of the Emperor. There was no longer talk about the Emperor in a reduced-power role as a titular head of state a la Great Britain, Belgium, Sweden, et al. The students made Haile Selassie their bogeyman; he had to go! With such a mindset, it was easy for them to ignore facts or to put irrational spins on events. Our conversations about the U.S. role and influence in Ethiopia would often run along the following lines: I would point out that Ethiopia usually voted in the UN General Assembly against the U.S. position. They would reply that the UNGA was just a sideshow. Yes, Ethiopia votes often against the U.S. (Ethiopia voted together with the African bloc or the G-77), but that is not what really counts. What really counts is that you have a base out there along with combat troops. You are backing up the Emperor. Your corporations are given sweetheart deals. You have an American in the Prime Minister's office. You have military officers throughout the country. You have placed Peace Corps Volunteers in all the key ministries and the University to spy on us. You control the University. You exploit our natural resources. You have everything under lock and key. So what does it really matter if Ethiopia votes with the G-77 against something that the United States is pushing in the General Assembly? What does the General Assembly count anyway, because you have the Security Council under your control?

Since the students were passionate about their cause, they really were not interested in examining the logic or veracity of their various assertions. I came to realize I could not make any impression on them or change their view. What struck me was the vehemence of their expressions of hatred for the Emperor. They saw him as the embodiment of all that was wrong (in their minds) in Ethiopia. There, of course, were some exaggeration and posturing, but also some very strong feelings. There were undoubtedly also students in the Washington area who did not share such revolutionary desires, but I do not recall speaking with any.

Q: Was the Vietnam War playing any role in what we were doing therwith the Ethiopian Government or the students or anything else?

BUCHE: The Ethiopian elite generally were against our involvement in Vietnam. It was not a passionate issue with them, however. Even with the students, Vietnam was not a high priority. They had many other grievances on their agenda. They had a demonstration at the American Embassy, but I vaguely recall that it was small and more ritualistic than angry. There were a few signs and a banner with something like "America out of Vietnam". Ambassador Korry met them on the steps of the Embassy and offered them lemonade and invited the leaders to come inside and discuss the issue. After a while, they all marched back down the hill to the University. There may have been some other demonstrations after I was on the Desk. I can not recall. None of them apparently were big enough to make any impression on me or to prompt an immediate or NIACT (night-action) cable saying the Embassy was being besieged by angry demonstrators. Several times the Embassy was instructed to approach the Ethiopian Government for some diplomatic support at an OAU or UNGA meeting on the subject of Vietnam. If they could not support us, could they at least not join in the attack. The Emperor usually would tell the Ambassador that Ethiopia would have to go along with the majority, but would try to soften the condemnatory language. An issue that seemed on the surface to have very little to do directly with Vietnam was the perennial vote in the UNGA and other venues on Puerto Rico. The Ethiopians, however, knew how important this issue was to the U.S.A. They often would tell us that they would balance their vote on Vietnam with an abstention or possibly a favorable vote when Puerto Rico came up. They knew how to play an issue that was important to us and to them meant very little. They were masters at this.

I would like to stop now because I have to catch the 3:20 bus.

Q: Okay, why don't we stop at this point. We've pretty well coverethe time you were on the Ethiopian Desk.

BUCHE: I've touched on all the main issues.

Q: So we'll pick this up in '69. Where did you go?

BUCHE: I went to Northwestern University to do a year in African studies, one of the most fascinating years I had ever spent in my life, because that was when the Vietnam protests began hitting the campuses.

Q: Okay, we'll pick it up there.

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Today is the 30th of August, 1999. John, you went to Northwestern.You were at Northwestern from when to when?

BUCHE: From September of 1969 to June of 1970. It was part of the training program funded by the Foreign Service Institute for professional study outside of Washington. The African Bureau had two or three slots each year allotted by Personnel. The Bureau could choose candidates for a year of university training in African studies in conjunction with Personnel and the Foreign Service Institute. There were probably at the time five or six quite good African studies departments. I wanted to go to Northwestern University because I knew the head of the African studies program, Professor Gwendolyn Carter, and several Ethiopian scholars at that university and one also at the University of Illinois in Chicago, as well as several at Chicago University. Several of the foremost American scholars in Ethiopian sociology/anthropology, Donald Levine and William Shack, were at Chicago University. There was a cooperative program in the Chicago metropolis, so by enrolling at Northwestern, I could have access to the two other campuses.

Q: Before we talk about unrest on the campus, what about the courses? What were you getting out of them and what was the spirit of the times from the academic point of view about whither Africa?

BUCHE: At the time, Africa was still in the ascendancy, with evident optimism in the faculties. It was an exciting time, although some of the bloom had really come off the African rose itself. I do not think that was yet noticeable in the various African studies programs. For one thing, tons of money were flowing in from foundations to help universities to set up African studies programs. Corporations were also giving. There was the black studies movement also taking root at many universities. Although these were distinct programs, there was some money which was, I think, sloshing around that was available for both. There was a keen interest in African studies because that discipline was underrepresented on most American campuses until the late 1950s. The traditional schools of African studies were in France and England, for obvious reasons.

Q: The students who were there, was it all graduate, or were therundergraduates?

BUCHE: I was, of course, on the graduate side, but there were some courses that were open to juniors and seniors. What struck me very soon after arriving on campus was a predisposition among the students and some of the faculty to see Africa almost exclusively as good and positive. That did not correspond to the reality of what I had experienced, although I was pretty much restricted to Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, and to a small extent, Kenya. I had done some traveling, but my professional responsibilities were in the northeastern part of Africa. Both in Addis Ababa and on the Desk, I had access to cables from our embassies throughout the entire Continent and made it a point to read or at least scan many of them on a daily basis.. I avidly read the U.S. Government's research on African issues as well as scholarly publications, so I think I had a good underpinning on what was happening in contemporary Africa and where things were probably heading. Regarding Ethiopia, I was confident I understood the country better than anyone on campus (except the Ethiopians). In 1969, we were at the height of the Cold War, and it had spilled over to Africa. There was a new dimension in the struggle for influence and power on the Continent because the Chinese were involved for the first time in a major way.

Q: Did you sort of seem like the skunk at the wedding when in a class or seminar you commented on someone's contribution with "Well, that's all very nice, but what I observed was...?

BUCHE: Well, I had been very well briefed by the Foreign Service Institute. I was told campuses are currently quite different from when I had graduated fifteen years earlier, so I was somewhat prepared for the level of knowledge of the students as well as the prevailing animus against the U.S. Government. The students and faculty knew that I was a Foreign Service Officer, had served in Addis Ababa and had come directly from the African Bureau, and that I was going to return to the African Bureau. I think I had shared with some that I had an assignment, at least on paper, to Hargeisa, in northern Somalia. Professor Carter invited me to join several faculty discussions on Ethiopia. I wanted to make Ethiopian studies my area of specialization, so I took several courses involving Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya, either at Northwestern or at the University of Chicago. At the insistence of my major professor, Gwendolyn Carter, who had made her career on South Africa, I also took two courses on that country. If I presented a paper and people criticized some aspects, I accepted it as part of the learning process. I thought I defended my positions pretty well. I received all A's, except from a visiting Oxford professor, and she gave me a B+, the highest grade in her seminar.

I certainly did not flaunt my knowledge or experience or deliberately embarrass someone, but if a student said something I knew to be factually incorrect or drew conclusions that did not stand rational scrutiny, I addressed the point in class, but after a few weeks, I decided it was better to discuss it in private afterwards, so I made the decision not to criticize in class. I was really astounded at the factual errors many of the students were making in their papers or in discussions, but I soon realized how much more experience I had in African (and other political or economic) issues. I had such an advantage over the students. Even the graduate students lacked experience in Africa. Several had three months' experience in Crossroads Africa, but they were the exception. There was not a single PCV with African experience among the graduate students in my classes. The graduate students, almost without exception, came to Northwestern directly after completing their undergraduate degrees. (They could avoid the draft in that fashion.) I do not think many of them majored in African studies as undergraduates. It hit me that I was sitting in class competing against them, skewing the grading curve. I made a special effort to reach out to them. We had many discussions in the African Studies Lounge over coffee and doughnuts. Within a month, some of the students came to me individually and asked me to critique their papers before they handed them in. From then on, my relations with the students were very positive.

In one class, however, I was the midget and my student colleagues were the giants, because I was taking a course called African Geography and Spatial Problems in Economic Development. I thought this was something that I wanted to learn more about, African geography from an academic point of view. It turned out to be a class quite different than what I had imagined. We used Africa as the geographic reference-point. The purpose of the course, however, was to explore how economic development in designated areas (districts, provinces, regions, entire countries) theoretically could be stimulated (or held back) by the choice of investments and their relative costs in various geographically-specific objects: building bridges, roads, river-lake-or-sea ports, airports, etc. It was a computer-based course on quantifying the ratio of geographic or man-made structures in a designated area, for example, length of road network (all-weather or dry-season only), the number of road intersections, airports, etc. to various types of economic indicators: road traffic, filling stations, tonnage hauled, tax receipts, land values, building permits, population growth, etc. The class used transportation variables at different inputted costs under various geographic conditions (Sahel, central Ghana, northern Malawi, Gabon, etc.) and related them to actual examples. Some knowledge of computer-based modeling was essential.

After the first session, I wanted to drop the course. I had no experience with computers, much less computer modeling. I spoke with the young visiting professor about dropping the course. He convinced me to remain. He assured me that if I studied hard and also audited a concurrent course in computer modeling for geographic problems (also taught by him), I would do just fine. He repeated that he knew very little about Africa and the choice of that continent for the course was to familiarize him with a new region. (The course previously had been based on the Australian outback and southwest USA. The object of the course was to teach a methodology which theoretically was universally applicable with the appropriate modifications.) He knew I had experience in Africa and asked me to reconsider my decision to drop out. He told me I could help him and the class with my experience to make the presentation more realistic. The clincher, however, was his promise to give me tutorials if I found myself falling behind. I agreed to stay, but it was a struggle, especially to complete my class project. I chose an area in Ethiopia, where the Wonji Sugar Company was located. There was abundant reference material (feasibility studies and annual reports) available through the World Bank, the Ethiopian Development Bank, and the Dutch parent company, HVA.

But going back to your original query, did I feel that I was the skunk at the wedding party? I think to some extent, both yes and no. Yes because I was more experienced and grabbed the top grade in all my classes, and no because I used that experience to help other students. I realized that some of the students did not want to be helped by me. That was fine with me. Others had enough sense and confidence to ask for my assistance, so I helped them. The professors really welcomed my presence in their classes. I was invited to faculty teas, and I lectured a few times. I was asked by University of Chicago Professor Shack to come over and take a particular course on Ethiopia and to serve as a resource. His specialty was the Gurage ethnic group. He was half way through his field research in Ethiopia about the time I arrived in country. Whenever he came to Addis Ababa, he looked me up, and once I spent several days with him in Gurage country. I respected his work. I was delighted at his invitation. The University of Chicago is much different from Northwestern University. The level of students (all grad students) in the classes I took were usually older, more experienced, and a higher quality.

Q: Well, the University of Chicago, as with many city universities, attracts working people and more mature students, I would have thought.

BUCHE: They were more mature, and they were better. They just were a different breed of students. The University had an exceptional department for studies on the Horn of Africa. They had Shack anLevine, who wrote a classic on Amhara thought processes. They also had a Polish scholar in Somali studies and two visiting Ethiopian professors, one of whom was Dr. Kifle who did a seminal study of the Oromo gada system (age- based cultural/career stages). There was also another FSO from the African Bureau studying at the University of Chicago, Len Schurtleff. So during the second semester, I took several of my classes at the University of Chicago.

One other thing I wanted to mention was that it was an extraordinary time to be at a major American campus. Student protests against American involvement in Vietnam were at their peak. There were not only demonstrations at Northwestern against U.S. policy in Vietnam, but there were protests against the U.S. Government in general. Largely as a carry-over from opposition to our Vietnam policy, there was a palpable feeling of distrust and suspicion, if not anger and hatred, toward Washington. There was an institute on campus called the Highway Safety Institute. It was to a large extent federally-funded. They performed research, as the name implied, on highway safety, from the design and siting aspects. They were highly theoretical and used computers for simulation, plotting, analysis, etc. My geography professor was associated with the Institute. The Institute dated back to the era when the interstate system was being constructed. One night pamphlets were tossed around the campus alleging that the Institute was engaged in secret work (unspecified) for the Federal Government. The Institute replied that all its research was unclassified and that students or the public were welcome to visit and to discuss its work. The students were not convinced, and there were protest marches and demands for the University to close the Institute. The University administration met with student delegations, but refused to close the Institute. The student rhetoric became threatening. Then one night the Institute was fire-bombed. One of the researchers was injured. There were "victory" celebrations the next day on campus, since one link in the "industrial-military complex" was destroyed. There were demonstrations on black power, as well as demonstrations supporting the right of black students to have their own exclusive dormitories and the demand to prohibit whites from teaching black studies. And then came the bombing of Cambodia, in the -

Q: - spring of 1970.

BUCHE: Yes, in May 1970. That led to the further eruption of campus unrest. There were constant rallies, and to go from one building to another for class, I had to push through the crowds of students. The University of Chicago was a little bit quieter, and I was glad that I was doing some commuting to that campus. I did not run away from the demonstrations. I liked to talk to the student protestors. We sometimes had breaks between seminars of an hour, so I had plenty of opportunity. The African Studies building was on the edge of the campus, so it was a good spot to meet. It was a former residence that was turned into an office complex. There was a comfortable lounge, and the staff had coffee and usually cookies or doughnuts available for the students. I could see that there were definitely deep emotions involved within the student protestors. Still, some of their statements to me in the relative calm of the Lounge were absurd. These were college students and supposedly capable of a rational thought process. They were picking up wild rumors and believing them. They seemed to believe almost anything said in condemnation of the Federal Government. I cannot recall the details of the wild, irrational statements by the students, but they were along the line that the FBI had set up several concentration camps somewhere in the southwestern states and had rounded up thousands of student protestors and incarcerated them or that the CIA was engaged in abducting and torturing/murdering student leaders throughout the USA. I recall (vaguely) a conversation with one of my graduate student colleagues about Ethiopia. She was protesting against something entirely unrelated, but stopped in the lounge for a break. She saw me and decided to clue me in on what was really happening in Ethiopia. This was in spring 1970, a relatively calm period in Addis Ababa. She went on and on about the almost daily murders of the university students by the secret police, the concentration camps for the students, the wide-spread executions of political prisoners, etc. I asked her sources for such news, and her reply was something like everyone in Ethiopia knows what is really happening. I tried to reason with her that what she was telling me was not true. Student murders, concentration camps, and wide-spread executions would be picked up by the foreign press in Ethiopia pretty quickly, especially if such things were "well-known". She remained adamant. I remember telling her I would be pleased to call up my colleague on the Ethiopian Desk, David Shinn, to see whether there were any new developments in Ethiopia regarding what she had described. Her answer was that the U.S. Government was also involved in the murders. At that point, I realized there was nothing I could say that would convince her otherwise. I mention the stories to give an example of how the turmoil and chaos on the campus from the Vietnam protests so affected some of the students' emotions that they began to think (and act) irrationally. I was also simply amazed at some of the things some of the students were proclaiming about life and society in the Soviet Union. Such statements about happy peasants and industrial workers and the upcoming liberation of Africa by the Soviet Union from the neo-colonial West. They thought it was a terrible lie what we were saying in our propaganda about Soviet society, since it was far superior to our own. The Soviet workers all had jobs, health care, their children had day-care centers, and there were wonderful places for the workers to spend vacations, cheaply and comfortably. There were no ghettos, no discrimination, and no exploitation in the Soviet Union. I usually asked my interlocutors whether they had visited or lived in the U.S.S.R. or whether they were basing their statements on others' reports. None of them had visited, but they claimed they had received the information from friends or trusted sources. I told them that what they were saying was completely at odds from what I had heard and read. Some responded that I had been brainwashed; the others probably suspected it. I had many discussions with students on non-classroom subjects such as the above. I doubt whether I influenced their opinions. They were just too wound up emotionally because of Vietnam and other issues to be in the mood for rational debate.

At the end of my year on campus, I was supposed to write a report for the Foreign Service Institute. My first comment was that when another FSO prepares to attend Northwestern University, labeling it a "conservative campus" during the orientation might send the wrong signal. I suggested that the FSI alert the officer who would come after me that even on a conservative campus such as NU, he or she could expect to receive severe criticism from students on a wide variety of perceived evils in our foreign policy. It was not meant to be personal, but an officer of the State Department would be a lightning rod on campus when students were angry over foreign policy.

Q: So in 1970, where did you go?

BUCHE: I was supposed to go, as I mentioned, to Hargeisa, Somalia, but in a cost-cutting exercise the Department closed the post. I think Anike was relieved, since we had two adopted infants by the time I completed my studies at Northwestern. Our son, John, was born in 1968, and our daughter, Christina, was born in 1969, both in November. Anike was understandably concerned about the health conditions and medical facilities for the children in Hargeisa. I had been there several times from Ethiopia, and was familiar with the city. It was the former capital of British Somaliland and had about 40,000 residents and one hospital. There was a Consulate located in Hargeisa. The Peace Corps had a program in northern Somalia, so there was a resident Peace Corps doctor and nurse for the Volunteers. There was also an office of the Agency for International Development with two American officers. I was scheduled to be the resident Consul. I had heard from David Shinn that Hargeisa was likely to be closed, but until the closing was official, I could not bid for another posting. David kept me informed about possible job openings in Africa. Since I had benefitted from a year of African studies at the university, it was logical that I seek a posting on that continent. David called me one day to ask whether I would be interested in going to Blantyre, Malawi as the Deputy Chief of Mission.

Q: Go where?

BUCHE: Blantyre, Malawi. At that time it was the capital. I wadelighted, so that is where I was assigned.

Q: So you were in Malawi from when to when?

BUCHE: I arrived in August of 1970, and stayed two years to Augus1972.

Q: To 1972?

BUCHE: Yes, 1972. I guess we could get started on what Malawi was like. The position suddenly came open because the DCM, Chips Chester, resigned to take a job on Capitol Hill. I was without an assignment, so I went to Blantyre. It was a post in a country that on the surface was just as pleasant as one could imagine in Africa - beautiful temperate weather, fertile soil, a mixture of cultivated fields, savanna, and forests, nice rolling hills, some mountains, a large lake, excellent housing, decent medical facilities, and apparent peace and calm. Blantyre was named after a place in Scotland. It was the de-facto capital after independence in 1962. (Zomba, the colonial capital, still had the President's official residence, several ministries, and the British High Commission.) The President at the independence celebrations announced that the new capital would be built in the Central Region of the country, at Lilongwe, near his native village.) Hastings Kamuzu Banda was the President. The Malawi CongressParty was the only political organization permitted; Banda was Chairman.

After gaining absolute power in a show down with several opposing Ministers in his cabinet, Banda arranged to be elected President-for-Life. Banda went around in three-piece well-tailored suits and a homburg. He idolized many aspects of British culture, excluding their ideals of democracy and fair play. He was a tyrant and a dictator, who had peculiar ideas and hang-ups, and who tolerated no deviation or criticism. He used Israeli-trained thugs, the "Young Pioneers," as his enforcers throughout the country. There were contingents of Young Pioneers at every level of Malawian society. They served as informers and also had the power to arrest. They were loathed and feared by most elements of society, including the army, police, bureaucracy, clergy, politicians, merchants, peasants, et al. They were akin to the Ton-Ton Macoutes of Duvalier's Haiti. While the Young Pioneers were as ubiquitous as the Stasi, there was at least a highly-centralized command and control structure in East Germany. The Young Pioneers swore absolute fealty and obedience to H. Kamuzu Banda, but in their day-to-day activities, they were often unsupervised. They often used their power to bully, to extort, or to seek revenge for personal ends.

The judicial system was controlled by Banda, so there was seldom any protection in the courts for those accused of "disloyalty" to him. "Disloyalty" was one of the most serious offenses in Malawi. The definition of "disloyalty" was whatever the President or his circle decided. Persons accused of disloyalty were not brought to trial. Some simply disappeared without trace; a few big names were killed in suspicious "traffic accidents"; many perished while trying "to escape" from detention; others languished in prison until disease or "accidents" snuffed out their lives. There was a reign of terror in Malawi. Malawians were afraid and very careful about what they could say, and not just the government employees or politicians, but even the household servants, taxi drivers, waiters, retail clerks, et al. Completely off-limits was any criticism, even the slightest joke, about President-for-Life Banda. Being overheard by the wrong person could be fatal.

Banda, however, was not widely criticized in the West and in other African nations because of his brutal oppression of internal dissent. He was lambasted because of the open trade and diplomatic relationship with South Africa. Banda was widely ridiculed and lampooned externally because of his 1970 edict that all females over six years of age in the country had to wear skirts or wrap-arounds that extended beyond the calves of their legs. No repeat no slacks were permitted, except for Indians and Pakistanis when dressing in their native costume. What a woman wore or did not wear above her waist was immaterial to Banda.

Banda was really serious about his dress code. Dozens of foreign women were expelled or refused entry into the country if they were caught "inappropriately" dressed. There was no immunity for the diplomatic corps. The wives and daughters of the diplomats, plus any female diplomats, had to abandon their normal mode of dress and buy long skirts. They were not pleased with that, but there was no alternative. The wife of the Zambian Ambassador was declared personna non grata after being observed on a picnic caught in slacks. Since she was not East Asian, she was in contravention of the code. An elderly Baptist missionary from South Carolina was seen on the Mission compound (by a Young Pioneer) carrying a broom, mop, and bucket from her house to the next-door neighbor's. She had completely forgotten about the ban. She was expelled, despite my representations for leniency to the official in charge of the Young Pioneers, Albert Muwalo.

On the other hand, the Malawians were willing to talk about their customs, geography, sociology, or history, as long as there was no mention of current politics. One exceptional and positive aspect of life in Malawi in the early 1970s was the small amount of corruption in the financial sense, as was traditionally practiced in the rest of Africa. In other words, payments were receipted. If you were stopped for a traffic violation, the policeman would give you a ticket and file an account, but he did not collect the money. One could argue the matter with the policeman, but offering a bribe would have been a big mistake. Taxes were collected in a relatively objective manner by a well-trained, closely-monitored bureaucracy. Funds from foreign governments or international organizations for economic development projects were scrupulously accounted for. The Embassy managed two major economic development projects, the construction of a 110 kilometer (69 miles) road and a technical-training program at U.S. universities for future teachers.

The Embassy also ran a micro-development program that annually approved twenty to twenty-five small "self-help" projects submitted by committees or groups of elders in rural areas for additional classrooms, teachers' houses, cattle-dipping tanks, or clinics. The self-help requests were first vetted by the Malawi Government Development Office to ensure internal coordination with the appropriate ministries. The USG donated funds to cover imported materials (windows, tin roofing, plumbing, etc.) and the local people provided labor, cement, lumber, etc. Our contributions were about $5,000 per self-help project. The accounting on the Malawian side for both the two large projects and the self-help grants was detailed and accurate. Our auditors and those from the Malawi Government inspected the projects and compared receipts with quantities/qualities of materials. There were no significant discrepancies. Our auditors and engineers (from the AID Regional Office in Nairobi) frequently told us how far superior the Malawi accounting systems were to those of the surrounding countries. Fiscal honesty and accountability was a particular trait of Banda. Torture and murder did not seem to offend his conscience, but financial irregularities by civil servants, politicians, or businessmen infuriated him. He considered such acts as "disloyalty", and thus severely punishable. The Auditor General and the Minister of Finance were Scotsmen, as were several of the senior officers in both departments. The auditors had power to go on short notice into any government office to look at the books. So there was very little petty corruption.

The financial malfeasance took place on a much higher level. The sole political party in the country, the Malawi Congress Party, gained enormous economic power and wealth by seeking a minority interest in every financial enterprise in the country. Businesses would seek to keep the amount as low as possible. There were, of course, no legislation or regulations on the subject, so how many shares should be "donated" was "negotiated". Failure to comply meant closing the business, since permits, licenses, contracts, sales to government, etc. would be canceled. Some businessmen refused to comply and left the country; others were forced out. The hardest hit were the Asians. They would reach an agreement about the percentage of shares to be "donated" to the MCP, only to discover that they had to increase the number the next year. Dividends or profits would accrue to the Party. The money was used to pay Party expenses, including the Young Pioneers, and for whatever purposes Banda decided. The process was a national rip-off and extortion scheme. The Government's money was sacrosanct; there was no direct stealing of Government funds. The country as a whole, however, suffered thereby. Businesses tended to raise their prices to compensate for their losses from having to give away a percentage of their company. In addition to the funds from business ownership, the Party collected membership dues from every Malawian. Everyone had to become a card-carrying member and keep the dues up to date. People would be asked by Young Pioneers to show their Party card on the street, in a bus, at a restaurant, etc. Failure to produce a card could result in a trip to a local Party office, a jail, or a fine.

I have to leave the session now.

Q: Well, we'll note here we've got you in Malawi, 1970-72. You've talked about how Banda operated, about how he kept a lid on, and we'll pick up from there.

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Today is the 7th of December, 1999. We've talked a bit about Malawi,but what was your main line of work when you were there?

BUCHE: I had one of the most interesting jobs that I have ever encountered. I wore three hats. I was the DCM; secondly, I was the AID Director; and thirdly, I was for many months the Peace Corps Director.

Q: Oh, boy.

BUCHE: The way this came about is that the Peace Corps was forced out of Malawi by Banda because he was concerned about the dangerous ideas that were being passed from the Peace Corps teachers to their students - such things as democracy, free press, political parties, discussions of that sort. So he just decided to get rid of the Peace Corps teachers. That was about 90% of the PCV's in Malawi. The Peace Corps Director left in protest, as well as for the fact that there would not be much for him to do after the expulsions. There were about a dozen Peace Corps Volunteers who were not instantly expelled. These were Volunteers who were in non-teaching positions. They had technical jobs in the ministries. They were permitted by Banda to finish their terms before departing. Half of them decided to leave in solidarity with their PCV teaching colleagues. The remaining five or six stayed for personal reasons - usually because of Malawian fiancï¿½es. One of the PCVs who was expelled was Paul Theroux. He took his revenge on Banda, the Young Pioneers, and the Party by satirizing them in some short stories.

Q: Paul Theroux is quite a well-known travel author, mainly.

BUCHE: Yes, he was teaching English in one of the high schools in Malawi, and after being expelled, wrote some short stories about Malawi with Banda and company as the butt of some pretty vicious humor. The reason I was the AID Director is that there was an effort to consolidate the AID programs in southern and eastern Africa into a regional approach. AID technicians, accountants, lawyers, engineers, and others were centralized in a Regional Office at Mbabane, Swaziland or Nairobi, Kenya to support the AID projects throughout the region. DCM's at five embassies in southern Africa replaced the AID directors and managed the projects locally. Whenever the embassies needed help or advice, they telephoned or cabled Nairobi or Mbabane. If the issue could be worked out over the phone, fine; if not, an AID official or team would arrange to come to the country.

After a few months it was clear that my responsibilities as the AID director were taking much more time than my responsibilities as DCM. This was not a problem, however, because there was not much happening politically in the country, and we had a really first-rate staff. Some of the very best officers with whom I would ever work in the Foreign Service were with me in Blantyre. Some of them went on to much higher positions. One of them was Jerry Bremer, who was our political officer. He went to Kissinger's personal staff, was named as Ambassador to the Netherlands, and later became an Assistant Secretary for Anti-Terrorist Activities. Another was Bert Moore, who was the administrative officer and went high in his field. Our US Information Officer was Jim Thurber. He reached the upper ranks of the USIA bureaucracy in his area. Oulocally-hired employees, the Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs), were dedicated, talented Malawians. Unlike in Ethiopia, where Anike and I seldom socialized off-hours with the FSNs, we found several of the Malawian employees quite interesting and compatible. Our consular assistant, Mrs. Rosemary Argente, knew almost all the major players in politics, business, and academia. She also understood the nuances of Malawi politics. She was so valuable to the Embassy.

Q: Your ambassador?

BUCHE: Was Bill Burdett. He was a Middle Eastern specialist, including North Africa and Turkey. Blantyre was his last assignment. After decades of turmoil and chaos in various countries where he was DCM, Chargï¿½, or Political Counselor, he wanted a quiet final assignment - and he got it. Ambassador Burdett carried out his duties responsibly and with a skill that comes from many years of experience. The entire staff really liked and admired him and his wife, Marlys (a former Foreign Service secretary).

Q: Looking at the map, Malawi thrusts right inside Mozambique. Whawas happening in Mozambique?

BUCHE: Well, there was an insurgency against the Portuguese coloniaregime that had ruled the country for centuries.

Q: That's what I was going to say. I would have thought that you would be up to your neck in reporting on the insurgency and what was going on there.

BUCHE: We were doing some reporting in normal channels on information that we would get from the Malawi Government, the British High Commission, and the South Africans. We were under restraints from the Department not to be aggressive in pursuing leads or information on the insurgency outside of diplomatic contacts. The bulk of the reporting on the struggle between Portugal and Frelimo was done by the Agency. The CIA had a big operation in Malawi. The Chief of Station was Jim Warrick. He was relatively young to head such a large operation, but he was bright, alert, politically savvy, and had great self confidence.

Q: Was there any problem with Banda and company to have this Cloperation?

BUCHE: Parts of it were declared. The CIA station chief was declared to the Malawi Government, and there were certain programs where they worked together with the Malawi Intelligence Service. It was to our mutual interests to know what was going on with the insurgency and with the Portuguese counterinsurgency measures. As you can imagine, with Malawi stuck, in a sense, as a finger into Mozambique, there was a lot of sloshing over of operations and some firefights that got into Malawi territory. Both sides, the Portuguese and Frelimo, would apologize to the Malawi Government and give assurances it would not happen again. Malawi was scarcely able to defend itself against large-scale incursions by either Portuguese or Frelimo units. Malawi, of course, recognized this, and tried to persuade both sides to stay out of Malawi. Both sides recognized if one side really antagonized Malawi to a large extent, Banda' Government might move from its neutral position toward helping the other. So there was a mutual incentive for both sides to avoid antagonizing Malawi. On the other hand, Malawi depended economically on Portugal/Mozambique for use of the ports and on Frelimo to allow transit through the areas they controlled. Banda felt more at ease with the Portuguese than with Frelimo, because the latter was a Marxist-based insurgency and an unknown quantity as far as he was concerned. He also realized that the Portuguese probably were not going to be able to hold on in the long run, and he did not want to be on the losing side. Philosophically, he may have been rooting for the Portuguese, but he was realistic. Also, the strength of Frelimo was basically in the central and northern parts of Mozambique, and this is where Malawi had its main transport links to the coastal ports.

Q: What about Tanzania? Malawi abuts on Tanzania. What was youimpression of developments there? We are talking about 1971-72?

BUCHE: It was the time under Nyerere. A lot of international development aid was going into Tanzania. At that time Nyerere was the "darling" of the Nordics, the World Bank, the Christian churches, and even the U.S.G. This really upset Banda. He repeatedly proclaimed that most of the money given to Tanzania would be wasted. It's pouring water into the sand."

Q: It does seem to me he was absolutely right.

BUCHE: Well, very often what he said about Tanzania was factually correct. He weakened his arguments, however, by personal attacks on Nyerere. Banda despised him. He was angry that the West liked Nyerere, and he could not see why the West was reluctant to put more money into his Malawi. Banda saw the development assistance issue from his own optic. He was a staunch friend of the West and made sure that foreign assistance funds granted to Malawi would not be wasted. Besides, be refused to recognize Beijing or allow the Soviets or any Warsaw Pact country to open an embassy in Malawi. Yet, the West (with the exception of the UK) was hesitant to fund bilateral assistance projects in the country. They much preferred to put money into "socialist" Tanzania.

On several occasions, Banda summoned Ambassador Burdett and me to State House to berate the U.S.G. for helping Tanzania build a road, a bridge, or some other project. His theme was the same each time: If the U.S. Government would put more money into Malawi, you know the money would not be frittered away or disappear; it will be well spent, and the project will be well maintained. Twenty years later you will still have something to show with pride. If the U.S. Government and the World Bank give money to Tanzania, they will have nothing to show for it in ten years. It will be wasted or stolen. We knew what Banda was saying was correct, but we also had to defend our Government's policies, as well as explain to him why Malawi was low on the priority list for U.S. assistance, despite its excellent use and accountability of the funds. We said that there is not more money coming to Malawi - and we had to choose the best diplomatic language - because many in our Congress are opposed to South Africa and its system of apartheid. Since Malawi had diplomatic relations with South Africa, there was the belief in Congress that Malawi was wrong in not maintaining the Africa-wide ban on formal relations with South Africa. When the policy makers in Washington divided the African-assistance pie, they were conscious of the negative reputation of Malawi in Congress, the American churches, and the press. We assured Banda that we kept Washington aware of the good use by Malawi of American assistance. He was not satisfied with our explanations, but there was not much he could do. He certainly was not going to change his policy toward South Africa. Not only did Malawi receive millions of dollars from Pretoria each year in assistance, but Banda believed that he had a morally correct policy toward South Africa.

He did not approve of apartheid, but criticized the policy. He maintained that race relations would improve in South Africa if there were a dialogue between the people in the country and between African states and South Africa. He frequently proclaimed that many African states secretly traded with South Africa, but only Malawi openly published trade data on the transactions. What Banda could not comprehend was that his policies of repression through the Young Pioneers, his edicts against long hair, short skirts, slacks, or God forbid! shorts on women, and rock and roll, his extortion of merchants, particularly the Indians and Pakistanis, plus his cultivation of the South Africans made him a pariah in the eyes of Western governments. Of course, putting money into Tanzania turned out to be the folly Banda had predicted. As we all learned by the end of the Cold War, most African assistance projects turned sour. Assistance to Africa was usually politically motivated, not the result of cold, economic analyses. We were going for headlines and PR points rather than solid projects. We were not alone. The Russians, the Chinese and so many other donors were pouring money into Africa. As I would learn personally years later from the Chinese Ambassador to Zambia (his previous assignment was Ambassador to Tanzania), Beijing continued to lavish money on Tanzania despite a stream of warnings from the Chinese Embassy in Dar Es Salaam that the Chinese-financed projects were heading toward failures because of local corruption, malfeasance, and incompetence

Q: Well, particularly the Nordic countries.

BUCHE: They adopted Tanzania and other East African countries.

Q: Nyerere was a charmer. He was probably the worst administrator and in many ways, a tyrant on his own, I mean in the nicest possible fashion, but he forced people onto these disastrous collective farms.

BUCHE: Well, in Zambia - we were putting money into Zambia, too. Kaunda was very close to Nyerere, but Kaunda, at least, did not get into collective farms. He did enough other dumb things from an economic and political point of view that the result was that we and other donors poured money into the proverbial rat hole - nothing really took. I think both in Tanzania and in Zamba the corruption was quite enormous. It was just blatant and ubiquitous, whereas in Malawi it was different. There was corruption at the very top in Malawi, but you didn't get pecked to death by sparrows. Foreign aid was well accounted for. The private sector, however, had to pay Banda and his Malawi Congress Party.

Q: Did anybody replace the Indian merchant class out in thcountryside?

BUCHE: Eventually, when the Indians and Pakistanis were forced to give up their stores, Africans in good stead with the MCP took over. The net losers were the customers because the new owners were not really businesspeople. Some of them went out of business, and others just raised prices. The losers were the people out in the countryside.

Q: Well, this generally is what happens, that often those that take over the stores do not stock them. They basically sell off the stock and then sit there and wait for something to happen, no investment.

BUCHE: The people who took over were basically the local politicians, police chiefs, or civil servants with good Party connections.. They were not interested in the running of stores and making a little bit of profit every day. They wanted quick profits. The Malawi Congress Party had a supermarket chain - I forget the name of it - but they did fairly well in the big cities, since there were no competitors allowed. As the small "Indian shops" in the countryside went out of business from greed and mismanagement, the MCP decided to extend its supermarket chain. Most were eventually closed because there were not enough sales to support the large stores. The people in the countryside were again without access to such basic things as salt, sugar, batteries, soap, medicines, canned goods, cooking oil, etc. They had to depend on wandering traders who would sell them something from the rear of a pickup truck, which meant the price was much higher.

Q: Was there anything else we should touch on before we move on?

BUCHE: Well, I think we pretty much have covered Malawi. I want to mention that Banda asked the Peace Corps to return, but at a much more senior level. He did not want secondary-school teachers, but surgeons, dermatologists, teaching nurses, air-traffic controllers, heavy-duty equipment mechanics, et al. Washington was anxious to try new directions for older Peace Corps Volunteers, and gave priority to filling Banda's shopping list. Within a year following the banishment of the PCV schoolteachers, the new group began arriving. They filled regular Malawi Government positions, so they were entitled to the perks of their rank. All received government housing; some even had cars and drivers assigned to them. The new group was obligated to spend only one year in the Peace Corps, so there was a heavy turnover. Malawi gained some highly competent professionals at bargain rates; the Americans gained the experience of living in a third-world country and contributing to its development. Several mentioned to me that they gained professionally because they were forced to work with a significantly lower level of technology and had to use their intuition, intelligence, and wit to compensate.

I also wanted to mention that the AID-financed road was completed and dedicated. I had to resolve many problems along the way, including working out a tax and fee dispute with the Beira Port Authority so that our heavy equipment could be released, obtaining speedy replacements for contractor personnel who quit or were expelled from the country (usually for racist remarks), and gaining agreement on changes in specifications or acceptances of work performed. As pleased as I was to be heavily involved in the successful completion of the road construction project, I was even more thrilled to return to Malawi on a visit ten years later and see that our road was still in good condition.

As I was leaving Malawi, the diplomatic community was of the opinion that Banda was in his last years of power. Once again foreigners underestimated the ability and determination of African dictators to maintain power. Banda held on for over a decade before being driven from office.

I despised Banda and his oppressive regime. I personally knew several Malawians who were arrested, tortured, and killed during my posting to that country. They were, in some cases my neighbors, in other cases, Ministry of External Affairs officials with whom I dealt. I regarded them as honest, dedicated, competent civil servants. They met their deaths because they were accused of disloyalty to President-for-Life H. Kamuzu Banda. In each case, the men were taken from their home at night and were not seen again by their family or friends. Inquiries about their location or the charges against them were fruitless. There was no information on where they were held, no public trials, no lawyers to defend them, and no verdict publicized. Several weeks or months after their arrest, their wives were told they had "died in prison" or had been "killed while trying to escape". The wives were also told where they had been buried. Since they were government officials, they lived in government-supplied housing. After their deaths, the families were evicted from the housing. In a few of the cases, the wives also worked for the government; they were fired. Who their accusers were and for what motives, I do not know. We all heard many stories that the easiest way to avenge someone in Malawi, to get a promotion or a better house, or to acquire a man's coveted wife was to concoct some examples of his "criticism" of Banda or the Party and denounce him in secret to the Security People for "disloyalty". Not all such victims were executed, but by the time they got out of prison, they had suffered greatly.

Paradoxically, the greatest number of accusers and victims were Party officials, including some from the highest ranks. There was a feeling among the foreigners (and probably also among many Malawians) of Schadenfreude, when the official in charge of the Young Pioneers, Albert Muwalo, probably the most-feared man in the country, was accused of "disloyalty". He was arrested, tortured, and killed, like so many of his victims! Many of us concluded that Banda and his niece, Miss Kazimira, had arranged the execution to eliminate a powerful, potential rival. We had the impression that Banda deliberately fomented suspicion and distrust among the top people in the Party against each other to ensure their total dependence on him. He created insecurity and hyper-vigilance, and only he could "protect" them against the inevitable charges of "disloyalty" from their colleagues (and rivals). The stakes were very, very high, and led to desperate and despicable methods for self-protection. It was a combination of Stalinism, the NKVD, the Stasi, the Taliban, and the Red Guards in lovely, scenic Malawi.

Q: Well, I would have thought that because of this system, it would mean that all of you at the Embassy would deal very carefully so that you did not hurt the people you were dealing with by pushing for something which might get the people you were having to work with in the ministries into trouble.

BUCHE: We were quite concerned about that. We recognized that to have a meeting or a discussion with a minister or an official could put him or her into jeopardy, so there would be other people present. The conversation would be very formal. I cannot recall any real substantive, free-wheeling, private talk with a minister or high official. I do not think that Ambassador Burdett ever mentioned to me that he had such a conversation. It was always so formal. When there was a reception, we would not dare out of concern for our Malawian interlocutors to talk or ask questions about anything other than the weather, boating, the fishing on Lake Malawi, soccer matches, game parks, or what was happening in the United States. They seemed to be interested in learning what was happening in the United States, and we would tell them, because that was a safe subject. The agents and informers for the Malawian intelligence services were ubiquitous and aggressive. Malawians lived in fear about what might happen to them. They just could not take the risk of being close to foreigners.

Q: Were the Soviets making any inroads?

BUCHE: The Soviets did not have a chance in Malawi. They were active in Zambia and Tanzania, but they were not in Malawi. Ditto for Beijing. The Chinese from the mainland were represented in the other two countries with large embassies and several large economic development projects, including the Tanzam railroad. Taiwan sent a large embassy staff and several hundred technical advisers to Malawi. Banda made no effort to hide his determination to keep "socialism and communism" out of Malawi. I do not think the Soviets or Chinese made much of an effort to initiate diplomatic relations with Banda. They knew it would be fruitless. I am sure the Chinese kept tabs on what the Taiwanese were doing in Malawi, since they were so massively represented in two neighboring countries.

Q: You left there when? 1972?

BUCHE: I have to think. Yes, I did leave in 1972.

Q: Where did you go?

BUCHE: I came back to the Foreign Service Institute to study French,since I was assigned to Niamey, Niger, as DCM.

Q: So you took French for what, six months?

BUCHE: No, I took it for four months.

Q: So you were going to Niger, and you were in Niger from when twhen?

BUCHE: From January 1973 to July 1975.

Q: Now who was ambassador there when you were there?

BUCHE: My first ambassador was Ross or Roswell McClelland.

Q: It was Roswell...

BUCHE: Yes, but we called him "Ross". He was there for about six months. I was told that there would be a hiatus between McClellan and the new ambassador, whoever that was to be, and I would be in charge for several months. Ambassador McClellan had spent three years there, and this was his last assignment before retiring. His wife was not well. He was trying to keep things on an even keel. He recognized that Niger was not a country of any strategic interest to us. It was, however, important to the French. We had a Peace Corps program of about forty volunteers and a small AID program. We would periodically offer to send a Nigerien army officer to the US for six months training. Our policy was based on the reality that Niger was a former French colony and the French pretty much controlled things. They had advisors in all the ministries, and French commercial interests had a lock on the economy. French military and police advisers were found in every major unit. The French-equivalent of the Peace Corps had Cooperants throughout the country. The French Embassy was the center of control, and the French Ambassador was the focal point.

Niger still had its first generation leadership. President Hamani Diori had been in power since independence. There had been some attempts to overthrow him, but he (with French assistance) had put them all down. Niger was a terribly poor country, absolutely impoverished. When I arrived, the drought was raging. There was starvation among the nomads in the northern reaches of Niger, and food shortages throughout the country.

Q: This is the Sahel.

BUCHE: The Sahel, yes. Under the best of circumstances, the nomads in the north of the country were poor, but during a drought period they lost their animals and some lost their lives. Many of them were eventually able to get down to wherever camps were set up by the Red Cross and others humanitarian groups. Some of them waited too long before moving south, and it was just too late.

Regarding the politics and economics of Niger, we were interested in following what was happening, but we did not have important interests at stake. There were some medium-grade deposits of uranium in the north, and a French company was exploiting them. This was not France's only source of uranium - it was a source - and they were interested in that. There was some drilling for oil or gas, but that was not successful. There were some minor finds of other minerals, but not of a commercial nature. The French felt that they had to keep the country going since it had been part of their empire at one time. They were more interested in what was happening further south, because the Cï¿½te d'Ivoire was really much more important economically and politically to Paris.

Nigeria was interested in Niger for security and economic reasons. They did not want the people of Niger to come into Nigeria looking for jobs. Also they did not want any of Niger's periodic tribal squabbles to move southward or their own Hausa or Fulani people to move northward into Niger. Nigeria was not willing to put much money into helping Niger, but tried to be a good neighbor during the drought by facilitating the transit of emergency food. Nigeria was experiencing an economic boom because of oil profits, and so the Lagos harbor was jammed with ships offloading goods for local consumption. As a result of heavy international pressure, the Nigerian Government gave some priority to emergency food shipments for Niger. The Canadian Government was interested in Niger and other French-speaking Sahelian countries because of the language issue. The Province of Quebec had an assistance program whose main goal was to build a road across the Sahel to link Chad, Niger, Mali, Haute Volta, (now Burkina Faso), Mauritania, and Senegal. The road was called "the Unity Road." No one was interested in stirring up things. It was a quiet time politically for my first year.

Q: How about Libya?

BUCHE: Libya tried, but it was so far away. Libya bordered Niger on the northeast, but there was a lot of desert between Libya and any population centers in Niger. Libya at the time seemed more interested in stirring up problems with its other neighboring states. We heard stories about Libya sending rifles to the Tuaregs in northern Niger and trying to stir up a rebellion against Diori. We had no way of checking out the stories, so we asked the French Ambassador. He said that Libya was trying to foment trouble in Niger's north, but the situation was under control. He also told us that the situation in Chad was more precarious, but was containable. The French Ambassador confirmed that the French Foreign Legion (based in Chad) had seen action in that country against Libyan-supported rebels.

Q: Did the French have to bring in the Foreign Legion from time ttime into Niger?

BUCHE: No, not during my time there. I do not recall that the Foreign Legion was ever used in Niger since independence in 1960. The French had a couple of hundred of their own troops in Niger to help train. I imagine these troops could be used to protect the Embassy and French citizens, if necessary. The interesting thing is that when the coup took place in April 1994, the French remained neutral. They did not take action to protect Diori. Since the Nigerien military maintained public order, there was no need for the French soldiers to become active.

Q: Were you there when the coup took place?

BUCHE: Yes, I was the chargï¿½. Ross McClellan left as planned in July of 1973, and I took over expecting to be in charge for the customary month or two. I remained in charge until June 1994, since the ambassador for whom we had obtained an agrï¿½ment was retained by Kissinger for his own staff.

Q: Who was that?

BUCHE: He was eventually made Ambassador to Athens.

Q: Stearns?

BUCHE: Yes, it was Monteagle Stearns. He was to come to Niger, and I looked forward very much to working with him. He had a wonderful reputation.

Q: Well, how did the coup take place, and why?

BUCHE: There were many reasons for the coup. The drought had become worse and worse. More people were dying. Many of the embassies, the UN organizations, and private groups were trying to get permission to do things on their own, to deliver food, medicines, fodder, shelter, and other necessities. The Nigerien Government was reluctant to allow USAID, Caritas, the Quebec Group, Lutheran World Relief, or other organizations to go very far outside of the major cities to distribute food directly to the people in need or to set up emergency shelters or clinics. The Government wanted everything done through the Nigerien Red Cross or the Political Party. In a few cases, external donors could work through the Nigerien Army. In theory, this was understandable and acceptable, but in reality the Red Cross and the Party did not have the logistical capability to do this. Also these entities were stealing substantial amounts. There was a standoff between the international community and the Niger Government. We were able to do certain things, such as airdrops, but were not allowed to take our USAID-donated trucks with our PL-480 food out into the countryside and assist the starving nomads. The US military decided not to send planes to Niger for airdrops, so we worked with the Belgian Air Force. The French Air Force did not need or want any help. The Belgians made about twenty airdrops over a three-week period. I went on a few of these. When we saw bands of nomads, we would swoop down and kick out a big bladder of water, a pallet of high-energy biscuits, dried fruits, and powdered milk, plus some hay for the animals, if there were any still surviving. Airdrops of food, fodder, and water are an inefficient way to deliver such necessities, especially when there are possibilities of using small aircraft as spotters and directing trucks to the targets. Because of the Nigerien Government restrictions on surface deliveries, airdrops were the only alternative to reaching the nomads in the north.

The Nigerien Army wanted to do more, but was largely kept out of the food distribution. Diori was playing politics with the drought. He wanted to use the two organizations he trusted and controlled, the Red Cross (Madame Diori was President) and his political party in order to gain credit for relieving the suffering and deprivation. He did not trust the military beyond the generals. He certainly did not want the colonels and majors to gain any publicity or goodwill from the people for bringing food. Observers could see that food was not reaching the people most in need, the nomads and the small rural hamlets. The diplomatic community and the international humanitarian groups met frequently under the aegis of the UN Development Program Representative, Sandy Rotival, (a dynamic American married to an equally dynamic French wife, Edith) to discuss what we could do. Our interventions with Diori and his Ministers had little effect. They promised us that they were aware of the problems and would improve the distribution channels if we would give them even more trucks, more food, more money, and more technical assistance. It was clear that Diori was more interested in control than in meeting the needs of the suffering and dying people. We were prevented from taking steps that would have saved lives. That is one reason we used airdrops, despite their high cost. At least some people were saved.

The Nigerien Army finally took action. On Easter Monday morning in April 1974, a battalion of soldiers stormed the Palace and arrested Diori. Madame Diori was killed resisting arrest. All the cabinet ministers and the top politicians were put under house arrest, as were the generals. About a dozen soldiers lost their lives, so it was not a particularly bloody coup. The people of Niger were delighted to see Diori ousted. He was losing support even before the drought, but his handling of that catastrophe vitiated whatever good will remained. His wife's greed and venality were well known. She was widely detested, and the strong feelings against Madame Diori also hurt the President.

I had seen the French Ambassador on Good Friday and said there were rumors that something serious was going on. I told him I happened to notice that there was three machine gun emplacements at the Palace that I had not noticed a week earlier. He was enigmatic. He replied, "I think things are under control. I am not going to be here for the holidays." He told me he was going camping with his family for the holidays.

Around four in the morning, I heard what I first thought were fireworks, and my first reaction was this is an odd time to have fireworks. I wondered whether it was a custom in Niger to have fireworks on Easter Monday morning. Then I realized those noises were machine guns and mortars. I flung open the shutters, and a tank went past the house. I assumed this was a coup attempt. I tried to phone, but the line was dead. There was no backup radio in my residence. Only the residences of the Ambassador and the AID Mission Director had radios. The tank was now parked in front of our gate. I asked the crew to please move, since I wanted to go to the Embassy. There were several roadblocks, but I got through to the Embassy. There was no one there, and the telephones were all dead. I needed the communications officer, so that I could send a cable to Washington alerting them to the coup. I did not have access to the communications vault where the cipher machines and the radios were kept. I decided to drive to his house, about two miles away. Just as I was leaving the Embassy compound, I saw him approaching. What a professional Joseph Acquavilla was! He knew he was needed at the Embassy, and managed to get through. I listened to the local radio to learn what had happened. The coup was successful, and there were communiques and martial music. I drafted a short cable summarizing what we knew. Joe then informed me that our landline with the local PTT was blocked. We could not send a cable. Our communications equipment at Embassy Niamey was not so sophisticated in those days. We did all our own encoding and decoding, but we had to use a landline from the Embassy to the Nigerien Post, Telephone, and Telegraph Office to transmit our telegrams.

Since we could not send a cable, we used our radio to call up the Consulate at Kaduna, Nigeria. I explained to the Consul that a coup had taken place in Niger; we had no way of communicating with Washington; and would he send a cable to the Department. I read him my draft. We had to use Kaduna for the rest of the day to transmit bits of information, as we began to piece together what had happened. Since we were without telephones, we had to go around in our cars (through the checkpoints) to try to make contact with people who might know more than what was being broadcast on the local radio. I found the Taiwanese Ambassador to be well informed. Ironically, he knew his Embassy's days were numbered because the Government of Taiwan had such close links with deposed President Diori. It was widely assumed that Taiwan was putting money into Diori's personal off-shore banking account. The French Ambassador was not to be reached, but I finally tracked down his DCM. He told me he also wanted to go camping over the holidays, but the Ambassador insisted he stay in town. The DCM admitted the Embassy was not surprised by the recent event. I then realized why the French Ambassador wanted to be on a camping trip in the desert, and thus theoretically unreachable by telephone from the Palace. He made sure to be out of town, so that Diori could not call upon him to have the French military rescue him. That was my reading. When I next saw the Ambassador, he smiled when I said, "Now I know why you were out of town for the holidays."

There were a few casualties on both sides, not many. The most important casualty was Madame Diori, who was considered the "dragon lady." She was universally detested by almost anyone who came in contact with her, whether it was the diplomatic corps, the NGOs, the UN, or her own people. She was rapacious and greedy. She was also audacious. She would notice a ring, a brooch, or a necklace on a woman at a party or reception, and ask to "borrow" it for a while. Nigeriens were dreadfully afraid of her, and so they would acquiesce. Of course, they learned never to wear anything of value after that to events where she might be present. Even some wives of diplomats and UN officials were asked. Some did not really know what to do; they were so astounded that the wife of the President would ask them for a piece of jewelry they were wearing. They would give it to her, expecting she would give it back. In some cases she did, if the husband made an issue of it with the Foreign Minister or the President.

The soldiers who fought their way into the Palace arrested the President, and then they went after her. They shot her many times. The soldiers claimed that she fired at them first. She may have.

Order was restored in Niamey. The tanks left the streets, and the checkpoints were removed. The Government announced that relations would go on as before, except for the Chinese. Taiwan was out, and the Beijing Government was to come in. The new Government was wary of Libya and kept a distance from Qadhafi. Although Qadhafi sent a delegation soon after the coup, the Libyans did not open up an embassy. Most foreign governments began recognizing the new Nigerien Government within days. At the time of the coup, the U.S. Government had been debating what our recognition policy should be when a government is ousted by non-democratic means. Should we withhold recognition even if the new government is firmly in control, or should we be realistic and state that recognition is not a seal of approval, but an acknowledgment of political realities. The Kissinger doctrine of Realpolitik prevailed. I received a cable to convey our recognition after about a week.

Q: Who took over?

BUCHE: A Lt. Colonel named Kountche. He was in the second tier of the military hierarchy. He and a small group of majors, captains, and lieutenants planned the coup and carried it off successfully. One unit seized the national radio station; one took over the PTT; another unit went to the police headquarters; other units went to the Army Headquarters and various military installations in Niamey to neutralize their rescue attempts. The message of the Putschistes to potentially loyalist units was: "You don't have to join us, but don't fight us, and we'll take good care of you." Several generals who were close to Diori decided it was not to their interest to risk their lives defending their friend and chief, so they just surrendered and were put under house arrest and eventually were discharged and given a pension.

About three weeks after the coup, Douglas Heck came to Niamey as the new American Ambassador. He was accompanied by his wife, Ernie. He had been DCM in Teheran. Ernie was a career Foreign Service Officer. Doug and Ernie were in Paris for Easter and were scheduled to arrive in Niamey, the Tuesday after Easter. Because of the coup, they were asked by the Department to return to Washington.

The coup did not change significantly the daily life of many people in Niamey, but for the people in the countryside, it turned out to be the event that saved many of their lives. Kountche called the embassies, UN, and relief groups together on the second or third day of the new regime to announce they were free to distribute food and other necessities anywhere in the country. They had only to inform the Army where they were going so there could be some coordination. He offered to put the Army at the disposal of the relief groups if they needed extra hands. Kountche said the reason that he had overthrown Diori was that the former President no longer cared for the welfare of the country, was hindering the relief efforts, and had allowed relief food to be stolen by his wife and his Party supporters. The Army had seized warehouses that were the private property of Madame Diori, and opened them for the public to see. They contained trucks, medicines, and bags of wheat and rice with the logos from the UN, from the Common Market, and Japan. Madame Diori was said to have already sold tons of grain for her private gain, and from what was in the warehouses, she was planning to sell more. People could wander through, and journalists were encouraged to film and to write about what they were seeing. Madame Diori was not in the same league with Imelda Marcos. She did not have 800 pairs of shoes, but she had several hundred boubous, the traditional dress, and much jewelry. In another clever gesture by the new Government, people were invited to reclaim jewelry taken from them. I do not know how many people actually got their pieces back, but I assume some were reclaimed, particularly if they had some sort of proof.

Q: Something engraved on it?

BUCHE: Yes, a name, initials, a proof of purchase from a store, or some evidence of a previous attempt to get the jewelry back. It was a great PR gesture. The Kountche Government did not have to worry about a backlash of sympathy for Diori and the old guard. They were thoroughly discredited. Diori was eventually released from house arrest in Zinder and allowed to go to the Cï¿½te d'Ivoire, where he was given asylum by Houphouet Boigny. Within several years of the coup, the new crowd was emulating the ways of their predecessors. Bribes and theft of public property, politically-motivated arrests, judicial decisions, promotions, firings, contract awards, etc. were the norm, just as they had been under Diori.

Within months of the coup, the relief operations were running so well that the donor countries and the UN began planning for the long-term. What could they do to mitigate the damage and suffering from the next drought in the Sahel. The enormous costs to the donors of the relief operations were key factors. A decision was made, pushed by the UN as well as by the French, to do something structurally for the Sahel that would enable the countries of the Sahel to withstand future droughts. When people began adding up how much money it cost to buy grain in the donor countries and transport it through the ports of West Africa northward or from Algeria southward to the intended recipients, they were willing to invest money in potential long-term solutions. The USG spent several hundred million dollars for the Sahel drought-relief efforts. Our relief programs for Niger were varied. AID purchased twelve, large ten-wheeler Berliet trucks in Algeria, filled them with grain and drove them southward across the desert to make distributions from that direction. We also rented trucks to bring the grain from Lagos and Abidjan ports. It was enormously costly. Government officials, scientists, and economists began meeting in conferences to discuss solutions for the long term. Some of the principal ideas were to develop drought-resistant sorghum (the staple crop in the Sahel), deeper wells, campaigns aimed at encouraging better use of the limited grazing areas, better weather forecasting, expanded agricultural surveillance, better communications and more clinics in the countryside. It was decided to set up a voluntary Sahel Fund to cover the costs of the programs.

Washington was interested in doing something, so there was money available. Television had had its impact on America and Western Europe. CNN and others networks had shown wrenching images of starving babies, mothers trying to nurse their babies, but having no milk, skeletons and cadavers by the roadside. There were frequent visits by TV crews from all over the world to the Sahel. NBC, CBS, and CNN came from the US to Niger. The TV news accounts often made the Diori Government angry. The President complained to me that CNN came to Niger looking for starving babies, and did not want to film the camps on the edges of the major cities where some of the nomads were being assisted. We suggested to the TV crews that they might want to take some footage of the camps. They would shoot some scenes, but would not use that portion in the final product. They preferred the dramatic scenes of suffering and death from the northern reaches.

There was a ground swell of sympathy in the United States. We got a cable from the Department saying that Mrs. Nixon wanted to come out to the area and that she would be bringing a contingent of nearly 200 to show the US sympathy for the starving people of the Sahel. What was the Government's and the Embassy's opinion on this? I went to the Palace and posed the question to President Diori. He asked how many would be in the First Lady's party. When I told him about 200, he was silent. Finally, he answered Qua faire? What can I do? The American people have given us help, so we should thank the American people through her. She is welcome. Diori added in an aside that her visit would practically shut down the government for days and force numerous UN officials and relief workers from hotels and government guest houses, but Mrs. Nixon was chaleureusement bienvenue. I reported our conversation absolutely straight. I was the first to respond to Washington. Most of the other ambassadors and chargï¿½s reported similar reactions from their host governments. Her visit will be a heavy burden, but we are a hospitable and grateful nation and we will receive her with dignity. Our Ambassador in Ouagadougou, Don Easom, took a different approach. He sent a short reply saying he did not want to approach the government at this stage since the President would probably respond along the lines of what Diori, Keita (Mali's President), and Senghor (Senegal's President) had said. He offered his own opinion that a visit with such a large retinue would cause great hardship and severe logistical problems for the governments. If Mrs. Nixon wants to come as a gesture of sympathy, she should do so with a much smaller group. We heard nothing for a few days, and then Washington cabled that because of other pressing commitments, Mrs. Nixon could not visit the Sahel.

While I escaped the headaches of a visit by the First Lady, there were other difficult problems I faced as Charge. One involved our Public Affairs Officer. He was in a bar one night and struck up a conversation with a correspondent from one of the French newspapers. Our PAO was asked what he thought about Diori and the Nigerien Government's drought relief efforts. He had never met the correspondent before. Nevertheless, our PAO, instead of ducking the question or speaking in generalities, apparently lambasted the President and the regime. What our PAO did not realize was that the correspondent was a personal friend of Diori and may actually have been on Diori's payroll. Two days later, I was called to the Palace and told by Diori that our PAO had spoken in a way that defamed the Nigerien Government. I was requested to quietly send him back to Washington within two weeks.

I was completely caught off-guard. I knew nothing of the prior conversation, so I told the President I would speak with the officer to hear his side of the story. I spoke with him as soon as I got back to the Embassy. He said it was a very general and nothing personal against Diori. I reported the situation to Washington. My instructions were to go back to Diori and confront him with the PAO's version. I returned to the Palace. I asked the President whether he was positive that the PAO had really said what he was accused of. His reply was that a third person had overheard the conversation. The implication was that it was another Frenchman. Diori gave me an ultimatum. Either withdraw the PAO quietly, or he would declare him persona non grata. I then went back to the Embassy and confronted the PAO with the new information. The PAO backtracked considerably on his version of the conversation. I again reported to Washington. The response was to withdraw the PAO and spare him the humiliation of being PNGed. He received a decent assignment in Washington, so his career was not ruined. Years later, I learned that he had also been declared persona non grata from a country in South East Asia for publicly criticizing the government!

Another source of concern to me (and the Peace Corps Director) was the public behavior of a few of the Peace Corps Volunteers. This encompassed a wide range of individual actions which I found inappropriate and insensitive. Some examples: romantic relationships in public (an absolute no-no in rural Muslim Niger); allegations of sexual relations with students; mini-skirts; drinking alcohol in public (tolerated in the cities, but scandalous in small towns); and open criticism of the regime (certainly deserved, but not the prerogative of a PCV). There were also examples of irresponsibility by the PCVs in the personal health area: failure to take the anti-malarial tablets on a regular basis, failure to use a condom against STDs; failure to use "the pill" on a regular basis, and for one PCV, the failure to refill her anti-asthma prescription. As a result, there were numerous cases of malaria and STDs, several unwanted pregnancies, and the death of the asthmatic. In most instances, the PCVs had to be evacuated back to the States. In the latter case, not only was her corpse flown back, but the young woman's roommate was so distraught that she, too, had to be evacuated and her PC service terminated. It was the surviving roommate who told us that her friend had run out of her medicine, but made no effort to renew the supply. Several weeks later, a sand storm hit their town; she had an attack and died.

The number of PCVs in Niger at one time was not more than 50, but they caused more concern and anguish than the 450 Volunteers in Ethiopia during my tour there. The Niger group included a higher than usual percentage of immature Volunteers. They should have been selected out while in training or sent home early in their tour in country. The stricken individuals suffered; the Peace Corps had its outstanding record in Niger badly tarnished; and the recipients of the Volunteers' work, the students and the patients at the maternal and child health clinics, were deprived of their services.

As I was leaving the country, the idea of the Sahelian Initiative was in the forefront. There were many workshops and policy discussions on the proposals in Africa, Europe, and the U.S. Governments were determined to launch an attempt to mitigate the effects, costs, and suffering of future droughts. I was a "short-timer" in Niger, so I did not become deeply involved in the medium-to-long-term planning or programming. That was probably wise, since I was quite skeptical of many of the premises of the Initiative. I had a feeling that we could not accomplish much to overcome a century of ecological degradation, unless we and the other Western governments were willing to be quite generous in our funding and the Sahelian governments were willing to enforce onerous, but necessary laws regarding grazing, herd sizes, well drilling and use, etc. The Sahel was becoming drier, and the desert was moving southward. The Sahara was encroaching ever further southward, and there were abundant evidence and measurements to document the phenomenon. It was a question of how far south the desert was going to go, and could man stop the encroachment. Desertification, was the word that we were throwing about at the time. People were saying, if we plant millions of trees, we can stop this. The trees were there originally, but they were cut down. There were also abundant grasses and shrubs, but they were overgrazed and eventually failed to regenerate. Many scientists were convinced the Sahel was in a long-term dry cycle. I was not optimistic that man-made policies would be very successful in overcoming what man had done even in the last century to aggravate the delicate ecological balance. I had seen numerous photos of Niger's landscape from the turn of the century into the 1950s. I was amazed at how many trees there had been, but over the years, the nomads and others had cut the trees down. I talked to some people who had lived in Niger for decades: missionary priests, former administrators, retired military, and others. They spoke of how there had been more rainfall, cooler temperatures, and much, much more vegetation thirty or forty years earlier. The meteorological records dating back a century showed that the weather patterns had changed, although there were differences of opinion on how much the cause was man-made and how much was cyclical. The old timers agreed that when the country became independent, many of the colonial restrictions on cutting trees, drilling wells, and limiting grazing were cast aside. The other Sahelian countries experienced similar reactions. Some of my interlocutors argued that the accelerated ecological degradation of the post-colonial era played a significant role in exacerbating the damage.

I spoke to Ambassador Heck at length on my misgivings that an Initiative would accomplish much because the Sahelian governments were not about to return to the old colonial restrictions. New sorghum varieties, stockpiled emergency food, and reforestation projects would certainly help, but would not be decisive. I told him that we were all being driven by the past disaster and the high costs involved to do something. There was a determination to do something quick to show that we cared. Unless the Sahelian governments were willing to take some draconian steps to curb harmful practices against the ecology, what we did would probably be largely negated. I was pessimistic that the Sahel Initiative would focus on doing what might be effective in the long run. I saw mostly short-term palliatives, namely quick-impact projects. Doug listened to me patiently, but I saw that he was under orders, so I stopped offering my opinion. There was so much interest in Washington, Paris, Bonn, Brussels, the UN, and especially the Sahel. There was going to be enormous money poured into the area. There was talk of a "Marshall Plan" for the Sahel. New proposals were made every day. Universities, NGOs, contractors, think tanks, governmental development agencies, and others got involved. People flew into Niamey to discuss projects and funding. Nigerien officials flew to Paris, New York, Brussels, Ottawa, and to Sahelian capitals for consultations and conferences. People were coming and going. Unlimited funds seemed to be available for travel and conferences. Some of the pilot projects were funded. Officials were upbeat. Western money and technology were going to turn things around in the Sahel! Even if Doug had wanted to take a more gradual approach, he would have been overruled.

We worked well together in the short time we were both in Niamey. He was a dedicated professional, but also had a good way with people. He was respected from the very beginning. Within a few months, Doug was also very popular with a wide circle of friends. I liked him immediately. We became personal friends. Although he is deceased, I am still very close to his wife, who was a professional who had to give up her career while he was ambassador. Just the past year I worked with her on several occasions in connection with refugee issues.

Q: Yes, I know Ernie very well. We served together in Saigon. Wwere quite good friends. I had a long interview with Ernie.

BUCHE: She's a fine person.

Q: Yes, she was a fine Foreign Service officer.

BUCHE: Looking back from the perspective of some fifteen-years' distance, I see that hundreds of millions of dollars went into the Sahel. Trees were planted, more wells dug, herds were replenished, storage facilities built, roads constructed, better sorghum varieties developed, weather forecasting improved, and agricultural monitoring stations scattered throughout the area. Some Sahelian government officials and merchants are living much better as the result of the Initiative. The desert is still moving southward, but slower. Nomadic life has been abandoned by many. Many of the nomads of Niger have died out, gotten jobs, or settled in the bidonvilles of Agadï¿½s, Niamey, Zinder, or elsewhere.

Q: Somewhat the same thing happened in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere.The Bedu.

BUCHE: The French and other Europeans have long been fascinated with the nomads of the Sahel. I was intrigued by their life style, but I was not a strong advocate of preserving their culture at all costs. The West performed a Herculean task to bring the nomads food, fodder, and water. Despite our efforts, many of them died. They could have moved southward earlier where there was food available. After the first year of the drought, the Niger Government pleaded with the nomads to stay in the south, where they could more easily be assisted if the drought continued. Most of them ignored the Government's pleas or the meteorological warnings of more drought and moved northward in their usual transhumance patterns expecting the rains to come. When the rains again failed, the nomads and their flocks were so weak that they could not reach the southern lands without heavy casualties. The victims were mostly the very old and the very young. When conditions became critical, the old people voluntarily stayed behind to allow the young a better chance of survival. When the water and food were nearly at an end, the adults abandoned the infants and those children who could not keep up with the march. That is how the nomads survived hard times. The camps were largely populated by nomads between the ages of five and fifty. There were, of course, some younger children and older adults, but not many.

It was not politically correct for diplomats to comment that if the nomads had not been so stubborn in following their traditional way of life, many more would have been saved. The journalists, however, had no such compunction, and asked the question frequently of the drought victims in the camps. They said all was in the hands of Allah. Allah wanted them to follow their traditional ways, and so they depended on Allah to take care of them. If drought or other misfortune befell them, that was the will of Allah. There was nothing they could do. They desperately wanted to return to the desert and would do so if they could obtain animals to sustain them. Part of the assistance money from the Sahel Fund went to replenish the herds of the nomads. Some nomads, along with their newly-acquired animals, moved out of the camps and back to their old life. Sahel Fund money also was used to train nomads for a more sedentary life. I later learned that the success rate was low for the adults in this group. They had no previous schooling and were thus not only illiterate, but also ill at ease in the twentieth century. Their children, however, were more successful in adapting to urban life.

Before moving on to speaking about my next assignment, I want to include a few remarks and observations about our social and family life in Niamey. Anike and I found the Nigeriens in Niamey generally pleasant and agreeable. They have a quiet, subtle approach to life. They were a great contrast to their neighbors to the south, the Nigerians. Our circle of friends and acquaintances was mainly Government officials, other diplomats, UN people, and the small American community - Embassy, Peace Corps, and missionaries.

Our children found life in Niger more difficult than Blantyre or Washington. They spent four months at the Cathedral Day School in Washington while Anike and I were learning French at the FSI. They liked the school so much that they did not want to leave at 5 o'clock when we came to take them home. School in Niamey was quite different. John and Christina did not know French and did not know any of their classmates. Despite the special attention given to them by their teachers (Madame Maouri was especially kind to the children), they had a rough time adjusting. Not only was the weather terribly hot (no air-conditioning in the school), but there were no swings, slides, or toys at the school. The school's recreation area was an large expanse of sand. At recess, the boys played soccer, and the girls watched. Since John had never played soccer before, he was left out. Christina's lack of French at the beginning meant that she could not converse with the other kids. Anike recalls visiting the school one day during the recess and seeing John kneeling on the ground using his shoes as two toy trucks driving through the sand. Our children learned French rapidly and adjusted well. They seemed to forget their school in Washington with its many enjoyable facilities. At least they no longer asked why they could not go back to Cathedral Day School.

Through our children, we got to know some teachers and parents from the French School. As our French conversational ability improved, we expanded our contacts. Without French, there could be little communication with the Nigeriens. I knew of only three Nigerien officials who spoke English. (One was President Diori. He understood English quite well, but hesitated to use the language in official discussions.) Because of the lack of "cultural" facilities and events such as theaters, musical performances, and cinemas, social life centered around traveling performers sponsored by embassies and held in the French, Chinese, American, or German Cultural Centers. The American Community ran a recreation center that included a snack bar, swimming pool, two lighted tennis courts, and an open shed for showing films. Anike was the manager for one year. We were generous about allowing guests to use the facility. An American member could bring up to six guests at a time. Other embassies had similar facilities.

There were only a half dozen restaurants catering to the foreign community in Niamey. There were two open-air restaurants, Vietnamese and Middle Eastern, along the Niger River. They were attractive places to visit in the evenings. There were also two discos favored by Westerners. I found the discos too loud, too crowded, and too smoky. After several visits, I stopped going, despite invitations from my diplomatic and UN colleagues to join them after a reception or dinner. Mixing in with the international social circles were former French colons. They had lived in Niger or elsewhere in French West Africa for many decades. They often married or lived with local women and had children. They were interesting, intelligent, and skilled in surviving. They flourished under French colonialism, Diori, Kountche, and Kountche's successor. There may still be some living in Niamey today, unless they left for France for better medical care.

Niamey was a fascinating assignment. I found the situation at the Embassy and in the country much more challenging than I had expected. There were more crises than I had imagined would come my way. As Charge for nearly a year, I had to deal with the drought, the PNG episode, the PCV death and other medical problems of the Volunteers, and the coup d'etat, and the aftermath. I was confident I handled the situations in a competent, professional manner. The Desk Officer or his boss, the Office Director, in the Department on many occasions sent letters (an official-informal, as we called them) praising the way I was running the Embassy and responding to the crises. (Since the Nigerien telephone system was useless for communicating much beyond local calls, we were dependent on mail and telegrams.) As my tour of duty came to an end in Niamey, I had every expectation of being promoted by the Department for my excellent performance both in Malawi and Niger. I was shocked when my name did not appear on the promotion list. I wrote to Personnel and asked discreetly why I was not promoted. I also asked for a copy of my performance evaluation written by the Office Director for West African Affairs. Before Personnel could reply, a long-delayed, unclassified diplomatic pouch arrived at the Embassy with a copy of my evaluation. I knew instantly why I was not on the promotion list. The Office Director had written only one short paragraph about my work as Charge. It was highly complimentary with several nicely-chosen adjectives and adverbs, but there was no detail other than to say I performed magnificently when the Embassy and Niger were under the stress of time drought and a coup d'etat. The evaluator wrote apologetically that he had been named Ambassador to Senegal and in the rush to prepare for confirmation by the Senate and to get to post, he had neglected to do the required "efficiency reports" on the dozen Ambassadors and Charges in his area. When Personnel had reminded him of his neglect, he wrote whatever he could recall while sitting in Embassy Dakar. I was upset that he did not bother to send me his draft and ask whether I could add some details. In those days, there was not much a Foreign Service Officer could do in such circumstances. We were expected to go along without protest with the "System," and if we did, we were told the System would eventually right the wrongs and take care of its own. (The next year, I gained my promotion!)

I left Niamey with a sense of accomplishment. I looked upon my tour there with satisfaction and pride. I was ready for another assignment, this time outside of Africa. I needed a change of continents.

Q: Well, you left there in 1975.

BUCHE: Yes.

Q: Whither?

BUCHE: Embassy Bonn! I had had enough of Africa for the moment. My whole career, except for those initial two years in Canada, was spent in Africa, on the Ethiopian Desk, or at Northwestern University studying African issues. Niger was especially hard on the children. They needed to go to a good school. My German and French language ability was pretty good, so I bid on several openings in Western Europe.

While I was trying to find a position in Western Europe, a colleague in Personnel was trying to assign me to the Foreign Service Institute to learn Romanian so I could go to Embassy Bucharest to be the Political Counselor. She thought she was doing me a favor, even though I tried to convince her I preferred to serve much further west in Europe. She told me there were some officers specializing in Eastern Europe who would have given the tip of their little finger to have that opportunity! She was right, but I really did not want to serve in Eastern Europe at that juncture of my life. (Romania was ruled by one of the most brutal of the Communist dictators, Ceausescu, although he was at that time our "darling" because of his refusal to go along with some of the Soviet policies.) I did not want to go from a geographic desert to an intellectual/political desert in a Communist police state. Not only did I have to convince my friend in Personnel that I did not want the honor or prestige of serving in Bucharest, but I had to turn a deaf ear to our neighbor in Niamey who also tried to convince me that Bucharest would be great for my career. Our next-door neighbor was an American citizen (married to a French woman) who had come to Niger as the UN Development Program Representative after serving in Bucharest in the same capacity. His pitch was similar to that coming from Personnel: John, here is your opportunity - things are going to change in Eastern Europe, and you can be there. He was so fascinated with Bucharest. I told him eventually things will have to change, but I did not want to go there at this stage. It was a Stalinist rï¿½gime. I did not want to have to live and work in Rumania under the constant surveillance of the secret police. I knew I was turning down a good career opportunity, but I was adamant. I would take my chances.

Shortly before departing Niamey for home leave, I got a telegram saying would I be interested in the position as the Counselor for Consular Affairs in Bonn with supervisory responsibilities for consular offices throughout the Federal Republic of Germany? My immediate reaction was YES. I drafted a reply and called Anike to make sure she would be pleased with Bonn. She was, of course. I sent my acceptance cable. The matter was wrapped up within a few weeks. I had gambled and won.

Before starting my job in Bonn, I had to go through an intensive retraining in consular affairs in Washington, since it had been some time since I had actually been a consular officer. While in Washington, I learned the reason I got the job. Ambassador Hillenbrand had made a request to the Office Director for German Affairs, David Anderson, for a consular officer who had political experience and "feeling", management skills, and fluent German. There were numerous consular officers contending for the post. David pushed my candidacy, despite the fact that the Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Consular Affairs, Barbara Watson, wanted the Bonn position to go to a career consular officer. The Bonn post was traditionally a reward for senior consular officers. David had a rough time with the assignment process and succeeded only because the others did not meet the criteria set by Ambassador Hillenbrand. He was dissatisfied with the attitudes and service provided by some of the older, "hardened" consular officers in several of our Consulates General, as well as in the Embassy. He wanted a supervisory officer with the right attitude and management experience to ensure that the consular officers, and particularly the Foreign Service Nationals, provided efficient, timely, and friendly service to Germans, Americans, and third-country nationals, while, of course, upholding the regulations and laws. He (and his Deputy Chief of Mission) had seen too many instances of haughty and disdainful attitudes, especially by the German Foreign Service Nationals toward persons seeking consular services. He felt that some of the American consular officers and their German support staff had subordinated the concept of service and helpfulness to the attitude that the public should accommodate to the wishes and preferences of the officials. What really bothered him was to learn that in some consular offices, services would be refused fifteen or twenty minutes before the posted closing times so that the officials could leave promptly for lunch or for home when the official closing minute was reached. One of my tasks was to change attitudes and practices.

Q: This is very German bureaucratic approach. You served in Bonfrom when to when?

BUCHE: It was August 1975 until August 1978. When I arrived in Bonn and met with Ambassador Hillenbrand and the DCM, Frank Cash, they told me specifically of their unhappiness with the way consular services were performed, particularly in Frankfurt. I was expected to use my management ability and leadership to put things on a service-oriented basis. Frank Cash told me bluntly: "I will judge your performance by the number of complaints the Ambassador or I receive about consular services. I responded that there were so many things I cannot control. He said, "But you will, I'm sure of it. Improve the record." So basically, these were my marching orders.

I had never served in as large an embassy as Bonn. It was overwhelming in many ways. Showing up in the first staff meeting of "senior officers" was a revelation. There were section chiefs, counselors, minister counselors, attaches, the DCM, and the Ambassador, nearly twenty persons in all. The weekly staff meeting (the next layer) brought together about forty persons. There was no regularly-scheduled staff meeting of all the Americans at the Embassy. It would have required the post theater to fit them all in. I soon learned how hierarchical a large embassy such as Bonn was, and how large several of our consulates were. I attended the various staff meetings and was fascinated with the complexity and breadth of our relations with Germany. After several months, I decided that the weekly staff meetings were sufficient, unless there was a consular issue to discuss. I think I did a much better job as the supervisory consular officer by being available for calls and for the public, rather than spend an hour each day in the Senior Officers staff meeting.

Another new aspect of serving in a large embassy was observing and participating in the work of programming and assisting the many official visitors. There seemed to be a constant stream of Congressmen and Senators, assistant secretaries, Cabinet members, judges, academics, generals, Vice-President Mondale (twice during my posting), and President Carter. The flow of visitors never stopped. The Visitors Section of the Embassy had ten employees whose primary task was to service official visitors to Bonn. The administrative staff of the Embassy was enormous and had every conceivable resource. The Embassy could call upon the U.S. military for logistical help, if needed. The motor pool was enormous. I could order a car with a driver for official use at any time of the day or night. I learned that the German Government paid for the Embassy cars and trucks. The State Department had such budgetary problems that Washington could not afford to pay for more than a few new cars each year. The solution was simple. We told the German Government that the cars were needed for our Mission in Berlin. Since the Germans were responsible for paying the administrative costs of the Berlin Mission, several hundred cars would be ordered each year by the Mission, paid for by the Germans, and then driven from Berlin to Embassy Bonn and to the Consulates General in Stuttgart, Munich, Bremen, or Hamburg. So we all had well-stocked motor pools.

Q: Frankfurt, too.

BUCHE: Frankfurt, of course. The Germans were so eager to have the three Allied powers remain in Berlin that they picked up much of the cost. We stretched the definitions of allowable items to some extent, but not so blatantly as the French. In addition to the car scheme which we picked up from the French, the French military would periodically rotate troops from Western Germany to Berlin to have them outfitted with new uniforms and other equipment. We and the British kept the Berlin purchases within bounds.

Q: Well, now, you were faced with the problem of getting essentially the Consular Sections to be responsive to the customer. How did you go about that?

BUCHE: Two ways. I decided to hold off-site consular conferences every six months. I chose a US Army-owned resort hotel at Berchtesgaden for our first session. Frank Cash, the DCM, and the Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs, Barbara Watson, also participated. She delivered a strong message. "Complaints are coming from all over the world that American citizens are not being served well by our consuls. This must stop. You must improve your service to Americans!" She threatened that the careers of consular officers would be negatively affected if attitudes and performance did not change for the better. The main culprits were not the officers, but the locally-hired personnel. The FSNs were too often allowed free rein to deal with the public as they wished, with little supervision from the Consular Officers. Service with a smile, flexibility, and going that proverbial "extra mile" were not in the operational vocabularies of some of the FSNs. They worked for the American Government, but their attitudinal role models seemed to be the Prussian bureaucracy.

Ms. Watson also proclaimed a new requirement that every American prisoner held in German jails and prisons had to be visited once a month by a consular officer. This was to be the policy worldwide. Previously the frequency of prison visits was left to the discretion of the consuls. There was strong opposition from some of the senior consuls in our meeting. "We can't do this; we don't have the people." She answered, "You have sixty days to find a way to do this. If you need more money for your travel budgets, let Washington know." She then turned to me and said, "Mr. Buche, you are the supervising consular officer, so you will see that this is done. I will hold you responsible." I suspected she still had some animosity toward me because I had defeated her candidate for the prestigious Bonn position. I calmly replied to her that I would see to it that all the German posts complied within sixty days to the new requirement. All of us in the room knew that monthly visits to 300-400 prisoners would be difficult to carry out without additional vice-consuls, and to obtain incremental personnel would take almost two years. Most of the incarcerated American were in Bavaria, held in a dozen prisons. Since the Munich Consulate General was responsible for Bavaria, the most difficult adjustment from the new order fell on Consul Ira Levy. He showed great management skill and ingenuity in working out methods to carry out the command. The others had to adjust and shift workloads, but their tasks were not as complicated. Frank Cash informed all the Consuls General (the supervisors of the Consuls) of the new requirement from Washington and told them to do whatever was necessary to carry out the directive. I then visited all the Consulates to work out details. I was able to report to Ms. Watson that we had met her deadline! The second tool I used to ensure better service was the annual performance review of the individual officers. I offered to serve as the reviewing officer for the reports, if the rated officer so wished. I was not the direct supervisor of any of the officers in the outlying post, so I could not be a "rating officer". I did, however, send evaluation reports on each of the officers to his or her direct supervisor for inclusion within the report. Several of the officers took up my offer to serve as the reviewer of the report of the direct supervisor.

Fortunately, the main problem was resolved by a change of personnel. One of the older, consular officers became ill and was hospitalized and eventually retired. Another left in a normal rotation. They were replaced by officers with a much more positive attitude. The new officers approached the job in the way the Ambassador, Frank Cash, and I desired. Things were looking up, except in Frankfurt. There were still several embittered, old consular officers who had heard and seen it all, and were not about to change. They were also being goaded by some of the local German staff not to yield to the Ambassador's and my "smile and charm campaign" (as they described our efforts to provide better service).

Q: I'm just curious. What could you do in the Frankfurt situation?

BUCHE: Well, it took a little longer, but we found solutions. The most significant instrument for change at Frankfurt was the quadrennial post inspection. In early 1976, all the German posts were inspected by officials from the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of State. The Ambassador, Frank Cash, and I shared with the Inspectors our general concerns about the quality of consular services. During subsequent discussions with the Inspectors, I suggested they should observe first hand over an extended period how the Consular Section of the Consulate General Frankfurt interacted with the public. I also told them that I thought the organization of the Consular Section was flawed. I also raised the issue of the delineation of the Frankfurt Consular District. Regarding the organization, there were three chiefs, one for visa operations, one for passport operations, and one for special consular services, and they all reported directly to the Deputy Consul General. The DCG also had other section heads reporting to him. No one person was really responsible for overall, daily consular operations. The problem with the consular district was that Frankfurt served the States of Hesse, Rheinland-Pfalz, and several others, but not Bavaria. Yet northern Bavaria reached to within twenty miles of Frankfurt. (Incidentally, my great-great grandmother lived in the northernmost part of Bavaria, Hoerstein, before migrating to New Albany, Indiana.) Our Consulate General in Munich (which served Bavaria) was some two hundred miles away.

After spending several weeks in Frankfurt, the Inspectors returned to Bonn and discussed their findings on the consular side with me. They agreed with my point of view about the structure of the section and the interaction with the public. Their inspection report recommended that a new position be created for a Chief of the Consular Section. Since this person would not be on board for at least a year, there was no immediate problem regarding the three incumbent sub-section chiefs. They were all scheduled to retire within two years. The Consul General and the Deputy Consul General were told by the Inspectors of their negative findings about consular services. (Both had been told about the very same problems by the Embassy, but they did not take our concerns very seriously, since their own staff members insinuated that we were exaggerating the problem.) The DCG began to focus more on the consular issues, and so there were improvements. Fortunately there were some young officers in Frankfurt who were not pleased with the prevailing attitudes of their bosses or of the FSNs toward the public. I stayed in contact with them and encouraged them. They were saying, in effect, "John, you're pushing on an open door, as far as we are concerned. We try to do something beyond the call of duty, and our boss says, 'To hell with that - it's ten minutes past closing time. Don't issue the visa. Tell him to come back tomorrow.' or 'No, don't serve that person because he is from outside our consular district. Tell him to go to Munich.'" The Inspectors also agreed with the approach on the consular district issue which the Embassy was advocating. Serve people from Northern Bavaria, if legally permitted. To wit, issue visas, passports, and provide some other services. Only notarials and official certifications were not legally permitted to be performed out of district. After the Inspectors weighed in, Frankfurt officially changed its policies and provided services for clients in Northern Bavaria. This was a breakthrough because there were several large U.S. Army units stationed in the area. The soldiers and their dependents no longer had to travel to Munich for most consular services. The Ambassador and Frank Cash were delighted with the backing from the Inspectors and the subsequent changes in attitudes at Frankfurt. We achieved our goal of providing excellent consular services at all the posts. People began to note the change. I received kudos from Frank Cash and the Ambassador, as well as from Washington. The accolades I most appreciated, however, were from my colleagues, especially the younger officers.

The assignment to Embassy Bonn was rewarding in so many ways. Professionally, it expanded my horizons considerably. Although I had served in two small embassies as DCM and as Charge, the extent of our national interests in Malawi and Niger was quite limited. Germany, however, was a focal point of our global strategy. The Embassy was a key component in carrying out that strategy. As a member of the Ambassador's "Management Team", I played a role in the day-to-day activities in furthering our national interests. Making sure that our consular activities were carried out properly was considered important to the Ambassador. That is the reason he fought so hard with the Washington bureaucracy to fill the position with an officer of my background and proven capabilities, rather than a "business-as-usual" career consular type. Ambassador Hillenbrand was fully aware that every working day several thousand Germans came to our Consulates seeking services. He was determined that they would be served in a professional, efficient, and friendly manner. I also had responsibilities to deal with foreign members of the diplomatic and consular corps accredited to the Federal Republic of Germany. On several occasions, I was the official contact between the Embassy and the East Germans on issues involving Allied access to Berlin. Washington made the decision to deal with certain contentious issues on a Consul-to-Consul basis, rather than at the Political Counselor level. Even when I was not directly involved in an issue, I could observe up close how the Embassy team was handling the matter.

I was impressed with the way Ambassador Hillenbrand, and later, Ambassador Stoessel managed various crises or important issues. They were both superb diplomats, with a breadth of experience relating to Europe. I liked and admired both of them and got along well with them. Hillenbrand was the more outspoken of the two. His analyses of events and developments in Germany were accurate and were reported straight. He did not gloss over differences between the U.S. and Germany, particularly on issues where we were attempting to push the Germans into taking positions, with which they disagreed. Since Secretary of State Kissinger fancied himself as the expert on Germany, he often took issue with what Hillenbrand reported or advocated. Kissinger eventually forced Hillenbrand to retire.

Walter Stoessel was transferred to Bonn from Moscow. Not only did I have a good working relationship with Ambassador Stoessel, but we were frequently together on the tennis courts. Walter and his wife liked to play tennis, and their playing level was about equal to Anike's and mine. We played twice a week mixed doubles, Stoessel and Anike on one team and Mary Ann and myself on the other. A Stoessel and a Buche always won (or lost). We got know them very well over the two years. After the game, Walter was relaxed and would often like to talk about something on his mind. He and I would sit together, while Mary Ann and Anike carried on their conversation elsewhere. What was on his mind was usually a current problem. I served as a sounding board. He sensed I was very discreet, so he trusted me. He knew I would hold whatever he told me in strict confidence. I was reluctant to offer advice on complex diplomatic issues to a person of such great experience and intelligence. That was not his intention. I sometimes was asked directly for my views, but mostly Walter simply wanted to get something off his chest. By telling me what he thought about a situation or problem, he clarified in his own mind what he should do. Later I would read the cable he had sent to Washington offering his views or solutions. Or if it were a matter for him to handle, I would learn that he had taken such and such a decision, just as he had suggested to me he would do. I learned much about diplomacy from the-post-tennis sessions with Walter. I realized what problems of our own making (the US Government) that someone such as an ambassador to Paris, to Moscow, or to Bonn has to resolve. It is difficult enough to run a huge embassy and to be responsible for US relations with the host country, but a big part of that job is trying to figure out what Washington is trying to do, where a change or shift in policy is leading, why they are going there, what they think they will achieve, what are the chances of success, and what will be the results if we are not successful. I think this is what was very often on Ambassador Stoessel's mind. He was puzzled or uncertain about an issue and wanted to think out loud about how to respond. I certainly appreciated his confidence in my discretion, as well as the chance to share his thinking on some big (and quite minor) issues.

Notwithstanding the problems of the first year in dealing with some stubborn personalities, our tour at Bonn was really enjoyable. It was rewarding in so many ways, culturally, gastronomically, intellectually, and professionally. The children attended an excellent French school, and they liked the experience. It was so much better in their eyes than the school in Niamey. We lived in a comfortable apartment close to the Rhine and surrounded by green areas. There were clubs, theaters, restaurants, recreation facilities, a military post exchange, and a library on the grounds. We were within an hour's drive to Cologne, and other interesting Rhineland cities, the Belgian border, or to the Mosel wine district. We took advantage of the fabulous travel opportunities to visit throughout Germany and into Belgium, France, and especially the Netherlands, where Anike had many close relatives. After our two tours in Africa, we felt we had arrived in a tourist's paradise. We explored the menus of some excellent restaurants and treated ourselves to some fine wines.

We knew a few Americans and Germans from our previous tours, and met other interesting people at the Embassy or in the constituent posts. (Because of my country-wide responsibilities, I traveled to the other posts in the Federal Republic on a regular basis.) Some of the colleagues whom I met during my Bonn assignment have remained close friends to this day. Doug Hunter was in charge of the Consular Section in Bremen. I met him at the first consular conference and was impressed by his contribution to the discussions. He offered positive, practical ways of reaching the goals the Ambassador sought. I was also immediately attracted to him. We worked so well together over the next thirty some months. There was never a problem or complaint about any aspect of the consular operations in Bremen. I looked forward to my visits to that post, since spending time there was such a pleasure, both professionally and socially. Little did I realize at the time that we would both be assigned to the U.S. Mission in Geneva or that we would spend years together in the Refugee Program/Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration in Washington. Other long-standing friends from Bonn are Dick and Sally Smyser. He was the Political Counselor. We got to know each other through work, but our friendship developed through shared cultural and intellectual interests. Several years later, we were both involved in refugee issues. He came to Geneva as the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, while we were posted there. There were other American colleagues from the Bonn era whom we still see occasionally in Washington. On the German side, we met Gunter and Christine Joetze, when he was Ambassador to Niger. We continued our friendship in Bonn, where he was assigned to the section of the Foreign Office dealing with the Four-Power Negotiations, and later in Vienna, where he was the Head of the German Delegation to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).

Q: Well, John, this might be a good place to stop. We'll pick it unext time. You've left Bonn.

BUCHE: I have finished with Bonn. I think this is enough.

Q: Where do you go in 1978?

BUCHE: I had hoped to go to Salzburg as the Consul, but the Consulate was going to be closed within two years. Also, Salzburg was an eagerly-sought post for a last tour. The Consular Affairs Bureau controlled the selection process, so I was facing some big obstacles in obtaining the position. The CA bureaucrats had not forgotten how I had muscled out one of their own to obtain the Bonn posting. Although the post was going to be closed in a year or two, they intended to send one of their consular-cone officers to Salzburg, and not some interloper from the political cone. So although my name was thrown into the hat, I was told, "Forget it, John. You have been blackballed, and you're not going to a consular-cone designated post." So I was left without an assignment, until I got a call at home in Bonn, shortly before I was intending to return to Washington without an onward assignment. I was asked whether I would be interested in the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in Geneva. And I said, "Yes." My personnel counselor explained the position. It was the number two slot in the Refugee and Migration Affairs Section. I was vague on what my duties would encompass, but I was thrilled at the idea of going to Geneva. We had close friends there who were with us in Ethiopia, Art and Doni Stillman. We had stayed in touch with them and had visited them once from Bonn. We knew they liked Geneva, and it was a beautiful city. I figured I could not go wrong by accepting the position. Besides there was nothing else on the horizon. I did not know much about the U.S. Government's refugee program, except that I helped a dozen or more Ethiopian refugees, when I was in Bonn. I had arranged for them to go to Frankfurt to be processed by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). I was told I would be brought back to Washington and be given an orientation on what my duties were to be in Geneva. I asked why I had not seen the position listed in the periodic cables sent to the posts to help the officers with the bidding process for onward assignments. I was told there was a sudden vacancy (a retirement), and the position had not yet been posted. The Personnel Bureau had decided to make a quick internal search for a candidate and ask him or her whether there was any interest. My counselor had read what Ambassadors Hillenbrand and Stoessel and Frank Cash had written in my annual "efficiency report" (the EER), and decided I was the person for the job. And so that is how I was assigned to Geneva. Little did I realize at the time how pivotal that assignment would be for my future career, both in the Foreign Service and afterwards.

Q: So we'll pick this up in 1978, when you were off to Geneva, antalk about what the job was all about.

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This is the 15th of December, 1999, the Ides of December. John, yowere in Geneva from 1978 to -

BUCHE: From 1978 to 1982.

Q: When you went to Washington before starting off in Geneva, what were you hearing about refugee affairs and what you were going to be dealing with?

BUCHE: When I went to Washington, I was told that refugees were becoming a more important aspect of U.S. foreign policy and that there were discussions underway with Congress to set up a new bureau in the Department for refugee affairs. In the meantime, refugee affairs were being handled in the Human Rights Bureau, which had been set up by President Carter. The Bureau was under Pat Darian, the Assistant Secretary. I also learned about the budgeting for refugee affairs within the Department. I did not realize that as a Cold War holdover, the budget for refugee affairs was separate from the State Department's regular budget. I did not know all of the ins and outs of why that distinction was made back in the 1950's, but the exception was still valid. There was the State Department budget, and there was the budget for the Office of Refugee Affairs. I think the intention was to isolate the refugee budget from the partisan battles over the State Department's budget. Refugee issues had become a non-partisan Cold War requirement, and Congress decided to handle it in that fashion. I learned what was going to be required of us in Geneva, as far as projections concerning refugee numbers and the funds needed to process and care for them. I learned about the international humanitarian organizations we would be dealing with in Geneva: the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR); the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC); and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). (At the time, IOM was named the InterGovernmental Committee for European Migration and subsequently, the InterGovernmental Committee for Migration.)

I went to Geneva, and within a few days after arriving, I was told I would be the acting chief of the section since the Counselor for Refugee Affairs, Ed Brennan, had just been diagnosed with cancer, and he left to return to Washington for medical treatment. Doug Hunter, whom I knew from my time in Bonn (he was the Consul in Bremen) arrived in Geneva at the same time. So we two newly-arrived officers were to take over responsibilities for an expanding program for refugees from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and liaison responsibilities with the international organizations for the program for refugees from Southeast Asia. The SEA program was growing at a fast pace as more and more people began to leave Vietnam in boats. This was 1978, and the fall of Saigon and the collapse oSouth Vietnam occurred in 1975.

Q: There was a continuing flow?

BUCHE: Yes, a continuing flow. They were coming out in ever-larger numbers. The outflow seemed to become larger in the spring and summer of 1978 than it was right after the fall. The Vietnamese Government allowed this to happen. All sorts of Vietnamese were getting involved in renting, selling, or stealing boats, and selling places on the boats to people who wanted out of the country. The numbers were really quite large. This was quite a concern to the United States, as well as to some of our allies in Southeast Asia - the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Hong Kong. The boat people were landing in these countries, but none of the first-asylum countries wanted to keep them permanently. They were obliged to offer asylum because of the Refugee Conventions they had signed, but they decided that it was not in their national interests to offer permanent resettlement to the refugees. When the numbers were relatively small, they took them in and requested the U.S., Canada, and Australia (traditional countries of immigration) to resettle them. That arrangement worked for a while, but as the numbers increased, we and the other resettlement countries did not keep up with in influx. The refugee camps became overcrowded. The first asylum countries began to refuse to allow the refugees to land. They gave them additional fuel, food, and fresh water and pushed their boats back into the sea. The U.S. Government stepped up its rate of acceptance and began to asnon-traditional immigration countries to take in Southeast Asian refugees. Some non-traditional immigration countries had been resettling SEA refugees since 1975.

Q: I imagine France would be in that category.

BUCHE: Yes, it was.

Q: Proportionately they have more Vietnamese than any other country.

BUCHE: I think that is correct. As the former colonial power in that part of the world, France had a long tradition of accepting Laotians, Cambodians, and Vietnamese. The French were, of course, taking in refugees who had some connections with the old "patrie," i.e. those who had served in the French colonial administration or military, had attended French schools, or had close relatives in France. The non-traditional resettlement countries, such as the UK, Germany, Austria, Italy, and the Nordics were quite reluctant to take in Vietnamese because they were already seeing increased influxes of Eastern Europeans. The U.S. Mission in Geneva was heavily engaged in working with the international organizations in that city, as well as with the other diplomatic missions to coordinate the myriad problems involved in caring for, processing, and resettling Eastern European and Southeast Asian refugees.

Q: I'd like to know, where did you fit in? What actually were yodoing in Geneva?

BUCHE: I will try to describe the work of the Mission and my owrole. The Mission was a hybrid creation.

Q: Was it United Nations?

BUCHE: No, it was an American diplomatic post accredited to the United Nations and other international organizations, instead of to a country. The internal structure was similar to any large American Embassy. There was an Ambassador, DCM, and various sections headed by Counselors. I was the Acting Counselor of the Refugee and Migration Section. We had nine Foreign Service Nationals in the Section. They were responsible for formulating budgets, auditing the Non-Governmental Organizations which we funded, keeping a central registry of refugees whom we were assisting under the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program, and liaising with the international humanitarian organizations on funding and budget issues.

Q: You were under an ambassador and had overall responsibility fodoing what?

BUCHE: Yes, I was under an ambassador. The Mission was set up with an economic section, a political section, an economic section, a small consular section, and as mentioned above, a refugee and migration section. There was also a legal section in the Mission because of the legal and treaty aspects of our membership in the various international organizations. There was also a CIA station attached to the Mission.

Q: Who were your ambassadors?

BUCHE: William Van den Heuvel was our first ambassador. He was a political appointee from New York and had come from the humanitarian world. After he made his career and fortune as a lawyer, he went into humanitarian work. He had been associated with the International Rescue Committee, Amnesty International, and the UN Association. He was quite knowledgeable about refugee affairs and the international organizations we were dealing with. Ambassador Van den Heuvel was like a gift of God to me because I was just learning the nuts and bolts of the job. He and the DCM, Roger Sorenson, were deeply involved in refugee issues before Doug Hunter and I arrived, so we had excellent guidance on what needed to be done. After about a year, Van den Heuvel resigned and was replaced by a career diplomat, Gerald Helman. He brought Don Eller with him to Geneva as his DCM. (Roger went to Rome as head of our Mission to the UN Food and Agricultural Organization.) When Reagan became President, he replaced Ambassador Helman with a political crony, Geoffrey Schwaeb. Schwaeb was the Chairman of May Department Stores and a big financial contributor to Reagan. In the spring of 1979, the Refugee Counselor position at the Mission was filled by Steve Palmer. After a year of running the Refugee Section, Steve was called back to Washington by the Deputy Secretary for a special task and was replaced by Frank Sieverts. Frank was in charge of the Section for a year, before he was recalled to Washington to open up the position for Karl Beck. After several years in Geneva, Doug Hunter resigned from the Foreign Service to work for IOM. He was replaced by Robert Paiva, who also resigned after two years to work for IOM!

Because there was so much U.S. domestic interest in refugees, the Mission was actively engaged in working with the UN, the ICRC, IOM, and the NGOs. There were frequent international conferences held on refugee issues. The first one was three months after I arrived. The U.S. delegation was headed by Vice-President Mondale. You can imagine the complexities when a Vice-President gets involved in an international conference. He was there for several days. But before Mondale and the official party arrived, we had teams of security people, several Assistant Secretaries to conduct preliminary negotiations, dozens of journalists, and additional secretaries, public affairs specialists, and working-level officers from the State Department. The way these conferences normally play out, much of the groundwork is done beforehand. Then the big names come in from the capitals, make speeches, do some bilateral work, put the finishing touches on the declarations, give press conferences or interviews on the "success" of the high-level gathering, and depart.

There were constant conferences, but fortunately only two in Geneva at the Vice-Presidential level, but the idea was to push the concept of burdensharing among the potential refugee-resettlement countries and to come to some sort of an agreement on how to assist and to reassure the countries of first asylum, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Hong Kong that they would not be stuck with tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of refugees. An understanding was reached that if the first-asylum countries would take in the refugees, the UN would pay for their upkeep, and then they would be resettled. That meant that Congress had to be brought on board (for funding and to allow the U.S. to take in tens of thousands of refugees each year). The UN High Commissioner for Refugees had the responsibility to protect and care for the refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention (signed by most governments). That UN agency also had the task of coordinating the understandings and speaking out when parties did not adhere to what had been agreed. Of course, the UNHCR needed large sums of money to carry out its mandate. This was something the UNHCR had always done very well on a limited basis. With the outflow of thousands of refugees daily from Vietnam, the UNHCR was not prepared to meet the burgeoning crisis. They were basically Europe-oriented and were beginning to handle large-scale refugee crises in Africa, but they were not staffed to handle simultaneously another major crisis in Southeast Asia.

They were particularly weak in the resettlement aspects, since in Europe, we, the Canadians, and Australians processed our own refugees. (Israel was beginning to receive large numbers of Soviet Jews, so the Jewish Resettlement Agency was also involved in the processing in Europe.) The High Commissioner at the time was Paul Hartling, a former Prime Minister of Denmark. He responded to the pressures (and increased funding) from the U.S. and our European Allies and augmented his staff to meet the worldwide crises. My office was called upon to work with the UN and other humanitarian organizations to meet the crisis in Southeast Asia and still manage the ever-increasing outflows of refugees from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. While there was not the problem of the first-asylum states of Europe, particularly Germany, Austria, Greece, and Italy, turning back the refugees, they were also concerned that they not be stuck with large numbers. They counted on us and the other resettlement countries to take most of the refugees. Fortunately for the program, there was fairly wide support in the U.S. for offering haven to the Eastern European refugees. This was part of the Cold War mentality.

Q: We're still talking about the Cold War era. The Cold War was ifull fledge, particularly after 1979.

BUCHE: It was August 1978, when I arrived in Geneva. The number of people coming out of Eastern Europe, and asking for asylum in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, and Greece had been growing by twenty to thirty percent annually since 1975. The U.S., the Canadians, and Australians years ago had worked out an agreement to help these first asylum states by taking for resettlement most of the refugees who entered Western Europe. The exceptions were the East Germans (who were offered West German citizenship immediately upon reaching the country) and those refugees who had close family members in Western Europe. The Canadians and the Australians were looking for migrants, and we were doing it for political and/or humanitarian reasons.

In 1977, the U.S.S.R. began to drop many restrictions to legal emigration for Jews. They were coming out of the Soviet Union by train to Vienna. The Jews would be met by representatives of an American NGO, HIAS, as well as by the Jewish Resettlement Agency. They would indicate their preference to go to Israel or to the U.S. (or elsewhere, other than Israel). They would then either be flown to Israel within a few days, or processed in Vienna for resettlement elsewhere. In 1978, the overall numbers of Jews coming out of the U.S.S.R. was growing dramatically, but the ratio of those choosing not to go to Israel was increasing. (These were the so-called "split-offs".) The U.S. Government believed they should have a choice. This is where the Israeli Government and the US Government had sharp differences. The Israeli Government maintained since the Jews were coming out of Russia with visas for Israel, they should go first to Israel. If they did not like living there, then they could go elsewhere. We said our laws on asylum did not permit that, since once a refugee has been resettled, he or she had no claim as a refugee for a second country of resettlement. This issue was a bone of contention between our two Governments, especially since the numbers were going up of those who decided to split off and settle in the West.

Q: What was your office's role in this Jewish migration?

BUCHE: We funded from our office the operations in Vienna of the organizations involved in the initial questioning and processing. Once a Jew decided not to go to Israel, we picked up the costs of care and maintenance of the refugee in Austria, until we could resettle the person elsewhere. This was an arrangement that we worked out with the Austrian Government. The Austrians agreed to be a conduit, but they were not going to pay for care and maintenance or allow them to stay in the country, unless they had ties with Austria. The reasoning of the Austrians was completely in conformity with the Refugee Convention of 1951, since the Jews had the right and a means to go to Israel. Some of them eventually did stay in Austria, but not very many. My office's responsibility for a refugee ceased as soon as the person was resettled either in Israel, Europe, or a traditional country of immigration. Until that happened, however, our office paid for care and maintenance, including clothes, pocket money, health costs, school supplies for children, and burial costs in a few cases. When I arrived, the Jews on our care and maintenance rolls in Austria numbered about 10,000. Shortly before I departed, the numbers had risen to 30,000. We worked primarily with two Jewish and two non-Jewish NGOs who were in daily contact with the Jews. These former were HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Assistance Society), AJDC (American Joint Distribution Committee), and the latter were IRC (International Rescue Committee), and Austria Caritas.

Q: I would think that these latter organizations would shy away because, after all we're talking about people who have a place to go. I would think that there would have been the idea of putting their resources elsewhere.

BUCHE: They wanted to help on an ecumenical or humanitarian basis. The IRC was founded in the mid-1930s in New York to rescue Jews from Hitler's Germany. Most of the Jews who broke off in Vienna and wanted to go elsewhere were helped to do so by HIAS and AJDC in a partnership arrangement. But there were other NGOs which were already working with the non-Jewish refugees and decided they would help because, for one thing, it smoothed out the peaks and valleys of workloads. The Jews were very regular in coming out of the U.S.S.R. They needed exit visas and were allowed time to pack up and say good bye. While their numbers were growing, we could plan in advance. Whereas the number of refugees from Eastern Europe was up and down, depending on so many aspects. Very few of them actually "climbed under or over the Iron Curtain". They came out as tourists or part of teams or delegations or they had permission to join family members. There were some very dramatic escapes, but most of them came out in tour buses or trains with permission. The non-Jewish NGOs did take some of the Jews, and we encouraged them to do so. By the same token, HIAS processed some Pentecostals and Evangelicals from the Soviet Union because it had a large staff of Russian-speakers. Our office reviewed and approved the NGO budgets, incorporated them for submission to Washington, and after the funds became available to us, we apportioned the money and audited the expenditures. Because of the long lead-time required by Washington for the budgets and because the budgets were based on future estimations of the number of refugees each NGO would handle and for how long, until they were resettled, there was a real need for intelligent estimations and informed guesses. We could adjust budgets for the NGOs within our overall ceiling without reference to Washington, but if we grossly underestimated the overall levels of incoming refugees, we would have to go back to Washington for a supplemental. Since a supplemental request to Congress was acceptable only for large-scale emergencies, we were encouraged to over estimate and be prepared to return the money at the end of the fiscal year to the Treasury. By a combination of good estimations and favorable luck, we came very close to the real numbers each year.

In addition to the work in Geneva, several of our local employees in Geneva would travel to the NGO field offices to audit the accounts and serve as advisers in the day-to-day operations. We also used American accounting firms to audit the NGOs. Once a quarter, Doug or I would visit the NGO field offices in Vienna, Rome, Paris, Munich, Istanbul, Athens, or Bucharest for discussions with the NGOs that we were funding. Our visits gave us a good comprehension of the "big picture" of the U.S. Refugee Program in Europe, as well as acquaint us with the numerous fine points and the many local variations.

During our visits, or sometimes between visits, we would receive requests from the NGOs for additional money. Sometimes it would be a request for an extra $50,000 because of an unexpected influx or the funds to hire an extra driver. Sometimes it was a minor sum for a new electric typewriter. We tried to be very reasonable and accommodating. We knew the NGOs were operating on a shoestring in many cases. We knew what their salaries were, and they were not getting rich. Some of the more difficult decisions concerned medical cases. The NGOs had authority to cover emergency or life-threatening situations if the host government would not pay, but there were also cases where a person needed a major procedure, but not on an emergency basis. Seldom would the host government pay since the immediate need was not acute. We would usually consult the U.S.G.-approved "panel physicians" and follow their recommendations. If the refugee was being processed for Australia or Canada, we would ask the panel physicians whether the operation or procedure could be safely postponed until the refugee arrived in the country of resettlement. We sometimes even followed that route for U.S.-bound refugees, if there was no significant danger in postponing the operation, because refugees in the U.S. came under Medicaid, for the first two years. If there were any doubt, however, about the safety of putting off the operation until after resettlement, we would authorize the procedure in Europe.

So that was what we were doing in Geneva. We were running our own Eastern European refugee program and doing the political and liaison work, and the information gathering from the international organizations in Geneva for the U.S.G.'s Southeast Asian program. Since there were also larger numbers of Africans refugees and displaced persons coming under the UNHCR care and protection, we reported on that area. We would get the information, send it to Washington, and Washington would make the decisions about how much money should be given to the UNHCR, to IOM, or the Red Cross and for which purposes. Our office at the time processed the U.S.G. payment checks for those organizations.

Q: Would your office be talking to refugees, or you were one steremoved, making decisions?

BUCHE: We did not speak with many refugees in Europe. We visited Traiskirchen, a refugee camp outside Vienna, and a camp in the Munich area. Yes, we observed them, but we seldom talked to them about substantive issues. Doug and I sat in on a few interviews and asked questions, but our job did not involve the processing of individual refugees. We had the experience of refugee camp visits, but our job was to concentrate on the big picture by talking with the heads of the NGO units in Europe, UNHCR, IOM, and Red Cross officials, as well as State Department officers in the countries of first asylum. We were on the phone almost daily with Washington and followed up by sending cables.

During my time in Geneva, refugees were a major preoccupation with Washington. It was a significant domestic issue - not necessarily partisan, but an issue. Many Americans were concerned, on both sides of the equation. Some people wanted to limit the number of Southeast Asian refugees; others advocated a generous admissions policy. State governors, as well as Congress and the White House were united in their desire to bring more order into the process. The fall of Vietnam and the easing of restrictions on travel in Eastern Europe meant that unprecedented numbers of refugees were being admitted to the United States, usually on an ad hoc basis (the parole authority of the Attorney General). The process was disruptive. It was clear to many that Washington needed a new way to handle the U.S.G. response to the worldwide refugee problem. The State Department's Human Rights Bureau was proving not to be the place for the responsibility of managing and funding the processing of refugees.

There are some basic differences between human rights and refugees regarding international organizations, NGOs, treaties and conventions, fora, and funding, as well as domestic constituencies. Perhaps with different leadership at the time in the Bureau of Human Rights, both aspects could have been accommodated. The reality, however, was that refugee problems were given second priority by Assistant Secretary Derian in favor of human rights issues. The dedicated officials on the refugee side of that small Bureau overcame or worked around her reluctance and performed magnificently in meeting the demands of the ongoing crisis. Nevertheless, the Carter Administration and Congress decided that a new bureaucratic structure was required to handle refugee issues. In 1980, Congress passed the Refugee Act. This Act did many things. It codified which Department was responsible for what. Roles were defined for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) of the Department of Justice, and the Department of State. It created the equivalent of a new Bureau in the Department of State, the Bureau of Refugee Programs, headed by a Director. The first Director was John Baker, who lasted for a short time before he went to another bureau. Congress decided not just to create a new Bureau-like entity in the Department of State, it also created a structure above the Bureau involving a Coordinator and a Deputy Coordinator with a dozen staff positions. This structure soon proved to be unwieldy and almost unworkable. The first Coordinator was Senator Dick Clark. His job description called for him to coordinate with all the players, HHS, INS, State, Congress, the Governors, et al. The Coordinator in theory was to be responsible directly to the President and to take his orders from the White House. It possibly could have worked, but in reality did not. Dick Clark soon after taking the job, resigned to become involved in Senator Kennedy's bid for the Democratic nomination for President.

The next Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator were the two men, Victor Palmieri and Frank Loy, who had worked on the reconstruction of the bankrupt New York Central Railroad into Conrail. The idea was to bring a successful team from outside of government and let them put a management structure into place to deal with refugee problems. They made a good beginning. Then came the Mariel Cuban refugee crisis. The President decided to run things out of the White House, and marginalized Palmieri and Loy. President Carter became, in effect, the refugee coordinator. With the election of Reagan as President, Palmieri and Loy resigned. With the frequent changes at the top of the new refugee bureaucracy, it should be no surprise that there was much confusion in the ranks regarding priorities, assignments, and follow-through. We were trying to compensate for Washington's disarray by including more specific recommendations in our reporting. We thought that would make things simpler in the Refugee Program in Washington. They would have the information we obtained, as well as a recommendation on what to do as a result. We were also operating under a cloud because the new team was not sure what they wanted Geneva to do or how it should be structured. How much financial authority should we have? Should we continue to run the Eastern European Program as before, or should it be revamped to place it under Washington's control? In the near term, there was no alternative to maintaining the status quo in Geneva since the new bureau was in no position to take on any new tasks. We assumed from what we were hearing from Washington that eventually Geneva would lose much of our current autonomy. There would likely be a restructuring of the Eastern European Program. Instead of a centralized control of the NGO operations in Geneva, the future shape of the Program was toward working with fewer NGOs and allowing them autonomy within per-capita limits to make their own decisions regarding expenditures.

Q: I would think that in our dealings over the Vietnamese refugees, there had to be an awful lot of sitting around the table, saying: "I'll take so many; how many will you take?" and an awful lot of pushing and shoving.

BUCHE: There certainly was. Once the refugees were approved for resettlement in the U.S., there was a constant process of allocations and re-allocations with all the players having a say. The Department had only a minor role in the domestic allocation process. The big players were HHS, the NGOs, especially the larger organizations (Church World Services, the U.S. Catholic Conference, HIAS, and IRC), and representatives of the State governors. There was considerable give and take over the numbers of refugees to be admitted. Before the Refugee Act of 1980, this was an on-going, piecemeal exercise. With the passage of the Act, there was a formal procedure put into place which involved the Congress and the Executive Branch.

Q: Were you involved personally in any of the refugee crises? I'm thinking particularly of the Sudan, maybe Burundi and Rwanda, or any of those areas?

BUCHE: We were trying to do as much as we could through the UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross and through NGOs and not have to become involved on the ground. There was one exception. After the passage of the Refugee Act, there was a decision in Washington to begin processing of Ethiopian refugees who were in the Sudan and Djibouti. In June 1980, I was sent to Djibouti to set up a processing office. My orders were to select and process several hundred refugees for interviews by officers from the Immigration and Naturalization Service in early September so that they could arrive in the U.S. before the end of our fiscal year on September 30.

I certainly counted on the American Embassy and the UNHCR to assist me in this undertaking. At first, they were really helpful in finding office space and locally available persons to work with me. The UNHCR sent over its files on refugees who had petitioned for overseas resettlement. Then as numerous minor problems and bottlenecks arose, they became less willing to assist. The Charge was unhappy with the crowds of refugees who gathered outside the processing office. It was in the Motor Pool, but on the Embassy compound, so I was forced to re-locate my office.

When several Djibouti Government officials asked me for refugee status and resettlement in the United States for their Djibouti-citizen relatives and I turned them down immediately, they complained to the Charge. I explained that I was managing a refugee program, not a migration or educational program. Only refugees were eligible. By definition, a Djibouti citizen in his or her own country could not be considered a refugee. The Djibouti Government was already taking a "cut" of some 10-15% on food delivered to refugees by the UNHCR/WFP. (The number of refugees in the two camps was pegged at a higher number than were actually there. The "undistributed" food was taken by the Government and used for its own purposes.) The Djibouti Government began to complain of the "burden" of the refugees and how our program of resettlement would attract even larger numbers of Ethiopians.

Although Djibouti and Ethiopia adjoined, there was a desert of some 80-100 miles to cross from the populated areas of Ethiopia before reaching the border. Crossing the desert was extremely dangerous for the Ethiopian refugees. There were Ethiopian military patrols as well as hostile natives looking for asylum seekers on the way to Djibouti. Some refugees lost their lives from attacks; some perished from exhaustion. Of those who reached Djibouti, almost all had been robbed. Most of the women also suffered rapes. Life as a refugee in Djibouti was extremely difficult. The weather was horrid, and there were constant shake-downs and harassment by the police. The refugees were generally aware of the dangers awaiting them in the desert and the daily tribulations of life in Djibouti, but they fled to that country because they feared for their very lives in Ethiopia. To say that Ethiopians would flee to Djibouti because a few of them might have the chance to resettle in the U.S. was irrational. Instead of trying to dissuade the Djibouti Government officials from this point of view, the Charge seemed to agree. He became quite uncomfortable with the program and did the minimum to help.

There were three UNHCR officials posted to Djibouti when I arrived. Two of them departed for annual leave in Europe shortly thereafter. The Chief of Mission, a Kenyan, remained behind. He was unwilling to do much of anything to help. The files turned over to me by the UNHCR were mostly out of date. In addition, there had been few new files created in the year or so before my arrival for potential resettlement cases. That meant I had to interview many refugees with nothing more to go on than name, date of birth, and date of arrival in Djibouti.

Since I was getting little cooperation from the American Charge, I asked him repeatedly to speak to the Djibouti Government (and the French Embassy, since the French controlled many aspects of the Government) for help in obtaining some necessary papers for the refugees (birth and marriage certificates if those events happened in Djibouti, plus exit permits from the country) as well as medical exams. I could not understand why he was so unwilling to act, until I went to the French DCM directly for help. I learned from the French DCM that the UNHCR head and the Ethiopian Ambassador were "very close". The DCM said he suspected that the UNHCR head was passing on information about the refugees in Djibouti to the Ethiopian Embassy. The French DCM turned out to be supportive, and I was able to make some progress in obtaining papers from the Djibouti Government offices. As far as the medical exams were concerned, all the French physicians left the country in August for vacations in France, so I had to appeal to Geneva. The Mission asked the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for help. IOM sent down two doctors and a nurse, so the medical exams were completed.

The two locally-hired assistants proved to be gems. Both were wives of officials; one from the American AID Mission and the other from the French Military Assistance Group. I was reluctant for obvious reasons to use refugees to perform any processing work. The temptations and pressures on refugees to "assist" their friends and family would be too great to assure objectivity. I interviewed without interpreters to prevent shading and coaching. By the time the Immigration and Naturalization Service officer arrived in the first week of September, we had 228 persons ready for interview. We had their medical clearances, their security checks, and if applicable, the verification from the American Red Cross of their stated relationships with persons/companies/institutions in the USA. The latter step was not a pre-requisite for being included in the U.S. resettlement program at the time, but we were encouraged to obtain the data in order to facilitate integration in the USA. All but one person was approved by the INS officer. The one exception seemed to have very close ties in Djibouti and France, and could likely find resettlement opportunities in either. I returned to Geneva after welcoming my replacement and handing over the responsibility for starting the processing for the next group. Eventually about a thousand Ethiopian refugees were resettled out of Djibouti to the USA before the Djibouti Government closed the program in 1983. Sometimes we would become involved in individual cases, but through letters, telegrams, or rarely, a phone call. It was the exception. I was probably guilty more than anyone else because I knew many Ethiopians from my tour in that country and they remembered, if not personally, at least my name through some other people. You will recall that a revolution began in Ethiopia in 1973 and that Emperor Haile Selassie was deposed and murdered a year later. There were tens of thousands of Ethiopian refugees in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Once in a while I would receive a letter from Djibouti, the Sudan, or Somalia asking for assistance since their file seemed to be lost in the bureaucracy. My normal reaction was to alert someone at the UNHCR headquarters to the problem and then follow-up later to make sure the case was back on track. Even before the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980, the U.S.G. could process and admit Ethiopian refugees to the U.S. They were potential beneficiaries of the old Refugee Act of 1952, which included a section designed to offer the Jews in North Africa and the Middle East resettlement opportunities in the U.S. The geographic limits for such assistance included Ethiopia, although the main purpose at the time was for North African Jews.

Q: Morocco?.

BUCHE: Particularly, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya.

Q: And Egypt, yes?

BUCHE: Yes, Egypt had the largest Jewish community in the area. Including Ethiopia in the 1952 Act was one of those quirks of drafting, where the intent was to help one particular ethnic or religious group under extreme pressure and persecution, and for some reason, another group was also included. The Refugee Act of 1980 did not include any geographic limitations, but defined a refugee in accordance with the Refugee Convention of 1951.

Q: In 1982 you went where?

BUCHE: I came to an end of my tour in Geneva in July 1982. I had received an assignment several months earlier to be the DCM in Mogadishu. As Anike and I were beginning to focus on Mogadishu, I got a call from a friend of mine, Nick Platt, who said that he had been nominated as Ambassador to Zambia and would like me to be his DCM. He was a Chinese specialist and had not served in Africa before. I said I would be delighted to go to Lusaka as his DCM, but I had already been assigned to Mogadishu. Nick knew about that and said he would work it out with Ambassador Oakley for me to come to Lusaka and for Ambassador Oakley to choose another DCM. Nick later reported that Bob Oakley had wanted another officer for his DCM, but at the strong recommendation of the Executive Director of the African Bureau, Len Shurtleff, he accepted me after checking out my background and references. When Nick offered Oakley a chance to obtain his preferred choice for DCM, he was delighted. So were Nick, Anike, and I. Looking back, I am so pleased that I did not go to Mogadishu. From a professional point of view, it probably would have been great assignment, but daily living was awful.

Q: It was very, very difficult.

BUCHE: Absolutely terrible, from every thing I heard or read. Mogadishu in the early 1980s was dreadful, but I was a Foreign Service Officer and was prepared to go wherever I was assigned. Besides, my professional "home" was the African Bureau, and I had been out of my home area for seven years in Bonn and Geneva.

We were leaving Geneva after four demanding, but rewarding and enjoyable years. Our children, John and Christina, were happy in their school, Le College du Leman, and had made good progress in their studies. They had many friends and enjoyed the diverse activities offered by the school, particularly the "obligatory" three weeks of skiing at the resort of Crans-Montana. In fact, John and Christina liked the College so much that they wanted to stay as boarders in the Internat, while we were in Africa. We agreed. We knew the owners of the school and also had the assurance from the presence in the area of our dear friends, Art and Doni Stillman, from our Ethiopian days. Their daughter, Alexandra, was one year ahead of John in the same school. In addition, we knew that the school in Lusaka was mediocre at best. Anike also liked living in Geneva. For the first time since Ethiopia, she was able to work in a paying job. She worked in the Mission Security Office with Arthur Hanrahan, mostly in a liaison capacity with the Swiss Police. When I found some free time outside of my long hours at work, I enjoyed singing with a well-respected Geneva group, le Cercle Bach. One of the basic realities of the Foreign Service is that no assignment is permanent. Anike and I were delighted with Geneva, but we knew we would have to move on. Focusing our attention on Lusaka, we were relieved not to be going to Mogadishu. We knew Zambia from our previous assignment to neighboring Malawi. I knew that from a professional point of view, being in Lusaka in 1982, was the place to be. Big changes were taking place in Southern Africa - Namibia, South Africa itself, Angola, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique.

Q: You were a "front-line" country.

BUCHE: Zambia was a front-line country. What this meant in 1982, was not so much a threat of a direct attack against Zambia, but rather that Zambia was in an area where there was so much insecurity and fighting that the country was the victim of cross-border fighting between outside parties. Also the insecurity had negative results for Zambia's economy. President Kaunda sought to bring an end to the fighting and offered Zambia as a venue for discussions between or among the warring parties.

Q: You were there from 1982 to 1984. How did Nick Platt work aambassador? What was his way of operating?

BUCHE: Nick was an excellent manager, and he had wide experience in Asia and in the Department. He came to Lusaka, having read voraciously everything he could about the history of the country as well as the post's reporting over the past several years. He spent considerable time with his predecessor, Frank Wisner. Frank was then serving as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (PDAS) in the Bureau of African Affairs. They were close personal friends, and I think that Frank had something to do with Nick's being nominated to Lusaka. I think Nick was probably looking forward to an ambassadorship in Asia, but there was nothing open at the time. Zambia was an important country for our overall interests and Nick accepted the position.

Nick's style was to let the professionals who knew the area keep him informed or make recommendations to him. If he was satisfied with what they were doing, he let them carry out their tasks without trying to micromanage. Frank Wisner had pulled together a competent group of professionals. As is often the case in the Foreign Service, the new Ambassador comes into a situation where his or her staff had been chosen by the predecessor. I was the only person chosen by Nick. He knew me from past experiences. We had served in Canada together, at different posts, but at the same time. I saw him several times in Geneva. He was the PDAS or the Acting Assistant Secretary with IO (Bureau of International Organizations).

We worked well together. Both of us had multilateral diplomatic experience. I had African experience and contacts in AF; Nick had Asian experience and contacts throughout the Department, as well as in the DOD and CIA. What was happening in Zambia from a bilateral point was not that important strategically to the U.S. Things politically were on an even keel, while economically, the country drifted downward. We had an economic assistance program with an AID Mission. What made Zambia important was its "front-line" status, and Kaunda's policy of seeking solutions to the regional conflicts. There were numerous attempts by Kaunda through emissaries and conferences to bring about peace.

Q: This was during the time of "Constructive Engagement"?

BUCHE: "Constructive Engagement" was the name applied to the policy of Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Chester Crocker toward South Africa. He contended that the USG and others were not getting very far with South Africa by castigating and isolating the leaders or by publicly criticizing the cruelty and inhumanity of apartheid. He maintained that we would be more successful if we made our opposition to apartheid quite clear, but that we also try to find ways of working with the South African Government to improve the domestic situation for the blacks. The policy of speaking constructively with the South African Government also applied to its conduct with its neighbors, particularly in Namibia and Angola where there was active fighting. The Reagan Administration came under very heavy criticism for this policy. Apartheid was so repugnant to the American people that the idea of our Government's trying to work constructively with the South African Government, the enforcer of the policy, appeared wrong. As we know, when President Reagan vetoed legislation to embargo U.S. trade with South Africa, the Congress over-road his refusal (with heavy Republican Party support). I have not served in South Africa, so my judgment about the effect of Constructive Engagement in advancing or retarding the eventual overthrow of apartheid is based on second-hand sources. I concluded that apartheid was becoming so costly and difficult to maintain in the face of embargos and the increasingly effective internal opposition from armed resistance groups, that it was only a matter of time before the system collapsed. I thought that CE would probably prolong the time before the collapse, since the South African Government could count on the U.S.G. (if not the American people) not to help its opponents. We had so many discussions within the Embassy and with outsiders about the pro's and con's of CE. Within, we could openly debate the subject; with others, we stuck to the official line.

From an external point of view, Constructive Engagement was a positive. We and others could talk to South Africans about Southwest Africa (Namibia), Angola, and Mozambique. It was helpful that we could bring the South Africans to the table to try to find some solutions for the conflicts in the region.

Q: Well, let's talk about the states in the region. What role were you playing?

BUCHE: We were playing a facilitative role so that when the Angolan Government or the SWAPO (Southwest African People's Organization, the nationalist group seeking independence) and the South Africans wanted to meet or were strongly encouraged to meet, the U.S. Embassy and the Zambian Government were the hosts for the occasion. This fitted in with President Kaunda's peacemaking vision, and also with our ideas and policy. We jointly hosted about six or seven meetings with various participants. The invitations went out from the United States Government and from the Zambian Government for the Angolans and the South Africans to meet, for the Malawians and the Mozambicans to meet, or for South Africa to meet with SWAPO.

SWAPO had its political headquarters outside of Lusaka. The actual military headquarters and the training camps were distant. Some were within Zambia, but more were inside of Angola. The fighting took place mostly along the border between Southwest Africa and Angola. The fighting was mostly SWAPO against South Africa, but occasionally, UNITA fighters under Jonas Savimbi would team up with their supporters, the South Africans to attack SWAPO. The SWAPO officials near Lusaka were the political leaders. They made up the delegations for the talks with the South Africans.

The situation in Angola was much more complex. In that mixture were the Angolan Government forces and their Cuban allies against the UNITA forces and their supporters the South Africans. The Soviets supplied arms and advice to the Angolan Government and the Cubans. It was an on-going war involving many parties, with clashes occurring throughout the country. Almost as a sideshow, there was the aftermath of the Zimbabwe or the Southern Rhodesian struggle for independence. That had already been settled, but there were still hard feelings and scores to be settled between the two armed independence movements (basically divided on tribal lines). Zambia had supported the losing faction (Joshua Nkomo) in the struggle for independence. Nkomo lost heavily during the fighting for independence and afterwards in the clashes with the victorious forces under Robert Mugabe. Zambia in 1982 was still engaged in a campaign of "let's make up and be friends" with Mugabe.

While the U.S.G. participation in the conferences was coordinated by Washington, the Embassy had the task of working with the Zambian Government on substance and logistics. If U.S.G. and Zambian positions or goals in respect to the other parties were too far apart, we had the task of negotiating a closer convergence of views. Several days before the start of the conference, a contingent would arrive from Washington to participate in the meetings. Chet Crocker led the U.S. Delegation several times; Frank Wisner on one occasion; and Ambassador Platt on several occasions. Embassy staff often served as note-takers for the meetings.

Q: How did we see the Zambian Government and Kenneth Kaunda at thatime. We're talking about 1982 to 1984.

BUCHE: We saw the Zambian Government as entrenched and determined to maintain its one-party monopoly. The Party of Kaunda (the United National Independence Party, UNIP) controlled the levers of power and thus could do practically whatever it wanted. This meant jobs, housing, cars, access to "loans", international travel, and numerous other means for UNIP officials and UNIP-supporters in Government to enrich themselves, family, and friends. There was previously an opposition party, but it was gradually suppressed. Some of the leaders spent time in prison, but they survived. (Unlike the fate of many of the political prisoners in adjacent Malawi under Banda!) There was an uneasy peace in the country, but there was very little political violence. (There was an increasing level of break-ins, thefts, and robberies in the major cities during our posting there. The deteriorating economic conditions were blamed for the rise in crime.) Kaunda was more interested in Zambia's external affairs than in the nitty-gritty of domestic politics. We had the feeling that domestically things were drifting. Copper prices had collapsed after a decade of high demand. Much of the gains from the high copper prices were squandered or stolen. Food production was not keeping up with population growth. There was a recession. Corruption was commonplace. Zambian officials were often absent from their office or duty station. They were engaged in family ceremonies (marriages, baptisms, funerals, commemorations, etc.) or moonlighting in a second job. Public services were often not being performed effectively or at all, whether in the fields of health, education, telecommunications, public works, public security, or agriculture. The infrastructure was slowly crumbling. The leaders of the country seemed to make no effort to rein in the absenteeism, neglect, and theft of supplies. If you wanted medicine, you paid for medicine, although it was supposed to be free. This was something that Kaunda had promised in his first election campaign. It was an extravagantly expensive proposition to promise free medical care for the entire country. You could imagine what that would cost if it were truly carried out. Actually, it was a statement that did not have any meaning, because there were not enough doctors, nurses, or technicians, clinics, medicines, or beds to serve a small fraction of the population. Many countries would donate medical equipment to the Ministry of Health, but once they were in need of repair or recalibration, they had to be abandoned, since there were few technicians in the country. There was a large general hospital in Lusaka that was understaffed or overstaffed, depending on what the department was. People would come from all over the country trying to get medical treatment there. It was a financial and medical albatross, an enormously costly set of buildings that failed in most instances to deliver adequate treatment. We were told by the regional medical officer: Do not use that hospital for any serious illness or accident. If the Embassy nurse or contract doctor cannot treat you, we will evacuate you to Europe, to South Africa, or to Zimbabwe. There were several missionary hospitals in the vicinity of Lusaka, where we could go for minor things. For something serious, we would fly out of the country.

Kaunda had decided that Zambia would maintain an economic embargo against South Africa in protest against apartheid. While such a policy was morally uplifting, it had a terrible effect on Zambia's economy. In so many areas, South Africa had been Zambia's leading trading partner. South Africa manufactured most of the machinery for the mining industry and for much of the other industries in Zambia. Spare parts had to be obtained by circuitous routes to avoid "breaking" the embargo. For example, the mines would buy spare parts from Zaire or Gabon that had been manufactured in South Africa, shipped to those countries, re-labeled, and then shipped to Zambia. The extra shipping and handling costs doubled the price. It was both a ridiculous and dishonest policy. President Kaunda would say, "It hurts us, but we are not going to trade with South Africa. No trade whatsoever with South Africa until they change their policy of apartheid." But there was trade. It was all done in a convoluted and hypocritical manner. I pointed this out many times to my Zambian friends. They knew the score and would only shrug their shoulders and roll their eyes. Vice President Bush visited Zambia in 1982. When we were invited to State House for the official dinner, it was an elegant affair. Starched white linen with candlelight and beautiful silverware! And the wines? All South African wines, but the servers took the labels off. The menu stated "cabernet sauvignon" or "merlot" with the vintage. I asked one of the waiters whether the wines were from South Africa. He smiled and nodded affirmatively. He then brought me the cork. It read Stellenbosch; it was South African. It was similar to what I would find in a local grocery store. The wines would be labeled "Democratic Republic of Zaire" or "Republic of Gabon." The corks told the truth - South Africa!

Kaunda was determined to ship Zambian copper to its worldwide buyers using the Tan-Zam Railroad instead of using the rail links through Zimbabwe and South Africa. He did this because of his determination to maintain a boycott against South Africa (although he was also denying another "Front-Line State and ally, Zimbabwe, potential revenue from the transshipments. The Tan-Zam Railroad was built by the Chinese as a spectacular gesture to gain a political/economic foothold in East and Southern Africa. The RR turned out to be a high-cost operation, although the Chinese paid for most of the construction and the original rolling stock. What caused the original estimates for operations to go up was the unanticipated high costs of maintenance for the line, as well as the locomotives and railcars. The project was put together too quickly, and there were numerous instances of faulty engineering. The Chinese did not have experience in working with African soils, and so there were problems in drainage and soil expansion and contraction. There were also faulty assumptions on the ability of the locals to maintain the right of way and the rolling stock. Additionally, the Chinese greatly underestimated the number of accidents, which would occur because of negligence, drunkenness, or sheer ignorance. The net result was that shipping rates had to be increased. Also there were so many breakdowns of rolling stock, derailments, and delays for track repairs that shipments were inevitably late in arriving at the port of Dar Es Salaam. The port itself was often blocked because the freighter ships would have to await the arrival of the delayed trains. Similar problems existed in shipping heavy machinery to the Zambian mines. Much of the machinery was manufactured in South Africa, but was shipped to third countries before being off-loaded at Dar Es Salaam.

It was clear to any impartial observer that Zambia's economy was slowly falling apart. The domestic political situation was also deteriorating. We were reporting to Washington that an economic collapse was not imminent, but was only a few years away unless fundamental changes were made. We also did not believe Kaunda would be capable of instituting the changes or of maintaining the discipline needed to implement them, if they were imposed from outside by the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund.

Washington's chief interest in Kaunda was his external role in South African geopolitics. He was very active on several fronts and had enough clout and respect to influence policies and events. Washington had reservations about some of his actions in the Southern African context, but on the whole, regarded him positively. Kaunda often rankled Washington with his sharp criticism of the Reagan Administration's policy toward South Africa. Nevertheless, even on South Africa, Kaunda was regarded as a potentially helpful interlocutor. On Angola and Namibia he was a crucial partner for us. Washington was keenly interested in knowing about the internal threats to Kaunda, namely what were the chances of a successful coup d'etat against him. This was a constant worry in Africa. The local CIA station focused on the coup possibilities, both from its own sources, as well as from an official liaison with the Zambian intelligence agencies. The unwavering evaluation submitted to Washington was that Kaunda was in little danger of being deposed in a coup. The Embassy reported on the broader domestic political scene. Our judgment was that internal political instability would worsen, in large part because of the failing economy, but that for the next several years, Kaunda would most probably remain in power. Washington was basically of the same opinion about Kaunda's staying power and potential helpfulness, and included him as an important player in the calculus about our policy designs in Southern Africa. In the 1980s, Zambia was quite important to the United States for its geopolitical position.

Q: Although it wasn't a front-line state - or maybe it was calleone -

BUCHE: It was called one.

Q: I know, but I was thinking about Tanzania. This was still durinthe Nyerere period. What were your observations of Tanzania?

BUCHE: Well, my observations of Tanzania were a continuation of the way I looked at the Tanzanian Government when I was in Malawi from 1970-1972. I saw that it was the recipient of an enormous amount of foreign aid that was not doing very much to develop the country. When I saw Tanzania from the optic of Zambia, which had close relations with Tanzania, I did not change my opinion. Tanzania was a favored country of the Scandinavians, the Dutch, and to some extent, the US. The President, Julius Nyerere, was a reasonable leader. He had been freely elected and ran the country with some regard for human rights. Nyerere was clever at contrasting his government with the surrounding dictatorships. He was a disaster as a manager and administrator, but his charm and earnestness strengthened the belief by the big donors that he was personally honest and did not benefit personally from the corruption around him. He did live relatively modestly as a President. His weakness was that he tolerated dishonesty in his officials. Some donors rationalized or made excuses when they should have taken a firm line when audits showed missing cash and assets from foreign aid projects. The donors usually were willing to continue the projects while awaiting to see what the President would do about his cabinet ministers and other high-ranking officials suspected of stealing funds. Nyerere pleaded for patience and magnanimity towards his officials, promising that they would be disciplined. Some did lose their government jobs, but they had stolen enough to set themselves up in private business. Theft and malfeasance were probably not the main cause for the high level of failure of most of the assistance projects. Many were badly designed and others were carried out poorly. It took years before the supporters and champions of Nyerere and socialist Tanzania finally recognized what was so apparent to objective observers on the ground. I had a macro view from Malawi and Zambia what was happening in Tanzania through Embassy reporting from Dar Es Salaam, UN and World Bank reports, plus discussions with Europeans and Americans who were involved in the field in Tanzania.

What Ambassador Platt and I learned from the Chinese Ambassador in Zambia about the Chinese assistance program in Tanzania was astounding. For political purposes, the Chinese were willing to tolerate much higher levels of theft, mismanagement, and incompetence than the Europeans and Americans. How Nick and I developed close relations with the Chinese to be told such confidential information is a fascinating vignette. We had good and friendly relations with the Chinese Embassy in Zambia, but we were not particularly close and did not discuss sensitive subjects. The Chinese had by far the largest embassy in Lusaka. They also had an enormous aid program. They were very interested in what the Soviets were doing in country as well as in the entire region. The Chinese thought that the CIA had some penetrating insights on what the Soviets were doing. This was a period of increased Soviet-Chinese tensions and suspicions. The Soviets were not that very active in Zambia, as far as we could determine. They wereactive, however in Tanzania, Angola, and Zimbabwe. The Chinese had a fixation on the Soviets. They were eager to learn as much as they could about their rival Communist power. There were discussions in Beijing and Washington about the proposal for an informal exchange of information on matters of mutual interest to our two governments. Washington agreed to allow Ambassador Platt to conduct an exchange of intelligence information on the Soviets with the Chinese.

The Chinese Ambassador was a very senior African hand. He had come to Lusaka after serving four or five years as Ambassador in Tanzania. Given Ambassador Platt's Chinese connections, it was clear that Lusaka was an ideal place for such an exchange to be tried. The ground-rules were simple. Each side would consist of Ambassador, DCM, and their spouses. We would meet for dinner on a monthly basis, alternating between the residences of the American and the Chinese Ambassadors. We received our instructions from Washington a day before the dinner. We were told what we could pass on to the Chinese and were given some questions to ask the Chinese. We tried to maintain an air of informality in the exchange by mixing social chitchat with confidential information. The meals at our residence were typically "American" at the request of the Chinese. We had fried chicken, hamburgers, barbequed spareribs, hot dogs, potato salad, and other American classics. The Chinese really seemed to appreciate what Sheila Platt served.

When we ate at the Chinese residence, it was quite a treat. I believe each time we must have had thirteen courses of fabulous food, plus many rounds of a potent Chinese drink. It was quite open and informal. By the end of the meal, we had mentioned to them everything that was in our briefing paper about what Washington wanted the Chinese to know about the Soviets in Southern Africa. The Chinese DCM wrote it all down on little cards as he was eating or drinking. When the Chinese Ambassador spoke about the Soviets, I would jot down key words. The Chinese told us very little that we did not already know about the Soviets. His comments, however, about the trials and tribulations of running a large economic assistance program for Tanzania and Zambia were detailed and fascinating. He confirmed with his stories and examples what we had picked up from various other diplomatic and expatriate observers.

Although we were interested in what he had to say, at times we were almost overwhelmed by the number of stories chronicling the wrong-doing and incompetence of some of the local officials and employees of the railroad. I came to the realization that Nick and I provided a therapeutic occasion for the Ambassador to get rid of some of his accumulated frustrations by sharing his problems with us. What did it all mean that such and such a district official was stealing money or that he was going out with someone else's wife, or that he drank excessively? I would jot down the information. What did we do with the information? The following day, we would go over it with our local CIA station chief, as well as with the political counselor, in case they were interested. They seldom were, so we filed it in the safe that held our Embassy biographic files.

Q: This often happens. Zaire - did that raise any particulainterest?

BUCHE: There were bad feelings in Zambia against Zaire. What really irked the Zambians was that the conduct of Zaireans in Zambia. Bands of soldiers or armed civilians would cross the border and do all sorts of nasty things in Zambia. This would involve stealing cars, burglarizing homes and shops, getting drunk, or going on a shooting rampage. The bands would return to Zaire with impunity. Seldom were the individuals arrested or disciplined. If a stolen car were identified, seldom would the rightful owner get it back. It was often like the era of the Wild West along the border. Kaunda and other Zambian official believed that Mobutu was uninterested in taking steps to prevent such cross-border thuggery. It was widely known that Kaunda did not like or trust Mobutu.

Q: I think we've pretty well covered Zambia, the peace process, the contacts with the neighbors and all, and so why don't we move to 1984, when you came back to Washington to the Bureau of Refugee Affairs?

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It is the 18th of February, 2000. John, 1984 you were with thBureau for Refugee Affairs?

BUCHE: It was called the Bureau for Refugee Programs. It was known by its abbreviation of RP. RP was a Bureau, but it had a Director and not an Assistant Secretary as its head. (The Director, however, received the equivalent salary of an Assistant Secretary.) It was one of these bureaucratic nuances that meant something within the organization, but had little meaning outside. Over the Bureau was the Refugee Coordinator (S/R). The Coordinator had the rank of an Under Secretary. The Refugee Act of 1980 set up the formal structure. Previously, the Bureau for Human Rights (established during the Carter Administration) was responsible for refugee affairs. Under the Clinton Administration, there was a reorganization of the refugee structure within the State Department. RP became the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) with an Assistant Secretary. The position of Refugee Coordinator was abolished. A new position was established, the Under Secretary for Global Affairs (G). PRM and three other Bureaus reported to G.

Q: You started in 1984. You were there till when?

BUCHE: To 1987.

Q: Let's talk about this bureaucratic entity. When you came there - -and then we'll talk about what you were doing - what were its responsibilities?BUCHE: It was set up in response to needs that reached crisis proportions after the fall of Saigon and the massive outflow of refugees from Southeast Asia (the "Boat People"). The Department, the White House, the Congress, and especially the non-governmental organizations, the NGOs, realized by 1976 that a new structure was needed in the Department of State to deal effectively with the worldwide refugee crisis. The small office that already existed in the Department had been set up in the 1950s to focus largely upon Eastern European refugees. The refugee crises of the mid-1970s were worldwide, involving African, Middle Eastern, Latin American, Eastern European, Soviet, and Southeast Asian refugees. Within the Department of State, the geographic bureaus were trying to handle the refugee problems in their regions. The Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services were also trying to cope with inadequate bureaucratic structures, mandates, and funding. It was possible for a while, but eventually the sheer numbers of refugees began to overwhelm the government bureaucracy. Congress in 1980 passed the Refugee Act, which set up the Office of the Refugee Coordinator and a Bureau of Refugee Programs. In 1984, the Refugee Coordinator was Jonathan Moore. He was associated with the Kennedies. I had heard that Senator Kennedy lobbied hard in favor of Jonathan's appointment by President Reagan. What I came back to was a Bureau that was beginning to function effectively. RP had a Director, Jim Purcell, and three Deputy Assistant Secretaries (DASs). There were offices to perform the following functions: accounting and finance; emergency response; resettlement, training and monitoring; plus geographic offices. RP was unlike other bureaus in State because of the nature of its work and the fact that it handled big sums of program money. At the time, it was around eight hundred million dollars, which meant that there had to be auditors and accountants. Congress determined that the budget for RP would be separate from the State Department's or that of the Agency for International Development (AID). The separate budget was a big plus for RP. There were frequent fights between the Administration and Congress on issues that sometimes led to cutting of programs or pressures to do this or that. Since RP had its own budget, it was isolated from these maneuvers.

Q: So if there was going to be a cut in the budget, it had to be essentially done by Congress rather than the Department of State saying, everybody takes a 10 percent cut.

BUCHE: The level of RP's budget was ultimately in the hands of Congress, not the Department of State. How RP's budget level was determined was, of course, through an initial proposal from the Administration (through the Office of Management and Budget, OMB) and a series of formal and informal consultations between the Judiciary Committee Chairmen (and the Minority Heads), the Secretary of State, and the Attorney General (or designated representatives.) Among the most important items to determine was the number of refugees to be admitted into the U.S. for the following fiscal year. The consultation practice was written into the 1980 Refugee Law. There was heavy consultation among the staffs in setting the numbers of refugees and the overall amounts of dollars. The consultations were held throughout the year, and involved State, HHS, Justice (INS), the NSC, the NGOs, and the various Congressional staffers. By the time the actual formal consultations took place, refugee numbers and dollar amounts had already been worked out. I recall that Senator Kennedy and his staff were active participants. The Senator was Chairman of the Sub-Committee, which had oversight for refugee admissions and other refugee-related issues.

Q: Senator Edward Kennedy, from Massachusetts?

BUCHE: Yes, his staff members very often would talk to us, and the Senator himself would phone the Director. They would go over some problems and unresolved issues. There was also interest in the House. Both the Senate and the House were really interested in refugee issues.

Q: Who was the director when you started?

BUCHE: It was Jim Purcell. He was there my entire three years. He had come from OMB to RP as the DAS responsible for budgets and finances. He was made Director about a year before I arrived. One of the main reasons he was brought in originally was to put a system into place to manage the millions of dollars the Bureau was giving to international organizations and NGOs to provide care, maintenance, protection, and transport for refugees. When RP was created, there was only a rudimentary system in place to manage the disbursement and tracking of large sums of money to numerous organizations. There were a dozen officers who were deeply concerned about refugees and who proposed or took actions to help them. Sometimes their actions were not properly coordinated or cost more than was anticipated. Program officers were shoveling so much money out the door for refugee emergencies all over Southeast Asia that they nearly overspent the budget. It was nearly impossible to keep an accurate count of how much money had been obligated. This eventually led to some serious problems, not only with our auditors, but with Congress. There was a desperate need for someone to bring financial discipline into the process. Jim Purcell brought a financial management background to the Bureau. He did such an outstanding job as the DAS for financial management that he was promoted to head RP.

Q: What piece of the action did you have?

BUCHE: I was one of the few officers who had some refugee experience before coming into the Bureau. I had been in the Refugee Section at our Mission at Geneva. I also had experience in Europe with refugees. I was put in charge of an office that embraced the Western Hemisphere, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe/Soviet Union. The other geographic offices were Africa and Asia. The refugee programs for Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union were running very well because of the Geneva Mission. The Mission had years of experience in the area, so I did not have to devote much time in Washington to this area. I knew the strengths of the Mission, and so deferred to their judgments and recommendations. The Middle Eastern part of my portfolio was problematic. Fortunately, my deputy, Judy Chavchavadze, knew the issues quite well and had excellent contacts to turn to when necessary. The organization with which we dealt on refugee problems in the Middle East was not the UNHCR, but UNRWA - United Nations Relief and Works Administration. The organization had responsibilities for caring for the Palestinian refugees.

This was an organization that was traditionally underfunded. We and the European countries, plus Japan, Australia, and Canada basically supported the organization. Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt provided land for UNRWA to set up camps for the Palestinians. UNRWA contributed funds for the education and health care contributed by the four host states. The other Arab states did not do very much to assist UNRWA financially. We would ask Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and some of the other wealthy Arab states to contribute more toward UNRWA, but they seldom responded by more than a token amount.

Q: Why was this?

BUCHE: Well, many explanations. The Saudis said that they had no responsibility for Palestinian refugees. The answer was for the Israelis to allow the refugees to return home. The Saudis contended that money given to UNRWA, which was feeding, educating, housing, and providing medical services to the refugees outside of Israel, was just taking the pressure off of Israel to allow the refugees to return. Those attitudes were generally shared by the other Arab governments. To keep some of the camps from having to close or school kids being sent home early because there was no more money, we and the usual donors would usually come up with the extra five or seven million dollars. The countries that hosted the Palestinians said that they were not going to contribute extra cash to UNRWA because they were already out of pocket from providing educational and health facilities to the refugees. They did have some un-reimbursed expenses, but UNRWA covered most of the costs of the Palestinians in the camps. In addition to funding shortages, there were other problems. I spent much time writing talking points for our embassies to use with the host governments on funding issues or other problems having to do with UNRWA. That task became almost routine.

Q: I'm sure it did.

BUCHE: Judy and I worked closely with the Near Eastern Bureau, NEA,on UNRWA and Palestinian refugee issues.

Q: Did you find the NEA people would cringe and try to avoid you in the halls when you came around and asked their governments for money for UNRWA?

BUCHE: Well, they would say, "You're not going to get any money from our governments, but we'll sign off on your cable if you're going to ask for help from Western Europe. We would be delighted if you would ask them." If I said I would like for our Ambassador to approach the Saudis, they would sign off, but with the rejoinder that a demarche to the Saudis at the mere ambassadorial level was not going to work. Sometimes NEA would alert me to the travel of the Secretary or Deputy Secretary in the area and ask for talking points to include in his briefing book. They were realistic and helpful, since they wanted peace in the camps.

We often had to speak with Congress about funding for UNRWA. The general feeling on the Hill about UNRWA was negative. The USG was paying about a quarter of the costs. The situation of the Palestinian refugees looked intractable. It seemed that we would be required to fund the situation far, far into the future. Also Congress was not sure how the Israelis felt about UNRWA, but the lawmakers certainly knew how the Palestinians felt about Israel. The net result was that we had a difficult time convincing Congress to appropriate enough funds for UNRWA. Congress was generous in funding assistance to refugees elsewhere in the world, but often balked at providing money for the Palestinians. I recall one instance when the Senate Appropriations Committee voted to cut back by a significant amount the Administration's request for UNRWA. The Secretary of State went to the Committee and appealed for the full amount, but was unsuccessful in changing the decision. We were really desperate, since we knew that our shortfall in funding UNRWA would produce a ripple effect on other donors, and they, too, would cut back. UNRWA would have to retrench dramatically. The Israeli Prime Minister was visiting Washington at the time. When the NEA Assistant Secretary met with him, he asked the Israeli Prime Minister to indicate to Congress that Israel supported the restoration of the funding cut. The Israeli Prime Minister agreed to do so since the last thing the Israelis wanted was more unrest in the refugee camps. He told the Assistant Secretary he would have a few words with his friends. He was true to his word and within days, word came back to the Department that the funding would be restored. What the Secretary, the NEA Assistant Secretary, and RP's Jim Purcell had failed to achieve, the Israeli PM succeeded with a few words to "his friends"! I realized then the extent of the power in Congress of the "Jewish lobby".

Q: This was when, about 1985?

BUCHE: 1985. We learned from the experience. We decided to work more closely with the Israeli Embassy on UNRWA funding issues with Congress. We shared with them our budget requests and counted on them to pass the word to their friends in Congress that Israel looked favorably on USG financial support for UNRWA. We had no more trouble from Congress about UNRWA funding cuts while I was with RP (through 1987).

Q: What other things were you dealing with?

BUCHE: I have spoken about two of the three parts of my portfolio, Eastern Europe/Soviet Union and the Middle East. The Latin American portfolio was the real problem area for me. I spent almost 60 percent of my time on the Latin American side. I should be more specific - Central America. It was during the Reagan Presidency, so we were in the era of the Contras and Ollie North. It was also the time of the Salvadoran civil war, the fighting in Guatemala, and the upheavals in Haiti. There were refugee flows in all directions. The wars and the refugees had a heavy impact on the American public and our foreign policy. There were ongoing debates in Congress and in the media about the ways refugees were being cared for and protected, as well as which national or ideological groups were recognized by the US as refugees eligible for resettlement. How the USG regarded refugee groups was influenced by both political and humanitarian considerations. The Department's Bureau of American Republics (ARA) under Assistant Secretary Elliot Abrams was the focal point for the Administration's Central American strategy. ARA made distinctions about the ideologies of the refugees and thus favored some and were critical of others. Accordingly, ARA was ambivalent about the non-ideological, neutral approach of the UNHCR, the ICRC, and some of the NGOs toward the refugees. RP and ARA were frequently at logger-heads. Congress was more inclined to support RP's approach, while the White House backed ARA.

Q: Well, ARA as an institution had not really been dealing witrefugees before, had it?

BUCHE: No, at least not as a key aspect of our foreign policy. Thus many of the officials in ARA viewed refugees through the political optic. They were quite concerned about the Salvadoran refugees who were fleeing their country's civil war to seek asylum in Costa Rica and Honduras. ARA looked upon these groups with suspicion, since they were sympathetic to the rebels. ARA feared that the Salvadoran refugee camps in the area of Colomocagua just inside Honduras were serving as rest and recuperation areas for the guerrillas fighting the USG-backed Salvadoran forces.

Q: You're talking about rebels going to the refugee camps, recuperating, and then going back and doing the fighting, which happened in Cambodia - well, it happens all over the world.

BUCHE: That was the accusation. The High Commissioner for Refugees, which had inherited de facto camps just over the border from Salvador in Honduras wanted to move these camps deeper into Honduras in conformity with policy of moving refugees away from contentious borders. The refugees would be safer because there was hot pursuit at times by the Salvadoran army into the refugee camps and shoot-outs. At other times there were clear cases of rebels getting first aid, food, and rest in the camps. The High Commissioner approached us and asked that the US Government lean on the Honduran Government to make land available and for us to contribute to building the new camps. ARA supported this proposal. Honduras offered some land, but it was not at all suitable for refugee camps. So instead of going back to the Honduran Government and asking for more suitable land, ARA returned to the complaining mode, blaming the UNHCR for not moving the camps and for not controlling access better.

A consultant to RP, Bob Gersony, completed a field study of the Colomocagua camps several months after the first offer of land, and confirmed what we had expected: the Salvadoran rebels were indeed using the camps for R and R. On the basis of Gersony's report and other intelligence sources, ARA again took up the issue about approaching the Honduran Government for suitable land to be made available some distance from the border. Gersony also brought the CIA and the DOD into the camp-relocation issue, so when ARA began to re-think its position about asking the Honduran Government for a new offer of land, the two agencies lent support. Both agencies saw that moving the camps to the new area would benefit their strategy. The UNHCR was delighted since the new camp would be in compliance with UNHCR norms (a minimum of 25 kilometers from the border). That meant better protection for the refugees from the frequent gunfire between rebels and Salvadoran soldiers. The rebels were probably unhappy since they lost a convenient R and R area. The Hondurans benefitted handsomely because the rent paid by the UNHCR for the land was relatively generous. The Honduran Government also agreed to patrol the perimeter of the refugee camp so that the Salvadoran army would not enter in pursuit of rebels and shoot up the refugees and to prevent the guerrillas from using it for an R and R spot. The DOD expanded its military assistance program to offer training to the Honduran military in connection with the patrols.

My office had the reverse problem with the ad hoc camp for the Nicaraguan refugees on the border between Honduras and Nicaragua in the area called the Meskito Coast. The reason was that the Contras were using that camp for R and R. ARA did not want that camp moved at all. Of course, the UNHCR insisted that it be moved for the safety of the refugees and in keeping with the usual norms regarding minimum distances. ARA really had no rational argument against moving the camp, so it asked the Honduran Government to stall on making land available elsewhere.

The UNHCR was not dissuaded by the tactics of ARA. As an organization with solid credibility in the US, the UNHCR could mount an effective campaign to support its principles. For decades, the US was the principal donor and provided strong diplomatic support to the UNHCR as part of our anti-Communist strategy. We were its largest donor and had an informal arrangement that the Deputy High Commissioner would be an American. The UNHCR informally and quietly made its case about moving the Honduran camp to the U.S. Congress and the American media. Soon the White House became involved with ARA on the other side.

Q: This was Ollie North still?

BUCHE: Ollie North played a leading role. He threatened our Bureau and the UNHCR with all sorts of things. My boss, the DAS for Refugee Assistance, Gene Dewey, took on Ollie's challenge. Gene was a political appointee of the Reagan Administration and brought impressive credentials to the job. (He was a West Point graduate, a retired Army Colonel with an outstanding record as a combat helicopter pilot in Vietnam, and as a coordinator for relief operations in Biafra.) Gene was not bluffed by Ollie North's military exploits or his position on the National Security Council. Gene had logic, precedent, and strong political support on his side. Ollie huffed and puffed, but he could not blow the UNHCR house down. The UNHCR was able to work out an arrangement with the Honduran Government to move the camp. There were internal security reasons the Honduran Government wanted the camp to be moved. The Honduran Government was not getting along with the Meskito Indians. The Government did not want a refugee camp in the midst of the area inhabited by the Meskitos. There was concern that with the Contras moving back and forth and the Nicaraguan Army in pursuit there would be too many opportunities for the Meskitos to obtain weapons. So when the UNHCR requested land elsewhere, the Government decided in its own interest to comply. I was just delighted when the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan camps were moved.

My tour as Office Director for ENA was coming to an end about the time Gene Dewey was planning to depart the Bureau to become the Deputy High Commissioner for the UNHCR. The USG had decided to support Jean-Pierre Hocke, the Director of Operations at the International Committee of the Red Cross, for the soon-to-be-vacant position of High Commissioner. Hocke was chosen by the UN Secretary General for the job. Hocke then chose Gene to be his deputy. They had worked together in Biafra under difficult and dangerous conditions and had become good personal and professional friends. With Gene's departure, Jim Purcell asked me to serve as an interim Deputy Assistant Secretary of State (DAS). My responsibilities were to coordinate worldwide assistance to refugees. The two other DAS's had responsibilities for Management and Finances (Bob Funseth) and for Resettlement of Refugees in the USA (Richard English). After I had served in the job for four or five months, Jim told me he had submitted my name to become officially the Assistance DAS. I was pleased at the honor. After a month, Jim was summoned to the Director General's Office and informed that because the Department had lost its discrimination suit in Federal Court (alleging that women were systematically prevented from advancing proportionate to their numbers), my promotion to the DAS position was denied. He was given a list of seven women and told to choose one to fill the DAS slot for Refugee Assistance. I was certainly disappointed, but I considered the Director General's decision in context, so I knew that I had not been rejected because of my performance or potential.

Within a few weeks, I left the DAS job and became the Executive Assistant to the Refugee Coordinator, Jonathan Moore. This was a position created for me to help bridge the gap until I could move into my next job. Basically, I did special, short-term jobs for both the Coordinator and for Jim Purcell. The most interesting task was to sort out some cases of fraud in the refugee processing office in Khartoum, Sudan.

When our Refugee Coordinator in Khartoum, Frank Moss, cabled RP in February 1987, that he had discovered evidence of fraud in several cases of Ethiopian refugees seeking resettlement in the US, Jim Purcell and Bob Funseth asked me to fly to Khartoum to determine the full extent of the fraud and, if possible, to identify the perpetrators. (The Processing Office was run not by the Embassy, but by a Non-Governmental Organization under contract to RP.) They counted on my experience in the area and my knowledge of Amharic to enable me to resolve the problem. I departed within a few days. As I quickly learned, the lax security measures in the Processing Office enabled most of the Ethiopian workers to have access to the files. One, two, or more of the Ethiopian workers took advantage of the free access to alter the files to benefit their friends, relatives, or bribe payers. We undertook a thorough examination of each of the nearly 1,000 files. Fortunately, there was a master ledger that was kept locked in the Director's safe and only he and his assistant had access to it. This document was our Rosetta Stone. While the ledger contained considerably less information each person than the individual refugee files, we could crosscheck data to see where there were discrepancies. The essence of the fraud was twofold: to help some people jump the queue by a year or two or to give new identities to people who had been initially rejected as not being eligible for the program, i.e. Ethiopians who were resident in the Sudan and who wanted to go to the US. After several weeks, we were able to say with great assurance that less than a dozen files had been altered. Of these, only four refugees had traveled to the US. With these four, it turned out they would have been eligible for resettlement, but they jumped the queue. The others were still in Khartoum waiting to depart. I interviewed all the workers several times. On the basis of family or close social relationships between the persons we pinpointed as having benefitted from the altered records and the workers who had access to the files, I concluded that three of the Ethiopian workers were most likely the actual perpetrators or, at a minimum, had knowledge of the fraud. Since we did not have absolute proof, we did not turn their names over to the Sudan authorities, but allowed them to resign.

I was so pleased to leave Khartoum and return to Washington after three months. The mission itself was arduous, but the harsh living conditions in Khartoum (security concerns, heat, sandstorms, lack of amenities, an anti-American atmosphere, and other negatives) made living there particularly onerous. The kindness and generosity of Frank and Kathy Moss provided a welcome relief from the rigors of the environment. One month after I returned home, I was shocked to read that the small hotel in Khartoum, where I had stayed, was blown up by terrorists with heavy loss of life. A week later, one of the Americans at the Embassy was killed. I had only several more weeks in RP before moving to my next assignment.

Q: Well, then when you left in 1987, where did you go?

BUCHE: I went to the Bureau for International Organizations (IO).

Q: And you were there from 1987 to -

BUCHE: To 1989.

Q: What were you doing in lO?

BUCHE: I saw a notice that an office directorship was coming open in the summer for the technical agencies of the UN, and I thought this would be very interesting. The technical agencies, the Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the International Labor Organization (ILO), and others.

Q: Post and Telegraph?

BUCHE: Yes, but the name of the organization is the Universal Postal Union (UPU). It is the oldest existing international organization, and has its headquarters in Bern, Switzerland. There was also the International Civil Aviation Organization in Montreal.

Q: Yes, ICAO.

BUCHE: ICAO. Also in the portfolio of the office were the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in London, and the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in Madrid. There were also two UN organizations in Nairobi dealing with the environment and with housing. I thought working with UN technical organizations would be fascinating. I looked forward to working with officials in the UN system and in our own Government on a wide-range of issues. I realized that there were technical issues that we would be involved in, but I was assured the technical aspects would be primarily handled by the Departments of Commerce, Labor, HHS (Health and Human Services), Transport, Energy, the Postal Service, the Coast Guard, and others. The problems I would be dealing with were said to be financial and political. I knew two of the officers in lO/T, and was quite impressed during the job interview with the supervising DAS, Sandy Vogelgesang. So I bid for the job, and was accepted. I began work as the Office Director in the Office of the UN Technical Agencies (lO/T) in August 1987. I was told during the interview that a new element of the job would include an international response to AIDS.

Q: AIDS being the medical problem of Acquired ImmunodeficiencSyndrome.

BUCHE: Yes. I was told I would be working with the CDC, the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, as well as with the WHO on the AIDS issue.

I began my work in IO/T with great enthusiasm. Gradually I realized there were some negative aspects of the job that I had not anticipated, namely the caliber of my staff. In the staffing pattern, there were eight slots for officers (in addition to my slot) and three for support staff. Of the officer positions under me, four were reserved for the Civil Service and four for the Foreign Service. The Civil Service incumbents were first class; the Foreign Service incumbents were not. In fact, the fourth FS slot (for environmental issues) was not even filled. My predecessor planned to retire after completing his tour of duty with IO/T in the summer of 1987, so I discovered he had made no effort to recruit the "best and the brightest" FSO's available to fill the jobs when the incumbents rotated out in that summer. He basically left the task to Central Personnel.

I knew before seeking the job in IO that the Bureau did not have a good reputation in the Department because it was headed by Alan Keyes, a Reagan appointee well known for his antipathy toward the UN. I had heard rumors that Keyes was on the way out because Secretary George Shultz found working with him was difficult. I anticipated a few months under Keyes and then a new Assistant Secretary. What I had not anticipated in considering the job was the extent of the financial damage inflicted on the UN technical agencies because of the severe cut back in contributions from the United States as recommended by Keyes and enacted by Congress. A third surprise for me was the large amount of time I (and others in the Bureau) had to spend to counter any progress or advances within the UN system by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Our anti-PLO policy found practically no support from our traditional allies. It was seen as futile and crafted largely for domestic purposes. We were constantly drafting instruction cables to our delegates at UN meetings telling them how to try to thwart the PLO's efforts to gain observer status or the right to speak.

Q: That was something of a non-starter. I mean, there's nowhere tgo with that.

BUCHE: Well, we tried. Our delegations stood up and threatened to leave the organization or cut off our funding if the PLO achieved any advance in its status.

Q: What was your impression of Alan Keyes. I keep seeing him referred to as a former diplomat, and the people I've talked to are rather dismissive of him for his time in the State Department. He was seen as just another political appointee.

BUCHE: He was a typical political appointee, in that he brought a strong personal ideology to the job. I do not know about the relations between Reagan's first Secretary of State and Keyes.

Q: Haig?

BUCHE: Yes, Haig. I do know that Shultz and Keyes did not get along, at least during the two months I served under him. The talk in IO was that Shultz did not read Keyes' memos and pretty much ignored him. The other top officials take their cues from the Secretary, so Alan was isolated within the Department. He had no choice but to resign. What exactly precipitated the problem between Shultz and Keyes, I do not know. I guess it was basically Keyes' enmity toward the UN. This had to be unacceptable to the Secretary since some of our foreign policy goals depended on the UN for success. Keyes was the force behind the change in long-standing U.S. policy regarding the payment of our dues to the various United Nations organizations. What he proposed and sold to the White House was the scheme to skip a year of paying our dues. Normally Congress would approve the budget for the Department sometime between late September and December for the fiscal year, which began on October 1. The Department would the pay the UN early in January at the beginning of the UN's fiscal year, which was concurrent with the calendar year. The UN regulations encouraged member states to pay in full early in the year or at a minimum, make a partial payment and indicate when and how much for the subsequent payments. Technically, a member state could wait until the end of the calendar year to pay without being considered in arrears. Mostly the small states were guilty of this practice of late-paying. Keyes argued effectively that the US could save an entire year's contribution (over $500 million) by delaying our payments at the beginning of the calendar year and making our contribution in late December. Since we were the heaviest contributor (usually around a quarter of the budgets), by delaying our contribution to the very end of the year, we caused a severe cash-flow problem for many of the UN organizations, which had small cash reserves. What made the financial problems even worse for the organizations was the growing political fight between the Administration and Congress over Central America, which delayed the appropriation process for the Department. Thus our payments to the UN were not made in late December, but rather in late January or February. This practice instigated by Alan Keyes was the beginning of our UN dues deficit policy.

Another practice pushed by Keyes (and readily supported by the Reagan White House) was setting a high price for "in-kind" contributions for the UN peacekeeping operations and using these inflated figures to offset our assessed payments. The USG (and other countries with modern military air capabilities) often responded to requests from the UN for air transport of supplies or soldiers for peacekeeping operations. The USG would carry out the assigned missions and months later submit an invoice to the UN charging an inflated price for the services performed. When the services were requested (usually in a crisis situation), there was seldom a fixed price agreed to by the member states. The underlying assumption was that the UN was the organization created and supported by the member states and that member states, on a voluntary basis, would carry out requests by the UN at a fair and reasonable cost. This was particularly the case with the five Permanent Members of the Security Council, since no UN peacekeeping operation could be carried out if any one of the Perm Five objected. Our practice of inflating the charge for services was heavily criticized by the UN, as well as by other member states, in particular by our NATO allies. Our practice was seen as underhanded and unbecoming of a great power. Our practice brought not only a degree of tawdriness in our dealings with the UN, but it weakened the peacekeeping operations by making available less cash than required.

Keyes was praised by the conservatives in the US and the anti-UN crowd. His antipathy toward the UN caused serious problems for the United States with that organization long after he left the Department of State. There was rejoicing in IO (and probably in the Secretary's suite) when Keyes resigned. Reagan's next appointee to the job was more subtle than Keyes, but he was also no friend of the UN.

Q: Who was that?

BUCHE: Rich Williamson. He was a lawyer from Chicago. He had previously served a few years as Ambassador (a political appointee of Reagan) at the US Mission to the UN in Vienna. He left that job to become legal counsel to a corporation which soon was bought out. Williamson profited handsomely from the buyout. He had millions in his pocket and wanted to do something in Washington toward the end of the Reagan Administration. He accepted the job as Assistant Secretary for IO. He wanted to cut back our traditional contribution of 25% of the UN budgets. He also wanted to downsize many of the UN specialized agencies. He found support at the White House and on the Hill. There was little support in the Department of State for reducing our contributions to the UN or for UN cutbacks. There was some strong opposition to the suggestion in the other Departments which had dealings with various UN agencies, for example: the Department of Labor and the ILO; HHS and the WHO, the Department of Energy and the IAEA; and the Department of Commerce and the ITU.

Q: Was he politically powerful enough, so that the upper branches othe Department of State were not saying, "Cut out this nonsense?"

BUCHE: He was not that powerful in himself, but there were people in Congress, the NSC, and the White House who were vibrating on the same resonance. It was the UN he was trying to downsize - that was something that the Reagan White House was not going to oppose. He was preaching to the choir. There was another political appointee in IO; she was a DAS. She was stridently anti-UN and was a holdover from the Keyes' era. She certainly pushed the ideas within her circles. Most of the career officials in IO thought that Williamson's ideas were not good policy. Secretary Shultz had other things on his mind, and did not personally become involved until late in the game. The issue which galvanized Shultz to take a position was an action memo in which Williamson asked the Secretary to approve a process in which the US would unilaterally reduce its contribution level to the UN Secretariat and other UN specialized agencies to a maximum of 20% (from the current 25%). Shultz rejected the request. He also wrote on the margins of the memo his thoughts on the issue. In summary, they were along the following lines: We are a founding member of the UN and a big power, and this is not the way to act. Reducing our percentage should be a long-term goal, and we can work toward that end, but we do not simply announce the fact and force the organization and the other member states to adjust. Assistant Secretary Williamson lost credibility with the Secretary with that memo.

The Williamson approach to the Palestinian issue in UN bodies (no augmentation of Palestinian presence) was no different from the Keyes' policy. Actually, the policy guidelines were determined by the White House and the NSC, and Keyes or Williamson were entrusted with carrying out the policy on a day-to-day basis in the many UN fora. The IO and NEA lawyers had their work cut out for them as they parsed the UN resolutions. Does this resolution increase PLO representation or is it just saying the same thing with new language? Our diplomats, whenever they went to an international conference, were not to make any decisions or speak on anything involving Palestine or Israel without sending the full text and background to the Department. The draft resolutions would be vetted at the highest levels in the Department to make sure that not one millimeter was gained as far as the PLO was concerned. All of us in IO spent large amounts of our time on the PLO issue.

A result of the Keyes' initiative, which hit months after he resigned, was the 10% cutback in the money Congress appropriated for the UN specialized agencies. The UN technical agencies generally do not have an assessed budget. They depend on voluntary contributions of member states for their operations. We had 10% less money in 1988 to distribute to the specialized agencies than we had in 1987. We could have made a simple 10% cut across the board. Assistant Secretary Williamson, however, chose a more intelligent approach, but one that would open the Bureau to immense pressures from a multitude of supporters for the various specialized agencies. He and the DAS's decided that we would apportion the money according to several criteria, namely how important was the agency to USG interests and how well was the agency managed. These were admittedly impressionistic and subjective guidelines, but they were intellectually defensible. We agreed that it would be preferable to set up a set of matrices to guide us rather than treat all the agencies the same way. The 10% across-the-board cut would penalize the organizations that fulfill our goals and are well managed and would reward the agencies that were not doing what we would like and/or were badly managed.

We set up an elaborate system of grading the organizations. We came up with three categories - those that would not take any cut; those that would take a ten percent cut; and those that would take a nineteen percent cut. We did this preliminarily in-house, and then invited the rest of the U.S. Government to come and join the discussions. As expected, the Departments whose UN counterparts were left untouched were happy and those whose organizations were to be cut protested. The technical agencies in my portfolio did rather well. WHO, IAEA, ITU, ICAO were untouched, so HHS, DOE and DOD, DOC, and DOT were pleased. ILO was slated to be cut by ten percent, so we listened to many protests. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) was to take a nineteen percent cut, so the positive response from the Department of Commerce(DOC) about the ITU was tempered considerably. The development agencies (UNDP, FAO, UNICEF, and WFP) fared less well in our matrix. There were some small UN agencies, where our traditional contribution was under $100,000, so we exempted them from any cuts. We expected the various Department Secretaries to weigh in with Secretary Shultz about the exercise, if their counterparts were to be cut. Elizabeth Dole, who was Secretary of Labor, vigorously protested the cut in the ILO. She wrote a "Dear Colleague" letter to George Shultz, who had at one time also been Secretary of Labor. So then Shultz got involved. Williamson again explained to Shultz the basis for our decisions and reminded the Secretary that he had given his approval to the process. He admitted that had given general approval, but requested that the ILO not be hit with a ten percent cut. Rather than open the entire process to further revisions, we shaved a few thousand dollars from various organizations and found some other funds in an account so that we could comply with the Secretary's directive to ease the burden on the ILO to nine percent! We spent many days on the process and were satisfied that we had been good stewards of the public's money. There was, however, considerable frostiness on the part of our colleagues in the Departments of Labor, Commerce, and Agriculture as a result of the exercise, not to mention the hard feelings and sometimes harsh words from the heads of the UN agencies to our ambassadors, visiting delegations, and to us in IO. We thought that if the Congress repeated its performance the following year, we might give serious consideration to an across-the board cut.

Just as we were finishing the process of allotting the money from the exercise, a new crisis hit. I learned about it while at the Buche-family reunion in Richmond, Indiana. I turned on my TV in the morning of July 3, 1988, to see the men's finals at Wimbledon. On the screen, however, was the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Crowe. He was explaining how a US Navy destroyer, the USS Vincennes, in the Persian Gulf had mistakenly shot down an IranAir Boeing (Flight IR 655) with 290 persons aboard, killing them all.

Since the International Civil Aviation Authority (ICAO) had jurisdiction in such cases, I realized I would be heavily involved in the crisis. The Pentagon immediately ordered a full investigation of the incident. The ICAO Council President convoked an extraordinary session at the request of Iran. The issue was put on the agenda of the UN Security Council. The USG was in full damage-control mode. The Department of State had the lead, and IO was the lead Bureau. We did research on the ICAO rules and precedents. We resurrected the files on the Soviet shoot-down of the Korean Air 007 in 1983. (The Iranians and the Soviets were playing much of our own rhetoric back to us.) We plotted a strategy, in essence, admit our mistake, express regrets, offer compensation, and avoid a formal condemnation. Our plan was accepted within the USG, although there was some reluctance on the part of DOD pending the completion of the formal investigation. We argued we had to take the highroad at the very beginning to avoid a nasty condemnation and linkage with the KAL 007 catastrophe. We could not wait for the formal investigation hoping to show some technical errors on the part of the Iranians. The Pentagon investigation (the Fogarty Report) turned out to be more damning of the Vincennes' actions than the original version of the incident.

Rich Williamson represented the USG at the ICAO session, while Vice President Bush spoke for the US at the Security Council. Williamson's approach was that of an attorney trying to make the best case from a weak brief, and thus he emphasized our own investigation of the case, our offer of compensation, and the imposition of improved procedures to avoid similar incidents in the future. We fared pretty well at the ICAO session and were able to buy time for additional investigations and subsequent meetings. Vice President Bush took a different tack at the Security Council. While expressing regret over the IR 655 incident, Bush lambasted Iran for a series of actions, including the hostages. (Bush was running for the Presidency, so he scrapped our draft text and had his political writers prepare a speech aimed for the American voters rather than the delegates at the UNSC.) Iran was still relatively isolated in the diplomatic world because of the hostages and ongoing revolutionary actions, so there was a reluctance by other states to go beyond pro-forma support. The Soviets were not about to risk the new relationship with the US by going overboard in support of Iran on the IR 655 issue. My office worked closely with the Office of Civil Aviation and the Legal Adviser in State, with DOD, and the Department of Transportation to write briefing papers, talking points, and instruction cables to our delegation in Montreal for the series of hearings, investigations, and meetings at ICAO over many months. In March 1989, the ICAO Council culminated the process by passing a resolution that was a compromise. The Council "deeply deplored the tragic incident", but did not condemn the US since the shoot-down was the result of errors. The Secretary was pleased with the outcome and commended Rich Williamson. Rich, in turn, praised DAS Sandy Vogelgesang, Neil Boyer, my principal deputy, and myself. Several months later, I received the Department's Superior Honor Award for my handling of the IR 655 crisis.

Soon after the conclusion of the IR655 issue, Williamson resigned. The Bush administration had taken office and had another candidate for the position. John Bolton, a Washington lawyer, became the new Assistant Secretary for International Organizations. John made it clear from the very beginning of his tenure that there would be no change during his watch regarding the PLO issue in the UN bodies. We were to continue to fight any attempt to enhance the PLO position in any UN organization. There were several more sessions of UN governing bodies before my scheduled departure date from IO/T. Thus I had to update instructions for our delegations to oppose with every means any attempts by the PLO to improve its status, even if this meant breaking with our NATO allies. IO's number one priority was to thwart the PLO, even if in doing so we would lose support from potential allies and thus fail on other UN issues of importance to the USG!

At the end of my two years in IO, I was ready to leave. I had been assigned as the DCM to the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in Vienna. I was eager to leave Washington and start my job in Vienna. It was an assignment I had eagerly sought.

Q: You were in Vienna from 1989 to when?

BUCHE: To 1992 with the Mission. Then I retired.

Q: What were you doing there?

BUCHE: I was the DCM at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations. The agencies for which we were responsible were the Vienna-based UN organizations. These were the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the formal name for the agency responsible for the care and maintenance of the Palestinian refugees who had fled or been expelled from Israel beginning in 1948, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). We also had responsibilities for the UN Women's Commission and the UN Drug Agency. There were some smaller offices, but our main business was with the above-mentioned organizations.

Q: What was your main job?

BUCHE: The main job was helping Ambassador Michael Newlin run the Mission. There were a dozen officers and support staff assigned to the Mission. Mike wanted me to handle the administration and personnel issues, and to be the focal point for official visitors and to monitor incoming cables, and to work with the various officers in drafting/editing our reporting cables. Since I had responsibility for all of the Vienna-based agencies when I was in Washington, I knew them quite well. I had more political, financial, and institutional expertise than the staff at the Vienna Mission or my replacement as the IO/T Office Director, Tom Martin. Accordingly, I could work confidently with the officers in Vienna or Washington. Admittedly, I did not have the technical expertise of the nuclear scientists and technicians seconded to the IAEA from the US Department of Energy. They had the technical background, and I provided the political guidance.

Since the Cold War was coming to an end and the Iron Curtain was crumbling, there were large numbers of official visitors coming to Vienna from Washington. I believe many of our visitors had themselves accredited to a UN conference or study group, so they could take the opportunity to visit Prague or Budapest from Vienna. Unless the visitors were Congressmen or Senators, or high-ranking State Department officials, Mike Newlin asked me to take care of them. (Accordingly, I made many trips with the visitors over the weekends to Prague and Budapest.) Some of the most demanding delegations were those for the annual meetings of the UN Women's Commission. The delegations were completely female and were selected by the White House as rewards for political contributions in behalf of President Bush. The visiting women attended all the sessions (from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M), but looked forward to the evening or weekend activities. We were asked to obtain opera tickets, reservations to some of the best restaurants, and to make arrangements for excursions to Budapest and Prague. I was requested to accompany them to Budapest. Fortunately, the State Department sent along a seasoned professional, Sharon Kotok, to help the Mission on the substantive business of the Commission, namely to prepare for the Cairo Conference on Women and Children. Sharon, Greg Sprow, the Mission officer responsible for the Commission, the Ambassador, and I did whatever was required to carry out our policy objectives for Cairo.

Michael Newlin had been the Principal DAS in Consular Affairs before his Vienna assignment. Before that, he was at the United Nations as the DCM to the Ambassador, the Permanent Representative. During most of Newlin's posting to the UN, the Permanent Representative was George Bush. So he was on very good terms with President Bush.Ambassador Newlin chose me, in part, because we got along together very well on both a personal and professional basis, as he was being briefed by my staff and myself in Washington in preparation for taking charge of the Mission. Once he was installed in Vienna, he appreciated the way I supported the Mission. Also, I had an excellent reputation from my previous experiences as a DCM. So when Mike considered the various candidates proposed to him by the Foreign Service Personnel Office as his DCM, he quickly settled on me. Mike headed a successful, proactive, and dedicated team. It was also a happy and cohesive group of professionals. Vienna, from my first days there, was my most enjoyable and interesting posting since Addis Ababa. For professional, cultural, and family reasons, it was the zenith of my Foreign Service career.

Q: You had been involved in budget paring. What was your impression of the UN agencies that your mission was representing? How were they run?

BUCHE: The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was considered one of the best run of all the agencies. It was an independent agency that was an absolute necessity because of the Cold War. Its purpose was twofold: to inspect for violations of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to provide technical assistance for the peaceful use of nuclear energy. It was one of the few international agencies where the Soviets, Chinese, Americans, Brits and others would really concentrate on the business at hand. It was to the major powers' interests that the agency be well-run and highly professional. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) was temporarily located in Vienna. The UNRWA headquarters was moved to Vienna from Beirut because of the security situation in Lebanon. (In the late 1990s, the headquarters was moved to Amman, Jordan.) I was responsible for UNRWA matters between 1984-87, when I was in RP. I had visited the camps and met on several occasions with the UNRWA leadership. A career Italian diplomat, Giacomelli, was the Director General, and a distinguished Foreign Service Officer and former Ambassador to Syria and Algeria, Bill Eagleton, was his deputy. It was a huge agency with over two million refugees in its care in five different countries. The leadership had to walk a narrow line because of the political sensitivities of the refugees and the host countries. An ongoing problem was the constant need to obtain more funding from the donors to provide the refugees with education and health care, and for some of the particularly vulnerable, food and shelter. We were impressed with the ability of Giacomelli and Eagleton to keep the many disputes, protests, and demonstrations localized and eventually to work out solutions. We did not like UNIDO's performance when I was in Washington, and when I was in Vienna and saw the organization and its newly-elected Director General, Domingo Siazon, up close, my evaluation was confirmed.

Q: UNIDO being -

BUCHE: United Nations Industrial Development Organization. The Reagan Administration and Alan Keyes were determined to get rid of the previous head of UNIDO, an Algerian named Abdul Rahman Kahane. He was a strong advocate of socialism as the preferred system for the development of industry in the third-world. Our chosen candidate was the Philippine Ambassador to Vienna, Domingo Siazon. He was an outspoken advocate of capitalism and was favorably disposed toward the United States. Our Embassy in Manila had worked with him and gave him rave reviews. The UNIDO election was hard fought and bitter. The Kahane had strong support from most of the Africans, some Middle Eastern countries, the USSR and Eastern Europe, plus France and a few Scandinavians. We (and the Philippines) lined up the Latins, some of the Middle East and Africa, and all of Asia. For Keyes and the White House, the battle was ideological. Our Mission Vienna had the task of much of the day-to-day campaigning. The Algerian was not a good manager, regardless of his political leanings, so that was an effective talking point. UNIDO fell into even greater disarray as the campaign progressed. The final tally was close, but Siazon won. There were strong feelings and much bitterness within the organization and in the Vienna embassies and missions over the election. Many of Kahane's supporters were waiting for Siazon to make a serious mistake in order to pounce.

After Siazon won, he replaced many of the top officials in UNIDO. Because of the UN staff regulations, the buy-outs were quite costly. The US decided to give a little extra money to make up for some of the funds lost when the member states supporting the Algerian cut back on their contributions. (Funding for UNIDO was voluntary.) Siazon decided that he had to mend fences with some of the third-world countries which had supported Abdul Rahman Kahane, so he offered jobs to their nationals, although their qualifications were weak. He also gave some study or feasibility contracts to politically important persons. He brought in a dozen Philippine nationals (about half in staff-support jobs). Siazon's wife obtained a job with the IAEA. It was widely assumed in Vienna that he used his influence in her behalf. Despite the poor condition of the organization when Siazon took over, there was the expectation that after a year of transition, he and the new team would put UNIDO on the right track. We expected Siazon's principal deputy (an American, the brother of Senator Warner of Virginia) to play a major role on the administrative side. Unfortunately, there was no quick turn around in UNIDO. (I came into IO/T at this point.)

Our mission was quite aware of what was happening and reported accurately, not only on what was happening in UNIDO, but about the hypercritical attitudes of the diplomats in Vienna. When IO had to make cuts, there was no way we could justify exempting UNIDO from a heavy hit. Siazon was "our man", but he was failing in our eyes to manage the organization the way we expected. That may have been an impossible task for Siazon, given the prior history of the organization, but when forced to choose between such well-run and vital organizations such as the IAEA, ITU, WHO, and a few others and UNIDO, the latter had to be put in the lowest category. Of course, word got out that the USG was cutting back on its usual voluntary contribution to UNIDO. That made Siazon's task even harder. Ambassador Newlin in Vienna and we in Washington spoke with Siazon and with Warner about what we wanted, but only part of our message sank in. The organization was drifting. We wanted greater transparency in the financial aspects of UNIDO. We wanted the operational funds to go for real market feasibility studies, and not for "pay-off" writings that had no value. We proposed that a few additional experienced Americans in key middle-manager jobs would help. We were paying roughly a quarter of the budget and wanted more positions, something between ten and fifteen percent of the professional slots. Congress was quite insistent that American representation in UN bodies be roughly proportionate to our contributions. The rule of thumb was that we should have about ten percent less in jobs than our percentage contribution. Under the Algerian, almost all the Americans had practically been squeezed out of the organization. When Siazon took over, we had around seven percent of the positions. We thought it was catch-up time. Despite offering some well-qualified candidates, we were turned down in most cases. Siazon used the vacated slots to hire his own preferences. As I mentioned above, these persons were only minimally qualified. Our criticism of Siazon was both very parochial on the jobs issue, as well as broader on the achievement of the goals and objectives of the organization.

When I went to Vienna, I was determined to be objective in reporting on UNIDO. I could see mitigating circumstances for Siazon's actions and appreciated the Mission's nuanced reporting. There were, however, some decisions (and statements) by Siazon that bothered the Ambassador and me. We were finding ourselves in the difficult and uncomfortable position of defending the Siazon and Warner against the criticism of the Europeans, particularly the French, Belgians, and Nordics, when we, too, were critical of what was happening. The longer I stayed, the more critical I became. I learned so much of the inside, day-to-day activities of the organization from our superb Mission UNIDO officer, Greg Sprow. He was observant, had developed valuable contacts, and could communicate so clearly. Mike Newlin was more patient, but he, too, eventually realized that Siazon was falling down in the job and that the USG had made a mistake in pushing his candidacy.

The Europeans were really honing in on UNIDO. They uncovered some uses of small discretionary funds and some procurement policies that were not clearly illegal, but did not pass the "smell" test. Siazon apparently had decided to mend his fences with the African embassies, but not with the Europeans. He was like a ward politician. He calculated who could be bought off and who could be ignored. He put the Europeans in the latter category.

The first major confrontation developed over UNIDO's decision to upgrade the computer capabilities of the organization. They had several systems of computers, and they did not function as a network. Siazon and Warner, along with some in-house advisers decided to purchase a big mainframe computer. To make the US happy, they chose an IBM. There were many computer specialists inside and outside the organization who were saying that a large mainframe was not the way to go. It was not only too expensive, but using PC's was the wave of the future. Siazon was not technically minded, and his insistence on a large mainframe seemed to be rooted in wanting a machine as large as the IAEA's computer. (The IAEA, as an organization dealing with nuclear issues, needed a large mainframe.) There was no need for UNIDO to have a mainframe for 99% of its tasks. If there were a need now and then, UNIDO could make arrangements to lease time on the IAEA machine, since the two organizations were in the same building. UNIDO's plans were attacked by the Europeans as financially and technically unsound. We were caught in a bind. We had to defend Siazon, Warner, and IBM. When Siazon and Warner insisted on moving forward with the IBM purchase despite the European objections, the Europeans were enraged. They threatened to withdraw funding, and eventually forced Siazon to agree to a re-study of the issue. Outside consultants (including some Americans) were brought in, and they recommended going the PC route. UNIDO had no choice but to comply. Warner worked out a deal with IBM that resulted in only a nominal penalty for voiding the contract. The entire affair was embarrassing to us. We had to use so much good will and "political capital" to save Siazon from being publicly censured and forced out of office. Although he survived, his reputation in Vienna was tarnished, and UNIDO as an institution suffered. Canada announced that it was leaving the organization and gave the necessary one-year's notice. Australia and Belgium threatened to follow.

We were in the awkward position of defending our protï¿½gï¿½, Siazon, when we, too, had lost trust in him. He seemed to be oblivious to criticism from the USG or the Europeans. Washington was by now also quite concerned because of the financial condition of UNIDO. Washington was afraid that we would have to contribute more than our customary amount to keep the organization afloat. (UNIDO was supported almost entirely from voluntary contributions, and the Europeans had reduced their funding to show their displeasure at Siazon.) Several officials came from Washington to see at first hand what could be done. I hosted a lunch for the officials and Siazon. Siazon came a few minutes late. He explained that he was on the phone with his personal banker and was delighted to announce that he had just made several thousand dollars profit from a speculation involving a foreign exchange transaction. Although there was nothing illegal about what he had done, it was so incongruous to us that he would boast about a personal speculative gain when his organization was making plans for layoffs because of financial difficulties and he was asking the USG to increase its voluntary funding of UNIDO.

The Europeans did not give up their efforts to force out Siazon. We decided that we were not going to waste any more capital propping up the institution by increasing our funding or defending the indefensible. Siazon saw the handwriting on the wall and resigned to become the Philippine Ambassador to Japan. (He had served there before, had a Japanese wife, and spoke Japanese.) When the Philippine Government changed, he left Japan to become the Foreign Minister. Apparently his mismanagement of UNIDO had no effect on his subsequent career. Mike Newlin and I had to spend so much time on UNIDO that we sometimes delegated responsibilities to other members of our staff for carrying out a few tasks with the IAEA or UNRWA that perhaps should have been handled by us. Of course, that all changed with the Gulf War.

Q: Aha.

BUCHE: The Gulf War catapulted the International Atomic Energy Agency into strategic importance. The UN Security Council gave the IAEA the responsibility to conduct the inspection missions in Iraq to determine the status of that country's nuclear program. Our Mission was the focal point for carrying out Washington's instructions for discussions and negotiations with Hans Blix, the Director General, and the other top officials of the IAEA regarding the mandated inspections. Our Mission staff was augmented by two officers from the CIA and several nuclear-detection specialists from the Department of Energy. They provided us with the technical expertise we needed in our discussions with the IAEA on the modalities, interpretation of findings, communications, security, logistics, and other aspects involving the inspections. Our reports of the meetings with the IAEA were read by the top policy makers in Washington and shared with our Coalition Partners. (For the sake of efficiency and clarity of purpose, Washington obtained the concurrence of our major Coalition Partners that the US Mission in Vienna would be the focal point for discussions with the IAEA on the inspections.) The IAEA was sending its own reports to the UN Secretary General of the discussions. To avoid any confusion or misunderstandings in the reporting by the IAEA or ourselves, we informally compared notes at the conclusion of each of our discussions. The inspections took place, and the results were spectacular. The IAEA team discovered the secret laboratories and the infrastructure used by the Iraqis to construct nuclear weapons. The conclusions of the IAEA were that the Iraqis were about a year away from their first bomb. The IAEA had the mandate from the UN Security Council not only to seek out the clandestine nuclear program and to report on the findings, but also to destroy the Iraqi capabilities to manufacture weapons of mass destruction. The IAEA succeeded brilliantly. The Security Council accepted the report by the IAEA that the Iraqi program had been uncovered and dismantled. The inspections by other organizations for chemical and biological weapons in Iraq were not so successful and thus were not accepted as conclusive by the UNSC. The success of the IAEA resulted from many factors. First of all, the IAEA was a superb organization and organized the inspection teams carefully. The IAEA inspection teams were augmented by some outside specialists and helped by intelligence data from several major powers, including the Soviets, and the USA. Also, the nature of constructing a nuclear weapon required larger facilities and more machinery than would be required for chemical or biological weapons. Thus, the facilities would be harder to hide. Washington was paying close attention to the developments over the six months of the various IAEA inspections. We received daily telephone calls and cables from Washington. I know on three occasions, President Bush himself phoned Ambassador Newlin to discuss the inspections. Our IAEA reporting was commended frequently by Washington.

After the IAEA inspections were completed, Ambassador Newlin decided to retire. He had done a superb job and had also thoroughly enjoyed his tour of duty in Vienna. With his friendship with President Bush and his excellent professional credentials, he could have asked for and received another ambassadorship, but he and his wife, Milena, wanted to enjoy their retirement. They had a daughter in the Washington area, and wanted to see her more often. I was the charge ad interim for a month, and then the new Ambassador, Jane Becker, arrived. She came from IO, where she was the principal DAS. We got along quite well together. There were no major crises involving our organizations in the time we were together. After the UNIDO debacles and the strategic demands in connection with the Iraqi inspections by the IAEA, I was pleased with this relatively calm period. My successor, Tom Martin from IO/T, arrived at post in August 1992, so I handed over to him my office and my responsibilities. I formally retired from the Department of State on September 30, 1992, after thirty three years in the Foreign Service. My career was exciting, challenging, and successful, but above all, interesting and fulfilling.

After I retired, Anike and I found a small, furnished apartment near St. Stephan's Cathedral. She continued working with the Representative of the Department of Defense to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. I went to the University of Vienna as a post-graduate student in a special course on Eastern Europe and the European Union. Given my diplomatic background, I was asked by the Chairman of the International Relations Faculty, Professor Neuhaus, to mentor three students from the Baltics. They were on a scholarship given by the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I was delighted to help them during the year, and in doing so, we developed friendships. I also had become a member of one of the most prestigious choirs in Vienna, the Augustinerchor (Choir of St. Augustine). I now had time to take special singing lessons and devote the necessary hours to private practice and group rehearsals. Our son, John, moved to Vienna upon his graduation from Northwestern University, so we were with him again. In July 1993, Anike and I departed Vienna for me to take a position (pro bono) as an Adjunct Professor of History at St. Meinrad College. I returned to the institution, which had meant so much to me in my formative teenage years. I was invited to return by my former classmate, Bob Sweeney, now Archabbot Timothy, O.S.B.

During my two years at St. Meinrad (August 1993 to June 1995), I twice taught a two-semester course in U.S. Foreign Relations from the founding of the Republic to the Gulf War. I used Walter LaFeber's The American Age as my text. I also taught a seminar on the United Nations, with emphasis on the specialized agencies. For the latter, I used several texts, plus my own notes and recollections and many articles from periodicals and journals. I arranged a symposium at St. Meinrad in November 1993 on Russia and Eastern Europe with guest speakers from the German and Hungarian Embassies, plus the Department's Policy Planning Staff. There was heavy conflict in the Balkans at this time, so interest was high for the event. In January 1995, I conducted an intense, two-week, inter-term seminar on U.S. economic development policy, with particular emphasis on Africa. Retired Ambassador Ed Korry came to address the students on the African portion. He had served four years in Ethiopia, and had been asked by President Johnson to formulate a new approach for the USG's economic development policy toward Africa. He helped me celebrate my 60th birthday, when I gave a wine-tasting party for the faculty.

I was considering a third year at St. Meinrad, but Anike wisely counseled a return to Washington instead. Her point was that I had successfully put together several courses and had enjoyed the challenge of teaching college students. If I stayed a third year, I would be repeating much of what I had done before. She emphasized that I needed further challenges, and these were not to be found at St. Meinrad. Admittedly, my students were, for the most part, motivated and intelligent, but their educational and cultural horizons and personal goals did not involve foreign policy and international relations. The same could be said of the faculty. Anike and I enjoyed being with the monks, faculty, and students at St. Meinrad. We broadened our own knowledge and benefitted both spiritually and intellectually from the experience. Our time at St. Meinrad was a positive and fascinating interlude, but both of us wanted to return to a more cosmopolitan setting.

While my post-retirement activities are not a part of my Foreign Service career, they involve foreign policy and may be of some interest to readers and researchers. I will describe briefly my activities after returning to Washington from St. Meinrad in the summer of 1995.After settling into our house, I began to look around for something to do. I had the idea of working with Gene Dewey at the Hunger Coalition on a voluntary basis. Gene was my supervisor when I was in the Refugee Bureau of the Department in 1994-97. I admired him immensely and figured he could use some assistance. I spoke with him and he was enthusiastic.

Several days before I was to begin, however, I received a call from Mark Freeman with a fascinating offer - pro-bono work as an adviser in the newly-reopened Cambodian Embassy in Washington. (Mark was a mutual friend of Richard Kochan and myself and was currently heading the Asian Section of Meridian House, an NGO involved with exchange visitors and technical assistance with developing countries.) Diplomatic relations between the United States and Cambodia were broken in 1975, when the Khmer Rouge took over the country. After years of widespread starvation, torture, and murder by the Khmer Rouge against their own countrymen, the KR leadership turned against their traditional enemies, the Vietnamese. The KR met their match, when the Vietnamese, fresh fromthrowing out the Americans, turned their military against the upstart Cambodians. After years of guerilla warfare, the KR were driven into the western mountains of Cambodia. The Vietnamese were not intent on remaining in Cambodia for the long term, so through a series of international negotiations, the United Nations took over running the country for two years.

The country was totally devastated, first by the genocidal Khmer Rouge and then by the incessant warfare between the Vietnamese Army and the KR. Few educated Cambodians escaped slaughter by the KR. When the Vietnamese and then the United Nations took over governing the country, some Cambodians returned from abroad to take positions in the new Cambodia. The Cambodian King, Sihanouk, returned from asylum in China to serve as a symbol of national unity and constitutional monarch.

There was a UN-sponsored national election which resulted in a two-way split in power, including two Prime Ministers. The First Prime Minister was Prince Raniridh, a son of King Sihanouk; the Second Prime Minister was Hun Sen, a former Khmer Rouge official who defected and subsequently worked with the Vietnamese. The two parties were bitter rivals and were intent on gaining undisputed hegemony. All the government ministries, including the embassies, had officials appointed from both parties.

The Embassy in Washington had reopened in August 1995, after being shuttered and sealed for twenty years. The Embassy staff was eager to serve their country, but lacked the education, experience and language skills to function effectively in Washington. Mark told me that Ambassador Var Houot at the newly-reopened Cambodian Embassy in Washington was eagerly seeking a retired diplomat to help him and the staff establish themselves with the USG, Congress, journalists, investors, travel agents, et al. Ambassador Var told me that only two persons on his staff had ever served overseas in an embassy and that he had no diplomatic experience. Only one official at the Embassy spoke fluent English. The rest, including the Ambassador, had only an intermediate working command of the language. He wanted someone to advise him and his staff on almost every aspect of running an embassy. I told him I was interested, but knew very little about Cambodia. He said that was not important. What he wanted was someone experienced in diplomacy and with knowledge of how the U.S. Government functioned. I checked with the Department's Cambodian Desk Officer, Deborah Kingsland, to see how she viewed the offer. She responded positively, since I could help resolve some of the inevitable misunderstandings and miscommunications between the Department and an inexperienced Embassy staff whose English was limited. I agreed to help Ambassador Var for several months pro bono.

My first task was to prepare for the visit of the Cambodian Foreign Minister. In making the preparations, I became better acquainted with the Embassy staff and how the officials interacted with one another. I did not handle the briefing papers from the Cambodian side, since they were written by the Foreign Minister's staff in Phnom Penh. I made the appointments and conferred with the American officials handling the visit in State, AID, Treasury, and Commerce. I asked the Ambassador what were the main points the Foreign Minister wanted to raise. I then passed these on to my contacts so that they could prepare their bosses to respond. In turn, they told me what was in the briefing papers on the American side. This was standard procedure for any high-level visit. The basic rule is that there must not be any surprises for the principals. The Foreign Minister's trip went well and was followed by an official visit from the Minister of Defense and then by other ministers. We followed the same procedures. At the time of the early visits, there were no divisive major bilateral issues between the two countries, and so the talks were positive.

Ambassador Var and his staff were quick learners. Their English improved significantly. They constantly sought help from me in understanding some fine points or colloquial uses of English from their reading or from conversations with Americans. They depended on me to write their letters and diplomatic notes, but as their English improved, I asked them to do the first draft as a learning exercise. I would then correct or re-write their draft and explain why I changed their wording. I also published a monthly newsletter about economic and commercial developments in Cambodia, emphasizing U.S. investments and potential opportunities in the country. I really enjoyed my work. I was a combined teacher and adviser.

As Ambassador Var and I got to know each another better, we could frankly discuss the increasingly, negative impact on Cambodia's relations with the USA resulting from the internal political rivalries and violence between the two Prime Ministers and their parties. Not only was the State Department concerned about the increasing violence in Cambodia, but potential investors began to re-think their plans.

Even more ominous for Cambodia's economic development was the displeasure shown by several influential Senators and Congressmen at the mounting numbers of human rights violations. They threatened to block passage of a law that would restore Cambodia's normal trading rights with the US. (After we broke relations in 1975, practically no items from Cambodia were allowed to enter the United States.) The Department of State and the Agency for International Development decided to cut back economic assistance to Cambodia in reaction to the increasing number of human-rights abuses.

After several egregious examples of human rights abuses against journalists and harassment against the well-known opposition figure, Sam Rainsey, became public, Senator McCain wrote a letter to Prime Minister Raniridh, with copies to Hun Sen, stating that he was greatly disturbed by the news and implying that his support for legislation to grant Cambodia "Most Favored Nation" status (normal trading rights) was in doubt. McCain asked for an explanation and a commitment to safeguard the rights of dissenters. Raniridh responded with a high-handed letter to Senator McCain denying any abuses in Cambodia and mentioning some American sins of commission and omission in the human rights area. Raniridh challenged McCain's right to criticize what was happening in Cambodia. The PM's letter arrived by diplomatic pouch at the Embassy and the Ambassador was asked to deliver the letter personally to the Senator.

I saw the letter and was aghast. I told Ambassador Var that if he delivered the letter as written, there would be terrible consequences, further cuts in assistance from the U.S. and no chance of passing legislation for MFN for Cambodia. Var was torn about what to do. He was a Hun Sen supporter and owed his appointment to him. Var intensely disliked Raniridh. He would have been personally delighted to see Raniridh publicly excoriated in the Senate and in the U.S. press if the original letter were delivered. On the other hand, he was a patriot and was working for the good of his country. He asked me to edit out or soften the most offensive portions of the letter. I did so. Var then had the problem of convincing someone very close to Raniridh to suggest he have the letter re-written, possibly along the lines I suggested. Var hesitated for several reasons. He was in the "opposition party" and did not have working contacts with the inner circle of Prince Raniridh. Secondly, it was not in Cambodian culture to question a decision, or in this case, a letter from a higher official. I saw things quite differently and so I urged him to do his duty as an ambassador and quickly, since the reply to the Senator was long overdue. After several days of intense reflection, Var made a series of phone calls to Phnom Penh.

A new letter arrived. It was less offensive, but still had a tone that would likely upset McCain. The text was certainly not what I would have written, given the importance of MFN to Cambodia and the powerful position of the Senator on the issue. Var took the letter to McCain and did a superb job of talking away (and apologizing for) the actual words of the letter. McCain lectured Var about human rights and how the actions of Cambodia's feuding Prime Ministers were rapidly dissipating the support of the United States for a nation that had suffered so terribly over the past two decades. In the end, he assured Var that he still supported MFN. McCain then wrote a sharp letter back to Raniridh, with copies to the Embassy and Hun Sen. I told Var that he should strongly advise his Prime Minister to acknowledge the McCain letter, but write nothing repeat nothing further. Fortunately for all concerned, that is what happened.

I had been with the Embassy for five months and was also concerned about the direction Cambodia was heading. I was becoming queasy about defending the Cambodian Government's actions. I spoke to Var about my misgivings and told him that I had fulfilled my promise to help out for about a half year. I told him I would leave in several weeks, but that Anike would continue to come to the Embassy several times a week to help with English lessons. He had no choice but to accept, since I was working pro bono.

The next day I received a call from the State Department asking whether I would be interested in a three month special mission to the Philippines. I asked a few questions and replied affirmatively. I had to report to the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (the old RP) the following day. Little did I realize that the three-month mission would be the beginning of a series of assignments with PRM lasting years. On April 15, 1996, when I showed up in the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), Evelyn Whittaker greeted me and told me she had the responsibility for helping me complete my paperwork and making sure I was on the Northwest Air flight to Bangkok two days later. I was to participate in the kick-off workshop in Bangkok for Operation ROVR (Resettlement Opportunities for Vietnamese Returnees). I was pleased Evelyn was handling the administrative formalities since she knew all the shortcuts, as well as the people who gave the approvals. I recognized many people in PRM from my days in RP in 1984-1987. Foremost were Doug Hunter, Judy Chavchavadze, Jim Kelley, Norm Runkles, Terry Rusch, Paula Lynch, and Jim Lawrence. Doug and Judy were instrumental in recommending that I be brought out of retirement and entrusted with heading the mission to the Philippine camp on Palawan Island for rejected Vietnamese asylum seekers. (The Assistant Secretary, Phyllis Oakley, had confidence in Judy and Doug, so my interview with her a few months earlier about future work in PRM took place in a positive atmosphere.) After two hectic days of briefings, I boarded the plane to Bangkok.

In Bangkok I met up with the other members of the Palawan ROVR team. I was to be supported by a junior consular officer at the Embassy in Manila, Jim Mullinax, and two contract personnel, Babes Katima, a Filipina from our Vietnamese Processing Office in Bangkok, and Phu Dac Ninh, a Vietnamese refugee settled in Canada. Jim spent only a few days on Palawan before returning to Manila. He was to be my link with the Embassy and thus the "outside world."

Electronic communications were so irregular and of such poor quality between Palawan and Manila that almost all my messages were delayed and garbled in transmission. The initial telegrams to Washington sent from Embassy Manila with my progress reports read differently from what I wrote on Palawan and faxed to Jim. (When I finally received the come-back copies, weeks later, I asked him about the differences in the two texts. He told me he had given my faxes to his local secretary to be typed into cable format. What she could not read because of the garbles, she reconstructed to the best of her ability! Subsequently, he personally took charge of the transcribing.)

The refugee camp on Palawan had about 2,000 Vietnamese registered, but since it was an open camp, many were living outside. In fact, they were living on other islands and were engaged in trading. They came back to Palawan occasionally to celebrate Vietnamese holidays or weddings and funerals. Shortly after arriving, we announced the details of the ROVR program. Basically, the program offered a second chance for U.S. resettlement to those persons who had left Vietnam and had been turned down in their request for refugee status by combined UNHCR and national authorities. The USG, in conjunction with the refugee-hosting nations of Southeast Asia, had reached a compromise that promised resettlement in the USA for those refugees (and their immediate families) who had served in the U.S. or Vietnamese military or in the civilian government, provided they returned to Vietnam for processing. The important element was that they did not have to convince the U.S. authorities in Vietnam that they were refugees, but only that they had served in the civil service or the military. There was great skepticism among the refugees about what would happen to them if they returned to Vietnam to await their turn for processing. This is where the ROVR teams played a role. We were to answer questions, encourage the would-be refugees to inquire from family or friends in Vietnam, or to seek advice from the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), or from other sources.

While the choice for most of the Vietnamese in Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand was go home voluntarily or under duress, the Vietnamese in the Philippines had a broader choice. They could also opt for resettlement in the Philippines. A group of Philippine Catholic bishops, clerics, and nuns had gone to the United States and had raised sufficient funds to build simple housing for those Vietnamese who wanted to remain on Palawan. With that incentive, there were few takers of the option to return to Vietnam and await processing for the US.

It should be noted that while the Catholic chaplain (an American with decades of service in Southeast Asia) and a Vietnamese nun leaned in some cases toward encouraging the return option, there were several groups of Vietnamese from the U.S. who came to the Palawan camp to denounce the ROVR program. They cited many examples of alleged arrests, persecution, and violence involving Vietnamese who had returned. I noted the particulars and asked Washington for information. The response was quick. These were old allegations. Our Embassy, the UNHCR, several NGOs, and the International Red Cross had investigated the charges, but could not find substantiating evidence. Reading between the lines, it was clear to me that the examples were either made up or exaggerated to serve the purposes of the anti-ROVR groups. After several months on Palawan, I realized I had accomplished whatever was possible under the ROVR program. I returned to Washington on June 10.

After returning from the Philippines and spending a week being debriefed by various PRM officers, I went on a long vacation with Anike. Before leaving, I was asked by Doug Hunter whether I would be interested in eventually filling in for one of the officers who was expecting a baby and planned to take several months of maternity leave. I very definitely was interested. Her portfolio was the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Before I got very deeply into her work, a crisis erupted in Northern Iraq when some units of Saddam Hussein's army invaded (at the invitation of one of the Kurdish factions) to attack another Kurdish clan. We hastily withdrew most of the Americans working in the region. The White House then made the decision also to withdraw the Kurds (and their families) working for the USG. A civilian airlift was ordered and Operation "Quick Transit" began. A dozen PRM officers spent the weekend trying to arrange through the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for charters of civilian aircraft.

The officers also began the search for a destination to receive them for processing before they entered the USA. The European Bureau (EUR) and the Near Eastern Bureau (NEA) worked with PRM on the political aspects. No European country wanted to host the Kurds, even temporarily. The solution was to pick them up in a Turkish Air Force base, Diyarbakir, and fly them half way around the world to Andersen Air Force Base on Guam. There they would be processed by the US Immigration and Naturalization Service, and after security checks were completed, they would be flown to the US for resettlement. Our Embassy in Ankara had a hard sell to obtain permission from the Turkish Government for the uninhibited transit of thousands of Kurds from Iraq to Diyarbakir. IOM ran into problems with the first charters, since the aircraft provisionally chartered were not certified by the FAA, and thus could not land at the US Air Force Base on Guam. The PRM officers were unfamiliar with the requirements to obtain over-flight clearances from all the countries between Turkey and Guam. The two Air Force officers in the Department of State's Operations Center were called in on Sunday evening to assist. Operation "Quick Transit" would last for several months, so someone had take charge of the logistics. PRM Assistant Secretary Oakley selected me.

I went to the Department's Operations Center on Monday Morning, September 16, 1996, to take charge of the Task Force. I relieved several bedraggled PRMers who had spent much of the past two days attempting to activate the process of extricating from Northern Iraq those Kurds who were U.S. Government employees. I was told that there would be other members of the Task Force from PRM, the Near Eastern (NEA) and European (EUR) Bureaus, from the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in the Agency for International Development (AID/OFDA), and from the Consular Affairs Bureau (CA). We were to operate around the clock. For the first several days, a technician from the Ops Center was assigned to our group to help us master the complex communications equipment at our disposal. We could reach Embassy Ankara and the small detachment at Diyarbakir, as well as Andersen AFB with a secure phone. Also we could reach our liaison officers in Northern Iraq with satellite phones, but the messages were not encrypted. We could also hold secure video conferences with all the other players in the USG involved in the operation: FBI, CIA, INS, HHS, DOD, and the NSC. Within a day, the NSC set up a regular video conference at 5 P.M. each day. Eric Schwartz, the NSC Officer for Humanitarian Affairs, chaired the discussions.

I began to work twelve-hour shifts. I would come in for the last four hours of shift A, work my own shift for eight hours, and the stay for the first four hours of shift C. The team members had little experience in Kurdish affairs, logistics, aircraft charters, etc. It was a learn-by-doing operation. We knew what we were doing was essential to save lives. We were determined to succeed. We were confident that by asking questions from people in and out of the government, we could fill in the many gaps in our knowledge. IOM was of enormous help, particularly Michel Tonneau and his boss, Jorg Stuwe. Those two ran their own task force. We were in communication with them practically round the clock. So that I knew what was happening with IOM and to minimize contradictory instructions, I decided that I would be the prime contact for IOM. That meant I was also on call round the clock.

The initial snafu by IOM with the charters was rectified and the first plane, a charter Boeing 747 from Corsair with 325 Kurdish refugees aboard, landed on Guam on September 17. The Kurds had made their way out of Northern Iraq by car, truck, or on foot to the Turkish border where they were met by Embassy and US military officers and then bussed to Diyarbakir. They were allowed to bring only one suitcase per person. They had to leave their homes, cars, furniture, household pets, etc to be disposed of by friends and relatives. A three-star general of the US Air Force and dozens of US military personnel welcomed them as they deplaned. Before the exhausted Kurds could be taken to their temporary housing, the Guam Customs officers wanted to search all the luggage. After an hour of searches and the clearance of only the first several dozen travelers, the AF General pleaded for some common sense and humanity. Customs relented and did a spot check of every twentieth person. The Kurds were delighted to be halfway to their new homes in America, but were startled to see a huge welcoming sign at the AFB in English and Turkish, the language of the country against which many of their kinsmen were fighting. The need for quick action in leaving Northern Iraq meant that there was great flexibility by the American officers at the border in determining the definition of a "nuclear family." Our Kurdish employees interpreted the concept quite liberally. Thus they brought with them parents, grandparents, nephews, cousins, and assorted in-laws. Regarding those men with multiple wives, they were advised to list them on the INS entry forms as cousins. In fact, some of them were cousins! Four other chartered aircraft followed. The first phase of "Quick Transit" was completed by September 19. A total of 2,137 Kurds were flown to Guam for processing by the INS and HHS before being transported to their new homes in the United States. Once the four planes landed on Guam, I began to plan for the extrication of the second group, as well as work to resolve problems that came up during the processing of the first tranche. We learned that several members of a family were separated during the move from Northern Iraq. They showed up at the Turkish border several days after the departure of the last aircraft. They were offered shelter by an Embassy officer (on the Iraq side of the border) until they could be flown out in the next tranche. The Kurds on Guam who were USG employees wanted their back pay as well as word on whether they would continue to be paid while on Guam, since they were legally still on the Government payroll. I was able to hand the payroll issue off to AID, the employer of the Kurds. As we began the preparations for the next flights, we had the advantage of additional time and the experience gained from the first phase. I personally took charge of obtaining the flight clearances. The process was more orderly. We did not have the need of telephoning our embassies with frantic requests asking them to plead with their host governments for urgent over-flight clearances. The second tranche of Quick Transit was aimed at extricating some 600 Iraqis who fit in the category of "oppositionists" to the Saddam Hussein regime. These were members of various opposition groups such as the Iraqi National Group, the Iraqi National Accord, and the Iraqi National Congress. This was not a group as well-defined as Quick Transit I. Some were supported directly or indirectly by the American Government; others were known to us, but received no monetary compensation. The White House determined that this group also was in grave danger if a second attack were launched. The order was given to fly them to Guam. Leasing two charter aircraft was relatively simple. The main problem was identifying the right people and assisting them to cross into Turkey and conversely, making sure that people not on our list were spotted.

One unexpected glitch that took hours to resolve and resulted in delaying the first flight by a day was a misunderstanding by the top leadership of the Kurdish Democratic Party as to the timeframe for the departure. As a result, the evacuees were not allowed to cross into Turkey at Habur Gate by the lower-level KDP security forces. It took dozens of telephone calls between the Task Force, New York, London, Ankara, and Northern Iraq to resolve the problem.

As expected, some people showed up at the border who were not on our list, but had papers and some strong vocal support from other members of the "Oppositionists". This necessitated calls back and forth between the Ops Center and our people on the border, followed by conference calls in Washington to decide whether to allow them on the plane. Most were rejected because we really did not know who they were or their backgrounds. The Tower Air and Air Outre Mer charters took off from Incirlik Air Force Base (instead of Diyarbakir because of dust problems at the latter). They landed on Guam the night of October 23, with a total of 601 "Oppositionists." Quick Transit II was successfully concluded.

The CIA arranged a separate flight after the close of QT-II to take out a special group of people. Some of the CIA assets were included in Quick Transit II, but not all. My task force was not asked for direct assistance.

Attention was now focused on the most contentious issue, whether the USG should evacuate the Kurds working for American NGOs or for USG-funded European NGOs. The Department was ambivalent about recommending such an evacuation. Saddam's forces had not re-entered Northern Iraq since the first thrust in September. Of course, no one in the USG would state that the security situation would likely remain stable. While the NGOs were lobbying hard for an evacuation, there was, nevertheless, the realization that if the locally-hired Kurds departed the country, most of the services provided by the NGOs to the population would diminish or disappear. The United Nations personnel and most of the European NGOs did not plan to leave unless conditions changed. In the end, the White House decided in the affirmative to move out the Kurds working for American NGOs or USG-funded European entities. (It was election time!) We, therefore, prepared for Quick Transit III. This phase turned out to be the most difficult. One of the tasks that had to be completed before movements out of Northern Iraq to the Turkish border began was the identification and security clearance of the potential evacuees. Unlike the two earlier phases, where there was reasonably complete data (full name, date and place of birth, family members, etc.) on the principal "anchor" member of the family group (USG employee or identified "oppositionist"), the NGOs did not have similar data on their employees. Also there was a dispute about whether part-time or contract employees of the NGOs should be included. Since the USG had not previously vetted the NGO employees on security grounds, basic background checks were ordered. Before the security checks could begin, the NGOs had to obtain the personal data. Since the American NGO field reps had been evacuated from Northern Iraq, there were doubts about the accuracy of the data being gathered on the Kurdish employees by other Kurds and third-country nationals. There were many rumors of NGO employees "selling" their identities to other Kurds desirous of being resettled in the US. Eventually we got the lists from the NGOs of their employees and their families and turned them over to the CIA and FBI for security checks. We were also receiving reports almost daily from our intelligence agencies, from Kurds, or from other sources that employee X, Y, or Z was an agent of Iraq's intelligence service or that employee A, B, or C had committed murder, rape, or some other heinous crime. None of the accusations could be verified, so the decision by the NSC was to evacuate the persons and conduct in-depth interviews on Guam during the processing for U.S. resettlement.

On December 2, 1996, the Quick Transit III Task Force formally started operating in the Ops Center. (We had been working out of PRM since the last flights.) American Field Liaison Teams were in Northern Iraq to assist and prioritize the movements of the evacuees to and through the border at Habur Gate. Chartered busses were to take them to the airport at Batman (instead of Diyarbakir). IOM had chartered fourteen flights, with the first to depart on December 6.

It was not an easy task for our team on the ground at the Turkish border crossing point of Habur Gate to identify and process (preliminarily) the streams of Kurds coming out of Northern Iraq and bus them to the Batman field. The team made life easier for us in the Ops Center by making most of the decisions on its own and referring only the policy issues to Washington. There were attempts by Kurds using false documents to bring along distant adult relatives or friends as family members. Some were detected. The Americans were aided by Kurdish officials to check the authenticity of documents. With the concurrence of our Ambassador to Turkey, Marc Grossman, if adults in a family group were discovered with forged papers in an attempt to be included, the entire family was struck off the list for evacuation. It was a draconian measure, but it seemed to be effective as soon as the word got out. Since the original lists submitted to Washington by the NGOs did not include the names and dates of birth of infants, there were some confusion and delays at the border as the team amended the official lists. There was concern that some of the infants were probably nephews, nieces, and cousins of the principals, but there was little that could be done short of DNA tests to disprove the relationships. None of the infants had papers from the Kurdish authorities.

Other problems were the refusal of the Kurdish authorities to allow the departure from Northern Iraq of some dozen physicians working for the NGOs; whether to evacuate former NGO employees; and what to do with stragglers from an NGO who arrived at Habur Gate after the departure of the NGO head (who could identify them). There was also the question about how many planes would actually be needed. With the doctors, the decision went around and around. Washington, the field team, and Dahuk (the administrative center for the Kurdish authorities) discussed the issue. Most of the doctors were eventually allowed to leave. On the employees who formerly worked with the NGOs, some were identified by NGO heads at the border and urgent clearance requests were made to Washington. They also boarded. Most of the stragglers were finally accepted after the NGO heads were located and urged to return to the border to identify their employees. The first plane departed on schedule on December 6 with 340 passengers. Because the number of evacuees was less than the NGOs had anticipated, IOM canceled contracts for several planes (and the USG paid the required financial penalties). The last flight (number eleven) arrived at Andersen AFB on Guam on December 15. 3,780 persons were evacuated in QT-III. That made an overall total of about 6,520 over the three-month period.

I was delighted and greatly relieved with the successful completion of the Quick Transit exercise. When I was suddenly asked by A/S Oakley to take over the PRM Task Force, I was out of touch with many of the recent developments in the Department and in PRM. Also, I no longer had the personal contacts throughout the building and in the other agencies that are so necessary to do the work involved with a task force. I succeeded in the assignment because of my prior experience, the ability to think through the problems as they arose, and the willingness to work twelve-hour days to make sure we were covering all the bases. I recall mentioning to Doug Hunter toward the very end of the exercise that I was just becoming comfortable with the task assigned to me, since so many aspects of the job were entirely new or quite different from previous experiences. He replied that was the reason I was chosen. No one in the Bureau had first-hand knowledge of all the tasks required for the job, and so the decision was made to choose the person with the broadest Foreign Service career. That was me.

I stayed on in PRM after QT. There were always more than enough refugee crises, maternity leaves, TDYs, resignations, high-level visits, and gaps between assignments to keep me busy and in high demand. I worked almost exclusively in the Office for Multilateral Coordination and External Relations headed by Doug Hunter. My portfolio was largely the Red Cross Movement (the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of the Red Cross/Red Crescent, and the American Red Cross). My supervisor was Nick Miscione. He had served for years overseas in refugee camps with various NGOs. He came into the Department several years earlier.

The Department's relationship with the American Red Cross normally required only occasional attention from our office. The Secretary of State was ex officio a member of the Board of Governors by virtue of a Presidential appointment. Four times a year we prepared briefing papers for the Secretary or his/her designated representative, usually the latter, to participate in the meetings. Except for the activities of the International Services Committee, the Board spent most of its time on domestic issues.

The relationship between the Department and the American Red Cross changed after Dr. Bernadine Healy was chosen to fill the position of President and CEO vacated by Elizabeth Dole. Dr. Healy publicly attacked the exclusion of the Israeli National Society, the Magen David Adom (MDA), from the International Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement. The reason for the exclusion was the wording of the Geneva Conventions, which stipulated that the only recognized symbols of national societies were a red cross or red crescent. The Star of David was not mentioned. The Red Cross Movement was acting to amend the Geneva Conventions to include a third symbol, a red circle, diamond, or square, for optional use by the Israeli National Society. Healy's attack accused the Movement of anti-Semitism. The U.S. press took up her attack and was soon joined by Congress. Our role was to explain what the ICRC and the IFRC were doing to facilitate the entry of the MDA into the Red Cross Movement and to refute the unjust and unwarranted accusation of anti-Semitism. The bottleneck in amending the Geneva Conventions to make the admission of MDA possible was not the Red Cross Movement, but many Arab or Muslim states.

The Movement had a detailed plan to amend the Conventions and had successfully negotiated the preliminary steps leading to an international diplomatic conference scheduled for November 2000 to complete the process. The renewal of hostilities in the Middle East in October of 2000 made further negotiations on the issue futile. The ARC Board sacked Healy in late 2001, but the MDA issue had taken on a life of its own.

Congress had included a paragraph in the Department's budget authorization requiring the Secretary to certify that the MDA was not being denied "participation" in the Red Cross Movement. We could prepare a certification document for the Secretary's signature because the Movement had frequently taken that extra step to include the MDA in many of its activities.

Other notable Red Cross activity I was engaged in was the 1999 International Red Cross Conference. This gathering is held every four years and brings together all the national societies and the governments signatory to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. Heading the US Government delegation was retired Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Shalikashvili. He was an ideal choice for the mission. The idea came from our Assistant Secretary Julia Taft. She had worked with him a few years earlier on humanitarian issues.

I was his contact and assistant during the last two weeks of preparations in Washington for the RC Conference. "Shali" is how he wanted to be addressed. He was such a delight. He asked very little from me in the way of care and maintenance. We used the time together in taxis and between meetings to discuss so many issues other than the Conference. He was teaching a seminar at Stanford University on international relations for the first time, and when he heard that I had taught diplomatic history and international relations for two years at St. Meinrad College, he asked me how the students and I interacted. Shali recognized that we shared a wealth of experience in the international area, but were novice teachers. He was interested in discussing how practitioners of international relations could better convey their knowledge to a younger audience with a minimum of personal experience in the field.

He carefully studied his briefing books and took an active role in formulating our policy positions. There were initial disagreements between State and DOD on issues, but Shali helped bridge many of the gaps. (In the end, however, it was Doug Hunter who reconciled the outstanding differences in Washington, and then played a key role on the USG delegation in the drafting sessions at the Conference to negotiate acceptable language for the final documents.) I remained in Washington as the backup to the delegation during the Conference.

Working again on the Red Cross portfolio in PRM has been one of the most rewarding and positive assignments in my career. (When I was in Geneva, I was responsible for liaison with the Red Cross for two years.) From observing the ICRC staff in the field during my years in Africa and at the Headquarters in Geneva, I developed a deep admiration for them and their organization. I am proud of the long and close relationship between the United States and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

On that note, I will end my narrative account of my career idiplomacy.

Q: That's great. Well, John, I want to thank you very much. appreciate this.

BUCHE: Thank you.

End of interview