

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

AMBASSADOR NICHOLAS PLATT

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INTERVIEW

Q: This is a Foreign Affairs Oral History Program interview with Ambassador Nicholas Platt. It's March 7, 2005, and we are in his office in New York City. This interview is being conducted under the auspices of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training with the support of the Luce Foundation. I'm David Reuther.

Early Influences

PLATT: At St. Paul's School in Concord, NH, I learned to love history under the gruff, incisive teaching of a man named Carrol McDonald. Later on the intellectual pull of a Foreign Service career was the chance that it gave to observe and even become a part of history in the making.

I met my first Asians at St. Paul's. Reporting for practice on the lowest club football team I found myself in the middle of the line with a boy from Japan who was much older and

smaller than me. He introduced himself as Ben Makihara from the Seikei High School in Tokyo. "I don't understand this game at all," he said. "I don't know what to do." "Well, our job in the line is to knock people down," I replied. "There are three ways of doing that. We can just charge straight ahead or you can lie down on the ground and I can knock someone over you or I can lie down on the ground and you can knock him over me." "Oh," he said. We used all three methods during the season becoming lifelong friends in the process. Ben went on to become the Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of one of the Japan's largest conglomerates, Mitsubishi and a key figure linking the U.S. and Japan. We have joked together that this was the first example of U.S. Japan security cooperation. The year was 1949.

Tatsuo Arima came a year later, a product of the Seikei Exchange, and joined my class. The closest collaboration occurred almost 30 years later as Foreign Service Officers when he was the head of the political section of the Japanese Embassy in Washington and I was in charge of the Japan desk at the State Department. We worked closely and would later boast that the class of '53 had managed U.S. Japan relations from both sides of the Pacific. St. Paul's involved me with the Winant Volunteers, an experience that changed the course of my life. John Winant, the much admired U.S. Ambassador to the Court of St. James during World War II had been a master at the school before becoming governor of New Hampshire. He committed suicide at the end of the war, as much a casualty of the conflict as a battlefield death. His friends in Britain led by an electric evangelist named Tubby Clayton organized in Winant's memory a group of high school and college age volunteers to help during the summer months with the reconstruction of London's war damaged East End. Clayton's first recruiting stop was SPS in the late '40s. I remember sitting in the chapel, a callow choirboy mesmerized by Tubby's descriptions of the ravages of London, Winant's visits to the fiery scenes during the blitz (Londoners thought he was the ghost of Abraham Lincoln) and the need to rebuild the city. I told myself I just had to join the volunteers.

Several years later as a Harvard sophomore I did. I was assigned to work at the world's oldest Orthodox Jewish boys club in the heart of Cockney London. That summer brought home the fun and interest of living abroad and of explaining the United States and its policies to contemporaries in a different culture. I returned to college firmly directed toward the Foreign Service. It was one of the forerunners of the Peace Corps, which has supplied so many future FSO. It's still going, too.

Q: Could you give a little more on your family, father's occupation and all, how many children there were?

PLATT: My father was an architect. His father was an architect. My uncle was an architect, cousins and so on and so forth. I was the only who was not. My father's father, Charles A. Platt was distinguished and well known architect in his time. He designed the Freer Gallery, Andover and Deerfield Schools, as well as a lot of private residences in New York and the rest of the country . Originally trained as a landscape architect, he gained a nationwide reputation with a game-changing photographic study of Italian gardens. An accomplished painter and etcher. Platt came to architecture because his

friends kept asking him to design summer places for them. He hit the top of his stride just as the Gilded Age group of American tycoons arrived at the turn of the century.

Charles A. Platt lost his fortune in the 1929 Wall Street crash. My father, Geoffrey and his partner, brother William, fended for themselves, but had very distinguished careers as architects in their own right. Geoffrey was New York City's first Landmarks Commissioner.

My mother's name was Helen Choate. She came from a family of lawyers. Her grandfather, Joseph H. Choate, was a major figure in New York City, instrumental in founding the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Natural History. He became the ambassador to the Court of St. James during McKinley's time. She and my father were devoted and produced an older sister, Penelope and a younger brother, Geoffrey Jr. I was the middle child. They were all based in New York. I was a New York kid, though not very happy about it, to begin with.

Q: You were mentioning about it that your father and his brother had war service?

PLATT: Very much so. My father and his brother were partners. My uncle was eight years older than my father and he served in World War I as a flyer and in World War II as a naval officer. My father served in the 8th Air Force as a photo intelligence analyst. He commanded from the American side the joint US-UK technical unit that used to look at all of the photographs of bomb damage done by the 8th Air Force to see determine the results and decide what should be done next. It was believed that architects looking through stereoscopes had an ability to envisage three dimensions better than anybody else and maybe they were right. Geoffrey Platt did performed that role for the whole war. Stationed in England, he never got leave. We did not see him for three years. His unit was the one that found the V-2 rocket launching sites. So, he had his impact on the outcome of the war, and was awarded the Order of the British Empire for his efforts. When my father came home in 1946 we moved from the city out to Mount Kisco, in Westchester County where my mother and father lived for the rest of their lives. Though I enjoyed being in the country, I found suburban life increasingly confining intellectually.

Q: Please.

PLATT: St. Paul's School provided both intellectual rigor and an exhausting array of things to do. I sang, boxed, rowed, played football and was part of the student government. The impact of these activities, particularly crew, on the way I operated later in life, was huge. My management style as an ambassador and a bureaucrat which valued team work and measured progress one stroke at a time was formed in a racing shell. The graduation speaker for the form of 1953 was a distinguished corporate lawyer from New York named Grayson Murphy, the father of one of my classmates. He was flawlessly dressed in a black pinstripe suit. What he said shocked me to the core and affected the way I lived my life. He told us that his graduates of St. Paul's had smooth and well-worn career paths open to us, mostly in finance, law and other professions. Comfortable patterns of existence and relationships laid out by the many graduates like himself which

came before. But if we took those paths unquestioningly without trying other things, if we simply floated ahead unquestioningly, he and his generation would never forgive us. On the other hand, if we chose different, adventurous courses, we would receive respect and, even if we failed repeatedly, forgiveness.

In many other ways the most lasting lessons I learned came during summers. I was fifteen when I took a summer job at "Naumkeag", the Stockbridge, Massachusetts estate of my great aunt Mabel Choate. Mabel had inherited the large summer "cottage" in the Berkshires that architect Stanford White had designed for her father Joseph H. Choate, the New York lawyer who made his name opposing the graduated income tax and became US Ambassador to the Court of St. James (1899-1906). She added what became a famous array of gardens to the working farm that served the estate. At 75 cents an hour, I weeded bricks, mowed lawns, milked cows, and did whatever the estate foreman instructed. I was proud of my social security card, whose early number (beginning 014) I carry to this day, and moved seamlessly between "Upstairs" and "Downstairs" at the big house.

Mabel Choate was amply sized. She strongly believed that good health depended on the vital organs being surrounded by a layer of fat. Witty and quick, responsible and philanthropic, she made herself easily accessible to all ages. Mabel had suffered from a number of ailments in her past, and apparently kept on taking every medicine ever prescribed for her. One of these was Argyrol for sinus problems. As a result over time she turned a distinctive color. The children in our family referred to her fondly as "our navy blue aunt." A more accurate description would be a light battleship gray. She wore a set of silver bracelets that tinkled loudly when she walked and announced her presence from a distance. My mother adored her father's younger sister, and so did we.

Aunt Mabel had traveled extensively in the "Orient" as a young woman. She fell in love with the arts and architecture of China, and brought home, brick by brick, an entire ancestral temple which she reconstructed at Naumkeag. As an employee, during the day, I would sweep the dragon walk and clean the spirit gate. In the evenings I would sit on the temple porch and listen to her traveler's tales and the lore she had absorbed. The spirit gate, she told me, was placed to block the direct approach to the temple, forcing visitors to detour around it. Evil spirits could fly only in straight lines, and were thus denied entry. Mabel also imported other Chinese practices valuable to teen-age boys. It was the height of politesse in old Peking, she reported, to belch loudly in appreciation for a delicate dish or a fine meal. She had mastered the technique and taught it to me, empowering me to disrupt school study halls for years to come. At the time, I had no conscious sense of pull toward China. Seeds Mabel Choate sowed would sprout later.

Closer to the real world I worked as a day laborer on a Buckeye Pipeline Company repair gang based in a tiny town called Frazeyburg, Ohio. My roommate, Norman Marsh, and I rode by truck each morning to our work sites with five experienced hands who treated us at first with the contempt reserved for green college slickers. They relented later when they realized that we were determined to do our share. Our first impression of them as blue collar rednecks changed accordingly. They taught us the tricks of pacing and

technique that enabled a person to do hard physical work all day long. They impressed on us the importance of finishing our education so we would not end up on their day labor treadmill. At daily lunch break penny ante poker games, they took us to the cleaners but taught us how to bet and bluff. When we were broke at the end of the pay period, they quietly let us win a little. Our nicknames were Slim and Red (me), better than one young member of the gang known only as Turd.

In the evenings we would return to our boarding house filthy and smelling of the crude oil that covered our clothes, a little high on the 3.2% beer we had shared with our mates after work. We learned how slow life is in a small American town. The only movie house in Frazeysburg, population 570 had long been converted into one of the town's three churches. The much anticipated event of the week was a square dancing in the red brick main street blocked off by a flatbed truck on which a country music band led the young generation through the traditional steps as elders gossiped on their porches.

Q: How did you get this job?

PLATT: I got it through the father of a classmate at school. Perhaps he was a shareholder in the Buckeye Pipeline Company. Summer jobs were crucial and we were happy to scrounge them any way we could.

Q: This one actually meant leaving home, too.

PLATT: Yes, we bought a car for a couple hundred dollars and took off. It was very instructive. I also spent a summer working in Toronto as a carpenter in a plant that produced aerial survey maps. I lived on a farm in the Caledonian hills outside the city. My host and employer was a man named Douglas Kendall, an English colleague of my father during the war. He was the British counterpart commanding the US-UK intelligence analysis team that kept them busy the entire war before moving to Canada start this company. On weekends my work in the barn launched a lifetime fascination with pigs. One day the farm manager came to me with a cardboard box containing four tiny newborn piglets. "The sow dropped 14, but only has 10 spigots," he said, "these are yours, do your best for them," he said thrusting the box into my hands disappearing out the door. The smallest, a runt of runts, had not had any food since birth and was dying. I had no idea what to do, but devised an emergency potion, equal parts of milk, honey and Canadian Club Whiskey. I fed it to him with an eyedropper and in half an hour he was larking around with the others. These four became my first children. They were clean, smart, funny and responsive particularly at the time of their 2:00 AM bottle. On weekends lying on the lawn they would climb all over me and the family dog snuffling in our ears and grunting affectionately. I never got over it. Small wonder when I retired from the Asia Society I was given a pig instead of the gold watch.

Q: That's this picture here?

PLATT: Yes.

Q: A pig registry?

PLATT: That pig is going to live in Richmond. His name is Ambassador Pig as you can see. My brother runs a big institution in Richmond called the Maymont Foundation, which manages an antebellum house, actually it's a postbellum house, with a garden, a zoo, and a petting zoo. It's Richmond's downtown park. It's a private park, but it's public, it's open to the public, free every day.

Q: Is it down by the museum? I've been to the museum. Richmond, Virginia, right?

PLATT: There's museums, but Maymont Park is on the James and it is right downtown and easily accessible. Anyway a residence is being built for Ambassador Pig and his brother Deputy Pig even as we speak.

Q: Exquisite.

PLATT: Let me continue here. At Harvard after the Winant volunteer summer I pursued my interest in diplomacy by studying European and American diplomat history. Taking German language courses and writing an honor thesis on the passage of the Marshall Plan through congress. These were the Eisenhower years and the role of the U.S. as the leader of the West had solidified. The lines of battle for the Cold War were drawn. U.S. interests in world affairs were strong and growing. University courses began to reflect these realities. I took intellectually defining courses from the likes of George Bundy and Arthur Schlesinger. Sheila Maynard, my wife to be, was a year behind me at Radcliffe College. We found each other during my junior year at a smoky post exam party in a crowded dormitory room. We started talking and we were astonished three hours later to find that we had not run out of things to say. The conversation has lasted more than 60 years. I gave up rowing my senior year in order to court her and we married just after graduation. This was the crowning achievement of my college years.

I had picked diplomacy as my career in my junior year. This was an unorthodox choice in those days particularly in a family whose professional traditions were architecture and law. Happily my father had no preconceived notions of what profession I would choose. On the contrary when I asked him if he thought I should be an architect, he responded in the most kindly manner, "If you have to ask, you should not be one. It's a hard way to earn a living. You have to have your own fire in the belly. Go your own way."

Another important influence was Charles E. "Chip" Bohlen, who had been my father's roommate at Harvard. I met him first at their 25th reunion in Cambridge. He endeared himself to me instantly by pointing out that he had survived life despite being expelled from St. Paul's School five days before graduation. The legend was that he had inflated a condom in the library. More seriously he had shaped a famous Foreign Service career by insisting on studying Russian in the 1930s, when the United States had no relationship with Moscow. He calculated that the time had come when U.S. Soviet relations would be paramount and he would be in the thick of things. His example would be important to me later on when I made up my mind to study Chinese.

Stories about Ambassador Choate were an important part of family lore, and made it easier for my mother to get used to the idea of a son in the “diplomatic”. He served in London (1899-1906) at a time most ambassadors wore ornate court uniforms. Representing an egalitarian republic, US envoys refused the finery, wore black tie or white tie instead and were frequently mistaken for waiters or musicians. At one now famous reception at Claridge’s Hotel, the Argentine Foreign Minister approached Ambassador Choate. “My man, call me cab,” he said. A crowd gathered, knowing Choate was fast on his feet. “You are a cab, sir,” he replied. The Foreign Service remembers Choate well because he invented housing allowances, and successfully lobbied Washington to adopt them.

In his early twenties, my mother’s father, Joseph Jr., served two years as Ambassador Choate’s private secretary. He was the duty officer on August 14, 1900, the day the Boxer Rebellion ended and the Siege of Peking was lifted. The U.S. Embassy in London was the telecommunications center for information about the international expeditionary force sent to rescue the foreign legations. Official London and royal London were all at the annual garden party at Buckingham Palace. My grandfather put on his striped pants and frock coat, took a hansom cab to the palace with the fateful telegram, and found himself the instant man of the hour. A reticent and self-effacing person, Pa Choate told me later this was the highpoint of his life. His story also made it easier for my mother to accept the idea of a son in the Foreign Service.

My father-in-law, Walter Maynard, a leading Wall Street investment analyst and banker, had little time for government officials and told me so in the most genial way. Assistant secretaries were a dime a dozen, he said. Wall Street had a comfortably clear and quantitative way of measuring performance. The more money you made, the better you were. Even though I was only twenty-one and painfully green (he tactfully diverted me from asking for Sheila’s hand as we stood side by side in a downtown club men’s room), Walter respected my judgment in choosing his daughter. We liked each other from the beginning. He knew that my mind was made up and simply advised me to consider his profession as a fallback, should my plans fail to work out.

His advice was well taken. I may have decided to join the Foreign Service, but the service had hardly decided to join me. The entrance exams were notoriously competitive. In 1957, the first year I applied, 240 officers were chosen from a field of 14,000. Failure was common, and many subsequently successful diplomats had flunked several times. I took my first set of exams before graduating from Harvard in 1957 and fell short. The examiners said I knew nothing about economics and had to fix that. They encouraged me to try again once I had. A solid commitment to the career was rare in someone so young, they said, implying that I needed to go away and grow up some.

That afternoon, I went to call on Paul Nitze at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). The father of a classmate at college (as well as Walter Maynard’s Harvard roommate), he was a founder of SAIS, former head of the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff under Dean Acheson, and a respected member of the

Washington foreign policy establishment. I had consulted him earlier on the benefits of graduate school for a Foreign Service career. A blunt and friendly mentor, he had advised that I take the exams first. If I got in, the Foreign Service would train me on the job. If I did not pass, come and see him. Graduate school could help.

The two years at SAIS were stimulating and eventful. We lived in a tiny house in Georgetown and fell in love with the city that was to become our headquarters for the next thirty-five years. The school, now renamed after Nitze, was the perfect place to start learning the Washington ropes. Small then, with a student body limited to seventy-five by the size of the two converted townhouses in which it was housed, the teaching was done by international figures with years of Washington knowledge, like Hans Morgenthau, and experienced practitioners, like Roger Hilsman and Nitze himself. Papers were graded on the quality of the interviews students conducted with working officials, rather than books cited.

SAIS taught us the mechanics of Washington. My formal academic focus remained on Europe. I studied advanced German, economics, history, psychological warfare, and the balance of power. But we were lucky to get a look at loftier levels of life in the capital. The columnist Joseph Alsop, an admirer of Sheila's mother, befriended us when we arrived in Washington. He liked to sprinkle his guest lists with younger people and included us in some of his famous Georgetown dinner parties, where he gathered the top personalities and policy makers of the day. At one of these, his cousin, Alice Roosevelt Longworth, snapped my head back with the cay observation that the vain General Douglas MacArthur hid his baldness with an "armpit comb-over."

Paul and Phyllis Nitze took us under their generous wings and included us in weekend activities at their spectacular farm on the Potomac in Maryland. Sheila and I were close to the Nitze children and later our boys to their grandchildren. The weekends at the farm were a cozy mix of family, policy talk, and sport, featuring ferocious tennis games between people like the CIA's Desmond Fitzgerald, Stewart Alsop, and a variety of admirals and generals. I remember asking Paul at one of these events what he thought of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. "Foster Dulles was a bore and a fart!" Nitze replied, never one to mince words.

We started our family. Adam was born in July 1958. His first month of life was marked by a severe case of pneumonia, which almost killed him and taught his parents more about the fragility and value of life than anything that had happened before. Taking the advice of my father-in-law, I spent the summer of 1958 as a trainee at the Baltimore investment banking firm of Alex Brown and Sons, working in all their departments for a dollar an hour. We bought our first house, in the old town of Alexandria, and moved there.

I took the Foreign Service exams again. The Board of Examiners, noting that I had showed up once more, this time a year older, married, and a father, and with some real-world economic experience under my belt, decided to let me in. It took another year to complete the security and medical clearances (obtaining urine specimens from an infant

was a challenge) and for the Congress to appropriate the money to bring in another class of new Foreign Service officers.

The call came in April 1959 to report to the A-100 course at the Foreign Service Institute, the State Department's equivalent of boot camp. The die was cast. The choice made.

WHAT TURNED YOU TO CHINA?

I backed into China. Entering the Foreign Service in 1959 with an itch to see history, I thought Europe would be where I would find it. A major in European History at Harvard, a Masters Degree in International Relations from Johns Hopkins, strong emphasis on the German language and Germany in post-World War II Europe had prepared me, I thought, for a career engaged at the center of the Cold War in Europe. Not so.

The Visa Section of the US Consulate in Windsor, Ontario was the State Department's idea of a European post for a 23- year old aspiring political officer. A quirk of geography had placed this Canadian border city due South of Detroit on a peninsula, the post report told us, of "poorly drained soil, whose principal crop is rutabagas". Windsor produced cars and Canadian Club whiskey, but not history.

My classmates at the Foreign Service Institute's (FSI) A-100 course for new officers in Washington greeted my assignment with hilarity. They had orders for glamorous sounding places like Isfahan, Iran; Yaoundé, Cameroon and Paris. I felt humiliated. State Department Personnel insisted I go. Three other applicants had wriggled out of the assignment, one because, he argued, his mother in law lived in Detroit.

Roaming the halls of FSI in shock and despair, I ran into Herbert Levin, an older friend from Harvard who had joined the service a few years before. What was he doing there? I asked. Studying intensive Mandarin Chinese, came the answer. Why? There are no posts in Mainland China, I continued. Well, there will be, came the reply. History is on our side. The Far Eastern Bureau of the State Department, he added, is free of prejudice toward Jews, an important factor in his own decision..

Having never given a single thought to China, I was intrigued. The year was 1959. Mao's Great Leap Forward was failing, and news of the resulting turmoil and starvation was filtering into the western press. Levin, who already knew the ways of the bureaucracy, recommended that I put in a strong application for Chinese language training before I left for Windsor, and then do the research during the two years in Windsor to determine if I really wanted to proceed. The Department would not force hard language on unwilling officers. The process was simply too expensive.

Thirty years before, Chip Bohlen had insisted on studying the language of a large country with whom we had no relationship. What would he be studying now? Chinese, I guessed.

I followed Herb's advice, after consulting with Sheila. The hard language option provided a rudder for Foreign Service careers. There were few jobs in Europe for young

officers, and lots in Asia, provided you learnt a core language. Senator McCarthy had purged the Foreign Service of many competent China specialists. Chinese was key to more Asian countries than any other. The assignment officers were skeptical given my lack of background or experience. But I, having made this decision in cold blood, put up a warm, enthusiastic front, promising to keep coming back until they acquiesced.

So we went to Windsor, Sheila, infant son Adam and I. The plan was to issue visas by day, read about China at night, and see where that led.

The Consulate in Windsor was a four-man post where FSOs traditionally began or ended their careers. I was the most junior by far, Vice Consul in a section that issued eight thousand visas a year, to immigrants, Canadian commuters and visitors from all over the world. The offices were on one floor of an old office building on the Detroit River, with the skyline of the promised land shining through the window. A callow 23 year-old, I was to decide who got there and who did not.

The new Principal Officer arrived a month after we did. He was replacing a Consul of long tenure who was locally known for his skill at the poker table, and more so for entertaining guests in his office barefoot. He suffered from a scrofulous foot condition that shoes made worse. Colleagues reported that he would put them on the desk when meeting others with whom he felt at ease.

The new boss had spent years as a clerk in debilitating posts along the Mosquito Coast in Central America, and was integrated as a Foreign Service Officer under the Wriston program in the late 'fifties. Fresh from an assignment heading the Visa Section in a large Embassy in Latin America, Windsor was his first command.

Sheila and I prepared meticulously for our initial call on the Consul and his wife. Carefully following the guidance from "Social Usage in the Foreign Service", which we had been told to consult for all such occasions, we dressed in our best, she in hat and gloves, me in a dark blue suit. My calling card was turned down at the corner, with the appropriate initials penciled in as instructed.

Walking down the flagstone path to the modest brick suburban house that served as the residence of the ranking American official in Windsor, we were apprehensive about our first formal occasion as a Foreign Service family abroad. The Consul met us at the door. He was dressed in a pair of khaki shorts, nothing more. Bald, with knobby knees, bunions and undisciplined sprouts of chest hair, he greeted us affably and invited us out onto the back porch to meet his wife and enjoy a glass of iced tea.

She welcomed us warmly, dressed also in khaki shorts with a halter. We sat stiffly on the porch glider, which had not been oiled for some time, and squeaked with every movement back and forth.

The women carried the burden of the exploratory small talk that followed, with Sheila asking the Consul's wife about her life and work. In soft tones from her native Virginia

(the boss was also from there) she told us that she had been trained a nurse, a profession that had served her well in the unhealthy climate of coastal Central America.

“I set great store by enemas, Sheila”, she said. “Whenever I’m feeling a might puny, I just bend over and take a quart.”

The glider squeaked loudly as it moved back and forth in the silence that followed.

“How was your trip up to Windsor?” Sheila asked, to fill the void.

“Oh, we had a horrible time with our medical exam in Washington”, came the reply.

“You see, neither me or my daughter (a sallow 21 year old who accompanied the new top couple) could produce the stool specimen required. It was Friday, and we thought we’d be stuck the whole weekend.”

The glider squeaked back and forth.

“Well, what did you do next?” Sheila asked, helpfully.

“Well, my husband never suffered from this complaint. He produced a big one. We just cut it in three pieces and went on our way. That’s how we got to Windsor, Sheila!”

After a few more squeaks of the glider, we took our leave, walked to the car, drove around the corner, stopped, and convulsed laughing. What have we gotten into, we wondered? Was this the same Foreign Service that produced Chip Bohlen?

Composing ourselves, we drove back to our hotel in silence. “Bend over and take a quart” became a secret family motto. But hilarity aside, our first call troubled and even shamed us. It took years before we told others of the conversation.

Windsor taught us that things are never as bad, or as good as they seem. My colleagues were weak. The leadership example set by the new principal officer included driving the official car home each afternoon to watch “Queen for a Day”. The head of the Visa Section, a cultured and fastidious European specialist, turned out to be an alcoholic who binged when his domineering wife was away, drinking vodka out of a paper bag in his desk drawer between visa applicants. I had not expected as the most junior of officers, to have to send my supervisor home. The Consul kept the situation at arm’s length. “You handle it,” he said.

I did, and, in effect, ran the Visa Section. The staff, eleven smart polyglot Canadian women from Ontario, Quebec, Serbia, Montenegro, and Italy and a Pakistani man with terrifying B.O. and long experience in the Consular Service kept me from making mistakes. I had much broader responsibility than most of my contemporaries working on one specialized kind of immigration problem in the huge Visa assembly lines in Toronto, Montreal and Rome. With immigration lawyers crossing from Detroit to push their cases,

and congressional staffs a mere phone call away, I had to know the law and the procedures..

The flow of applicants provided endless variety. The Australian female bullwhip champion; a Polish spy; Cuban baseball players; Japanese chicken sexers; suspected Lebanese marriage frauds and midget wrestlers, were among my “clients”. I learned early one of the basic skills of diplomacy, imparting difficult news in a positive way. The cherry- cheeked grandmother had to be told that she had failed the Wasserman test (for syphilis), but could get a visa after a big shot of Penicillin. The middle- aged couple who had never formally wed despite twenty years together had to be told to go get married quietly during the lunch hour, lest their teen age daughter find out that she was illegitimate. The Iranian student who married an American whore from the pits of Detroit had to be told that this relationship would not get him into the United States or her out of jail.

Sheila and I, insular New Yorkers by birth, learned a lot about the American Middle West (two of our daughters-in law are Michiganders). I found out how we manage the long, peaceful Canadian border, knowledge still valid in the current age of borderless terrorism. We made friends who last to this day. Our family grew, with the birth of second son Oliver in 1960. Inspired by a great folksinger named Odetta, I took up the guitar and sang to my boys, a practice that turned into a semi-professional passion in later years.

My supervisors, such as they were, appreciated what I did for them and wrote glowing efficiency reports, which in turn convinced Personnel in Washington to take a gamble and assign me to Chinese language training. We were thrilled when the word came through. Reading the five foot shelf on China during long Windsor evenings had produced a fascination that was to last a lifetime. The prospect of two years of intensive Mandarin, one in Washington and one in Taiwan, would start us down a new path, after a grim, if instructive start in the Foreign Service.

Do you want to ask anything at this point about Windsor or about the time when?

Q: Yes, what other kind of reporting was coming out of a post like that?

PLATT: There was economic reporting about automobile manufacturing. Windsor of course is the great Canadian adjunct in Detroit and the assembly lines are completely integrated even especially now. I mean if the customs officials looking at big trailer trucks takes longer than a minute and 14 seconds, the assembly line in Baton Rouge slows down because the parts are coming over. In those days there was a lot of traffic back and forth. We also had some political issues. Paul Martin who became the Prime Minister and then his son who I think is now the Prime Minister all came from Windsor. So, there was a little bit of sort of local biographic reporting to do. We had one big incident which occurred in the consular district where an army corps of engineers major took it upon himself to in cahoots with the Michigan State police to arrest two Indians Canadian Indians who had been working on an dredging project in Canada. These guys

had been suspected and in fact were quite guilty of robbing cottages on the American side. This was a feature of border management, Mounties and Michigan state police and the various different border agencies were all in each other's offices everyday trying to chase criminals into each other's jurisdictions. This was a little bit flagrant. There was a bend in the river and it was the middle of the night and the barge carrying the workers home crossed into American waters and after a light was flashed and the Michigan state police took them off and took them to Detroit and charged them. Ottawa just went up in smoke. The new immigration minister who was a very fierce and politically potent woman.

I was tasked with sorting this out, finding out what had happened, and devising a solution. So I went up and down the river talking to people, including the major. Yes, he had flashed the signal, and way exceeded his job description. The solution I recommended was to move the major to other work, and leave it at that, a sacrifice to maintain the extraordinarily effective, if informal, collaboration between all the agencies along 4,000 miles of border. This was my first experience with political work, and I loved it.

Q: How big is the Windsor consular district?

PLATT: The post closed about ten years later. The district stretched from Windsor to Port Huron over to Sault-Sainte-Marie, with nothing in between except the nickel industry in Sudbury. Though we had the river and Great Lake districts up to Sault-Sainte-Marie, Our reason for being was to issue visas on the border.

Q: How did our automobile industry factors get so intertwined over the border? Was that an adjustment to taxes?

PLATT: No, Detroit and Windsor were one big industrial area with an international boundary running between. There were benefits from manufacturing offshore. Plant space was available. Labor costs in Canada were somewhat cheaper. Anybody Windsor resident who commuted to work in Detroit had to get an immigrant visa.

Q: Immigrant?

PLATT: Yes.

Q: Did the UAW also unionize the Canadian plants?

PLATT: There was a local equivalent. We had all kinds of interesting cross border issues. There used to be a big field day every year organized by a small committee of people from the different agencies border patrol, from the consulate and the Mounties and state police and so on and so forth. For everybody from Sault-Sainte-Marie all the way over to Nova Scotia. They had a big field day at the country club in Windsor. It was great fun and everybody got bombed and played bad poker and played softball and shot pistols and did all that stuff for a day and

everybody got to know each other and it made a huge difference. I mean if I had a problem I could call the district commissioner in Buffalo or some other place along the border and get things done.

Windsor was where you went if you wanted to adjust your status because you couldn't do it in the United States in those days. The Cuban ball players would come to Windsor for a day, bring their documents, have them sent in and looked at and if they didn't have an epileptic fit on the rug or declare that they were communist or homosexual they'd get their visas and go home. I got to know all kinds of ball teams and companies and so on and so forth. I used to go to the ball games in Detroit, steal the signals of the pitchers and stuff. It was fun. Sit in the bleachers.

Q: Somebody was asking me the other day, can you define diplomacy and I was arguing that diplomacy in one sense is maintenance of a relationship. .

PLATT: Maintenance of relationships is part of diplomacy, but the key is communication. It is the way that countries talk to each other. A lot of what they have to say is very difficult. So, you have to choose your words and you have to know people. You have to become a trusted interlocutor.

Q: You basically have to have some personal experience with the guy across the table so that you know how to make your presentation. .

PLATT: You have to establish.

Q: A human contact.

PLATT: A contact and you have to establish integrity and trust. You also have to figure out in each case the best way to communicate. Sometimes what happens across the table is a ceremony and the real back and forth, the real communication, the real horse trading that leads to a solution takes place through a back channel that you create. When working with the Japanese it's very much that way. There's so many different approaches and your job is to figure out what your channels are, develop your channels and how best to put your messages. Then you have to also figure out what are the right messages. When you get bad instructions, you must tell the guys at home that this isn't the way it's going to be done or else to just change them yourself and deliver them and get the same result.

Q: I've seen examples of both of those.

PLATT: I think secure communication is the first thing, Then there are all kinds methods. For example, the diplomatic reception so maligned by observers from the outside is a key channel of communication, one of the few conversational environments that cannot be bugged. Those of us who attended receptions to learn things or impart messages and so on and so forth used to rate the reception as a one telegram, two telegram or three telegram reception. A lot of work was done.

Q, Tell about Chinese Language Training

How does a Euro-centric New Yorker in his mid-twenties learn an oriental language?

Answer: By turning back into an infant and starting from scratch. In 1961, the Foreign Service Institute, now in grand quarters on a handsome campus named after Secretary of State George P. Schultz, occupied the garage of an unprepossessing apartment building in Virginia named Arlington Towers. There, in hastily assembled, windowless wallboard compartments under fluorescent lights, the return to infancy began.

World War II had transformed oriental language teaching. The urgent need for speakers and readers of Japanese and Chinese gave rise to a two-track system patterned after the way children learn to talk from their mothers, and to read from their schoolteachers. Before the war Westerners who wanted to learn Chinese were taught to read and speak at the same time, associating each written ideogram with meaning and sound simultaneously. The process was thorough, laborious and slow, often taking several years. The two-track system was much faster, but required a return to mother's knee.

We started by hearing sounds and mimicking them. During the first three weeks, we spent six hours a day drilled in class or hitched up to tape- recorders, repeating the four hundred noises that Mandarin Chinese uses to differentiate meaning by sound. (English has twelve hundred noises). It was important to get the tones right. These are really directions of sound, rather than notes, right. The syllable, "ma", pronounced with a high steady tone means "mother", with a falling tone means "scold", with a low dipping tone means "horse", with no tone at all, denotes a question mark, and so on. More dangerously, "bi" means "pen" with the low dipping tone, and a rude word for "vagina" pronounced high and steady

The weeks of mime gave way to months of drill on patterns of grammar, and increasingly complex dialogues that dealt with social interaction, survival in daily situations, and later history and economics. Seven weeks into the course we started the second track, beginning to learn Chinese characters, to write them in the proper stroke order and to make them look right. We were responsible for "active" knowledge of about eight hundred characters, which meant we had to know how to write them. Most of the thousands of characters and combinations we studied were learned passively, i.e. we had to be able to recognize them in the newspapers and know what they meant. Our goal was to read with speed and competence.

The pace was grueling—six hours of class, and three to four hours of homework for each weekday for eleven months. My three classmates, Roger Sullivan (later Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs), Stan Brooks (later Consul General in Shanghai) and Tim Manley (served in Taiwan embassy), were talented, hardworking and humorous. We became lifelong friends. (The process has also been known to create lifelong enemies, too). Happily, we moved along at more or less the same pace.

Our teachers were skilled and many-faceted. Mr. Li Tsung Mi was an erudite linguist who could tell you where the words came from and how they interrelated. Miss Chao was a brilliant conversationalist, who forced us to use our limited child vocabularies for real discussions. Most impressive as we grew more conversant was Dr. Ma, an elderly former editor of a major Catholic newspaper in Peking, who told us about Chinese attitudes and cultural beliefs. He had suffered when the Communists took over in 1949, and was in poor health.

My first meeting with Dr. Ma remains indelible. I found him in his office sitting under the fluorescent lights at a drab steel table that was standard government issue for classrooms. He wore a shawl, scholars' wool cap and calligraphers gloves (with the fingers free) to protect against the blast of Arlington Towers' fierce air conditioning. We were early on in the course, focused on problems of pronunciation, nagging our teachers with questions about where we placed our tongues when making exotic Chinese sounds.

Without my saying a word, Dr. Ma turned to me and said, (I am smoothing out his famously terrible English)

“If you ask me where your tongue should be, I'll answer it's in your mouth. I am not a linguist and know nothing about such things.”

“You should know something important as you start your study of Chinese. Americans think we are yellow, but we think you are purple.”

That was it for our first class. I never forgot how strange Chinese think we look. The lesson stood us in good stead later when traveling in provincial Mainland cities where huge crowds would gather in the streets to ogle my wife, children and me, odd zoo animals from another world.

Dr. Ma performed another valuable service. He gave me a real Chinese name. Normally, when naming purple barbarians the Chinese choose characters that are as close to the sound of your surname as they can find. They sound okay but don't mean anything, except to identify you as a foreigner. Under that formula, my name would combine three characters with the sounds Pu La Te. Dr. Ma wanted all of us to have names that sounded roughly right but meant something to Chinese. Pu was a regular surname, so he let me pick a simple character easy to write. To that he added “Li”, to force or propel, and “De” virtue. So I went through life as “Self Propelled Virtue Pu”. Chinese have always liked the name, and invariable ask me how I came by it.

Vivid glimpses of Washington glitter enlivened the plain daily grind of language learning. The columnist Joseph Alsop, an admirer of Sheila's mother, had befriended us when we arrived in Washington as graduate students five years earlier. He included us in some of his famous Georgetown dinner parties, where he gathered the top officials and policy makers of the day. Passionately knowledgeable and opinionated about China, he

believed he had influenced my decision to study the language and was pleased when we returned to the capital.

One summer morning, he telephoned to say that he was organizing a dinner for “the Young Man”. Would we join him, bring the guitar and provide the entertainment? The idea of singing for John F. Kennedy terrified us both (by now duets with Sheila were our best numbers), but we accepted immediately.

Georgetown was bathed in a lovely summer evening light as we approached Alsop’s house, guitar case in hand, shadowed along the street by discreet well-dressed men with hearing aids. They closed in as we moved to enter the house, and thoroughly inspected the case in the most decorous Secret Service manner. Once inside, we found Joe’s closest friends, people like William Walton, British Ambassador, Phil and Katherine Graham of the Washington Post, the Chip Bohlen, all straining to create a natural atmosphere for the “Young Man”, who was, in turn, relaxed and cordial. Jacqueline Kennedy was in Newport, so the gorgeous Mary Meyer (later tragically murdered while jogging on the Georgetown Canal) kept the President company on this occasion. As normal for Washington parties, the talk covered all the issues of the day, particularly Medicare, which had that day failed to pass in Congress. At Joe’s after dinner round table, the President voiced his disappointment in certain terms. Phil Graham kindly asked me if I had anything I wanted to say, in which case he would arrange for me to get a word in edgewise. I demurred, having no view on the topic.

Later in the garden, Sheila and I sang. (“St. James Infirmary”, “I’ll Fly Away”, John Henry”) The President listened politely. Attorney General Robert Kennedy, arriving late from a trip to Michigan, chinned himself in a nearby tree.

TAIWAN

By the end of eleven months in Washington, we took an exam and qualified at the 2 level, which meant that we could operate safely in a Chinese environment, but were not yet able to work at a professional level. We were ready for the next phase, a year at the FSI language school in Taichung, Taiwan. The prospect of living and communicating in a real Chinese place had buoyed us through the long months of drudgery in Arlington Towers. Sheila was eager, too, having taken private speaking lessons on the side during our months in Washington. (The State Department said it had no money to train wives).

We had never been to Asia. The long flight to Taiwan via Hawaii and Japan with two small sons was a major passage for our family. We fought jet lag and culture shock in Tokyo, but found comfort in Taiwan because we could communicate. The long hours of training had started to pay off.

Taichung is central Taiwan’s largest city with a current population of several million and a bustling port on the Taiwan straits. In 1963, it was a much smaller place. 600,000 people lived there, and the city limits ended long before one reached the sea. Electricity was limited and the nights were dark. Motorbikes and cars had yet to replace bullock

carts and pedicabs, though the process had begun. Water buffaloes plowed the green rice paddies in the countryside, framed by wrinkled blue mountains in the background. We were fortunate to find a Japanese-style house in a walled compound at the end of a dirt road. a short bike ride from the school. We settled in happily.

Letters home give some of the flavor:

“It is a shock to find one’s self a curio, I wrote. Yesterday I was downtown engrossed in bargaining for a balloon for the boys. Nearing the end of this exhilarating process, I looked up and found myself surrounded by a crowd of at least fifty people. Sheila, on the other hand isn’t just a large red curio, she’s a phenomenon! We walked down in the park the other day, she clad in her rather full blue overcoat (the one that makes her look like a six-foot tea cozy) and the Chinese crowded around exclaiming “Tai da” (“Too Big”). The reaction, far from being mirthful, was one of awe and amazement. It was Queen Liliuokalani walking in their midst.”

From Sheila:

“The boys are really thriving, and they’ve made a clutch of Chinese friends in the neighborhood. Yesterday Adam sailed forth bright and early, dressed in blue overalls, a red shirt, cowboy hat jammed down over his nose, red bandanna around his neck and a flashy Hong Kong cap pistol and holster low on the hips. He was met by a horde of admirers outside the gate, and they escorted him to their stamping ground under a bush, where they placed him on a bamboo stool, seated themselves on stones in a circle around him and proceeded to admire him. Adam thought this was great, especially when they gave him some caps for his pistol, and he had a fine noisy time for the rest of the morning. Oliver, who doesn’t like caps (“too dangerous”) retired to the house to read up on Chinese culture (Ping the Duck, for the fifty ninth time), but the morning was a great success. O and A are known as “Tiger Number One” and “Tiger Number Two” so you can imagine their delight when they found out that one of our two cooks’ son’s names are Dragons Number One and Two.”

In 1963, the Republic of China on Taiwan, like the People’s Republic of China across the Straits, was a single party police state under an authoritarian ruler. Rapid growth in agriculture, under a land reform program designed by American and Chinese economists and enforced by the strict government, was beginning to spur the entire economy. Mainlanders under Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and his wife, the army and the police dominated politics. Native Taiwanese, who had received higher education as doctors and agriculturalists under Japanese rule (1895- 1945), were taking charge of the economy.

Such, in broadest outline, was the scene as we started our school year. All told there were about twenty students and their families, representing the State Department, CIA and the military. We were the new kids on the block. Last year’s class welcomed us. They included names like Morton Abramowitz, Harry Thayer, and Don Anderson who would later go on to big jobs in Asia and Washington. They would graduate in a few months and proceed to assignments in Hong Kong, Taipei, Singapore and Malaysia.

The school was a two-story building, honeycombed with small classrooms, all of which had windows. The teachers were all Mainlanders with pure Peking accents, led by an soft-spoken American linguist named Gerardus (Gerry) Kok, whose academic bloodline included Monterey and Yale.

The infants had grown up. The routine of six hours of class and four hours of homework remained, but instruction was now individual. You cannot relax when working with a teacher one-on-one, and the pace of learning intensified. The pablum of elementary textbooks was replaced by live materials; newspapers, radio broadcasts, oral discussion and debate. Although we were still shy, and fenced off as foreigners, we did our best to practice in the street and on the trips we took with teachers at the end of each term. These placed us in some ridiculous situations, which enriched our vocabulary.

On one such trip, at the end of an exhausting day of driving Sheila and I, accompanied by one other couples and a teacher, found ourselves in the hot spring resort of Beitou. All of the hotels there were, in effect, ornate whorehouses. We had no choice but to persuade the perplexed management of one of these to let us in, not just for the normal hour or two, but for the whole night. Sheila and I took our rest in a round bed under a huge mirror. Throughout the night young ladies knocked at the door asking if I would like one to come in and “take a rest.” In the morning, we had a delightful breakfast with the “staff”, who were comely, well-spoken and intensely curious about the odd-looking foreigners who had invaded in the night.

Sheila’s perspective, set forth in a letter:

[“That day brought us down out of the mountains and to a hot spring resort north of Taipei, where we discovered that all hotels are dual purpose affairs partly for travelers, but mostly good time Charlies and each had a goodly staff of young ladies to assist the Charlies in having a good time. The Gents picked an establishment called the “New Life Hotel,” and we were helped to our rooms by clouds of young ladies, one called “Goldie” in Chinese. The tutors thought the whole thing fairly amusing but not too far out of the ordinary, but we thought it a scream, especially when Goldie wanted to help N. & me take a bath. We managed to get rid of her, and had a lovely time wallowing around the hot spring water, from which we emerged much refreshed, but smelling strongly of sulfur. As we were going to bed, the door was practically broken down by a “miss” as they are called, who wanted to use the local euphemism, to “rest a rest” with Nicky, who said no thank you. We were the only Americans in this establishment, so maybe we got special attention. Anyway, the giggles, door slamming and other activities during the night were formidable, but we rather enjoyed, in a surrealist way, the idea of sleeping in a brothel!”

My breakthrough to fluency took place during a weekend of travel with a brilliant and eccentric teacher named Zhang Damu who moonlighted as an instructor of Chinese composition at elementary schools throughout central Taiwan. He had refused my invitations to travel down-island, suggesting instead that I take him on his teaching

rounds in my car. He asked me to prepare a five minute introduction of myself—who I was, where I came from, why I wanted to learn Chinese, etc.-- which he would then ask me to present in Chinese to the students of each of his classes.

This was terrifying. Imagine a purple six-footer, making his maiden speech to a classroom full of tittering Taiwanese sixth-graders. But I did it, and got better each time. In two days we visited six schools, three classes at each school. By the eighteenth session, I was teaching the entire hour, answering questions about America (“Does everyone wear six-guns?”) and asking the students about their own lives. Zhang, who knew exactly what he was doing, would disappear from each class after introducing me and made me fend for myself. After that weekend, I was confident that I could finish any sentence I started. The inhibitions were gone.

When the course ended, I qualified with the rest of my class at the 3+ level, which meant I was ready to work professionally in the language. Our mastery was still rudimentary, we found. It would take years on the job as well as constant practice for all the material that had been stuffed into us to settle.

Our contact with the teachers yielded a wealth of lore on how Chinese think. For example, take the term *dweifu*, in common use, which means to cope with or manage. Our teacher provided a uniquely Chinese definition. “Let’s take an example. If I’m a visa applicant and you’re the consul and I come to you to apply for a visa to immigrate to the United States or to get my mother to go to the United States, if you are a normal American you will simply tell me it’s just not going to happen, it’s just not possible. The quotas are all full up and we don’t have a chance.” Now that to me is being like having cold water poured on my head. If I was a Chinese dealing with this situation I would *dweifu* you and I would *dweifu* the situation. What I would do would be to say well, fill out this form and come back in three weeks. Then when you came back in three weeks, I would say, look I’ve sent the form into Washington and I’m not so sure that there’s room on the quota, but if you come back in three weeks, I’ll let you know what I’ve been told and so it would go. In three weeks you’d come back and I’d say, there are a lot of people in line here and it may take a while, but I’m going to keep working on it and I want you to keep coming back and keep in touch with me. You would get the idea, well, you know, it really isn’t going to happen. That’s what *dweifu* means. For Chinese, it’s much preferable to the cold water treatment.

We were picking up this kind of lore all the time and I used the technique for years even though it wasn’t necessarily the way that Americans, in our honest and straightforward and blunt way, would behave. I *dweifued* people. I would be polite. After a while they’d get the idea. They got the answer. They knew what the situation was, that they had not had cold water poured on their heads.

Q: To me that’s an illustration, too of the negotiating benefits you get from the language training. The language is the software of the mind. It tells you what symbols you can pull out of the other individual to help him either understand or to help you communicate

what you need. Otherwise you're operating only in your own system and not in his system.

PLATT: Well, this is an important part of the conversation because I had two jobs back to back. One in China at the liaison office where I was using my Chinese every day, working on domestic politics, reading the paper, talking to people and so forth. Talking to people who didn't know my language, but I was also dealing with Chinese in Chinese and I found that I was using the simplest way of putting things because that's what I knew what to do. I was using relatively straightforward, simple techniques, simple language constructions and so on and so forth. I found that I was being franker with them than I would have been if I had a real mastery of all of the nuances of Chinese.

Then I went to Japan and the tables were turned. I had taken six months of language training in Japan and I knew how to navigate and get around, but I couldn't really work professionally. I didn't need to because my job was to cover the Japanese foreign ministry at the office director level and in the Japanese system, the office directors are the ones who are allowed to have ideas. In fact they're required to have ideas as to how you solve problems. In the Japanese system as you move up the line you turn into a consensus manager. The Japanese who were talking to me were talking in English which was far better than my Japanese was ever going to be. But it was still a foreign language for them and for the same reason I was frank with my Chinese interlocutors in Beijing they were much franker with me than they would have been if they'd been speaking Japanese.

You know, when you're speaking a foreign language to another person, you somehow have this idea that because it's a foreign language, nobody of your own nationality is listening or can understand and so you can say things that you wouldn't ordinarily say. That's another reason you're franker and more direct in a foreign language than you would be in your own.

The Japanese I found, use language less as a means of communication than as a lubricant in a very crowded society. Chinese is set up quite differently because you must communicate clearly in a continent that's so big with so many different people from so many different parts. Japanese, most of the communication is done with body language amongst a people who really know each other's moods so well that you don't have to go out and say anything terribly direct. If I were talking Japanese to these guys or they were talking Japanese to me, they'd figure all kinds of ways of softening and obfuscating what they were trying to say because that's the way their language is. I found language study a very crucial tool, not only in being able to communicate myself, but in understanding the techniques of communication. People were astounded at what I was getting out of these Japanese Foreign Service Officers.

MEETING THE GENERALISSIMO

While we were on the trip described above, an ornate invitation arrived at the school from the capital, Taipei, requesting the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Platt at the annual

garden party hosted by President and Madame Chiang Kai-shek. The teachers were impressed and the students envious. How had this happened? Why were we singled out?

It turned out that my uncle Joseph H. "Sandy" Choate III had written a letter about us to Madame Chiang's close confidant and assistant, Pearl Chen. Sandy was a lawyer in New York who had decades before been selected to manage the financial affairs of Chang Hsueh-liang, the notorious "Young Marshal" who had kidnapped Chiang Kai-shek during the famous Sian Incident in 1936. Placed under house arrest for most of the rest of his life, the Nationalist Government nevertheless made sure he was financially secure, and under Sandy's management his portfolio swelled.

The Chinese loved Sandy Choate. Huge (six feet five inches and 250 pounds), with a prominent nose and flaming red hair, patches of which covered his entire body, Sandy was everything a Chinese thought a foreign devil should be. Witty and smart, he made many friends during periodic contact with the Nationalists. Madame Chiang and Pearl were among them.

Sheila has the authoritative account of this meeting.

"When we arrived, tired and dirty, at the Embassy in Taipei, we found an invitation to tea with the Generalissimo and Madame Chang waiting--very elegant and formidable. We had no proper clothes with us, of course (white gloves were necessary) but friends in Taichung had unbeknownst to us sent some up and the whole school was in an uproar because the President's office had called about the invitation! It turned out to be a very large tea indeed, and we were all delivered in big black cars, and sorted out on arrival into categories: Diplomatic corps, A.I.D., U.S.I.S., and something called "others." We were Others and at the very foot of the line with some Fulbright Professors. We all snaked through the residence and shook hands with Madame (fierce) and the Generalissimo (old and rosy) and then were herded to the Others tables in the garden. Soon up rushed an elderly Chinese lady called Miss Pearl Chun, Madame's American Secretary for 28 years, who urged us to get something to eat. We did, whereupon she urged us to eat it. We did, in front of her eyes and she said "good, now I can go and tell Madame you have had something to eat" -- she hot-footed it off to do so. We were walking around admiring the garden (lovely with fat pots of daisies, snap dragons, verbena, palms & Korean grass, all marvelous and healthy) when up panted Miss Chun, perspiring heavily, and said that Madame wanted to see us and would we please follow her, which we did, galloping after her through the surprised guests. Madame and the Gimo were sitting in a pavilion, and we were charmingly greeted, seated on pillows, talked to and given tea, while the Embassy people stood around with their eyes out on stalks. Needless to say, this was all due to Sandy, whom she really likes. She is expecting to see him when he comes out, asked fondly after him, and really made a royal fuss. We were impressed, charmed, and generally bowled over by all this, and really had a lovely time on the reddest carpet you've ever seen. The Generalissimo speaks no English, but we were about to murmur appropriate politenesses in Chinese to him, which was lucky, and the crowning touch to the whole thing was that on the way out, as the Madame and

the Gimo made their way through the crowd, she said loudly to me “Goodbye Mrs. Platt,” which practically finished the Embassy people.”]

A meeting of no substantive importance, Sheila and I valued it later as we became one of the very few couples of our generation to have met Chinese leaders from both sides of the civil war, Zhou Enlai and Madame Mao in Peking, President and Madame Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan.

Another far more significant development in the diplomacy of China marked our time in Taiwan. General De Gaulle announced that France would recognize the Communist Government in Peking. Washington was dismayed, but my classmates and I gathered in the garden of our house in Taichung to offer a private toast to the Grand Charles. The logjam of history was breaking.

Q. Were you in Taiwan when President Kennedy was assassinated?

PLATT: Yes he was.

Q: How did that strike everyone?

PLATT: It was awful. We were shocked and horrified. No one ever forgets where they were on November 22 in 1963. Our cook came in to inform me and I tuned into the VOA immediately. I remember the People’s Daily having a very tasteless cartoon. Kennedy lying down with a big bullet in his head saying, another capitalist bites the dust.

WATCHING CHINA: THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE

The rudder of language training steered us to Hong Kong in early 1964, with an assignment to the Mainland Section of the American Consulate General. This was the China Watching capital of the world, a three-story office building on Garden Road (still there, and larger) with a staff of several hundred, many of whom were assigned to guess what was happening in the People’s Republic. Others did consular work, facilitated trade, and took care of American citizens.

When I showed up for work at Garden Road in February 1964, a shortage of analysts gave me a rare opportunity to choose the field I wanted to cover, domestic politics. China’s external affairs were hot. This was the high season of the Sino-Soviet polemics, month after month of richly insulting barrages of invective between rival approaches to Communism (Khrushchev’s “revisionists” and Mao’s Stalinists). Dirty laundry in the relationship, collecting since the Soviets pulled their technical experts out of China in 1960, was now washed in the public media. Domestic politics seemed cool and dry by comparison, but I was attracted by the opportunity to learn the names of China’s players and the system that they had built. I wanted to use Chinese language capability so arduously acquired over the past two years.

The process of watching China was, and still is, labor intensive. The staff read every newspaper we could get our hands on, including provincial publications smuggled into the Colony wrapped around fish. Native linguists listened to every radio broadcast, from every province. Refugees were debriefed and their stories written up.

I was to sit each day at the end of a conveyor belt of such data, tasked to convert it into meaning. More than 90 percent of the material we analyzed was in the public domain. Clandestine sources and methods existed, to be sure, but the yield was limited. Our starting points were the prevalent slogans and the jargon of daily political discourse in the official media. Any deviation, or repositioned language meant something. We felt like subscribers to a dull and repetitive orchestra that played the same pieces day after day. We listened for squeaks from the oboes or sour notes from the horns, changes of rhythm or volume, all potential indicators of debate, or shifts in policy.

The reading skills I had acquired worked as a rough strainer. I could scan People's Daily editorials quickly, moving smoothly through the set rhetoric. The formulations I could not understand right away signaled what was new and needed analysis. The Consulate General had a staff of translators who I could consult, as well as a towering Manchu language teacher named Tang Hung (also a fine painter), with whom I could discuss new terminology.

Chinese literature provided a crucial code to political expression and debate. Editorials were shot through with references to figures and stories from great classical novels of Chinese literature. The plots and characters of The Three Kingdoms, Dream of the Red Chamber, Water Margins, to name a few, were embedded in the upbringing of every educated Chinese, whatever his or her politics. In particular, The Three Kingdoms, a Fourteenth Century novel of struggle and statecraft set around 200 AD, represented an encyclopedia of every political and military ploy in the Chinese lexicon, as well as many of the plots in Chinese opera. If you had not read this book, you simply could not decipher the editorials. Other classics, Confucius' Analects, Sun Tzu's Art of War, also helped. The time we had spent in Taiwan acquiring and reading pirated English translations of these works turned out to be well spent.

In this most closed of systems, all serious political attacks were masked in cultural allegory. As we will see later, the opening shot of the Cultural Revolution was fired in a Shanghai editorial panning the revival of an opera lionizing an official fearless enough to criticize his emperor. The reviewer was aiming at contemporary political leaders who had crossed Chairman Mao.

In 1964 and most of 1965, the China we were watching was quiet on the surface. I wrote learned dispatches, called airgrams, sent by diplomatic pouch to Washington each week on a different aspect of the domestic political scene, from Party politics to population control. I learned the traditional tools of the China Watching trade and the names and histories of the leadership.

Culture was an important part of my portfolio. One of my reports covered the Festival of Peking Opera on Revolutionary Themes, which took place in Peking during the summer of 1964. Madame Mao made her first public speech at this event, a notable development, the significance of which eluded us at the time. “Do you eat?” Madame Mao asked her audience of theater professionals and officials from the Ministry of Culture. “That food came from the farmers! So serve the farmers in your plays and operas.”

A work that received approving mention in the People’s Daily was a one-act opera called “The Bucket”. Here’s how it went:

The curtain opens. A night soil bucket sits center stage, nothing else. It contains a valuable commodity in rural China, the contents of the family chamber pots and privy.

Enter stage left the virtuous wife (cymbals, squealing strings and woodwinds) who sings a fervent aria describing her plans to spread the contents of the bucket on the communal fields to increase production for the benefit of the revolution. Cheers.

Enter stage right the husband (Chinese Communist theater conventions, like our TV sitcoms, usually portray the male as the buffoon or villain.). His aria describes the advantages of dumping the bucket on the family private plot so that family earnings from improved vegetable yields. Boos, hisses.

The husband and wife sing a duet, each grasping their side of the bucket. A tug of war ensues. (drums, cymbals, gongs, flutes).

Enter center stage behind the mother in law, who casts the deciding vote in favor of fertilizing the commune fields. Curtain, applause.

Though the placement of human fertilizer was a real issue in the Chinese countryside, we all thought this treatment in Peking opera form was silly and somewhat hilarious, a view shared by Sy Topping, NY Times Bureau Chief, who wrote it up after I briefed him. So did a number of Chinese officials, we later learned. This turned out to be a big mistake, probably the biggest of their lives. For Madame Mao’s revolutionary operas, plays, films and ballets, works like *The Red Detachment of Women*, *White Haired Girl*, and *Red Lantern*, would be the only sanctioned entertainment for years to come. She had convinced Mao that this was a vital way to purify the thoughts of the Chinese people.

The China Watching process was also intensely and competitively collegial. Diplomats stationed in Shanghai and Peking, as we called the capital then, became friends and sources. Journalists with special knowledge and good contacts as well as scholars with relevant research projects were courted for what they knew. Travelers were wined and dined. Everyone was engaged in the same game. It did not matter who or what you were, whether government official, newsman, trader, if you had some knowledge or connection to offer, you were welcome at the table, literally. Different lines of analysis were chewed over at regular lunches, organized by my colleagues and me.

Members of the group included people who went on to earn big reputations in Journalism, Government and Academe. The Chief of the Mainland Section, FSO John Holdridge, the de facto convener of the club, went on to play a key role in the opening to China as Henry Kissinger's aide on the National Security Council Staff and later became US Ambassador to Singapore and Indonesia. Other prominent members of the group included Stanley Karnow (Washington Post), Ezra Vogel (Harvard), Richard Solomon (Michigan, Columbia, National Security Council), Jerry Cohen, (Harvard Law School), Stanley Lubman (Berkeley), Michel Oksenberg, (Michigan, National Security Council), William Gleysteen (Ambassador to Korea), Soviet experts Heyward Isham (Ambassador to Haiti) and Curtis Kamman (Ambassador to Chile, Bolivia and Colombia), John Boyd (British Ambassador to Japan), John Weston (British Ambassador to UN, Emrys Davies (British Ambassador); V.V. Paranjpe (later Indian High Commissioner to South Korea. Father Ladany, an indefatigable Hungarian Jesuit with decades of experience, was the high priest of Hong Kong's China analysts.

So, that's just a list of everybody, everybody who later became anybody in the China academic diplomatic and journalism field, was in Hong Kong in the mid '60s.

Rumor was a staple of the community. If China's public information system was shut down tight, the word of mouth grapevine was one of the world's busiest and most efficient. We all listened hard for real news in the clouds of gossip. To test the speed of the system, I once told a visiting diplomat that the reason the Mayor of Shanghai had not been seen for more than a month (true) was due to liver cancer (false). One week later a Norwegian journalist, just in from Peking, whispered in my ear that the Mayor of Shanghai had liver cancer. Peking residents reported that juicy items would travel from one end of the capital to another within a day.

VISITORS

We sang for our supper to touring media moguls like Katherine Graham and Osborne Elliott, and mega-pundits like Joseph Alsop who passed regularly through Hong Kong on the way to Vietnam, where the war was heating up. Joe, a family friend, had strong views on everything including what was happening in China, which could only be changed by reversing the interview process. I would ask him questions and help with the answers, which often showed up in the stuff of his articles.

For example, Joe would say I don't think that there's really very much to the Soviet threat. I would ask, have you looked at the figures on the military units that are massing on the Chinese border? His reports would then reflect the growing danger of Soviet troops massing. Only by asking him questions could I get a point in edgewise.

The relationships we made with these figures turned out to important later on during assignments in Washington.

Visiting congressmen, also on their way to and from Vietnam, were a plague. They came to shop, hundreds of them each year, and had little real interest in China per se, though

we briefed them all. One exception was the tyrannical Armed Services Committee Chairman Mendel Rivers, who was deathly and genuinely afraid of being kidnapped in Hong Kong and spirited across the border into Red China. We assured him and his staff that this was totally unlikely, but to no avail. Special security measures had to be arranged.

As his “control officer”, the Foreign Service Officer assigned to meet, greet and manage the congressional delegation, I was also responsible for Rivers’ peace of mind. The British authorities would have laughed if I had approached them for a special police detail. The manager of the Hilton Hotel, an inventive Australian, solved the problem by stationing all the uniformed Pinkerton guards in the hotel, twenty in all, on River’s floor for the first two hours of his stay. When the elevator door opened upon his arrival, a line of tall Chinese from Shantung province (where the British traditionally recruited their police) in full uniform with side arms holstered, snapped to attention. Rivers’ shoulders sagged in relief.

Returning American Korean War defectors provided unique sources of insight and information about life in China during my time in Hong Kong. Three of these, William White, Morris Wills and Clarence Adams, left the People’s Republic in 1965 and 1966. Originally, twenty one POWs refused repatriation at the end of the Korean War and settled in China. All but five had gone back to the United States. These men were among those who had adjusted best to life in China, married, had families and taken jobs. We were interested in what they could tell us about their lives and treatment.

As the officer responsible for debriefing them, I met the defectors and their families on the Chinese side of the border at Lo Wu, the modest farming village that has since become part of the huge economic zone at Shenzhen. Being the first American official they met created a bond that helped with the interviews later on. They were expecting a sterner welcome than I gave them. Consular ritual required that I ask some pro forma questions to determine whether any of the POWs had taken actions that might have cost them their citizenship. After making sure that I got the right answers, walked them across the railway bridge and took them to Hong Kong by car.

We made small talk during the hour it took to move through the bucolic farmland of the Colony’s New Territories. Then suddenly rounding a corner in the mountain pass, they got their first sight of downtown Kowloon, the great harbor and the Island of Hong Kong. Shock and amazement were the universal reaction, rather like that of foreign visitors now to the new Pudong development zone in Shanghai.

When I asked them what motivated their decision to return, all responded that their families would have a better chance in the United States. Their decade plus in the PRC had convinced them that children of “mixed blood” would have no future in Chinese society. For some of them, White and Adams in particular, the timing of their departure was dictated by seamier considerations. The Beijing authorities were cracking down on black market activities and had implicated both.

White arrived at the border without warning, with nothing but a new suit, a few dollars in his pocket and the luggage his family could carry. It felt like an expulsion. We had advance notice of Adams' arrival, but he was not permitted to bring household possessions with him. Morris Wills, by contrast, was not touched by the investigations and negotiated a dignified departure with a full shipment of personal effects.

All three had something to tell. White (who was black) in particular, a brilliant linguist, had spent years as a top government translator. He explained how the Chinese Communist Party kept informed. White described a sophisticated system of confidential Party publications containing the latest news and articles about China in the foreign press.

The most voluminous of these, best translated as the Every Daily (Mei Ri Bao) printed every item on China that appeared each day. Only the top leaders were allowed access, and only one of them, Mao himself, had time to read it. (It was in this publication, we learned later, that Mao read Richard Nixon's 1967 Foreign Affairs article calling for rapprochement with China).

The next level of publication called Reference Materials (Can Kau Ziliao), contained important foreign articles and internal party documents for distribution to senior officials throughout the government and the provinces. The lowest level periodical was the better known Reference News, which was meant for all Party members.

Morris Wills, also known for his mastery of the Chinese language, had studied at Beijing University and ended up working on the publication China Pictorial. He gave us a sense of the strange cocoon in which foreigners lived in Beijing, as well as the pleasant but guarded existence of intellectuals in the most prestigious university in the capital. The Sino-Soviet rupture in 1960, not surprisingly, created a much stricter and more suspicious attitude towards foreigners. The inner workings of the leadership were as mysterious to Wills as they were to other observers, both native and foreign. He had great difficulty arranging to marry his wife, which soured him on Mao's China and the prospects for his children there.

Adams (also an African American) had spent the last several years translating children's books from Chinese into English. He had reportedly made broadcasts for Radio Hanoi in 1965. Clearly a hustler, Adams described widespread demand in Beijing for foreign black market items. He took pleasure in pricing watches in Hong Kong and lamenting the profit he would have made.

With the exception of Wills, who wrote an article for Look Magazine and spent a year at Harvard on a fellowship, these men returned home without fanfare and blended quietly back into Middle America..

“THESE ARE THE GOOD OLD DAYS”

We loved living in Hong Kong in the mid-sixties. The work was compelling and the surroundings exotic. Sheila and I took an ample apartment at 2 Old Peak Road

overlooking the harbor and located across the street from Canossa Hospital. Adam and Oliver, named by Chinese friends Tiger Number One (Da Hu) and Tiger Number Two (Er Hu), were soon to be joined by Tiger Number Three (San Hu), and we wanted to be close to good medical attention. The children settled in at British schools nearby (Oliver was the fastest infant at Victoria Barracks Infant School). The Wang family of Anhui Province, immigrants from Shanghai who fled the Mainland in the fifties, moved in to work for us, providing expert household service and three young children roughly our kids age, who gave them a feel for Chinese friendship, the language and local life.

Social life for foreigners in Hong Kong was organized around occupation and activity. The more different things one did, the more circles of people gave you access. In addition to watching China, we played guitar and sang folksongs and choral music, went to church at the Cathedral, and rowed and played squash competitively for the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club. Sheila began her social work career as a volunteer, doing house calls in her fluent Chinese for a non-profit agency that cared for refugees from Mandarin speaking parts of China. Our continued language study with the painter Tang Hung gave us a look at Hong Kong's artistic community.

Tang was a student of the world famous painter (also forger) Zhang Daqian. He took us one day to meet Zhang at his "studio" in a rundown apartment building in Kowloon. The place was jammed. Students, concubines, clients and critics all milled about, watching Zhang paint. There was not an easel in sight. The Master had a painting of a different style or period under way in each room, on whatever surface was handy. A trademark horse scroll was working on the bed, a lotus and bamboo in the Chan (Zen) Buddhist style on the top of a dresser, a Ming landscape taking shape on the dining room table, a delicate circular Qing bird forming on the sofa in the living room. Zhang went from room to room, surrounded by a cloud of observers, adding brush strokes and colors. a bird beak here, a flower there, a flying horse's hoof on another. The audience marveled at the rapid, flawless work, the seamless transitions from one style and century to another.

Hong Kong, was less crowded and polluted in the sixties than it is now. The population was under four million, vs. seven million plus now. But it was a confining place, particularly since the Mainland was closed tight. To get away, we bought a sailing junk and hired a boatman, both easy and inexpensive things to do. The boat was painted blue, with eyes in the bow, almost thirty feet long and ten feet wide, with three sails and an outboard engine. It cost US\$900, we named it "Star Elephant", and shared it with Inger McCabe (now Elliott), whose then husband Bob was the Newsweek correspondent.

The boatman was from a fishing family in Aberdeen. He and his colleagues used a big tree beside the road on Middle Bay as headquarters, with awnings stretched between branches and a telephone nailed to the trunk. On an hour's notice, he would be ready after work when the family and a picnic arrived to set sail into a sunset on the South China Sea.

Sheila and I told each other from the very beginning of our years in Hong Kong that "these are the good old days". That said, the history of the territory from 1964-68 was

dotted with crises of different kinds. We arrived in the midst of the massive drought of 1964, when water supplies to apartment houses were limited to three hours every four days. CEOs and Taipans would leave board meetings abruptly when the water came on in their zone. The principal topic of analysis at gatherings of China experts was the best way to flush a toilet.

1965 saw the drought broken by nine consecutive typhoons, which frightened us all with torrents of water dashed against the picture windows by ferocious quirky winds that played strange tricks. One tore open the closet doors of a friend and hurled his entire wardrobe out into the night.

In 1966, Hong Kong's financial bubble burst. The boom/bust cycle in the years before the territory's economy became the vestibule for Mainland growth in the 1980s was between three and five years. Stocks tumbled, real estate prices plummeted. Our landlord called on us and begged that we accept a 30% decrease in rent. The entire period, climaxed by torrential rains that triggered unprecedented mudslides and deaths in collapsed buildings has been immortalized in James Clavell's novel Noble House.

In 1967, of course, we had to deal with the Cultural Revolution in Hong Kong itself. But, as I wrote my family then, "we are actually thriving on our diet of disturbance. The boys are well, and Sheila, whose political sense is as sharp as her others, has been fascinated. As for myself, I can only admit to having a ball. Political trouble is what we are trained for and wait for."

THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

As mentioned before, the appearance in late 1965 of an article in the Shanghai press criticizing the opera "Hai Jui Resigns His Office" marked the first tremor of the Cultural Revolution, the political earthquake that almost destroyed the People's Republic. The experienced hands in the Consulate General, including my Chief of the Political Section, John Holdridge, Bill Gleysteen, whose missionary upbringing in China gave him special insights, and Brownie Chang, a legendary translator, all knew something huge was in the offing.

My peaceful apprenticeship as a China analyst came to an abrupt end as we struggled to keep track of the torrent of increasingly explicit media attacks, first on the leadership of the Peking Party Committee, and then during the Summer of 1966 on the top leaders of the national Party apparatus. The Red Guards made their debut in June at the first of several gigantic rallies worshipping Chairman Mao in Tiananmen Square and began their rampage throughout the country and the society. They first attacked their teachers and parents and all remnants of traditional culture and then, explicitly, the Party apparatus throughout China.

The initial weapon of attack was the "Big Character Poster" attached to the walls of the Capital. A traditional mode of student protest in China, these sprang up everywhere, excoriating Peking Party boss Peng Chen, President Liu Shaoqi, and Party Secretary

Deng Xiaoping and others down the line. Red Guard Groups began publishing their own newspapers expanding the attacks. On the ground, huge public criticism sessions ended with target officials paraded through the streets in dunce caps, their arms stretched out wide behind them in a derisive and painful position known as the “jet plane”.

Most simply, as we pieced it together over time, leftists in the Party, led by Chairman Mao, his wife Jiang Qing and Army Chief Lin Biao had organized and launched the movement in an effort to restore the primacy they had lost when the Great Leap Forward collapsed in 1959. Ever since the victory of the Communists ten years before, the Party had been divided between those who believed that you could use the same techniques to run a nation state that you used when you seized power—mass campaigns of struggle and attack, and those who felt you needed more practical approaches. Tension between the “red” and the “expert” factions were the Yin and the Yang of Chinese politics.

The failure of the Great Leap—a huge mass political effort to force the Chinese economy to new heights, mobilizing the people to build blast furnaces in their backyards, and reorganizing the Chinese peasantry into agricultural communes, discredited Mao and the “Red” approach. Millions starved as agricultural production fell. The alliance between the Chinese and the Soviets fell apart, and the industrial economy suffered as Russian experts abruptly left the factories they had designed. Pragmatic elements in the Party led by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping gained steadily in power and prestige throughout the first half of the ‘sixties. Brooding, Mao came to the conclusion that his revolution was dying because two key elements of society were rotten with bourgeois influence—the Party and the Youth. He decided to turn one against the other in one climactic purifying event—the Cultural Revolution.

The tools and techniques of China watching changed radically. Gone was the careful listening for sour notes in the daily symphony, as the orchestra dissolved into bedlam and threw their instruments at each other. We paid attention to the central media, because the leftists still controlled it. But wall posters and Red Guard newspapers became the most sought after sources of information, always juicy and often wrong. These were in great demand. Our embassy friends in Peking obliged, ripping them from the walls, shards of concrete and all and stuffing them in the diplomatic pouch.

The stately weekly dispatch I had produced became a daily telegram, approved in person by Consul General Ed Rice, in a vain effort to satisfy Washington’s voracious appetite for news and analysis. I was in the hottest of seats, and enjoying the temperature, but wondering whether I could maintain the pace.

Happily, help arrived in the form of Charles Hill, a fresh graduate of the language school in Taichung. He shared my fascination with China’s domestic politics, love of rowing and unwillingness to take too seriously either himself or the momentous events we witnessed. Perhaps the highpoint of our collaboration occurred during the disturbances in the Summer of 1967, standing on the roof of the Consulate General, observing the absurd vignette of local fat cat communist officials leaping from their Mercedes cars to wave Mao’s little Red Book at the Governor’s Residence. Together we followed the tortuous

course of the Cultural Revolution and formed a lasting partnership that took new shape decades later when we both served as Special Assistants to Secretary of State George Schultz.

In the summer and fall of 1966, the Red Guards were encouraged to travel throughout the entire country spreading the chaos originally focused on the capital. The results were often deadly, as the targets of mass criticism and humiliation cracked under pressure, killed themselves or were beaten to death. The Red Guard generation, liberated from school, free as never before to rebel against their elders and to travel anywhere they wanted, were willing instruments of the extremists during the early months of the movement. But by the turn of 1966, the Party structure was still standing. Officials, driven from their office buildings, were performing their duties from garages and other makeshift headquarters.

Realizing that the youth were not capable of toppling the Party structure by themselves, the Leftists pulled out the last stop, declaring the “January Revolution” of 1967 in Shanghai, which proclaimed that it was fine for anyone, of any age or walk of life, to rebel against authority. That did it. In city after city throughout China during the next nine months Party structures were swept away by the waves of warfare waged between great factional organizations.

These organizations formed very quickly after the lid came off. They were marvels of Chinese organizational skill, with their own propaganda arms, dance troupes, fighting units, work and welfare brigades. As the weeks passed they united into mass coalitions of “haves” and “have nots”. Those with something to lose, the children of government cadres, the established workforces of state owned enterprises, the peasants who were doing well combined to fight the dirt poor and the disenfranchised. Anyone with a grudge or a score to settle piled on. The factions outdid each other in adopting revolutionary nomenclature, East Is Red, Red Flag Fighting Corps, etc. making it very difficult for observers to understand the underlying motivation of the struggle. And they killed each other in large numbers. Those of us out sailing our pleasure junks in Hong Kong waters would see bodies floating out from the Pearl River Estuary, casualties in the battle for Canton City.

We learned about the “have-have not” cleavage from a young man who had served as a telephone operator for the big “have not” faction in Canton. He had fled for his life when his side began to lose, swum to Hong Kong and made it through to the immigration authorities, who accepted him, under the rules of the game, as a refugee. I hardly ever had the time to interview refugees, but dropped everything to spend eight hours with him, going over the table of organization of his faction and his opponents. He knew the whole structure and helped us understand why the fighting was so intense. His attitudes were also instructive. He had not the slightest interest in the freedom offered by Hong Kong. His escape was simply an act of survival. He despised Madame Mao, who he described as shallow and uneducated, and adored Chairman Mao, to whom he felt he owed his life. It was the Chairman’s teaching to fear no enemies and overcome all obstacles that inspired him during his swim. (The analysis based on this and other interviews was

published in Current Scene, a USIS mag, and was part of the raw material on which Ezra Vogel based his book Canton Under Communism.)

My purpose in relating all of this is not to give a definitive account of the Cultural Revolution, but to provide a sense of the stuff of our analytical lives during our last years in Hong Kong. There was little certainty in our judgments, and a lot of debate and argument at each stage of the process. The knowledge that the Chinese were just as confused as we were lent scant comfort.

The Cultural Revolution finally arrived in Hong Kong during the summer of 1967, bringing with it labor unrest, bomb scares, serious riots, and mass demonstrations. This all took place in our neighborhood. We were robbed in our beds one night by a cat burglar who shinnied up the pipes outside our bathroom, took my wallet and Sheila's purse, and left without disturbing our sleep. When we awoke, the bomb squad was outside our window, in full armor, gingerly inspecting a suspicious object in the middle of Old Peak Road. It was Sheila's handbag, left there by the thief.

I wrote a letter home in June 1967 describing what was going on, as follows:

"The situation now is quite favorable to our side. The communists are essentially weak, and have been forced to try and save face by showing what strength they have through a series of token strikes, each of which affects the ordinary citizen whose support they seek much more than the "imperialists" they are trying to protest against. They have threatened food, water, electricity, and gas supplies, and stopped ferry and transport services, not in any case long enough to cause lasting disruption, but just long enough to make everyone cross. It's a stupid performance, which reflects clearly the lack of direction across the border. I was taught to respect the organizational ability of the communists (and still do as a sensible hedge to all bets) but thus far it's the other tiger who turns out to be paper.

The local government, for its part, despite a few tactical blunders, has performed far better than any long-time observers of its pukka bumbings in the past would ever have dared hope. The younger officials, many of whom are in responsible jobs because their bosses are on leave, have risen to the occasion and delighted everyone by fighting the communists with their own weapons propaganda campaigns, poster wars, etc., all with good effect. The governor turns out under his sun helmet and ostrich feathers to be a sound and unflappable man. At bottom, it has been the cops who held the key, managing through good training and self-control to deny to the communists the martyr and the emotional issue they were looking for. This despite extreme provocation and an attitude toward them by the general population which resembles that of the negroes in Watts for the Los Angeles police. Anyway, the troubles will continue, with the Communists probing for weaknesses and hoping for a break, but all at a level that the local population has already become used to.

Across the border the Cultural Revolution has ground to a halt with the basic issue becoming not whether Mao can impress his antediluvian ideology on the Chinese people,

but whether the government in Peking can extend its influence in the provinces sufficiently to restore order and maintain economic production. I think they probably can, but at a cost of almost everything the old man has sought to achieve. When they finish up – God knows when that will be-- they will probably be back roughly where they started, with much of the old Party apparatus intact and society galloping towards Russian-style revisionism even faster than before.

In the meantime, the Chinese appear to have lost the respect they once had for what once was a pretty effective government. Some of the legendary discipline is gone- streets are dirty, people are beginning to steal things in a minor way, mass calisthenics are skipped, and once automatic response to mass appeals to rush out and do things like kill sparrows is no longer taken for granted. Organizations are fighting in the streets and in the communes for political power in battles so confused that even local residents don't know which side is which. The only answer is tough army sanctions, which I suspect are soon to be imposed. The net result of such sanctions, however, to judge by the happenings of February and March when the army cracked down briefly, will be "Fascist atrocities" that make Hong Kong look like a teddy bear's picnic. And where will it leave the "great Red Sun in our Hearts" Chairman Mao? In charge of a garrison state as far removed from communist Nirvana as any you can find. "

Throughout the chaotic months of 1967, the People's Liberation Army, led by Mao's chief lieutenant Lin Biao, stayed on the sidelines making half-hearted, localized attempts to referee the violence, but not, in most cities, taking decisive action. By August, public order in the cities and with it the fate of the People's Republic seemed to be sliding away. Consul General Rice asked me to do a detailed analysis of the situation and make a judgment about the survival of the regime. The result later become notorious in the analytical community in Hong Kong and Washington as the "bifurcated airgram".

I struggled with this for a week and concluded after lengthy argumentation that the situation had deteriorated alarmingly, but the point of no return had not yet been reached. Mao still had the option of calling in the PLA to quell the violence and form the basis for a new structure. The Consul General and others disagreed, believing that the deterioration of order was irrevocable. He asked me to go back, review my data and come up with a new draft. I did, but with the same conclusion.

Famous for his fairness, Rice decided to send in my analysis without edit and append his own dissent as a cover page. I was relieved and delighted. This approach would guarantee a wide readership. Rice's dissent argued, on the basis of his long experience in China, that the regime had entered a "descending spiral", a tailspin from which it could not pull out. The Deputy Consul General, Allen Whiting, a noted China academic on loan to the government, agreed with Rice and added a short statement to this effect at the bottom of the cover page.

After the message was sent off, I departed with the whole family on two months of home leave, our first since 1965. Having always flown to Asia, transiting from one almost identical airport to another, we were determined to return home on the surface of the

earth and get a sense of the real size of our planet. It took five weeks just to reach New York, via boat from Japan to the Soviet Union, trans-Siberian Railway across Russia (with Soviet expert and Hong Kong colleague Kurt Kamman as our guide) and the final leg from Europe aboard the SS United States from England.

While we were in America acquainting our eight, seven and three year old sons with their grandparents, Chairman Mao called on the People's Liberation Army to restore order throughout China. The violent stage of the Cultural Revolution came to an end that summer of 1967. Military men, all Party members to begin with, took over the key positions in the provincial governments and Party Committees and ran the country for more than a decade. The political tensions of the Cultural Revolution would last until Mao's death in 1976 and his wife's arrest immediately thereafter, but the killing and chaos were over.

We returned to Hong Kong well after the PLA crackdown and spent our final months in Garden Road reporting the militarization of the Chinese government, the rustication of the Red Guards, the suppression of the fighting factions and the return to a nervous, inconclusive calm. I had been spared the discomfort of sheepish superiors worried I would say, "I told you so."

We prepared to leave the Colony after almost five years, assigned to an additional year of language training in Taiwan to prepare me to be the US interpreter at the Warsaw Talks, our principal point of contact with the Peking regime. On the eve of our departure these long standing orders were changed in favor of a job on the Mainland China desk at the State Department in Washington.

I was relieved. The Cultural Revolution had dried up the Talks. Sheila and I were delighted at the prospect of returning to the US. The changes in our own country were in many ways as deep and disruptive as those we had observed in China. Since we had been away, President Kennedy had been killed, the President Johnson had turned the Civil Rights Movement into law, feelings against the Vietnam War had exploded, with Johnson deciding to leave the Presidency, Martin Luther King had been shot and Washington burned, the feminists were transforming women's rights, Robert Kennedy was dead, and the campaign to choose the next president was in full and turbulent swing. It was time to go home and relearn the country we represented.

WAR LETTERS

The Consul General in Hong Kong felt it was important for China Analysts to understand the broad context in which the Middle Kingdom was set. At the end of each fiscal year, left over funds normally spent on carpets and water coolers were allocated for staff travel. Analysts were unchained from their desks and encouraged to find out what the rest of Asia was about. One's turn came up roughly every two years. I benefited from two such outings, a June 1966 tour of Southeast Asia, including a close unauthorized look at the secret guerrilla war in Laos and a dangerous trip to Vietnam in May of 1968 at the time of the Mini Tet.

These trips shaped my view of Asia and the insurgent struggles that dominated the region's politics as well as our Cold War policy for decades. Of course, the Chinese were busily supporting the "revolutionary movements" on the other side. I was able to relate my experiences on the ground to the ideological arguments the Chinese put out to justify their support, as well as our own justifications for backing our surrogates

I recorded in letters home the diaries of my daily doings, which I draw on now.

Guerrilla War in Laos

Hong Kong
July 13, 1966

Dear Ma and Pa,

There's a typhoon in town and the time has come to repay your many letters. Sheila has filled you in on much of our trip [seeing the sights of Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Bangkok] but she wasn't on the Laos part and its up to me to tell.

A word of background explanation. Pop Buell, the man I went to visit in Lao is an Indiana farmer about your age whose wife died about nine years ago, an event that left him mightily depressed. He decided that a change of scene was required, signed his big spread over to his children, and took off for Laos as an agricultural extension officer for the International Volunteer Service (one of the unknown precursors of the Peace Corps) at a salary of \$60.00 a month.

He was assigned to work with the Meo [Hmong] people in the Northeast corner of the country close to North Vietnam. The Meo, or Miao as they are called in China' are a mountain race who inhabit the hilly area which takes in areas of Northern Laos, North Vietnam, and the southern border areas of China. He spent a year or so wandering around the area getting to know something about the language and the ways that the Meo and the other Lao hill tribes operate, and was beginning to settle down when the war started. A magical pint-sized general named Kong Le (then Communist, now pro-West neutralist) was advancing from the Southwest and the Viet Minh were coming from the Northeast. The Meo were caught in between.

Pop found himself at the head of a column of 7,000 Meo refugees walking due South. They trekked for 38 days. When Pop finally got to Vientiane and was flown out to Bangkok, he told the US Ambassador that he had had his bellyful of mountains, Meo, and sticky rice, and was going home. He was back in Laos in 8 days and has not left since with the exception of ten days he spent in Taichung with our friends Stan and Claire Brooks in 1963. I met him then and we hit it off.

What made him go back is hard to say, but I suppose that he felt that the long trek with the Meo had created some sort of special tie. They apparently felt that way, too. Our

people soon found out that the Meo were the only people that cared enough to fight. Like the Montagnards in South Vietnam, they hated the Vietnamese long before ideology became a consideration. Mountain people anywhere have always resented the efforts of lowlanders to tell them what to do. Pop was the only person who knew them well enough to organize them.

He started out by setting up refugee villages for those who, had, like him, been thrown out, and as morale gradually returned began, with the help of various other agencies, to collect a guerrilla force. Today, he coordinates and provides the backing for one of the strangest, least known, and most successful military operations anywhere. A guerrilla war run along lines that would make Mao Tse-tung proud, supplied by air and tied to no roads, taking advantage of an enemy that must rely on trucks and road transport for supply, i.e. the exact opposite of our situation on South Vietnam. The civil-social tie-in is obvious and effective. In every village that is set up or re-taken, the first buildings that go up are a school and a dispensary. (Footnote: Technically and overtly, Pop worked for USAID. The management and coordination of his operations, as well as some logistics and funding, clearly came from the CIA, a fact that was not acknowledged.)

Pop learned this from the Communists, and it works. He told me about his activities in 1963 when he came to Taiwan on R & R, exhausted and distraught after a particularly rough stretch and found Stan and myself sympathetic receivers for his troubles. I had known several Pop-like men from the summer Norman and I repaired oil pipelines in Ohio and we had no difficulty communicating. He reminded me of the gang foreman, a wizened, short, unprepossessing looking man, with a plain gray spectacled monkey face and hardly any hair, whom you might meet anywhere, drinking coffee at a truck stop, welding in a garage, or spitting off the courthouse steps. In any case, I was fascinated, and when the chance came to make the trip, three years later, I cabled him to ask whether I could pay him a visit. He said I could, but only if I brought my guitar. Pop did me the singular honor of taking me with him on his normal rounds for three days (no one at the Embassy had been accorded such treatment) and gave me a time I shall never forget.

While in Laos, I kept a diary for Sheila and all of you, which follows, more or less verbatim. Some of it and the above, is sensitive and should be kept strictly within the confines of the Family.:

June 17

Arrived Vientiane aboard the same flight bringing, I later learned, the Soviet ambassador back from home leave. I bounded out of the plane just ahead of him and a gaggle of Slavs - apparently the entire embassy pressed forward to greet me. I was unaware that the man behind me was the ambassador and was much relieved to be passed by. Mark Pratt (an FSO friend at our embassy) met me and took me via his old gray Mercedes to his house on the bank of the Mekong River looking across at Thailand and to the Northwest at the mountains of Sayaboury Province. Spent the afternoon touring sleepy Vientiane, a small town (160,000) by comparison with Bangkok and Hong Kong, for sure. Hot, with water

buffalo wandering down the street and some lovely old temples - beat up, provincial, but in a way more genuine and every bit as attractive as the well maintained splendor of Bangkok.

Mark took great glee in pointing out the houses of various figures in the national government and the shell holes and roof repairs caused during the fighting between the various political factions in this not so comic opera kingdom. (No Joke being blown in two by a stray mortar shell, as apparently happened to a second secretary of the Thai embassy).

Main shopping square of town has French provincial look.

After wanderings, highlight of which was visit to Royal Chedi (pagoda), a handsome golden pile with a massive hornets' nest affixed near the top; and visit to embassy where I spoke to various officers, we showered, changed, and made for a reception given by the American military attaché.

As is the case in many small towns (i.e. Windsor, Ont.) the smaller and farther afield it is, the more formal the dress. There were a score of handsome ladies there beautifully turned out -- a strikingly well preserved Czech whose name escapes me, a Madame Soulier, the American wife of the French Chargé, and the wife of the former Lao Consul General in Kunming (Capital of China's Yunnan province which lies due North over the border). She spoke halting Mandarin and was a well decorated four feet tall. Other interesting types included an old BBC horse named Tony Beamish who had spent years in Singapore, Malaya and Thailand and had now worked his way north and become public information advisor to the LAO government; the Soviet military attaché with whom I exchanged a few stuttered pleasantries in French - enchante - pause - enchante - groan, etc.

I was on the whole impressed with the quality of people I met. Small and sleepy though it may be, Laos is strategic enough to warrant governments sending some of their best younger people to keep track of things here - they obviously are.

After reception, Mark, three other embassy officers and I repaired to Mark's house for a Chinese dinner and several hours of talk on recent Mainland politics. Very stimulating, but too much drink, and too late to bed (1:00 A.M.).

June 18

Up at 5:30 this morning to meet Pop at airport. I hadn't seen him for three years. He looked older and more wizened than ever and had a hacking cough, which he kept fueled with many cigarettes. Despite this, he is as spry and friendly as ever. We took off through a rain squall in a light plane called a Helio-courier -- about the size of a Piper Cub, but faster, stronger, and able to land and take off on a handkerchief. We flew for an hour due North (about 110 miles) out of the rice paddies and up into the wooded ridges of Meo country. A beautiful trip with patches of clear sky alternated by towering rain storms, and

we zig-zagging around them - lovely little (some not so -- 7,000 feet) - blue green mountains with hill tribe settlements on top of them and paths leading straight up and down. Arrived at Sam Thong, elevation about 4,900 feet, Pop's main base of operations - a collection of refugee villages with a hospital, airstrip, supply dump, etc. Frantic beehive of activity during early morning with every imaginable type of civil aircraft landing and taking off

Helios, helicopters, caribous (a big cargo plane shaped like a banana that needs scarcely any runway to get in and out), Porter turbo-props (loud insect-like single engine runabouts), etc. with people, rice, medicine, sick villagers, etc. Around the big, dusty quonset hut beside the airstrip, which Pop uses as an office, stood soldiers of all ages (according to Pop, 25% of the Meo troops are 13 and under, and from looking at them you could believe it) in various attitudes of relaxation. Also Meo women in full length black skirts or culottes and blouses contrasting very sharply with electric blue or pink sashes. Their head dresses were also colorful, though not so bright as the sashes and many wore their dowries around their necks - handsome necklaces of beads attached to an axe-shaped plate all of pure silver. A farmer in black sat by the door near his crutches. His left foot was gone - blown off by a Pathet Lao mine, I was told. The big, dark office was in a state of permanent but usable disarray, with knapsacks and bed rolls along the walls and a carbine or two standing in the corner

On all sides of the airstrip were Meo villages, one of which had been there for years and others, which were new. The air was clear, blue and cool like Colorado in July, and to make the picture complete, Meo ponies grazed in a nearby field.

I went over to the field to take a closer look at the horses and was mystified when a young girl ran by driving them away with a stick. I soon learned that my presence had no connection with this maneuver. A C-46 droned overhead, having made a couple of lazy circles over Sam Thong. Immediately thereafter the ground shook with a sharp series of "whump"-like noises which sounded like what I had always imagined the impact of mortars to be. I looked over in the direction of the noise and up, observing to my alarm about twenty enormous sacks of rice tumbling out of the sky and hitting the ground about thirty yards away. It was the village's weekly rice drop (sometimes it is cheaper to drop than to land), I later found out. After the plane had murmured away, the villagers all ran out to collect the grain.

Pop immediately threw himself into a series of consultations with his Lao, Meo, and American colleagues, all of whom were awaiting him with three days of accumulated problems, - one apparently about potential sex problems among male and female workers housed near the hospital, another about soldiers' families hitching illegal rides on USAID aircraft - and countless others on where to and what to do that day - where to fly some pigs, where to drop some rice, what village headman needed the "face" of a trip to Sam Thong, etc. Pop's interpreter for the more complicated problems was a meo with a red beret and a 38 caliber revolver wrapped in a polyethylene bag and inserted in a holster strapped around his ample belly by a bullet studded belt.

At noon, Pop and I flew sixty miles west to Luang Prabang, the royal capital and residence of the King. The purpose of Pop's trip was to discuss problems with AID people there, and while he was doing this I managed to get hold of a jeep and toot around town. Luang Prabang is probably the only national capital whose sights can be seen in fifteen minutes. The population of this languid little place is 10,000 and the buildings, including the usual slew of Wats, have the same kind of worn charm as Vientiane. A golden Chedi (reported to be the holiest place in Laos) on top of a hill commands the town which, like Vientiane, sits on the banks of the muddy Mekong. The river is narrow here with long, slim, canoe-like craft drifting along it past women in purple and white skirts washing their hair in the brown water and naked children pointing at a bird flying above the green mountains in the distance down the valley.

The flight to and from Luang Prabang was sensational – one minute skimming over a green 5,000 foot plateau with a Meo village and a Helio strip set in a rusty earth clearing - and the terrain next falling abruptly off into a valley with a deep blue floor thousands of feet below - next threading our way between two seven thousand foot peaks, alternating the gray slate of sheer cliffs with the dark green of forest and the bright green of slash and burn cultivation. In light planes you truly fly - I tried to take movies of all this but I am afraid that the dirty windows will water the impression too much.

After a half hour nap and a briefing on the general situation, Pop and I took off fifty miles south to a place known only as site 191, a series of refugee villages strung out along a narrow valley distinguished by several sharp hairy blue rock spires about 250 feet tall. The number of different tribes represented in the valley was remarkable. There was a Meo village, a Laotung village, a Black Thai village and valley Lao village, all less than a year old and all peopled by refugees from Sam Neua, more than a hundred miles to the Northeast. The naikhon, or area chief, was a Laotung, whose house was to be our stopping place. The land in the valley was farmed by the Lao, Laotung and Black Thai, while the Meo who have a congenital aversion to level places, worked the hillsides.

We were to spend the night, and the entire settlement was drawn up beside the airstrip waiting for Pop. No sooner had he gotten out of the plane when he was surrounded by kids of all ages and stages of dress, waiting for something. What? Balloons, hundreds of them (his balloon budget is US\$200 a month) and soon the valley was filled with small brown children straining to inflate red and white globes. (Much of Pop's aid program comes from private contributions, I had known. Rice, medicine, fertilizers, building materials, all come from U.S. AID, but the frills like school supplies, sports equipment, balloons, etc. all are paid for by unsolicited checks from Pop's friends, Helio pilots, old aunts, embassy secretaries, and so forth. In any case, I was so struck by the impact of the balloon ploy - Pop said that one balloon had twice the political value of one hand grenade - that I wrote out a check for \$150.00 on the spot.)

Waiting for us at the village was Father Bouchard, a Catholic priest from Boston, who, true to form, knows the language well, lives with the people, and unlike his Protestant counterparts that I have seen operating in the Far East, actually succeeds in making some converts. His church hut, Pop's school huts, and the dispensary were the most

important buildings in the area.

After leaving our things at Naikhon's hut -- a roomy rattan building on stilts with a porch, kitchen, living room and sleeping alcoves, we went from one end of the valley to the other, about a mile, talking to the headmen of the various villages, sitting in their huts, drinking rice wine through two-foot bamboo straws leading from what looked like a chamber pot - also drinking their rice whisky, a rather tasty moonshine that is considered fully aged after four days. (I am sure I will catch some dread disease, but it can't be helped - the mosquitoes here are huge and I hope I took the anti-malaria pill in time.) (I did not catch anything and apparently took the pill in time.)

When we returned to the Naikhon's house it was dark and time for cocktails. Out came more rice whiskey, and the bottle of Scotch I had brought along for the head man. Toasts. After we had all become quite tight (we had been guzzling various rustic liquors for about two hours by now) I was asked to make some noise with the guitar that, thank God it turned out, I had lugged so far. If there were a Northern Laos hit parade, Old Macdonald and The Old Sow would now be numbers one and two. Each had to be rendered several times with meticulous attention to thunderous grunts, mellifluous moos sharp quacks, etc.

Supper was glutinous rice chicken, raw cabbage (I passed this up) and more rice whiskey. By the time we had eaten, a large crowd, curious about the strange noises, had gathered - men, women and children. The few transistor radios (yes, they have penetrated up there too) in the village had long since been turned off and Pop turned to me and said, "Well, looks like you have created a problem for yourself. There's only one way out. Start singing and keep singing!" I did, for about an hour and a half, with almost every song I knew adapted for local consumption, i.e. with accentuated rhythm and animal noises added. The Pretty Little Horse sounds odd with neighs interspersed, and Saint James Infirmary even odder punctuated with pig grunts, but they seemed to lap it up. We finally wheedled and coaxed three songs out of them. A Laotung, a Black Thai, and a Meo each got up and rendered a song about the war.

To bed at 9:30--talked until 11:30 with my bedmate, Father Bouchard about salvation, heaven, revisionism in China, etc.

June 19

Up with the sun. Shaved with battery Norelco razor, attracting attention of local young bloods (there were about three - the rest were away fighting) who ended up shaving with it, too. Breakfast was more of last night's supper, same dishes and everything, including the rice whiskey. Somehow it had lost its charm. Father Bouchard was gone, on his way to a village a day's walk away. The plane returned for us and we waited a few minutes while Pop held a political conference with the headmen. Apparently the valley Lao were not getting along with the Laotung headman. He said they were lazy and wouldn't follow his instructions. Pop jabbered a while and we flew back to Sam Thong.

The Helio, after dropping us at Sam Thong, went south on a routine run, and returned four hours later with six bullet holes in her wings Either the Pathet Lao or the pilot had gotten to some place they shouldn't have.

I took a delightful walk through the villages surrounding the airstrip at Sam Thong and holed up in a schoolhouse during a brief but violent rainstorm. It was Sunday and school was out, but some of the teachers were there studying English lessons, and we had an impromptu class. Walking among Meo villages encountered pleasing bucolic scenes - eight water buffalo submerged in their mud wallow, blowing loud grey bubbles of satisfaction through their noses, two chestnut ponies making what appeared to be most satisfactory love in a green field, Meo ladies weighed down by their silver necklaces hoeing in backyards, etc.

The walk was something of a comfort because before going out I visited the hospital (big and well-equipped for these parts) and saw the awful consequences of this kind of war - what the Communists call "wars of liberation"--children with limbs missing, adolescent military casualties with shrapnel wounds, blood, flies, disease - when will it all end. The answer hardly seems to lie in departure. As far as the people here are concerned, they are fighting for their own liberation, i.e. to throw out someone who has occupied their own lands. Apparently they will fight on and on as long as they get support, but Pop says everyone is tired.

At 3:00 PM Pop was invited to attend a party given by the Chaomeng of the Striped Meo in the area. (A Chaomeng is the equivalent of a county governor. There appear to be three classifications of Meo--Black, Red, and Striped--based on their customs and habitat, I suppose. The party was in honor of the Chaomeng's son who had returned after five years at school in Vientiane. The Chaomeng, who lived in a clapboard house about a mile from the airstrip, had a pouchy, dissolute look, and Pop told me that he had once a reputation as the finest guerrilla leader in the area. Once he was finally pushed off the Plaine des Jarres, however, he threw in the towel, physically, mentally, spiritually, and took to the grape (rice, out here). He has recovered, however, and although through as a military man is gaining influence as a political leader.

Present at the party were all the ranking Meo who happened to be in the area, as well as a handful of Lao. Having them eat together was apparently quite rare. He sat cross-legged on the floor along the walls of a largish room and watched the floor fill up with dishes of food - bananas, rice, buffalo jerky, buffalo burgers, bullock steaks, chicken, lettuce, and the inevitable rice whiskey (which, I now gather, is called Lao-Lao, an exact and very accurate translation of which is alcohol-alcohol). There was also a plate on which stood nothing but two one-pound silver bars, the Chaomeng's present for his son. After a few minutes, the plate was also filled with Kip (The Laotian currency- 500 to the dollar) contributed by the guests. Just before the food was brought on in full, a basi (ceremony) took place with Pop acting as the grandfather. The Meo way of wishing someone well is to take a piece of string and, muttering incantations of good luck and good health, tie it around the wrist of the object of honor. If you hold on to the elbow of the person being tied, that means that you second the motion, and the same goes for

anyone holding on to your elbow. It's like being plugged in --something similar to grace at Yankton, South Dakota, only more special. Pop led off the proceedings by tying a string around the boy's wrist and congratulating him for having returned, and having made such a fine showing at school, but pointedly hoping that he would return again to the mountains to work with his people as soon as his education was complete. Then everyone "tied" the boy, including me- who managed to make appropriate incantations in English. Pop's attendance was primarily for ceremony, and we left shortly thereafter, still chewing on buffalo steak, which is tough but very tasty razor strop au jus.

At 5: 00 PM we took off in a single engine turboprop called a Pilatus Porter for a village just Northwest of Sam Thong, at which Pop had not made an appearance for three years. The place was poor and primitive, but bulging with livestock - pigs, goats, dogs, chickens, and, of course, horses. It had long been self-sufficient, and off the rice-drop-list. The only thing needed was salt for the animals. A hut dispensary was well stocked, it appeared. There were three leading men in the village, and we ended up having dinner separately with all three (making six meals in all that day for me). Meanwhile balloons and grunt-laden guitar renditions played what had become a standard role in softening up the children. The guitar became an object of reverence which was carefully carried by the headmen as we went from hut to hut. The final dinner was a genuine happening, complete with basi, much string tying (I have four strands on my wrist as I write) an enormous whole boiled pig in the center of the table (it was for show and removed before we had to make polite attempts to eat it- praises be!). Before each of the guests, which included Pop, a young USAID man named Sam Adams, and I, was a paper cone like a big Grand Central Railroad drinking cup. In each was an orchid and several hundred Kip, a very big present on their part. (He stuffed the Kip in the pocket of a young boy with a rupture who we flew back to the Sam Thong hospital next day).

The scene was as follows: We were in a room about 30 x 15 with beaten earth floor, rattan walls, and roofed with enormous shingles 2 foot square. It was pitch black except for the wavy light created by oil candles on the table. The headmen were sitting with us and the small pool of light and activity was surrounded by villagers and children, taking it all in. It couldn't have been cozier. We were all quite tight by now and draining our glasses at each toast. (The Meo equivalent of "bottoms up is "chico"!) In between Chicos, each of which had to be followed by roars and gasps (the more you made it look like you were dying from the fire and strength of the booze, the better they liked it) Pop and the men would talk and make jokes - and once in a while a balloon would be blown up for the children. All very gay, friendly, and the food even good. The Meo are much better cooks than the Laotung (with whom we ate last night) and their dishes, chicken, pork, etc. are well-seasoned. Their soups are especially good, and they serve a delicious quasi-vegetable which tastes like a cross between watermelon and cucumber.

To bed at 9:30 in sleeping bag on rattan dais, after a few delicious puffs on a Salem cigarette filtered through a bamboo water pipe. I lay down, seeking sodden repose only to find strong hands grasping my feet pulling me down the bed. The headmen, to whom the hands belonged, tore off my gamey socks and with thoroughness and ceremony washed my feet in a tin basin of hot water--utter bliss--then pushed me back into my sack.

It is fascinating to watch Pop operate. He is obviously something very special to these people. In fact the word "pop" in Meo does not mean "father" but rather a man with special powers from above. He is known as "Tan Pop" - "Mr. POP"-- in effect, "Mr. Magic".

June 20

Awoke with the pigs and the incessant noise of the rice huskers - big wooden hammers operated by foot-that pound the unhusked rice in a bowl. Happily the plane arrived before anyone could offer us breakfast, i.e. at 6:30 AM and we returned to Sam Thong carrying with us the boy referred to above, who had a grotesquely swollen testicle, bound for the hospital. After a glorious breakfast of ham and eggs - no Lao Lao, thank God - I went for a walk around the villages on the hills above Sam Thong, and then down into the market of Sam Thong itself. At one end of the market, I met a Meo who lived behind one of the stalls whom I had seen the day before at the Chaomeng's party. He asked me in and we had a friendly glass of hot water together. He spoke some French, and I asked him in the best of that language that I could dredge up between the thickly crusted layers of German and Chinese how long he had lived there. Apparently the dredging operation was not a success, for he replied that he spoke no English whatever, only French, a shattering testimony to how bad my French is, or his is, or both.

Took naps while waiting for a "non-restricted" pilot, (i.e. one who has had more than five hundred hours of this type of cowboy flying and can operate with confidence on the most difficult airstrips) to take us North. Pop wanted to show me some places near the front, from which some of the refugees we had visited in the South had been evacuated. We stopped at two villages, which had changed hands twice in recent months, the aspect of which was indeed different. Very few women and children, if any, remained--instead Meo soldiers, bomb craters, trenches, plane wrecks, burnt and twisted trees, in what were once lovely and prosperous valleys. Someday, I will be able to sit down with you and a map and show exactly where we went.

We also visited a 5,000 ft. mountain top village, which had an airstrip about half a football field in length, ending abruptly in the side of the peak. All this by turbo-prop flown by a laconic but superbly skilled pilot who earns every bit of his enormous salary.

Late in the afternoon we dropped Pop off at San Thong and said good bye. We dropped in briefly again at site 191 to pick up Father Bouchard who had hailed us with some Boston quacks on his walkie-talkie, and then flew to Vientiane and the incredible luxury of a shower and a giant martini.

So much for that. I have since learned, to my horror, that 100 feet of my best footage on the trip were double exposed (too much Lao Lao, I suppose) and so this account is about all I will have to remember that incredible weekend by. So keep it, but locked up, perhaps.

I returned to Hong Kong, the floods, and the weather which has continued to defy every definition of the word beastly, and the Great Socialist Cultural Revolution in China, which took up all my time before the trip and has continued to do so ever since. We are going through a period of Chinese history now that will not be sorted out until the scholars have had about ten years to chew it over. Suffice it to say that I have been involved in trying to analyze, as it happens, what appears to be a massive intellectual rectification campaign, a power struggle, and a Party purge, all rolled into one, and interconnected in a way that we are unable at present, if ever, to know. Exhausting, but totally engrossing and fascinating.

If anyone could have chosen a time during the past seven years to be reporting on internal politics in the Mainland, this would have been it. Unfortunately my job has been made much harder by the sudden death of my right hand assistant, a jolly old Chinese American known only as NG. He had been following Mainland affairs for fifteen years and was one of the fastest translators in the government. Finding someone you know well and like, naked on the floor of his bedroom, convulsing in a pool of blood and vomit after a heart attack is not my favorite way to start the day. That was the way it was, however, although he mercifully died about fifteen minutes after we got him to the hospital. Sheila and I went to his funeral, a proper Buddhist do with monks (nuns are cheaper but not fashionable, I found when making arrangements with a dreadful hand rubbing Chinese undertaker –they're the same everywhere), chants, and incense. We made three low bows before NG's photograph, which is what one does, and then, feeling rather low, went off to be cheered up by the Julliard Quartet which luckily happened to be in town.

Vietnam

Many of my colleagues have asked me why I chose to use staff travel funds to visit Vietnam. The answer was curiosity and convenience. There was a hot war under way which was beginning to preoccupy and divide American politics. The Chinese were supposed to be heavily involved, and commented constantly in the flood of media in which I swam every day. I wanted a hands-on sense of events.

Several Foreign Service Officers that I knew were serving in Vietnam, staffing the CORDS apparatus in the provinces, or serving in Embassy Saigon. It would be quite easy and very cheap for me to move from district to district, sleeping on their sofas and looking over their shoulders. Friends in the press, whose families we knew well, came home to Hong Kong emotionally wound up and physically spent. I hoped to learn a little about what they were going through.

Here is the war letter, which contains my findings and feelings:

*Hong Kong
July 1, 1968*

Dear ,

Enclosed, finally, is the diary of my visit to Vietnam at the end of May. It is long and raw, but I think an accurate reflection of what I saw and felt. It should be classified BOF "Bosom of the Family."

If there is any overall impression that one gets, it is that there is no one impression. Mary McCarthy can find in Vietnam all the sludge she needs to buttress her preconceived pessimism. Joe Alsop can find the facts and the figures to support the optimistic view. I found them both, and having no long dug-in position to defend (especially to this audience) tried to put them down side by side.

My own views on the war have not changed as a result of the visit. (No one's does, I suppose, because the situation has something in it for everyone.) I felt when I came home last that we should maintain our commitment and try to cut the costs if possible. I still think so now, not only because we are in so deep that a precipitate withdrawal would cause many more problems than it would solve, but also because there is something to defend, and there are some costs that can be cut. South Vietnam appears to be a country in its own right, with a government (of sorts), and people who fight for their own survival. The administrative and logistic tail wags the substantive and operational dog in our mission, and it can and should be reduced. We can and must speed up the rate with which we are supplying better small arms to the local forces who are doing most of the everyday fighting throughout the country.

The problem with such a policy is its limited appeal to most Americans. It offers neither quick victory nor quick withdrawal. Its message is that we win by staying--a concept totally meaningful in Asian eyes, but foreign to the impatience of our Western logic.

But don't let me bore you with a political harangue. Read what follows and tell me what you think.

May 25

The flight down from Hong Kong was uneventful. We crossed the coast of South Vietnam and Qui Nhon and flew over the country for about a half an hour before landing in Saigon. With the exception of some craters that pocked the hills from place to place, there was no sign below that there was a war going on. Saigon airport is just as busy and ugly as everyone says it is. It's a mad house. Planes, military and civilian, of all descriptions behind sandbags and aluminum revetments. Don Ferguson (an old Taichung and Hong Kong colleague now serving at the embassy in Saigon) met me at the airport, and we drove off in his battered black Volks through some of the most incredible traffic I have ever seen. It is a mélange of Army trucks, busses, motorcycle trishaws, Lambretta buslets crammed with people, vegetables, piglets, and chickens, Hondas, Yamahas, beat up Renault taxis. The driving, especially by the motorcyclists is some of the most imaginative that I've ever seen--a mixture of broken field running and a giant game of motorized Chicken.

We went straight to Don's house on 13 Nguyen Gia Thieu a very pleasant bungalow in a large garden shaded by Palms and Banyans. He shares it with another FSO named Frances de Tarr. I slept in the dining room on an army cot--cool and comfortable.

After having left my things, we drove to the Embassy. Most of the things reported in the press about Saigon are true and need not be repeated here (the best book on the subject of Saigon and whole war for that matter is Ward Just's To What End?, which I highly recommend as both reporting and literature). There are some lovely tree lined streets in the central section of town and it must have been a really attractive place once. In a way it still is. The bustle, traffic, and the thin film of blue exhaust dust, and garbage that overlays the place cannot hide this. Saigon is a combination of all the Asian cities I have seen. The dusty wide streets and squalor of Manila and Taipei, the slums and refuse of Hong Kong, the red tiled roofs of Singapore and the same Chinese flavor in the Cholon district, permeated by the faint French atmosphere so noticeable in Vientiane.

The embassy is an imposing white pile with a thick concrete sunscreen that doubles as a blast shield. The area in front of it is not cordoned off, but inside the compound sandbag bunkers cover every approach, forming interlocking fields of fire. The MPs are in full battle gear, and a machine gun nest guards access to the receptionist. All the damage done during Tet is repaired, and the place looks like new.

We stopped for a while and met some of the officers, all of whom were cordial but preoccupied. Only the most fleeting kind of substantive conversation is possible. I gathered, however, from a young political officer named Johnson (U. Alexis' son) whose job is to help keep Thieu and Ky informed of the progress of the Paris negotiations, that these consultations had been progressing smoothly so far. He said that he attended the meetings between Bunker, Berger, Calhoun (the Political Counselor) and GVN president and vice president, which take place once or twice a week. At these meetings the U.S. passes the South Vietnamese transcripts of the talks and press statements in Paris, and try in other ways to provide the South Vietnamese with the communications facilities they lack. So far the South Vietnamese are satisfied with what has happened in Paris (which is nothing), and with our handling of the negotiations, and with our consultation procedures. When I pointed out that we hadn't really discussed anything important in Paris yet, and that when we did, things might not go so smoothly, Johnson agreed. He said, however, that during these consultations, the GVN and the US had discussed contingencies well beyond the stage the talks were at now. He felt as a result, that the negotiations could progress a lot further without friction developing. He did not elaborate on the contingency discussions.

From my talks with Embassy officers so far, I get the impression that very little thinking is being done on what form, if any, Viet Cong participation in the political life of the country or in any coalition government emerging from a negotiated settlement might take. One officer said, "People are thinking about it, but not out loud." I'm not sure they are even doing that. .

We left the Embassy in Don's Volks and went to the Y bridge and the area beyond known as District 8, where severe damage was inflicted by U.S. air strikes and gunships during the fighting in early May. Approaching the bridge we saw the objective of VC infiltration, a huge power plant that supplies electricity for a significant portion of the city. Concern over the consequences of losing the plant motivated the order to bomb the area. The destruction was appalling, with whole blocks of little two story bungalows blasted into twisted rubble. The facades of some of the buildings--small painted concrete structures such as can be found now in the outskirts of most South East Asian cities--stood intact with nothing but blue sky and clouds through the windows behind them. Army bulldozers and armored personnel carriers (APCs) and an occasional helicopter were also in the areas beginning what appeared to be rather low key efforts to clean the place up (these were premature for the VC were back in District 8 the next night and fighting broke out all over again). There were a few Vietnamese in the area, picking through the rubble and trying to put things together. None of them showed signs of hostility towards us. On the contrary, they waved and smiled. Some incongruous but representative sights in District 8: a group of naked children laughing, chattering, and squirting each other around a pump; a little boy dragging a scorched, twisted kiddy car; a blackened Buddha, decapitated by some blast, sitting calmly beside the road; three pretty young girls in high heels, Ao Dais and conical straw hats putting through the mud on red Hondas, their clothing streaming out gently behind them. The height of incongruity was reached on the Y Bridge itself--an APC with a confederate flag flying from its antenna on which a Negro and white soldier sat side by side, naked to the waist. The Negro was applying "Coppertone" sun tan lotion to his white buddy's back.

After lunch at Don's, I went to MAVC headquarters located nearer the airport. This impressive new building, a two story complex of yellow aluminum siding and gray (or should I say rose?) tinted glass is better known as "Pentagon East." One of the great benefits of the new building is that it has moved most of the American military presence out of the center of Saigon. At MAVC I managed to sit in on a briefing given by General Westmoreland and General Weyand (Commander of III Corps and Senior American involved directly in the defense of Saigon) for the Chiefs of Diplomatic Missions in South Vietnam. Present were Ambassador Bunker, General Gruenther, who was visiting Saigon, the Chiefs of Mission and their Military Attaches.

Lieutenant General Weyand did most of the briefing personally. A tall, (6'7") slow talking man, he gave a very lucid and low-key exposition of the May offensive and the lessons he believed could be derived from it. The high points were as follows:

- 1. Although the VC scored impressive psychological and political gains from the May offensive, proved they were capable both of maneuvering in the countryside and around Saigon and attacking the capital, their military capability has weakened. This despite a 12,000 man per month infiltration rate from the North. The attacks, based on the same sort of grandiose plan as TET, were nowhere nearly as intense, nor as tightly coordinated or followed up. Enemy command posts were much further from Saigon than was the case during TET, which made it impossible for commanders to regroup their forces once broken up after meeting resistance. What succeeded in penetrating allied*

defenses were small uncoordinated groups, capable of causing indiscriminate damage, but incapable of concentrating on any of their given military objectives, i.e., the presidential palace, police headquarters, power plants, etc. The destruction caused by these groups and the forces fighting to remove them have gained world headlines, earning psychological and political capital for the communists.

During the May offensive enemy commands gave their units only two or three hours of notice of objectives or routes. As a result they were much less able to familiarize themselves with the area or to plan as thoroughly as TET, which was the product of months of sand table drills etc. The losses suffered by the communists during 1968 so far exceed their losses for all of 1967. Current infiltration rates are sufficient to replace all the losses suffered so far this year, but not any losses incurred from now on. At the present rate of infiltration and loss, net enemy strength is on the decline.

2. The VC lost many of their best indigenous cadres during TET. The percentage of North Vietnamese troops among the VC has increased significantly. Westmoreland estimates that between 75 and 80% of the forces in the Saigon area are NVA. Most of these troops are unfamiliar with either the terrain or the population. Without experienced local cadre to lead them to their staging areas, they get lost, communications and coordination break down. More important Weyand said, the local population regard communist forces more and more as foreign elements and seem less inclined to cooperate. People are now less inclined to remain in their village when the VC come, but rather flee as refugees. Weyand admitted that there are many villages in the Saigon area where villagers would not report the VC presence. This was, he suspected, because the people feared their village would become a battleground if they informed on the VC and that they would go away if they kept quiet.

3. Weyand felt that the shift in the composition of enemy forces in South Vietnam would ultimately be politically significant. As he put it, "the Maoist sea in which the fish are swimming is beginning to change composition" (sounds more to me like the fish are changing).

Since Tet, the communists have altered their tactics to stress infiltration into urban areas with the purpose of luring massive air or artillery response, calculating that the resultant destruction will earn hatred for the U.S. and the Vietnamese government and create refugee and reconstruction problems. The tactics are creating problems, as exemplified by District 8 and Cholon, and ways are being sought to counter them. (The only way that I can see is house-to-house fighting. We cannot engage in this to any grand scale because the higher casualty rates that would inevitably result would exacerbate public opinion at home. The ARVN has to do it but so far they not been very aggressive.)

During the question period Westmoreland remarked that this was an area war rather than a linear one. This concept was new and difficult to explain to the American people. He was candid though defensive about Khe Sanh. He said that the battle proved an outpost surrounded by hostile forces could be maintained and supplied by air, but that the process was extremely expensive. He estimated, although he admitted there was no

exact way of knowing, that the communists had lost roughly 15,000 men during the siege of Khe Sanh.

On the whole, the briefing was an impressive job, and the ambassadors left with the feeling they had gotten the straight scoop. The generals gave the impression that they were fully aware of the political ramifications of the fighting--a point they were trying to get across to their political audience.

We had dinner and went to bed early.

May 26

Had breakfast with Tom Conlon, an old Vietnam Hand in the Embassy political section. We talked about negotiations, American intentions, past policy failures, and the new cabinet. He is an articulate hawk who thinks we should have done much more, much earlier. He also thinks that the new cabinet is a step in the right direction representing a broader political base.

*After breakfast, we went on another tour of the city, starting out by transiting District 8 again on our way to Cholon, the Chinese section of Saigon. Out in the countryside about a mile to the south of the city we noticed helicopters landing, and some puffs of white smoke coming up from a clump of trees. This is as close as I have gotten to the war yet. We drove into Cholon and stopped to pay a call on a Chinese painter friends of Don's named M. Pan. He came to Saigon years ago from Taiwan where he was born. He makes very competent copies of famous Chinese paintings from art magazines, books, and museum catalogues. It amused me to see a Chinese painter working from *Life Magazine*, *Jim Cahill's Skira book on Chinese paintings*, and other western studies of oriental art. While we were in Mr. Pan's house, a cool bare, high-ceilinged three stories under a red-tiled roof with a loft full of paintings, explosions sounding like artillery rounds shook the area we had just left. We then proceeded north through District 6 which was particularly hard hit during Tet and again in early May. Here, however, reconstruction was underway with progress noticeable. We drove on past the racetrack, another incongruous mixture of sights; little horses, troops, sand-bagged pari-mutuel windows, artillery in the infield. During the week that followed, the VC attached these places, too, and were thrown out again.*

Hot, dusty, and sweaty from our drive, we welcomed a swim and a game of water polo at the house of the political counselor, Arch Calhoun. Among the guests were Congressman Tunney, a Vietnik-Bobby Kennedy man, a Vietnamese youth leader who has become a government official in the refugee agency, and two Vietnamese Senators, one of whom assured me that the new premier, Mr. Hong, would not begin his term in office without the good will of the Senate. (The adages about Vietnamese endemic divisiveness may be true.)

In the evening Don Ferguson and I went to dinner with Bob Shaplen and a friend of his, an American sugar planter with decidedly spooky antecedents. The evening was a

disaster. Bob was drunk and dropping names even faster than usual. Both of these old time Vietphiles were completely negative about everything, but so intoxicated that they could not articulate the reasons for their pessimism. Instead they countered probing questions by maintaining that one could not understand the Vietnamese until you had lived here as long as they had. In all fairness to Bob, I have had many fascinating and balanced conversations with him when he was not tired and sizzled and he is as nice as he is knowledgeable. His friend, however, was a smug horses ass. We ended the evening at dinner on the top floor of the Caravelle Hotel, watching the flares and flashes on the outskirts of town, and listening to the maudlin murmurs of dire predictions arising like wisps of swamp gas from knots of pressmen at tables nearby.

I am becoming convinced that there are three centers of intellectual incest in Saigon. Two of these are the Embassy and MACV where everyone persuades each other that things are going well, or as well as could be expected under the circumstances, or at least not as bad as everyone says. The other is the Continental Hotel where the newsmen sit around convincing each other that the situation is deteriorating at an ever accelerating pace, has become hopeless, and that there is nothing anybody can do about it, much less the American government. If the personal observations of one inexperienced though uncommitted observer during a single week of travel in the country are worth anything, the truth lies somewhere in between.

Our conversation during this disastrous evening was punctuated by several loud bangs from only a few blocks away. We were told later that some VC had penetrated District 8 again. Home through the curfew and to bed on my cot in the dining room.

May 27

Had a pleasant flight from Saigon to Da Lat aboard an old Air America DC-3 over country that rolled from paddies into the low mountains of the Central Highlands. Da Lat is the Bar Harbor, Newport, Baggio of Vietnam. The weather at 5,000 feet is cooling and clear, with one big rainstorm a day sweeping hills like a wide soft brush. Instead of water buffaloes and grass huts, it's evergreens, churches, chalets, a lycée, a university, a military academy and a clear lake, surrounded by enormously fertile vegetable farms which, along with Da Lat's reputation as a resort, account for the city's prosperity.

It is not a city, really, but a collection of suburban villages connected by well paved roads, dotted with Shell and Esso gas stations, all of which makes it look like any American or European resort town. In this physical context, the existence of a serious security problem seems doubly incongruous. Traveling on the roads you invariably carry automatic weapons to defend yourself against whatever VC might be lurking behind the lovely pines. Several civilian Americans (the U.S. military presence here is minuscule) have lost their lives here because they did not.

The political and military situation here has gone downhill since Tet. Before Tet there was no security problem at all. The province was neglected by the VC, in fact the rumor is that Da Lat was where VC, like their Governmental foes, went on R&R. Since Tet,

during which the city was invaded for several days, an estimated reinforced VC battalion has been operating in the area. It consists of the three scraggly and uncoordinated VC companies that used to operate ineffectually in the area, stiffened and integrated with a company of North Vietnamese soldiers. The NVA elements are providing political and military leadership as well as medical help. In addition experienced NVA riflemen lead VC fire teams. Pressure from these forces has caused the abandonment of several outlying Montagnard villages leaving the VC in control of large tracts of uninhabited land. Most of the populated areas in the province remain under GVN control, primarily because most of the people are minority tribesmen from North Vietnam and have no illusions about the VC. Catholic influence is also strong here, which helps. The relatively small number of hamlets (urban subdivisions are also called hamlets) populated by Buddhist Central Vietnamese are more sympathetic to the VC and harbor some VC "infrastructure" (a gobbledygook word meaning clandestine tax collectors, recruiters, propagandists, etc.).

Facing the VC in Da Lat are a motley mixture of Regional Forces (RF-provincial militia under the direct command of the province chiefs), Popular Forces (PFF-village militia under local command), Police Field Forces Trainees (PFF-the military arm of the national police, a redundant operational male tit) Army Cadets, Staff College Trainees, uniformed university students, etc. The command structure is chaotic. The province chief, who has the most power in terms of troops and communications facilities, is a Lieutenant Colonel. The mayor of Da Lat, with some forces and a small operations center at his disposal, is a full Colonel, as are the commandants of the Military Academy, PFF Training Center. The senior military man in the area is the commandant of the Staff College (the Vietnamese Fort Leavenworth) who is a two star admiral-exiled to this lovely Siberia for opposition to Ky at a crucial moment in 1965. He has no troops at all. Getting these people to work together is the task of the American Province Senior Advisor, a delightful and highly competent young FSO named Frank Wisner (with whom I share myriads of mutual friends. I went to Da Lat primarily to see him) and his deputy a Lieutenant Colonel named Deverell. Some progress has been made in rationalizing this Rube Goldberg structure, and during the crisis that occurred while I was in Da Lat most of the participants worked together pretty well, but they have a long way to go.

With pressure on the villages from the VC, the pacification program has slowed. Refugees, both the homeless and those too frightened to stay in their villages at night who prefer to wander around the city at night, are on the increase. Still, life goes on, the vegetables grow and are shipped out by the ton each day, etc. One of the striking, and least describable aspects of Vietnam is the simultaneous and symbiotic coexistence of war and peace, danger and calm, blood and beauty.

I arrived in Da Lat and was met by gaunt, acerbic, middle aged gent wearing camouflage trousers held up by a cartridge belt and a holster with a Smith and Wesson Magnum 357 revolver in it. He looked like an armed praying mantis. His name was Lindy and he works for Frank Wisner. As we left the airfield we noticed a small group of young men getting out of army trucks and forming into lines. "Must be new recruits," mused Lindy, "They're under armed guard." They were, and they were. We drove through the town

past the cemetery where the VC had been dug in during Tet, and where we discovered later they had re-infiltrated in force. They were probably peeking at us at that moment. We visited the market, a modern two story building built into the side of a hill selling everything from Montagnard crossbows to enormous green avocados. A blind man was playing a guitar on the stairs--a Vietnamese instrument tuned the local way, but he sounded exactly like a Mississippi Delta Negro. I never could understand what Leadbelly was singing. Maybe he was Vietnamese.

After a quick lunch at Frank Wisners (he has a fine cook) one of CORDS (I think it stands for Civilian Operations Reconstruction Development). It is the civilian side of the pacification program and all civilians in the provinces no matter what agency they work for are under it) a man named Berny Savio and I went to visit a big, rich Central Vietnamese-Buddhist hamlet on the outskirts of Da Lat. Our purpose was to talk to the Revolutionary Development cadres there and determine what kind of pressure they were under, their morale, progress, if any, self-defense measures. etc.

The RD cadres we saw were a pretty scruffy, loungy lot. Admittedly they have an almost impossible task. Teams of 50 cadres move into a hamlet to provide it with security, political indoctrination, and economic help. They are supposed to organize its defense, locate and expose VC elements, oppose bullies and landlords, and build bridges, latrines, fishponds, etc. The RD cadres can't even begin these tasks unless they are protected, and security is a particularly difficult problem because the cadres are a magnet for VC retaliation.

We talked to the assistant team leader for about 45 minutes. He was about 29, dressed in black pajamas, soft spoken, had the equivalent of a high school education. He seemed idealistic and dedicated in a very low key way. According to him VC come up to the wire every night from the mountains and distribute leaflets which say that they are only interested in killing RD cadres (He must be motivated--there's no other reason for him to be here, the pay is slightly better than in the Army, but the risks seem higher.) Self-protection was his main obsession, and they had failed. in the cases of two team members who were killed during Tet. So far his team had completed 59 out of the 98 tasks outlined in the revolutionary development program (there's mechanical numerology to the program which pervades many governments' schemes throughout the world, and throughout history, I suppose, having their roots in such practices as spinning prayer wheels, repeating fixed numbers of Hail Mary's to attain grace, etc.). When I asked him which of the remaining 39 tasks he felt was most important he replied, "locating and removing VC influence." The most basic of all.

He had a lot of questions, too. As we sat in a hut and looked out the window at the village with its big yellow temple, neat rows of huts, watch towers, barbed wire, rich surrounding fields of bright green vegetables inserted in bright red earth, with all the colors especially sharp against the black sky of the approaching afternoon storm, he asked in his soft voice whether the U.S. wanted to make a colony out of Vietnam, whether we were racists who enjoyed oppressing colored peoples. He smiled and said he had read these things in newspapers. I was the first American he had ever talked to and he was

curious. The flies buzzed for a while on the garbage pile outside the window as I thought how to approach the answers best. I decided that he was not baiting me, that he had not made up his mind, and that a long and careful answer would be worthwhile. Without glossing over the warts in our history, I assured him that we had no territorial ambitions of any kind and did not believe in oppressing anybody, much less colored races. I would not have been there talking to him if we had, I said. He seemed convinced and relieved, and we left after many smiles and nods.

After leaving the hamlet we drove to the staff college where I had an appointment with Admiral Kanh, the two star exile mentioned above. Admiral K was a trim, pleasant, round-faced man who was one of the few persons American or Vietnamese that I met during my trip who seemed interested in China. According to Wisner, who thinks highly of him, when Kanh heard that I was coming to town he asked that I come and brief him. This I did in his huge simple office overlooking the Staff College campus, which was furnished with a giant desk and a tiny bed with a steel helmet next to the pillow. The Staff College had been rocketed the night before, and the Admiral showed us (Wisner was along on this call) fragments of a B-40 rocket that had exploded in a tree nearby. It's an ugly little missile that will penetrate armor or masonry and can be launched from a simple bamboo tube. I talked for an hour, wending my way in deliberate English through the intricacies of the Cultural Revolution. Kanh disagreed with my contention that China was not likely to fall apart. Basing his sentiments on his own Asian background and his experience with clique politics, he felt that a return to political regionalism and perhaps warlordism was likely. While recognizing that a sort of bureaucratic regionalism had already developed, I differed politely as to the extent it was likely to go and switched the subject to Saigon politics. Kanh, a southerner, likes Huong, the new premier, and dislikes Ky (I have already mentioned his fall out with Ky). He said Hong was an honest man who would move against corrupt officials. Dossiers are being prepared against these individuals, and some are ready now, he said. In general, he felt that the new cabinet was stronger politically than its predecessor. Whether it would be able to work together administratively was another question, however.

We had dinner at the enormous Da Lat Palace Hotel while the VC started to move into town. The guests were Lee and Becky Lescaze of the Washington Post and Peter Kann of the Wall St. Journal. It was this year at Marienbad. With the exception of one Vietnamese family we were the only diners in a giant formal room with 18 foot ceilings, seated before a great plate glass window overlooking the town and the lake. The lights went out during desert--we learned later that the VC had attacked the plant without damaging it much, but that in the confusion, the plant technicians had turned off the power. We had a front row seat for flares, artillery and small arms fire that rattled and rumbled in the distance. Meanwhile we chatted with studied unconcern about the Trans-Siberian railway.

Trigger-happy "friendlies" are the main hazard in Da Lat at night under normal circumstances. It was after curfew when we finished dinner and Frank's house was $\frac{3}{4}$ mile away past his headquarters, the roof of which bristles with nervous RF who will shoot anything that arouses their apprehension. What followed was a harrowing high speed drive in Frank's International Scout, both of us keeping as low as possible,

arriving without incident at his villa where we talked for hours, drank old scotch and then went to bed with a shotgun, a carbine and a grease gun (a WWII automatic weapon that squirts .45 bullets like a garden hose and with about the same degree of accuracy) within easy reach. Our sleep was punctuated with small arms fire mortar blasts and artillery thumps at 1:00, 3:00 and 5:00 AM although our area of town was never directly threatened. The 3:00 rumble turned out to be the VC mortaring the Psychological Warfare College (another of Da Lat's ubiquitous educational institutions) killing 2 and injuring 1.

May 28

Before breakfast Frank took me to the Police Field Force Training Camp outside town to get a view of Da Lat and the surrounding mountains. A sensational clear morning, crystal blue sky, dark mountains, steeples in the distance, camouflaged marchers in the foreground. We then went down to the firing range to shoot Wisner's captured AK-47. During earlier conversations he had made the point several times that this weapon has altered the balance of power in the local level guerrilla war between VC and RF, and he wanted to show me exactly why. I had no trouble getting the point. The AK-47 is smooth, accurate, and enormously powerful. I had difficulty keeping it from riding up. (The M-16 (which I did not fire) is believed as good or better, but is more fragile, and in any case not yet available to RF or PF. Until they get it (unlikely until this winter) and as long as they are forced to face VC with M-1s and carbines, they cannot be expected to be much more aggressive. The wonder is that they fight at all, but they do and bravely). At the range, I was also given an opportunity to fire a Browning Automatic Rifle--I was instructed in this task by a Vietnamese soldier of Chinese extraction speaking mandarin--and the AK-47 seemed nearly as powerful but was much more portable.

On our way back to breakfast artillery rounds began to go over our heads, landing about a half mile away. I was supposed to catch a plane to Danang that morning, and went to the airport to wait after saying goodbye to Wisner. The plane never came, having, I later found out, broken down before it ever got into the air at Nha Trang, its point of origin. At about 10:00 I realized that the plane was not going to come but decided to go up to the control tower for a last check and to call the headquarters for a ride back. It was a lovely day as I trudged down the dusty airstrip, cool and clear--the Southeast Asian equivalent of North Haven in October. The bunkers along the strip were built out of horizontal tiers of evergreen logs and had grass growing on the tops, looking like miniature forts out of some Mountie movie. Climbing the three stories to the control tower, I found two of the Army Signal Corpsmen sunning themselves lackadaisically on the pipe balcony in front of the glass. A third, bewhiskered and be-earphoned, sat at the desk inside muttering technical imprecations into a mike. I stated my business, was told in the most cordial terms that they had never heard of my F---ing plane, and offered a phone to call for transportation. As I cranked the phone what sounded like two very fast sharp sighs of relief--"whew!"--"whew!" sounded outside the window. "F---!" shouted one of the sunbathers, sitting bolt upright, "we're under fire!" They both scuttled low into the tower room, donning steel helmets and flak jackets as they came. We all started to get down, noticing as we did puffs of small arms fire hitting the runway to our left and the Mountie

forts burping a response. Instantly, with a crash and an almost delicate tinkle, a hole appeared in the glass just about where we had been standing a moment before.

We crouched under the desk, swearing loudly into several phones, telling headquarters we are pinned down and lacing our narratives with pungent expletives people use when frightened, excited, or surprised, or all three at once. While this was happening, a space of about three seconds, I suppose, my briefcase fell with a thud from the desk, and from deep within it came an ominous buzzing sound. With alarm, I realized that the impact of the fall had turned on my portable razor and that the confused machine was not only wasting itself untended but eating my underpants as well. Detached enough to realize with nervous amusement that I might someday be telling my children and grandchildren that much of my (hopefully) only time under fire was occupied digging a runaway razor out of my baggage, I located and quelled the beast, spewing dirty shirts as I went. Actually, this ridiculous incident was a Godsend. It took some of the tension out of the situation and gave me something to do when I would otherwise have been crouching in apprehensive impotence. The soldiers in the tower were totally preoccupied and happily never noticed me rooting in my bag.

As it turned out, these were the only rounds the control tower took. What had happened was that the VC were withdrawing from the town and digging in, in a wooded valley opposite the airfield. As they went they were aiming harassing fire first from a distance of several hundred yards at anything that made a good target, like a three story control tower with sunbathing soldiers. Shortly thereafter a reaction force of RF went out from the airstrip into the valley. Through the ventilator in the tower, I watched them disappear over the lip of the runway. In the engagement that followed two RF and two VC were killed, two VC captured. Meanwhile, the heat having been taken off the tower, I beetled down the stairs to a waiting jeep and drove back to town in the middle of a tense convoy of trucks, with outriders fingering their weapons eyeing the trees where a sniper had been reported ten minutes earlier. Driving out had been like going to a church picnic, but returning all was changed. I got a very clear idea how fluid a concept security is in Vietnam.

Back in Da Lat, I found the town closing down. The airport had been declared shut, and so was the market. There was no panic, rather a strange silence. While I had been stuck at the airport, fighting had broken out at several other points in the town as a sweep force from headquarters came in contact with guerrillas. Apparently it was the retreat before this force that brought the VC into the area opposite the airport. By now artillery was being directed at that area, with whumps, and smoke appearing above the trees.

In the afternoon, I went with Lescaze, Kann, and an American teacher at Da Lat University over to the campus to check on the number of refugees arriving. By then 101 families had arrived--not homeless, but fearful of staying in their homes--with their belongings in baskets on poles. The students were dressed in uniforms, and carried Carbines, their belts festooned with clips. One that I talked to had nothing but tracer bullets in his clips, judging from the red heads on each one and I imagine that had he ever been called upon to fire in anger, his gun barrel would have wilted like a trunk of a

tired elephant. The students wandered around filling polyethylene sandbags (it's a modern world) and murmuring to one another. One particularly articulate one, a strangely old wizened young man who had obviously talked to a lot of foreigners said to me, "Well, we're coming to the end of the tunnel, but there doesn't seem to be much light, does there?"

Air strikes were called in that afternoon to deal with the VC near the airport. Terrifying but beautiful, graceful swoops, incredible bangs, vertical climbs, high velocity flatulence, thunderous roars, whines, pillars of smoke. The townspeople, especially the children crowded the high ground, the walls and the windows for a look, like the circus coming to town or a Sunday afternoon ballgame. Everyone who feels themselves threatened by VC presence in the area is delighted with the strikes and cheer the planes silently. This series did not do much good, however. A sweep force that went into the area right after the planes left was fired upon immediately and with affect. Two hours later another series of strikes were called for, and the same horrible but fascinating air show was repeated.

By that time the two prisoners taken that morning had been interrogated and an alarming intelligence picture was beginning to emerge. What was estimated in the morning to have been a force of a little over one hundred VC turned out to be about 300 or more firmly dug in near the airport, and they were reportedly to be joined by 400 more from the north in a night attempt to overrun Da Lat. The Southwestern sector of town where the attack was expected from, was reinforced and cleared of Americans. Talk of abandoning the airport (which had continued to take fire that afternoon) was vetoed, and blocking forces sent there. Corps headquarters was alerted of the threat and promised to airlift reinforcements the next morning. We settled down to wait. A riotous dinner ensued. Several Americans who had left their houses in the Southwest part of town joined us at Frank Wisner's and we devoured a sumptuous banquet which had been prepared for his boss (Robert Komer) who had been expected to visit from Nha Trang (Corps Headquarters) but had been told to stay away because of the threat. We had tomato soup, an enormous broiled fish, cake, all washed down with suitable wines and liquors. We got somewhat high, told jokes and little renditions, and had a perfectly delightful time, perhaps because of the slight but genuine suspicion that it might be our last. At bedtime we loaded our guns carefully (I had graduated to a carbine after carrying a shotgun most of the day after the airport ordeal--Frank had lent me one of his tiny sports coats to carry shells in and I was known in town as "the Duck Hunter," though no one laughed--they were all armed to the teeth, fully aware of the comforts of a gun of any sort under those conditions (not that I don't full support all the demands for a strict gun law!) and went to bed.

May 29

Absolutely nothing happened. The cock crew and none of us had stirred. There hadn't been a shot fired in town all night. The VC were gone. I flew to Nha Trang and back to Saigon that morning without incident. That day, the Lescazes and Peter Kann drove eight miles around the countryside outside of Da Lat. Nothing. Corps command arrived that

morning, took over the Da Lat Palace, dug trenches, ran sweeps, found nothing. Da Lat had become Bar Harbor again.

The experience at Da Lat was worth any number of briefings at bureaucratic nerve centers. I learned from first hand:

- 1. How few men can cause how much trouble.*
- 2. How little we know about how many there are, what they are going to do, and when.*
- 3. How ineffective air strikes can be, and also maybe how effective (there were some indications that the second wave of strikes had broken the VC force and made them retreat although no one really knew for sure).*
- 4. How fluid security can be in this country.*
- 5. How the RF and PF fight, though scraggly, scared, and under gunned.*
- 6. How life goes on through it all, around it all, and afterwards*

I drove in from the Saigon airbase through a driving monsoon rain. In one street, nine children were simply dancing in the downpour, jumping up and down throwing their arms out. Spent the rest of the day sleeping and thinking.

May 30

I passed the next two days flying around the Delta in small planes across great flat water-veined country, hopping from river town to river town. I spent the first night at a lovely place called Chau Doc, a few miles from the Cambodian border. The border is an imaginary line drawn across hundreds of miles of marsh. Seemed unpoliceable to me. In the evening had a delightful meal at a Vietnamese restaurant in the courtyard of an old family compound. The dusk fell as we sat there eating Chau Doc beef and vegetables in rice paper and watched willowy girls in Ao-Dais walk by under the big trees by the river. My host was a Vietnamese-Chinese named Cam Luong who works for CORDS and who delighted in gossiping cattily with me in Mandarin about the other guests while smiling sweetly at them. "Now her husband," he would say referring to a pretty Vietnamese lady across the table, "is a total flop. He's not bright, has no money, and has a reputation as one of the laziest men I town. No one can figure why she, one of the brightest and best born here, ever married him." Etc. etc.

After dinner went and drank scotch in undershirts with the American Senior Province Advisor, a sharp, outspoken man named Tull. He said that the situation had improved since Tet and that the VC were in no position to do anything except harass. He felt the local forces would do much better if they fought at night, were better armed, and better officered. We have known these things for years, but progress has been slow, if in some areas noticeable at all. The ARVN Officer Corps was, with some noteworthy exceptions, rotten, he said. One of the reasons is lack of promotion mobility. The few operating generals in the Army cannot agree on whom to promote. Promotions are a function of clique politics and the officer corps is frozen—few people move, bright officers are squashed. They are now just getting around to promoting people on the basis of seniority.

The next step, and God knows when that will be taken, is to institute a system of promotion by merit.

May 31

Left Chau Doc in a Swiss short take-off plane called a Pilatus Porter (see Laos letter two years ago) and flew to Vinh Long, a famous old river town and political center (the present premier, Mr. Huong, is only one of several leading South Vietnamese politicians born there) which was badly hit during Tet. I was with Josiah Bennett, an old China Hand who is Deputy Province Advisor. Over a vile lunch in a darkened mess hall (macaroni and Kool-Aid) during a torrential downpour, I met the Senior Advisor, a bright political soldier, a Lieutenant Colonel called Roberge. One of the impressive things about our mission in Vietnam is close cooperation between civilians and military. Despite mutual misgivings when the Pacification Program was put under military command, both sides have been somewhat startled to find they like and respect each other--or at least so it seemed in the provinces I visited and in the capital. As a result we are developing in Vietnam a core of diplomats who know military problems and soldiers who understand politics. More important, they know each other and friendships formed now will be significant when these individuals work their way to the top of the ladder.

In the afternoon, I went with Peter Collins, an Embassy provincial reporting officer (as far as I can see these are the only Saigon Embassy jobs for junior or middle level officers worth having at the present time. The officers have plenty of opportunity to travel and get a feel for the country. They also have considerable freedom to write what they want, when, and where, etc.) to visit the Secretary to the Bishop of Vinh Long, a Father Tam. The Catholics are big in this town. Dien's brother, Mr. Nhu, built an enormous cathedral here, a great, squat, tower less ponderous structure that looks exactly like a white elephant. The bishop's residence was badly shot up during Tet--the upper floors gutted and the roof gone in some places of what was once a graceful French colonial structure. Fr. Tam, a youngish man, prominent teeth, a square face, and glasses received us in his study on the ground floor. The glass in his bookcase was shattered and jagged pieces still remained in the frame. A formal photograph of an elderly and extremely aristocratic looking couple, presumably his parents, had been holed by a bullet. Father Tam sat down and began to talk. His words flowed on a mellifluous voice, formed at the back of his throat like a bad operatic tenor's, out under the sluice gates of his enormous teeth. He was outspoken, confused, bitter, friendly, pleading, defiant, misinformed, and contradictory. Collins, who knows Tam, said he was not a representative individual, but that what he said amounted to a capsule summary of South Vietnamese frustrations, hopes, hatreds, weaknesses. Tam's main points:

- 14. You're going to sell us out in Paris. I pray you don't.*
- 15. Your presence here is corrupting our morals, fostering drunkenness and prostitution. (Collins commented afterwards that the Vietnamese had a taste for vice long before we ever made the scene.)*
- 16. Premier Huong is a good man and his new government is stronger than the one it replaced. I wish it well.*

17. *You Americans always betrayed your best friends. You turned on Diem, and now you have put Huong in office to implement your policy of furthering negotiations with VC. You know he is one of the few of our politicians Ho Chi Minh will talk to. (How's that for a contradiction.)*
18. *We hate the Communists and want to have nothing to do with them.*
19. *The CIA is the root of all evil.*
20. *Our government and army are weak and corrupt. They get as little of my help and support as I can manage.*
21. *Without America's help, we would go under immediately. We need you desperately and deeply appreciate the sacrifices you have made for us. We distrust your motives and hope we're wrong.*

As I left, he thanked us for coming and blessed us. I thought, "God Bless you, too, Father Tam."

Returned to headquarters for briefing, martinis on the roof with Col. Rogers as light faded over the river. Night calm, no incidents.

June 1

Indescribable breakfast (awful) followed by wonderful walk through Vinh Long market, gently floating about on a sea of cooing coned hats. A big difference in mood from the shoving and bustle of the normal hard-driving Chinese market. Got the impression that the South Vietnamese (especially the Delta breed) are Lotus eaters who have been asked to change their diet. Returned to Saigon aboard Navy plane whose back-facing seats and under wing portholes gave a splendid view of the city as we approached. The outskirts were burning in three places. Air strikes and a paratroop operation are visible to the south. A spooky ride into the city with two jumpy young Navy types and an incompetent Vietnamese driver Pillars of smoke from Gia Dinh. I more frightened (with less real reason for being so) than at any other time, because I had no confidence in the people I was with. The tension level was up in Saigon since I left, with jeeps and trucks full of flak-jacketed troops roaring around, planes and choppers moving overhead, other pillars of smoke, but dead quiet in the center of town. Went to diplomatic reception that evening where everyone sweated politely at each other and griped convivially about the curfew (which few honor anyway). Scuttlebutt was that Ambassador Komer (the Pacification Czar) has gradually replaced the FSO's on his evaluating staff who told him the truth with military types who will take literally the requirement to write progress reports. Bed early--bangs, rumbles, and grunts during the night as rockets hit the city and artillery answers.

June 2

Robin Pell, who works for USAID as a press-PR man, came for breakfast and then took me on a tour of Saigon shops. I bought Sheila an old Chinese pot and tortoise shell comb, the boys some camouflage hats. Lunch with Davis Pike (who had just finished up a tour as Pfizer representative in Saigon) and Robin Pell and their magnificent broads, one

Australian, one Vietnamese. Bachelor civilians can do very well in this town. Left for airport, took off 90 minutes before that stray rocket killed the four Saigon officials. Two hours later arrived in Hong Kong, immensely relieved, stimulated, tired. Special Joy to see Sheila and the boys.

PLATT: Now, there was another connection with Vietnam for those of us who were in Hong Kong. We were where press people kept their families, David Greenway and other major reporters. All had families living in Hong Kong. We took care of them. They were friends and we were part of their infrastructure and when their husbands came home we went out on weekends and took them out on the junk and calmed them down. Wisner came and others. So, we were adjunct members of the Vietnamese group, a very tight group of people who went through all of this. We had kind of, we were adjunct professors, adjunct members of the war. We didn't go through what they did, but we had linkages with them throughout.

Q: Where you saw the impact on them.

PLATT: Oh, yes and I just went through a little bit of it and I got some idea of what it was like.

Q: The cadre of people who cycled through Vietnam learned a lot and had very successful careers later. This Vietnam experience molded an entire generation of the Foreign Service. Lambertson, Oakley, Negroponte, Frank was there himself and you were connected.

PLATT: Richard Holbrook was another.

Q: Holbrook, exactly. I mean you were talking earlier of the benefit of it. I was talking to an FSO who 20 years later was stationed in Kenya, Mombasa, Kenya and the Marines were operating out of there for the first Gulf War. Since he'd been through the CORDS experience he knew what the Marines needed as an FSO. He was extremely helpful as a result.

PLATT: That's right. I, myself, later on had quite a lot to do with the US military in US-China relations, and when I was ambassador in the Philippines.

Q: You appreciate the observation that Provincial Reconstruction Teams operating in Afghanistan are influenced by the CORDS model.

PLATT: They are much smaller.

Q: It is terribly exciting to me. I don't know where you are, but I notice in the staffing pattern that Doug Pike is in Hong Kong at the time you're there.

PLATT: I knew Doug Pike but not well. The USIS guy that I knew the best was Dave Hess whose wife was Chinese and was one of my singing partners.

Q: Singing partners?

PLATT: Yes, he and I made a record together called the Country Team.

Q: Are you kidding?

PLATT: Yes. He was a USIA officer and a banjo player. We used to fill up the city hall.

Q: In Hong Kong?

PLATT: In Hong Kong. Dollar concerts on Sundays. In Hong Kong you could always go to something. He and I would perform and did TV shows, a lot of fun. I played the guitar right up through my Philippines time. The Filipinos loved the guitar and loved anybody who could sing and then I stopped, terminally burnt out. I wrote a blues complaining about the foreign minister's negotiating style which I was invited to sing at the palace on New Year's Day with the foreign minister playing the drums behind me. Only in the Philippines is all I can say. We've got to go on now, I'm going back to Washington in 1968.

RETURN TO WASHINGTON

I reported to Paul Kreisberg, the head of the Mainland China Desk in State, in September, 1968. We had spent the summer months in Maine, watching with fascination and some horror, the violence at the Democratic Party Convention in Chicago. These were Lyndon Johnson's last months in office. *Every* bureau in the government was tasked to chronicle the achievements of his Presidency. As the junior man on the desk, Paul announced apologetically, my first duty would be to write the history of LBJ's policy toward China.

Although the result was a slim volume at best, the project required that I research all the files since 1964 and list every initiative put forward by the Desk to develop relations with Beijing. All of these, including proposals for exchanges in journalism, sports, education and culture, as well as ideas to resume trade, and new approaches to the talks in Warsaw, had gone up to Secretary of State Dean Rusk's inbox, and returned without action. The Chinese, embroiled in the Cultural Revolution and dominated by radicals were simply not interested, and neither, really, was Secretary Rusk. After President Nixon took office in the Spring of 1969, the call came from Secretary Rogers' office for new China initiatives. The earlier ideas were dusted off and sent forward. This time, they were not returned, in fact going from Rogers to the White House for action. Something was up.

The Bureau of Intelligence and Research

The "Bifurcated Airgram" had established my reputation as an analyst. In March, 1969, I was asked to replace Lindsey Grant, a respected senior China specialist as head the division in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) that covered Asian Communist Areas, including the PRC, North Vietnam and North Korea. My boss once again was

John Holdridge, soon to join Dr. Kissinger's staff at the National Security Council. When he left for the White House, I persuaded my mentor from Hong Kong, Bill Gleysteen to replace John. His deputy, Evelyn Colbert, was a great editor and fount of knowledge on Southeast Asia, kept a stern eye on the output of my division.

In contrast to our "watching" work in Hong Kong, the analyses for which my office was responsible were linked directly to the issues with which Washington policy makers were grappling. Among these the most important were; developments in the heated Sino-Soviet dispute and their significance for US policy; and China's increasingly successful campaign for recognition at the United Nations, and what we should do about it.

My division was also responsible at the beginning of my tenure for analyzing Hanoi's moves and motives and its complex relationship with the Chinese and the Soviets. How these played into the Paris Peace Talks was another concern. President Nixon had already announced the policy of Vietnamization. The prospect of an American military draw down in Asia affected balance of power calculations in all the capitals of the region. When our top analyst, William "Dick" Smyser, joined John Holdridge at the NSC in early 1970, we restructured our scope of duties to focus on North Asia dropping Vietnam but adding Japan and South Korea.

My division prepared reports and briefings for Marshall Green and Secretary of State Rogers, and represented the State Department on the interagency intelligence community committees that produced National Estimates. In addition, I was expected to keep up with my academic contacts in the China Watching community, and expand them through public speaking appearances around the country. In those days, the State Department wanted to share its thinking, at least in a general and unclassified way.

My presentations to regional Councils on Foreign Relations, and specialist audiences at universities and different War Colleges helped me sharpen my editorial and analytical functions within the intelligence community. If I could explain our thinking in terms understandable to public audiences, I could make a more pointed case to the policy makers. I also taught a seminar at SAIS, "Communist China: the Aftermath of the Cultural Revolution" during the Fall Semester in 1969. Putting a human face on intelligence analysis struck me as a good idea. I enjoyed not being kept hidden.

THE PRESSURES OF SINO-SOVIET HOSTILITY

My years in INR, 1969-71, saw the Nixon White House lay the groundwork for its opening to China against the backdrop of a major shift in China's strategic policy, moved by growing alarm over Soviet actions and attitudes. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs Marshall Green, a key China policy player and consumer of our analyses during the period, described Beijing's attitudes as follows:

"The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, followed by the rapid build-up of Soviet military power in Siberia, especially in disputed areas along the Chinese frontier, created an atmosphere of war panic in China. Air raid shelters were built on a massive scale. A

CIA estimate of October 1969 placed the chances of a Soviet effort to knock out China's nascent nuclear weapons factories at about 1 in 3." (War and Peace with China", Marshall Green, John Holdridge p. 178) As the INR representative on the interagency committee that produced the estimate, I remember a lengthy discussion on whether the Soviets could really perform such a "nuclear castration" of China. The conclusion was no. China, as one analyst put it, had at least "eight balls", and these were not clustered in one place.

The winter of 1969 saw violent armed clashes between the Chinese and the Soviets along the Ussuri River that formed the boundary between the two countries. Tank battles and artillery exchanges across the frozen river marked a new stage in an ideological rivalry that had become national and personal. Bizarre photographs, like the one showing a horde of Chinese swarming over a Soviet armored personnel carrier beating at it with sticks, demonstrated the depth of Chinese fear and sent a calculated message to Moscow: If you attack us we will drown you in the sea of people's war.

While none of us were privy to the operational policy maneuvers under discussion in the White House and, to a lesser extent, the policy side of the State Department, we had a keen appreciation of the backdrop against which the early steps of a mating dance between Washington and Beijing were taken. In late 1969 the US announced limited relaxation of travel and trade restrictions with China. In January of 1970, the Warsaw Talks started again after years on hold.. In his Foreign Policy Message to Congress in February 1970, President Nixon called for "a more normal and constructive relationship with Communist China." (Op. Cit. P.88)

As I explained to a Council on Foreign Relations audience in Chicago at the end of September 1969, four broad options were under discussion within the Administration as to how it should position itself in relation to the Sino-Soviet dispute.

--Make it clear to the Soviet Union that Washington would do nothing to hinder it in its confrontation with China. Proponents argued that to do otherwise might sabotage agreements that this country wanted with Moscow (notably arms limitation). Opponents argued that the step would prevent improvement of American relations with China.

--Do the opposite—make it clear that the United States will oppose any effort to bring China to heel. Proponents said that this would speed an improvement in relations with China. Opponents say it would jeopardize relations with Russia—and the United States had more in common with Russia than with China.

--Do nothing. This had already been ruled out.

--Adopt a positive attitude toward both sides, while making it clear that they could not take American support or lack of support for granted.

The fourth approach was decided upon as the right one. It was intentionally vague, giving Washington the freest hand to influence events without being committed to one side or

the other. It left both China and Russia guessing, worrying that otherwise Washington would help the enemy.

Many judgments went into the making of such a subtle policy. For one thing, American expert opinion judged that China and Russia would not go all the way to war, despite the military buildup and the whipping up of animosity for the other in each country. Yet allowance is made for miscalculation. Each side was judged to have made big mistakes already in handling the other, so escalation to a war that neither side wanted was considered conceivable.

Another factor in the equation was the deep suspicion that both Moscow and Peking had toward Washington's role in their quarrel. It was established that each side genuinely feared that the United States would ally itself with the enemy. This fear could be useful in American maneuvering—and could also be a pitfall.

Another point being weighed carefully the balance of power concept—that it is in the interest of this country to for the opposing sides in any world confrontation to be as evenly matched as possible, because if one prevails, it will be strengthened for possible conflict with this country. Russia was stronger than China . Therefore there was a feeling that the United States should consider ways of bolstering the Chinese side,

China, to be sure, might not want overt American help, because it might provoke a Russian attack. Moreover, there remained issues between the United States and China (especially Vietnam and the future of Taiwan) on which Peking and Washington appeared irreconcilable. So help that Washington gave to strengthen Peking's hand had to be subtle. Current Nixon Administration moves to ease trade and travel restrictions against China were this category—more to be thought of as “signals” than as a genuine relaxation of the long feud between China and the United States. (footnote reported by Stewart E. Hoyt in the Milwaukee Journal October 5)

CHINA AT THE UN

These years also marked China's worldwide campaign to replace Taiwan as China's representative in the United Nations. We reported extensively on Beijing's progress, as country after country recognized the People's Republic and broke formal ties with the Republic of China on Taiwan. As early as December, 1969, we were asked for our views on what kind of UN member, the PRC would make.

We replied in a memorandum that the UN membership would not tame the PRC but would force its representatives to exercise discipline. As a Security Council member, we guessed that Beijing would not be a helpful influence on peacekeeping, but would be less negative than many observers now thought. Beijing would champion the underdog against the superpowers, and generate a larger number of Security Council Meetings, but would be careful in exercising its veto, assessing net impacts like other countries did.

We thought the PRC would be a baleful influence in the General Assembly for the former colonial powers and those like the US who had bases overseas. It would oppose waste, slipshod procedures and high cost measures, and lobby for larger representation on the Secretariat. More positively, we estimated that China would observe our security and espionage rules sufficiently to avoid being thrown out of New York. The PRC presence at the UN would provide a convenient point of contact for the US Government. Perhaps most significant for US diplomats whose entire Autumns were devoted to lobbying in capitals worldwide on the issue, the Chinese Representation question would be over, although Beijing would maintain pressure to prevent Taiwan's participation throughout the UN system.

The final vote in October, 1971, helped set the stage for Nixon's visit in February, 1972.

People in the State Department were very punctilious about pushing this battle to the end and I'm sure Ray Cline was amongst them, but I think also as an intelligence analyst he was very fair minded and straight. I never had a sense of him trying to elbow people into some kind of position.

PERSPECTIVES IN ASIA AND EUROPE

In addition to managing the preparation of reports and analyses, an important part of my job was to travel, both to Asia and Europe sharing our analytical perspectives and seeking out those of other governments. During a "parish visit" to Hong Kong at the end of 1969. I compared notes with my former colleagues and found that the post had turned dull for China Watchers after years at the center of attention. The long slow process of picking up the pieces after the Cultural Revolution was vitally important but inherently boring.

The China Mainland section was well staffed with scholarly types who seem to thrive on their daily diet of dry rusks from the Communist press and radio and were well suited to the painstaking task of documenting the reconstruction of Chinese body politic. Any differences in analysis and interpretation between Hong Kong and Washington were ones of tone and shading. They were, perhaps rightly, more inclined to accentuate the positive aspects of the picture, the strides for instance made in party building as opposed to the painful pulling and hauling that was impeding progress; the overall success that the regime had had in moving people out of the cities as opposed to the dislocations and the leak-backs. I found little to quarrel with really.

The most exciting thing about Hong Kong professionally was the change in climate for Sino American contact. The Communists in Hong Kong were extremely interested in recent American moves and clearly under instructions to adopt a more relaxed attitude toward contact with Americans. Local officials from the New China News Agency, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and other go betweens were striking up conversations with Consulate General Officers, and expressing their own views in surprisingly cool and objective ways. All this was absolutely new, and reflected the changes we had noted elsewhere.

In March 1970 , I got my first taste of multilateral diplomacy at a meeting of NATO's Allied Planning Advisory Group in Brussels. The topic was Sino-Soviet tension and the implications for NATO. One of a four man delegation led by Bill Cargo, Director of the Department's Policy Planning and Coordination staff, I was the resource person on China.

The first three days were devoted to discussions of the Sino-Soviet dispute, what course it was likely to take, what adjustments in its own posture NATO should make, if any. The general conversation by members of 15 delegations and the international staff of NATO--there must have been forty or more people in the room--rambled painfully.

We spent the next two days drafting a seven-page document summarizing our conclusions and recommendations. National egos and sensitivities blossomed. To get a feel for the complications, imagine representatives of 15 branches of the same family from different towns, with diverse interests, backgrounds and economic circumstances all sitting down and trying to write a letter which must meet the approval of the family elders.

The substance of our discussions and conclusions was simple. We examined three contingencies: (a) continued Sino-Soviet antagonism short of war, (b) major hostilities, and (c) a major reconciliation. All agreed that (a) was more likely than (b), (b) was more likely than (c), although remote under presently foreseeable circumstances. All agreed that continued Sino-Soviet antagonism short of war--i.e. the present situation--was advantageous to the western alliance, although there was little that we could or should do to exploit the situation. All agreed that major hostilities would be dangerous because of the possibility of other countries being dragged in or nuclear weapons being used, and a host of other imponderables. There were some kinds of hostilities that would be of more advantage to the West than others: i.e., a protracted conventional land war limited to Asia that would exhaust both the Soviets and the Chinese. All agreed that the Soviets would work to avoid this kind of conflict.

In any case, all agreed that we had no control over the situation. An outbreak of major hostilities was undesirable. Genuine reconciliation, putting the Sino-Soviet relationship back on the same basis of close ideological and national cooperation that prevailed during the '50s would be disadvantageous to NATO, but was so unlikely, even after Mao's death, as to warrant little real consideration. Under the circumstances the NATO allies concluded that they should sit tight, behave in an impartial manner towards both the Chinese and Soviets, watch the situation and keep each other informed.

This summary of the proceedings took me twenty minutes to write, and I could have done it before going to Brussels. Instead we talked about it for 3 days and wrote for 2. Was it worth it? There were times during the proceedings when I wondered. At one critical point, however, I realized that all the disjointed mutters and wheezes rising from around this enormous table represented an alliance thinking aloud, and that this was something quite marvelous. The single glass of milk produced by endless squeezes on the fifteen udders of this giant cow, was well worth the drinking. Getting countries to do anything

together is hard enough under any circumstances. Here were 15 governments focusing on one problem, and ending up making sense.

In November of 1970 (check), I traveled to Paris and London with Marshall Green and Alfred L Jenkins, the man then in charge of Mainland China Affairs at State, to exchange assessments with the French and the British. Our talks, conducted in the genteel high-ceilinged rooms at the Quai D'Orsay and Whitehall, covered the Sino-Soviet stalemate, the impact of Vietnamization on our Asian relationships, and the growing strength of China's position vis a vis Taiwan in the UN. French President De Gaulle died just before we left Paris, bringing to my mind our secret toasts seven years before in Taiwan when he recognized Beijing.

The French were irate about the US military intervention in Cambodia, which had occurred in May. Green's opposite number, Froment-Meurice, repeatedly called our action "deplorable", helpful to China's position in Indo-China, and harmful to the prospects for the Peace talks with North Vietnam underway in Paris. Less visible, the incursion had also stopped our private mating dance with the Chinese in its tracks. Promising action at the Warsaw talks had been canceled, and the Chinese remained, or so we thought, uninterested.

Sino-Soviet relations were congealed in a state of "guerre demi-froide" ("half-cold war"), and the situation inside China was still a stalemate between pragmatists picking up the pieces in the provinces and radicals in Beijing huddled around an aging Chairman Mao. Japan continued to grow in economic strength but, our London colleagues agreed, seemed unwilling to exercise political influence in Southeast Asia.

This trip was my last major duty in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. My two-year assignment was coming to an end and I was ripe for a change. I had done nothing but China for ten years. The fascination of China and its growing importance to US policy notwithstanding, I was stale and burned out. The mere mention of Mao made me ill. I needed to learn more about the practice of diplomacy in general, and requested a job that would provide the broadest possible overview of the Department of State and its operations.

Personnel obliged by assigning me to the Secretariat Staff (S/S-S), the office that manages the daily affairs and travels of the Secretary of State, where I served first as Deputy Director and later Director during the next two years. The move was to prove pure serendipity. It would lead to participation in President Nixon's historic China trip, and later to assignment at the US Liaison Office in Beijing, developments of which I had not the faintest inkling.

THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

The Secretariat Staff is known in the Department of State as "the Line", a reference to its earliest configuration in a row of its offices close to the Secretary's own. Its function is to manage the paper flow to and from the Secretary, determining the briefing documents

and talking papers he will need to get through his daily schedule, setting deadlines and standards, tracking decisions and their implementation. Each “Line Officer” is responsible for the performance of a cluster of bureaus and imposing discipline over whatever work they send to the Secretary and his Deputies on the Seventh Floor, urging promptness, rejecting sloppy work, and insuring that every paper has been cleared by all the bureaus with an interest in the issue to be discussed. The Secretariat sits astride all official lines of communication between the Department, the White House, and the other agencies of the government. It is central, respected, feared and, at times, despised by those working under its lash in the bureaus.

I was delighted and flattered to get this assignment. S/S, despite its Gestapo reputation was considered an important training ground for the upwardly mobile. Indeed, many whom I worked with went on to prominent futures. William Gleysteen (Ambassador to Korea), L. Paul Bremer (most recently US Administrator in Iraq), Frank G. Wisner (US Ambassador to India, Egypt, the Philippines and Zambia), Laurence Eagleburger (finally Secretary of State), Stapleton Roy, Ambassador to China, Indonesia and Singapore), to name a few, were all Secretariat grads.

Running the Secretariat Staff felt like the bareback rider in the circus, standing precariously on top of nine horses and making them move delicately in the same direction. The “Line Officers”, as spirited as they were competent, had to be tracked and guided. If papers did not arrive on time, or were sloppy, I was the one who took the heat from our front office. The Executive Secretary, Ted Eliot and his Deputies Tim Curran and Bob Brewster were themselves directly answerable to Secretary Rogers himself. Smart and good-humored, they did not have the time to stay mad for long.

The pace of the Secretary’s life was intense and the pressure high, as I found out when sitting in for the leaders of the front office when one was on leave or traveling. And the heat came from below as well as above, as action officers and Assistant Secretaries complained about the demands of the Secretariat. Our work covered all the issues of interest to the Secretary, from disputes over Ecuador’s fishing rights and the importation of Polish golf carts to the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks.

Relations with the White House were terrible. Both President Nixon and his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger distrusted the State Department and kept from it the information needed to do its work. They also sent directives that were frequently impossible to follow. Fortunately, Alexander Haig, Kissinger’s Deputy, a consummate bureaucrat, translated these often peremptory orders into manageable form.

Haig was marvelous in those days. When Nixon was removed from office, he really ran the country for several months. He’s gotten a terrible rap since. Maybe he did undergo some kind of physiological change or something like that.

Q: Haig was Henry’s deputy then?

PLATT: Haig was Henry's deputy and then when Henry went over to and then he remained Henry's deputy throughout. Nixon resigned in August of '74, Henry became Secretary of State in '73, November of '73. So, Haig was the Security Advisor from November of '73 until August of '74. Something like that.

Q: He longed worked with Kissinger, so he knew Kissinger's style?

PLATT: Absolutely.

Q: Now, you're saying he's helpful in clarifying some of these things. Somebody calls him up?

PLATT: Absolutely. Elliott calls him up. He asks how a harsh White House directive can actually be implemented, and Haig tells him how. Just send me X,Y and Z and I'll take care of the rest of it. Without Haig we would really have been in trouble.

Most of my work concerned the process of moving paper and the management of people, rather than substance. Both of these were new fields for me and the stretching process was painful, but I was learning how to be a bureaucrat and found I was good at it. My immediate boss, James Carson, was a dedicated and experienced teacher, who taught me that a modicum of irreverence and wicked humor actually improved the rate of speed and the quality of responsiveness required in this kind of job.

Carson also hammered home the most important message any would- be policy maker needed to know: It does not matter how sound and carefully thought out your recommendations may be, they are worthless if they do not get to the decision makers on time and in a concise form that they can absorb quickly. Knowledge of the pace and complexity of policy makers lives is crucial to influencing them. Knowing the machinery that moves decisions is as important as the actual substance itself. At the same time, those who operate the machinery cannot function without an understanding of the substance.

Work under Carson, (who died of cancer in November 1972) made me grow and use an entirely different set of muscles. Whereas I had once focused on detailed research, thinking, writing, editing and explaining our analyses to others, I now spent most of my time on the telephone getting other people to work. As an analyst, I knew my subject and what should be reported, but I had no idea how wide the readership was or what I might do to make my work more readable. The Secretariat taught me about the bureaucracy and how to make things happen. It gave me a perspective on how important my work had been in relation to the other issues facing the State Department.

I learned the difference between diplomats and bureaucrats and how crucial it was for an effective Foreign Service Officer to be both. As diplomats, we learned difficult languages and lived in very different cultures, interpreting them to our own government and ours to theirs. We are supposed to lubricate relationships, smoothing the sharp edges between presidents, chairmen, premiers and kings. As bureaucrats in Washington, we are tasked to lead a gangling, often obtuse, foreign affairs community, pounding our shoes on

countless staff meeting room tables in an effort to get our way with representatives from the State Department, Pentagon, the Treasury, Commerce Department and the Intelligence Community. This of course, is what ambassadors do, too.

The legendary Philippine Foreign Minister Carlos P. Romulo put it this way in one of his famous stories. “When confronted with an ugly woman, the bureaucrat will say, ‘You have a face that would stop a clock!’ The diplomat will say, ‘when I look into your eyes, time stands still’”. The Secretariat taught us both approaches, and when to use them.

Managing the Secretary’s travels was another important function of the Secretariat. The challenge was to replicate, on the move, an office that would perform, in miniature, our services at home, making sure the Man was properly briefed for all his meetings, received his telegrams from other parts of the world and was in touch with Washington. Once the plane arrived at our destination, our challenge was to set up an office immediately, usually in the hotel where the party was staying. S/S-S was responsible for sending officers on ahead to be ready when we arrived. We learned a lot about the tricks of working without much sleep. One ploy, when everything was quiet for a while was to slip into your hotel room, get into your pajamas, sleep an hour or two, get up, take a shower and brush your teeth as if you were waking to a new day. The idea was to fake your body into thinking it had had a full night’s sleep. Your body could be fooled, but not all the time.

KISSINGER’S TRIP TO CHINA

So far there had been practically no China content to my work in the Secretariat. President Nixon’s announcement on July 15, 1971 of Henry Kissinger’s secret trip to Beijing and his intention to visit the PRC the following year came as a total surprise. I remember lounging with Sheila on the lawn behind our house at 3734 Oliver Street with our colleagues from language training in Taichung, Stan and Claire Brooks, listening to the President on a small radio. If we had not been lying down, we would have fallen down. We repeated our secret toast to De Gaulle, this time proposed to Richard. M. Nixon.

I had no operational role in China policy at that point, but was beside myself with curiosity about what had happened in China. My old boss John Holdridge had accompanied Kissinger. After a decent interval, I invited him on July 30 to lunch at the Metropolitan Club and pumped him on his experiences. He obliged me with the following observations, drawn from notes I took right afterward.

Trip to Peking: Atmospheric

14. *The Chinese were exceptionally gracious. There were no differences in style from their counterparts across the straits.*

15. *The living quarters were middle European in the western suburbs of the City..*

16. *Four protocol officers accompanied the US delegation from Pakistan. Three plus Nancy Tang, the first line interpreter (who corrected Ji Chao Ju in his translations during the talks).*
17. *The Chinese pilots all dug into the free cigarettes on the plane (Pakistan Airlines).*
18. *The food was marvelous (palace cooking) but all dishes were ones that Holdridge had seen before.*
19. *Zhou Enlai looked like he had been through hell and emerged in tact on the other side. His approach was low key, not forceful, humorous, and intelligent. He looked old and drawn.*
20. *They were met at the plane by Marshall Ye Jian Ying, Deputy Foreign Minister Zhang Wenjin and Huang Hua. The Chinese made a point of identifying Ye as a military man. Holdridge said he thought an effort was being made to show that the People's Liberation Army was firmly behind the whole venture. Ye sat in on all the talks. I noted that of all the PLA men in the top leadership Ye is the one with the closest ties to Zhou.*

Substance

In the first day of talks Zhou presented the Chinese position in stock set-piece form, along lines with which we are all familiar. It was as if he had to get certain things on the record. Later he relaxed and became more candid as he heard the US answers to his positions. The US made no deals and no promises. There are no conditions set for the President's visit. The Chinese appeared very anxious for the Kissinger trip to come off and for the announcement of the President's intentions to be made public. Huang Hua was the first to bring it up in the car on the second day. It was the Chinese who stayed up all night drafting the announcement. The Americans went to bed at about 3 AM. The main discussion centered around the second sentence. "Knowing of President Nixon's expressed desire to visit the PRC, Premier Zhou, on behalf of the Government of the PRC, has extended an invitation etc., etc.". The problem was how the sentence would be cast to satisfy the Chinese that the Americans had made the initiative and the Americans that they not appear to be coming hat in hand. There were some tense moments over the word "knowing" "liao jie" (understanding).

8. *HAK was skillful and irrepressible. He made jokes. Holdridge got the impression that both he and Zhou enjoyed the meetings. HAK was the only man who could have brought it off.*

9. *Holdridge and HAK both told Zhou also about the jade body stocking and were furious about the way Joe Alsop handled the story to lend weight to his speculations about the substance of the conversations.*

10. *The entire Forbidden City was closed off for HAK. The trip around the Forbidden City, which included the visit to the archeological exhibit (where the jade body stocking was displayed), also included a look at the Empress Dowager's bedroom. The dust on the floor---the group left tracks--suggested that very few visitors were taken here.*

11. *Peking seemed very subdued--people quietly going about their business on a Sunday, no crowds jamming the parks, no gongs, hub hub, street vending cries, as in the Peking Holdridge remembered.*

12. *Huang Hua is an old, honorable Chinese gentleman, who also looked like he had been through hell. He used his English, but sparingly. Holdridge spoke Chinese, especially at meals.*

Onward Preparations

13. *No one has really focused on the question of onward preparations. John Holdridge's impression is that the entourage will be small by normal presidential visit standards--no larger than a planeload.*

Analysis and Substance

14. *The Chinese have come to a sense of reality. Zhou made a point of explaining the Cultural Revolution. During the talks he said, "Have you heard of our Cultural Revolution?" Holdridge politely said, "Yes, but we would not want to deal with something that we believed to be an internal matter of the PRC." "Oh no," said Zhou, "I want to tell you" and then he went on a length in standard fashion and sincerely. He said that (and this was a standard phrase of three years ago) this was a time of "great turmoil, great upheaval, and great reorganization." (John and I in turn were surprised to hear him say this even now.) Holdridge was convinced that the phrase applies to a wider context. Not only in China but outside. They are anxious to redress the balance, and change the equation of power.*

John, of course, found it the supreme irony that the Chinese were sitting down at the same table with the representative of the man they had only months before labeled "the God of War."

I returned to the Secretariat and plied my bureaucratic trade for the rest of the year. I was aware that additional Kissinger trips were in the works to prepare for the Nixon Visit, but while State Department officers like Al Jenkins, William Brown and Roger Sullivan (another Taichung classmate) had roles in creating briefings, the formal State Department machinery was not yet involved.

TRAVELS WITH AGNEW

The services of Secretariat officers were available upon request to any cabinet officer traveling abroad. My most demanding and controversial task during the rest of 1971

involved accompanying Vice President Spiro T. Agnew to Turkey, Iran and Greece in October 1971.

Agnew's traveling entourage was small; Agnew and his wife and daughter; Art Sohmer, his chief of staff, Brigadier General Mike Dunn, his foreign policy adviser; Vic Gold, the press secretary; and John Thomas, the State Department's most senior administrative officer, who managed all travel arrangements. His presence demonstrated the Department's determination that nothing go wrong on these trips.

In addition to the usual S/S duty managing the delegation's communications and supply of briefing materials, I was expected to sit in on all the Vice President's meetings, take the notes and prepare the reporting telegrams. The extra load ensured my involvement in all the delegation's activities, except sleep. I would need all the help I could get, so I took with me the best secretary in the Executive Secretariat, my own assistant, Dixie Grimes, whose smarts matched her stamina and good looks.

My notes of the trip yielded the following thumbnails of Agnew and his principals:

The VP

Dignified, thoughtful, very conservative, really convinced that "Comsymps" in the government and press are dragging us down. A big man who takes real pains to keep himself in shape. Soft spoken, but outspoken. Very effective in conversations with foreign leaders, learns his brief cold and makes the points he should with finesse. Exceptional on his feet making easy and genuine extemporaneous toasts, he turns into a different kind of person when talking to the Press. An extraordinary Jekyll and Hyde act.

Mrs. Agnew

A nice, uncomplicated person.

Sohmer

Bright, quick, Mike Nichols humor, irreverent, sensitive, very close to the VP. Has been with him the entire time since the beginning of his career in Towson MD. Not at all the type one would expect as Spiro's right hand man. Relationship makes VP seem broader gauge person.

Dunn

Brilliant boy general. Boston Irish with degrees from Harvard, Yale and Princeton. Smiles with huge teeth. Eats raw meat and probably people three times a day. Friendly and funny with me, but watch out. V. close to Sohmer. No toady. Dominates Sohmer while making it look the other way around.

I approached this trip with trepidation. Agnew's politics were at the other end of the dial from mine, though as a professional, I suppressed that concern. His public persona was a disaster. The media, labeled by Agnew the "nattering nabobs of negativity", treated him as a dumb right wing nonentity. Once announced, the visit to Greece was excoriated as a

gratuitous bouquet to the dictator Colonel Papadopoulos by America's leading Greek American, who was interested only in making a cheap pitch to ethnic voters.

TURKEY

Our 36 hours in Ankara started with a hair-raising 50-60 mile an hour motorcade. The Agnew limousine was chased by a horde of beat up press vehicles filled with fierce looking Turkish photographers speeding to get past two ancient police vans flanking our line of cars, belching black smoke. Sometimes four abreast, the press cars jockeyed for the best shot of the visitors in a scene that combined a game of chicken and the feel of the Indy 500. This went on for twenty miles. The Secret Service were beside themselves.

Once in the capital, we hit the ground laying wreaths. The rest of the stay was orderly and even productive. Agnew handled his meetings with the Prime Minister and other political figures competently, discussing the Cyprus issue, SALT, MBFR, and other NATO issues, and exchanging toasts with increasing warmth and spontaneity.

The Turks had been grumpy about the visit from the outset, treating the presence of this American Greek as a minimal duty dance required before his visit to Athens. Now they began to relax and even enjoy themselves. At the final luncheon, before we left for the airport, the Prime Minister's press secretary leaned over to me and remarked, "You know, your Vice President reminds many of us of one of Ataturk's lieutenants." What a turnaround, I thought. Agnew has moved in a day and a half from sufferance as a Greek interloper to comparison with a close colleague of the country's greatest leader. He must have done something right.

IRAN

The Shah was celebrating two thousand five hundred years of the Persian monarchy, linking himself and his father with the long line of rulers stretching back to Darius and Cyrus the Great. Vice President Agnew was the US representative at a three day event for which no expense had been spared. Set dramatically in a small city of tents laid out before the historic ruins of Persepolis (Alexander the Great-- a Greek-- had burned the place down in 330 BC), crowned heads and dignitaries gathered from around the world.

I got a close look at these tents when delivering telegrams to the Vice President. Made specially by Porthault, a French firm famous for tablecloths (not camping gear), the material, a gorgeous blue and white floral design, seemed a bit thin for 40 F degree nights at 6,500 feet. The air conditioning, much touted in the press, consisted of a small fan set under a small cap at the top of the round tent. It looked like the propeller of a beany-copter, unlikely to make much of an impression in the 80 degree noonday heat prevalent in the surrounding desert. The tents were small, with a sleeping compartment and a living/ dining area graced by a table with a bunk space underneath into which the security/batman could slide.

I was housed with others from the VP's staff in nearby Shiraz, at a US Army Field Advisory Team compound called FAT 3. Its simple comforts included an empty swimming pool shaped like a diseased kidney, and menus featuring wild boar (shot by the US Advisors) washed down with Pepsi Cola. Nevertheless, familiar with the conditions at Persepolis, I felt fortunate. The dignitaries, when not boiling or freezing in their cramped tablecloth tents, were probably out of breath at that altitude.

The events at Persepolis were short on substance, and long on ceremony, protocol and gossip about who sat where and with whom. The Vice President was more than miffed when relegated to the first sitting at dinner in the banquet tent with a host of relative nonentities. As he left, the Shah cruised in with several other heads of state announcing, "we're celebrating (Empress) Farah Diba's thirty third birthday." To make matters worse, the Soviet representative Podgorny, a famously long-winded bore, was a conspicuous member of the group. The Shah made it up to Agnew the next day by giving him the longest audience of anyone, a carefully clocked hour and ten minutes.

As the most senior royal visitor, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia was invited to address the assemblage at the major dinner. He did so in his native Amharic, drawing the ire of the UK's Prince Phillip, who remarked loudly to the person next to him, "The temerity of the chap, to deliver a speech before a gathering of this size in a language that only three of them can understand." Selassie never went anywhere without a tiny black Chihuahua. The dog distinguished himself in front of the world press by urinating on the columns of Persepolis, but was much more diplomatic in private. He took a shine to Agnew during his conversation with the Emperor, climbing all over the Vice President, licking and sniffing. "If my dog likes you, you must be all right," the Lion of Judah was heard to comment.

General Dunn, who was my source on what went on at the tents, had a horrible time of his own. He was seated between an empty chair and the eighty year old wife of General Van Fleet, a rabid prohibitionist who ragged him mercilessly through six different wines about the progressive deterioration of his internal organs. A courtly ambassador sitting at the same table commented to Dunn, looking at Madame Van Fleet, "Fortunately, I only speak French."

Life in the fast lane at Persepolis was a series of such events, and vignettes of sheiks, empresses and kings wandering back and forth. King Constantine, ousted from the throne of Greece years before, lurked among the tents waiting to pounce on reluctant passing dignitaries to gain unwanted audiences. Despite the efforts of General Dunn, Constantine managed to waylay Agnew for a few moments of small talk.

The climactic event of the Shah's celebration was a massive parade celebrating the victorious armies of the Persian Empire down the ages. A broad roadway had been paved in front of the ruins at Persepolis to carry thousands of soldiers from the Iranian army wearing false beards and dressed in carefully authentic uniforms of units which had served Persian rulers during the centuries between Cyrus and Pahlavi. It was a beautiful clear, dry desert afternoon, with an eager audience buzzing in anticipation. Carefully

selected invitees, staff members, and press representatives sat in bleachers erected facing the ruins and the parade ground, perfectly backlit by the lowering sun. The reviewing stand was placed up under the walls looking West, requiring the Shah and fellow dignitaries, decked out in full regalia, medals, and native dress, to squint into the afternoon light.

The parade began with blasts on long trumpets from robed and helmeted heralds appearing dramatically from behind the columns, and lasted for two magnificent hours. Historic battalions marched by, interspersed with cavalry units mounted on horses and camels, carefully equipped with replicas of the weapons of the times—giant shrimp forks, lances, spears, even small cannons fixed to swivels on the camel's saddles. Triremes floated by on hidden jeeps, with oarsman rowing rhythmically in the air.

As the afternoon wore on, the steady ranks of cavalry animals left calling cards, carpeting the tarmac with droppings that dried rapidly in the low humidity. The grand finale of the parade was a march past by men and women of the Shah's Own, the elite unit of the modern Iranian army, which traditionally shifted into a high, hard stamping goose-step whenever they came within 100 yards of their leader. As this occurred, a clearly visible cloud of dried animal waste rose into the air and settled on the notables, all now standing in deference to their host. Agnew related later that Imelda Marcos was standing next to him in a spotless white terno, the traditional Filipino formal dress with exaggerated high shoulder sleeves. As the cloud enveloped them, she poked him with her elbow and exclaimed, "What is this coming down? My God, it's horseshit!"

GREECE

Agnew's welcome was tumultuous. Greeks stood ten to twenty deep for miles in the October afternoon sun along the route of the motorcade to cheer the local boy who had made good in America. The first event, a two-hour conversation with Papadopoulos, was the most significant by far. The Greek leader came across as tough, bright, zealous and sinister, clearly in a class by himself among the others around him. The conversation was interpreted consecutively, enabling me, as note taker, to get the back and forth almost verbatim.

Agnew spent the first forty minutes establishing his credentials as a friend of Greece, who had not come to criticize or preach. The second forty minutes was devoted to describing the vital importance of Greece as an anchor of the southern flank of the NATO Alliance. During the final forty minutes, the Vice President laid down a blistering description of the damage to NATO of Papadopoulos' human rights performance, which harmed the reputation of Greece at home and abroad, and weakened the Alliance in its confrontation with the Soviet Union. The fact that it came from a friend gave the message more power. Papadopoulos, taken aback, asked for a private meeting at his home the next day to discuss the issue in more detail.

I was surprised and impressed. The State Department briefing materials contained none of the tough language. The hard line had been prepared by Kissinger's staff in the NSC

and slipped into General Dunn's bag. Agnew had taken considerable heat for going to Greece at all, given Papadopoulos' human rights record, and he took more criticism when he returned home. But he never mentioned that he had raised the issue, believing that its punch would be lost if he took public credit for sticking it to the Greek dictator. In the event, the Agnew pitch, and the additional meetings, resulted in the release weeks later of some political prisoners, just enough to relieve some of the pressure on Papadopoulos.

Some members of the Vice President's party were dismayed by the meeting. Press Secretary Vic Gold's pungent assessment was that Agnew had "pissed in the wine" and jeopardized the rest of the trip. It proved not to be so, as the following days of banquets, receptions, and the Agnew visit to his home village at Gargalianoi continued to be a love fest.

CONNECTING WITH CHINA: THE NIXON TRIP

Getting Picked

As 1972 began, I was down in the dumps. The date of the President's departure to China had been set for February 17. Small secret NSC/ State preparatory teams visited Beijing twice during the end of 1971. My boss in S/S-S, Jim Carson, had been responsible for some minimal, mechanical aspects of the preparations for the President's trip to China—ordering tabs, binders and fact books from my old office in INR. Both he and Ted Eliot assured me that they had my background and abilities at heart, and no interest in going to China themselves.

Dr. Kissinger had made plain to the Chinese that the usual entourage for a presidential trip would be cut to the minimum. The White House had informed Secretary Rogers that, instead of his usual planeload, he could take one secretary, one staff assistant, one administrative manager (who would handle logistics for the entire delegation), one interpreter and one policy adviser. My chances of becoming involved seemed dim at best.

On the morning of Friday, January 21, Carson returned from the Front Office and said, "shine your shoes. Your chances have improved. The Secretary is thinking of interviewing you. He may call anytime today or Monday." I waited. At six PM the phone rang. "Go immediately to the Secretary's office." I hurried through the hall, hopping furtively as I buffed my shoes on the back of my pants leg. Maggie Runkle, Rogers' secretary (she was definitely going) showed me into the cavernous office, furnished in those days in a somber Frank E. Campbell funeral style. The Secretary was alone.

He greeted me cordially, sat me down on a sofa and asked about my China language background. In several carefully rehearsed, self-serving paragraphs, I sketched out my training in Washington and Taiwan, and jobs in Hong Kong, the China Desk, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research and the Secretariat. "Is there anything in your background that could embarrass me? Do the Chinese know you?" Rogers asked. I explain that the Chinese must know about me from Hong Kong days, but as an analyst, I had made no statements for attribution. The articles I had published about Chinese politics in academic

and government journals had been under the pseudonym Adam Oliver (my elder sons' first names) or credited to the editor.

"I am looking for an aide for my trip to China," the Secretary responded. "Normally, I would take Peter Johnson or Rush Taylor from my own office. For this trip, I need someone who knows something about China."

I cite the ten years I had devoted to China before assignment to the broadening experience in the Secretariat. "More important." Rogers interjects.

"I can help," I say. "Don't count on it. I'll let you know in a couple of days." The Secretary ended the interview. Total elapsed time-four minutes. I left, passing the glass cubical at Roger's office door in which sat a frowning Peter Johnson, whose background in Latin America had served him ill that day.

During the weekend, I bit my nails and pretended nothing was going on. Monday afternoon Ted Eliot called me and Carson into his office and told me, "It looks like you are going to do some traveling!" Much excitement, cheers, handshakes. I called immediately on Al Jenkins at the China Desk and Marshall Green in his office, who both expressed delight that I would be part of this adventure. Green told me that Rogers had called Friday evening for a reference. "I gave him an earful," he laughed. I thanked him, and floated home to tell Sheila.

Getting Ready

The next morning, I was escorted to a locked door at Task Force Area One, another part of the Executive Secretariat's Seventh Floor complex. Inside, I found my colleagues from the East Asia Bureau and INR, sitting at desks and waiting for guidance on the shape of the papers to be prepared for the Secretary. If I had not moved to the Secretariat, I would have been in their place, working on the substance, but without the chance to travel and see some history. Who could have known?

The immediate task was to organize the briefing books for Rogers, and, in theory, the President. Every time the Secretary and the President travel, papers are commissioned outlining the scope and objectives of the mission, as well as the issues he or she will confront, how they arose, and how they should be handled. These are then put in ring binders and hand-carried everywhere the boss goes. The form, quality and production of the briefing books are carefully guarded responsibilities of the Secretariat, and managed with a strict punctilio that often rankled contributors.

The production of a concise informative book required a mix of art, science and coercion. The Secretary traveled constantly, and his ability to function demanded that everything he needed to know for the particular stop and meetings was at hand when he needed it. He relied on the books to know where he was, why he was there, who he would see and what he should say. The Secretariat commissioned the papers from the bureaus of the

Department. The experts who did the writing had strong and often voluminous views about what the Secretary should know and say. Their products often tended toward the obese and the obscure. Our job was to sweat them down and sharpen them up, saving time for the principal. Secretariat officers then went back to the Assistant Secretaries to make sure that the changes were acceptable, a process that stretched bureaucratic and diplomatic skills. The creation of a good set of books, on time, was the measure of a Secretariat staff officer.

How the books were used depended on the consumer. The Secretary not only relied on, but helped shape what we gave him. The President would normally get his own set from the NSC staff, which provided unique guidance, but often appropriated whole chunks of material from the State Department books and presented it as their own. This was expected. Policy influence in the bureaucracy depends, I had found, on the extent to which you can get others to take your ideas and call them their own. Constructive plagiarism is the name of the game. As soon I heard of my role, I telephoned Kissinger's key aide Winston Lord, an old friend and former FSO, pledging to work closely. He said that was what he wanted, too.

My immediate task was to merge the considerable substantive work that had been done so far, particularly in connection with the Kissinger's trips, into the format that Rogers was used to and could send to the President. My good fortune was that the East Asia Bureau writers were among the best in Washington. I knew them and Marshall Green, their boss, very well. Issues papers on bilateral questions-- trade, travel, cultural exchanges, American citizens in China, Chinese assets frozen in America, etc.--were already done. But the Secretary had yet to address crucial questions which had emerged in Kissinger's negotiations with the Chinese so far on the final communiqué. These included: 1. How to treat the status of Taiwan? 2. How to acknowledge the People's Republic as the government of China? And 3. How to handle reduction of the US military presence in Taiwan.

We were flying blind in two major respects. First, we did not know how Rogers really felt about the opening to China. What role, if any, had he played so far? What role would he play during the trip? Second, the White House had not shared with the State Department the records of Kissinger's talks with Zhou Enlai, in which these issues had been raised. We had very little time. Air Force One would be taking off on February 17, little more than three weeks away. I set to work immediately with the Task Group editing and producing papers on the issues on which Rogers' reaction was urgently required. The materials had to be ready for a meeting with Secretary Rogers two days hence. His reactions would provide the answers we needed. We made the deadline, but just.

Rogers Reacts

That first session with Rogers was disappointing. The entire hierarchy of the Department that dealt with Asia was assembled, Undersecretary U. Alexis Johnson, Assistant Secretary Marshall Green, his deputy Win Brown, as well as my boss Ted Eliot were there with others from the Task Group, anxious to sink their teeth into the meat of the

issues. Instead, we drank Cokes while Rogers, who clearly had not read the materials, asked shallow questions about tourism in China, business opportunities including possible aircraft sales, cultural exchange, and trip arrangements.

In the following days, the Secretary began reading his brief. Word of his deep concern over the central issues filtered down to Al Jenkins. Accordingly, we reworked and fussed over the papers, in preparation for a climactic meeting January 31.

In the meantime I had lunch with Richard Solomon, another China Watcher from Hong Kong days, at a sandwich deli near the White House called Kay's. Dick had moved from Academe to Kissinger's NSC Staff. He told me he was writing a paper for Henry on the PRC strategy toward Taiwan. "How would you describe that?" I asked. "Isolate the die-hards, split the supporters, and make it impossible for Taiwan to do anything but unite with the Mainland", he replied. Munching on a gigantic roast beef sandwich I asked what policy we should adopt to deal with this strategy. "Help them", he responded, meaning the PRC. I agreed, but thought the process should be very gradual.

On the afternoon of January 31, the same cast of characters met with Secretary Rogers for an intense substantive discussion that lasted more than two hours. My notes tell the story:

Rogers has really read all the papers. He asks penetrating questions:

1. *Why recognize explicitly the PRC as the government of China? Do we have to? Isn't this an unnecessary red flag in front to the ROC? Doesn't it suggest that we have been thoroughly out-negotiated by the PRC if we do?*

Answer (from Green and Jenkins): We don't have to, but why not make explicit what is implicit in the President's visit, especially if it will guarantee a better relationship with the PRC?

Rogers counters: We are doing plenty going there in the first place. The President is meeting with Zhou, who is lower in rank. We want to move, but we can't look like we've given too much. How do I explain? How does the American public understand?

2. *Why say we want to withdraw troops from Taiwan in 2 years? Jesus Christ! The American right will charge sellout. Why not say we'll lower our presence as tensions are reduced.*

Decision: Leave recognition moot, go for a PRC declaration of intent to use peaceful means in search of a Taiwan solution while we pledge to reduce our military presence. Note Beijing's position as the government of all China. State we have no fixed idea of a future solution for Taiwan.

Comment: The Secretary... has wit, good humor and a good mind when he wants to use it. His whole approach is political. I get the impression that he sees himself as the President's major advisor on the domestic political effects of foreign policy moves. He is the man to tell Nixon how what he plans will look to Congress and the Public. He looks at issues from the role of a spokesman and explainer in a domestic political context. A

grand designer he is not. A competent advisor he is, and plays with gusto the only foreign affairs role with which Henry Kissinger cannot compete.

During the next few days, we worked all hours to put the briefing books into finished form, and sent them in draft to the White House on February 2. Ted Eliot was pleased, describing the results, “spectacular” in such a short time. John Thomas, Assistant Secretary for Administrative Affairs, who had been picked to manage the logistics of the entire trip, heard this accolade and brought me quickly back to reality.

“Today’s eagle is tomorrow’s turkey”, he commented dryly, adding that the reverse was seldom true.

A brilliant administrator and budget manager, Thomas deeply resented the downstairs/upstairs class distinctions in the Department between administrative specialists, the “adcats”, he called them, and the substantive political and economic officers, or “subcats”. I had discovered these festering attitudes during earlier travels together. It took me hours to convince John that subcats like me knew we could not accomplish anything without adcats like him. It was as important for adcats to know the substance as it was subcats to understand administrative procedures. Thomas had asked me to prove it. I made a point of keeping Thomas up to speed on the issues whenever he asked, and made an important career ally.

The White House Reacts

The State Department and NSC tracks merged at a meeting in Dr. Kissinger’s West Wing office February 4. Green, Jenkins, Haig, Holdridge, Lord were there. “Oh, yes. I know you,” Kissinger remarked when we were introduced. “You are one of Joe Alsop’s sources.” I bit back the temptation to retort that at least we had one thing in common, along with everyone else in the room, and made a self-deprecating reply appropriate to my lowly station.

Sitting us down, Kissinger made it clear that he had no great problem with the books, and with the general tack Rogers wanted to take. He, too, was worried about appearing too soft to the American Right and suggested some revision to the talking points on Taiwan. He asked for more detailed specific proposals on trade and cultural and scientific exchange, in apparent search for concrete results, given the unwillingness of either China or the US to move on the basic issue between them. This was the wording of a US statement to reduce forces progressively in Taiwan juxtaposed with a Chinese statement to seek a peaceful solution to the Taiwan question. Kissinger asked for additional papers; on the renunciation of force and on intelligence operations, among others.

Henry went on to explain the futility of quid pro quo bargaining with the Chinese. The negotiations over the number of Americans connected with the Nixon Visit were illustrative. After promising the Chinese to keep numbers to a minimum, Kissinger had been appalled to learn on returning from his first visit to Beijing that the normal number associated with past Presidential trips was rarely less than 900. After making many

enemies, particularly within the Secret Service, he scaled the number down to 350, took that to the Chinese explaining exactly what he needed and why. They bought it. If he had started at 700, then fallen back in the customary Western way, it probably would not have worked.

In closing, Kissinger made it clear that he wanted a unified delegation, with everyone working from the same set of briefing books prepared by State (which would have been unprecedented). As he mentioned to Green later in a private aside, the damage to relations between State and the White House was, to some extent irreparable. But on this trip at least we must move as a unit.

My notes of the meeting (which lasted an hour and a half, interrupted by a 15 minute call from the President in Key Biscayne) comment that Henry seemed to be feeling exposed and wanted to reduce the criticism he was under for operating alone. This represented no problem to the people at State. We agreed with the policy. His idea of one big happy family as long as he was in charge seemed less grating under the circumstances. It was clear he trusted Al Jenkins, who represented no threat. (In the event, Kissinger admitted later in his memoirs that the President worked from his own set of briefing materials).

Final Tuning

I returned immediately to the State Department for a discussion of travel arrangements with Secretary Rogers. He was engaging and funny. A condescending memo sent by White House Advance Chief Dwight Chapin advising all travelers in the party how to dress, what shots to take and how many bottles of liquor they could bring back to the US drew his ire. Commenting, Rogers refused to wear any hat with earlaps on the Great Wall. As for liquor, he continued, Americans will do almost anything to get something for nothing, and described little old ladies staggering around airports loaded with whiskey bargains they would never bother with at home. He then got up and staggered around his huge office, hands weighed down past his knees, mimicking an old lady in an airport with her liquor purchases. Rogers added some dry comments about the schedule. "Admiral McCain sure as hell will be there to meet the President in Honolulu. Two bits he'll bound half way up the ramp before the plane door is even open," Rogers laughed.

The days leading up to lift off February 17 were marked by more meeting designed to fine tune substance and arrangements, and unify the Party, including a lunch hosted by Rogers February 10 and another White House gathering with Kissinger the next day. Henry became effusive about the briefing books, terming them "the best he had ever seen from State for any trip or visit." He embarrassed me by poking Jenkins and saying with a big laugh, "since I have worked with you before and know what kind of book you produced, the quality of the current set must be Platt's fault." He continued. "Substantively we are in very good shape. State's books are our basic position." If the trip was a disaster, he would make that known. And if it were a success? Marshall asked. In that case, as usual, the White House would take the credit, Kissinger twinkled.

The talk turned to gifts. I knew that there were a number of clocks in the gift list, and explained that in Chinese culture the gift of a clock was the equivalent of enquiring when the recipient was going to die. "Clocks are out!" Henry said, horrified. I commented on the planned presentation of two Musk Oxen to the Chinese, pointing out the parallels with past barbarian tributary missions to the emperors of China bearing strange animals-- Rhinos, Giraffes, etc. "The Musk Oxen are out!" came the refrain. (Actually they were not, but the gift was rearranged as a present to the Chinese people, rather than a personal present to Premier Zhou). Kissinger cracked that State would put the oxen on his plane, and arrange for him to follow them off.

Kissinger enquired about the commemorative George Washington medallions being re-minted in large quantities to be given as mementos to Chinese banquet guests during the visit. This was an idea cooked up, he said, between Treasury Secretary John Connolly and the President. I was the only person in the room who had seen the medals, and described the reverse side, which showed one hand with a naked, presumably savage, forearm clasp another, clothed and civilized, beneath a crossed peace pipe and tomahawk. I wondered about the suitability, but opined that the Chinese might interpret the savage extremity as ours, and the civilized one of theirs. "The medallions are dead," was the deep-voiced judgment.

After the meeting, Kissinger's staff, somewhat embarrassed at not having paid attention to such matters found out that the medallions were originally struck during George Washington's administration and handed out to Indian chiefs who behaved themselves and signed treaties.

The gifts that were finally picked, handsome Boehm porcelain birds, were both suitable and spectacular. Attention to detail was not a White House strong suit, however. Later in Peking, the gifts were put on display in the Nixon guest house before presentation to the Chinese. I took a quick preview look and noticed that the gift for Mao was labeled "President of the People's Republic of China", a title of which he had been ignominiously stripped more than ten years before. This was corrected to "Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party" before any damage could occur.

In the last days before departure, as orientation, Secretary Rogers and I got a chance to watch home movies of the first two Kissinger trips, featuring long pans of John Holdridge and Kissinger grinning. "That's just the cat-swallowed-the-canary type of smile we want to avoid", Rogers commented. Other features of the film were shots of Henry's toothsome secretary Julie Pineau, and a gruesome, graphic sequence of a lady under acupuncture anesthesia slit open to remove an ovarian tumor, wide awake and chatting while needles were twiddled in her wrists.

On February 15, before our last delegation meeting, Rogers suggested that I focus on communications rather than taking care of him. I assured him that the flow of cables would be light. In Peking, the entire delegation would have available just one circuit, capable of carrying only 1670 words per minute. I would have plenty of time to help him.

He agreed, and confirmed to the group that I would be the coordination point for all communications with him from the Department. "See you in Hawaii", he said.

En Route to China- Hawaii

We took off February 17 aboard the President's back up plane, an old Boeing 707 from the Presidential fleet which Secretary Rogers had used many times before. The President, Rogers and Kissinger departed fifteen minutes later aboard in a brand new 707 making its maiden voyage. At each stop throughout the trip we would land fifteen minutes ahead of the President, ourselves preceded in turn by a separate press plane, and be perfectly placed to view and photograph the grand arrivals.

As we headed for Hawaii, the first stop of an itinerary designed to reduce the effects of jetlag on the President, Holdridge, Jenkins, Chas Freeman (the interpreter) and I had a stateroom to ourselves, a flying office with desks, typewriters, Xerox machines and white phones. The Presidential suite just in front was chock full of presents. At Travis Air force Base in California we stopped to refuel and pick up four redwood saplings, which were shoehorned, sweating in plastic bags, into the big office. This did not prevent me from wedging myself into its white Naugahyde throne, with a multi buttoned console at my imperial fingertips, and phoning Sheila and the boys.

We were all still pinching ourselves. My colleagues, professional diplomats trained to be taciturn, did not even try to hide their excitement at lifting off on this voyage into the history books. Holdridge regaled us with the cloak and dagger details of Henry's escape from Islamabad, disguised in dark glasses and a hat pulled way down, scooting through early morning streets in a battered Volkswagen to a deserted end of the Chaklala Airport where waited a Pakistan International Airways Airliner, poised to take him on his first secret trip to Beijing.

Ten hours later, we emerged, groggy and stuffed with food, into the bright Hawaiian sunlight at Hickam Air Force Base, watched the President land, and then were whisked by presidential Marine turbojet helicopter to the golf course of the sumptuous Kahala Hilton, where we set up operations and went to sleep in great comfort.

A Reversal of Roles

The next morning, I took the overnight telegraphic traffic to the Secretary, who was staying, along with the President and the senior members of the delegation, in more Spartan officers' housing at the military base. Rogers and Marshall Green appeared shortly, wind-blown and cheerful after an early golf game, and, after reviewing the cables, invited me to stay for lunch. We were digging into our salad when Henry Kissinger, unannounced, padded in on hush puppy-style gum shoes, sporting a striped yellow towel shirt and white pants. I had never seen Rogers and Kissinger together, and was fascinated to watch the two adversaries interact, relaxed and genial as country club associates.

Kissinger had eaten, but sat with us and made to Rogers many of the same points he had emphasized in previous meetings. These Chinese will not bargain quid pro quo like the Soviets. They assert principles and stick to them, and expect us to as well. Kissinger expressed the strong hope, and Rogers agreed that the President would stand up to the Chinese and give back as good as he got, right away. Both were worried that Nixon might not react this way. Tough as he was in public, in private confrontations, the President customarily stepped back and tried to move around his opponent. This would not work with the Chinese, Kissinger said. Both agreed to urge the President to be firm, and not to worry about offending the Chinese by refuting their statements if the need arose. This would gain respect, not offense.

The conversation continued, covering familiar ground about how key issues should be handled to limit damage and gain support in Congress, the Media and the American public. On issues of policy substance, Kissinger talked, Rogers listened. The roles reversed when management of domestic politics came up. I wondered as I listened whether Nixon foreign policy might not function better if Rogers were the White House adviser and Kissinger Secretary of State.

I wondered why Kissinger showed up without warning and came on the way he did. Later, Marshall Green told me he put Kissinger up to it, believing that Rogers would benefit from the exchange. He was steeped in standard Western legal bargaining processes, and had engaged in quid pro quo bargaining with the Soviets. There was also a sense that Rogers, as an old friend of the President's, could reinforce the message with his boss more effectively than Dr. Kissinger.

Returning to the hotel, I treated myself to a massage administered vigorously by an enormous Russian lady, who turned out to have been born in Manchuria and lived in Shanghai until 1952.

“Saying Hallo to Shanghai for me!” were her parting words.

Labor is Divided

Later in the day Green, Jenkins, Freeman and I returned to Rogers' residence to discuss what tack to take in the Counterpart Talks in Beijing. We had learned that three separate sets of conversations had been proposed for our consultations with the Chinese: Nixon and Zhou on the world situation; Kissinger and Qiao Guanhua on the wording of the final communiqué; and Rogers with Foreign Minister Ji Pengfei on the mechanics of day to day relationships after the trip. Despite all the talk of a unified delegation, the State Department was, in fact, to be segregated from the strategic substance that drove the Nixon initiative and relegated to deal with the nuts and bolts of exchanges, trade, and travel. This was not an illogical division of labor. The issues were ones that we knew cold, and would turn out to be crucial in the decades to follow. Kissinger made plain in his memoirs that the President wanted it that way, and he did too. At this point in Hawaii, we were so excited about going to China, we would have been happy to negotiate about the weather.

Rogers asked smart questions about what we hoped to achieve, the tactics to follow, and the misconceptions the Chinese harbored about us that needed to be corrected. Green and Jenkins noted that we were dealing with people who believed the US had betrayed them ever since the Marshall Mission in 1946. We were a different set of Americans, but the Chinese were the very same people, trained to regard Americans as untrustworthy.

Rogers believed that the most important goal of our talks was to create a sense of momentum, tangible evidence of movement in our relationship after the visit was over. We went over the kinds of exchanges the Chinese might approve: sports in general, particularly basketball; music, ballet, many of which turned out to be prophetic. (200 million Chinese now watch National Basketball Association games on TV every week.) We also noted that the Chinese were using their new mission in New York much more broadly than UN representation required

Rogers knowledge of history was spotty, I found. He had forgotten General MacArthur's threats to bomb across the Yalu River, words and gestures that preceded the Chinese entry into the Korean War. The meeting turned into a relaxed and rambling dinner, giving us a chance to get to know Rogers and bond as a group. We agreed to take further cues from whatever happened at the President's talks and at the plenary sessions. Tactically, we would begin the proceedings with our Chinese counterparts by thanking them for their hospitality and then put the ball in their court.

Guam

On February 19 we flew to Guam, the second stop on our jet-lag reduction itinerary. I worked on a paper for Rogers during the long flight. Arriving, as usual, in time to observe the big welcome prepared for the President, we got one of our own: soft kisses and leis made of shells and orchids from scantily clad Guamanian maidens at the foot of the ramp. That night I sat bolt upright in my bed.

"My God! They've gone without me!" Not so, I was relieved to find, but never got back to sleep.

A Quiet Arrival

The approach to Shanghai, under overcast February skies, took us over stretches of snow-dusted paddies and villages interlaced with canals up which floated junks with tall flat sails. The airport was empty, except for a smattering of officials, tiny against the vast expanses of concrete. At the ramp stood Zhang Wenjin, the courtly head of the American Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Deputy Chief of Protocol Wang Hairong, an awkward young woman reputed to be Mao's niece. Both had been important figures in Kissinger's trips, and were to prove key operatives during the early years of the new relationship between the US and China. Holdridge and Jenkins knew both and made the introductions. From the cavernous terminal building, tea and pastries in hand, we watched Air Force One land, the history of the occasion marked by total silence.

After a brief interval, we returned to our plane across the wide tarmac with the PRC navigators who were the real reason for the Shanghai stop. The distinctive Chinese field smell, with the hint of night soil so familiar from our time in Taiwan, wafted from the surrounding farms, conclusive evidence that I had arrived in China at last. Not a reason to fall and kiss the ground, perhaps, but a significant sensory jolt nonetheless.

Beijing airport was sunny and cold. Again, the place was empty, except for two long lines of exceptionally tall, magnificently dressed and disciplined soldiers forming the honor guard of the People's Liberation Army, and a small knot of civilian officials. The people on our plane were not permitted to join them and mar the photo opportunity, but were herded instead into an area just behind the President's aircraft after it rolled to a stop. From a worm's eye vantage point just back of the engines of the Boeing 707, I took my own films of Nixon's historic, and some felt endless, handshake with Premier Zhou Enlai.

The President knew what he was doing. John Foster Dulles had refused Zhou's hand in a famous slight at a Geneva conference years before, and Nixon wanted the world, as well as the Chinese, to know that that he was determined to put this right. He even kept everyone on his plane, except his wife Pat, penned up until he got the job done, coming down the ramp alone in the dead quiet, a dramatic entrance he felt the occasion demanded.

After a brief ceremony, we raced for the motorcade, a long line of small green Shanghai brand cars, behind several big black "Red Flag" limousines, the Chinese hand-made equivalent of a stretch Cadillac or Mercedes. I rode into the capital with John Thomas, across flat brown/white farmland dotted occasionally with small factories, rows of young trees planted along the roadside. Driving through the city and into Tiananmen Square, where Chairman Mao's huge portrait stared stolidly above the gate to the Forbidden City, I wondered where all the Chinese were. Not one to be seen, unless one peeked quickly down the side streets whipping by, where Public Security Police had cordoned off crowds of curious onlookers half a block away.

We arrived at the Diaoyutai (the word means "fishing platform" and emperors used to fish in its ponds) official guest house compound, a large complex of Russian style villas with high ceilings and rooms full of stuffed chairs, anti-Macassar doilies draped over the backs. I unpacked and got my bearings. The State Department contingent and the Secretary were segregated in a separate villa of our own. The White House and the NSC were in other buildings close by. So much for the "unified delegation". I checked for messages at the communications room, and ate lunch with our group. It was the best food and service of any Chinese restaurant in any five star hotel anywhere in the world. This visit was going to be fattening.

Not Meeting Mao

After lunch we were scheduled to gather for a plenary session to kick off the proposed counterpart discussions. It was postponed abruptly, and we waited—and waited—and waited. What had intervened was the crucial meeting between Mao and Nixon, called without warning during a bright period in the uncertain daily forecast of the Chairman's health. Henry Kissinger and Win Lord (as note taker) accompanied Nixon. The Secretary of State was not included, and to my knowledge, not even aware of the meeting.

The press made much of this deliberate omission, another humiliation in the long rivalry between Kissinger and Rogers, and none of us could explain it. Kissinger's memoirs insisted that the Chinese wanted the meeting small and Nixon never intended for Rogers to participate anyway, but he apologized in his book for not insisting that the Secretary be included. (Op. Cit. The White House Years). Rogers, always the grown up, did not complain, or even raise the issue around us. Later, he admitted it bothered him.

Participant list aside, the Nixon-Mao meeting was the historic key to the success of the entire visit. In contrast to past Presidential visits to other countries, there had been no specific time slotted for a meeting with the leader of the country. Nixon went to China without knowing exactly when he might meet with Mao. That the Chairman's blessing came so soon and so emphatically relaxed the Chinese, and assured a smooth path in the days ahead.

The long delayed plenary took place at the end of the afternoon, a pro forma ceremony at which the decisions already made about who would talk about what and where, were endorsed. We then left for Tiananmen Square and the opening banquet at the Great Hall of the People

Dinner with the Elders

No one who attended that opening dinner will ever forget it. The sheer size Great Hall of the People made one feel like an ant in a movie set. Everyone in the President's party was invited, including aircrews and baggage handlers, flowing in an excited crowd up the wide staircase. As the official party was photographed on a grandstand at the top of the stairs, we could hear music wafting from the giant banquet hall. Just inside the entrance on a raised platform, sat the People's Liberation Army band, in their baggy, rank-less uniforms, playing a sublime and very authentic rendition of "Turkey in the Straw". The hall was lit dramatically, the focus on Chinese and American flags hanging side by side.

I moved in something of a trance through a receiving line of Chinese leaders I had read and written about for years, headed by Premier Zhou Enlai, Marshall Ye Jianying and Vice Premier Li Xiannian.

Gathering my wits, I noted from a sweep of the tables in the cavernous room, that many of the Chinese guests were very old, some in wheel chairs, oxygen tubes attached to their noses. Two of these were at my table, a famous historian named Tang and an old politician from Sichuan Province named Liu, museum pieces produced periodically to maintain an image of democratic unity. Mr. Liu could not eat, drink, hear or speak more

than a few words, and had to be lifted bodily by attendants for the historic friendly toasts by Zhou and Nixon.

Others at the table were younger and better able to communicate; a pair of revolutionary opera stars, she very stiff, he a heavy drinker with jowls; the Director of Consular Affairs at the Foreign Ministry: and, on my right, Qian Dayong, Deputy Director of the American and Australasian Section at the ministry. Qian was the closest thing to a direct counterpart for me, and in fact became an important colleague when I returned to live in Beijing fourteen months later. We chatted amiably, basking in the incongruity of the situation. The Chinese returned to the question of age, commenting on how young the American delegation was. They were not talking about me, but about Nixon and our top leaders. They were right. The Chinese leaders were the same people who had taken power in 1949, twenty-three years before. To be a match, our delegation would have to be led by Harry Truman and George Marshall. China, I now understood, was caught in a generational logjam. It would be six more years before Deng Xiaoping, under house arrest and nowhere in sight that evening, would break it.

Geriatric observations aside, nothing could take away from the excitement and magic of the event. In the stampede for the doors that traditionally marks the end of Chinese banquets, I ran into several journalist friends from China Watching days in Hong Kong. Bob Keatley of the Wall Street Journal sidled up. “History, I’m here”, he muttered, smiling. Stan Karnow of the Washington Post, preceded by his paunch, was also on the prowl, the circles under his eyes making him look like an inquisitive Panda.

The next morning (February 22), I was itching to get out of our guest house cocoon. So, after delivering the overnight telegrams to Secretary Rogers, I took advantage of a free moment and headed for Wang Fu Jing, then as now, Beijing’s top shopping street. Huge, subdued, curious crowds were gathered around the sidewalk bulletin boards displaying the morning’s People’s Daily. Front-page pictures of Chairman Mao meeting with President Nixon and Premier Zhou at the banquet drew top attention. The function of Chinese media is less to report news than to tell the masses what to think. Today it did both, a resounding plus for US-Chinese relations.

Feeling strange, I went up the street to the biggest department store, the Bai Huo Da Lou, to check out what was for sale. The sturdy, drab, limited output of the Cultural Revolution economy was all that was on offer; padded coats, Mao suits, PLA hats, cloth shoes, leather boots, etc. I bought ping pong paddles for my boys, and covered teacups for Sheila.

A White House Phone Call from the Great Hall of the People

The first session of the Counterpart Talks between Secretary Rogers and Foreign Minister Ji Pengfei took place that afternoon in the Sinkiang Room of the Great Hall of the People, with me at the end of the table taking notes for the US. Others included, on the Chinese side, Xiong Xianghui, Premier Zhou’s foreign policy adviser; Qian Dayong, the Deputy Director of the American Department who sat next to me at the welcome banquet, and

underlings from his office. Others on the US side were Marshall Green, Al Jenkins, Chas Freeman the interpreter, John Scali and Walt Ziegler from the White House Press Office, and Commander Jonathan Howe from the NSC staff. I noted that everyone had observers at our talks, but that State was not represented at the other discussions involving the President and Dr. Kissinger.

The major topics covered during the three- hour session were:

1. The US desire for better contacts between the governments, including channels of communication, and some kind of presence in each other's countries. The Chinese promised to get back to us on these issues, but took pains to point out the obstacles presented by the presence in America of representatives from the Nationalist government on Taiwan that we continued to recognize.
2. The Chinese desire for more people-to people programs and exchanges, facilitated by both governments,
3. US-China trade. The Chinese believed that we were under considerable pressure from the business community to start trade relations. Rogers responded that we were not being pressed, but wanted trade, particularly as evidence of an improved political relationship. Foreign Minister Ji undertook to invite American businessmen to the annual Canton Trade Fair.

During the course of the conversation, the Chinese asked why the US continued to require fingerprints of Chinese visitors. Members of our delegation believed that this regulation was no longer valid, but no one was sure. Rogers asked me to check. I left the room in search of the Secret Service Command Post in the Great Hall. Wherever the President goes, a White House phone can never be far away. Sure enough, discreetly placed behind a huge pillar was a telephone with a picture of the White House on the dial. I picked it up.

Click. "White House switch" (clear as a bell).

Me. "State Department Operations Center, please."

Click. "State Department Operations Watch Officer. How can I help?"

"This is Nick Platt in Beijing. We are in talks with the Chinese and need to know right away whether we still require fingerprints for Chinese visitors. Please wake up whoever knows the answer. I'll hold." (This was fun,)

The Watch Officer roused the head of the Visa Department, (it was around 4 AM), who sleepily confirmed that no fingerprints were required for PRC visitors. I was back in the meeting in 15 minutes. Rogers, on my prompting, told the Chinese that our quick response showed how instant communications could clear up misunderstandings quickly.

Madame Mao Entertains

That evening, the President and most of his party attended a performance of "The Red Detachment of Women," a revolutionary ballet developed under the patronage of Madame Mao, and one of the few cultural works authorized for public consumption. Imagine a mix of modern ballet choreography and stereotyped Chinese opera movements, supported by a traditional Chinese orchestra and shrill voices, presenting a heavy propaganda libretto. Uniformed ballerinas in puttees pirouetted vigorously pointing their

Mauser automatic pistols, uttering piercing denunciations of the Japanese invaders and paeans of praise for Communist heroes, all to the loud accompaniment of gongs drum and cymbals. The political event of the evening was the appearance of Madame Mao herself, looking sharp, dignified and self-contained in a well-tailored blue Mao suit. She shook hands at the end, with a firm, polite, schoolmarm grip. I had now met the top leadership of China, with the exception of Mao himself, but not, strangely, Richard Nixon.

Media Makes the Message

The visit took on a carefully choreographed rhythm, with a telegenic event each morning and evening, and substantive talks interrupted by superb meals taking up the time in between. The White House advance men had taken smart advantage of the twelve hour time difference between China and the East Coast of the United States, assuring live TV coverage of the visit in American homes at the breakfast and prime evening hours. The Chinese cooperated in every way, seizing on the opportunity to present their country in the most favorable light to a huge and growing audience, not just in America, but world-wide.

Thus on the morning of February 23, Mrs. Nixon visited a People's Commune, while the President closeted himself with Washington work. I wrote up the meetings of the day before. In the afternoon, Secretary Rogers' talks centered on Taiwan, a standard exchange of positions. The evening event was a spectacular display of gymnastics, ping pong, badminton, etc. set against a crowd of 18,000 all dressed in new sweaters of different colors. I sat a few rows behind Premier Zhou, watching with fascination how he operated. He was seated at the leadership dais, which featured a long table for teacups and snacks. In addition to keeping several conversations going with President Nixon and others, he was approached by an aide who placed in front of him the layout for the next day's People's Daily. He proceeded to move pictures and text around until they met his approval, then dismissed the assistant. Zhou's attention to detail was legendary, but this struck me as a new height, and vivid testimony of the importance he attached to the media impact Nixon visit.

The Great Wall was the happening of the next morning, February 24. We left early, after breakfast. A beautiful day was in the making, with the Western Hills shrouded in a delicate mist, which had frozen in the trees. An incredible scene awaited us as we approached the old barrier, begun thousands of years before to keep the barbarians out. Poking out of the first battlement we saw, not a cannon, but an NBC color TV camera. No soldiers in sight, but the turrets were fully manned by American correspondents and anchor men: Walter Cronkite, Eric Sevareid, Bob Keatley and Jerrold Schecter, to name a few, wearing bushy fur hats

Parked right up against the Wall was a long mobile TV satellite trailer, cables sprouting in all directions. For me, the vision of the Great Wall wired for world-wide communications was the symbol of the visit, dwarfing even the appearance of the President of the United States on China's most famous landmark. Everyone was drunk

with the excitement of the moment, resulting in some famous inanities. When asked to comment on the scene, all that President Nixon could manage was, “It’s a great wall!” We also toured the Ming Tombs, a mob scene resembling Sunday afternoon at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Returning to Beijing, our session of the Counterpart Talks featured a strong exchange between Secretary Rogers and Ji Pengfei on the world situation and America’s place in it. The Chinese Foreign Minister led off with a diatribe against US foreign policy since World War II which sounded like an old People’s Daily editorial. Rogers presented our position vigorously in his own words, straight from the shoulder, following to the letter the advice Kissinger gave him in Hawaii. Both sides having placed on the record their positions on “matters of principle”, we moved directly to the room where President Nixon and Premier Zhou had been conducting their talks. They had finished, and members of the three teams who had engaged in substantive discussions stood around chatting, drinking tea and waiting for an informal, unscheduled Peking duck dinner that Zhou had arranged in Nixon’s honor.

My Chat with Zhou Enlai

I was introduced to Premier Zhou as a Chinese speaker. We stood face to face, and the Premier began to talk, quoting in his thick Zhejiang accent a famous Mao poem with the line that one could not be considered a real man until he had been to the Great Wall. Did I think the quote would be appropriate in a toast to President Nixon on the day he had visited the Wall? I was having some difficulty understanding, but nodded sagely and uttered a few grunts of comprehension.

“Of course it would be appropriate, Premier Zhou”, I blurted, stunned that he had thought it worthwhile to seek out and address the most junior person in the room. As we talked, who should come barging rapidly between us, but Henry Kissinger on his way to the side of President Nixon, who stood about five yards away. That broke up the conversation. Ron Ziegler, right nearby, laughed and asked Kissinger if he knew he had just interrupted the Premier talking with a member of the US delegation. Henry muttered in reply that when the President called, he came. “And anyway”, he added, looking at me, “who cares?” Kissinger was famously uncomfortable when Americans on his delegations spoke to foreign leaders in languages he did not understand, so I shrugged off his clumsy intervention. In subsequent years he helped me in many ways and showed a kindness that more than made up for this flash of insecurity. The dinner was a small, cozy affair, with everyone seated next to his counterpart. I drew Qian Dayong again, who seemed to have become mine.

Our final day in Beijing, February 25, began with a tour of the Forbidden City, magnificent in the snow, with the grand scale of the public spaces in striking contrast to the intimate dimensions of the Imperial living quarters. More shopping, desultory consultations, and an American return banquet at the Great Hall that was subdued in comparison to unearthly euphoria of the welcoming affair suggested that we had just about run out of thing to say and do in the capital of China.

Haggling in Hangzhou

Meanwhile, trouble was brewing for the US delegation. Throughout the visit so far, Henry Kissinger and Deputy Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua had worked steadily on the wording of the final communiqué. After long and difficult negotiations they agreed on the final form of the artful document that enabled both nations to begin a relationship despite the deep differences that divided them. The device was simple and ingenious: both sides stated their own positions clearly and without agreement, while acknowledging or at least not challenging, broad principles that both could accept. The language of the commonly accepted principles was finally hammered out the night before the President's party left for Hangzhou, submitted to the Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Politburo, and accepted.

The problem was that Secretary Rogers and State Department members of our "united" delegation had not been privy to the negotiations, and did not even get a look at the communiqué until we got on the planes for Hangzhou on Saturday February 26. There were two Russian IL-18s set aside for the American delegation, PRC One and PRC Two. A freezing wind from the Northwest was blowing out of Mongolia as we boarded the small turbo-prop planes. The President, Rogers, and Green were in PRC 1. I struggled onto PRC 2 along with the rest of the staffers, oblivious to the unfolding drama, wrestling two large cases of classified documents into postage stamp sized seats configured for Chinese passengers. The flight from snowy Beijing across the brown North China plane to green Hangzhou took about two hours.

The photo op of the day was a stroll through the lovely park next to legendary West Lake, planted meticulously to provide casual little vistas, through bamboos across lotus floating on ponds at graceful pavilions. Walking with the Presidential party and the TV crews, I watched Nixon and Zhou feed the fishes and exchange banter. Little children danced and sang winsome, pre-planned, Communist kiddy songs. In a nearby pavilion, I found Rogers, Marshall Green and Al Jenkins sitting in a grim row, clearly having just had an argument with a furious Henry Kissinger. I was not meant to be part of the discussion, which was clearly over, but the Secretary of State handed me a draft of the communiqué, marked up with his handwriting, and told me to destroy it.

Marshall Green had major problems with the document Rogers was given on PRC One, and Rogers agreed he was right. I knew nothing of this, of course, and rely on the memoirs of John Holdridge to tell the story:

"Two elements above all caught Marshall Green's eye, and Secretary Rogers relayed them to the President through a reluctant Henry Kissinger. The first, in the section dealing with Taiwan, spoke of "people" on either side of the Taiwan Strait regarding Taiwan as a part of China" Green felt this language would erroneously include inhabitants of the island that considered themselves Taiwanese. The word "people", should be changed to "Chinese", a fix that the Chinese accepted quickly.

"The other point was more difficult", Holdridge continued. "In the original draft..., the United States reaffirmed continued support for the security obligations it maintained with

Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, SEATO and ANZUS, but no mention was made of US obligations under its security treaty with Taiwan.” Green felt that those in the Republican Party opposed to the President’s China trip, particularly Vice President Agnew and Treasury Secretary Connolly, would accuse the President of “selling Taiwan down the river.” Holdridge, Crossing The Divide, p 93. Marshall Green, War and Peace With China P. 162.

All accounts report that the President blew up when he heard of Rogers’ objections, concerned that State Department “nit picking” after the Chinese had approved the text would endanger the outcome of the visit. But the issues were important, and the President worried about the possibility of returning home with a divided delegation that might argue with each other and ruin the outcome. Kissinger worked late that night with Qiao to deal with the issues before we took off the next morning for Shanghai for the last stop of the trip. Minor adjustments in the text were approved. The Chinese would not allow any reference to our mutual security arrangements with Taiwan to appear in the communiqué. Kissinger made sure to reaffirm those arrangements in response to a planted question at the press conference presenting the communiqué the next day.

Premier Zhou Calls on Rogers

We flew to Shanghai the morning of September 27. Unaware of the drama the night before, I accompanied Secretary Rogers to his suite on the twelfth floor of the government guest house in the Jin Jiang Hotel (a separate Art Deco tower, the now beautifully renovated Grosvenor House). From there we had an overview of the great gray expanse of the city, which had been run down over the years, but remained physically the same as photos I had seen taken at the time of the Communist victory in 1949. As we were unpacking, the elevator doors opened without warning and Zhou Enlai stepped out, accompanied by Mao’s influential Brooklyn-born interpreter Nancy Tang, Foreign Minister Ji Pengfei, and two Vice Chairmen of the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, Wang Hongwen and Zhang Chunqiao who later gained notoriety along with Madame Mao as members of the “Gang of Four”.

“Is Secretary Rogers in?, Zhou asked.

“Of course. Let me tell him you are here, Premier Zhou.”

“Be right out.” Rogers said when I knocked on his door and told him who had come to call.

For a prime minister to call, unannounced, on a cabinet officer of a visiting head of state in his hotel suite was unheard of. And we were in the land where protocol was invented. Rogers, who was as surprised as I, emerged to greet Zhou in the most natural and affable manner and the two men moved in to the sitting room, where tea awaited on tables beside the stuffed chairs. The staff certainly had known someone was coming. The sun was streaming in the windows as we sat down. I peeked at the others from the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, of whom I had read much but never seen. Wang Hongwen, in

his mid-thirties, had risen fast through the Party ranks, earning the nickname “helicopter” in the Red Guard press. He was nattily attired in a tailored Mao suit and shiny calf-length black leather boots, in stark, bourgeois contrast to Foreign Minister Ji, a classic, gnarled, Long Marcher, whose long underwear curled out below his baggy trouser cuffs. Zhang Chunqiao had a long intelligent face, which betrayed no trace of emotion. Nancy Tang, with her cute bobbed hair, chirped away in idiomatic English. Zhou Enlai was all smiles.

Secretary Rogers began by asking Zhou how he thought the visit had gone. Zhou replied it had been beneficial, and asked if there had been any reaction from people opposed the visit. He was aware from his channels that there were still some in America who did not understand it. “We have our Goldwaters, too”, Zhou continued. “We are explaining the visit carefully to them, and did so before you came.” Rogers asked about television and radio news of the visit. Zhou replied that coverage had been extensive world-wide.

The Chinese government, he continued, read the world press carefully. He described the layered system of publications, Reference News, Reference Materials, and even more detailed daily publications for the top leaders, which kept the Party informed, (exactly as defector William White told us in 1966, Chapter 4). Mao was the most careful reader, Zhou said, and spotted the Nixon Foreign Affairs article in 1967. He underlined it in red and told us, “This is important”. (Emperors invariably used vermilion pencils, I remembered). “Mao voted for Nixon in spirit”, Zhou added, smiling, “although, of course he did not approve of all his policies.”

Rogers said he anticipated criticism of the trip. The President had made a statement that there could be no news without controversy, and he expected attacks. But these would neither reflect, nor affect, US policy. Zhou said he understood. Marshal Green would be visiting several countries in Asia to explain our policy, Rogers continued, and he himself would be briefing ambassadors and appearing before Congress. We must be able to tell everyone that we stood up for our principles. Zhou indicated his understanding of the point and assured Rogers of China’s interest in gradually normalizing its relationship with the United States.

Rogers said he was deeply impressed by the Premier’s command of detail and his ability to relate them to the big picture. He reiterated his interest, as earlier expressed to the Foreign Minister, in establishing direct telephone links. Zhou replied that the Foreign Minister had been late in telling him about this request. An answer would be forthcoming.

And so the extraordinary meeting ended, and remained a secret for decades. When the Premier and his party had left, Rogers asked me, “What was that all about?” I told him I thought Zhou was trying to make up for Rogers having been left out of the meeting with Mao. With hindsight, we now know that the Chinese were deeply concerned about potential splits in the American delegation. Zhou paid the call, in part, to see for himself how deep they might be. In the event, he had little to worry about.

End Game-the Shanghai Communiqué

The visit was winding down. I called home from Shanghai, taking advantage of extraordinary, free White House communications service to stay in touch with Sheila and the boys, and to try out the new RCA satellite station that had been specially installed in Shanghai for the visit. The connection was so clear that I could hear our dog barking outside the kitchen door and startled my wife by suggesting she go and let him in. The Chinese asked that we leave the station behind and later bought it. The other station erected in Beijing was already being taken down for shipment home.

On the morning of February 28, Secretary Rogers held a final round of Counterpart Talks with Foreign Minister Ji, which revisited earlier proposals for exchanges and channels of communication. The two men broke no new ground, but laid the institutional foundation for contact, specifically designating umbrella organizations like the National Committee for US China Relations, which had handled the Ping Pong exchanges the previous year, as coordinating agents. The Chinese did not want to commit themselves at this point to communicating through their new mission at the UN, or special phone links. They agreed that we could announce that a selected group of firms would be invited to the next Canton Trade Fair, but thought it premature to establish trade offices in the Japan model. Exchange of language materials was agreed. The Chinese had remarked lightly that our interpreter, Charles Freeman, had used “feudal” terminology. We noted that both languages had changed in the decades since we had relations, and discussed ways of updating our usage.

Rogers designated Marshall Green as the person responsible for follow-up, in consultation with the White House. He closed with a vote of thanks to the Chinese for the flawless planning and execution of an historic trip and pledged to do everything in his power to avoid misunderstandings as the governments moved forward. He stressed the importance of maintaining momentum with gradual but concrete actions, lest the visit end up being judged only a “euphoric event.”

The Shanghai Communiqué was issued the afternoon of February 28 at the theater on the grounds of the Jin Jiang Hotel, where Henry Kissinger and Marshall Green conducted the briefing. The National Security Adviser took pains to reassert the existing mutual security arrangements between the US and the government on Taiwan in response to a carefully planted question. Neither the President nor the Secretary of State attended the press briefing. I spent this historic moment where I was supposed to be, close to William P. Rogers, who needed my advice on which model of the several Panda Bear souvenir figures available would make the greatest hit with his grandchildren.

Meeting Richard Nixon

At the banquet that night which formally ended the visit, Nixon toasted the “week that changed the world”. A meeting later that evening gave me an inkling of how it would change my life.

I had remarked to Secretary Rogers earlier that I felt strange having met most of the Chinese leadership, but not my own president. He invited me to attend a meeting in President Nixon's suite at 10:30 that evening.. The topic was the positions to be taken with the different Asian leaders by Marshall Green and John Holdridge who would flying throughout Asia to brief them on the results of the visit as the party returned to Washington.

I arrived early, along with Secretary of State Rogers, to find the President sitting in a flowered silk dressing gown over an open collar shirt and trousers, a long, fat cigar in one hand and a tall scotch and soda in the other. He looked drained, but satisfied with what he had accomplished. What an extraordinary looking man he was up close! Huge head, small body, duck feet, puffy cheeks, "about three walnuts apiece", my notes indicated, and pendant jowls hanging down, the entire combination exuding authority. Mr. Haldeman was there with his close-cropped hair, yellow legal pad and a fistful of sharp pencils. Green and Holdridge arrived a bit later, and the discussion began.

The President, I was impressed to note, did most of the talking. He shaped the approach to be taken with each leader, whether from Japan, Taiwan or the Philippines, based on his own knowledge and relationship with each. "Tell them the President says....," adding a personal message for each. He predicted a generally favorable reaction from Asia's leaders. Only Taiwan had reason for disappointment, However, Chiang Kai-shek could be confident that we would maintain our security commitment. Our 9,000 man force stationed in Taiwan was not important in the grand scheme of things, especially when compared with the 450,000 we had in Vietnam. Anyway, Nixon concluded, where else could he turn? The President implied from his remarks that he was well aware of the difficulties his China visit would cause for the Soviets.

His performance was a tour de force, and documented for me Nixon's reputation as the great foreign policy president of his time. As the meeting came to an end, he made a point of thanking each of us for our work. Secretary Rogers introduced me to the President as one of the new China specialists in the State Department. I told Nixon that I had spent ten years preparing for this trip and was grateful to him for making it happen. He accompanied me to the door of his suite, placing an avuncular flowered arm on my shoulder as we went. "Well," he said, "you China boys are going to have a lot more to do from now on."

Heading Home

The departure scene at the airport next morning could not have been more different from our somber arrival. There was no protocol at all. Everyone milled about, Chinese and Americans, saying cheerful good-byes, without a clue as to when we might meet and see each again. We flew home to a noisy and enthusiastic welcome at Andrews Air Force Base, confirmation that Nixon's bold gamble and the careful media planning of his staff had paid off. My own family was included in the welcome, which gave the event a special excitement and joy.

Dealing with the Disgruntled

We arrived in Washington at night on Tuesday February 29th, and were at work early the next morning. Roger's first priority was to brief senior officers of his Department on the results of the visit. He was angry about media reports of grumping at State about the trip. The President of the US, he began, had just returned from a great historic visit to China, the results of which he believed to be in the best interests of the country. He felt the Department of State played a significant role in the success of the trip. What does he read? Our morale is bad. We were cut out. We are depressed. What would he like to read? The Department is happy with the results of the trip and providing strong support for the President.

President Nixon, Rogers went on, also gets depressed from time to time, but does not wear it on his sleeve. Drawing on his old friendship with the President, Rogers recounted several occasions in a long career, particularly after Nixon's loss in California when the Press buried him alive and upset his family. Nixon did not let those occasions get him down. He has trouble with the concept that morale is like temperature. Supporting him is what will help morale the most.

"What troubles me, from our standpoint, is the Mao meeting." He explained his absence in the context of Mao's fragile health. Mao was supposed to go to Hangzhou, presumably for wider meetings, had caught cold and could not go. So the quick initial meeting was arranged instead. From that point on, Rogers spent more time with the head of government on this visit than any other past summit. Premier Zhou was with him for more than an hour and a half on the plane to Hangzhou, and came to see him in Shanghai.

Rogers said he was happy with the outcome of the visit and felt the Department deserved a lot of credit. It was the best of the five summit meetings he had attended. He had spent a lot of time with the President on the way out to China. Obviously, Henry Kissinger was going to do the negotiating, but we worked with him on the communiqué and gave our views.

Rogers concluded with a rundown on the counterpart meetings, his desire to develop practical momentum for the new relationship through exchanges, and some random impressions of the visit. The Red Detachment of Women, was "inexcusable". Zhou Enlai was a "bundle of nerves", in command of every detail. Mainland society struck him as "spiritless". The system on Taiwan worked better.

I doubt that the Rogers' briefing had much impact on attitudes in the Department, one way or another. Certainly, "China boys" like myself were excited and upbeat about the visit, as were many people throughout America. Invitations for speaking engagements poured in to everyone connected with the trip, from baggage handlers on up. My bosses wanted me back at work, and let me accept one only. I chose Brigham Young University, in part for its strong missionary connections and Asian language programs, but most of all for its proximity to the legendary powder snow at Alta, Utah. I gave a speech to a large audience of students and faculty, presented the university with copies of the

People's Daily covering the historic week, did radio and TV interviews in Salt Lake City, and then met Sheila at the Alta Lodge in Little Cottonwood Canyon, the first of many visits. It was our first time off together since Secretary Rogers called me to his office six intense, unforgettable weeks before.

Birth of the Bruce Mission

Back at work in the Secretariat, there was an immediate flurry of follow up action to work out interagency guidelines for trade, travel, and exchanges with the People's Republic of China. These were set forth in National Study Memoranda 148 and 149, which listed approaches to the Chinese, in the order of attractiveness to them. Arguments with the Pentagon over trade were, as always, emotional. The Department of Defense was against selling anything to the Chinese that might make them stronger, and that included practically everything. Secretary Rogers, remembering the fingerprinting dispute during his talks in Beijing, was particularly intent on developing visa procedures that would accommodate Chinese sensitivities. There was also talk on beefing up our China expertise at the US Embassy in Paris, with the possibility of establishing an "Interests Section" there, a form of diplomatic half way house, which would provide a cockpit of contact with the PRC.

I had no inkling that fourteen months later, I would be on my way with a handful of other Foreign Service "China Boys" to open the US Liaison Office in Beijing, our first diplomatic presence in China in over two decades. My plan, after finishing in the Secretariat a few months later, was to take a year of Japanese language training in Yokohama followed by assignment to Embassy Tokyo as deputy to the political counselor. The concept of using expertise on China as a base for a broader Asian capability had taken shape for me. I had visited Tokyo a number of times as a China analyst and found fascinating the way Japanese had taken Chinese cultural influences to form their own distinctive style. The old family ties with the Doshisha in Kyoto also exerted a pull. Secretariat officers usually got what they wanted, and these requests struck my bosses as sound, even modest. All this would happen, but hardly as planned.

Explaining the Paris Peace Accords

One of Richard Nixon's reasons for moving toward China had been to facilitate an end to the war in Vietnam and the US role in the conflict. Chinese support for his strategic objectives never amounted to more than a tacit understanding to stay out of the way. In fact, Beijing had objected strongly to his tactics, including the bombing of Hanoi and the invasion of Cambodia. Finally, after a long and tortured process, which straddled Nixon's reelection in November, 1972, US and Vietnamese negotiators reached agreement on the Paris Peace Accords to end the war, and signed them on January 23, 1973, three days after the inauguration ceremonies for his second term. The President decided to send Vice President Agnew on a lightning trip to brief the leaders of Southeast Asia on the agreement. I was assigned to provide Secretariat support.

The trip began in haste and ended in frenzy. On Wednesday afternoon, January 24, at 5PM, I was told we were leaving for eight countries (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines) the following Sunday morning and to start getting the papers ready the next day, a federal holiday marking the funeral of President Harry S. Truman. The holiday turned out to be a blessing, providing the concerned desks of the State Department some quiet time to do a quick job. By Saturday noon, the briefing papers were ready, and I delivered them to the Executive Office Building where General Mike Dunn, the Vice President's national security advisor, and John Negroponte, the NSC staff member assigned to the trip were waiting. Dunn said he was anxious to project the image of a working trip. "Substantively, it's a hand holder", he said. I rushed home to pack. Air Force Two left Andrews AFB early the next morning.

The NSC and State-- Finally Working Together

Once the plane door had closed, Negroponte and I did something unheard of. We handed each other the State and NSC briefing books we each had assembled. John was a long-time friend and Foreign Service colleague from the East Asia Bureau. (Later Deputy Secretary of State, Director for National Intelligence, US Ambassador to Iraq, and Permanent Representative to the United Nations). The NSC had, as expected, prepared a separate set of papers for each stop. Normally, NSC staff members, trembling at the thought of White House wrath, would tightly protect any materials they produced. I suggested to John we pool our efforts and prepare one coordinated book for Agnew, saving him (and General Dunn) the chore of wading through two sets of material and sorting out the differences. Negroponte readily agreed. Not a fearful type in any case, he was on final last assignment for Kissinger, and would leave the NSC staff after this trip. We spent the next hours in the flight, reading each other's papers, deciding which were better, and which the Vice President should use.

The NSC papers for the Indochina stops were models of clarity and authority. I sat goggle-eyed, reading the memoranda of conversations General Haig had conducted just the week before on the impending Paris agreements with the heads of government in Vietnam (Thieu), Laos (Souvanna), Cambodia (Lon Nol) and Thailand (Thanom). These were extraordinary documents; free-flowing, almost verbatim, laced with Haig's toughness and humor. Two main points emerged:

1. Hanoi was bombed back to the conference table. As Haig put it, when you are dealing with a mule (Hanoi), you have to hit him between the eyes with a baseball bat (the Christmas B-52 bombings of Hanoi/ Haiphong) to make him more flexible.
2. If South Vietnam would not come along, we would sign alone, and no further aid would be forthcoming from the US. The argument was that the Congress and the American people would not stand for new aid appropriations for Saigon without a peace agreement. The message was clear: no signature, no help.

In turn, the State Department papers for the Southeast Asian countries (Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines) were fuller and more up to date. In some cases, NSC staffers had simply taken the State papers, superimposed their own NSC letterhead,

and stuffed them in the books. For the first time in my experience, the State Department and the NSC were cooperating at a level of trust that made for maximum effectiveness. Dunn, a bureaucrat of great sophistication, saw what was happening and approved. What we were doing would strengthen the performance of his boss. From then on I was shown the back channel traffic from the White House direct to the Vice President's Party and given an opportunity to play a role close in.

This was heady stuff and great fun. Negro Ponte and I rewrote all of Agnew's public statements en route at 30,000 feet. The Saigon arrival statement, which raised press eyebrows for its toughness, was based in part on a blunt letter from Nixon to Thieu that Negro Ponte was hand-carrying. During the flight, John shared some of his views on the Paris negotiations, in which he had been intimately involved from the outset. He was also thoroughly familiar with both Kissinger's discussions with the Chinese on Indochina and the results of General Alexander Haig's recent swings through Southeast Asia.

As an experienced Vietnam hand who had served in Saigon for years, he worried that we were letting the countries of the area down. He remembered Henry Kissinger getting onto the elevator of the embassy during his last trip to Saigon saying, with his characteristic owlish leer, "I've screwed so many people, I ought to open a whorehouse". John also said that there had been real arguments within the small inner circle of advisors around Kissinger--Peter Rodman, John Holdridge, Alexander Haig, Jonathan Howe, and Winston Lord—as to whether to go for a comprehensive agreement or a simpler bilateral agreement with Hanoi.

Breakthrough for Liaison Offices

After we had finished holding hands in Southeast Asia that February, Henry Kissinger returned from another visit to Beijing, to our surprise and delight, with an agreement to establish Liaison Offices in Beijing and Washington on an urgent basis. These were just the kind of diplomatic half way houses, somewhere between embassies and private offices, we had speculated about. The move was at China's initiative, way ahead of any American timetable. John Holdridge's best guess was that Zhou Enlai, pressured by domestic political infighting which was growing as the health of Mao, and that of Zhou himself, deteriorated, sought to give more permanence to the opening with the US. (Op. Cit. Holdridge, pp).

For me, and other eligible "China Boys", the following weeks were agony as we waited to find out who would staff the new office. State Department recommendations had gone the White House through the Secretariat. I knew I was on the list. My bosses were asking me how I planned to train my successor, and how quickly I it could be done. Then the President announced that Ambassador David Bruce would lead the mission. We also learned that Al Jenkins and John Holdridge would both be his deputies. Two Deputy Chiefs of Mission? That was a new one. Originally, Jenkins and Holdridge were supposed to lead the Liaison Office as numbers one and two. But the Chinese had raised the stakes by naming their most senior diplomat, Huang Zhen, former Ambassador to France, and the only member of the Chinese Foreign Service to survive the Cultural

Revolution unscathed. Kissinger needed an American of equivalent stature, and Bruce, a close friend, was clearly the right person. Former US Ambassador in Paris, Bonn and London under three Presidents, he had been head of the delegation to the Paris Peace Talks just concluded.

Where did all this leave me? The Mission was top heavy with political officers. Kissinger's early reaction was to "drop Platt." But Jenkins, Holdridge, and David Bruce himself lobbied for my inclusion. On March 26, Roger Sullivan, then in charge of the Mainland China Desk, called to say I would be going to Beijing as Chief of the Political Section. Joy.

Meeting David Bruce

I planned to leave for Beijing in a month, and spent more and more time at the Mainland Desk. David Bruce arrived to start reading in. Two weeks helping him answer his mail and set up his appointments showed me what a bright and happy choice he was. There had been some question about Bruce's age, whether he was still up to par. In fact, he was just the right age, a little older than Zhou, a little younger than Mao.

My notes recall, "Bruce was entirely whole upstairs, his famous sense of humor intact, wit pouring softly and clearly out of his marvelous, lined, lived in face. I came into his office one morning while he was reading a CIA report on the health of the Chinese leadership. He was laughing aloud at the long list of conditions and complaints, from Chiang Kai-shek's pneumonia, to Mao's emphysema and arterial sclerosis, to Zhou's stretched capacities. Reading a sentence which said that Zhou had reached the stage where the addition of any more duties left him confused and exhausted, Bruce commented 'I know just how he feels.' David Bruce is the most comfortable of creatures. He will do very well."

The Chinese Come to Town

Shortly before I left for China that April, the Chinese Liaison Office advance party arrived in Washington. It included Deputy Chief Han Xu, who had managed the Nixon visit as Chief of Protocol.; Qian Dayong, formerly deputy head of the American Desk in the Foreign Ministry and my counterpart during the Nixon Visit; Ji Chaoju, Zhou Enlai's interpreter, and others.

Bruce welcomed the Chinese with a dinner at his house. The guest list included, from the White House: Henry Kissinger, General Brent Scowcroft, Win Lord, John Holdridge, Dick Solomon, and Commander Jon Howe. From the State Department, Deputy Assistant Secretary Art Hummel (later Ambassador to China), Roger Sullivan, and myself. Bruce had been worried about the food and asked my advice. I said stuff them with a good American Dinner. Pay them back for what they did to us in China, where we had been wined and dined to within an inch of our lives, and waistlines. Bruce let them have it with both barrels; crabmeat imperial, Chicken Kiev, endive, a super-rich chocolate pudding, red and white wine and champagne.

I was at Dr. Kissinger's table with Holdridge, Qian, Ji, Dick Solomon, Art Hummel, and a bun-faced bagman named Wang who knew no English. He was unaccustomed, Henry joked as he sat down, to dining with so many State Department people. He spent most of his time reminiscing about earlier contacts with the Chinese to Ji Chaoju, who had participated in all the talks. I got the usual sweet and sour treatment. Greeting me most pleasantly, Henry asked when I was leaving for Beijing. When I was gone, he hoped "Alsop would get off his back". Joe had written him a letter about me early on in the process of choosing the USLO staff, I was horrified to learn. Kissinger added that when Alsop did his homework he was the finest reporter in town, and had a tough, first class mind. Again, Henry displayed his irritation with Americans talking Chinese in his presence, and asked pointedly whether moon faced Wang, with whom I was chatting, spoke any English. Later, rising to depart, he announced "I am leaving early, so everyone has a chance to say bad things about me." (NP Notes)

Bruce enjoyed himself enormously. He liked the idea of having the Chinese to his house, they were at their most charming, and he found them "cozy", a word I had not heard applied to Chinese before. He told a bemused Han Xu an incomprehensible story about an American who wore a flower in his buttonhole while fox hunting. Bruce gave a graceful toast welcoming the Chinese to his country and his house. If we could not develop a relationship, given the good will and inclination of the peoples and governments on both sides, he said, we would have ourselves to blame. Han replied with a natural speech of thanks for the friendly "family party." At the end, the Ambassador saw them off, standing on the Georgetown brick sidewalk, and, with only minimal prompting from me, waved (in best Chinese fashion) until their limousine was out of sight. We were all suffering from end stage euphoria.

The Longest Day

The trip from Hong Kong to Beijing took up all of a long, long May 2. In 1973, the only way Americans in Asia could enter China was to cross the wooden railroad bridge separating the border village of Lo Wu from sleepy Shenzhen (now a city of more than 3 million). Then a train took us to Canton (Guangzhou), where we caught a plane for Shanghai and Beijing. I was accompanied by my secretary Lucille Zaelit and four Marine Security Guards.

The day was a steaming hot and all of us were sweating and excited. Friendly China Travel Service officials helped us cope with 29 pieces of baggage and freight, and ushered us into a private waiting room, where I gave the Marines their first Chinese lesson, an uproarious session which focused on, "Hello, how are you? Where is the bathroom?" They were a handpicked group of enthusiastic and earnest young men, the first US Marines to return to China in 23 years. (Ozzie Osborne of Hazard Kentucky, Mac MacDonald from Indiana, Bob Jones from New York an insatiable reader of Alistair MacLean paperbacks, and Mark Worrel from Iowa.)

The 2 hour train ride to Canton was straight out of a Pearl Buck novel, past brilliant green fields of young rice, water buffaloes, burial bone pots like those on the other side of border, and farm women in wide straw hats. The six of us crossed muggy, seedy Canton to the airport in taxis groaning with luggage. At the airport I ran into Pakistani Ambassador Agha Shahi (later Foreign Minister), who wanted to know all about USLO and how David Bruce would be greeted, when he arrived in ten days' time. He wanted me to apologize to Bruce for not being in Beijing at that time.

We flew to Shanghai in a four engine Russian Ilyushin 62 jet. I sat next to two friendly foreign department cadres from Anhui province who assured me that the Cultural Revolution was purely ideological and had had no effect on their daily lives. Straining not to laugh out loud, I focused on their carry-on luggage, which consisted almost entirely of green bananas. Newspaper columnist Marquis Childs and his wife were also on the plane, but out of touch with the latest news. They were appalled to hear of the Watergate scandal now dominating the US.

Our layover in Shanghai reminded me of an old fashioned Greyhound bus stop. The plane landed, parked, everyone got out, including flight crew and the cabin attendants, who turned out the lights. We repaired to the terminal restaurant, where dinner was served. After the pilot finished eating, the airplane lights were turned on, passengers boarded, and off we flew to Beijing. Arriving after dark, we were met by Chas Freeman (our interpreter during the Nixon visit, who was helping with the opening of the post for a few days) and Bob Blackburn, the administrative officer who had preceded us by about a week. They drove us past the building site for USLO (near the present St. Regis Hotel), where workmen were swarming under lights, and around Tiananmen Square to our new home at the Beijing Hotel.

Gritty Realities

Ordinary life in Beijing contrasted starkly with the carefully programmed glitter of the Nixon Trip. Our first office was in two rooms on the Ninth floor of the Russian Wing of the Beijing Hotel, with windows overlooking the golden roofs of the Forbidden City. Our living quarters were along the same hallway, which was lit and ventilated by transoms over the doorways from which every sound escaped. Family arguments, body noises, policy discussions; we heard them all. With only a few of us in residence, this was manageable, but when the rest of the staff arrived, the din would become unbearable, and a major morale issue.

The staff of the hotel, infused with the Socialist work ethic, moved at a lethargic pace. The local saying "work or not, you get 36 yuan" (the frozen minimum wage), infected the entire non-farm economy. In the countryside, where 80% of Chinese lived, you worked hard or starved. The front entrance of the hotel was grand enough to stage a performance of *Aida*, but the elephants would soon have been covered with the fine layer of Gobi Desert dust that permeated everything in the Chinese capital.

In the days that followed, I called on Chinese officials at the Foreign Ministry and their Diplomatic Service Bureau, the government organ that managed every aspect of our lives; made friends with members of the local diplomatic corps, particularly the Brits, who greeted us with open arms and went out of their way to show us the ropes. Richard Samuels, Michael Richardson, Elizabeth Wright, China hands who later rose to high rank in the Foreign Office, shared their rich stores of local lore, including knowledge of the best restaurants and picnic spots at the Ming Tombs. Canadians and Australians, led by their new Ambassador, Steve Fitzgerald, a contemporary who studied Chinese in Hong Kong when I was there, made me feel at home. My most important immediate task was to negotiate with hard-nosed cadres at the Number One Flag Factory the shape, material, price and delivery dates of drapes for David Bruce's temporary residence at the Nine Story Building in the Sanlitun diplomatic area. I also bought some furniture for USLO at local stores. After years of arcane, long distance China analysis and policy formulation, these gritty, hands-on tasks gave a satisfying sense of dealing with reality. I also spent time at the USLO permanent building site, where 250 workmen, spurred by a poster on the wall that said "Grasp Revolution—Promote Production" were charging around, under the watchful eyes of American Sea Bees, who told me they were amazed at the quality of Chinese joiner work and plastering. Arranging treatment for a case of the clap contracted, in record time, by one of our Marines also occupied my attention.

As chief of the political section, my responsibilities included liaison with the US press. What became a flood of interviews had already begun, along with pressure for permanent media representation. During these first days, I spent time with Keyes Beech of Chicago papers, Jack Reynolds and a camera crew from NBC TV, the ubiquitous Stan Karnow, and Jerry Schecter, to name a few.

Beijing By Bike

Official calls excepted, I went everywhere on the bicycle I bought the day after I arrived, a Shanghai Phoenix, British racing green, with a sonorous, commanding bell. The Liaison Office had a small motor pool, but the drivers' hours were limited and rides had to be arranged well in advance. On one early errand, I out to the Peking Zoo to make inquiries on behalf of the Steinhart Aquarium in California about an obscure species of fresh water dolphin. There were no dolphins at all, but I got a good first look at the west city. It struck me as poorer than the east, and less interesting.

The Chinese capital in 1973 was a dusty, down-at-the-heels city, for all its ancient and well-kept splendors. The bleak and cramped way of life had food as its only obvious pleasure for the people, and, less obviously sex, although no one went out of their way to be very attractive. To the contrary, drab, patched, baggy clothing were the fashion in the waning days of the Mao era. But I found myself bowled over by the beauty of local speech. Having been educated that Beijing dialect is the purest of all Chinese, it was still a surprise to find every urchin in the street sounding like a grand concubine. Even insults were elegant. One kid I almost ran into in a lane shouted after me, "cao nin ma!"--roughly translated as "fuck thy mother, honorable sir!"

One of my earliest messages to Washington summarized the local scene that Spring, as quoted in David Bruce's Beijing Diaries:

"Peking is a cyclists' town. The best way for a foreigner to move around and see things is on two wheels, which carry him fast enough to avoid collecting a crowd, and slow enough to observe life and chat with other bikers, all of whom wobble along at roughly the same pace..."

The Pace of Life This is a busy city during the hours that the Chinese use it. Society operates from dawn to dusk, not much before and precious little after. The restaurants are empty by seven, when most of us are prepared to eat. But at six they are full and doing a roaring trade in all the good things the city is famous for. There are traffic jams and rush hours at opening and close of business, with flocks of ringing bicycles flowing around horse drawn carts. Double length busses edge not so gingerly out from the right into the blue flow of bikes, while speeding cars, honking to announce their whereabouts, form a hazard to the left. Stray pedestrians add more imponderables to an already complicated scene. Shoppers throng the stores and the shopping streets. This is all over by suppertime. There follows a short period of life in the streets, where teenagers play cards in the shallow pools of light under street lamps, and lovers nestle on Rectitude Road and other dark spots. Then the night belongs to the water trucks hosing down the dusty streets and the long lines of limousines pulling away in silence from banquets at the Great Hall of the People.

The Attitude of the People The Chinese in Peking are quite nice to each other these days. One girl who had just fallen flat on her chest in the street off her bicycle after being sideswiped by two adolescent boys stood up, dusted herself off, and though blushing with rage, told them sweetly, 'You know, I thought that was your fault,' Others are polite, leave room for each other, and swear only rarely at cars. Policemen, however, back on their stands for some time after years in limbo during the Cultural Revolution seem as rude as if the great upheaval had never happened. They bellow through bullhorns at all intersections and wave their arms. No one seems to pay much attention, which may explain their behavior.

The Chinese are also quite nice to foreigners on bicycles. Somehow it is less threatening to talk moving along at nine miles an hour than on foot. One young secretary at an embassy here reported that a man rode up level with her as she was pedaling home one evening, turned to her, opened his mouth, sang an unintelligible but pretty song and then dropped back not to appear again. The reporting officer, cycling near Peking University, asked directions from a round gray cadre in sandals and was answered in slow but flawless English. When asked where he had learned, the cadre, who turned out to be an electrical engineer at the university, said 'from Hollywood movies.' 'That must have been a long time ago.' 'Yes', came the fading reply as he pedaled off into a side road.

The image of Chinese Communist discipline remains intact though marred at times by very human touches. The children march singing to events at the People's Stadium behind fluttering red flags. But once when an empty bus pulled up to a stop near one

militant group wearing Red Guard armbands, all ranks broke and scrambled aboard. The Peoples Liberation Army appear to have the respect of the populace. But one little boy dressed in shorts and a blue and white striped shirt could not help but dance up and down and shout derisive cadences when a company swung past near the Peking Hotel last week.

The Shape of the City Many of the street signs removed during the Cultural Revolution are still down, making it hard sometimes for the newcomer to find his way. The signs are gradually being replaced and none of the radical names are coming back. Many of the public buildings have placards which identify them, however. The lanes (hutongs) that lace the city are readily accessible and are as quaint and interesting to the newly arrived American as they were to the old hands. Life there appears to go on much as it always has. The city is almost as clean as everyone says, despite the fact that children relieve themselves with impunity through customary split pants and spitting definitely remains a practice in People's China. The public monuments and treasures are carefully kept and vigorously enjoyed by a population that seriously takes its Sundays off. The only problem at this time of year is dust—especially from the great shelter-subway excavations that dot the city. It blows everywhere and sometimes rises to hide the sun. Everyone is covered with it, especially the cyclist.

Supplies The shops are full of goods and people appear to be buying, particularly the simple things. Vegetables are everywhere, even dumped down on corners and hawked loudly to people going home in the evenings. The corner markets appear to be free, but several bikers pedaling along, back wheel racks festooned with radishes and leeks, have assured the reporting officer that the impromptu trade is totally government run.

Cycling broke the membrane of isolation surrounding foreign diplomats. During USLO's early months, we scheduled regular biking hours every Wednesday afternoon, the first and probably the last US diplomatic establishment to do such a thing. Though we worked Saturday mornings to make up for our midweek excursions, the practice came to an end when we moved into permanent quarters and conventional bureaucratic practices resumed their grip.

The Policy Context

During my first week, I had a long talk with Australian Ambassador Steve Fitzgerald about the future of China and the current status of relations. We both agreed that this was a particularly key time to be here. I told him I thought the recent Chinese decision to accept long-term credits to finance foreign trade was particularly significant. The Chinese could not have made the decision without deciding to change the way they managed their economy. The old conservative methods--pay as you go, no foreign debt, no domestic debt-- are finished. Fundamental principles must have been debated. Do we want ideological purity or economic development, or both? How much of each? The latest decision would surely benefit development, but purity must suffer as foreign influences born on the winds of foreign purchases blew once again into the Central Kingdom. I told

Steve that what we were seeing could be as significant for China as the Meiji Restoration had been for Japan in 1868.

Steve felt that Zhou Enlai was moving more and more toward the past in developing his policies towards the rest of the world. I disagreed, arguing that he was looking to the future, trying to set China onto irreversible paths, building, like the traditional Chinese gentleman that his was, the historic coffin in which he would like to lie.

Clearly, the core issues that had divided the Chinese leadership since they took power in 1949 and that had led to the Cultural Revolution in 1966 remained unresolved. The competition between realist “experts” and revolutionary “reds” had, if anything, intensified as Mao’s health continued to fade. Madame Mao and her Shanghai cohorts led the radicals and still controlled the media. Party Secretary Deng Xiaoping, just rehabilitated, Vice Premier Li Xiannian and the military men who ran the provinces were on the side of pragmatism. So was Zhou himself, whose role, as always, was to be the balance wheel that kept the Chinese body politic from flying apart. The tension that infused the leadership would remain a feature of life in the capital until Mao died in 1976, and was prevalent throughout the early life of USLO.

An Odd Table of Organization

In addition to Ambassador Bruce, his deputies Al Jenkins and John Holdridge, and me, the roster of the Liaison Office would comprise only seven officers: my deputy in the political section, Don Anderson (later Consul General in Shanghai and Hong Kong); Herb Horowitz, Chief of the Economic Section (later Ambassador to the Gambia); and his assistant Bill Rope (who became a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State). Other key figures included CIA Station Chief James Lilley, ostensibly a member of the Political Section, but actually the manager of the special communication channel between Bruce and the White House (later Ambassador to China and Korea); Brunson McKinley, Bruce’s aide; Robert Blackburn, who was responsible for consular and administrative affairs, and Virginia Schaeffer, the budget and fiscal officer (later Ambassador to Papua New Guinea). Each section had a secretary. Lucille Zaelit, a smart, friendly, funny and flexible member of State’s elite staff, was mine. The five man Marine Guard detachment rounded out the initial table of organization.

The Liaison Office would be unique in US diplomatic annals, a small embassy in everything but name, staffed by Foreign Service professionals, most of whom knew the language. We would be denied the formal responsibilities of attending functions at the Great Hall of the People for visiting foreign leaders, but otherwise could participate in the diplomatic life of the Chinese capital, with diplomatic license plates, ready access to the Foreign Ministry, and the right to fly our flag.

USLO would also be unique for having two deputy chiefs of mission, an arrangement without precedent before, or repeated since in the Foreign Service. The double deputy arrangement would present the mission with a variety of peculiar problems until Al Jenkins retired in 1974. While I was in Beijing, the deputies focused their attention on

Ambassador Bruce and each other, leaving de facto management of the post to the chiefs of section, Herb Horowitz, Bob Blackburn, and me. There was little overt friction, only an awkward sense of discomfort in the ranks, and one additional hazard to bear in mind as we navigated daily life and work. Bruce admired them both, and they him. Henry Kissinger also liked the arrangement, for it placed his own trusted representative, John Holdridge, in a position to protect the direct channel from the White House to USLO and Bruce. Jenkins also had Kissinger's trust, although he seemed more a symbol, than an operator in this tight loop.

Housing our odd couple was an issue of special delicacy for the Chinese. Each mission was allotted one seven room apartment for their deputy chief in the "Nine Story Building" at the Sanlitun Diplomatic Compound. Both of our deputies felt entitled to one. The Chinese agreed at first, postponing the issue. But as more and more foreign embassies arrived in China, the pressure would grow until it affected the housing and, indeed, the morale of our entire staff.

Jenkins arrived May 10. Already a grizzled veteran after a week in Peking, I gave him a tour of the temporary offices and residence the next day, and took him to meet the Acting director of Protocol, Ju Quanxien, a charming young man who had served as Han Xu's deputy. We discussed the arrangements for the Bruce arrival. In contrast to the US and other countries except France, China assigned its most capable officers to protocol work. When I asked why, the answer was crisp and clear. A substantive mistake can always be fixed with words, but protocol errors are most often irrevocable.

That evening at dinner, Al voiced concern over the division of labor between himself and John Holdridge. I replied that we would have to develop a mechanism that would assure both of them were aware of everything that was going on, as well as each other's views. Al said, "Well we're both adults. It will work out." He then went on to worry about office procedures and precedents being taken while he was absent. He would be going home soon to make a speech and receive an honorary degree from his alma mater Emory University. I told him simply to make his worries plain.

David and Evangeline Bruce arrived in Peking the evening of May 14, following much the same tortuous route that I had from Hong Kong. They were accompanied by John Holdridge and the Brunson McKinleys, and met by Zhang Wenjin and a gaggle of lesser Foreign Ministry people, as well as a group of ambassadors from friendly countries. After a brief arrival statement expressing delight to be in China, we whisked them to the Nine Story Building. En route, the flag almost fell off the car. We stopped and removed it. All in all, it was an appropriate half-way diplomatic welcome. The Liaison Office was in business.

Making the Rounds

The next day, after more flag trouble, involving a pole that was much too small, Ambassador Bruce began an arduous, month-long round of calls on Chinese officials and diplomats, including the ministers responsible for all aspects of our new relationship,

including foreign affairs, trade, sports, culture, science and technology. Qiao Guanhua, the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, who had negotiated the Shanghai Communiqué, was the official whose company Bruce enjoyed the most. A tall, intense and witty man, master of our own and other foreign languages, heavy smoker, eager drinker, Qiao and Bruce were two peas in a pod. During the first call, they shared Kissinger jokes, and pledged to cooperate and continue the normalization process. We accompanied Bruce on most of these calls, and benefited from the additional access they gave us to leading figures. (Bruce describes his daily activities in detail in his Beijing Diaries).

A cozy welcome banquet for the entire USLO staff hosted by Qiao gave us a chance to meet the new PRCLC Chief Ambassador Huang Jen, Mao's alleged niece Wang Hairong, and the new head of the Foreign Ministry's American and Oceanic Bureau, Lin Ping. Huang, we were told, would arrive in Washington in June. Making family small talk, I told Qiao and Lin Ping about my sons, the Three Tigers, and of the decision of Tiger Number Three, "San Hu", to use his Chinese name in America. All conversation stopped. "You mean that's what they call him at school?" Qiao asked, astonished. When I confirmed this, the entire table toasted San Hu (his family name to this day) and his arrival in the capital later in June.

I sat next to Madame Huang Jen, whose appearance --a round, jolly, Chinese version of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle--masked a strong reputation as an effective diplomat in her own right. She told me she had seven children and loved gardening. Her husband, China's answer to David Bruce, had a heavy cold, hawked loudly, but managed to refrain from spitting. Lin Ping, a tall, thin cadre of dour mien, who had served as Ambassador to Chile, was pleasant during this honeymoon event. He later turned out to be the main messenger when there was bad news to pass on. Bruce was in top form, commenting that the Maotai liquor had a "kick like a mule," an expression which stumped the interpreters.

Bruce moved quickly to define the Liaison Office as a small, low-key mission empowered to negotiate on substantive matters of mutual interest. During his call on the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, the Nepali Ambassador, it was agreed that USLO staff should not attend formal functions involving the diplomatic corps as a whole, including national days and Chinese events related to visiting foreign leaders. This was a relief to Bruce, and, in fact, to all of us. It meant that we could choose who we wanted to see, and when. The ambassador also briefed the visiting US press on these guidelines, as well as the staff. He was anxious that Washington also got the message. Every agency in town wanted to have representatives on the ground in China, and he wanted to keep his mission lean and nimble. After all, the US had yet to grant full recognition to the People's Republic, and still maintained a full-scale diplomatic establishment in Taiwan. He would remain adamant in fending off pressures for additional staff.

Premier Zhou Welcomes Bruce--Kissinger is Cross

"When are they going to give us something to do?" Bruce asked, fidgeting in his office on May 18. The answer came 15 minutes later in a call from the protocol department announcing that Premier Zhou would like Ambassador Bruce to call between 6:30 and

7:00 PM Jenkins, Holdridge and I accompanied Bruce to the same room in the Great Hall of People where Nixon and Zhou had talked fifteen months before. Qiao Guanhua and Huang Zhen were the top officials at the Premier's side. After the obligatory photo and tea, Zhou got down to cases. He named Qiao as Bruce's opposite number in Beijing, and announced that Huang Zhen would be leaving Beijing May 25 and arriving in Washington June 1. Having established the lines of communication and made it clear that he wanted to substantive exchanges to start right away, Zhou urged speedy implementation of the Shanghai Communiqué, and asked Bruce to assure President Nixon that his government and the North Vietnamese "ardently" wished to comply with all the clauses of the Paris Agreements. He wished Dr. Kissinger success in his talks with Le Duc Tho, Hanoi's top negotiator, and expressed the hope that a peaceful solution could be found in Cambodia. Zhou praised Cambodia's Prince Sihanouk, (a close friend of the Chinese who spent months each year in Beijing), and hinted that Bruce might be willing to meet with him. Bruce did not reply.

Bruce was elated by the meeting, and deeply impressed with Zhou, who struck him as "one of the most remarkable statesmen of our time." Zhou and Bruce clearly hit it off, establishing a rapid rapport that enabled the serious substance of the meeting to be transacted gracefully and without strain. I was flattered when Zhou, ever the well-briefed politician, remembered that we had met and discussed poetry during the Nixon Visit. After the meeting, the four of us Americans dined at the Beijing Hotel on vodka, caviar and simple Chinese dishes. The total bill came to about US\$6.00 Bruce almost fell off his chair. Jenkins, Holdridge and I then worked up a report of the conversation. I did the writing, based on their comments and ideas. The entire process took about 2 hours and went much quicker than I expected. It was difficult to sleep that night given the excitement of the evening, and the shouts of hilarity coming over the transoms of our hotel hallway from the Seabees, who repeated every joke they had ever heard until 3 AM.

The next morning, we went over the draft with Ambassador Bruce, who carefully reviewed every word, and made his own elegant edits in spidery handwriting with the finest of fountain pen points. By the time we had finished, it was his own message. Dr. Kissinger reacted with a back-channel blast of anger objecting to my inclusion in the meeting. My presence had violated the secure channel he had created for exchanges with the White House and was not to be repeated. Jenkins and Holdridge were used to working with me, and knew the team approach would save them time. But it was not to be.

From then on, I remained outside the mechanics of high policy communication with Washington, focused tightly on domestic politics and developing day-to-day relationships with the Chinese. The stream of visitors that would preoccupy much of USLO's work and attention--businessmen, athletes, musicians, scholars and scientists--had already begun. Politics were my responsibility, and the Chinese treated sports and culture as important tools of diplomacy. We would find ourselves thoroughly occupied with starting key links for trade, investment, travel, study, academic and cultural exchange. Over time these would grow huge, outweighing and outlasting major changes in the international balance of power, and forming the thick sinews of current US-China relations.

Huang Zhen Leaves for America

On May 23, I went with Bruce to call on Huang Zhen, whose cold was better. He was genial and funny. He carried a fan, which he fluttered from time to time, oddly incongruous and at variance with his crew cut, military tough guy appearance. He told Bruce that he was changing his travel plans to arrive in Washington earlier, no doubt to keep track of the Nixon Summit in Moscow, which started May 22. We all turned out at the airport two days later to see Huang and his wife off amid a very impressive group, including the Foreign Minister, two Vice Foreign Ministers, and a host of minions. I interpreted small talk between Mrs. Bruce and Madame Huang, an easy and pleasant task. I was struck by the contrast between the tall, urbane beauty of Evangeline Bruce and the ordinary round jollity of Madame Huang who was also known as Zhu Lin. Both were equals, however, when it came to position and brainpower.

Building the Red Ass Bar

Meanwhile, construction our permanent office, which would also house the Bruce residence, was in full swing. I visited the site on a Sunday at the end of May, and spent some time translating for the Seabees, adding some new vocabulary in the process—shellac, varnish, sealer, amperes, etc. While not trained as an interpreter, I found myself pressed into service on more and more occasions. The Seabees were friendly and totally professional, but rough-hewn and foul mouthed. Their frustrations were magnified by the social success of the clean-cut Marines, who within three weeks were squiring pretty secretaries from other diplomatic missions, attending parties, and having a ball. The Seabees occupied their time building a beautiful bar for the Marine House, in an apartment on the Avenue of Lasting Peace (Chang'an Da Jie) in the Jianguomenwai area near the new USLO office. (I had already spoken for an apartment on the top floor of the same building.) The bar, meticulously crafted of laminated strips of packing crates, would be the centerpiece of what the Marines named “The Red Ass Saloon”, their traditional term of endearment for Seabees the world around. The bar would last longer than the Marine detachment at USLO, but that is a later story.

During the rest of May, we continued to connect with Chinese officials who would become important contacts later on. One of these was a talented young diplomat named Ma Yuzhen, who had managed the foreign press during the Nixon Visit and now was in charge of the Press Division of in the Foreign Ministry. Ma would later become Ambassador to London, and the first Chinese High Commissioner in Hong Kong. For now, he was the key official responsible for fending off our efforts, to secure permission for permanent American media representation in Beijing.

In the coming months, our relationship would evolve considerably, from the current stage of wonderment at simply being in China, to a period of groping about amiably while learning the ropes of daily dealings with the Chinese, to a clear and hard-eyed recognition that the process was exacting, tough and often petty. We would learn that below the lofty, affable plane on which Kissinger and Zhou operated there lurked a breed of Middle

Kingdom bureaucrat, tough, narrow, orthodox, unable to shake completely their thorough schooling in antipathy towards the foremost capitalist power in the world.

Shepherd of Sports

The US Swim Team would be arriving soon, two top American basketball teams, both men and women, would be playing in Beijing at the end of June, and the Philadelphia Orchestra was scheduled to come in the Fall. These would be major milestones in the development of our relationship, which would need careful handling. I lobbied hard with both Bruce and the Chinese for permission to attach Liaison Office personnel to major visiting American delegations. I argued that our expertise and experience would help the visitors deal with their Chinese hosts, and give our officers a chance to travel and get a feel for China. After expressing some worries about stripping his staff in Beijing, the Ambassador agreed, naming me, in the privacy of his diary, “our shepherd of sports.”

The Politics of Swimming

Anxious to confirm a precedent for USLO participation, I called on Guo Lei, the ranking official of the All China Sports Federation responsible for the swim team visit, at his office at the Beijing Gymnasium. We drank tea, smoked cigarettes and talked about the swimmers schedule. He expressed disappointment that the US swimmers would not be permitted to compete directly with their Chinese hosts. I did not know what he was talking about, but hid my ignorance. The call was an important warm up.

The next day, I flew to Guangzhou (Canton), the first stop on the swim team tour. Guo Lei, sweating profusely in the muggy air, met me at the airport with other responsible sports officials, including Lu Dapeng, a slight former sprinter and Zhao Jixin, a wizened high jumper, both of whom spoke good English. The Sports Federation operates a fully developed bureaucracy with functional bureaus (water sports, field sports, etc.), country desks, and regional branches, all staffed by retired athletes. Over a lunch punctuated with toasts and expressions of enduring friendship, I began to realize that these people were as much in the dark about the US team as I was. All we had to work with was the names of the swimmers, a vague agreement for them to come to China and a rough itinerary. I asked Guo for as much information as he had on the itinerary and those questions he wanted me to discuss when I met the team at the border the next day. After he finished, it was clear I would have plenty of work to do.

In the afternoon, we went for a swim at the pool where the exhibition would take place and inspected the facilities. Chinese girls in swimsuits, rid of their shapeless proletarian uniforms, were knockouts. Mr. Lu, the sprinter, and I swam up and down, while Guo floated his potbelly back and forth helped by occasional pulls on the lane ropes. Our bonds grew stronger in the water.

On June 2, exactly a month since my arrival, I took the train to the border at Shenzhen with sprinter Lu and high jumper Zhao. I was fortunate to meet an Australian swimming coach on the train, who briefed me on the members of US team and on the politics behind

the US refusal to compete. The PRC had withdrawn from the international swimming body FINA, in 1958 because Taiwan remained a recognized member. FINA forbids competition with non-members, upon pain of disqualification not only of the actual competitors but of all competitors from the violating country. One of leaders of the US delegation, Al Schoenfield, was a high-ranking member of American Athletic Union and very sensitive about this. The rest of the US team members were retiring from competition and had little to lose themselves, but worried about younger American colleagues losing their status.

The group of young Americans that crossed the bridge into China could not have been more handsome or wholesome. The women's roster included swimmers Jane Barkman, Ellie Daniel, Karen Moe, Lynn Vidali, and gold medal diver Micki King. The men included swimmers Frank Heckl, Mitch Ivey, Brian Job, Steve Power, and another champion diver, Bernie Wrightson. All of them were world-class Olympic athletes. Most had competed at Mexico in 1968 and Munich in 1972, the year that Mark Spitz won seven medals. Spitz was not among them, an absence for which no one expressed regret. The next weeks would bring us close, particularly the divers, who were a few years older and natural leaders. They were a disciplined, but relaxed lot. All were deeply interested in China and the job at hand.

I immediately engaged in a discussion with Men's Coach Jim Gaughran and Team Leader Al Schoenfield, describing the Chinese desire to compete or at least exhibit together. I outlined a schedule that would include Canton (Guangzhou), Changsha, Shanghai and Beijing. They were happy with the schedule but remained adamantly opposed to competition. I worked out a compromise whereby divers would exhibit together and swimmers would go off in heats, first US, then Chinese. Technically, it was important that swimmers from the US and the PRC not be racing in the water at same time.

In the train on the way to Guangzhou, I told high jumper Zhao and sprinter Lu what we had discussed. A plenary planning session at the Dong Fang hotel ratified the compromise arrangement. The Americans knew what to expect and handled themselves well. Guo Lei, briefed by his own people, expressed understanding of US problems with competition, though he worried privately to that spectators would find the exhibitions boring.

How to make an Olympic Champion

The next day, swimmers, divers, and coaches from both countries mingled at poolside in an informal joint training/teaching session, a scene to be repeated several times at each stop on the tour. The Chinese were consistently interested in the answers to two broad questions; 1. What is the training formula that produces Olympic champions? and 2. How do you increase speed by the one second that separates the gold medals from sixth place. The American answers were forthright, and in those days, difficult for the Chinese to manage.

Coaches and swimmers alike acknowledged that there was a certain length and quality of training required to make a swimmer world-class competitive. But there was no set formula. Every swimmer was an individual, and rounded into shape at different times in the season. Some needed to be in fine condition before competition began. Some competed best starting the season with more training to do. Some started fine-honed, slacked off, then sharpened up again. The Chinese seemed to be looking for a hot dog machine into which you could insert a swimmer, turn it on and in due course a champ would pop out. There was no such thing, but individual programs ran afoul of the regimentation that marked the communist system.

Replying to the question of how to shave the second off the clock, the American swimmers began by asking their Chinese hosts how much they swam each day. 5000 meters came the answer. The Americans replied, we swim 5000 meters in the morning, then do two hours of calisthenics, then swim another 5000 meters in the afternoon. If you want that second, you have to work at least twice as hard. But how, the Chinese swimmers asked, can you keep that schedule and at the same time be a soldier, worker or peasant? Answer: You can't. Competing for the Olympics is a full time job.

The PRC rise to competitiveness in Olympic swimming and diving over the last several decades suggests that they mastered these lessons. The teaching began with this trip. It gave me sharp pleasure to hear laid back American youths tell Chinese they needed to work harder.

The Interpreters Nightmare

Among other notable conversations at poolside in Guangzhou was a dialogue between Ingrid Daland, the American women's coach and her Chinese counterpart, a Ms. Chen. I found myself, by default, the interpreter. It was a hot South China morning, the sun beating down hard. We were standing under umbrellas, wearing bathing suits and big straw hats. About fifteen curious male coaches joined us to listen in. The specialized vocabulary flew thick and fast—interval training, endurance laps, frog kicks, butterfly strokes, etc.—but I was managing reasonably well, having boned up on swimming terms before leaving Beijing.

Then the trouble began.

Ms. Chen asked sweetly, "What is the impact of the menstrual period on training and competition for your swimmers?"

Ingrid replied, "It's nothing, really, a minor discomfort. We swim and compete as usual." I had no problem whatsoever translating these words. A look of complete incomprehension set itself upon Ms. Chen's face. She asked the question again, verbatim, and got the same reply. I began to sweat hard, realizing that I faced the deepest dilemma that can confront an interpreter. When you are missing a specific term, you can always work out a parallel explanation, but when the concept you are trying to describe does not exist in the other culture, you are in the hottest water. In Chinese tradition, I remembered,

objects are never placed in the orifices of the body, except at death. When one dies, body plugs are inserted, made of a material that accords with your rank—jade for the emperor on down to wood for the peasant. A Tampon, in short, was not only unknown, but unthinkable.

The sun beat down, the male coaches, riveted, drew closer. I tried hard to describe a Tampon, but failed miserably. My best effort, “a small, quilted tent pole,” was clearly the wrong scale and puzzled my listeners totally. Finally, I gave up, turned to Ingrid and explained the quandary. Did she have one of these objects anywhere nearby? “Why yes, as a matter of fact, there’s one in my handbag over on that bench”, she replied. So, the entire group moved over to the bench, Ingrid reached into her purse and showed the Chinese their first Tampon. Flashbulbs of understanding went off all around, and the crisis was over.

I expected to learn shortly through clandestine sources of a massive Tampax order to Johnson and Johnson. The Chinese solution was simpler. Thirty years later I shared this story with the mother of a swimming daughter who lived in Hong Kong in June of 1973. She reported a mysterious telegram arriving from the Guangzhou Swimming Association at that time requesting a box of Tampax with specific instructions in Chinese.

I was becoming, perforce, a fairly competent escort interpreter, the lowest form of life on the interpreter food chain. The higher levels are occupied by consecutive interpreters (like Chas Freeman), who work on formal conferences or conversations, with speakers pausing to let them translate. The top of the line are simultaneous interpreters who operate in real time as the words come out of the speaker’s mouths. Interpreters are never noticed unless they screw up.

Well, almost never. One of my heroes is a Korean interpreter, who, when faced with a nightmare like mine, quite literally saved his country’s bacon. The occasion was a speech by Vice President Lyndon Johnson in Seoul during the late ‘Sixties, the climax of the highest level visit by an American official to Korea since the Korean War. The grandest hall in the city was filled with the top leaders of the country, all paying close attention, intent on making their guest feel important. The US Embassy had some Korean language officers, but no one trained to interpret. The government interpreter was working smoothly from a text provided in advance. Then Johnson, enthused by the hold he had on his audience, left his text and winged a Texas joke involving hound dogs hunting for coons. The embassy language officers froze, sensing disaster. But the Korean interpreter did not break stride, and when he had finished, the audience broke up, slapping their thighs, some even weeping with mirth. Johnson beamed, and the visit was a success. What the interpreter actually said, never to be made public, was “The Vice President of the United States has just told a very funny Texas story that is impossible for me translate. When I give the signal, please laugh uproariously!”

Exhibitions and Tours

There were two exhibitions in Guangzhou. The first drew 10,000 people, despite a torrential downpour. At the opening ceremonies, the Chinese marched in wearing smart matching warm up suits on one side of the pool, while on the other, individual Americans sauntered along under plastic ponchos. Once in the pool, however, they showed the Chinese the speed and performance they had come to see. The final exhibition drew 15,000 onlookers, with a spectacular finale worked out by Micki King and Bernie Wrightson involving two Americans and five Chinese diving simultaneously into the water from three separate heights. This was a political masterstroke, and alleviated Chinese disappointment over the restrictions placed on competition by the FINA rules. During the children's event, which became part of every exhibition, the American athletes developed an endearing routine for helping the kids out of the pool at the end of the race, friendly giants pulling tiny creatures aloft, usually with one hand.

In between exhibitions and training, the American team and their escorts, including Richard Williams (a Foreign Service Chinese language officer from Washington) and Tom Bernstein (the representative of the National Committee on US China Relations, which organized the visit) toured the sights of Guangzhou and the surrounding area. Our itinerary included the famous Foshan porcelain factory; a school for deaf and dumb children; The Peasant Institute, where history has been rewritten to state that Mao started the entire movement; Ban Xi, a beautiful and renowned old Cantonese restaurant; an 880 year old temple; the arts institute; performances of revolutionary opera; acrobatic shows, banquets and more banquets. Luckily the athletes' superb physical condition enabled them to endure the rigors of both the sports and the marathon cultural schedule. Although carefully scripted, we were all transfixed by these first looks at a part of China we had never seen. Even the bus rides around the seedy, beat up city were fascinating.

We traveled by boat down the Pearl River to visit a model island production brigade famous for producing fruit, and clearly often visited by foreigners. Everything was spic and span, the fields well-tended, the children washed and chanting "Welcome, Friends!" when we arrived, and "Good Bye, Friends!" when we left. I questioned an approachable official about the impact of the Cultural Revolution on the production brigade; he said that the fighting had not reached them, although I suspected, privately, that plenty of bodies had floated by. The leadership of the commune had not changed, although wall posters criticizing the attitudes of the leading cadres made them all more careful of their relations with the people under them. Sharp-eyed Dick Williams, who later became our first Consul General in Guangzhou, found a poster in the brigade store which exhorted members to "Sell your hair! Sell your jewels! Promote foreign trade!"

Mao Country

The next stop was Changsha, in Hunan Province. The team was welcomed with open arms and great curiosity, Hunan never having received any sports team from the US. As I had expected, these trips would provide fine raw material for reporting on China during the early days of our presence there. David Bruce thought so, too. Here's a cable I wrote, which he signed and sent to Washington June 22.

Subject: Changsha by Bus

The Look of the Town. Changsha is a cement gray provincial city of about 700,000 surrounded by lush green gently rolling countryside and split by a broad brown river, the Xiang. The older part of town to the south, burned by the Japanese in the late 'thirties, has been rebuilt in standard fashion with wide streets flanked by undistinguished concrete office buildings, factories, and stores. Many of the small houses that line the residential side streets, however, are of wood with tile roofs. Unlike Beijing, where most life goes on behind walls, strollers and bus riders can peer directly into living and bedrooms and observe people eating, sleeping, working, and at night trying to read by the dim light of weak bulbs. A long island, from which Changsha - 'Long Sand' - gets its name, sits in the middle of the river, dotted by clumps of attractive old wooden houses, small fields and tipped by Orange Point Park, the scene of yet another famous Mao swim many years ago. The river, with its long graceful, flat-sailed cargo boats dominates everything. The northeast portion of the city, once countryside, has been built up since 1949 with showcase factories, workers apartments, the usual Martyr's Park, and a cavernous installation called the Hunan Guest House. The latter is where important visiting cadres, foreign officials, and itinerant American swimmers stay in rooms with 14 foot ceilings and hard box beds surrounded with mosquito netting, bathing infrequently in the rusty water that issues from groaning pipes.

The Feel of the People. The Hunanese we met seemed warmer, franker and more open than the big city people we left behind in Canton and were later to meet in Shanghai. Any foreigner takes some getting used to this far into China, but giant golden American youths strolling around the town in shorts and T-shirts advertising a California animal farm called 'Frazier the Sensuous Lion' caused sensations everywhere they went. The reporting officer breakfasted one early morning with three team members at a tiny restaurant in an old residential district. As we ordered our steamed buns, rice noodles, and tea from the proprietress, a tough authoritative street committee type who hid her surprise behind a wrinkled smile, the restaurant and the street outside filled with people who crowded around and strained to hear who we were and applauded when they found out. Left in momentary peace by an outburst from the proprietress, which quickly cleared the restaurant, we worked at our heaping breakfast (total cost per person 11 US cents) until a middle-aged man approached us and politely asked if we were through. We were, and thinking he was the waiter, said he could clear the dishes. He piled the leftover noodles furtively into a bowl and then slipped over to a corner table and started to wolf them down. Not for long. The breakfasters in that part of the room quickly formed a ring around him, criticized him severely, took away the bowl, and then removed him bodily from the premises. He had embarrassed them all in front of us. Sensing a thickening of the atmosphere, we made a brief speech about how delicious and plentiful the food was and left amid smiles and more applause.

The Sights of Changsha. Chairman Mao not only slept here, he ate, taught, organized, agitated, swam, discussed politics and took cold showers from a well here. Every such spot is lovingly documented and we saw them all. We moved dutifully from the peaceful Ai Wan T'ing (The Pavilion Which Loves the Evening) on the western slopes opposite the

town where Mao held deep political discussions, to the comfortable little house where he established the first Hunan district Party headquarters, to the Number One Normal School where he studied and taught, to Orange Point Park where he swam. The advantage of such a pilgrimage, for the benefit of future visitors, is that it gets one into most parts of the city. The finale, of course, is the visit to the Chairman's birthplace, Shaoshan.

The Chairman's Home. It was not poverty that pushed Mao Tse-tung onto the revolutionary path. His house, set on three acres of prime land with a lovely pond in front and handsome green mountains on three sides is comfortable by any standard. He and his sister and brothers each had their own cool high-ceilinged room with box beds (softer than those at the Hunan Guest House). At the back, around a courtyard pool into which the rain drains from the roofs, well organized animal pens, storage bins, and grain processing areas suggest that Mao's father was not only competent, but far more well to do than orthodox ex post facto hagiography will admit. Mao's primary school nearby is similarly comfortable. Small wonder he had to move further a-field into the countryside to find out how the peasants really lived.

The countryside on the two-and-a-half hour bus ride from Changsha to Shaoshan is practically identical to that in central Taiwan. The red soil, tea plantations up the hillsides, rice fields with water buffaloes, chaotic road conditions, sounds and smells are the same. Only here the slogans are red rather than blue, and wish long life to a different leader. The farmhouses are larger, and the rivers have water all year round and are filled with sailing junks.

Tension in Shanghai

I expected trouble in Shanghai, our next and last stop before the finale in Beijing. My contact at Boeing, Ed Raymond, told me that he had found Shanghai politically far more tense than any other Chinese city he had visited. On Sunday May 27 he had personally observed three incidents involving a group of people attacking with fists another person with a large crowd looking. The last of these was at the Peace Hotel downtown, another in the outskirts of the city on returning from a visit to a commune, and another, the first, in the early morning while taking a walk on the Bund, along the Whampoa River. Raymond, who I ran into in Guangzhou, contemplated issuing instructions to Boeing people living in Shanghai to stay off the streets and keep to the hotel and their place of work at the airport.

The Boeing people were the most experienced and savvy of all US business interests in China. Their operatives had been in the PRC for many months, and the “gee whiz” days we were now in, were long gone for them. Their jaded acronym, AFWT, “Another F...ing Wall Trip”, became a secret slogan for veteran resident foreigners over time.

For all the friendship at various pool sites and banquets, a sense of tension on the Chinese side underlay the visit. The struggle session at our unauthorized breakfast in Changsha was an indication of what could go wrong in a fragile society, when foreigners departed

from their hosts' careful scripts. One official in Guangzhou explained to me the painstaking way tickets for swimming exhibitions were systematically farmed out to various organizations, labor unions, government offices at all levels and schools. The authorities in these "units" decided who could go, and issued a specific letter of introduction. No letter, no admittance. There were "bad elements", the cadre explained, who were dissatisfied with Society for a variety of reasons, plus others who did not agree with the policy of rapprochement with the U.S., hence the need for screening. The class struggle still continued, he concluded.

In the event, the city seemed calm enough as we were whisked from the airport to our plush accommodations at Shanghai Mansions, situated on confluence of the Whangpoo River and Soochow creek overlooking the Bund. The Mansions, a great yellow pile built during the 1920s had been Japanese headquarters during their occupation of Shanghai during World War II. Pudong, across the way, now a showcase forest of skyscrapers, was a farm village.

The difference in attitude from city to city was marked. In provincial Changsha, the divers, swimmers and coaches were immediately responsive and grateful for any tidbits the Americans could pass on. Urbane, know-it-all Shanghai was different. The scene was a diving exhibition, billed as a master class, starring Bernie Wrightson and Micki King, perhaps the two greatest divers in the world. The pool and stands were packed. Five thousand people sat quietly as our divers went off the board, and then waited by the pool for Shanghai divers to come forward and ask questions of the champions. Nothing happened. "What is with these people?" King asked. "We are in Shanghai," I replied. "They are supposed to know everything." Together, we devised a special Shanghai exhibition/training ploy. King and Wrightson would stop trying to teach and each do their three most difficult and spectacular dives, then put on their towel wrappers and head for the lockers, as if to end the session. Each Olympic champion dive drew louder gasps from the onlookers. Then, when the divers made to leave, the cry went up, "Hey! Where are you going?" The Chinese divers crowded around and the master class began.

I returned to Beijing June 14 after two weeks on the road, glad to be "home". The hotel staff seemed glad to see me. The swimmers settled into their hotel, resting up for a final round of swimming and the great sights of the capital. David Bruce saw the exhibition June 16, and loved it, particularly the diving. Zhang Wenjin accompanied us. I took great pleasure in teaching him, an avid swimmer, the technical terms for butterfly, breast and back strokes. Later Bruce had the entire team to his residence for cocktails.

The USLO building was now finished, although there was not a stick of furniture downstairs in the reception area. While I was out of Beijing, a planeload of Drexel furniture had arrived from America for the official residence and other apartments. Bruce abhorred it, and hid it upstairs. "The bastard style of our present furnishings would not be appropriate for an isolated motel at home," he was to write.

Other events which occupied the interest of USLO in my absence included the visit of the North Vietnamese leader Le Duan, and Richard Nixon's visit to Moscow, which sent

frissons of anxiety through the Chinese leadership, and required Bruce to pass along to them reassurances from the highest levels of the US government. John Holdridge supported Bruce in these exchanges with his customary competence, leaving me free to roam around the country with our swimmers, looking, talking and learning.

The Return Banquet

My final task for the swimmers was to arrange their “return banquet”, a farewell custom that featured the visitors as hosts. The team had experienced the trip of a lifetime and charged me to do something really special in honor of their Chinese counterparts. My instructions were to order the kind of food Chinese really like, not foreigners’ fare like fried noodles and sweet and sour pork. They asked me to pick a special venue that Chinese and Americans alike would always remember, rather than the usual faceless hotel. I succeeded in a way that could have ended my career then and there. This is what happened.

My principal advisor in these arrangements was Harry Liu, the chief interpreter/assistant assigned to the Liaison Office by the Diplomatic Services Bureau shortly after I arrived. Liu had worked for the British and been “sent down” after the Red Guards attacked their embassy in 1967. He appeared on our doorstep without fanfare, a somewhat infirm old man, with a spark in his eye and an invaluable inventory of lore about the Chinese Communist system, how one operated in it and survived.

So I approached Harry with my instructions from the swimmers. I told him I wanted to try a Sichuan restaurant called the Chengdu, notorious as a hangout for Sichuanese politicians like Party Secretary Deng Xiaoping, which had been closed when he and others became casualties of the Cultural Revolution. Deng had recently reemerged in public, evidence of the ceaseless competition among the top leaders, and the restaurant was now open. Did Harry think we could go? Sure, he said, without hesitation.

”What is the standard?” (i.e. how much will you pay per person), he then asked.

“Eight Yuan”, I replied, having dined sumptuously for that price.

”What is the rank of the most senior Chinese guest that you are inviting?” Liu asked.

“Wang Meng, Head of the All China Sports Federation,” I answered.

Liu sighed and said, “That’s a cabinet rank. Eight Yuan will never do.”

“But Mr. Liu,” I interjected, “I thought this was a classless society.”

“Classless it is,” he deadpanned, “but there are ranks!”

Startled by this pithy insight, I asked what standard would, in fact, do. We settled on Eleven Yuan, or US \$5.50 a head.

Next, the food. I had especially enjoyed several Sichuanese dishes over the years. These included “Ants in the Trees” (tiny nodules of beef hidden among fine noodles in a spicy sauce), Smoked Camphor Duck, Eight Valuable Vegetables, and some others that I passed along for Harry’s consideration. He would see what he could do. As he padded away on his cloth shoes, I urged him to focus on dishes that the officials would like and for which the restaurant was famous.

Two days later (June 18), I was sitting in my office in our horrid corridor of the Beijing Hotel, preparing to leave for the restaurant. Out the window, the sun was setting in the West flooding the golden tiles that roofed the Forbidden City. Downstairs, the bus was loading the swim team. Harry Liu poked his head around the door, and asked if I would like a quick look at the menu for our banquet. I went down the list, laid out neatly in Chinese characters, followed by translations. Sure enough, “Ants in the Trees”, Smoked Camphor Duck, and Eight Valuable Vegetables were there. Then, a dish translated as “Ox’s XXX a la Maison” caught my eye.

“What’s this?” I asked, frowning.

“Well, read the characters”, Liu suggested helpfully.

“Jia Shang Niu Chong”, I read, or literally “the Bull Lunges, Family Style”.

“You mean it’s his.....?”

“Yes”.

“Mr. Liu, there are six American women on our delegation, from the states of California and Pennsylvania. If it ever gets into the US press that they are serving bull’s pizzles to their Chinese hosts, our careers are finished,” I said.

“Mr. Pu,” Liu replied. “I was only following your instructions.” This dish is a specialty of the Chengdu restaurant. The cadres will love it.”

It was too late to make a change. I boarded the bus in a mood of deep apprehension, which contrasted sharply with the excited chatter of our athletes.

The Chengdu was located a few blocks west of Tiananmen Square behind the Great Hall of the People. It was in a grand, traditional Beijing courtyard house, famous in history for having belonged to Yuan Shikai, the warlord who failed to make himself emperor of China in 1916. Now beautifully restored, the house is the Beijing site of The China Club. Then, it was a beat up mansion, paint peeling from the walls, with only one of several courtyards in operation, where food was being served. The swimmers were thrilled with the venerable, exotic look and feel of the place, and pleased to find all their Chinese counterparts at table. We had the place to ourselves.

The meal began. The athletes, relaxed after a grueling and successful tour, broke training and participated with gusto in the toasts. Maotai, the lethal liquor distilled 100 + proof from Sorghum, was the drink the Chinese liked. The mood quickly turned convivial. My alarm grew when our swimmers started the American practice of toasting each dish when it first appeared. I could just imagine what would happen when the XXX was served. “Here’s to the Smoked Camphor Duck!” “A Toast to Ants in the Trees” “Bottoms up for Seven Valuable Vegetables.” The dreaded moment approached. The Maotai failed to drown my fears.

Waiters entered bearing large oblong platters. The meat was cut into long strips and covered with a marinade of vegetables, but unmistakably XXXs to those who knew. The cadres murmured in appreciation as the dishes were placed on the tables.

“Oh, this is delicious!” cried Karen Moe, a former breaststroke champion. “What is it?” My panic spiked in the silence that followed.

The Chinese officials looked at each other, and the interpreter sitting next to Karen leaned over and replied, in a serious manner, “It’s a very special kind of tendon.”

“Let’s toast the tendon!” Karen exclaimed, and so we all did. I was saved. Once again, a smart, sensitive translator had come to the rescue. The evening was an unqualified success, lasting over three hours, and leaving behind memories of a lifetime.

I waited until the moment just before the American team left for the airport to tell Coach Gaughran what we had actually eaten. When I identified the “tendon”, we were standing in the parking lot of the Friendship Store, where the swimmers and divers were buying last minute souvenirs. He started laughing, and could not stop, practically rolling on the tarmac. “It was your revenge”, he said after he had recovered, “payback for three weeks of aggravation.”

“Not at all”, I replied. “The whole trip has been an unforgettable pleasure.” I do not know what he told the team, if anything.

Basketball Serves High Diplomacy and National Politics

The climax of my career as “Shepherd of Sports” came at the US-China basketball games June 19. Bruce and I arrived at the VIP entrance of the Beijing Gymnasium, knowing that top leadership would be there, but without a clue who it would be. At the door, we learned that Madame Mao would be the top leader attending. When she made her entrance 90 seconds later, it was clear that the former Shanghai actress was playing a new role. Her costume had changed. She was wearing a dress, not a Mao suit. It was the kind of outfit Eleanor Roosevelt would have worn, grey gabardine of midi length, a discreet collar and pockets. On her wrist, I was startled to note, was a Rolex watch, stainless steel but a Rolex, nonetheless. Her hair was gently but permanently waved, not the usual style for ultra-leftist radicals. She wore white leather shoes with a handbag to match. Her first words of welcome were spoken slowly and in queenly tones, a tip off to the new role she

wanted to play. As we moved onto the dais in the Gymnasium, I noted that the Chinese had not provided an interpreter for Bruce and Madame Mao, and, emboldened by the clear and stately pace of her speech, slipped onto the stool behind them,

David Bruce was quite taken with her. As he told his diary:

“I sat next to Madame Mao with Nick Platt behind us as interpreter. On my other side was a jolly Vice Premier addicted to cigar smoke. From time to time, prominent functionaries came to present their respects to Chiang Ch’ing. In repose, her flat-featured face was impassive; when she laughed, as she often did, it became mobile and sympathetic. Her reputation for inspiring fear may be justified, but certainly last night she gave the impression of being thoroughly feminine, carefree, hospitable, and with a keen sense of the ridiculous. She has beautiful hands and feet, and challenging eyes.”

Bruce reported the event to Washington the next day in a cable I helped him write:

- 1. High ranking leaders of the PRC, most notably the top leftists, turned out in force for the first Sino-American basketball games in Peking June 19..... Madame Mao, neatly attired in a gray Eleanor Roosevelt length dress with white shoes and matching purse, was most welcoming to all the visiting team leaders at tea before the game. She asked the coaches and me to convey her best wishes to President and Mrs. Nixon, Dr. Kissinger and Secretary Rogers, adding that the American leaders had been brave enough to come and see for themselves that the Chinese were not ‘freaks and monsters.’ Praising sports as a vehicle for international friendship, she told the swimming coach that she had slipped out of a meeting two nights before to watch the swimmers train and then had returned to the meeting which ‘lasted until dawn.’*
- 2. Yao Wen-yuan, who has always in the past been conspicuously absent when Americans were around, made a point of chiming in at this juncture to say how happy he was that the Sino-American relationship was developing, and how important sports were in the development process. He displayed some knowledge of English, having full command of the terms for basketball and table tennis, and appeared to understand some of what had been said in English before the interpretation. He was relaxed and smiling throughout the evening. Wang Hung-wen made polite remarks during the half to USLO officers who accompanied me.*
- 3. During the games, Madame Mao, who sat next to me, made quite spontaneous gestures of friendship to the visiting teams. Presented with souvenir emblem pins by the basketball and swimming team leaders, and having nothing similar with which to reciprocate, she fished in her pocket and brought out a handkerchief full of jasmine petals. She asked me to divide the petals into two equal piles and present one to the girls of each team, so that they could “flavor their porridge in the morning”....-*
- 4. Madame Mao watched the games with interest and good humor, taking delight in the victories of both the American men and the Chinese women. She worried good naturedly to me about the unremitting dourness of the basketball delegation leader who*

sat on her right hoping that the victory of the Chinese girls had not 'made him tense.' She also displayed knowledge of English in exchanges with the USLO officer who interpreted for me.

5. COMMENT: I do not know whether the long meeting June 17 that Madame Mao mentioned had any link with developments tonight. Clearly, however, an important top level discussion which in itself is a significant matter has been underway. In any case, the attendance of Madame Mao, Yao, and Wang transformed this international sports show into a major political event, with important domestic implications. Media coverage has been prominent (the games were televised live) and will demonstrate to the Chinese that all of the leftists, including Yao Wen-yuan, fully support the new relationship at its current stage of development. The leadership is at last united on what has long been a divisive subject. This, of course, is the message for us as well. (David Bruce, Beijing Diaries, page 133).

In domestic political terms, Madame Mao's performance at this first US-China basketball game turned out to be her public debut as a candidate to succeed Mao. Photographs of her in her dress appeared on newspaper front pages worldwide. Chinese viewers told me later that she seemed to be presenting herself as a modern day Empress Wu, the legendary Tang Dynasty (600-900AD) female ruler. Her costume became famous, derisively likened to the dress found on the corpse of a 2000 year old Han noblewoman at a recent archaeological find. The meeting she mentioned to David Bruce was one of a long series in the run up to the Tenth Party Congress, a meeting long overdue, which kept being postponed. If the leadership were united on Mao's opening to the United States, they remained deeply divided on who should succeed him. Three years later, after Mao died in September 1976, Madame Mao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen were arrested by military authorities under the orders of Vice Premier Li Xiannian and Li Tesheng, all of whom were sitting in a row at that ball game. Qiao Guanhua, who was very attentive to Madame Mao that night, was also purged. They enjoyed the games, but not each other's company.

Basketball has since become the biggest people-to-people force in US-China relations. When the giant (7'6") Shanghai star Yao Ming joined the Houston Rockets in 2002, 300 million Chinese watched his debut on TV. More than 200 million Chinese regularly tune in TV broadcasts of National Basketball Association games.

Apart Too Long

While I was living the sporting life, Chinese Communist style, Sheila and the Three Tigers were heading in my direction. I was to meet them in Hong Kong at the end of June, and was beside myself with excitement at the prospect. Staying in touch had been difficult. Letters were slow and phone calls expensive. Nevertheless, I was well briefed on my mate's multiple triumphs: getting the boys through the school year; finishing her Master's in Social Work at Catholic University and graduating; moving out and putting our house at 3734 Oliver Street up for rent; and packing for a new life in a place where American household supplies and food items were unavailable. She had also participated

in some of the social events involving the PRC Liaison Office in Washington, and made the acquaintance of Evangeline Bruce, the grand Georgetown dame described as possessing all the qualities of a diamond—brilliant, beautiful and hard. Chilling reputation aside, we found Evangeline unfailingly friendly and supportive, and fascinated by whatever we could tell her about China.

Back in Beijing, I spent the days before going to meet the family moving into my new office in the just finished USLO building. I had a nice bright corner room with a balcony that looked right at the apartment where we would be living, half a mile away. My early arrival in Beijing entitled me to pick a seventh floor flat in the new Jianguomenwai diplomatic compound on Changandajie, the main avenue leading west toward Tiananmen Square. This area, right by the Temple of the Sun, once an outskirt, is now part of the central city. We could move in as soon as the apartment was finished, cleaned and furnished. While I was still not sure that my family had forgiven me, my justification for leaving early had been sound. In addition to arranging for housing, I had bought a small second-hand Toyota, as well as bicycles for everyone

On June 25, I participated in a discussion with Bruce, Holdridge and Jenkins about a call they had just made on Zhou Enlai. The Chinese Premier was clearly still worried about recent US meetings with the Soviets. He expressed concern over the Nixon-Brezhnev communiqué, worrying that it would lull the rest of the world into a false sense of security, and render the Chinese more vulnerable to the Soviet threat.. The triangle game would continue, my bosses believed. Dr. Kissinger was at that point scheduled to visit Beijing in August.

“Fat Babies” in China

Our family had a jubilant reunion at the Kowloon Railroad Station. All was forgiven--well almost. We discussed problems we had had communicating during the months of separation, then spent the next four days shopping, visiting old family sites, and enjoying being together. I spent time at the Consulate General, smoothing ruffled feathers over the division of labor on substantive reporting, and participation in escort duty, the main preoccupation of officers who had never been in China.

Sheila’s record of our time in China begins on Saturday June 30, and describes the now familiar bridge crossing into China and the initial reactions of the children.. On the train, *“the boys flexed their new cameras at paddy fields, and we all enjoyed lunch rather late(after the masses had eaten, so no mingling would occur). Sanhu did well with chopsticks and all hands could be seen deciding that if one could eat like this on trains in China, one could also live there.*

Canton (Guangzhou), where we missed our plane and spent 26 hours laying over at the Dong Fang Hotel, was steamy and oppressive. The children were discomfited by the large numbers of Chinese staring at them (‘gawking’, they called it), and making rude comments about “fat babies.” Oliver was reluctant to go out, although he did finally. They turned crowd gathering into a sport. “I like being gawked at’, said San Hu, bravely.

(Oliver, now an actor with more than sixty movies, and several plays and TV series to his credit, no longer minds either).

A family supper at the beautiful Ban Xi restaurant, which the swimmers had also visited, cheered everyone up. Still one of the landmarks of Canton, Sheila described it as “*an island of gaiety and comfort in what seems to be a hardworking and rather joyless city. Our waiters told us the restaurant opened at 5:30 AM and could serve 10,000 people a day*”

We ate in the inevitable private room, reached by walking through a series of verandahs, over a bridge and up stairs. Ours was made of black wood, carved and latticed, with colored windowpanes glowing in the evening light. One was rose colored with flowers etched, and one pale green, shaped like a lettuce leaf with grasshoppers and bugs. The children were enchanted, and all hands went to bed cheerfully.

The next afternoon, after seeing the sights of the city, including the famous island “factories” from which foreigners had traded with China over the centuries, we went to the airport for the flight to Beijing.

Teddy’s Travails

It was fiercely hot. We were delighted to find the Holdridge family scheduled for the same plane. John’s wife Martha, who over the years had become something of a mother superior to all the younger China Hands, was glad to see us, but deeply concerned about their beloved dog Teddy, who would have to travel in the baggage hold. We knew Teddy, and questioned (privately) the wisdom of transporting him to a society which ate dogs. A large, elderly, russet colored animal, ill-mannered and curmudgeonly in his dealings with man and beast, his bloodlines featured some Chow among other breeds. Teddy made his appearance at the ticket counter in a wire cage balanced precariously atop a pile of Holdridge luggage on a cart being pushed laboriously by a wiry old baggage handler in a singlet and wide straw hat. Sweltering in his thick coat of fur, Teddy’s misery was compounded by an infection that swelled his testicles grotesquely. He snarled furiously at the terrified baggage man from his perch, and howled piteously as he was checked through.

The tarmac was well over a hundred degrees. So was the Russian Ilyushin 62 we boarded, which had no ground power source and had sat baking for over an hour while refueling. Teddy’s howls echoed from the bowels of the plane as we took off, and continued as we rose and the temperature plummeted about forty degrees. We could hear him during our stop in Shanghai, and sighed with relief when he was delivered intact in Beijing. Teddy got over his infection, and survived his years in China uneaten. He made our trip to Beijing, already historic, unforgettable. We drove through the darkened streets of the capital in a USLO Shanghai vehicle. Arriving at the hotel, the family admired our three room suite, which Sheila described as “Edwardian”, and fell into bed. We were “home”.

Mission Headaches

The family fitted quickly into the life of the Mission, which was faced with two major simultaneous challenges; our first July 4 celebration, and our first congressional delegation, a group led by Senator Warren Magnuson.

We had invited 80 Chinese for the Fourth and many said they were coming. Brunson McKinley and I spent hours developing choreography which would satisfy both our hosts and American traditions. The Chinese favored a set receiving line with ranking officials then moving to sit stiffly in protocol order on a row of stuffed chairs. Americans were used to a free-form cocktail reception. The ingenious compromise was a self-destructing receiving line, which would dissolve into a formal stuffed furniture seating arrangement in one room and stand up drinks in another. Thus do diplomats earn their livings.

Sheila described her first look at the Liaison Office during a July 3 briefing in preparation for our Party:

“Mr. Bruce explained how things would go...whatever happened it would only last an hour! Mrs. B. was dressed in blue slacks and a shirt, her hair tied up in a silk kerchief. The downstairs of the Residence is a raw, high ceiling space shaped like a T, with windows giving onto the equally raw garden, which consists, at the moment, of a crazily paved terrace and several empty flowerbeds of gray Beijing soil. On one side there is a covered walk to the Liaison Office and the back offices from the other side of the Atrium. Brunson McKinley outlined the plans for handling the important guests and how the food would be served. The boys took it all in and behaved appropriately.

Afterwards, NP showed us...our apartment on the 7th floor of the building next door. It's going to be nice and airy. Now it's stacked high with boxes of furniture and caked with mud on the floor. All hands claimed rooms and liked it.

July 4 began badly. Al Jenkins and John Holdridge were called into the Foreign Ministry and told by Acting Director of Protocol Chu that Marine Guards could not wear uniforms at our celebration. This was contrary to Chinese diplomatic practice and would be totally unacceptable. No Chinese would attend the reception if Marines were in uniform. Jenkins defended our traditional practice, but Chu insisted that Dr. Kissinger had agreed during an earlier trip to Beijing that military personnel would wear civilian clothes and not carry arms openly. Jenkins acquiesced and assured Chu that our Marines would not be in uniform during the reception.

The presence in Beijing of uniformed Marine Security Guards with side arms, a standard feature of all US Embassies from early in our history, had rankled the Chinese from the beginning. They objected to foreign military units, no matter how small, being stationed on their soil. A Marine presence had been something we took for granted, but had not been discussed in detail with the Chinese when making arrangements for the Liaison Office. We would hear much more about the Marine presence in the months to come.

Back to Sheila:

July 4. Everyone rather keyed up all day about the party. The boys and I worked in the apartment, unpacking furniture with N's help. San Hu has an excellent jumping technique for opening large cardboard boxes. He picks an edge and simply sits it down with his behind. Everyone applied themselves and the apartment turned into a sea of cardboard and packing fluff.

The boys swam (at the International Club), and then we all rested and got into party clothes and were ferried in Shanghais to the Liaison Office.

At 5:45 Protocol arrived with the list. Our biggest potato turned out to be Qiao Guanhua (not Zhou Enlai as Oliver had hoped.) At six, people started coming in absolute floods and were wheeled down the receiving line past Bruce, Jenkins, Holdridge and Senator Magnuson. Qiao and other dignitaries went to the sofas in the end room and were plied with food and drink. I circulated, until NP summoned me to sit in the sofa lineup between a Mr. Wang of the Sports federation and another Mr. Wang of the Beijing Revolutionary Committee.

I talked to one, then the other, about where I had learned my Chinese, pandas, Beijing vs. New York weather, my pangzi (roly poly) children (who were introduced to Qiao Guanhua)...The boys were charmed by the party and had a wonderful time, especially Oliver, who was in his métier, hobnobbing with bigwigs.

By contrast, the visit of the congressional delegation was a debacle. Magnuson was headstrong and egotistical. Delegation escorts Dick Solomon of the NSC and Alan Romberg from State, told us that the senator was miffed by the low rank of Chinese officials who met him at the airport, disappointed in the paltry press attention accorded his arrival, and angry that his group was quartered at the Beijing Hotel rather than the state guest house. The Chinese clearly did not understand the importance of the Congress, Magnuson fumed. Consequently, he spent most of his time at the July 4 reception lobbying Vice Minister Qiao for a meeting with Premier Zhou.

Magnuson got his meeting, all right, but mishandled it badly. After a brief discourse on the importance of Congress' role in granting trade concessions, the conversation turned to Cambodia and stayed there endlessly. Zhou criticized the US for the bombing and Magnuson insisted that the Congress was against the bombing and had in fact been instrumental in halting it. Zhou wanted to change the subject after a while but Magnuson, who hogged the American side of the conversation, would not let him. Other members of delegation were mortified, but too supine and seniority-whipped to chime in and talk about something else. Even worse, "Maggie" as he was called, blabbed to the press afterwards. Thus the impression given was of Zhou trying to play Congress off against the President, Congress letting the side down when talking to a world leader, and a world leader visibly annoyed at having to spend time with such lightweights.

On the way out, Zhou told Magnuson (as he duly reported to the press) that he would not visit America so long as a representative of Chiang Kai-Shek was in residence there.

Zhou, disgusted with whole interview, told Solomon as they left the room, “You’ll have a report to write, won’t you.” After the session, the accompanying senators and congressmen were ashamed, and told Maggie so. He was very contrite and then proceeded to get seriously inebriated.

The delegation left on July 8 but not after more idiot faux pas. At the return banquet, Maggie brought up Taiwan independence with Zhang Wenjin, assistant Foreign Minister, and refused to let this most taboo of subjects drop. The Taiwanese, he said, had “been foolish to allow themselves to be taken over by a small number of Chinese from the Mainland; had they been more cohesive, they could have prevented this and established an independent Taiwan.” He topped it all off by asking how Chiang and his troops got to Taiwan, anyway? “Was it by boat?” Zhang had to tell him that the US Air Force had provided the transport.

Bruce was beside himself, describing the delegation’s visit a “disaster”, due to Magnuson’s “bizarre” behavior, which made him “as petulant as if he were suffering from ptomaine poisoning”. Al Jenkins, who escorted the group on their itinerary outside the capital, commented that the visit had “reconfirmed the Chinese belief in the superiority of their own system of government.”

My own notes concluded: *“In retrospect I’m not sure how bad this all is. We are developing a relationship with the Chinese. They should know us warts and all. This delegation represents warts, of course. Compared to them, the swimmers were polished diplomats.”*

Living in the Cocoon

Life for foreign families in Beijing consisted of a pleasant but circumscribed circuit about three miles in radius, which included: the sights of Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City; the Beijing Hotel; the Liaison Office, the Jianguomenwai diplomatic compound where we would soon live; the International Club, a grim, cavernous facility with a swimming pool, indoor tennis court and western restaurant serving *Julebu Sanweiji* (Club Sandwiches); several favored Chinese restaurants, and the offices and residences of other diplomats in the Sanlitun diplomatic area. At the center was the Friendship Store, where one could buy food, clothing, and a wide variety of Chinese products. The department stores and specialty shops in Wang Fu Jing were nearby, such as they were. Concession stores, which handled second hand items, the effluvia of an overthrown bourgeoisie, were the most fun places to shop. Liu Li Chang, a *hutung* (lane) which specialized in art shops was a favorite destination, as was the Theater Store near the Front Gate of the city, which, to the boys’ delight, featured life-like wooden replicas of machine guns and automatic pistols as stage props for contemporary political operas.

Everything was in biking distance, so the family saddled up and hit the streets. At first it was tough going. Oliver ran into a lady, whose bicycle fell over and he fell off. He described the experience as “awful”, but was soon pedaling again. Earlier, he had burst into floods of tears on his bed at the hotel, telling me that he did not want to go to

boarding school. When I explained that this was part of growing up, he replied that he just did not want to grow up so fast. We had good days and bad. Beijing in July is hideously hot, if it is not raining. We sweated a lot.

Sheila was learning fast about housekeeping, Beijing style:

“July 6. I spent the day at the apartment with a crew of eight cleaning ladies.. They were waiting at 8:30 AM and stripped to white crepe somewhat see through form fitting shirts to start work—no bras, lots of nipples. All seemed in their 40s and had Beijing accents. Some called me “furen” (madam) and others called me “taitai” (Mrs.). None commented on my Chinese. Room by room, we scrubbed down and unpacked and placed the furniture. Local soap and scouring powder from the Friendship Store did not work too well. I was also told to buy a “Pan”, a cock feather duster to knock dust down off the walls, a sine qua non of Beijing housekeeping. I ended up borrowing one from...an Armenian neighbor on the first floor.

The ladies took several breaks, including an hour for lunch and requested boiled water, although refusing tealeaves. One shared her cup with me and all were solicitous that I was tired. They came from the Diplomatic Services Bureau, and did a good job, although the apartment is still filthy. At the end of the day, they all spent a little time hanging off the kitchen balcony exclaiming at the female bathing suits in the International Club pool nearby.”

This was the family’s first direct experience with Chinese household labor practices. Later we were to discover that naps were *de rigueur* in Mao’s China, an almost religious practice, at least in the industrial sector. When the time came to make up and install the curtains for the apartment, I was startled, returning home during the lunch hour, to find the women workers asleep on the dining room table with the curtains tucked up under their chins. These were not the short power naps at which Premier Zhou was reputedly so adept, but hour long snoozes. The habit did not survive Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms in the late seventies and the surges of economic growth that followed..

Back to Sheila’s narrative:

“After dinner, at which there was much fluttering in the dovecotes concerning Senator Magnuson’s behavior in his meeting with Zhou Enlai, we went biking under the walls of the Forbidden City, in front of the Meridian Gate and through Tiananmen Square, by the old American Embassy in the Legation Quarter and down “Rectification Road”. People were singing and playing trumpets under the walls. Couples were snuggling in the strip of bushes that ran down the center of the road. Once, when one of the children looped his bike into a courtyard gateway, a PLA man sprang out...Being here seems a combination of outrageous romance and utterly ordinary problems like keeping the boys going and managing their squabbles.”

We took in the great sights of the city and its environs, mounting expeditions to the Summer Palace, the Ming Tombs, and the Great Wall. The boys reacted in fresh and curious ways. When I told San Hu when the Forbidden City was built early in the Ming

Dynasty, all he could say was “Wow, 300 years older than the Red Lion Inn!” (in Stockbridge, Mass.) Months later, visiting the same place, my father, gazing for the first time at the grand scale of the great public courtyards, applied his own Euro-centric architects’ comparison, “This”, he said, “makes Versailles look like a chicken coop!”

Where to Go to School ?

Schooling for USLO dependents was a priority family issue in our cocoon. Sheila and other wives with children who would be staying looked at the alternatives, starting with the “International School” at Fan Cao Di, China’s best effort to provide a positive primary school environment for foreign children. It consisted of two buildings, one for Chinese neighborhood children, the other for foreigners. Both were red brick, three stories, set in a packed earth courtyard on a tree lined street of workers’ houses.

The other alternatives, a French Lycée and the Pakistan Embassy School, had relatively stronger curricula, but drawbacks of their own for Americans. In the end, we decided to start a Calvert correspondence school of our own to supplement whatever local school choices families would make. The only space available was a hallway between the Holdridge and Jenkins apartments at San Li Tun. Our first teacher was the Holdridge daughter, Pat, who did a superb job getting us started in the Fall. In addition, we decided, San Hu would attend the Pakistan Embassy School. He loathed the place, reporting that all the children started the day crouching in the same direction and moaning a gloomy song. (Their national anthem, intoned in the direction of Mecca). His teacher was tough, and given to rapping her charges alongside the head. He referred to her, very privately, as “pig nose weirdo”. Their English textbook, published in London in 1966 for use in Pakistan, was quaint and dated. One model sentence read: “A flatiron is an instrument with which one removes the wrinkles from one’s clothes, after first having placed it upon the hearth.”

By contrast, Sanhu loved Pat’s afternoon Calvert classes.

Social Life

Meanwhile, it was still high Summer, and social life was picking up for the family. The arrival of the Don Anderson’s wife Blanche, Sheila’s close friend from Taichung language school days, and their stunning daughters, Susan and Jean, led to a spike in morale. The girls, exact contemporaries and old friends of Adam and Oliver, had matured in marked and charming ways, adding spark to their relationship. The marines opened their apartment and their bar, dubbing it the “Red Ass Saloon” in honor of the Seabees who built it, and threw a lively inaugural ball. Sheila relates:

“All three boys thought it the party of the century and came home reluctantly, Sanhu with me at 11:30 and the boys on bikes with the Anderson girls at 12:30. Oliver, who danced with Mrs. Bruce, thinks she’s probably the most beautiful woman in the world.”

For the rest of us, dancing the frug in the stern, authoritarian heart of Communist China was just another mind-bending experience in an unforgettable time. The Red Ass Saloon

was the instant hit of the diplomatic community, attracting wide attention, which doomed it from the outset. Managing membership became a huge headache and complaints from neighbors who could not get in grew as time passed. For the moment, though, the Saloon gave us all a lift.

Collecting China

In the tight-shut 'seventies, geographic access was one of the most valuable gifts the Chinese could bestow on foreigners and they doled out destinations like party favors. Formal permission to travel followed a strange bargaining process, with first choices traded for fallback cities. "Xian is closed but you can go to Tianjin", officials might tell you, the equivalent of saying "No, Chicago is not open, but how about Hoboken?" Foreigners in China collected places, the way kids accumulate baseball cards. We did not drop names, we dropped places, the more distant and obscure, the better. Casual mention of a day spent in some grimy hinterland industrial city where no one else had been was the most telling form of one-upmanship. Ploys aside, the more places you went, the better feel you had for this enormous, unknown country. Nowadays, diplomats, journalists and tourists can go just about anywhere, but thirty years ago, each new town was a pearl of great price.

I was determined to take the family on a trip before school began and began the haggling by applying for the most scenic, distant and historic places--Kunming, Guilin, and Wuhan--with no idea if the Chinese would accept or not. They encouraged me to apply and ended up agreeing on an itinerary that included Wuhan, Nanjing, Suzhou and Shanghai.

Wuhan was of particular interest to me. Strategically located on the Yangzi River, the city had been the site of the rebellion that overthrew the imperial system in 1911 as well as the scene of notable violence early in the Cultural Revolution. Nanjing or "Southern Capital" had been the seat of government at various times during Chinese history, most recently the capital for Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government. Suzhou was famous for its gardens and the beauty of its women, and Shanghai was, well, Shanghai.

Setting Off

In a great state of excitement, Sheila, the three tigers and I, boarded the night train from Beijing to Wuhan on July 23, arriving the next morning after a restless night. Sanhu cut his head on the steps leading to the upper bunk, a tiny cut which bled profusely, and brought several service ladies rushing to our aid. They stopped the bleeding with coagulant salts and bandaged him up like a pirate, then called ahead for a doctor from the railroad hospital. He climbed aboard at the next stop, examined the wound, confirmed that the boy had been properly treated, and leapt off the train chirping 'serve the people.' We crossed the Yellow River before midnight amid very dramatic horizon-broad flashes of heat lightening. I guessed that most trains are scheduled to cross this vital strategic point at night. Sheila remembered "*a symphony of trains shrieking past us, noisy station stops filled with running women and babies and men all shouting 'Quick! Quick! as*

station announcers quacked above it all. Sweating, we awoke to South China and rice growing with little boys and buffaloes and paddy fields in different stages of cultivation”.

We settled into the Shengli (Victory) Hotel, an old British pile that was still one of the finest in China. Our room had high ceilings and air-conditioning. The boys were impressed with the bathroom fixtures, British Twyfold “Centaur” toilets. Hankou, the part of the city where we were located, was a former foreign concession. It looked quite European, with dormer windows, brick buildings, arcades, houses with verandahs all in a dilapidated state. From our room, which had two balconies, we could see a large stable courtyard to the west, and some lawn surrounded by red tile roofed buildings to the south, and a patch of misty river.

We Become a Delegation

Touring with one’s children in China was unheard of. There were no American-style children’s amusements, no Disneylands or aquariums with performing killer whales. The Chinese loved their zoos, and took their kids to the ones in their cities. But no one went on pleasure trips with children. Unless you were a high-level official with business reasons, you did not go on trips, period. The top leadership used the old missionary beach resort at Beidaihe each summer as a location for important political conferences. Some took their families, but that was it.

But the Chinese were expert at the care and feeding of foreign delegations, touring the important sites they wanted to show off; the museums, hospitals, factories, bridges, communes, government offices and restaurants of the particular place. That was what they knew, and that was what the Platt family became, a foreign delegation. We were assigned a guide and minder by the China Travel service in each city, with whom we negotiated an itinerary. Having worked with the US Swim Team, I knew the drill, and was familiar with the approach. We were interested in anything they wanted to show us--schools, factories, hospitals, whatever. The transformation of our children into dignitaries thus began, and proved surprisingly easy. They were genuinely interested in what they encountered, and grew to enjoy the celebrity status that awaited them in streets full of Chinese astonished and delighted by their exotic appearance and friendly behavior. To gather a crowd of several thousand people in any Chinese city, all that had to happen was for everyone on a block to stop moving.

People as Draft Animals

Our delegation’s first event was a visit to the Yangtze River Bridge – an iconic landmark of which the Chinese are justly proud. The river is more than a mile wide in Wuhan, and had been a formidable natural barrier, flooding frequently over the centuries with disastrous results. Construction of the huge span in the early ‘fifties had united China physically and politically behind the Communist government.

The head of the bridge maintenance unit, Mr. Hsiao, met us and took us into a reception room located deep in the eastern most pylon of the bridge. In a briefing sprinkled with

militant slogans, he described the construction process and the victory for Chairman Mao's thought that it represented. The boys, including Sanhu, asked some good questions about building techniques – caissons were not used – apparently – but rather piles driven by works from the surface.

What one saw when crossing the bridge was more striking to us than the structure itself. Sheila's eyes recorded, "*an absolute stream of men and women and boys harnessed to two-wheeled wagons...carrying cotton, rice bowls wrapped in straw, bags of wheat and rice. They strained and heaved up the (slope of the) bridge, the boys pushing behind or bent double in harness in front, and then braced themselves against the load coming down, braking it also with large wooden props behind.*" Our children had never seen people doing the work of animals before. "You can see why we feel so much the need of trucks," Mr. Rui, our China Travel Service minder told us, embarrassed. I watched a man and a donkey in harness together, sharing the work in front of a cart. The man was out-pulling the animal.

Wuhan's summer heat was like a coat you wore with buttons that lock. The city is the hottest of China's "three furnaces", Nanjing and Chongqing being the others. What made it worse was the lack of relief at night, when people pulled their beds into the streets and onto the rooftops searching for a breath of wind. Our entire visit to Wuhan was suffused with heat.

The cuisine was a match for anything we had found so far in the rest of China. The first evening we dined in Hankou at the renowned Dou Pi restaurant, named after its specialty--shrimps and sticky rice wrapped in egg and flour. The sweet and sour fish-- dipped in egg, fried, stuffed with herbs then refried, covered with sauce of garlic, onions, shrimps, peas, and tomatoes--was to die for. Pig livers and jelly fish – the one tender as a bud, the other, a contrasting texture like rubber bands, baby shrimps and tiny thin chicken strips filled out the menu. Another Wuhan specialty, soup dumplings – served in a steamer on a bed of pine needles became a favorite.

We had tea in an upstairs room. The boys wandered out on the balcony from time to time to wave at the gathering crowd below, like dictators after a coup in a banana republic. Afterwards we toured the kitchen, a grimy hell-hole, and congratulated the cooks and waiters who were delighted with the visit of the young delegates. We walked back through the streets, past people lying in their beds on the sidewalk and fanning themselves slowly, balancing with care the output of energy needed to move the breeze with that which might make them hotter still.

Salt in the Popsicles

The next morning, we rose early to take the ferry down the Yangtze to the giant Wuhan Iron and Steel Company, the second largest in China. Sheila remembers:
"The steamer was painted khaki and stopped at five landing stages between ours on the waterfront near the hotel and the mill landing down river on the south side. As we swung out, the boat to Shanghai was leaving ahead of us, four decks of passengers fanning

themselves. That trip takes two and a half days and we long to make it. As it was, the river was handsome, a muddy orange color. The foreign concession buildings on the north bank looked very familiar and old-fashioned. One sees so many prints of Hong Kong, Shanghai and Canton with the same sort of architecture. We sat up front with the crew and talked about the river, which had been high recently. The steel mill landing was flooded into its willow trees...A junk nosed up to the bank and unloaded watermelons tossed from hand to hand up the slope. The mill rears darkly out of a green vegetable landscape.”

Sweltering but riveted, we toured blast furnaces, the rolling mill and blowing mill. Workers moved languidly through the heat sucking salted Popsicles to replace their sweat. The boys listened patiently to an official standard political briefing in the cool guest house originally built for Soviet advisors (who had departed abruptly in 1959), and asked questions about working conditions.

Acupuncture Kills Pain

For our next entertainment, China Travel Service chose the Number Two Hospital of Wuhan Medical College, which had pioneered the use of acupuncture as an anesthetic. Through windows above the operating amphitheater we saw first a thyroid tumor removed from the graceful throat of a 17 year-old girl. Awake throughout, she was wheeled away smiling and praising Chairman Mao. The tumor, Sanhu remarked, looked like a thousand year egg when finally extracted and deposited in a dish. His hosts though that was funny. The other operation we witnessed involved removal of some particularly unappetizing polyps from the nose of a 60 year- old worker using wire lassos. Oliver retired for a cup of tea during the procedure.

Moving about the hospital, we saw acupuncture applied to a variety of neurological ills ranging from paralysis to bad dreams, as well as a ward for heart patients treated with a combination of Western and traditional medicine. Adam was spooked by a room full of beds on which rows of patients jerked peacefully, their muscles twitching to electrical impulses. He made a discreet visit to the bathroom.

Dr. Ni, a dour political medic, led the reception and inevitable briefing. Sheila, the family medical professional, recorded his explanation of the hospital set up, including: *“absolute sexual equality, teams of doctors and nurses sent to the countryside, etc. He was at pains to show that the staff served the people and told the story of a doctor, lacking an aspirator, personally sucking mucus from the throat of a peasant child with pneumonia.”*

“My own role as a hospital social worker was difficult to explain,” she commented.” The mind boggles at the difference between having kidney disease in Wuhan, with two (dialysis) machines available and no medical fees, and Washington with a minimum of \$9000 a year to use a machine.... My impression was that the doctors and staff are personally very warm and kind. No sign of temperament, hustle bustle, or prima donna behavior.

The technique of using acupuncture as an anesthetic is notably personal. The anesthetist is warmly supportive and strokes, pats and talks to the patient throughout (the operation). This ingredient itself is invaluable in a traumatic experience like surgery and must remove so many unknowns and so much fright/anxiety from the situation.”

As we left Sheila said she was impressed and would find it a pleasure to be sick here. Dr. Ni replied that he hoped we would return but not as patients. Unfortunately, this proved a prophetic exchange.

Horror at the University

Our request to visit Wuhan University came through the next day. The tour began with me interviewing a member of Revolutionary Committee office named Chen. My general impression was that the curriculum was a shambles. During our talk the boys sat around in stuffed chairs and read their books. Oliver talked to one charming girl student who spoke excellent English and had been a Red Guard, gone to Peking, seen Chairman Mao, and done god knows what else.

We went upstairs on to the balcony to get a view of the University. I was taking a movie pan of the dilapidated campus and chatting with Chen when Oliver screamed in agony at the other end of the balcony and ran toward me holding his right hand. The tip of his middle finger was gone, the end of the finger mangled and bleeding, his bone protruding. He had been playing with a hand-cranked generator for a siren, gotten it going, and then stuck his right forefinger finger in to stop it. Chen and I took hold of Oliver on either side holding his wounded hand and rushed him down 4 flights of stairs out to the primitive infirmary in the back, Oliver roaring about how it hurt, what dummy he'd been. "This machine kills! My finger is dead! I'm dead! It hurts! It hurts", he howled. Sheila and I cooing, holding him, blood and sweat getting all over my shirt. The sweat was my own.

A doctor also named Chen quickly put a tourniquet on Ol's finger and covered it with gauze. Mr. Rui, our sitter, called the hospital and we roared off in the two Shanghais on a wild ride weaving in and out of trucks on the Yangzi and Hanyang bridges, arriving 20 minutes later at the No. 2 hospital, where the day before we had witnessed the operations.

Sheila relates: *“Oliver was semi-hysterical all the way, but very brave, clutching my hand and biting on a knotted handkerchief. The mutilation was shocking to us all, and we kept seeing the exposed bone and hearing his cry. During the ride he said, ‘I’ll never be the same again. I’ll have a freak finger, No one will like me.’ He also, of course, worried about acupuncture and wanted to be put to sleep. ‘Acupuncture won’t work! It won’t work!’*

“In the operating room, (the same one in which the young girl had her thyroid tumor removed) which seemed a cool, clean, safe haven, he was given a shot of Dilantin which made him relaxed and high, so he simply lay back and cooperated with the team, which soothed and patted him. NP and I robed in surgical gowns, masked and scrubbed,

sat by his head until, at his request, I went to get Adam and Sanhu and sat in the theater above. Oliver managed a feeble wave and Sanhu watched the repair job carefully, sipping pineapple juice. Adam watched obliquely, and I, thankfully, avoided looking at all."

Meanwhile the tip of Oliver's finger had arrived from the university by car, where the Chinese had found it jammed in the generator. The doctors were marvelously skilled. They cleaned the tip, cut off the shredded tissue, and made a skin flap. Then they disinfected his hand, cleaned the finger, snipped the shredded skin, trimmed his bone, ("gross clicking", as Oliver described it), fitted the two parts together and sewed them up with 16 stitches, bandaged him, and gave him antibiotics. Oliver was calmed by the lovely anesthetist who made him feel cozy and relaxed. "I did not even know that she was saying but it was nice stuff--amazing!", he said.

After we returned to the hotel, the anesthetic wore off and Oliver started to hurt badly. We decided then to divide the delegation and send Sheila and Oliver home to Peking. Just then a knock at our hotel room door announced the arrival of a high ranking "comfort delegation", including the head of the Wuhan Branch of the China Travel Service, the head of the Wuhan University Revolutionary Committee, Dr. Chen, our Mr. Chen from the university and sitter Jui. Oliver, eased by codeine and a Chinese made drug called Salidin, propped himself up to receive them.

A long exchange of condolences and pleasantries ensued. I told our visitors that it would be hard to imagine the same quality and quantity of medical care in any other country under these circumstances. I told them that I would feel very badly if they blamed themselves in any way, that it was my responsibility to keep 13 year olds of my own flesh and blood from inserting their fingers into unfamiliar machines, that the Chinese reaction to O's accident was an even better example of the developing relationship between the two countries than the warm welcome we had received at the University, etc. The delegation smiled and departed. We played "Hearts" and Old Maid", dosed O again, ate and went to bed. What a day!

Our own Wuhan incident proved to be the effective end of our family delegation. Sheila and Oliver went back to steamy Beijing, and several painful sessions at the Capital Hospital (the old Peking Union Medical College founded by the Rockefellers). Adam, Sanhu and I continued the trip, feeling guilty about enjoying ourselves while Oliver was in pain.

Collecting Nanjing, Suzhou and Shanghai

I had been told about the charm of Plane tree lined streets in Nanjing; the exquisite calm of Suzhou gardens, and already knew the noisy density of Shanghai street life. But I was unprepared for the hair-raising dangers of up country commercial aviation. The Wuhan-Nanjing plane, an ancient Ilyushin 14 without seatbelts, threaded its way between towering thunderstorms, guided by a pilot whose main flight experience had clearly been fighter aircraft. We decided that trains were better.

A few special moments my growing collection of Chinese cities remain clearly etched:

--the Precious Belt bridge--53 arches, 1200 years old, along the Grand Canal straddling the Suzhou River--lots of boats new and old--old men naked as newts hunting for crabs among the lotus and other water vegetation under a hot blue sky.

--sitting in Suzhou on a hump backed bridge in the dark, a little light left. In the west heat lightening around the horizon reflected on the water, three Chinese sitting silently in the swelter watching us, as Sanhu described a ride in Disney Land through an African landscape, with the guide shooting blanks at plastic hippos which threatened mechanically. Chinese music all around.

--passing one night by a house in Suzhou where a fierce domestic fight was in full swing. One man and 2 women, lots of swearing, and slugging, people bounding off walls, a small crowd of neighbors clustered apprehensively around the front door. I stood on a bridge at the back and listened to the shouts, watching heads flash past the window. In the end the man, thin and past middle life, dressed only in shorts, stamped swearing out of the house.

We returned to Beijing July 31. Sanhu had come down with the flu in Shanghai, and Adam's fly zipper had broken on the plane. I arrived at the door of our hotel suite with one child clearly feverish, the other gingerly holding his crotch. Sheila was glad to see us, nonetheless. She and Oliver had had a horrible time. The tip of his finger, though healing, had turned black. He would need a new operation and skin graft.

Settled At Last

The weeks after returning saw real progress in building the family nest. Air freight and a food and liquor shipment all arrived at the same time as the Diplomatic Service Bureau personnel assigned to install air conditioners in our apartment. The result was progressive, constructive chaos – piles of dirt, mindless opening of crates, building of shelves and hanging poles, trunks full of excelsior. All in suffocating humidity and no one to rely on but ourselves and people from the mission. The Chinese kindly violated protocol order and put an air conditioner in Oliver's room so his finger would heal faster. Shortly thereafter a rotund, wall eyed lady from Shandong named Gang showed up and announced she had been assigned as our cleaning lady. Friendly and straightforward, she went immediately to work scrubbing up the place, doing the laundry and improving our morale.

Waiting, Watching and Welcoming

The Liaison Office that summer and fall was preoccupied with the politics of waiting, watching and welcoming: waiting for the Kissinger visit, watching for the Tenth Party Congress, and welcoming one unusual US delegation after another.

The Kissinger visit--initially expected in August--kept being put off for a variety of reasons: Chinese disapproval over our bombing in Cambodia, leadership differences involved in the scheduling and management of their Party Congress, and later by William Rogers' resignation as Secretary of State and Henry's appointment to succeed him. Kissinger did not want to come to China until he had been confirmed by the Senate and had assumed the full authority of that office along with his duties as National Security Advisor. He finally came in November, after voluminous exchanges with David Bruce, Al Jenkins and John Holdridge and consultations with Bruce and President Nixon in San Clemente, all against the backdrop of the worsening crisis over Watergate. .

A Meeting Long Delayed

China watchers in general and the Beijing diplomatic corps in particular had developed a cottage industry out of predictions, previews, scene setters and speculations related to the timing, substance and outcomes of the long anticipated Tenth Party Congress, the first major meeting since the Cultural Revolution lost its bite. Leadership activities and appearances were scrutinized from every angle, and every reference in the press examined for clues. All empirical signs indicated a major conclave in the works--the limousines in front of the Great Hall where the lights had burned late every night since the end of July; the statements of Chinese diplomats abroad; the postponement of most foreign delegation visits; the lack of large--scale leadership turnouts; and reports that congress delegates had been picked.

Evidence of continuing tension among leadership factions had been there for all of us to see since our arrival in the capital and before. We speculated now that difficult domestic and foreign policy issues were the reasons why it was taking the Congress so long to jell--How to dispose of the ghost of Lin Biao, named as Mao's successor in the current constitution, was particularly pressing. His plane had crashed in Mongolia after an abortive coup attempt in late 1971. Who to place on the Central Committee and the Politburo? How to handle educational reform, economic priorities, scientific assistance, youth in the countryside, and culture were among the most controversial questions.

Calm on the Surface

Our travels in China that summer revealed no evidence that any of these concerns had penetrated the lower levels of the body politic. On the contrary, and in marked contrast to the violent phase of the Cultural Revolution, calm seemed to prevail. I was asked to set the scene for Washington's benefit, and wrote the following message based on an entry in my diary:

"As the Party prepares for its meeting the country seems rather relaxed. My observations are random and fragmentary, based on brief visits to eight cities, but the pattern seems quite pervasive and consistent.

Under enormous posters of the revolutionary peoples of the world clutching rifles and singing fierce revolutionary songs, white shirted Chinese stroll lackadaisically, fanning

themselves with rattan fronds, eating Popsicles and then letting the wrappers flutter gently to the ground. Service personnel with little shovels, or in the bigger cities, riding motorized sweepers, will come along to pick them up eventually.

In Beijing and during visits to Guangzhou, Changsha, Shaoshan, Nanjing, Wuhan, Suzhou and Shanghai I have seen only 3 Mao buttons, one worn by an American Chinese thinking to ingratiate himself with his friends. People play cards openly in the streets and on trains, something done only furtively two years ago, and not at all two years before that. The rhetoric of meetings with officials of factories, communes, maintenance units etc. is toned down though one or two ritual kowtows to Chairman Mao are a normal feature of every interview.

The shops are crowded with people actually buying things. A walk up and down Nanjing Road in Shanghai on a Monday afternoon in July leads one to wonder if in fact anyone in the city is gainfully employed. The streets and shops are so thronged that you can walk only at a crawl. The pace of work in factories and units is slow, partially a fact of heat. People are less afraid to talk than reported before, but they don't say much. CTS guides relax after a while and often open up a bit.

If politics are not as strident an element of everyday life as before, they are very much there, just the same. The major campaign to "Struggle, Criticize, and Rectify" (Dou, Pi, Gai), underway nationwide, is accompanied by exhortations to "Read Books and Study". The Chinese we talked to were not sure at first what these meant and how they related. An official in Nanjing told me that "Read Books and Study" amounted to organized bible study twice a week. The Struggle Criticize and Rectify campaign is vague and started slowly because none of the Chinese at first knew (a) what to struggle against, (b) What they were criticizing and (c) how they should rectify it whatever it was....

The military plays a much smaller role in civilian life, from what one can now see. Representatives from factories, communes and universities where the question is put normally say that PLA representatives still sit on their revolutionary committees, but less than before and far below the one third ratio demanded, and in fact needed during the turbulent order-restoring period of the Cultural Revolution. There are less soldiers on the streets of Beijing now, even than when we first arrived and they are hard to find in other cities.

A Communist Analysis

Although the Western and Japanese embassies were well stocked with competent China analysts, we were all plowing the same sparse field of speculative data available about the Tenth Party Congress, "drinking each other's bath water", to cite a gross term we used. I sought a fresh perspective on domestic politics, and found one in the Yugoslav Embassy. Ilija Djukic, an urbane, experienced diplomat with a strong China background, had already become a friend. Through him I met an embassy political specialist named Trcek, a cerebral mole of a man whose close-set eyes sat behind little rectangular spectacles.

Trcek's background included years as a senior lecturer in Chinese affairs in Belgrade and as head of the Yugoslav Party's China section, plus three years now in Beijing. The combination of political, academic and hands-on experience in China provided him with the most erudite grasp of domestic politics of anyone I had yet met. The Yugoslavs had an edge over the rest of us. They were Communists themselves and understood the workings of Party machinery. I called on Trcek, ostensibly for a brief courtesy introduction. But propelled by kindred interests, we talked for two hours, sitting on carved furniture in the Yugoslav Embassy, sweat dripping down beneath our polite jackets and ties. His analysis:

The major policy directions for China were being set now, or have been in the process of being set during the past 2 years, and not during the Cultural Revolution, which in his words was only "a spectacle."

The moderates were in control, but the left was strong enough to make itself heard, and to counter attack from time to time. He cited as an example the lead article in Red Flag (the Party's main theoretical journal) for August which expressed dissatisfaction with bourgeois tendencies in the "superstructure" (i.e. the top leadership). This, he felt was in answer to a series of moderate commentaries on culture which had demanded a higher volume of more entertaining cultural works which paid more attention to local tastes and popular demand.

There were so many unresolved issues that the outcome of the Party Congress could only be a compromise. Deep differences existed over foreign policy, the pace of economic development, culture, the rehabilitation of officials. The Congress, in any case, was badly needed to confirm policies adopted during the past two years. Government and party cadres (officials) needed an authoritative signal to proceed. Many of them had been recently rehabilitated and were still worried that the more moderate trend could be reversed.

Congress postponements were the work of moderates, Trcek felt. They had enough power to prevent a meeting if preparations were not going their way. In his experience with Party Congresses in Yugoslavia, delays were usually the result of differences over personnel. Policy issues could always be fudged.

The current relaxed pace of society would be difficult to reverse. He noticed large numbers of official cars filled with the wives and children of cadres parked for shopping in front of department stores during working hours. In a society where basic standards were so low, the small perks and incremental additions to salaries made a much larger impact on comparative living standards. The spread between 36 yuan, (the basic minimum wage) and 150 yuan (what senior cadres earned) as a monthly salary was enormous, much greater than in an affluent society. You could always tell if a political campaign directed at cadre corruption had teeth. If it did, the parking lot would be empty.

The Secret Anticlimax

When we finally learned about the Congress it was already over. August 29 had been a difficult day for our family. With big lumps in our throats, we put Oliver and Adam on the plane for Guangzhou, the first leg of their journey home to boarding school. That evening we gave a dinner party for CC. Chang, a visiting Chinese American meteorologist which included Australian Ambassador Fitzgerald, his wife Gay and Don Anderson.

As we sat down to dinner the phone rang, the distinctive double rings of a long distance call. It was Oliver at the Dong Fang Hotel in Guangzhou sobbing into the receiver. He said he had to come home, he was going crazy, was not going to make it. Sheila and I both talked to him and calmed him down. Adam was cool and collected, but obviously affected. “He’s beginning to get to me”, Adam related. Upset, we returned to our guests. (Years later, Sheila and I still kick ourselves for not having accompanied the boys as far as Guangzhou. Within the week, however, we were comforted by reports from close friends in Hong Kong that they had cheered up. Long term, the separation was a low point for all of us, and left lasting scars.)

The phone rang again, this time a local call. It was David Bonavia, the London Times correspondent, reporting his ticker announcing that the Party Congress had finished yesterday after five days in session! After we said goodbye to our guests, Don and I drove downtown to observe the scene. This is what we reported the next day:

“Atmospherics. Local response to news of the Party Congress has lacked enthusiasm or militance. As the 9p.m. August 29 broadcast began to report the results of the meeting decorative lights on buildings all over Beijing went on. Shortly thereafter, small knots of rather desultory marchers, mostly young people, started parading around the streets of the capital behind red flags, cymbals, drums and portraits of Chairman Mao. Their patterns of march were carefully controlled to cover specific neighborhoods, with no large crowds permitted to collect. Tiananmen Square was relatively empty. The largest groups, reaching perhaps several hundred each, were seen in front of the Minzu and Xinqiao Hotels, as if gathered there for the benefit of foreign visitors. There were a few scattered firecrackers and skyrockets. Slogans were muttered en masse rather than shouted in any disciplined or energetic way. Those few Beijing residents who were out on the streets and not marching moved about without joining in. One worker welding a section of pipe near the old city moat did not even stop to look up as the masses shambled by. The special lights went out promptly at midnight by which time the marchers were well in their beds. Marching activity continued August 30 on a slightly larger scale, though with no increase in verve.

Final Assessments

Over the next two days we sent in a stream of telegrams analyzing the Congress documents that came out. The name lists suggested that Zhou Enlai had managed another tightrope walk. The Politburo ranked Wang Hongwen, the 36 year-old Shanghai labor

union radical at Number 3, but his rise was balanced by rehabilitated moderates, most notably Deng Xiaoping. The Central Committee comprised fewer military men, and more women. The State Council (a Zhou stronghold) appeared to have done well. Several officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs instrumental in the détente with the US, i.e., UN Ambassador Hung Hua, Foreign Minister Ji Pengfei (William Rogers' opposite number), and Vice Minister Qiao Guanhua (Bruce's favorite) were honored with membership in the Central Committee.

Specific denunciations of Lin Biao as a Rightist, the worst name a Communist can be called, were a main feature of the Congress' political reports. The people of China were charged to criticize Lin as well as Confucius during their study sessions, which added to the confusion already widespread. That, it turned out later had been Zhou Enlai's whole point. John Holdridge remembered hearing the Premier laughingly tell Henry Kissinger when he visited in November that he had himself taken advantage of the Congress to initiate the campaign to criticize Lin (*pi Lin*). Since Zhou himself had been the Radical's target in the campaign to criticize Confucius (*pi Kong*) the addition of Lin took the focus off him and diluted the impact of the entire campaign. (Holdridge Op. Cit. p. 147).

Congress pronouncements dealt with foreign policy in the broadest terms. The US was lumped together with the USSR as a superpower whose "hegemonism" was to be opposed. At the same time the Soviet Union was singled out for special treatment with a warning to be on guard against surprise attacks by "social imperialism." We yawned with relief.

The meeting was odd for its brevity. Five days was the shortest congress since the Communists came to power. Defensive references in the documents to "repeated deliberations and consultations" suggested leadership sensitivity to charges of a rushed, put-up job. In addition, this was the first, and only, Congress that had not been announced at the outset. We speculated that the meeting planners were worried enough about possible mishaps to forego the normal, ritual appearances of openness and democratic centralism. In summary, the Tenth Party Congress struck us as a carefully managed production, laboriously prepared and held in secret by an apprehensive leadership, anxious to confirm a new lineup while keeping in hand pressure for further change.

In the immediate aftermath, top officials avoided comment on the Congress to foreigners, even ostensibly close friends. Vietnamese party chief Le Duan arrived in Beijing for a visit August 29. At a banquet the evening that the Congress was announced, he was clearly interested in what had happened and asked Zhou Enlai, in effect, "What's new?". Zhou replied, "Nothing."

The arcane outcome of the Tenth Party Congress, and particularly the defensive way it was handled, underscored for all of us living in China at the time the peculiar fragility of leadership relationships in the waning years of Mao's rule. This affected the way Beijing dealt with the leaders of the US, whom Watergate had also made fragile. On practical matters, our official dealings relationship had reached a plateau. We were in China, and had set up an office. But, the pace of official responsiveness to our requests had slowed,

and we were now, it seemed being treated like everyone else. We still lacked apartments, storage space, language teachers, electric wiring. I supposed that this was what normalization was all about.

Getting to Know You

But there was nothing fragile about the pace at which people-to people relations between Chinese and Americans were developing that summer. Beijing was swarming with groups from the United States. The White House Fellows came and went, as did a group from Staten Island Community College, a gaggle of education officials, and the model cities group of young blacks and Chicanos from Chicago escorted by old friend FSO Charles Hill. Businessmen looking for trade opportunities added significantly to the mix. All were met, briefed, and entertained at USLO.

The groups all wanted contact with American officials, but the thing they seemed to appreciate most was the chance to come to the Liaison Office for an hour and have some real American booze. In Washington, you would probably decline an invitation to stand in a steamy room drinking whiskey with other sweaty Americans, even if David Bruce was giving the party. In Beijing, the idea was compelling. Americans responded to invitations with hoarse croaks of thanks from cracked lips and fat tongues. After weeks of traveling in China with Chinese guides, culture shock, and over eating, the sight of the American flag and a bottle of bourbon brought tears to many an eye.

These groups varied widely in type and quality. The Chinese were clearly targeting a cross section of Americans and that is what they were getting. The White House Fellows and the Educator's group were both attractive bunches of intelligent reasonably objective achievers who knew what they wanted out of their trips and understood when they did not always get it. A high-powered delegation from the National Council for US-China Trade representing Westinghouse, Cargill, Deere, JC Penney, among other companies, came to make commercial contacts that would one day become enormous.

The Staten Island youths were from working class backgrounds, all terribly anxious to be impressed by what they saw, but disillusioned that the Chinese were not practicing what they preached. They were led by some traditional liberals, particularly Bill Birenbaum, a New Yorker transplanted from Iowa; Barbara Thatcher, an old wasp from Bryn Mawr who summered (like me) in North Haven Maine; and Emile Ji, a starry eyed young Chinese American professor whose uncle, the interpreter Ji Chaoju was currently serving in the PRC Liaison Office.

The model cities group was inner city kids, most of whom were terribly homesick for their neighborhoods and their Motown music. They were being fed well of course, but hankered for chicken wings, Dr. Pepper and cream soda from the corner store. One was an avid Black Muslim much impressed with the freedom to practice that religion in China.

Charley Hill, who held the disparate group together, described his delegates as ignorant, unsophisticated, unmannered, incurious, and bright. He found them hilarious and loved being with them. I briefed them and when I was through one large nice looking kid named Donald came up and said “Hey man, who is this Bruce you talking ‘bout?” As I explained, he asked “is that his first or his last name?” They would go home with a much broader outlook.

Dangerous Liaisons-The Politics of Music

In August, David Bruce had asked me to take over management of the upcoming Philadelphia Orchestra tour. John Holdridge had started the arduous negotiation process in Washington months before. It had become a difficult full time job, and he had other things to worry about. At any rate, Bruce added, “It’s not John’s thing”. Though flattered, I was deeply apprehensive about the assignment. It was the last major government sponsored exchange from the US to the PRC on the horizon and the first one with real cultural impact. The dangers were legion. Culture had torn China apart in recent years. Madame Mao was still in charge of culture, with even the smallest issue referred to her for decision.

Consequently, at the Foreign Ministry, we haggled endlessly over the details of the visit, negotiating music programs as if they were treaties. The Chinese, for example, rejected Strauss’ “Don Juan” and Debussy’s “Afternoon of a Faun” as prurient and decadent. They came back with Aaron Copland’s “Billy the Kid” and any piece by Mozart or Schubert, both of whom they judged politically neuter. Respighi’s “Pines of Rome” were fine. The bottleneck at the top meant there was no firm schedule until just before the Orchestra was due to arrive in early September. Even then, nothing was solid. Officials were petrified of the Chairman’s wife, and the dire consequences of making a mistake.

Maestro Eugene Ormandy, at least from a distance, could be just as imperious as Madame Mao. No, he would not play Beethoven’s Sixth (“the Pastorale”) Symphony, as repeatedly requested by the Chinese side. He loathed the piece. Beethoven’s Fifth was fine. So was the Seventh. But the Sixth? Never! Complicating matters further, the orchestra labor union was making sure its rules were carefully followed while the Orchestra was in the People’s Republic. The usual personality problems within any large creative organization like a symphony orchestra added to my list of worries.

On September 11, I left for Shanghai to meet the Orchestra’s chartered plane and fly with them to Beijing. I gave myself an extra day, in the hope that I would be able to get together with Ministry of Culture officials handling the visit from the Chinese side. Early liaison had been of great help in managing the swimmers’ trip. No way. I was held at arm’s length until twenty-five minutes before the orchestra landed.

Beethoven’s Peasant Revolution

That was when Mr. Situ, the glum but competent concertmaster of the Central Philharmonic Society, entered the VIP lounge where I was waiting. He sat down and told

me with deep apologies that certain revisions in the programs would be required. The leadership now wanted concerts which packaged, with other works, Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, an American composition, and the Yellow River Concerto, a wet, romantic piece of program music composed by a revolutionary committee. I pointed out that the agreed programs, which had taken months to negotiate, contained no such combination. Maestro Ormandy's antipathy toward Beethoven's Sixth was well known. The Chinese also wanted revisions in the schedule. I told Situ that I would do my best to work the changes, but feared the consequences of confronting Ormandy with major issues after more than 20 hours of grueling travel.

The orchestra arrived, one hundred and thirty strong, exhausted but exhilarated. Ormandy, a tiny, hyper-animated man with tufts of fluffy hair, sat me next to him on the plane from Shanghai to Beijing. With trepidation, I related what the Chinese had told me. "You know I hate Beethoven's Sixth, and I did not even bring the scores," he said. Talking fast, and making a lot up as I went along, I explained the authorities' peculiar predilection for the Sixth in Chinese political terms. The Chinese loved program music, and the Pastoral Symphony themes represented peasant life in the countryside. Theirs was a peasant revolution, and they identified the storm in the fourth movement with the struggle they had been through. The peaceful, triumphant closing movement represented China under Communist rule. It was clear that the request had come from Madame Mao herself.

Ormandy sighed, and said "if that's what they want, that's what they shall have. I am in Rome and will do as the Romans. I will forget my own rules." His only condition was that scores would be provided by the following afternoon. I almost collapsed with relief.

Ormandy then turned to me. "You should know that I am terribly spoiled," he grinned elfishly. "I only eat in my room, and I only eat steaks and chicken breasts cooked by my wife, Gretel." I had been informed of the Maestro's eating habits and had worried about how to deal with them. I told him he was sure to like Chinese food and he replied, "I won't." I suggested that he try hard to attend the banquets and just eat a tiny bit, because his hosts would be insulted if he did not. Most Chinese social life went on around the dinner table, and he would be denying himself a major opportunity to meet people. In fact he ate nobly, to my intense relief, and ended up enjoying the food.

I informed orchestra manager Boris Sokoloff of my exchanges with Situ and Ormandy, and advised him to keep Ormandy's willingness to play the Sixth in his back pocket during the protracted negotiations that were bound to follow. It was standard Chinese practice to negotiate all details of a visit in advance and then renegotiate the entire program the moment an exhausted delegation arrived in the capital. The Chinese would give us anything we wanted as long as the orchestra played the Sixth.

The talks lasted until 2:15 AM, resulting in a new schedule, which called for four concerts in Beijing instead of three, one of which was a special "leadership program" planned for Sunday, the 16th of September.

Bravo in Beijing

“The Maestro is in a state!” I was told during the intermission of the opening concert. Rushing back to the dressing room, I found Ormandy upset and sweating profusely, his stately Austrian wife, Gretel fanning him rapidly with a towel held wide in her ample arms. “The audience does not like my music,” he complained. “They are so quiet. I have never had such a subdued reaction.” I assured Ormandy that the music (Mozart’s Symphony #35) had been ravishing. The audience response had been as enthusiastic as any I had heard in China. This was not the kind of boisterous ovation to which he was accustomed, but Chinese had not heard Western music for decades, and in any case, were circumspect in public. This had been a fine start. Ormandy cooled off, with Gretel’s help. The concert ended well.

The Central Philharmonic Society presented a superb concert for the visitors of Chinese music with traditional instruments. Ormandy was impressed with Chinese musicianship on the Pipa, a gourd shaped guitar, on the Sheng-- a hand-held mouth organ with vertical pipes, and the Erhu--a 2 stringed snakeskin fiddle that sounded at times like a human voice. The musicians told us, that yes, they had been sent down to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution. Their special cadre school had been a fruit farm, where they picked plums wearing soft gloves on, which protected their precious hands. Madame Mao must have been watching over them.

I never really understood the hands on impact conductors have on orchestras until I heard Ormandy conduct the Central Philharmonic. Their own conductor Li Delun, began the exchange, leading his musicians through a ho-hum rendition of a classical symphony movement. Ormandy then led the same players through the same piece. The difference was dramatic, the Chinese responding with the strictest attention to the Maestro’s phrasing, tempo and dynamics. No one said much, for fear of offending Conductor Li. But everyone got it, even me. The musicians then broke into small groups to twitter and warble together, and exchange gifts. They had much in common and found they could communicate in their own special language. At lunch, we overheard a Philadelphia Orchestra member telling a Chinese musician offering him yet more food, “poco pianissimo, please”, to laughter all around.

Banquets and visits to the Great Wall, Ming Tombs, Summer Palace, had their usual impact on first time visitors and tuned up the Philadelphians. They began as hard-bitten, jet-lagged professionals wondering what they were doing in China. But a crescendo of enthusiasm began to develop, which grew and grew as the visit progressed.

Madame Mao’s Blessing

On September 16th the leadership of the PRC turned out at the highest level ever for a foreign orchestra. Madame Mao led the group, accompanied by politburo member Yao Wenyuan, Peking Municipal Revolutionary Committee Chairman, Wu De, Vice Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua and PRC Liaison Office Chief Huang Jen (who was home for consultations). Jiang Qing applauded after every movement of Beethoven’s Sixth and led

a standing ovation at the end (she later confirmed she had requested the piece). She chatted incessantly throughout the “Pines of Rome”, paid polite attention to Barber’s “Adagio for Strings,” and seemed moved by Chinese Pianist Yin Chenjong’s rendition of the Yellow River Concerto. Sheila and I sat two rows behind her and David Bruce, watching like hawks. Yin’s romantic arrangement of “Home on the Range” and Ormandy’s spirited version of the “Worker’s and Peasant’s March” brought the house down and the music to a close. Mrs. Mao was wearing a formal black silk crepe version of the gray Eleanor Roosevelt dress she had on for the basketball game in June, white blunt toed sandals, a white plastic handbag and a small evening wrist watch set in a circle of what appeared to be precious stones. Full TV and national press coverage were given to her presence at the event in a hall hung with banners reading “Long Live the Friendship Between the Chinese and American Peoples,” and “Welcome to China Concert Tour of the Philadelphia Orchestra.”

At the reception afterwards, Madame Mao was most cordial, saying she had remembered meeting me at the basketball game. She presented Ormandy with an autographed 1870 edition of ancient Chinese songs from her own library, in traditional notation, which, she said, resembled “bean sprouts”. To Mrs. Ormandy she gave a large polyethylene bag of Cassia flowers picked from her garden with her own hands. She suggested that the petals be used to flavor wine and cakes for the musicians. The idea of urbane viola players and oboists lacing their martinis with cassia flowers made Sheila and I shriek with laughter later, but it was a genuine gesture, and reminiscent of her gift to our women athletes. After a mineral water toast to the continued development of contacts between the peoples and artists of the two countries, the entire party returned to the stage for mass photographs. Mrs. Mao insisted on shaking the hands of all 107 musicians. Ormandy on the verge of tears by this point received another jolt when Madame Huang Jen approached and addressed him in Hungarian (she had served there).

Coverage of the event was splashed all over the front page of the People’s Daily the next morning.

The Shanghai stop was a smash. The leadership had blessed the tour, political tension was gone, and the Orchestra simply enjoyed themselves. Shanghai audiences were much more alive than those in Beijing, and responded uproariously to Ormandy’s closing, blood racing rendition of “Stars and Stripes Forever” at each of the two jammed concerts. More banquets, a ride up the Whangpoo River in a ferry boat serenaded by traditional Chinese musicians, and a moving departure with the entire orchestra departing aboard a Pan Am Clipper flying into the Shanghai sunset closed out an altogether remarkable ten days. One observer noted, “Ormandy really didn’t need a plane to get home.”

Dramatis Personae

The personalities involved in this historic visit made it memorable.

Eugene Ormandy himself, of course, shone the brightest. I am not sure why, but we hit it off every well from the start. He had a lot of questions, which Sheila or I were able to

answer, and as the trip wore on he kept finding more. As a result we saw a great deal of him. Boris Sokoloff, the manager--a fiftyish Yalie with a very good head, told me as we parted that we probably had had more contact with Ormandy during this ten day period than 90% of the people associated with him in Philadelphia ever had. We found him charming, funny, demanding, egotistical, thoughtful and child-like. He was narrow in his interests, channeling everything into his music. The results were near miraculous. For example, when the notorious scores for Beethoven's Sixth were given to the Orchestra, they turned out to be separate editions from two different musical organizations, the Shanghai and Beijing Orchestras. No one source could supply a group as large as Philadelphia's 130 musicians. Required to work from pages that contained a jumble of different bowing and dynamic instructions, they simply watched Ormandy, and out came a flawless performance.

The Maestro was much taken with Sheila, her knowledge of Chinese and understanding of music. Given to kissing the cheeks of women he admired, Ormandy made a couple of tries, straining on the tips of his elevator shoes, (she was more than a foot taller), then asked her straight out to bend her knees next time. Of course she did, and together they formed a new Mutt and Jeff act. Ormandy was held together by his wife Gretel, a warm, solid, long suffering Austrian lady who wound him up in the morning, fed him, brushed his hair, tied his shoes, patted him, told him when he was out of line, made him take naps, fanned him when he was too hot, wound him down and put him to bed. She could not have been more friendly, low key or appreciative to us.

C. W. Balis was the chairman of the orchestra, a wizened millionaire whose sour exterior hid a tough sensible and rather entertaining person. It took a while for me to find this out, but it was clear at the end. Our first meeting at the Shanghai airport was inauspicious. "Can anyone tell the chairman of the orchestra where he might find a place to pee?" he asked with Main Line hauteur. When I told him he replied, "Well, the Liaison Office has a use after all."

Li Delun was conductor of the Central Philharmonic Society in Beijing. A fat and expansive politico-musician whose personality was cut from much the same cloth as Ormandy --obviously the Chinese version of a Maestro. Clearly a second rate conductor, his leadership, and political skills obviously made him the ideal honcho for a cultural organization at this stage in China. He knew a great deal about music, had the presence to handle himself well when the national leaders were around, and the managerial ability and sense of humor to run a large communal cultural organization.

Harold Schonberg was the leading music critic of the New York Times, a short, tough, hawk nosed, middle-aged city boy with a jaundiced ear and the respect of everyone in the Orchestra as the most knowledgeable and influential critic in the U.S. He was blunt to a fault, making sure to tell Yin Chenjong, the Chinese pianist, that the Yellow River Concerto was "trash." Yin happened to have been one of the members of the committee that wrote the piece. When upbraided for this, his reply was "I'm a frank guy, I'm a frank guy."

Caught in a white lie in Shanghai, the Chinese made Schonberg pay, their way. When taken along with the rest of the traveling press to the Shanghai Industrial Exhibition (a standard must for all visitors in which he had no interest whatsoever) Schonberg started to limp and told his hosts he could not go on because his ankle was sprained. The Chinese, clucking sympathetically and hovering attentively, took him to the car and started immediately for the hospital. He begged off vociferously and got them to take him to the hotel, where upon a team of doctors descended upon him and took him to a clinic for an X-ray. Naturally, he couldn't admit he was faking, and had to submit, wasting an hour and a half in the process. Later, I asked him mischievously how his ankle was. "Better", came the sour reply.

Kati Marton, a young reporter covered the trip for CBS TV and made a deep impression on David Bruce. His Beijing Diary for September 17 notes, *"This afternoon, at Platt's urging, I was interviewed by Kati (Marton) Wetzel, who does daily televised newscasts for CBS in Philadelphia. I spent more than an hour conversing with this sympathetic young lady of mid-twenty age. Hungarian by birth, most of her early youth was clouded by her Father and Mother being held in Communist prison camps in Budapest. When she was about eight, she moved to Paris, later to the United States, so possesses the advantage of being trilingual. ..She is beautiful and intelligent, an evident favorite of her fellow Hungarian Ormandy and his Viennese wife."* Kati Marton, has since become a well-known author (Wallenberg, Death in Jerusalem), living in New York. She later married Richard Holbrooke (since deceased), former US Ambassador to the UN and then Chairman of the Asia Society. She was married previously to the late Peter Jennings, the ABC TV anchor, and, much earlier, to a Carroll Wetzel, an international investment banker.

Frank Tenney was the US Information Agency's escort for the Philadelphia Orchestra and played an important role in negotiations and management both before and during the visit. USIA had no representative on the Liaison Office Staff in Beijing at this stage. I held that brief for now and we worked closely on all aspects of the trip.

Yin Chenjong was the most famous pianist in the People's Republic in the 1970s; a roly poly protégé of Madame Mao's who made his name performing the Yellow River Concerto. Born on a small island in the center of Xiamen (Amoy) called Wulangyu 31 years before, he started piano at age seven. Local authorities recognized his talent early and sent him to a musical middle school in Shanghai for six years. From there he studied in Leningrad, and at the Conservatory in Beijing.

Knowledgeable observers from Ormandy to Schonberg on down agreed that Yin had enormous talent. He was used to having his way, however, and Ormandy found him hard to control (musically). "I have never seen such a talented pianist play so badly" he said to me, referring to Yin's irregular counting. He plays with great power and virtuosity though with an affected style which led one irreverent on looker to call him "Ribelace." All that was missing, the wag went on, was a candelabra and mother. Sheila commented at the time:

”The Yellow River Concerto played by Yin Chenjong was a great performance of “method” piano playing, with soulful gazes into the air above the piano, grimaces, *etc. ...Mr. Yin played without reference to Ormandy, who kept peering hopefully over his shoulder—in vain because Yin only looked at him after he’d stopped playing.*

Yin and Ormandy got along beautifully as people, however. Sharing a common temperament and love of music, the language and cultural barriers between them just seemed to melt.

Personally, Yin came across as a sensitive and very friendly person. He knew world music, notably Glenn Gould’s virtuosity with Bach’s Goldberg Variations. Politically, he was a man of his time and place. On the plane to Shanghai we sat together and he described the Cultural Revolution and its effect on his activities. He never stopped playing, but performances were rare. At one point in 1967 the “Ultra Leftists” led, he said, by Lin Piao, launched a campaign attacking the piano as an expensive instrument irrelevant to needs of workers, peasants and soldiers. Yin and his supporters countered by loading a piano on a truck and putting on an impromptu concert in Tiananmen Square, which drew an enormous and appreciative crowd and defended his position. Madame Mao, he said, provided strong support at several junctures, arranging at one point for Chairman Mao to attend one of his concerts. When this was publicized nationwide, attacks on the piano ended.

Politics Again

We had not heard the last of Beethoven’s Sixth. Two weeks after the Orchestra left China, an article appeared in the People’s Daily attacking Western “program music”, especially pieces such as Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony and Respighi’s *Pines of Rome*. Music such as this “watered down the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses”, the article said. John Holdridge’s analysis was that Zhou Enlai had succeeded in gaining enough access to the People’s Daily to generate this attack on Madame Mao, the originator the anti-Confucius campaign aimed at him. The sniping between the factions continued, escalating into a full-blown campaign against Western culture that set the diplomatic community on edge for months.

Immediate political maneuvers aside, the long term impact of the Orchestra’s visit was profound. Tan Dun, the world renowned contemporary Chinese composer (“The First Emperor”) and conductor, told me at an Asia Society event I hosted for him in 2004 that the September 16 leadership concert, was beamed by radio to the rural village where he was working as a peasant in 1973. The live broadcast thrilled him and changed his life. He and a generation of Chinese musicians his age have since worked to fuse Chinese and Western musical traditions, moving back and forth between Shanghai and New York. Tan also told me that Yin Chenjong had immigrated to the United States, where he is quietly teaching piano in New York.

Since 2011, I have worked as the Senior Advisor to the Philadelphia Orchestra, helping shape an active China program that takes the musicians to different cities each year to perform and train.

Sour Reality Returns

Real life in Beijing returned with a vengeance after the Philadelphia Orchestra left China. Momentous events elsewhere—the Watergate tapes controversy, Kissinger’s peregrinations to Moscow and Israel, the Middle East War and a shaky ceasefire, Attorney General Richardson’s resignation and the Archibald Cox dismissal, as well as the guilty plea and departure of Vice President Agnew—seemed to soak up the energies of the US government, contributing to a lull in our activity. As David Bruce told his diary:

“In Peking, while Washington burned, we fiddled, walked in the Forbidden City, wrote, read, ate, drank, and saw our unhappy domestic political scene as through a glass darkly. We might as well be, as respects such occurrences, isolated on another planet.”
(*Beijing Diaries P.317*)

Morale in the mission was low and due for a series of blows. The housing problem came to a head with the news that the Chinese had begun passing out flats in two newly completed buildings, and the Americans were not getting any. To make matters worse, Lin Ping, Director of American Affairs, called Ambassador Bruce into the Foreign Ministry and told him that the Marine House Bar had to close. The operation of a bar in which drinks were sold was illegal and the bar had been the scene of raucous late parties, he said. What Bruce did not tell us was that Lin had demanded the total withdrawal of the Marine detachment. Bruce reacted by closing the bar and reducing the profile of the detachment, playing for time until the issue could be discussed at Kissinger’s level.

I took it upon myself to inform John Holdridge of the sore feelings among that half of the Liaison Office staff still stuck in the Beijing Hotel. They believed, correctly, that the US insistence on occupying two Deputy Chief of Mission apartments was holding them hostage. John agreed right away to move to smaller quarters. When the Diplomatic Services Bureau learned of his decision they allocated the three apartments they had been saving all along. The logjam was broken.

The Kissinger visit to China was postponed once more for a few weeks giving us more time to prepare. I was placed in charge of the arrangements and, as Bruce put it “harried” the Foreign Ministry on the details—flight courses, reporters, press credentials, visas, hotel accommodations and security for a party of more than fifty people, including fourteen journalists and three cameramen.

Low Society

Although correct in official dealings, the Chinese continued to keep their distance socially. Al Jenkins had succeeded in giving a farewell lunch at his apartment for Zhang

Wenjin before he took up his post as the PRC Ambassador to Canada, but that was a unique special case. I tried in vain to arrange picnics, lunches, and other meals with new colleagues and contacts, who had been relaxed and friendly when on the road with delegations. They froze up when they returned to the capital. For example, when I invited four Foreign Ministry working level colleagues to supper at our apartment, they took five days to answer, and when they did, explained that the senior most invitee had fallen ill. When I pointed out that the event was a week away and expressed the hope that he might recover in time, I was told, "He'll still be sick by then."

Sheila, Sanhu and I did finally succeed in hosting an informal dinner three interpreter-translators from the office. The guests were Mr. Liu, the relaxed and knowledgeable elder cadre who had arranged for Ox's XXX to be fed to the American swim team; Mr. Sung, a dour and inexperienced ex-language teacher who was thrust into administrative duties as USLO's first local employee and had never quite got his nose above water; and Mr. Yeh, a brand new graduate of the Foreign Languages Institute whose education was interrupted by the Cultural Revolution and whose inexperience was matched only by enthusiasm and political purity.

The evening turned out to be relaxed, entertaining and educational for everyone. Mr. Yeh, an Ex-Red Guard who had made a pilgrimage on foot to the historic Communist base at Yan'an during the Cultural Revolution, was frankly uncomfortable at first. Sitting ramrod straight on his chair, he announced--Yeh did not really speak English yet, but intoned each sentence full voice as if he were presenting the team lineup on the public address system at a football stadium--that this was the first time he had been in the home of a foreigner. He welcomed the opportunity to broaden his sphere of experience, enabling him better to combine the theory he had learned in school with actual practice, as Chairman Man taught. I suggested that he add a gin and tonic to his sphere of experience. Mr. Yeh said he had heard of gin and would be glad to make an experiment.

This stilted snatch of conversation was considered high humor by all concerned. The manipulation of political slogans to fit odd situations was one of the acceptable ways to make people laugh in the People's Republic during the early 1970s. Along this line, I told my guests that I had locked myself out of my car in front of a downtown bathhouse a few days before. I went to a nearby hardware store and bought a bamboo pole and some wire and proceeded to reach for the car door handle through a slit left open in the back window. A crowd of a hundred or so gathered to watch. To defuse the situation, I needed to explain why this red haired, tiger-eyed big nose was stealing his own car. A quotation from Chairman Mao rescued me. I told the crowd I had confronted a severe contradiction, analyzed the situation, and was now in the process of conducting a scientific experiment aimed at resolving the contradiction. These lines would not make it on late night TV in the US, but broke up the street crowd. All kinds of help and advice were forthcoming and I drove away leaving them buzzing.

We sat down to a dinner of ham, ratatouille, pate and vin rose. Ritual toasts to friendship followed along with more talk about humor and society. I noted that there was no humor published in the papers and wondered if anyone told jokes in the People's Republic. Oh

yes indeed, came the reply, and perhaps we would like to hear some. Well, there followed a story about a dumb general--there seemed to be a genre of dumb general jokes much like our moron or Polish jokes--who came upon a basketball game and, puzzled as to why everyone was fighting over one ball, ordered that nine more be issued so that peace might be restored. There was another story about a father who was so stingy, he would not let his sons eat the meat hanging in the larder, only smell it and would get upset if the kids took more than one sniff at a time. Mr. Sung told a sour parable about a man who starved to death after winning a debate with Confucius. Such was the state of the art.

After dinner we had a long discussion about the differences in our societies stemming from the different emphases we each placed on the individual and the collective respectively—a good solid discussion and useful for the pristine ears of the new graduate. They left at 10:30, having arrived at 6:15, the equivalent of a Western dinner lasting well past midnight.

We continued to batten down the hatches for Dr. Kissinger, even as the dates for his arrival slid further away. USLO prepared briefing papers on every issue likely to come up, including US-PRC Working Level Bilateral Relations, Cambodia, Sino-Soviet and US-Soviet Relations, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, South Vietnam and Laos, and Economic Issues. It was the first time in my memory that a mission abroad had provided the Secretary of State (Kissinger was approved by the Senate September 19) with a full set of papers in advance.

The news from the United States --the facedown with the Soviets over the Middle East, President Nixon's decision to hand over his tapes—continued to make us reel. Sheila and I will never forget lying in bed at 7:00 AM listening to the Nixon press conference live, as hundreds of blue clad cyclists passed below our window on their way to work, and hearing our President declare, "I am not a crook."

Kissinger Comes

Henry Kissinger finally arrived November 10 bringing a whirlwind of activity off the plane with him. His entourage included many who would become key officials in the Kissinger State Department: Bob Ingersoll, Ambassador to Japan and soon to be Assistant Secretary for East Asia; Bob McCloskey, Press Secretary; Art Hummel, Acting Assistant Secretary for East Asia, later Ambassador to the PRC; Tom Pickering, Executive Secretary; Winston Lord, soon to be Director of Policy Planning; Roy Atherton, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asia; Oscar Armstrong, Director of the PRC Desk, and Dick Solomon and Commander Jon Howe of Kissinger's NSC Staff. Winston Lord's wife, Bette Bao Lord, was also along, visiting the country of her birth for the first time since the revolution.

The Secretary's itinerary spanned the globe. Next stop would be Tokyo, for an Asian Chiefs of Mission Conference. President Nixon was on the decline, possible impeachment under discussion in the US media. Kissinger, by contrast, was at the top of his game, dealing with crises everywhere, most recently the Middle East.

Arriving at our villa in the now familiar State Guest compound, Executive Secretary Tom Pickering, already gray with fatigue, reviewed all arrangements with me. As the delegation settled in, I overheard juicy snatches of conversation. Kissinger, fresh from negotiating the ceasefire between Egypt and Israel, remarked to Bruce: “I would love to put Golda Meir and Nguyen Van Thieu in the same negotiation with each other. They deserve each other. I have always thought that for sheer ingratitude Thieu was unmatched. Now I know better.”

The Chinese had arranged the four day stop like a mini- Nixon visit, including banquets, high level conversations, with Zhou, Mao, Kissinger and Bruce, counterpart talks on more mundane issues involving the rest of us, and some sightseeing. On the Chinese side, as before, Marshall Ye Jianying and Vice Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua played prominent roles. Top radicals like Wang Hongwen, were nowhere to be seen.

At the opening banquet, Kissinger harked back to early times in our relationship. *“None of us who took this trip can ever forget the sense of excitement when we entered China for the first time. It was not only that we were visiting a new country, and what we thought was the mysterious country until the Prime Minister pointed out to me that it was due more to our ignorance than to its mystery. But it was above all because we knew that the normalization of relations between China and the United States was essential for the peace of the world. We set ourselves the task of moving forward with determination toward the normalization of relations.*

.....We have made good progress, we have Liaison Offices in each other’s capital, and we have increased exchanges between our two countries. But we are determined to do much more and to complete the process we started two years ago as rapidly as possible.”

In a Holding Pattern

At best, the Kissinger’s presence in Beijing held the relationship in place during a turbulent time in the Washington and the rest of the world. He also came bearing secret offers of security and intelligence cooperation vis a vis the Soviets, gifts to which we were not given access. Hours of conversation with the Premier and a lively session with Mao, normal treatment for Kissinger, were career high points for Bruce, who sat in on all of them. He told me that Mao was vigorous during his almost three hours with HAK, and could have kept going for another two hours had not time intervened--i.e., the banquet schedule. He laughed, joked, and dominated the conversation, which was almost a monologue. Cambodia was discussed little at this meeting or the entire visit for that matter. The Soviet threat was touched upon but not exhaustively. Don’t trust them” – we know you must have dealings. Watch out.” Mao had good recall, and wanted to talk about philosophy.

Bruce was impressed with the personal relationship that apparently existed between Mao, Zhou and Kissinger. They obviously respected and trusted him. Zhou and Mao obviously were obviously close to each other, Bruce continued. The Premier gave not the slightest

hint of being in any sort of political trouble whatsoever – being relaxed and confident throughout. The young ladies, Wang Hairong and Nancy Tang played an interpreting role and were clearly the chairman’s “pets”.

By contrast, the Counterpart Talks were a grueling stalemate. The Chinese stonewalled on nuts and bolts issues, specifically frozen assets claims. We gave no ground on Most Favored Nation treatment on trade matters. The existence of Taiwan government consulates in the United States was a sore point. The Chinese read of a list of ten exchanges they had approved for each side, but that was it. Concrete progress toward normalization was negligible.

Dick Solomon, who was dealing for the first time with the Chinese on their own turf, was disappointed with both sides. The inability to engage in give and take, the tightness of the PRC political framework, the lack of room for maneuver, were frustrating. Kissinger, he thought, would have trouble getting support within the US Government for the kind of security cooperation he had in mind if the Chinese remained so inflexible. I did not know what HAK had in mind on security matters, but told Solomon that the hard-necked attitude displayed by Chinese bureaucrats was normal. That was the way they dealt with other countries. That was the price of normalization – to be treated like a boarder rather than a guest. Our idea of what could be accomplished day to day had been warped by the extraordinary progress Henry’s personal relationship with Zhou Enlai had produced. I told myself that I dreaded true normalization.

Irritating the Soviets

At a private lunch in the Guesthouse (Win and Betty Lord, Dick Solomon, Tom Pickering, Jon Howe were at the table) Kissinger ripped Soviet behavior in recent negotiations. He knew the Chinese were listening, but this was not just for their benefit. I got the strong impression that he believed everything he said, and found the vituperation relaxing.

Labeling the Soviets an “extraordinary bunch of shits” he went on to describe their crude negotiating tactics, social rudeness, and general boorishness. Once, near the end of negotiating a recent agreement, the Soviets gave him their latest draft, describing it as very close, with only minor changes to what the U.S. had wanted, and then left immediately for lunch (after which signing was to take place). HAK discovered the document had many changes, was miles away from what the US wanted. He told the Soviets no dice, no change no agreement. Later the Soviet Ambassador commented, “I told them it wouldn’t work.”

During the Brezhnev visit to Camp David, Brezhnev never arrived on time, lounging conspicuously in front of his cottage at times when he was supposed to be meeting or eating with the President. He tried to see the President alone without Kissinger by saying he was tired, pretending to take a nap, and then bounding up when he thought Henry was out of range and asking for an appointment with RN. The Secret Service alerted Kissinger, who appeared at the meeting to Brezhnev’s discomfiture. The Soviets are able

to swear, call names, heap invective on the President's head (this of course while he was bombing Hanoi) and then be sweetness and light at dinner as if nothing had happened while getting bombed themselves.

Kissinger loved to play the US /China/USSR triangle. One morning at the Liaison Office after a session with David Bruce, he saw me reading the Chinese papers and asked me to show him what had been quoted from his toast the day before. He was particularly interested in his statement on US aversion to hegemonism, not just in Asia but worldwide. When I read the People's Daily account to him he asked, "Do you think that will drive the Soviets up the wall?" I answered that I thought it would. "I think so too," he replied, happily.

A Thousand Cups Among Friends

The visit was, if anything, a subtle success. The meetings, especially with Mao and Zhou, bespoke a strong relationship between the principals, at least. Relations at lower levels could be sour and testy. The communiqué itself was a bland document around which one had to peck vigorously to find kernels of new substance. Clear Chinese conditions for normalization were glossed over. There would be more frequent talks "at authoritative levels", and the Liaison Offices would be upgraded "qualitatively and quantitatively." That was Kissinger's phrase and no one knew what it meant. Bruce liked the mission small, and Kissinger agreed. He had called our office "in many ways a model for a revitalized Foreign Service,") In any case, there was no physical room for new bodies. Secret security arrangements, of course were not mentioned at all. Nor were the Marines, who would be allowed to stay, at least for a while.

The Secretary of State, with his entourage hovering about like so many gay flannel helicopters, departed on the morning of the 14th taking their private whirlwind with them. During a last chat at the airport he commented on some of the material I had supplied for his final toast to Zhou Enlai. In his staff office he had stood over me impatiently while I was finishing it and torn it from the typewriter. Looking at it, he had pursed his lips and said "It won't be one of my greatest," and given it back. Win Lord, at a desk nearby said this amounted to an A minus. A more standard reaction, Win said, was to shout "garbage," tear it up and throw it away.

For this particular toast I had given him a traditional Chinese saying: "When among close friends a thousand cups is not enough." Kissinger told me after hearing it Zhou had gone back to him asking if he knew the second half of the saying, which translates roughly "among those who do not understand each other half a sentence is too long." Henry reported he had laughed and replied he was incapable of delivering only half a sentence. He asked me at the airport if I knew the second half. I said I did, but that I had thought only the first part right for a toast. It was appropriate for those who had developed the kind of relationship he had with Premier Zhou. It would not have been right for his first visit, but was just the thing for his sixth. Kissinger, happy on balance with the outcome of his visit, bounded up the ramp of the plane and was gone.

A Fatal Accident

Our life changed in the blink of an eye.

“Last Sunday,” I wrote Adam and Oliver on December 2, 1973, “we were all driving toward the Great Wall in the little red Toyota – your mother, grandmother, grandfather, and Sanhu along with me. It was a lovely clear blue day and our spirits were high. We had given a large and delightful party for the parents the night before at the Mongolian barbecue restaurant on the North Lake. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a young teenage girl cyclist coming in the opposite direction swerved in front of us. I jammed on the brakes, trying desperately to stop, but could not. We hit her bike and she flew over the hood of the car, hitting and smashing the windshield, and landing in a heap off to the side seriously hurt. We flagged down a truck and I took her to the hospital, where she died that afternoon. Needless to say, we all feel terrible about this, especially me who was at the wheel at the time... No one in our car was hurt, though there was glass all over the place. The car suffered a broken windshield and some minor dents.”

I remember vividly the bumpy freezing ride watching the poor creature, never to regain consciousness, convulse slowly. The first hospital we came to specialized in bone sets and could only send us on to another hospital in the same jarring truck, but this time with two doctors and a stretcher bed. The Xuanwu hospital specialized in brain surgery took her in, said she was in very serious shape, and started operating immediately. She died four hours later.

Sheila’s diary, written the day of the accident, provides her own poignant perspective:

11:20 En Route to the Great Wall, lovely morning.

Our accident. Skid, crash, feeling that life was completely changed, all our happiness gone. Stood in the road surrounded by a crowd of 2-300 country people, enjoying the spectacle as we tried to get help for the girl we hit. She bled heavily from her right ear and twitched right outside our window. Helen (Nick’s mother) stood between her and Sanhu, who busied himself in the car reading. Got a flatbed truck to help, lifted her on straw mats and N took her off down the road...The Bonavias and a French couple stopped and the latter phoned USLO. Eventually Herb Horowitz arrived and the big station wagon took Helen, Geoff and Sanhu away to an agonizing afternoon of waiting in the flat. ..The Public Security Bureau took photos and measurements, and we all stood about until 4:30 pm when Nick got back and signed a statement of facts about the accident after having it interpreted.

We drove the car, shattered windshield and all to the Public Security Bureau (Foreigners’ Division) on the street east of the Forbidden City. Another statement taken in a curtained room by a big cop. John Holdridge was present and a little PSB interpreter named Ma. I was allowed to call Helen and Geoff. Got home, trembling, at 5:30. We spent an appalling evening of apprehension and shock, going over the circumstances in our heads... Sanhu drew a picture entitled ‘I am proud to announce that Nicholas Platt is innocent!, with judge and cheering crowds.’

The Investigation Turns Hostile

Sheila stuck close to me as the Public Security Bureau, increasingly hostile, continued their investigation. Her journal describes a disturbing interrogation on December 9:

NP and I were called again to PSB. More questioning, this time with a stout, unintroduced and obviously senior cadre sitting in. The tone of the proceeding was accusatory and unfriendly. They suggested NP's "mind wandering, mind numb, not paying attention", or he would have seen the girl. NP patently stated her action, crossing our path from the left, was too sudden and unexpected to avoid hitting her. Inconclusive and frightening session suggesting they wish to pin responsibility on us. Nothing said about speed Hostile reaction when NP stated that he did not understand why the girl was in his path. What was she doing there? The response from the cadres was that it was not our role to cross examine them. The senior cadre threw in that the girl was going home. The most upsetting thing about this whole session was their statement that we could have seen the girl before the crossroad and avoided her, but didn't because of carelessness...

PSB required that we view the body at the hospital morgue. We were driven slowly to the hospital, kept waiting in a yard next to an incinerator. We were shown the body in new clothes, with a red scarf around the lower face, wrapped in a pink blanket. We requested the scarf to be lifted and made positive identification. A scar on her forehead marked the site of the unsuccessful operation...A brutal morning leaving both of us very upset, unconfident of the fairness (of the Chinese authorities).

In the difficult days that followed, Sheila held the family fort, moving my parents through the familiar sights of Beijing, and accompanying them on a short trip to Shanghai and Suzhou. (I was not permitted to leave Beijing). My mother and father left for the United States, as scheduled, on December 7.

My USLO colleagues and other members of the international community crowded around to provide what comfort and support they could. Jim Lilley, whose ear was always glued to the ground, cheered me up with a report from Beijing's super-efficient grapevine. Word of the accident was all over the capital within twenty four hours. Popular opinion, for what that was worth, judged me not at fault, and a good person for having made the effort to take the girl to hospital.

Official Judgment

David Bruce reported the real PSB judgment to Washington in the following cable I drafted for him.

1. *Peking Public Security Bureau Traffic Section rendered decision December 21 on Platt accident which decreed withdrawal of his driver's license and payment of 25, 380 Yuan to family of deceased. Decision laid no blame on victim but charged Platt with ignoring PRC laws and serious violations of Municipal Traffic regulations. That mother*

of deceased had been rendered unable to work as result of accident (due to mental breakdown as subsequently alleged) added to seriousness of case, decision said.

2. *Upon hearing decision, Platt asked what appeal procedures were available, and requested full documentation behind finding of traffic violations including PSB diagrams of accident scene. Public Security officials replied that such documents not normally made available, that facts of case were “irrefutable” and that “indignation of masses” could not be held in check much longer. Platt asked for and received permission for adjournment to discuss case with me and my deputies.*

3. *We all agreed that there nothing to gain by rehashing with the Chinese the circumstances of the accident, although there was no conclusive evidence that Platt had been exceeding official speed limit (which is 60 kilometers per hour or 37.5 MPH), or that victim coming from opposite direction had not swerved suddenly into his path. Moreover, not mentioned in final statement was that victim might not have reached hospital at all had it not been for successful efforts of Platt to commandeer a truck and accompany her first to one hospital and then another.*

4. *Our assessment was that grave consequences of accident and desire of authorities to provide compensation to bereaved parents decided them to place full blame on foreigner driving automobile. Rather than work forward from the facts, the PSB had worked backward from the results in accordance with practice often followed in adjudication in PRC.*

5. *We agreed that it would be in best interest of both USLO and Platt if he accepted penalties, but refused to sign any documents suggesting admission that he had violated PRC laws and regulations.*

6. *During afternoon meeting December 21 with Traffic Section, Platt presented letter to PSB accepting withdrawal of license and payment of indemnities, but nothing else. When Chinese asked that he sign decision, he demurred, asking that letter be considered sufficient. PSB agreed and declared case closed. PSB refused final request by Platt for PSB diagram of accident.*

7. *Indemnity, under Platt’s policy with Ming An Insurance Co (Hong Kong), paid promptly December 22 by their Peking agent, the People’s Insurance Co.*

8. *We assume that Chinese declaration that case closed means precisely that and that both USLO’s and Platt’s future relations with PRC officials will not be affected. (Platt Diaries, Volume3)*

Sentenced to Leave China

In fact, my ordeal was far from over, as the next cable reported:

”Subject: PRC Request Platt Recall

MFA/Oceanian Affairs Director Lin Ping called Jenkins to MFA December 29 and delivered following statement from prepared text:

“I have asked you to come here today to discuss the unfortunate accident of November 25 in which the car driven by Mr. Platt on the way to the Great Wall caused the death of a fifteen year-old school girl. The Traffic Control Division of the Peking Municipality has made a decision on the case and Mr. Platt has undertaken to indemnify the relatives of the deceased.

“However, this is a case of irreparable loss which no indemnity can replace. Even now, the girl’s other is in an abnormal mental condition due to the shock.

“As the American side may be aware, previously when deaths have been caused by diplomats stationed in Peking, the diplomats have invariably been recalled on their own initiative.

“The US side will understand our wish that this matter be handled the same way.”

Jenkins replied as follows:

“As you know, our reaction to the accident was one of inexpressible sorrow. It is true that a matter of that sort is basically irreparable, and it has given us all heavy hearts. Recognizing that, and continuing to be distressed about the incident, we had yet hoped and believed that when the Peking Traffic Section recently termed the case closed, they meant precisely that. I shall report your statement to Mr. Bruce and to the Secretary of State.

“I was not aware that recall was the invariable reaction in China to events of this sort. I cannot refrain from saying that if we should be deprived of the services of Mr. Platt he would be sorely missed—not only because he is uncommonly able, but also because I know his convictions are well suited to our efforts to improve relations and that he is personally dedicated to the accomplishment of our mutual purposes here. We have all been deeply saddened by the accident, most of all Mr. Platt. Finally, it seems to me that in Peking-type traffic, this sort of thing can happen to a most careful driver.”

After brief, essentially redundant exchanges, discussion on the subject ended with Lin stating he could not accept Jenkins’ characterization of Peking-type traffic. He added that the case had touched upon “emotional and mental condition of the people.”

”There was something eerie and upsetting, my diary commented, about being the note taker at my own sentencing. Ling Ping seemed to rather enjoy it all. Tang Lungbin, the protocol man with whom I had worked closely on the Kissinger trip and other projects looked positively ill (to his everlasting credit). Jao Jia, the lady interpreter whom I had first met on the Nixon trip, did her job with gusto. (Now a lawyer in Chicago, she told me

recently that Lin Ping had warned her before the meeting to behave in a strictly professional manner.) *It was a beautiful day outside. Tea and cigarettes were offered, just like any other time. The weather discussed, and then—wham!.. Al Jenkins handled himself well, though obviously shaken by the proceedings.*

Backing from David Bruce

Mr. Bruce, whose support and wide sympathy were crucial to Sheila and me, cabled Henry Kissinger the same day:

“You will already have received telegram regarding PRC decision to have Platt leave the country at an unspecified date because of automobile accident. We had hoped affair was closed as a result of acceptance of license revocation and payment of indemnity.

I have no knowledge, nor likelihood of obtaining accurate facts about cited reference to recall being “invariable” outcome of traffic deaths caused by foreign diplomats in PRC.

It seems to me best not to argue further, or try to appeal this arbitrary decision. I consider this determination unfair to Platt, and to prospective loss of his services a severe blow to the future efficiency of our Mission.

I do, moreover, feel deeply concerned over the possible connection of this action with other recent picayune incidents such as refusal to issue TDY (Temporary Duty) visas for USLO replacements, obviously exaggerated complaints over Marines, long delays in answering requests for appointments with officials, and various indications of a marked lack of reciprocity here for our sensitive treatment of PRCLC representatives in the United States.

My personal recommendation is that if practicable concurrently with Platt’s leaving it should be announced that he has been assigned to another position in Washington or elsewhere of a grade and importance that would be judged as constituting a promotion.

In my estimation Platt is a man of exceptional ability and high character. He had behaved during the whole of this recent painful period with admirable dignity and compassion. Such an appointment as I have suggested would signal to the Chinese that although we had complied with their own severing rights to demand a recall, we do not ourselves regard this as a reflection on the officer to whom it was applied, but on the contrary maintain entire confidence in him.

I believe this requires speedy handling.”

We now slid off one tenterhook onto another, from waiting to know what the police would do, to waiting to know what the Foreign Ministry would do, to sweating out the Department’s decision on a new assignment. Bruce had been assured that the Secretary of State was fully aware of the problem and would not let it get lost in the bureaucracy. That was a comfort, as was the knowledge that the Director General of the Foreign Service,

Ambassador Davis had exactly the same problem in Bulgaria when he was Chief of Mission, with exactly the same results.

The following weeks were trying beyond words, but correctly handled. I was my own action officer throughout, both a cruelty, and a blessing. At least I had something to do. None of us had planned for such a contingency. As in so many other situations, Don Anderson and I made it up as we went along, supported by our bosses. One thing we all agreed on. USLO, not Washington, would make the decisions. The accident must not be politicized and become football thrown around in the bureaucracy at home.

Washington reluctantly acquiesced in the Chinese action. Our research with other missions, in fact confirmed, Lin Ping's assertion that "previously when deaths have been caused by diplomats stationed in Peking, the diplomats have invariably been recalled on their own initiative." We were right to yield. Other missions who fought the ruling ended up with the offending diplomat declared *persona non grata* and given hours to leave. Recalling myself "on my own initiative" preserved, I later found out, options for future dealings with the Chinese.

Press play was brief but worldwide and smoothly managed. Everyone knew what to say and said it. My father called from New York report that reaction had been sympathetic. Our final weeks included a brief but emotional round of farewell parties, capped by a big reception given by the Bruces, who were saintly throughout the entire affair.

Bruce's Prophecy

I called on David Bruce at four o'clock in the afternoon, the day before I left China. The weak January sun straining through the Beijing dust barely lit the room. The old ambassador looked at me through his hooded, droopy eyes, and said, "The accident was awful for you, but a great break for your career."

I was astonished. I had killed a Chinese girl. My career as a "China Boy" was over. How could this be a great break? Smiling his warm wrinkly smile, Bruce explained that the China specialty was narrow. I would now be forced to branch out, with opportunities to climb a broader and taller ladder in the State Department. "Beijing is a dead end," he said.

As we parted, Bruce told me he was coming home for a spell. He had "done about as much window dressing as he could." His house in Georgetown was open. Huang Jen had a big lead in consultation time. Henry wanted to see him. Bruce invited me to come and see him.

The End of the Beginning

We left Beijing the morning of January 19 on Air France bound for Paris. I had asked David Bruce to authorize departure via Europe, knowing that passing through Hong Kong bore high risks for me and future dealings with the Chinese. Too many friends,

particularly in the press, would lead inevitably to a press conference. Sore and vulnerable, I was bound to say something that I, and USLO, would regret. No one knew us in Paris except for the lifelong Foreign Service friends, Allen and Marilyn Holmes, to whom we were bound for a two weeks of comfort and diversion en route to Washington. Bruce approved and we traveled without public notice.

Leaving Beijing was difficult and emotional. As Bruce reported to Washington:

Subject: Platt Departure

Nicholas Platt's departure from Beijing January 19 provoked one of the largest airport turnouts we have seen since arriving. A score of diplomats including New Zealand ambassador and counselors from (British), German Soviet, Polish and other missions turned out at 7:00 a.m. along with sizable American contingent. While this was primarily a demonstration of the high regard in which they hold Nick Platt, several members of the diplomatic corps commented privately that they wished to show a sense of solidarity with him in response to the Chinese handling of the entire affair". (Op. Cit. pg. 421)

Saying goodbye to USLO couples, the Jenkinses, Holdridges, Andersons, Horowitzes, Lilleys, families with whom we had lived close as on a nuclear submarine, was particularly hard for Sheila, Sanhu and me. I was happy to note a few tangible benefits for some. Don Anderson got my job, Jim Lilley my apartment, but the event was indelibly sad. Lucille Zaelit, my irrepressible secretary, British diplomat John Boyd, a close friend since Hong Kong days, and journalist John Burns, who had shown special compassion after the accident were also difficult to leave. In due course the flight was called, we climbed the stairs to the plane and flew away.

What Next?

Six years later, around a hot pot in our kitchen in Washington, a Chinese diplomat described the private reaction within the Foreign Ministry to our accident. Several people had defended me, he said, maintaining I had acted honorably in stopping the car, hailing a truck, and taking the girl to the hospital. Other foreigners involved in accidents had behaved differently. He intimated that the same ruling would not have been made now, with the new emphasis on legal procedures in the PRC and more relaxed politics under Deng Xiaoping.

The accident in Beijing had a profound effect on our professional and family lives. It forced me to grow from a "China Boy" into an Asia Hand. For Sheila, our personal wounds spurred an intense interest in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder that led to a lifetime specialty as a counselor and trainer to international institutions, whose personnel abroad confronted the same kinds of shock. The accident, Sanhu told me recently, turned him into a fearful hypochondriac for a time. Memories of the windshield shattering, turning opaque white, and the rank smell of soybeans kept flashing back. Thereafter, for some years, whenever there was a thunderstorm with lightning, he slept in rubber boots. "You had a boring childhood", he commented. "But you made sure your children did not."

Charting a New Course

I was pondering flurry of excellent job offers, including my original onward assignment to the political section in Embassy Tokyo, when a message came from General Brent Scowcroft, Kissinger's deputy at the National Security Council. He said the Secretary was interested in having me on the NSC staff and that I should wait.

Arriving in Washington, I called on General Scowcroft to ask whether he really thought I could be effective dealing with the Chinese in Washington, given the circumstances of my departure from Beijing. He replied that Kissinger had instructed him to contact PRCLC deputy Han Xu to explore, privately and informally, the answer to this question. Han told him that the Chinese side would have no problem dealing with me whatsoever.

While this news was a relief, I had discovered while in Washington that I was just not ready to return, or, for the time being, work on Chinese issues. The bad memories were still too fresh, and would warp my judgment for some time to come. I told General Scowcroft that I would prefer the assignment to Tokyo, a job that had been in my sights for years which I had given up to go to Beijing. He agreed and released me.

I have always been grateful to Henry Kissinger for taking a personal interest in my fate. I was told that he insisted on clearing the cable listing my assignment options and scratched off a number of jobs that had no China content. He did not want the Chinese to conclude that they had put me out of their business. My friends in personnel revealed that they had beefed up the description of the China aspects of the Tokyo job--I would be covering Japan's foreign policy, particularly in Asia-- so he would not scratch it, too. His interest insured that the options remained open and that when I made my choice it would stick.

At the end of February 1974, I left for Yokohama and five months of Japanese language training prior to reporting for work at Embassy Tokyo.

Language Therapy

The shock of leaving Beijing began to dissolve under total immersion in the Japanese language. The training was therapeutic. The process--repetition with a tangible result--was like sawing wood, a comfort and a distraction. Not that it was easy. On the contrary, I wrote home, "... *the first missionary who ever studied this language reported to his bishop that it was an invention of the devil designed to prevent the spread of God's word to the people of these islands. He was right.... In any case, I am up at 6:20 AM... ride the train from Tokyo to Yokohama--sardined among hundreds of Japanese--to be at class by 8:45. I have a small tape recorder (all our lessons are on cassettes), which hangs around my neck connected to my ear by a plug and a wire and I study all the way, mouthing the phrases pumped into my ear. It must be a surprise to my traveling companions to be near a towering foreigner who seems preoccupied and from time to time utters irrelevant snatches of language like 'I would like two copies of that big red dictionary, and three*

sheets of white paper, too' from time to time. The schooling lasts from 8:45 to 3:20--very intense but so different from the work I have been doing that it seems almost a holiday. All I have to worry about is whether I can memorize the next dialogue in the lesson, or master a practical new grammatical pattern."

Being right there in the culture helped me learn. The same day I studied the phrases needed to guide a taxi--"stop here," "straight ahead," "turn left", "turn right"--I tried them out on a bemused driver. He responded obediently to this form of linguistic dressage, patiently performing the maneuvers again and again as I barked the commands.

The language training revealed the strength of Chinese culture in Japanese society. The Japanese borrowed and adapted the architecture, lifestyle and culture of China wholesale during the Tang Dynasty, (600-900AD), an era when China really was the center of the known world, a vibrant, open and technologically advanced society. The grandeur of Tang wooden buildings is best preserved in the ancient capitals of Kyoto and Nara. Tang Chinese lived on the floor. Japanese still do now. Confucian values, Zen Buddhism, Tao intuition--all Tang exports--are at the center of Japanese philosophy. Japan's complicated mix of attitudes toward China, contrasting a strong sense of cultural inferiority with the confidence and competence to assimilate and master foreign technology and art, date from seventh century China

More to my immediate concern, during Tang times the Japanese created their writing system around Chinese characters, an extraordinary feat given that Chinese grammar lacks the tenses, declensions, possessives, particles, articles and other troublesome inflections that riddle the Japanese language (and ours, too). Japanese use a different verb form to address the various ranks and stations in society. There's a special form for use with the emperor, your wife, child, dog, boss, equal, inferior, or barbarian colleague. This explains the extraordinary importance of name cards to Japanese. If you do not know the rank of the person you are addressing, you cannot communicate correctly.

The Japanese created two separate systems of phonetic symbols (Hiragana and Katakana) to deal with their inflections and words of Japanese and foreign origins. These they mixed with Chinese characters to create the most infernal writing system any foreigner could confront. Those who master the language as children or native speakers find it an exceptionally efficient and incredibly fast reading method. Those from abroad who start late find hell.

The Japanese talent for making foreign words their very own helped me understand the ease with which they adopted foreign ideas. "Waishatsu", from "white shirt", meant any dress shirt. "Sebiro" from "Saville Row", meant a western suit. "Hutoboru" was, simply, a football. My favorite slang expression, "bakshan", a combination of the English word "back"; and the German word, "schoen"--"beautiful" meant, "she looks great from behind, but not so hot when you get round to the front." The Chinese, whose language is sacrosanct, could not abide such practices. Faced with the challenge of rendering the term "parachute," they put together the three ideograms for "descending", "life-saving" and

“umbrella”. The Japanese version was “parashuto”. No wonder it seemed more difficult for the Chinese to absorb the techniques of modernization.

Comfort at the Survival Level

I left language school in Yokohama with survival level Japanese. I could manage travel, train schedules, maps. Many place names use Chinese characters, which helped me navigate. I could feed myself, buy movie tickets, shop, drive the back roads of Japan and convey polite greetings.

Happily, my job at Embassy Tokyo would not require the foreign language level that I had needed in China. My beat was the Foreign Ministry (Gaimusho), tracking the key elements of Japan’s foreign policy, including China, Korea, Southeast Asia the Soviet Union and the Middle East. My contacts and counterparts were Japanese professional diplomats whose English was far better than my Japanese would ever be. So we conducted our business in English.

This practice yielded special dividends. My Japanese colleagues were much more candid in my language than in theirs. Spoken Japanese, my months in Yokohama had taught me, is a language shot through with equivocation, precise in the service of obfuscation, its purpose to avoid giving offense, rather than to communicating bluntly. Day-to-day usage serves more as a verbal lubricant a crowded and tightly regimented society, than as a vehicle of clear expression. As a result, I was thrilled to discover, my Japanese contacts felt free to tell me things in English that they would not have said to their own countrymen, providing sharp insights and private thoughts that spiced my reports to Washington.

I had had a parallel experience when speaking Chinese in Beijing, and found myself being more blunt and candid than I would have been using the nuances of my own language. In part this was because I didn’t know many ways of saying things differently. In part it was the sense that my own countrymen could not listen in that gave me a license for candor.

A Perfect Plug In

I was also lucky with the level at which I connected with official Japan. As a First Secretary of Embassy I was expected to deal with the directors of the different “desks” (China, Korea, USSR, US, etc.) of the Ministry, the perfect place to plug into the foreign policy establishment. My counterparts, some of whom I had known for years, were expert on their areas of responsibility and welcomed the chance to exchange information. More important, the office directors were charged with devising solutions to whatever problems arose, and encouraged to think for themselves. In the Japanese system, their seniors on up the line spent most of their time developing consensus around the ideas that their unfettered directors sent upward. As their careers progressed, my counterparts would become consensus managers, too. But for now I had open access to the freshest thinking in Tokyo’s foreign policy establishment.

Over the next three years, I practically lived at the Foreign Ministry, sometimes visiting two or three times on a given day. With traffic jammed solid in downtown Tokyo, I soon resorted to traveling the half-mile from the embassy to the Gaimusho very discreetly by bicycle, a diplomatic conveyance hardly used in status-obsessed Japan. Frequent contact bred lasting friendships. Japanese diplomats, unlike their arms-length Chinese counterparts, loved to come to American homes, and would sing after dinner without coaxing. Their renditions of American folksongs were even worse than mine. Initially reserved and impenetrable, they relaxed and warmed up over time. The decision that you were a friend brought with it lifetime responsibilities. There was something quite familiar about the way Japanese handled their relationships. Later, it dawned on me that they behaved like Bostonians.

Work in a Big City Embassy

In contrast to USLO Beijing, a small, isolated pioneer settlement, Embassy Tokyo was a long established city, large and well organized. Deputy Chief of Mission Tom Shoesmith was the de facto mayor. The Ambassador was Robert Hodgson, a political appointee who had been a vice chairman of Lockheed Corporation. Untainted by the bribery scandal involving Lockheed that shook the Japanese political structure over the next several years, Hodgson's low key and unassuming style made him an effective envoy during what would emerge as a tricky time in the relationship between the US and Japan. Also on the staff were key figures who were to become important colleagues and friends: Mike Armacost, who was ending a tour as Ambassador Ingersoll's aide, later Ambassador to the Philippines and Japan; William Clark, a future Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and later Ambassador to India when I was in Pakistan, was also finishing up his tour in the political section.)

My immediate boss was Richard Petree, the Political Counselor, a wise and calm Japan hand with several tours under his belt. The Political Section that he led was roughly the same size as the entire Liaison Office in China. My job was to help him manage the whole section, in addition to my own External Affairs Unit. The Japan hands welcomed me and my family into their community. I had not gone through the full two year language training ritual required for entrance into what envious outsiders called the Cherry Blossom Society, but that did not seem to matter. Desaix Anderson, later prominent as the first US Charge in Hanoi, was my deputy. Desaix was an indefatigable legman whose extensive network of close relationships throughout the Foreign Office provided tons of grist for our reporting mill. Howard McElroy, a feisty former Marine from Long Island (he later became, in effect, the Mayor of Southampton) managed politico-military affairs William Breer, who rose to become Deputy Chief of Mission in Tokyo, (one of the biggest jobs in the Foreign Service), was in charge of covering the labyrinth of Japan's domestic politics.) I began to sense that David Bruce had been right about the benefits of a broader career.

Wags in the embassy joked that following Japanese foreign policy was a non-job, because Japan did not have one. You could have fooled me. As I worked my way into the Foreign Ministry, I found Japanese diplomacy tightly focused on:

- (1) Security, which relied for protection against the Soviets on the nuclear umbrella under the treaty with the United States and the conventional shelter provided by our Pacific Fleet. The Japanese paid minute attention to developments on the neighboring Korean Peninsula, strategically regarded as a “dagger pointed at Japan’s heart”. The half million Koreans living in Japan ensured that domestic politics were hotly intertwined. China was then seen as less of a threat, but an object of close scrutiny.
- (2) The development and maintenance of reliable sources of raw materials, which drove relations with the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, the United States and the Soviet Union.
- (3) Access to markets throughout the world, of which the US was the most important. Looking back, Japanese foreign policy in the ‘seventies was a more reticent and less confident version of China’s diplomacy now, with domestic growth objectives the paramount determinant of behavior toward the outside world.

The oil crisis in 1972 had sharpened Japan’s sense of dependence internationally—on the Arabs for oil, on the U.S. for security, and on the rest of the third world for raw materials.

President Ford Pays a Visit

These trends and pressures formed the backdrop for the visit of the new US President, Gerald Ford, in November 1974. President Nixon’s resignation that August had riveted Japan’s attention. The final hours of Nixon’s presidency on August 9 were broadcast live on Armed Forces Radio, and Tokyo media. The Japanese had felt betrayed by Nixon’s failure to inform them in advance of his opening to China, but the “Nixon Shock” was now past. Local analysts saw the Ford visit as a tactical gesture of amends by Henry Kissinger, still Secretary of State. Kissinger’s memoirs make scant mention of the trip

Whatever the motivation, this was to be the first visit to Japan by a sitting US President in history. Remembering that riots against the Mutual Security Treaty had forced President Eisenhower to cancel his Tokyo stop in 1960, government authorities were hyper-nervous. To make matters even more intense, a huge bribery scandal involving Japanese officials and the Lockheed Corporation had just broken, and Prime Minister Tanaka had been implicated. The result would be a period of turmoil in Japanese politics. The power brokers in the Liberal Democratic Party, which had led the government since 1948 (and still does today) agreed that Tanaka could stay in office for the Ford visit, but this would be his last hurrah.

The process of organizing the activities abroad of our top leader is as complex and arcane as the choreography which governs the moves of a Chinese emperor. Having worked in the Executive Secretariat and taken part in Nixon’s visit to China, I was assigned as the embassy coordinator for the Ford operation. I was to learn the hard way the huge difference between simply going on a presidential trip and assembling one from the

ground up. My first job was to mobilize embassy support for the White House and State Department planners who set up the visit, make sure that the Embassy was working smoothly in harness with these people, and that they were properly plugged in to their counterparts in the Japanese government.

A President's personality determines the way his staff behaves. The advance men who managed President Nixon's visits had been arrogant and overbearing, reigning with terror over embassy underlings around the world. Ford's people were every bit as precise in their requirements, but friendly and accommodating in manner, and willing to learn and adjust to local conditions. Astonishingly, many of the Ford men were same people who had advanced Nixon's travels. Same guys, different boss. Result, different behavior.

I realized from the beginning that the only way to keep track of the things I needed to know was to attach myself like a pilot fish to these people. So, during three weeks of sixteen hour days I made my office a dressing table (with built in sink) in the Okura Hotel suite that the advance team used as headquarters. Propinquity is power in situations of this sort. Luckily, the head White House staffer, a freckled, friendly Irishman named Red Cavaney, welcomed all the help and advice I could provide, and did not find me obtrusive.

Two weeks before the arrival of Air Force One, with the schedule firm, we chose embassy officers to act in two capacities: as project officers responsible for ongoing functions like motorcades, motor pools, baggage, hotel rooms, security, gifts and thank you letters—and events officers, whose activities were focused on making a particular event go well. Thus we had an officer responsible for airport arrival and departure, one for all events at the Akasaka Palace (the Rococo home away from home that the Japanese use for a guest house), one for Imperial Palace events, etc. DCM Tom Shoesmith and I picked the people, set up meetings for them with their temporary White House and State Department masters, and the whole machine started to move.

There was a lot to do. About 500 visitors were involved, including Gerald Ford and the eight who made up his official party. The bulk of these were from the press, the White House Communications Agency, and the Secret Service, some of whom were already beginning to arrive. Several hundred hotel rooms had to be reserved and a motor pool of about 90 cars assembled for their use.

While the projects officers were making these arrangements, the events officers went to work visiting the sites the President would be in, diagramming every room he would pass through and every step he would take. They did this several times, refining each scenario, making sure for example that the doors he was supposed to enter opened (horror shows occur when such details are not checked out) and in general assuring that there would be no surprises. All this information was funneled into Cavaney, who together with his friendly pilot fish would discuss the details with the Protocol Department at the Foreign Ministry. After these discussions Cavaney would rewrite the general program and telephone the changes to Washington. The end product of the process was a little book,

which all members of the official Party carried, their guide for every step of the gigantic minuet that was to begin the moment the President emerged from his plane.

Once the organization was set up and at work, my job was to oversee its operation, spot problems, and solve them before they got big. If an events or projects officer was not being responsive, I had to find out why, talk to him, and get him back on the track. If the Japanese Government was sticking on a point, and the normal negotiating process was breaking down at the working level, I had to make sure that Shoemith took it up with the Chief of Protocol, or higher. Our desire to land a plane with presidential communications gear at Osaka, for example, met with strong opposition in the Japanese bureaucracy. Osaka airport had a leftist labor union, and they feared that the landing of a US military aircraft would touch off demonstrations.

Permission could be arranged only after Foreign Minister Kimura had had a word with the Minister of Transport. For several hours, however, there was no Minister of Transport with whom Kimura could have a word. The cabinet was reshuffled just as the plane in question was taking off from Washington. By the time a new minister had materialized, the plane had left Alaska and was inbound without permission to land. To our relief, the plane landed at Osaka without incident. Japanese sensitivity to military presence of any sort provided a cornucopia of negotiating topics. Military markings on all cars used at the Akasaka Palace had to be removed, as did the markings on helicopters.

Communications were a special headache. The President is expected to run his government from wherever he is, so he travels abroad with an electronic retinue that virtually strews telephones in his path, in addition to providing a coded communications system for paperwork. A balding Alabaman named Melvin Barefoot, the head of the White House Communications Agency advance team, became the only American to install a phone in the Imperial Palace.

Barefoot was a sophisticated negotiator. Confronted with the clash between his own requirements and a Japanese law which forbade foreigners from operating their own radio stations in Japan, he worked out a scheme whereby the US government would give the Japanese the White House equipment for a few days during which time the Japanese would kindly lease it back to us (for \$3000) and then return title to us after the trip was over. It was Kabuki Theater all the way, for the equipment never changed hands for a minute, but at least the Japanese would be able to tell questioners in their parliament if the matter was ever raised, that they were renting Japanese communications gear to the Americans for use during the President's trip.

By the time the President arrived on November 18, everything was ready for him and the four planeloads of courtiers, guards, media hacks, and communicators in his train. We knew his schedule to the minute, had plotted it to the foot, the layout of the Akasaka Palace and all the places he would visit. His helicopters and his armored car were waiting at the ramp, along with seven trucks, eight busses, and twenty cars for the rest. From there it went like a great big clock.

During the visit itself, I took advantage of my broad bureaucratic mandate to rubberneck unabashedly. I had the requisite passes to be a fly on a lot of walls, and made the most of it. I watched the President move stiffly, though with natural dignity, through the arrival ceremonies with the Emperor, saw him walk right by the Crown Prince and the Imperial Family (they were just too short for him to see), his cutaway trousers were a good three inches too short and his ankles froze in the brisk fall wind as he took the salute from the Guard of Honor.

I stood discreetly at the foot of the grand staircase of the Akasaka Palace as Kissinger swept down followed by a cloud of dignitaries.

“Platt, what are you doing here?”

“Oh, just keeping track of things, Mr. Secretary.”

“Well, if you’re keeping track of things, for God’s sake find me a bathroom.”

The next day, at cocktails before the President’s Banquet, I had a chance to thank the Secretary for his help after my accident in Beijing. He replied that he had appreciated what I had done in Beijing, and had hoped to get me on his staff in Washington. I told him that I was happy with the Tokyo assignment.

The President’s dinner was full of small vignettes:

- former Prime Minister Kishi, whose handling of the ratification of the Mutual Security Treaty in 1960 had led to the furor which snuffed out the Eisenhower visit, standing absolutely alone during cocktails, as if no one could think of a thing to say to him now that, almost fifteen years later, an American President had finally come to visit Japan.
- Prime Minister Tanaka, seated well below the Imperial Family and the salt at the head table, looking bored and preoccupied as the final hours of his stay in office ticked away
- Emperor Hirohito and President Ford, chatting away like magpies, a diminutive, aged representative of the oldest ruling family on earth and a clean-cut American jock-politician who lucked his way into the world’s most powerful job. At the dinner he had hosted earlier in the visit, Hirohito had expressed, for the first time, historic regret over the “recent unpleasantness”, i.e. World War II.

The Kyoto portion of the visit was all pleasure and no real pressure. Kissinger’s hang-up bag was lost for about three hours, wrinkling administrative brows and fluttering the Secret Service dove-cote (they found it on the plane), but that was the only glitch. The Geishas at Tsuruya, the renowned traditional restaurant where Ford dined, drew heavy US media attention, but did not stand up to close inspection. From a distance they danced

delightfully, but proximity revealed acne beneath the thick white make-up, which in turn accentuated yellow teeth.

Politically, the trip broke new ground. The main message of the communiqué was that the security relationship between Japan and the United States was much more than just military. Security also depended on the extent to which the two countries could cooperate to solve the global economic problems (energy, food, finance), threatened world stability and, by implication the strategic balance. This broadened definition of security, codified and sprinkled with holy summit water, has guided our relationship ever since.

The symbolic and ceremonial aspects of the visit were equally important. The presence of an American President in Japan after post-war decades of Japanese Prime Ministers traveling hat-in-hand, to the United States added reciprocity to the relationship. The Japanese could now begin to think more closely in terms of partnership with the U.S., as opposed to the one-way subservience of the past.

The Japanese responded to Gerald Ford's sincerity. He had the knack, born of a politician's training and his own personality, of convincing you that you were the only person in the world at that moment you had together, even if it was only for a few seconds. (This happened to me for half a minute as the President left the Ambassador's reception.) Ford clearly developed a relationship with the Emperor, one that resulted in one of the few decisions Hirohito made during his lifetime: to make his own visit to the United States the following year.

As a newcomer to Japan, I had found it difficult understanding the Emperor's place and role in society. In preparation for the Ford visit, I asked an elderly Japanese political commentator to explain it to me. We were lunching at the restaurant on the top of the New Otani Hotel, which commands a panoramic view of downtown Tokyo. My guest took me over to the window and said, "the center of power in Japan lies before you. To the east is the business district and the entertainment center, to the south the government ministries, to the north the universities and publishing houses, and to the west the courts and the residences of the key government officials. In the middle is a big green empty space where the Emperor resides. It represents no power at all. But like the hole in the donut, it gives the rest of Japanese society its shape. Does that help?" It did, I said

After the Ford visit, Takeo Miki replaced Tanaka as Prime minister. His choice by LDP elders came as an almost total surprise to observers in Tokyo, locals and foreigners alike. The contrast with political analysis in China was striking. In Beijing no one could be blamed for bad guesses, given our pathetic diet of information, the few crumbs that fell from the table of a secretive society. But Japan's free press, accessible politicians, and plentiful pundits could be just as wrong, I was privately relieved to learn.

Becoming An Asia Hand: The Fall of Saigon

When Saigon fell in April 1975, Washington wanted to know anything and everything we could find out about the impact of our defeat on Japanese assessments of American

power and influence in Asia. Tokyo was the crossroads between the West and the rest of the region. The constant flow of American officials, military officers, politicians and policy planners gave me plenty of opportunities to supplement my own soundings of analysis on all sides of the Japanese policy community.

I knew from my first months at work that the Korean Peninsula was Japan's principal preoccupation. Relations with the neighboring Republic of Korea were terrible, the delicate, difficult legacy of decades of war and Japanese colonial domination. The people of both countries hated each other, and still do. Tokyo's ties with North Korea, already frozen by Cold War hostility and Soviet influence, were complicated by the presence in Japan of half a million Korean residents who supported Pyongyang politically and financially. The US nuclear deterrent and conventional military deployments along the Demilitarized Zone between the two Koreas and further South were crucial to Japan's security. All that the Japanese cared about was whether the US failure in Indochina would affect our policy and posture in Korea, where the power of the Soviet Union, the United States, and China converged.

They concluded that it would not. The security of the United States and Japan depended on deployments in the western Pacific rather than on the Asian continent. Japan could live with the US defeat in Indochina as long as it did not lead to any force reduction in the western Pacific. By mid-year it was clear that Japan, in the words of one American official, had "rolled with the punch."

Prime Minister Miki visited the United States in August and assured President Ford that an active American role in the West Pacific was still welcome. That assurance, in itself, was a mark of our diminished stature and Japanese worry about our staying power. Emperor Hirohito also visited the United States in October. This was a high-profile effort, which included a trip to Disneyland, and a heavily photographed meeting with Mickey Mouse on a park bench. The Japanese were astonished by the pictures. Disneyland was another of Hirohito's own unique personal decisions, the result of a long and deeply held wish. It struck a relaxed if bizarre note during a tense year

Although Tanaka had left office after the Ford visit, the Lockheed case was still hot, and getting hotter. American payoffs to Tanaka and other Japanese officials were involved, with the potential to ruin our relationship. Tanaka would be indicted in August of 1976 and ultimately go to jail. To limit the damage, we created a separate legal channel between the Attorney General's office in Washington and the Japanese judicial authorities. This enabled us to refer the flood of press queries on Lockheed case to tight-lipped court officials, who could say nothing about it. This kept explosive material out of sensitive political and diplomatic channels.

In March and April 1976, Embassy Tokyo sent me on a trip throughout Southeast Asia to assess the balance of influence, post-Vietnam. Ostensibly traveling to represent our embassy at a regional narcotics conference in Kuala Lumpur, I paid calls in all of the countries of the region on my way there and back. I found that countries in the region wanted the US to be the strongest power, but failing that would be perfectly content with

the US.-China-Japan-Russia in roughly equal balance, with no single power in a position to dominate. China was the beneficiary of the fall of Saigon, but their gains were offset by a pervasive fear throughout Southeast Asia of PRC size and looming power. The countries of the region were, in general, more preoccupied with each other than with the great powers, I concluded. (A-163, May 4, 1976, "Some Observations on Power Relationships in Southeast Asia.") Washington liked the report.

Changes in China

China, of course, was another major concern of the Japanese, and the rationale behind my assignment to Tokyo. With the conclusion of the Sino- Japanese Air Agreement in 1974, Tokyo replaced Hong Kong as the as the main transit point between the US and China. I set up shop at the crossroads, took care of a stream of major American visitors, and kept my ears open. Americans, including Secretary of State Kissinger, now bent over backwards to keep the Japanese informed of their China contacts and assessments. I was in constant touch with Japanese China watchers.

Change was the watchword of the years 1974-77. With Nixon out, and Tanaka going, the Chinese had lost their original champions in Washington and Tokyo. US Liaison Office Chiefs came and went, David Bruce replaced by George H. W. Bush in 1974, and Thomas S Gates taking over from Bush in 1976. The Chinese guard was changing, too. Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping, had replaced Zhou as Kissinger's interlocutor in the spring of 1974. The Secretary of State remained the one constant throughout the Ford years, but his relationship with the Chinese changed after Nixon's collapse and the fall of Saigon. Beijing officials assessed the US as weak, and branded Kissinger's efforts to achieve detente with the Soviets "appeasement", infuriating him in the process with references to a "latter day Chamberlain". US unwillingness/ inability to move ahead on normalization of relations further soured Chinese officials. China, for its part was divided internally, as jockeying for the succession to Mao intensified with the Chairman's growing frailty. On the surface, both sides made efforts to maintain the façade of normality. Kissinger visited China regularly. Gerald Ford visited Beijing in December 1975, and met a physically feeble Mao. The magic of 1971-3 was gone.

Zhou Enlai, in poor health and under attack from the left, died in January, 1976. Deng Xiaoping was purged yet again in April. Mao's long scheduled "meeting with his maker" occurred in September, 1976, presaged by the massive Tangshan earthquake, and followed by a leadership upheaval in Zhongnanhai. Madame Mao and her "Gang of Four" were arrested four weeks later after launching an abortive coup. Mao's anointed successor, Hua Guofeng, described by the first Americans who met him as "effeminate—perhaps even gay", took the reins of a transitional coalition while the able Deng Xiaoping, rehabilitated once again, began the process of strengthening his hold over Chinese politics and economic reform. In their day-to-day relations, Beijing, Washington and Tokyo treaded water, waiting for new leaders to be elected or to consolidate their power, while slowly building the practical economic, cultural and social links that would dominate the future.

The MIG-25 Crisis

Meanwhile, I found myself in the eye of a three-sided storm involving Japan, the Soviet Union and the United States. On Labor Day, September 6, 1976, a MIG-25 “Foxbat” fighter landed at Hakodate airport in Hokkaido. The Soviet pilot, brandishing a pistol from his cockpit, requested political asylum in the United States. The embassy duty officer of the day, I was paged off the courts at the Tokyo Lawn Tennis Club, to deal with the matter. I was also the action officer in the Political Section responsible for the diplomatic handling of defectors (as opposed to debriefing them, a task for the intelligence agencies), so sent to the State Department an immediate request for defector status for the pilot, whose name was Viktor Belenko. Washington quickly responded and we started preparations to move him out of Japan. Then the trouble began.

The Japanese, deathly frightened of the Soviets, wanted to return the aircraft to the USSR at the same time they released to pilot to us. The Ministry of Justice claimed jurisdiction over the case, arguing that Belenko had violated the National Sword and Gun Act when he waved his pistol. They maintained that they had no power to hold the plane. It had only served as the vehicle for the violator.

Washington was astonished and furious. The plane that had carried Belenko was no sword or gun, but one of the deadliest weapons in the world. We needed a long, careful look at the Foxbat. No one in the NATO Alliance had seen this most advanced fighter in the Soviet arsenal up close. I took the matter to my friend Yukio Satoh, the Foreign Office official in charge of security relations with the United States, explaining the very grave consequences to US-Japan relations of a further delay in making the plane available. Yukio, one of my closest and most candid contacts, reported an intense tug of war underway between the Ministry of Justice and the Japan Defense agency, which demanded to examine the plane. In post-war Japan, the Defense Agency remained bureaucratically one of the weakest in the government. I explained that our priority right now should be to separate the pilot from the plane, so we could manage the two issues at their own pace. Yukio went to his superiors and persuaded them to cut the issues apart. I then began in earnest the process of getting Belenko out of Japan.

Japanese public interest in this case was white hot. The press was in full tongue. Sensibly, the Japanese authorities put Belenko at the Suijo police station which is on a peninsula right next to Tokyo’s Haneda airport, from which Belenko would fly. (Narita Airport was under construction). Suijo was also a fire station, which enabled deployment of a wall of fireboats around the peninsula, to keep curious press craft away.

International protocol regarding defectors required that an American official first interview Belenko, to determine face-to face if he wished to go to the United States. Then the Soviets would have their turn to try to make him change his mind. On the appointed day, Friday, September 10, I appeared at the Suijo Police Station and was shown into a small office where I sat down next to pilot Belenko, a compact, muscular man with a big nose, a wide smile and sandy hair. In halting English, he described his desire to go to the United States, and someday fly again, even if only a plane that carried freight, or sprayed

crops. He understood the implications of his act for his family, and could accept the consequences. I handed him his airline ticket, and left.

On my way out the Japanese showed me the room in which Belenko would be interviewed by the Soviets an hour later. In contrast to the cozy office in which we had met, this was a large room with doors at either end, divided in the center by two lines of conference tables with a narrow slot in between that was filled wall to wall with Japanese police riot shields. Belenko told me later that he appeared at one end, the Soviet officials at the other and they shouted back and forth across this barrier for only a minute. He was prepared for the possibility that a letter from his family might be shown. "I have left so it doesn't matter", he said.

Half an hour later, Belenko departed Japan aboard Northwest Flight 22. The airline had arranged for the entire upper deck of their 747 to be set aside for Belenko and his bodyguard, a CIA agent specially flown in, known for his expertise with handguns, and his hands. He had earned a black belt in judo, and had the high squeaky voice, like so many Sumo wrestlers, of a person who had been hit in the throat many times. The meeting at the police station was covered extensively in the media, limited to pictures of me and my Soviet counterparts going in and out the door.

The easy part was over. Pressure from Washington to inspect the aircraft mounted. We were instructed to tell the Japanese government that Members of Congress and top officials in the White House were beginning to question the value of our security treaty. If Japan could not make available this most important weapons windfall since the beginning of the Cold War, what kind of an ally was it? The White House was also starting to blame Embassy Tokyo for failure to get the result they wanted.

In the end, under the patient and skillful prodding of Mr. Satoh, a special, very Japanese arrangement was made. The Foreign Office explained to the Soviets that the Foxbat's landing gear had been damaged (not true), making it impossible simply to fly the plane back to its base in Vladivostok as they demanded. Instead, the aircraft would have to be moved to Chitose Air Base, which the U.S. operated jointly with the Japanese, and taken apart for shipment back to the USSR. The Japanese went on to explain that, lacking the expertise to dismantle the aircraft, they would have to hire a contractor, which turned out to be--surprise, surprise!--the U.S. Air Force. In the event, it took a meticulous month to complete the dismantling. The parts were then placed in handsome, custom built wooden crates, as if packaged at a fancy Japanese department store. Plexiglas windows were installed helpfully to show what was in each box (wings, fuselage, engines, etc.). These were then loaded on to a freighter and sent back to the Soviet Union.

The Soviets were livid, and scolded the Japanese incessantly for having let Belenko go. They insisted he had been drugged and hustled onto the U.S. airliner. The affair roiled Soviet relations with the Japanese for months to come. Soviet ire was best expressed during conversations between Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko and Japanese officials later in September. He accused them of having "preyed on the plane like a mountain dog." Japan had acted as if "both countries were at war." We got a very good look at the

plane. U.S. Air Force had the temerity, a month later, to submit a bill to the Japanese Government for their services as a contractor.

Satoh, a mid-level official, deserves credit for saving an endangered relationship with the US, galvanizing the senior national security establishment at a time when the rest of the Japanese Government was behaving like a deer in the headlights.

The Guard Changes--Mondale Visits Japan

With the November 1976 election of Jimmy Carter, Henry Kissinger was out after eight years of powerful influence. Tokyo, Beijing and now Washington had undergone a complete change of leadership since the original opening to China. New Vice President Mondale's first act after inauguration would be a trip to Asia, with Japan to be the first stop. He would be accompanied by the just-appointed Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Richard C. Holbrooke, a long-time friend from our early days in the Foreign Service, with a mixed reputation for brilliance and brashness. Rumors, especially upsetting to the Japanese, that Carter was bent on pulling US troops out of Korea, preceded the Mondale delegation.

Preparations for Mondale were assigned to me. His lead advance man, a gum chewing ex-Michigan State football player turned lobbyist named Bob Beckel, was low key and easy to help. The visit, from January 30-February 1, 1977, gave me a good look at Mondale, and I liked what I saw. As I wrote to my father later,

"I participated in five hours of briefings Mondale used to prepare himself for his talks with Prime Minister Fukuda. These were relaxed sessions in Mondale's hotel room attended by the top policy people who accompanied him (including Holbrooke and Mike Armacost) and our charge Tom Shoesmith. Mondale was dressed in jeans with a hole in the knee that had been repaired, Tretorn sneakers without socks, a woolly shirt, and a huge cigar. He sat on the sofa with his legs tucked up under him and went over his talking points with great care, making sure that he understood everything he was supposed to say, approved of it, or had anything he wanted to add. Throughout, he kept bouncing questions off the people around him as to why we wanted to say this or that, what this meant, why that would look stupid to people back home if he put it that way. All in all, a very efficient and good-humored performance by a man who seems very comfortable with himself and his role. He showed that a relaxed approach can get good results—the talks with the Japanese were successful and Mondale flew home radiating satisfaction with the Tokyo stop." (Letters from Japan, February 8, 1977)

An important by product of the visit was my next job. As Holbrooke bounded off the plane, he asked if I would like to come back to Washington next summer and take charge of Japanese affairs in the East Asia Bureau. The man currently in the job, Bill Sherman, wanted to come out to Tokyo as Deputy Chief of Mission for the new ambassador. (Senator Mike Mansfield was about to be nominated.) I told Holbrooke I would be delighted. Country director for Japan was an exalted job for a person in my rank, one usually held by a career Japan hand and never before by a "China Boy."

I cemented my ties with Dick soon after. I was sitting in his hotel room chatting about the transition in Washington while Holbrooke unpacked. In a few minutes, he was scheduled to accompany the Vice President to meet Prime Minister Fukuda. Rummaging through his luggage, Holbrooke reported in panic that he had forgotten the pants to his blue suit. Traveling in khakis, he had nothing appropriate to wear for the most important event of the visit. Desperate, Dick asked if, by any chance, I had a suit handy and, as it happened, I did. Like all seasoned visit managers, I had taken a room at the hotel and quickly produced the clothes, which fitted quite well. Relieved and properly clad, Holbrooke went off to the meeting, assured that somehow I was a useful person. He wore my suit the entire time he was in Tokyo.

The assignment to the Japan Desk took several months to clear a bureaucracy dead set against what amounted to a double jump in rank for me. In the end, Holbrooke and his new Deputy, my old mentor and colleague, William Gleysteen, prevailed. We returned to the US in June, fully renewed after the Beijing setback. David Bruce had been right. I left Tokyo with a broader background and a new set of skills. It would be three more years before I would get to work on relations with China, but I was now qualified to deal with Asia across the board.

New Work in Washington

As Country Director for Japan at State, I spent a year plowing the furrows of a huge, established relationship. Hardy perennial frictions had to be handled with meticulous care-- defense spending that was too small; trade surpluses that were too large; a currency that was too cheap; a US military presence that was too noisy or hormonal for neighboring Japanese communities; the existence, or not, of nuclear weapons on visiting US Navy ships; choppy post war relations with Asian countries, particularly Korea. A generation of Japan hands had developed time honored ways of dealing with all of these. My job was to master the techniques and apply them smoothly, and with speed where necessary. What was new was the ballooning volume and importance of our relationship, a function of Japan's rapid economic recovery and growth.

I got important help from two sources. One was Mike Mansfield who began in Tokyo as ambassador just days before I left for home. I had served as his control officer when he visited Japan in early 1977 while still Senate Majority Leader. Easy to like and trust, (the only member of Congress I ever took care of who returned his counterpart fund allowance unspent) we developed a relaxed relationship. The Japanese revered Mansfield, his age, dignity, and unassuming accessibility. Visitors to his office never forgot that the ambassador personally made them a cup of coffee which he served himself, even though the taste was quite bad. Washington hung on his every word, especially during the first year of his long tenure in Tokyo, before he developed a reputation as an apologist for Japan. I played the role of forward spotter for Mansfield's heavy artillery. I could arrange overnight for a cable from the ambassador making the points I needed on any aspect of our relationship, which I would then make sure hit the desk of all affected cabinet officers the next morning.

One such barrage endeared me to Robert Strauss, the Special Trade Representative, whose negotiating style kept the Japanese on constant edge. His assistant, Richard Rivers, got himself into severe trouble during a visit to Tokyo in which I participated. He was quoted as daring to suggest to the Prime Minister during a courtesy call that Japan could solve its trade imbalances with the world by controlling its growth rate. The Japanese press uproar was so loud that State Department and the National Security Council officials asked me to cut Rivers' visit short and bring him home. I knew this would ruin Rivers and turn our trade relations more sour than ever. After assuring that Rivers' private meetings went well the following day, I drafted a cable for Mansfield to sign which described the exchanges as constructive and the Japanese press reaction as overblown. Curtailing Rivers' trip would be a mistake. Washington cooled and Rivers' bacon was saved. Thereafter, I was able thereafter to see Bob Strauss whenever I needed, a handy privilege during a period of trade stress between Japan and the US that lasted for years. Strauss, very privately, described trade negotiations with Tokyo to me as "wiping your behind with a wagon wheel--an endless process."

The other special source of assistance during my time on the Japan Desk was Tatsuo Arima, my old Saint Paul's classmate, who just happened to be assigned to Washington as the Japanese embassy political counselor at the same time I was put in charge of relations with Tokyo. This was hardly pure coincidence, as Tatsuo so stoutly maintained. Japanese men are closer to their schoolmates than anyone except their mothers, a sensibility which clearly influenced the decision of Foreign Office Personnel. American priorities may be different, but Tatsuo and I knew each other quite well and could communicate easily. Together we could defuse brewing crises in advance, particularly in the security field. I could be sure of a direct line to the leaders of the Japanese foreign policy establishment, if I needed it. Visits by Prime Ministers were frequent, carefully choreographed, and observed in minute detail in Japan. It helped me to have Tatsuo at hand to explain how every tiny arrangement would be interpreted in Tokyo.

The White House Calls

In the summer of 1978, Zbigniew Brzezinski invited me to join his National Security Council Staff in a position that covered US policy toward Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand--in short, everywhere in Asia but China. I had become one of a rotating interagency group of Foreign Service Officers who replaced each other in key sub-cabinet policy positions in State, Defense and the White House. These included Michael Armacost, William Gleysteen, Morton Abramowitz, and Roger Sullivan (my old language schoolmate). Richard Holbrooke managed the musical chairs, and used what became known as the "East Asia Informal Group" to mesh interagency policy toward Asia. We were all capable of writing the talking points for each other's bosses (Vance and, later, Muskie at State, Brzezinski at the White House and Brown at Defense) before they met, and frequently did.

Working at the center of American power was heady. The NSC staff lived next to the White House in grand and comfortable offices, with high ceilings and fireplaces that

contrasted with the modest scale of the mansion across the way. NSC staff members had access to the White House, which provided poignant glimpses of history. I remember walking along the underground passage between the East and West Wing one day and seeing President Carter jogging forlornly around the Rose Garden, the prisoner of his unfortunate pledge not to leave the White House grounds until our hostages, taken in September 1979 had been released from Iran.

My immediate boss was Zbig Brzezinski, who thought, spoke and wrote in broad conceptual brush strokes. His boss, Jimmy Carter, loved detail, perhaps to a fault. Any NSC staffer who repeatedly left a safe open in the Executive Office Building, got a stern personal note from the President of the United States. We thought there could be better uses for his time.

No staff study was too arcane for Jimmy Carter. The only paper of mine he really liked was an extract of Emperor Hirohito's poetry that I prepared for his visit to Japan in 1979. Knowing that Carter would appear with Hirohito several times, and understanding the Emperor's stature in Japanese society, I had picked excerpts from several poems Carter could quote on themes that would come up in his speeches; the search for peace, the beauty of nature, the strivings of mankind, etc. In this instance the combination of Carter's decency, moral sense and attention to minutiae paid off. He used the quotes. The Japanese Press took note and raved.

During that Tokyo visit, I stood in for Brzezinski, who stayed home to deal with a crisis in Nicaragua. Carter accepted the substitution without comment, introducing me to the Emperor matter of factly as his "national security advisor". That status had entitled me to a seat in the cabinet room aboard Air Force One, from which I observed the interplay between the President, Mrs. Carter, Secretary of State Vance, Treasury Secretary Mike Blumenthal, and Dick Holbrooke. Carter appeared frequently for discussions, seated in shirtsleeves on a low stool at the in the center of the compartment, engaged in easy give and take with his advisors around him. In such a group, thirty thousand feet above the Congress and the rest of Washington, policy could be made on the spot.

Room at the top, I discovered, could be extremely uncomfortable. The cabinet space, next to the President's suite, resembled a cocktail lounge, with a high-backed, U-shaped banquette placed around a work table. The excitement of frequent meetings with the President wears off, to be replaced by the mounting back pain that would afflict anyone who spends eighteen hours in a cocktail lounge. In the end, all the cabinet officers, led by Secretary Vance, who had a bad back to begin with, were sleeping on the floor, a fitful school of beached whales, snoring gently. Amy Carter would walk by from time to time, her passage marked by the signature fragrance of thirteen-year-old feet.

Work in the NSC was also scary. Zbig's staff was tiny, and all of us reported directly to him. I was unnerved at first to discover that he often sent my recommendations on policy papers concerning Asian issues from other agencies, straight to the President, without comment. With the exception of Carter's desire to withdraw US troops from Korea, which no cabinet officer wanted to touch, most of my issues were outside Zbig's area of

interest or expertise. There was little time in his job for editing or feedback in any case. I learned early that I had to be right, had to know precisely what the policy players in other agencies thought, and that they had to be aware what I would recommend. Misuse of NSC powers was a sin punished by a quick push from the White House perch, I knew from the fate of others.

Korea on Our Mind

US troop withdrawal from Korea was the issue that absorbed most my time at the NSC. No one knew where precisely President Carter got the idea but he held it strongly. When the proposal surfaced at the very beginning of the Administration in 1977, it upset our Asian allies, especially the Japanese, more than any US act since the end of World War II, including our defeat in Vietnam. The strategic interests of Japan, South Korea, the USSR, China and the US intersected in the Korean Peninsula. Any weakening of our position threatened the stability of the entire region. Asians had two main fears about the US—that we would bully them, or that we would desert them. Of the two, desertion was by far the most frightening, and fueled the strong reaction against withdrawal from Korea.

US Government professionals dealing with Asian issues in the State Department and the Pentagon were united in opposition to troop withdrawals, but reluctant, as were their superiors, to confront their President directly. So, in 1978, we designed an elaborate three stage plan purposed to change the mind of one man, Jimmy Carter. The first stage was to be a National Intelligence Estimate examining the latest evidence of North Korean military strength. Next, and this would be my responsibility to organize, would be a major interagency study (Presidential Review Memorandum-NCS-45) laying out the policy options informed by the NIE. The finale would come during a Presidential visit to Korea in the June of 1979, during which, we hoped, Jimmy Carter would tell President Park Chung Hee he had changed his mind.

The initial stages proceeded according to plan. The intelligence estimate concluded that we had underestimated the North Korean ability to attack and damage the South. The policy study, equally laboriously assembled, favored a recommendation to postpone troop withdrawals. But the findings were never discussed directly with the President. Holbrooke at State, Armacost at Defense, and I at the NSC all recommended that our bosses meet with the President to hash out the issue before he traveled to Seoul, but the subject was not discussed. Then came the visit, right after the Japan G-7 meeting.

The Korean welcome for Carter was tumultuous, with hundreds of thousands cheering along his route, while high school bands dressed in American style football half-time uniforms blared numbers including “Onward Christian Soldiers”. Carter could not help but notice the Christian steeples and crosses that dotted Seoul’s hills. As we arrived at the Blue House for discussions with President Park, I thought the stage was set for a success. I was wrong.

Bad Chemistry

For days leading up to the trip, we had worked with Blue House officials to choreograph a smooth interaction. If President Park did not raise the issue, we told his National Security Advisor Kim Kyong Won (later Ambassador to the United States), the chances of Carter postponing withdrawals would improve greatly. As we filed into the conference room, the US President was still glowing from his welcome. Vance, Brzezinski, Brown, Ambassador Bill Gleysteen, Dick Holbrooke and I followed and sat down. Park and his entourage were already in place.

After greetings, disaster struck. Park Chung Hee led off immediately with a long lecture on the strategic drawbacks stemming from US troop withdrawal--a heightened threat from Pyongyang, a weakened US strategic posture in Asia and the world, a stronger Communist China, and on and on. He could not understand how the US could even contemplate such an action. Park punctuated his presentation with snaps of his fingers, a habit he had when he was ill at ease.

Carter's own stress mannerism, seen frequently during press conferences, was to open his mouth wide with a snap of his jaw and pop his eyes wide open. Clearly furious, he began to do this, and then passed a handwritten note to his colleagues which said, "If he keeps on like this, I am going to withdraw all troops tomorrow!" Brzezinski was alarmed, and called for a coffee break. The plenary never resumed. Instead, the two men retired at Zbig's suggestion to Park's office for a private meeting, just the two of them, to discuss other issues on the agenda. The Koreans provided an interpreter, and Zbig sent me in as note taker, to balance the sides. Arriving a bit late, I found both men still snapping away, Park his fingers, Carter his jaw. I had never seen such a bad chemical reaction between two leaders. But the subject had changed, and the conversation that followed on economics and human rights was substantive and serious, if not cordial.

I rode back to our Ambassador's residence with Holbrooke in the car just behind the presidential armored limousine, with Brown, Vance, Brzezinski and Gleysteen, some on jump seats, shoehorned in together with the President. The cars arrived at the residence. Dick and I, seasoned motorcade veterans, jumped out poised to follow at the heels of our leaders into lunch. But the doors to the big limo did not open. Holbrooke and I waited peering into the rear window. We could see the President pointing his finger at each of his advisors, who sat looking sheepish. The only other mouth that was moving was Gleysteen's. Dick said to me, "I guess they are finally having that meeting."

Gleysteen told me later that a fuming Carter had laid into his advisors in the car, pointing at each and saying that all of them had been against him on troop withdrawal from the outset. Gleysteen spoke up to tell him why, outlining the consequences of withdrawal. Carter listened.

The car doors opened, and a grim lunch ensued. The President cooled down. He agreed to postpone withdrawals on condition that President Park made a commitment to increase significantly the ROK defense budget, and release a number of political prisoners. I

retired to write up the report of the Park-Carter conversations, and Holbrooke sallied forth to repair the damage.

He succeeded. In fact, by the end of the of the visit two days later, President Carter saw fit to tell Park Chung Hee in the car as they rode to the airport, that he thought it might be best to put US troop withdrawals from the Korean Peninsula on hold for a while. Almost thirty years later, an American military presence in Korea, reshaped and repositioned, continues to remain a key factor in the stability of Asia.

Normalization at Last

I was in the White House the day President Carter announced that the US and China would establish full diplomatic relations January 1, 1979. A fascinated bystander, I had only been a spectator in the process, which turned out to be fortunate. Policy toward China had been the responsibility of my NSC colleague, Michel Oksenberg, a distinguished professor at Michigan and leading expert on PRC domestic politics. The East Asia interagency mechanism had worked fine for all issues except China. Instead, fierce competition between State and the NSC over stewardship of China policy had plagued the Carter Administration from day one. The intense, secretive rivalries of academic life prepared both Oksenberg and Brzezinski well for the constant guerrilla warfare that broke out with Holbrooke and Vance over the day-to-day management of the normalization process. I had been friends with Oksenberg since he was a research scholar in Hong Kong during the 'sixties. From my adjoining office in the Executive Office Building I could overhear vicious arguments that fed what became lifetime ad hominem hatreds. Mike had never worked in a big bureaucracy and had little time for the consultative process. A marvelous lecturer and lucid writer, interpersonal skills were not his strongpoint. Fully occupied with the rest of Asia, I stayed firmly out of the way.

Back to China with the Secretary of Defense

At the end of 1979, after six years on the periphery of US- China relations, I was given one more chance to work directly on a new link with Beijing. The job in the Office of the Secretary of Defense responsible for East Asia policy, most notably nascent military ties with the PRC, came open. I jumped at the chance.

Almost immediately, in January 1980, I found myself on Harold Brown's plane bound for Beijing on another high-profile visit in the history of US-China relations. The Soviet Union had made it so by invading Afghanistan six days before Brown took off from Andrews Air Force Base. Planned since the summer, the trip to China of the US Secretary of Defense became an urgent focus of world attention. I was still technically a member of Brzezinski's NSC staff, but was asked to join Brown's delegation to prepare for my new job, Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Office of International Security Affairs, which would formally begin after we returned from China. I would serve during the trip as Brown's note taker and assistant, as if I had already assumed the post. This first visit to the PRC by a Secretary of Defense would start the process of forging the last unfinished link in the US-PRC relationship, that between the Pentagon and the PLA.

Our relations with China developed rapidly during the year following normalization. Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping, now back for good at the top of the heap in Beijing, visited the US in January 1979. I attended receptions given for him in Washington and saw first-hand how skillfully he bonded with the American public. Deng's four foot eleven inches topped by a ten gallon hat during a stop in Texas was a signal hit. Vice President Mondale reciprocated with a trip to China in August of 1979. Old deadlocks on issues involving trade and consular operations began to ease. Consulates began to open in different parts of the US and China to support the work of the embassies in the capitals. Also that fall, Congress approved Most Favored Nation trade arrangements for the PRC.

Military-to military ties were still in their infancy by late 1979, and perhaps the most fragile of any strand in our relationship. Defense attaches were assigned to Beijing and Washington, but had not settled in. The question of military contact with the PRC had been controversial from the outset, questioned by China scholars wondering what the US stood to gain, Soviet experts concerned about the impact on US relations with the USSR, congressmen who supported Taiwan, and Asian allies who apprehensive about a strengthened PRC.

I had not been privy to the clandestine foreplay regarding military relations with the PRC. Exchanges on intelligence and technology sharing with Chinese officials, including Deng Xiaoping, had been secret features of visits by Kissinger (in 1975) and Brzezinski (in 1978 and 1979). (The best description of these is in James Mann, *About Face*, pp 70-100). But events of 1979 preceding the Soviet invasion added both complexity and urgency to the process of linking the two militaries. These were mostly in the public domain, and easily visible from my NSC perch.

In February (reportedly with tacit US approval), the PRC had launched a border war against Vietnam. Irritated over Soviet backed Vietnamese gains in Cambodia, Beijing wanted to "teach (Hanoi) a lesson". Instead, second string Vietnamese divisions gave PLA units a bloody nose in a tussle called off after only seventeen days. Beijing learned the hard way how old-fashioned Chinese equipment and logistics really were. The Soviet invasion of neighboring Afghanistan only intensified Chinese desire to modernize their military through closer ties with the US armed forces.

Passage by Congress of the Taiwan Relations Act in April 1979 would make this more complicated for Harold Brown, and, for that matter, every Secretary of Defense since. The Congress was angry over the way the Executive Branch treated Taiwan when it normalized relations with Beijing. The Act mandated that the US should supply "such defense articles and defense services as may be necessary for Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability." The legislation provided more protection than the Administration wanted and infuriated Deng Xiaoping. In practical terms the Act meant that we were arming Taiwan to protect against the PRC, while strengthening the PRC to protect against the Soviet Union, all at the same time.

Finally, the September 1979 capture of US hostages at the US Embassy in Iran shocked the American public, shook the priorities of the Carter Administration, and further shaped Harold Brown's instructions.

Tightrope Instructions

We took off from Andrews AFB on January 4 in the Sec of Defense's windowless converted fuel tanker--we called it the "tube". As soon as we reached cruising altitude, Secretary Brown asked me to convene his large interagency delegation in the conference area. This was the "East Asia Informal Group Plus", with representatives from warring factions sent by their superiors to keep an eye on each other. Members included:

State- Assistant Secretary Richard C. Holbrooke,

ACDA- General Seignious

NSC- Michel Oksenberg

DOD- Undersecretary Robert Komer, Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, Gerald Dineen, Undersecretary for 3CI, David McGiffert (my immediate boss to be) , Michael Armacost, Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, Admiral Thor Hansen, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

CIA-David Gries, DDO, Charles Neuhauser, DDI.

In contrast to the careful compartmentalization of Kissinger delegations, Brown took pains to share in detail with the entire group the carefully qualified instructions he had received from President Carter that morning. As would occur throughout the visit, and, in fact, my entire year with Secretary Brown, I took the notes, on which these chapters are based.

His objective, he told us, would be to broaden and deepen the defense/security dimension of the US-China relationship, without forming an alliance, or any formal anti-Soviet arrangement. He wanted to coordinate policies where our interests were parallel, but avoid establishing a "big brother—solve everything relationship." He would cite Chinese devotion to self-reliance. Our consultations would cover the world strategic situation, regional issues and bilateral cooperation. Brown said he was authorized to consult privately on assistance to Afghanistan and Pakistan. We could mention transportation and logistics arrangements, (even though this was beyond the instruction) but avoid contingency planning. We could tell the Chinese of our plans to funnel aid to the Afghans through Pakistan

On technology transfer, we would indicate ways in which we differentiated between China and the USSR, discussing what we made available for Beijing that we did not allow for Moscow. We would engage in technical discussions on items under foreign assets control. While we had no plans to sell arms to the PRC, a point we wanted to stress in public, we could discuss the availability of military equipment on a case-by-case basis.

Over-the-Horizon radar, LANDSAT D , and site surveys could also be topics. LANDSAT D was a ground receiving station for the Landsat photo reconnaissance system. The technology was ostensibly for civilian use on oil exploration and agricultural production. Technically, Landsat D would provide the means for major improvement in

the resolution capabilities of Chinese intelligence satellites. The President, Brown continued, drew a firm distinction between arms and military equipment, but wanted to retain the option of changing policy to include defensive weapons.

The President was prepared to schedule a visit by Party Secretary General Hua Guofeng in June and announce it, if the Chinese so desired.

On Arms Control, the President wished to establish a hot line with the Chinese, using a full-time circuit. We were to urge the Chinese to do more testing underground, and sound them out on acceding to existing multilateral arms control arrangements.

Talks in Beijing

On January 6, Brown reviewed his instructions with Ambassador Leonard Woodcock and his staff at the Embassy, and confirmed the schedule of talks, including his meetings with Party Chairman Hua Guofeng, Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping; Defense Minister Geng Biao; General Zhang Aiping, (Deputy Chief of PLA Staff) a cranky heavyweight elder in both the military hierarchy and the emerging post-Mao national leadership. We set up counterpart talks on disarmament with General Seignious, Director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and on technology transfer with Gerald Dineen, Under Secretary of Defense for Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence with their opposite numbers. Brown was also to meet with Foreign Minister Huang Hua, Assistant Foreign Minister Zhang Wenjin (US-China pioneer) and PRC ambassador Chai Zimin.

These conversations took up the next four days, and were long, meaty and often difficult. Members of the delegation from all US agencies attended whichever meeting they wanted. The old games of exclusion that had marked the Nixon/Kissinger- Mao/Zhou era were over. In more important respects, US foreign policy was undergoing a tectonic shift. As Undersecretary Komer put it later, "US policy has changed more in three weeks than in the past two years". Détente with the Soviet Union was dead. Just as we arrived in China, President Carter announced a series of measures curtailing US relations with the Soviet Union, including grain sales, civil aviation flights, fishing allocations, consular relations, technology transfer and sports contacts, (leading ultimately to the boycott of the Olympic games).

The Chinese could barely conceal their delight. At a tea reception before the welcoming dinner on January 6, General Xu Xiangqian delivered a diatribe against the USSR, ranting on for fifteen minutes without letting the interpreter speak. Like all Chinese generals, Xu was very old. My notes describe him as "borderline gaga." Brown hit the themes of his instructions during his banquet toast, assuring the Chinese that the combination of US, NATO, and Japan would provide strength sufficient to contain Soviet expansion, praising China as a great and self-reliant country. The US had no intention to act as its tutor.

Brown's discussions with China's new leadership focused on 1) perceptions of the Soviet threat and how best to counter it in Afghanistan; 2) vexing international problems, including, specifically, Chinese help to free US hostages through support for UN sanctions against Iran; as well as different approaches to countering the Vietnamese in Cambodia and 3) Ways to expand bilateral military ties and technology transfer.

Strategic and International Issues

Both sides saw eye to eye on the Soviet threat. "As regards Soviet actions and prospects as well as the means of deterrence and opposing expansionism", Brown told Defense Minister Geng Biao, "it sounds as though our staffs wrote the papers together." Brown assured that the combined weight of US, Europe, Japan and China would be more than enough to deal with the global threat from the Soviet Union.

Deng Xiaoping described Soviet moves in Asia as aimed ultimately at the US and the West, and was pleased that the US had finally seen the light. Brown agreed with Deng that their objective should be "turn Afghanistan into a quagmire in which the Soviet Union is bogged down for a long time." Deng approved explicitly of new US measures to project power in the Indian Ocean, including expansion of facilities at Diego Garcia, increased naval capability, discussions with Oman, Somalia, Kenya, on air base access rights, and broadening security discussions with Saudi Arabia and Oman. They "would have been better done earlier", Deng said, but added, "don't take this as criticism, understand."

Brown and the Chinese leaders agreed on the need to provide confidential assistance to Afghan refugees and insurgents. Aid to Pakistan would be a crucial next step. Deng described the US decision to help Pakistan despite its efforts to develop nuclear weapons as, "a very good policy." The Indians would be annoyed, he acknowledged, but they did not play a stabilizing role in the region.. The magnitude and quality of support for Islamabad would remain an issue, however. The Pakistanis were reluctant to discuss the subject at all, Brown said.

The Secretary of Defense carried a personal letter from President Carter to Party Secretary General Hua Guofeng urging China to join the US in an upcoming UN vote to sanction Iran. In all his meetings, Brown argued forcefully that international solidarity would pressure Tehran to return our hostages. The Chinese listened carefully. They deplored the taking of our hostages, but expressed concern (as they do still) about the effectiveness of sanctions, and the long term impact on relations with Iran. They said they would think about it--in effect, a polite no. In addition, Brown disagreed flatly with Foreign Minister Huang Hua about the best ways to counter Vietnamese military action in Cambodia. The Chinese urged us to back Pol Pot as the only effective resistance force and to postpone support for Prince Sihanouk. Brown demurred.

Bilateral Military Relations

During his meetings with Defense Minister Geng, Brown presented proposals to increase contacts between the two defense establishments, including:

1. an invitation to Geng to visit the US, followed by a schedule of regular meetings,
2. expansion of the respective attaché offices on a reciprocal basis, as soon as adequate working and living accommodations became available in Beijing.
3. an invitation to a delegation from the PLA military academy to visit the United States.
4. establishment of a hot line between the Pentagon and PLA Headquarters.

Brown added his willingness to discuss communications and medical support, as well as transportation and logistics, “without implying that we were in a supply relationship, or engaged in joint planning for military contingencies.” He wanted to announce any or all of these proposals at the end of the visit.

Geng welcomed an expansion of attaché offices and accepted the military academy invitation. He would consider the other proposals and reply through diplomatic channels.

In fact, at this point, the Chinese were leery of committing to regular consultations between the ministers of defense or to publicizing their contacts in advance, at least in detail. They were agreeable to a general statement that Secretary Brown had invited a series of military defense delegations and the Chinese side had accepted the invitations.

Technology Transfer

The Brown visit provided the first opportunity for direct talks between Chinese and Americans on technology transfer. Current restrictions were particularly galling to the Chinese. Being placed in the same category as Libya seemed incompatible with recent US statements reclassifying China as a friendly country. Brown and other members of his delegation, particularly Assistant Secretary Gerald Dineen, led the Chinese through the thickets of US technology export control mechanisms relating to the sale and licensing of arms and dual use technology. They offered to explore, case by case, (a term that became a mantra) the export of items to China that the US did not provide the USSR, including elementary forms of integrated circuits and the technology to produce them. In addition, we were willing to discuss licensing technology associated with LANDSAT D, and Over the Horizon Radar (OTH), as well as high speed computers used in the Western Geophysical system for oil exploration, all topics clearly off limits to the Soviets.

The morning of January 9, after clambering briefly on the Great Wall, Brown’s party visited the headquarters of the Sixth Armored Division, where a military exercise featured old Soviet-model tanks rushing around firing at each other. The Chinese seemed to be trying to impress us in a spirited way with how rudimentary their equipment and tactics were.

In the afternoon, Brown met with Party Secretary General Hua Guofeng, Mao’s successor. The cordial meeting focused on President Carter’s invitation to Hua to visit the

United States. We recommended June, before our presidential campaign began in earnest. Hua had scheduling problems of his own and promised a response through diplomatic channels. Otherwise the conversation covered familiar topics; action in response to the Soviet attack on Afghanistan, levels of assistance to Pakistan, response in the UN to the Iranian hostage crisis, military relations, technology transfer, Cambodia, etc. By now, we knew each other's talking points by heart. Hua's reception of Brown was widely publicized in domestic and international media, marking attention to his visit at the highest levels of the Chinese leadership, and another milestone in the normalization process. A banquet and a press conference filled the evening. We left Beijing the next morning bound inland for the city of Wuhan and its shipbuilding plant. Naval headquarters for the East Sea Fleet in Shanghai was our final stop before departure for Tokyo January 13.

Assessments, Atmospherics and Personalities

Brown's presence in Beijing so soon after the Soviet invasion gave the Carter Administration a sense, at least, of doing something in response, and the Soviets a foretaste of the international consequences of their action. The invasion had killed détente, and tilted the US toward China.

Strategic symbolism aside, Brown's visit marked the wary beginning of the formal relationship between two military establishments whose most recent view of each other had been over gun sights in the Korean Peninsula twenty seven years before. A generation had passed since the armistice agreement in 1953. But China's military leaders were the same men who had fought that war. Ours had been lieutenants in the units facing them. The year ahead would see this odd couple become better acquainted. They had, at least, introduced themselves.

Substantively, the gains were mixed. The Chinese did not grant overflight rights, perhaps reckoning that the paltry level of assistance that the US was then willing to provide the Afghans and the Pakistanis (\$100 million in Foreign Military Sales and \$100 million in Economic Support Funds) was not worth the intelligence our airborne cameras might gain in the process. The PLA could not get used to the idea of a Pentagon hot line in their midst, and still cannot to this day. The procedures for technology transfer, hedged and limited as they were, got a start, with General Liu Huaqing handing Gerald Dinneen the first detailed Chinese wish lists before we left Beijing. Such lists would be the stuff of endless future meetings during 1980, as well as the basis, ultimately, for some significant transfers, including anti-tank munitions technology, air defense radar, electronic countermeasure devices, radio and communications equipment and transport helicopters. Brown and Dineen both left Beijing feeling that the Chinese did not understand either the potential military implications of either LANDSAT D or Western Geophysical's computers, or the scale of the concessions the US had made in offering them.

Briefing Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew at a meeting I attended in Singapore a month later, Ambassador Leonard Woodcock stressed the importance of Brown's conversations on technology transfer, and gave his own assessment. "In the two and a half years I have

been in Beijing,” he said, “this was the most useful exchange, aside from normalization itself, and the most useful of all the high level visits.” (Woodcock’s ranking visitors had been Vice President Mondale, National Security Advisor Brzezinski, and Presidential Advisor Clark Clifford.)

For me, Brown’s visit was an important return to a familiar, if at the end, bitter, scene. Our time in China let me meet the new post-Mao leadership face to face, and equally important, get the measure of my new Pentagon bosses in circumstances familiar to me and helpful to them. I could not have asked for a better debut.

Harold Brown

Harold Brown was easy to help. My predecessors, Mort Abramowitz and Mike Armacost had proven to this Secretary of Defense the benefits of having his own personal Orientalist close at hand. He called on them, and now me, for direct advice, bypassing several bureaucratic layers, and causing some envy in the process. I would need to brief with great care my immediate superiors, particularly Undersecretary Bob “Blowtorch” Komer, and the more reserved, lawyerly, Assistant Secretary David McGiffert on the details of my private meetings with Brown, which were to occur frequently.

Brown loved substance, but there was not an ounce of small talk in him. After long, strained silences sitting together in cars, I found the Secretary of Defense instantly responsive and engaging once I raised an issue of policy or technology. His scientific mind processed information and ideas as quickly as anyone I had worked with, particularly because it was always open. He was notably cautious and careful in his dealings with foreign leaders, relying on detailed talking papers from which he rarely departed. By contrast, he performed with ease and precision in front of the press, with few notes

In the mornings during this trip, as I always had during earlier travels in China, I listened to the Voice of America and the BBC on a short wave radio. I would then brief Brown on the headlines first thing while he was going through his cables. One day he asked me for my personal view as to whether the Soviets could prevail in Afghanistan.

Moscow appeared to have bit off more than it could chew, I replied, begging lack of expertise and only limited reading on the subject. I neglected to tell Secretary Brown that my assessment was based almost entirely on having just finished Flashman, George MacDonald Fraser’s rollicking and raunchy novel describing the British debacle in Afghanistan in 1840. A history fanatic, Fraser always took pains to place Flashman’s antics in accurate settings. His main sources for Afghanistan were the diaries of Lady Sales, the wife of the general in charge of the expeditionary force that was slaughtered almost to a man in Jalalabad. Flashman described in detail the ferocity and duplicity of the Pashtun tribes involved in the fighting. (I came to know Pashtun leaders a decade later when serving as Ambassador to Pakistan, and learned first-hand how little had changed). Brown took my observation without comment.

Deng Xiaoping

I had read about Deng Xiaoping for more than a decade and shaken his hand during a reception in Washington following normalization in 1979, but had never had a long, close look. He did not disappoint. A tiny man less than five feet tall, he was brisk, blunt and funny. Deng hawked and spat like a peasant in the field, startling visitors with, frequent, loud and wet offerings to the spittoon by his feet, a practice all the more striking in the formal grandeur of the Great Hall of the People. Expectorations aside, he kept his guests guessing with a mixture of light humor and blunt, heavy substance. Greeting Brown for the first time, he lamented, “China is backward. We don’t have anything to export. Perhaps we can export these hot towels (which were being passed around).” Meant as a joke, this was Deng’s least accurate prophecy.

We would soon gain early insights into his profound impact on modern China. Two questions from the PLA dominated the initial months of our new military relationship: 1). How can we extract from you the most sophisticated technology possible? and 2). How do you retire from a military career? Both reflected Deng’s new policies. We knew that upgrading military technology was one the “four modernizations” preached by the post-Mao leadership (the others: agriculture, industry and science). But the intense Chinese interest that was to surface in all aspects of American military retirement procedures was our first indication that Deng had ordered all officials across China above a certain age to retire. This was a momentous decision and arguably Deng’s most important.

By 1979 the Chinese communists had been in power for 30 years, an entire generation. But there had been no significant changes in the leadership, except through death or political purge. In effect, the same people who came to power in 1949 at the provincial level and the national level, and even the county level, were still in office, but thirty years older. The entire Chinese body politic was stuck, constipated by layers of elders who could not contemplate the loss of power and perks.

This applied to the military leaders we had already met, an extraordinary parade of geezers, including the dignified, but many believed irrelevant Defense Minister Geng Biao; the crusty but politically still potent Vice Chief of the PLA Staff Zhang Aiping; the near-senile General Xu Xiangqian, and the energetic Admiral Liu Huaqing. Liu was cheerful, and smart. He emerged as the key Chinese official operationally involved in docking of the Pentagon and the PLA. But he, too, was in his seventies.

For Chinese senior generals, retirement was unthinkable. The free fall between wearing four stars and returning to one’s village was just too far. China lacked the afterlife infrastructure American officers had--think tanks, beltway consultancies, or business opportunities, generous pensions--which would make retirement busy and happy. They have them now. In the months to come, on the fringes of formal meetings, the Chinese peppered us with questions about annuities, promotion rates, jobs in industry. We answered them all and provided all the material that we could. We also suggested that they be in touch with the South Koreans whose military establishment was closer to theirs culturally. The Koreans had created positions for their retired generals that had houses, cars, and “face” attached.

Vice Premier Deng chose not to promote himself to higher rank and would later resign from all formal positions, though he remained China's top leader until he died at 92. He did not move immediately against those around him, but he had put the handwriting on the wall for them. He broke the generational logjam, freeing the way for fresh generations of leaders to manage China's rise.

Hua Guofeng

Party Secretary Hua Guofeng, Mao's chosen successor, was not to be one of these. "With you in charge, I'm at ease," the Chairman had famously said, an assessment greeted by snorts of derision throughout China. We were to find out why. A low common denominator functionary who wielded little effective power, Hua was still tolerated in office in January 1980, but would only last a few more months. I found him articulate, and in command of his brief, but commented to my notebook: "He's benign, smiling, soft and cuddly, sort of weak and effeminate." It was hard to believe Hua could survive in the same arena with the likes of Deng Xiaoping. Come to find out, he couldn't.

A Channel Forms

Once back in Washington, developing my own channel to the Chinese military was the crucial next step in shaping the growing relationship with the PLA. General Xu Yimin, was the brand new Chinese military attaché in Washington. He called on me at the Pentagon in late January and presented himself as my opposite number, smiling broadly from an almost perfectly round, humorous face. He came from the same part of Shandong Province as Confucius, he told me, and was clearly a person of broad education. Xu, like most military attaches, had a long intelligence background. Together we would become the day-to-day managers of our expanding military dialogue. Visits by General Liu Huaqing and Defense Minister Geng Biao in May were next on our agenda.

Life in the Five Sided Building

Meanwhile, I had moved from my ornate, high-ceilinged office in the Executive Office Building to a space shaped like a railroad car on the E-Ring of the Pentagon. This august outer layer of the Five Sided Building, especially those sides with windows on the capital city across the Potomac River, is where power resides, both civilian and military. The transition from the smallest bureaucracy in the US Government to the largest was a shock. At the NSC I could move a memo to the President with only one stop in between, Brzezinski himself. In the Pentagon, policy documents moved in great, languid circles, printed a different color of paper at each level of approval, until finally signed off at the top. At the State Department, where all ideas for consideration must be put in writing, the Secretariat machinery ensures that papers move to decision. In the Pentagon, the way to slow an idea down is to put it on paper. I found out soon that the Military Assistants to the Secretary and his deputies were the keys to action. Short phone calls and brief chits funneled through the MAs made things happen. The US military produces the best bureaucrats in America, many of whom, like Colin Powell and Alexander Haig, have moved to high civilian office. (While I was in the Pentagon, Powell was the Military

Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense). The Military Assistants (usually two or three star generals) are savvy and fast, and make sure that the offices of the civilians who ruled the military are properly managed.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense/International Security Affairs, my new home, was, and still is, an unstable compound. Unlike the permanent ziggurats of the armed services, the civilian structure serving the Secretary is struck like a tent every time an administration changes. The military officers who work in ISA are on special assignment and move too. An air of impermanence, of competition, of jostling for the ears of the mighty, prevails. Moving into this environment, I was comforted by knowing that I, too, was a guest, and that the substance for which I was responsible was a top priority for both civilians and military alike. These helped me through the initial skirmishes on office space, bureaucratic turf and access to the top officers. I was ranked, and rank is almost everything in the Five Sided Building, somewhere close to a lieutenant general, when it came to perks, planes and the like. Deputy Assistant Secretaries of Defense normally do not have direct access to regional military commanders like the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Command (CINCPAC now PACOM), but I did, thanks to the skills and clout of my predecessors, Abramowitz and Armacost.

The most useful perk that came with my job was membership in Pentagon Officers' Athletic Club, a vast underground complex of the finest sports facilities in the land--squash courts, basketball floors, an Olympic length swimming pool, saunas, steam baths, you name it, it was there. My own dependence on exercise matched that of the US military establishment as a whole and helped me penetrate that jock culture. Sneaking off for an hour to play squash, unheard of in the State Department, was normal practice in the Pentagon. Urgent conversations with four-star generals anxious to visit China took place under the showers at the POAC. Friendships with key staff officers were cemented on the squash courts.

A Key Personnel Decision

Choosing a new deputy for my East Asia Division was the most important management decision I made at the Pentagon. The incumbent, an Air Force brigadier general, was due for transfer. The Navy felt entitled to fill this job, arguing that the Pacific Ocean was our highway to Asia. Accordingly, Admiral William Crowe, then in charge of naval operations, ("the Ops Dep", later Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and Ambassador to London) came in person to my office for a discussion of candidates. Crowe offered me a choice of two rear admirals, John Poindexter, a brainy nuclear submariner, top of his class, and Don Jones, the first naval helicopter pilot to reach flag rank. I interviewed both and formed an instant, comfortable, chemical bond with Jones. It was a fortunate decision for both of us. Jones, politically astute and personally engaging, protected my interests in Washington during my many days on the road in Asia. (He went on to become Casper Weinberger's Military Assistant during the Reagan Administration. Poindexter, brilliant as advertised, rose to be White House National Security Adviser, only to crash along with Oliver North over the Iran-Contra scandal). The military officers I worked with were generally much more sophisticated about foreign policy issues than my FSO colleagues

were on military affairs. The respect and understanding we developed in 1980 helped me immeasurably later on as Ambassador to the Philippines, a job that revolved around the presence of our largest military bases in Asia.

During my year-plus at the Five Sided Building, I spent most of my time on four issues: 1) Docking the PLA and the Pentagon, 2) Squeezing more defense spending from Japan, 3) Stopping the new dictatorship in South Korea from killing opposition politician Kim Dae Jung, and 4) Managing the bilateral military sales relationships with Australia, New Zealand and the countries of Southeast Asia. The focus of this book is on our new relationship with China, but my work as the Defense Secretary's man on Asia took me throughout the vast region, on a varied menu of tasks that I enjoyed as much as any I had before or since.

General Liu Comes to Washington

General Liu Huaqing and his PLA advance delegation arrived in the Washington May 6 for talks at the Pentagon and a look at the facilities in Indiana, Colorado, California and Hawaii Defense Minister Geng Biao would visit later in the month. Dr. William Perry, then Undersecretary of Defense for Science and Technology, (with responsibility for weapons system procurement, research and development) welcomed Liu. Perry would become a key figure in the search for ways to improve China's defense capability without threatening others. A former mathematics professor from Cal Tech (see Mann), he would later return to the Pentagon as Defense Secretary under President Clinton.

Perry told Liu that the US was prepared to help the PRC build both its technical infrastructure and modernize its armed forces, step by step, subject to the political constraints of the day. Meeting later with Gerald Dinneen, Liu said he understood the constraints on technology transfer and the need for self-reliance on China's part. He outlined new Central Committee guidelines. PRC imports of foreign technology and equipment could take several forms: (a) purchase of technological data, (b) invitations to foreign experts (c) formation of joint ventures. The goal would be to train PLA officers and technicians in order to improve Chinese weapons. Imported technologies need not be first rate. China understood other countries' reluctance to export their best systems. But the technology had to be better than China already had. "We have to consider our own level," Liu concluded. "Even if we could get the most advanced technology, we could not absorb it. We need to be able to use what we buy for practical purposes."

What Liu wanted most was help in improving China's F-8 high performance jet fighter. "We need advanced radars, electronics and guidance systems. If you can give us the engine, we would want that. Then the aircraft would be the best. If you could give us the pulse Doppler (radar), the F-8 would be equivalent to the MIG 23. This is one of our most urgent demands. We hope you will take it as a special case and consider it again. The Vietnamese have acquired the MIG 23. We will produce the aircraft." Liu invited American experts to come immediately.

Dinneen did not respond.

Liu Huaqing then took off for his inspection of Defense Minister Geng Biao's upcoming visit stops in Colorado, California and Hawaii, the routes all carefully arranged by the Pentagon to avoid aerial photography of sensitive military installations. He returned two weeks later bubbling with enthusiasm, delighted with the briefings he had received, the frankness of the talks, the visits to so many corporations and installations, the friendly attitude of the officers and men. He had made a real effort to see everything; high precision weapons, army armaments, naval weapons, electronic counter measures. Liu was most impressed with US efforts to develop new weaponry and our experience in administering research.

Liu and his delegation concluded that U.S. emphasis on research, development, evaluation and testing assured its leading role far into the future. The trip was a valuable experience for the Chinese in developing their military technology. As far as training was concerned, Liu was impressed with the quality of American bases and academies. "You are strict, well equipped and highly efficient," Liu beamed. "Everywhere we went, we met people from different walks who spoke of the importance to our relationship. We believe our relations will flower. We are also looking for fruits," he concluded with a smile.

The most important "fruits" Liu sought were not to drop from the tree any time soon. Dinneen told Liu that he had been required to turn down all the F-8 related requests--advanced engines, radars, and guidance systems. On the brighter side, Dinneen said he had approved for transfer several significant items of dual use technology and military support equipment. These would include read only memory chips; Bell commercial helicopters, which could be made in the PRC; disc drives, serial printers, and computers. All of these items would benefit the economy as a whole, Dinneen concluded.

Swallowing his chagrin ("Liu looks disappointed and pissed", my notes reported), Liu closed his meetings with a graceful review of the relationship since Harold Brown's visit, expressing satisfaction with the progress so far, and expressing understanding of how much time it takes to understand each other. He extended an invitation to Perry and Dinneen to visit China. But he made it clear that F-8 improvements would remain high on China's agenda, whatever the problems they gave the US. (NP notes pp. 51-53)

The Chinese Defense Minister Arrives in Washington

Five months had passed since Harold Brown's discussions in Beijing. Significant international developments during that time would affect the Defense Minister Geng's conversations in Washington. Failure of the US attempt in April to rescue the Iranian hostages had led Secretary of State Vance to resign and Edmund Muskie to take his place. Student opposition to General Chun Doo Hwan's seizure of power in the Republic of Korea was coming to a head in the city of Kwangju. The US, blamed for tacit support of Chun, was under pressure to intervene. On the eve of Geng Biao's arrival, a meeting of senior US officials, which I attended, decided to support the restoration of order in Korea in the short term, and worry about democracy later. If Chun made it to the Blue House, we would reluctantly have to accept him.

On May 25, Sheila and I went up to New York to meet the Chinese Defense Minister and his wife, Zhao Lanxiang, and escort them to Washington. Geng was wearing a light gray western suit, of which he turned out to have a regular supply, with a blue and silver necktie, also part of his uniform. He died his hair brown, using some kind of henna rinse. During our weeks together, the person that emerged was shrewd, polished, controlled and materialistic. Here was one Long March veteran ready for Deng Xiaoping's opening to the rest of the world.

Harold Brown was at Andrews Air Force Base to greet Geng and drive into the city. In the car together, Brown reviewed the visit schedule, the division of labor between them, and who would talk about what. Brown described the good impression General Liu had made during his preparations for the Defense Minister's tour. Searching in vain for small talk with our Secretary of Defense, Geng raised the subject of Alaska, over which he had flown en route to the US. How sorry the Soviets must be that they sold it to us in 1867, he mused.

Brown described our policy on Korea and the climaxing situation in Kwangju. Our emphasis was on stability. We had warned the North Koreans, encouraged moderation in the ROK and expressed our desire for political liberalization as a means for maintaining long-term stability. It was Seoul's own decision to make. Geng asked how the DPRK was responding. Brown reported that Pyongyang was maintaining readiness and perhaps preparing for hostilities. Frankly and privately, Geng commented that China, for its part, would not encourage unilateral action by the North Koreans, noting pointedly that the North Korean economy was not independent.

A Cozy Chat

The next day, the two men held an unusual, informal warm-up in Brown's office, and later that evening watched the movie "The Empire Strikes Back" at the White House (a big improvement over "Red Detachment of Women"). At the Pentagon, the two men chatted easily about what they would say about strategy toward the Soviet Union; ways in which they could coordinate action; the failure on both sides to predict the Soviet action in Afghanistan, and the difficulty the Soviets would have in conducting a war in China. Even with 47 divisions massed along the border, China's sheer size would seriously challenge the Soviets, Geng believed. They were having enough trouble subduing the Afghans in a much smaller area. Their surrogates, the Vietnamese, had planned to wipe out Pol Pot's forces in one dry season offensive in Cambodia, but failed.

Brown and Geng wound up their chat touching on ways in which Chinese and American military to military relationships could develop, including technology transfer. Geng understood that supplying certain items to the Chinese during an American election year could create political problems. The PRC would go slow, not press, and take satisfaction in the gradual improvement of relations. Geng said he was delighted to be in America and happy with the hospitality he had received so far. He had not seen anything yet.

Full Honors

During the next three days Washington gave China's Defense Minister the full treatment, starting with a top pomp military arrival ceremony at the River Entrance of the Pentagon: formal talks with Secretary Brown: a welcome dinner at the National Gallery; talks and lunch at the State Department with Secretary Muskie; White House conversations with President Carter and Vice President Mondale; a session on Capitol Hill with congressional leaders; dinner and entertainment at the Kennedy Center; a separate White House meeting with National Security Adviser Brzezinski, and lunch with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The symbolic point of the visit--the Defense Minister of China comparing notes on the Soviet threat in the US capital with America's national security elite--was made with style.

Substantive Issues

Substantive discussions reflected recent events. Assessments of the Soviet threat acknowledged the problems Moscow was having subduing the Afghans and catalogued worldwide revulsion to the invasion, including the Olympic boycott. Support levels for Pakistan were still a question. President Zia refused to engage with the US, and spurned our aid offers, despite increases. Because the rescue mission had failed, the US was as preoccupied as ever with the Iran hostage crisis, and the Chinese as politely reluctant to impose sanctions as before. Pol Pot had survived the Vietnamese onslaught, but the US would not help this "criminal" take power, Chinese entreaties notwithstanding. (NP Notes pp 62)

President Carter greeted Geng warmly, expressed regret that Party Secretary Hua Guofeng's schedule would not permit a visit the US during the rest of 1980, and hoped that he would visit China as President of the US (i.e. after the election). Vice President Mondale cited the phenomenal progress in U.S.-China relations since normalization, including trade, international monetary fund membership, and most favored nation treatment, but hoped for progress in four areas: textiles, a maritime agreement, civil aviation and housing.

At the State Department, Geng attacked the imposition of martial law and violent suppression of dissent in Korea by Chon Doo Hwan's "fascist military dictatorship", actions that would alienate popular support, jeopardizing the North-South talks and threatening peace and stability in East Asia. Geng asked Secretary Muskie and Assistant Secretary Holbrooke to exert their influence on Chon to oppose dictatorship and further democracy. He assured them the DPRK had no intent to invade the South, or become involved in ROK politics. The PRC would work to bring about reunification through peaceful dialogue, step by step.

Muskie replied that he shared China's interest in peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. The Chinese attitude could be helpful. During the past week, the U.S. had

worked to exercise a stabilizing influence. The prospects for political liberalization in the Republic of Korea were not encouraging.

At the White House, Brzezinski assured Geng that the US would not permit the USSR to gain military superiority or alter the balance of power in Southwest Asia and the rest of the world. Our goal was a total withdrawal of Soviet troops and a neutral Afghanistan. “We hope that the normalization of relations with Iran, which we hope will come after a few months when the hostage crisis is solved (sic), to be better able to assist the Afghans.”* (NP Notes, pp.61-62.

Brzezinski asked Geng if the Chinese military action against Vietnam in 1979 had, in fact, taught Hanoi a lesson. Before the action, Geng replied, 10 second string Vietnamese divisions were stationed on the Chinese border (which had, he neglected to say, beat up the PLA). Now 30 first line divisions had been drawn out of Cambodia to face the Chinese on the border, making it possible for the DK opposition to survive Hanoi’s dry season offensive. “Will there be advanced education?” Brzezinski asked. “Definitely”, Geng answered. The Thai and other ASEAN countries hope China will keep the pressure on. In fact, Beijing planned to keep tensions high on the border and resist Vietnamese pressure for disengagement.

In closing, Geng and Brzezinski admired each other’s tough, politically astute wives, neither of whom had been shy about expressing their views during conversations at social events. “She influences me not to capitulate,” Brzezinski assured Geng.

At their final meeting May 29, Geng offered to sell the United States some rare metals, which could be of use militarily. These included Titanium, Molybdenum, Vanadium, rare earth elements, Tantalum. Brown responded that the United States used all of these and would examine our needs. The two men agreed to China visits by William Perry and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Jones, and exchanges between the logistical services and the military academies. CINCPAC Long would go later, they decided.

After years at daggers drawn, suddenly everyone in the two military establishments wanted to visit each other. The Geng visit made me very popular. I was now the “go to” person on China, and everybody in the Pentagon knew it.

A Grand Tour

Spectacular military tourism is a Pentagon specialty, crafted and refined over decades of congressional travel designed to influence members responsible for the military budget. On May 30, Defense Minister Geng and his delegation departed on a tour of the US fit for the Chairman of the Senate Armed Forces Committee.

For the record, Geng Biao’s delegation consisted of:
Chai Zemin, Chinese Ambassador to the United States
Liu Huaqing, Vice Chief of General Staff
Chai Cheng wen, Director of Foreign Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Defense

Chen Lai, Deputy Chief of Staff, General Logistics Department
Han Xu, Director, Department of American and Oceanian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Huang Zhengju, Deputy Director, Intelligence Department, General Staff
Xu Yimin, Defense and Military Attaché, Chinese Embassy
Zhang Zai, Chief of the U.S. Division, Department of American and Oceanian Affairs

Among the Chinese along for their language skills were some old friends and people who became important later. One was Ni Yaoli, a Foreign Affairs Ministry interpreter who helped Geng Biao specifically. Zhou Wenzhong, Ambassador Chai's interpreter, later DCM in Washington and currently Ambassador in Washington.

On our side listed after me were
Rear Admiral Samuel W. Hubbard, Jr., Assistant Deputy Under Secretary (international programs and technology)
Colonel William Webb, Air Attaché, Beijing
Colonel Monte Bullard, Air Attaché, Beijing (designate)
Darryl Johnson, State Desk Officer, later Ambassador to Thailand
James Brown, interpreter, then and now

Secretary Brown saw Geng off at Andrews Air Force Base. "I've not had a chance to congratulate you on your successful missile shot." Brown told Geng. (The test had occurred while Geng was in Washington) "Ten years ago I would not have believed I would be congratulating a Chinese for such a thing." Geng thanked him and said, "Well, you know what direction it's pointed in. We won't fire anything first, but we want the Soviets to know that we have something, even one that can strike back." The two men then bear hugged awkwardly and then we boarded the special Air Force VIP aircraft that would fly us across the continental US and to Hawaii.

It was an extraordinary trip, carefully contrived to impress the Chinese and demonstrate the strength of America. As the ranking US escort, I saw everything at Geng's side, and to some extent through his eyes. That morning, the delegation climbed in and out of all-terrain vehicles at American Motors plant in Indiana. In the afternoon, at a massive firepower demonstration staged for them by the 4th Infantry Division Fort Carson Colorado, they stood transfixed as Apache gunships popped up from behind hills to fire wire-guided missiles at doomed targets. A sunset barbecue among the cottonwoods at Turkey Creek Ranch provided the PLA visitors with scenery and chow straight from the Western movies they had all seen.

The Colorado stop included eye-goggling missile tracking displays at North American Air Defense (NORAD) Command Headquarters in the bowels of Cheyenne Mountain; and a tour of the sparkling, futuristic campus of the US Air Force Academy.

En Route to San Diego, we dipped and circled over the Grand Canyon, and refueled at Luke Air Force Base near Phoenix, Arizona, where the Chinese got an eyeful of American fighter aircraft. At least 80 F-15s and many more, older F-4s and F-104s stood in rows on the runways. In San Diego, a visit to its famous Zoo yielded memorable photos of PLA generals in their floppy hats and baggy uniforms bonding with the giant animal mascots who ran to greet them, and walking with gingerly delight among a crowd of penguins. The next day, aboard the USS Tarawa, a helicopter carrier, the elevator carrying the Defense Minister got stuck, causing considerable consternation among the Navy brass, but widespread hilarity among the Chinese. The Americans were human after all.

At Third Fleet headquarters, the Navy briefed Chinese on the main features of modern naval warfare, emphasizing the ability to coordinate their “platforms” (carriers), stay at sea and operate. To demonstrate, they treated Geng Biao and his group to a morning at sea aboard the USS Ranger, observing flight operations. This was the climax of the entire visit, a show of teamwork and technology that stunned the visitors. In San Diego, our quarters at the magnificent Coronado Hotel, a huge, cozy, old-fashioned wooden structure that dominates the bay, provided relief from the relentless modernity of the US military establishment.

Gerry Dinneen flew into San Diego for a last meeting with General Liu, and one more look at the technology transfer lists. Liu was very grateful for this special gesture. He told Dinneen the entire delegation had been deeply impressed with everything they had seen. He had been in the United States for a whole month, the longest he had ever been abroad. Liu promised to welcome Dinneen, Perry and me to China later in the year. As they closed, Dinneen asked questions about the form and purity of the strategic metals that the Chinese had offered during Geng’s last conversation with Harold Brown.

The Chinese Defense Minister ended his visit in Honolulu, where he toured Pearl Harbor and held one last substantive session, this one with Admiral Long at CINCPAC headquarters. A long discussion of comparative strengths of the Soviet and American navies led the Chinese to conclude that the U.S. was ahead, but the Soviets were catching up.

The concrete results of Geng’s visit were a modest collection of dual use computers, radars and rolling stock, and a start on transferring munitions technology. But the first class tour he and his colleagues in the PLA were given of official Washington and US capabilities nationwide set the scene for William Perry’s visit three months later, which turned out to be the most revealing and significant of all the exchanges during that first year of military relations between the US and the PRC.

Revealing Conversations

For a new China hand like me, chances for informal chats with a Long March veteran like Geng were not to be missed. He made a point of telling me he had served in the international commission (to us the Marshall Mission) in Beijing in 1946. One of his

KMT counterparts then, a special intelligence officer named Cai Wenji, had since moved to the US. They met again at a private dinner hosted by Cai in Washington the night before we left. (Cai had also invited Harold Brown to dinner, but Brown, on my advice, stayed away).

Geng had spry, modern views for an old Communist. He told me that the Chinese Constitution was an incomplete document, flawed by a lack of provisions governing investment. The earlier emphasis on politics in education (i.e. Mao's) had been wrong. The current focus was on economics and modernization, with some political studies, but stressed performance. More pay for more work. Students must study and pass exams. Good students at the high school level could now be moved ahead a year or even two if particularly talented, and take college entrance exams early. Workers should receive bonuses for good performance on a monthly basis. Cadres would be selected and trained with more care, rotating the young ones to different jobs to see what they were good at and to give them variety of experience. The 3,000 long marchers like him left in the government would retire in accordance with a plan to bring forward younger cadres. The old men "have experience, but lack energy," he said. China's biggest problem was population growth, but the government was determined to limit families to one child or two through sanctions and incentives. America's biggest problems were its trade deficit and the propensity to waste energy, particularly oil, Geng noted. 26 years later, they still are. (NP Notes pp 67-68)

Getting Practical : The Perry Mission

William Perry's tour of China's military/industrial complex, and laid the foundation for practical cooperation between the Pentagon and the PLA for years to come. He had asked to see China's defense industry from the bottom up, so that he could work out a way to help within the narrow space permitted by US rules and politics. His delegation of three star generals and civilian experts, including Gerry Dinneen at the top, was divided into three groups. The A group would be responsible for studying weapons systems, the B group electronics, and the C group strategic materials and metallurgy. For two weeks in September 1980, they got an eyeful of Chinese capabilities and weakness, from the research institutes of Beijing, to missile launch sites in the Gobi Desert, to aircraft factories in Xi'an, tank plants in Inner Mongolia, satellite tracking facilities in the mountains of Shanxi, electronics institutes in Nanjing, and sub pens in Shanghai. I stuck close to Perry, attended all his events and meetings and took notes.

Perry's Political Commissar

Perry introduced me during this trip as his "political commissar." During my months in the Pentagon, we had developed a good and easy relationship, which lasts to this day. Then, as now, I found him brainy, low key, precise, and courageous. But Perry really did need a political commissar. He frequently departed from his script, pushed his guidance to the limit and beyond. His principal toast in Beijing, for example, looked forward to concrete results in Sino-US military cooperation, including "weapons." He did this on purpose, knowing that he was creating a dynamic for policy change.

“How do we make Chinese military forces, particularly along the Siberian border, more formidable without harming our own national security?” Perry asked Ambassador Woodcock in Beijing September 6. He answered his own question. “We help them with short range anti-tank missiles, ground and air, modern avionics and support equipment. This last one we can work on now, but it is the least important. Policy guidelines preclude us from the first two. We expect to recommend changes next year.” Perry told Woodcock he did not expect to discuss anti-tank weapons this trip, but, in fact, he did. While I agreed with his analysis and objectives, I became the keeper of the constraints, joined in this function by Roger Sullivan, my language student classmate in Washington and Taiwan, who had moved from State to the NSC China job. We spent our time making sure that Perry knew what the agencies had agreed to and what would cause problems-- what was new and what was not--what Bill could say to the Chinese and what not. He did not always listen, but knew that our role was to protect him.

The sights of the trip were rare and special: camel caravans plodding by deserted rocket gantries in Gansu; sunrise over sub pens in Shanghai; the serried ranks of the terra cotta army guarding the tomb of the Chin Emperor near Xi’an; and the elaborate bathtub of the enchanting Tang Dynasty courtesan Yang Guifei at the Hua Qing hot springs close by. (The ministers had to kill her before the emperor could get back to governing.) The springs were where Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek was betrayed and captured by Zhang Xueliang in 1936, losing his false teeth in the humiliating process. (See Chapter 3).

The itinerary was punctuated with jolly banquets and hundreds of toasts in Maotai, the lethal liquor that burns with a blue flame when lit. We all lit up, too, and in the process, began to bond with the soldiers of China, our bitter foes in Korea. Our hosts were only too ready to tuck in to the special rations that came with the foreigners. Sea slugs-- horrid, squishy, cucumber shaped organisms considered extremely honorific and therefore required fare for distinguished delegations-- followed us everywhere, even in the desert thousands of miles from the ocean. I imagined a little man with briefcases full of the things dogging our footsteps.

Changing Times

The Chinese leaders Perry met were all confirmed members of Deng Xiaoping’s evolving post-Mao team. Li Xiannian was promoted to Premier the day after he met our delegation. Crusty old PLA Chief of Staff Zhang Aiping became a Vice Premier shortly after. Genial host Liu Huaqing remained where he was, the architect of the Chinese military relationship with the US and the planner responsible for Perry’s extraordinary itinerary. The visit took place against the backdrop of massive (15%) cuts in the Chinese military budget, as Deng moved to modernize the economy. The conversations compared Western and Soviet strength, were laced with Perry’s expert assessments of weapons technology, and punctuated with the usual mantras, “case by case, and step by step.” He used a traditional Chinese saying I taught him to make our point: “Fat men are not made in one mouthful” (*pangzi bushi ikou qide*)

It was clearly a new day in China, even on the street. On Sunday, I rented a bike and pedaled under incandescent blue skies to my old haunts; the department store in Wangfujing; Tiananmen Square, the diplomatic compound at Jianguomenwai. The mood of the city had changed and seemed more relaxed. People were more willing to talk. A sign of the times, Hua Guofeng announced his resignation as Party Secretary that day.

I spotted a familiar figure walking along the street near the International Club (now the St. Regis Hotel). It was my son Adam, visiting from Hong Kong, and his friend Mimi Oka, whose father was the correspondent for the New York Times. We did an affectionate double take. I had no idea Adam was in Beijing. In Cultural Revolution days, foreigners could not just “turn up”.

What We Learned

The balance sheet for Bill Perry’s visit contained pluses for both sides.

The US gained a direct, first-hand feel for China’s military capability. Bill Perry was able to stand under the bomb bay doors of the S-6, the Badger bomber, look up, pace the dimensions and observe, “Hmmm. This could hold about 6 cruise missiles.” We were struck by the enormous scale of Soviet assistance to China in the nineteen fifties. All the designs for China’s planes, tanks and guns came from the Russians, along with entire plants to produce them. To be sure, the Soviets did not give the PRC their top line weapons. Using automobiles as an analogy, they provided the capacity to make Pontiacs rather than Cadillacs, more than adequate for Chinese purposes.

At the same time, we could also see that there had been no advances in the design of these weapons during the 20 or so years since the Soviet advisors had left. There probably had not been that much opportunity. In our briefings at various factories, an historical pattern of six stages in Chinese defense production emerged: (1) Soviet help, (2) Soviet withdrawal, (3) recovery, (4) the Cultural Revolution, during which production was halted for two years or more while workers engaged in “labor” in their factories, (5) recovery, and (6) the current financial squeeze.

The Cultural Revolution damaged national security as well as the education of a generation China’s youth. The disruption was particularly severe in the research institutes, which Perry told General Liu, were ten to twenty years behind.

The plants we saw were working way below capacity, the drab gun and tank lines side by side with brightly colored baby carriages, children’s bicycles and toys produced for profit.

More recent efforts to upgrade weapons technology had not yielded much result. Four years of work with British help to produce the Rolls Royce Spey Jet aircraft engine in Xian had yielded only four engines, assembled from imported military components. Perry told his hosts that that the plant, a sprawling complex with 10,000 workers and 40 workshops—was up to world standards, but privately our experts concluded that Rolls

Royce had not given that much to the Chinese, who now had to manufacture their own components, and had a long way to go. Our hosts in Shanghai took pride in showing us their Y-9 jet transport, a laboriously reverse engineered Chinese version of the Boeing 707, representing years of effort to create technology already thirty years old.

The missile pad at Shuangchengzi, where China's first satellite was launched was at the level of our pioneer Mercury project, deserted and ghostly. We knew, however, that a more advanced site existed in the Northeast. Missiles and nuclear weapons must have absorbed the bulk of the resources Beijing was clearly not spending on tanks, planes and guns.

What the Chinese Learned

"We need to know," Perry had asked Woodcock in Beijing, "how to convince the Chinese that the progress has been worth it so far, and that we are proceeding in a significant way, without them becoming discouraged." Perry's own answer was to expound on every subject raised, with candor and expertise. The Chinese asked Perry and Dineen constantly for their views as private sector scientists and business authorities, sat at their feet and genuinely valued their assessments.

In meetings at Hangzhou and Shanghai at the end of the visit, Perry and Dineen gave General Liu their final judgments. China had a good technical foundation on which to build, they said. The facilities and staffs of the research institutes had been well grounded, but severely set back by the Cultural Revolution. Unless China made big long-term investments in education and high-speed computers for design and analysis, the institutes would fall further behind.

Perry recommended specifically that the Chinese:

- a. Send a substantial number of PhD candidates from the institutes and universities to the US and Europe, to return as the teachers of a new, self-sufficient generation of Chinese scientists.
- b. Accelerate and expand scientific and exchange programs now underway between US companies and defense labs.
- c. Give research institutes access to modern high speed computers, including a large computer in Beijing with access from the institutes throughout the country by phone lines.
- d. Send substantial numbers of bachelor's degree candidates for computer technology and sciences to the U.S.
- e. Establish links, now totally lacking, between designers, institutes, and production engineers in factories. We had solved this problem in the US by arranging for production engineers to work in design institutes.
- f. Create in the Defense Ministry, and each military service, the position of armaments director, responsible for research, production and logistics to support weapons systems. This person, with no additional responsibilities other than technology transfer

from other countries, would pull together design and production functions. This was his own job, Perry said.

Manufacturing

The factories he had seen had the facilities, staff and tools to build good quality equipment, efficiently and to schedule, Perry judged. But volume of government orders was too low for the plant capacity available, designs were thirty years out of date, and small scale computers were not used in the production process. He recommended that the Chinese:

- a. Build on what they had rather than starting over, modernize existing designs rather than introduce new ones, improve the plants, machines, jigs and personnel, and modify components to create large changes in performance with small changes in technology.
- b. Initiate at pilot plants small computers to use in production process control. Computers provided opportunities for major technology transfer at low cost. Hardware, software and training were readily available from computer companies.

Significant Modifications

Perry gave some examples of product modifications that could be useful for the Chinese to introduce. Aircraft engines were unreliable and short-lived, leading to big maintenance expenses and high rates of failure in flight. Simply replacing the engine blades and discs with high alloy equivalents would bring big improvements.

Chinese gun designs were adequate, but their ammunition was old fashioned, Perry continued. Adopting cluster munitions for artillery shells, proximity fuses for anti-aircraft munitions, and long rod penetrators in anti-tank rounds--would make a huge difference. He explained that conventional anti-tank bullets simply bounced off Soviet armor, which, like ours, was made of layer upon layer of Kevlar fabric. The kinetic energy of a long rod penetrator could pierce tanks like a dart.

This turned out to be the most significant observation of the entire visit. Perry would later recommend transfer to the PRC of a technical data package to create long rod penetrators. The modification would allow the Chinese to improve defense against Soviet armor using existing gun tubes and factories, with minimal threat to their neighbors.

Electronics

Dineen's assessment of China's electronics industry, a prime factor in the modernization of both the military forces and the civilian economy, followed Perry's themes. He described Cultural Revolution damage to research institutes and engineers and a shortage of good standardized test equipment, recommending that the institutes buy cheap test equipment abroad rather than make their own.

Clean rooms and other specialized facilities were in short supply, scattered inefficiently, even if in the same area. Minimal contact between university professors, institute people and production managers was another flaw. Dinneen agreed that production people should be brought into the research institutes and research facilities placed in factories. As far as semiconductors were concerned the challenge was to increase production at lower cost. Joint ventures with the U.S. or Europe or Japan could help with the assembly of 16-K chips. At an appropriate time in the future Chinese would be involved at the front end of the process, but not now.

General Liu and his colleagues were genuinely grateful for Perry and Dineen's frank judgments. He acknowledged that their recommendations had been made without considering whether China could afford to implement them, or whether the United States could help. He agreed with their analyses.

The F-8 Again

Detailed discussions with American experts on how best to upgrade the F-8 fighter were another plus for the Chinese. At their first meeting in Beijing, Liu had raised the F-8. "Without weapons, talk of military cooperation does not make much sense", he had said, bluntly. Support equipment was useless without the weapons that went with it. Perry warned throughout the visit that the US was limited to transferring only dual use technology related to the plane, but agreed to discuss the issues.

We actually saw the aircraft at an airfield in Xian. After clambering all over it, US Air Force Attaché Brigadier General Bill Webb commented to me, "This is a flying cigar, very hot at one end." The wings were tiny. He expressed doubt about the plane's maneuverability, except at high speed, which proved prophetic. 20 years later an F-8 shadowing a US reconnaissance EP-3 going only 250 miles an hour near Hainan Island collided and caused a crisis in the relations between Beijing and the new administration of George W. Bush.

After viewing the plane, the American expert on our delegation, suggested a two-phased program which would concentrate first on extending the F-8's radar range, communications range, engine life and infrared air-to-air missiles. The second phase would focus on making new engines for the F-8 and adding look down radar. Before leaving, Perry proposed a visit to China by US turbine engine and electronics experts to study in some detail the F-8 engines and radar, identifying shortcomings, and identify what technology needed to be transferred. Decisions on policy exceptions would come later. (NP Notes, pp 87-91)

Following Up

Returning home to a capital beset with concerns about the upcoming election and the war between Iran and Iraq, our briefings with other US officials, diplomats and members of Congress were purposefully ho-hum. This had only been a survey trip that involved no

policy changes or weapons sales. There was nothing new to report. No press releases were made or planned.

Nevertheless, during the months between President Carter's defeat and the beginning of the Reagan Administration, PLA delegations continued to arrive, requiring my care and feeding. Grizzled Long March veteran Xiao Ke and his logistics team dined in their baggy green uniforms on my lawn in Oliver Street, a bizarre sight for residents of Chevy Chase DC. Patterns of scientific exchange mapped by William Perry began to take shape with the appearance at US conferences of Chinese military intellectuals from a variety of think tanks. What Stanford University's John Lewis described as the beginnings of a "big groping exercise on the part of China's scientific, technological and strategic elite" had begun, which continues to this day.

Dr. Perry met with PRC Vice Defense Minister Zhang Zhen December 15, whose delegation had spent a month touring US facilities and plants. Zhang made specific requests for US experts to visit Chinese installations and give lectures, for anti-tank weapons technology and for night vision technology. Perry said he would do what he could under current guidelines. For the future, he was preparing a paper recommending broad cooperation with the PRC on tech transfer. Approval would be up to the new administration.

I jumped in at this point to warn how long policy decisions took to emerge during a transition between administrations. I told Zhang that Brown and his successor Caspar Weinberger had already met and that Brown believed that the discussions were productive. I said I would work hard to insure a smooth transition. Perry added his hope that "Mr. Platt educates Mr. Weinberger as well as he educated Brown and me." General Xu Yimin expressed the desire to maintain our contact and friendship.

A New Roadmap

As it turned out, Dr. Perry had set the course for the development of military relations between the US and China until the Soviet Union collapsed ten years later. The findings of his report were frozen by the result of the election, but only for a while. In due time, the Reagan administration took action on much of what we had discussed, including a program to develop the F-8 fighter aircraft. Future Chinese tank rounds would change from balls to darts, manufactured with the help of a US Technical Data Package. Dual use items, among them high speed computers and chips, helicopters, military trucks, over the horizon radars all would find their way to China. The military attaché offices in both capitals would expand, exchanges of specialized delegations (logistics, military education etc.) would multiply and the stream of Chinese BA and PhD candidates in the sciences would widen.

Then and Now

PLA suppression of student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in 1989 brought the expansion of military links between the US and China to an abrupt halt. The end of the

Cold War shortly thereafter undercut further the rationale for interaction between the military establishments. Since then ties between the PLA and the Pentagon have moved in fits and starts, the casualty of a series of crises. Military contact has been the first element of our relationship Congress wants to cut as a sign of our displeasure or concern.

Ironically, the growth of China's power has revived ties between the PLA and the Pentagon. The combination of curiosity and mistrust that marked our earliest dealings, when China was weak, remains today. So does the wide gap between US and Chinese military capabilities that was first confirmed during Perry's visit. But the realization that the more we know about each other, the safer we will both be, is once again pushing the "two armies" closer together. What we forget, of course, is the extent to which we helped shape China's military modernization to begin with.

Election Shock

The interregnum following President Carter's resounding defeat at the polls in November 1980 was a time of tension, depression and anticipation, with major mood swings from one day to the next. Democrat political appointees mentally packed their bags, while soldiering on at work. Professionals like me, who had some chance of keeping their jobs, sniffed the wind for signs of who their bosses might be. Rumor ruled.

News of new appointments began to seep out-- Alexander Haig to be Secretary of State. Jim Lilley to NSC, John Holdridge to EA, Dixie Walker to replace Bill Gleysteen in Korea, among others.

China Angst

Policy toward China was a major topic during the transition months. The incoming Reagan Administration was clearly critical of the normalization deal Carter had made with the PRC, angry at the treatment Taiwan had received, and determined to make a clean sweep of all China policy jobs. Discussions in private meetings with incoming officials and at public conferences debated the continuity of current policy, levels and nature of weapons sales to Taipei, and degrees of official vs. unofficial relations with Taiwan.

One of Alexander Haig's first actions upon being named Secretary was to fire the entire conservative transition team at State, rocking Reagan's core group and delighting the professionals at Foggy Bottom. Rumor had it that China policy was one of the reasons.

Chinese defense intellectuals appearing at conferences I attended displayed serious angst of their own. They worried that Reagan did not understand PRC sensitivities toward the Taiwan question and would use the issue as a way to check and manipulate China; that US policy makers perceived the Chinese communists as still bent on overthrowing capitalist America and regarded China as a potential enemy. More fundamentally, one of

them told me, we might have a "wrong estimate of Chinese potential, a weak and unworthy friend, unable to play a role when necessary. It would be tragic if US policy were based on this principle." (NP Notes p. 100}

My farewell conversation with David Jones, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who had been invited to stay on, was all about China policy. The ten minute ceremonial call originally scheduled by Jones' aides, turned into forty five minutes, one on one. Jones had frequently approached me at the POAC for informal advice on the prospects for his planned trip to China. We were on easy terms. Jones began by saying he enjoyed a close relationship with the new Secretary of Defense and had been accepted into President Reagan's inner circle. They discussed their intimate opinions of political figures in front of him in a way that suggested they trusted him completely.

At the most recent Cabinet meeting (February 11, 1981), Jones continued, the President had asked the Government to stop pretending that the relationship with Taiwan was not official, as he had promised in an August campaign statement. I interjected that the whole success of our China policy depended on pretending that the relationship was not official.

Specifically, Jones continued, Reagan had asked for suggestions on things that could be done in the military relations field. Jones had said that the U.S. military would like to visit "both countries," have ship visits to "both countries." Jones related this to me somewhat sheepishly.

Jones asked what I thought could be done to improve the atmosphere of the Taiwan relationship and respond to the President's wishes without destroying or harming our relationship with the PRC. I replied that any action taken by the U.S. government which appeared to give a more official nature to our relationship with Taiwan would injure our ties with the PRC. It was a matter of face and symbolism on both sides. Appearances mattered more than reality. The U.S. could make the currently considered "non-controversial" weapon sales to Taiwan (armored personnel carriers, helicopters, standard missiles). The PRC would complain bitterly, but as long as we did not officially upgrade our relationship with Taiwan, the PRC would accept it in due course. Any such upgrading would prompt Beijing to retaliate by reducing its ties with us.

More official military relations with Taiwan would mean a freeze on military cooperation with the PRC. Neither General Jones nor Admiral Long would be able to visit the PRC as invited, and as both wanted. I added the critics inside the PRC now described Deng Xiaoping as a dupe of the US, a country that was willing to sell weapons to Taiwan but not the PRC, and now appeared to be backtracking on its commitment to treat Beijing as the legal government of China.

Jones said he understood the issues better now (he had taken notes throughout) and would be discussing the matter with Admiral Long. I said I would too.

This was to be my last opportunity as a government official to provide advice on US policy toward China. The Reagan Administration ended up continuing established,

constructively ambiguous guidelines governing official/unofficial relations with the PRC and Taiwan. The issue of weapons sales to Taiwan and the management of our relationship with Taipei would continue to rile our relationship right up to the present, but I would be working on other things.

Moving On

I learned my own fate early in the New Year, when Richard Armitage, head of the DOD transition team, called on me in my office. His appearance was striking-- a huge, muscular, weight-lifter's torso with no neck, topped by a bald, bullet-shaped head, from which came words in a gravelly voice. The words were friendly, humorous, and smart. I liked him instantly, but remained wary. I asked him simply to tell me if I had a chance of staying on at Defense under the new Administration. If not, I needed to hustle and find a new job. Rich said I was ok with the Reagan people, but that someone had his eye on my job, and that someone was he. It was the only post in the government that he wanted.

I thanked Rich for being straight with me, and offered him advice on how to operate in the Pentagon. I explained the treacherous facts of bureaucratic life in the civilian side of the Secretary's office, and explained some important tricks. It did not matter, for example, how well he knew the new Secretary, it would be vital for him to be the first Reagan appointee to report for work in ISA, and the first person to put his name on a memorandum. This would establish his seniority within the organization, which in turn would help him get the right office space on the E-Ring, and the pick of the staff assistants who would serve him. Early arrival would provide a leg up in the constant competition which marked his level on the bureaucratic food chain. I explained the importance of the Military Assistants to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, the men who really ran the bureaucracy and managed the tricky relationships between military and civilians. My own Deputy, Admiral Don Jones, was particularly skilled, and I urged Rich to keep him.

Rich probably knew all this already, but took it all in and acted accordingly. Colin Powell, the Military Assistant to the Deputy Secretary was to become his closest friend. Rich and I bonded, too, a relationship that became important later. When I served as George Shultz' Executive Secretary from 1985-87, Armitage had risen to be head of Weinberger's ISA. Shultz and Weinberger were enemies, but I could always phone Rich and make sure messages got through. In 1990-91, Rich negotiated the final US Bases Agreement with the Philippines, a drawn out and delicate task with a weak and emotional government. As Ambassador in Manila at the time, we worked closely to create an effective "good cop (me)-bad cop (Rich)" team.

Armitage told me I would have no trouble getting work back at State. Paul Wolfowitz wanted to talk to me about a job on the Policy Planning Staff, which he was to head. I had gotten to know Wolfowitz at the Pentagon during this past year. He was a systems analyst who became engrossed in Asian affairs and had needed some teaching. Elliott Abrams, who would be named Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs (IO), his first government job, was looking principal deputy with experience in

navigating the bureaucracy at State. After discussions with both, I took the IO job, seeking broader, if not greener pastures, in which to graze.

The afternoon of February 13, the Defense Department bade me a formal farewell. Every civilian who completes a policy level assignment and is still compos mentis receives a Distinguished Civilian Service Medal as well as a flowery citation in front of a group of close colleagues in the Secretary's office on the E-ring. It is a fine send off by a military establishment that loves such ceremonies and excels at arranging them. In Pentagon slang, medals are known as gongs, a noun that is also used as a transitive verb. So, appropriately gonged, I departed the Five Sided Building once and for all.

Fast Forward

For the next twelve years, the China Boy who became an Asia Hand was forced to stretch much, much further. 16 turbulent months in the State Department's Bureau of International Organizations (IO) compelled me to deal with a broad universe of foreign policy issues amid contending senior personalities in a new administration just starting its learning curve. China issues occupied only a tiny place on my plate. Secretary of State Alexander Haig's staff meetings kept me up to date on the status of our ties with Beijing, as did regular informal contact with fellow China hands. But despite the angst of the transition period, there was to be more continuity than change in the policy of the new administration. The same themes that preoccupied the Carter Administration after normalization-- Chinese focus on US ability to counter the Soviets, anger over US arms sales to Taiwan, snail pace US technology transfer to the PLA—were features of Haig's feedback on his contacts. Frankly, I was content to be doing something else.

Day to day, most of the work in the International Organizations Bureau involved cleaning up after the Israelis and the South Africans in the Security Council and supervising the fine diplomatic needlepoint that occupied the UN's specialized agencies in Geneva. Creative policy making centered on African affairs. When not serving as the suffering synapse between Secretary Haig and Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Reagan's strong-willed UN ambassador, I was working closely with AF Assistant Secretary Chet Crocker, to move the South Africans out of Angola and Namibia. This led to two absorbing years (1982-84) as US ambassador to Zambia, where I developed a close relationship with the tearful but politically astute president, Kenneth Kaunda, and acted as Crocker's roving representative to the "front line states" in the conflict with South Africa. I remember that Kaunda revered Nixon's imagination and courage in opening relations with China, and regularly urged visiting American officials, from Vice President Bush on down, to do likewise when dealing with Pretoria.

The relationship with China was complicated. The Zambians were grateful for the railway the Chinese had built to Tanzania to provide an alternate route to market for Zambia's copper, but complained that Chinese locomotives were too weak to pull their trains. Beijing's ambassador in Lusaka's private reaction was derisive. At a dinner he hosted for me, the crusty Long Marcher snorted that the Zambians had subjected 70 out of the 100 engines donated by Beijing to the "three destructions", derailling, colliding, and

burning. The grease fires that resulted from poor maintenance were as scorching as the Mongolian hot pot we were eating, he said. Chinese raw material investments in Africa get headlines today, but we forget they have been there for decades spending billions in support of their political and economic goals.

I kept up with developments in China during my time in Zambia: a frenetic stint that followed in Washington as Executive Secretary to George Shultz (1985-87); four hair-raising years dealing with coup attempts, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, typhoons and base negotiations while working to support of Cory Aquino's fragile democracy in the Philippines (1987-91), and a last post in Pakistan (1991-92) observing at close hand the Soviet collapse in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

China Expands and Explodes

During these years, Deng Xiaoping's reforms opened large portions of the Chinese economy to free enterprise, foreign investment and international trade. China joined the massive surge of Asian growth and became its leading performer, bringing about the most dramatic and rapid increase in living standards the world has ever seen. No one who had worked on the opening to China, from Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger on down predicted this, much less imagined that "nuts and bolts" economics would become the center of our relationship.

Like most great successes, that growth created a whole series of new problems. Pressures for personal freedom grew with it. Deng's reforms allowed people to travel, to take jobs in other parts of the country. China opened up internally. The tight, drab, tense society of Cultural Revolution days was replaced by a brighter, hyper energetic boom culture, burgeoning prosperity, rampant materialism and widespread corruption, particularly in the coastal areas which attracted the most foreign investment. It was the start of what American media has now begun to call the "Bling Dynasty".

At the same time, a middle class was forming which began to own a significant portion of the economy and wanted more consultation on government decisions affecting its interests. The student body, returning eagerly to reopened universities felt the pressure to learn in order to earn, but were confused by the collapse of Maoist orthodoxy, perplexed by the lack of a belief system to put in its place, and revolted by the corruption of their rulers. The wave of democratization in Asia which struck the Philippines in 1986 and Taiwan and Korea in 1987 washed into China.

In the spring of 1989, hundreds of thousands of students converged on Beijing's Tiananmen Square to protest official corruption and the lack of Party attention to political reform. The cameras and anchors of world media were already in place to cover the visit of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who had come to change the course of confrontation and conflict that had brought the China and the Soviet Union near war, and drove the US and China together during the 'Seventies. They stayed to cover an even bigger story, the mounting crescendo of student protest and the bloody suppression that followed.

In the United States, one night of media coverage documenting the armed brutality of the People's Liberation Army on June 4, perhaps even just one picture--of a lone unarmed Chinese facing down a huge tank--destroyed the bipartisan consensus in support for our relationship with China, created with such care seventeen years before during the week of live broadcasts throughout the Nixon visit. But, while Deng Xiaoping had snuffed out political dissent at Tiananmen, he held firm to his economic policies of openness and reform. Quietly, the administration of the senior President Bush moved to assure Beijing that US interests required a constructive relationship with China.

In Manila, I discussed the Tiananmen tragedy with President Aquino. Under instructions from Washington, I briefed her on our president's China decisions, emphasizing the carefully aimed and calibrated nature of our measures as well as our desire to keep the US-China relationship intact in a difficult, obscure and in many ways infuriating situation. President Aquino replied that she deplored the violence of the Chinese military and identified strongly with the students. During her visit to China in 1988 she had sensed that the people were enthusiastic about the new openness and economic opportunities that China's policies provided. Clearly, however, that was not enough. "It's in man's nature to want to be free," she said. The Philippines situation, she continued, required her to adopt a rather cautious public posture which commented only on the evils of the violence. She would work to maintain relations with Beijing while trying to assure the safety of Filipinos there. I told President Aquino that the events in China made the Philippines look good by comparison. She and her people had a lot to be proud of after three years of democracy. Several students in Beijing told reporters they had been inspired by television coverage of the 1986 EDSA revolution in Manila's streets. The Philippines, she replied, were fortunate that the EDSA revolution had lasted only four days. Had it gone longer, "people power" might have run out of steam, and Marcos might have recovered his resolve to crack down.

At the end of our talk, President Aquino raised the question of possible participation by Taiwan in the international aid program for the Philippines. Taiwanese officials had told her they would be pleased to contribute if asked by the United States. Could President Bush give Taiwan President Li Teng-hui a call? No way, I replied. President Bush had all he could do to keep our lines open to Beijing these days without the complications that would arise from any contact between him and Li. We had a successful unofficial relationship with Beijing and wanted to keep it that way. Taiwan had prospered under that relationship and naturally wanted to convert its economic success into political advantage, but we could not play that game. President Aquino said she understood. She would simply tell the Taiwanese that she had raised the issue with me. (NP Manila Diaries, June 8, 1989.)

A Phone Rings in the Himalayas

When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, I had been ambassador in Pakistan for about six months. The powers in the State Department had insisted that my four years helping Cory Aquino displayed a knack for dealing with female heads of government in struggling democracies. This made me just the right person to deal with Benazir Bhutto,

they thought. Startled, I replied I was unaware that this was a core Foreign Service skill, but would be happy to accept the post, whatever the rationale. Pakistan had been close as “lips and teeth” to China for decades, and had played a key role in facilitating the US opening to the People’s Republic. The Chinese had built the strategic highway paralleling the ancient Silk Route along the Indus River and up over the Khunjerab Pass into Xinjiang, and continued to maintain it against constant earthquakes and landslides.

As it turned out, there were few reasons for direct dealings with the Chinese. Furthermore, our bilateral relationship was in the dumps since the US had cut off all aid to Pakistan when they developed a nuclear weapon in 1990. We had discarded them “like a used Kleenex” once the Cold War was over, the Pakistanis told me. There was not much to do except travel--the Pakistanis loved having the American Ambassador show up--and watch with fascination and alarm as the Afghan insurgency next door turned in on itself, and the new countries of Central Asia coped with their newfound and

unwanted independence. Benazir Bhutto had been turned out of office by the time I arrived, so I passed the time acting as both referee and guidance counselor in squabbles between the prime minister, the president, and the chief of army staff.

That was the scene on a March morning in 1992 when the phone rang as I sat in my office looking at the foothills of the Himalayas. It was Osborne Elliott, former editor of Newsweek and a friend since the ‘Sixties, calling to inquire if I would be interested in becoming president of the Asia Society in New York. A long time trustee and member of the Society’s search committee, Oz had done his homework. He knew that I was in my thirty fifth year in the Foreign Service and would have to retire soon or sign on as a political appointee. The job was the best non-governmental position in the Asia field, he said, and traditionally came open only once every ten years. I told Oz I would call him back.

The Society was well known throughout Asia. Most leaders, heads of government, foreign ministers, and US Ambassadors in Asia spoke there when visiting New York. I had given a talk there myself while home from Manila. The Rockefeller pedigree, dating from the Society’s founding by John D. III in 1956 was important to Asians. It seemed an ideal job for my “afterlife”, even more so because all my children, now grown, had settled there, drawn by the cultural and financial magnets of the great city. For Sheila and me, it would be a return to roots. More important, the opportunity to operate across Asia, and reconnect with China, was irresistible.

I phoned Oz back, said I really wanted the job, but that if the Society really wanted me, they would have to wait seven months until the November elections. I could not tell President Bush I was just downing tools after only a few months in Pakistan, but all he could expect of any of his ambassadors was to stay until the first term ended. The deal was done after discussions with Asia Society Board Chairman John Whitehead, whom I had advised when he became George Shultz’ Deputy Secretary of State five years before. I left Islamabad the morning of the elections, before the polls were open, watched Bill Clinton announce victory, en route home at breakfast with the Aga Khan (an old Harvard rowing colleague) in Paris. Two weeks later, I retired from the Foreign Service in the

morning, took over at Asia Society in the afternoon, and between careers had only a bad, short lunch.

WHAT AMBASSADORS REALLY WORRY ABOUT

Introduction

I wrote about my career in China and Japan in a book called China Boys, published by ADST in 2010 (available on Amazon). This essay will draw on my experiences as a United States ambassador abroad (Zambia (82-84) the Philippines (87-91) and Pakistan (91-92) during the last ten years of my Foreign Service career. A host of books and articles tell us that ambassadors and their staffs abroad negotiate agreements, further US business interests, protect American citizens, gather information about the host country, and issue visas for travel and residence in the United States. This post illustrates some worries I had as a chief of mission overseas.

1. Staying Safe

A fitting for a bulletproof vest was my first appointment after being chosen as ambassador to the Philippines in 1987. Ambassadors' work is dangerous. More US ambassadors have been killed in the line of duty than generals during World War 2.

As it turned out, I wore my vest only once in four turbulent years. Manila was too hot, and vests too visible under the transparent dress shirt everyone wore much of the time. The Barong Tagalog, as it is known, was originally designed by Spanish colonial authorities to reveal hidden weapons. Though gun violence is a daily occurrence throughout the Philippines, vests are scorned in this macho society

A huge street rally and mass was organized in early December 1989 to celebrate Cory Aquino's survival after the most serious coup attempt of her presidency. (There were six in all). US Embassy security was dead set against my attending. The US had flown fighter planes from Clark Air Force Base to demonstrate support of Mrs. Aquino's government during the coup fighting. I was therefore a prime target, they argued, for assassination by angry army rightists hidden in the enormous crowd. I replied that not appearing would contradict the prominent US backing for Aquino, I was imperative that I attend. At least wear your vest, they insisted.

The day was cool, so I hid the vest under a blazer, shirt and tie and walked slowly but quite safely a half mile through a huge, rejoicing throng. A truckload of nuns stopped to thank me for sending the fighter planes. On the dais after the ceremony, Cardinal Sin approached to offer congratulations and enveloped me in his ample bear hug. "Aha", he uttered softly in my ear after feeling the vest. I assured him I would never speak to him again if he revealed my secret. He did not.

In fact, bulletproof vests are not what keeps US ambassador safe. What worked was a combination of psychology, logistics and, most important of all, good intelligence. I was number one on the target list for the communist National People's Army (NPA) from the first day I arrived in August 1987. Later, Army rightists working to overthrow Mrs. Aquino also increasingly wanted to kill me. Nothing personal, of course. Just the symbolism of the office.

NPA "sparrow" death squads liked a sure thing. They studied their targets' daily habits and travel routes, planned meticulously, and usually killed with one shot from a 45 automatic. They were, like most Filipinos, Roman Catholics and not Muslim martyrs thirsting for virgins in paradise. Their ideal was to make their kill, go home and watch the basketball game.

Our first objective, then, was to assure assassins that there was no way to avoid a serious fire fight if they went after the US ambassador. I never drove anywhere without a lead car and a follow van with a total of eight discreetly armed men, some with UZI submachine guns folded into briefcases. An additional guard sat in the front seat of my armored Cadillac with a .357 magnum revolver tucked in the seat pocket behind him for my use. We made sure the NPA knew about it. I also knew if I ever used it in that confined space, I would be deaf for life.

Every six months or so, my entire detail would drive downtown to a public outdoor shooting range, where we would discharge noisily every weapon we had. My men were all retired Philippine Constabulary officers, knowledgeable about the look and ways of local streets. My driver knew all the different routes across Manila from the residence in Makati to the chancery on the bay and all the tricks of defensive driving. I felt safer with them than with a special detail sent from Washington during one period of particularly high alert. Nervous and jumpy, the US agents were incidents waiting to happen. I sent them home with relief at the earliest opportunity.

What kept me safest was intelligence. Our CIA station had penetrated the NPA inner circle, and knew when they were studying my movements, preparing an attack. We were warned to use extra vigilance and a wider variety of different routes. In addition a special unit "watched the watchers" and told us when we were actually being followed. After a while the hit men would give up in frustration, to return again in a few months and try again. I was concerned that the tight cordon around me would force the NPA to go after other embassy officials. They did, in fact, murder one army attaché on his way to work.

Periodic coup attempts by the Army rebels were less predictable. The most serious of these in November 1989 required us to evacuate the residence until the week-long rebellion was over. One truckload of rebel soldiers came after me shortly after we left, but ran head on, like keystone cops, into another vehicle bent on the same mission.

Security requirements vary for every ambassadorial post, and change along with the political situation on the ground. Zambia in 1982-84 offered no threat and required no

security detail. In 1991-92, our embassy compound in Pakistan was under regular threat from Muslim mobs inflamed by extremist mullahs at Friday prayers. (They had succeeded in setting fire to the chancery in 1979, and had attacked the USIS center downtown in 1991) But the person of the ambassador was not a target. My detail was one small Pakistani constable packing an old revolver, with whom we travelled widely without incident. Nowadays, our chiefs of mission in Islamabad have a detail the size and intensity of mine in the Manila. As it was for me, the quality of our intelligence is what keeps them safe.

2. Staying in Command

All ambassadors carry abroad a letter from the president of the United States saying that he/she is his personal representative and is in charge of the operations of all US agency operations in the country of assignment. The ambassador exercises authority through a "country team" consisting of the heads of those agencies on his staff. The agencies represented are generally much bigger than the State Department, and all have independent channels of communication with their staffs abroad.

Ambassadors must establish authority from the outset and take every opportunity to underline that authority throughout their term of office. Everyone on the country team knows about the ambassador's letter, but if he/she ever have to cite it explicitly, they have lost their authority. The ambassador must know how to take command and exercise it.

Manila was one of the largest embassies abroad in the years I was there (1987-91). More than twenty agencies worked under its roof, guided by 500 American staff with 2500 locals helping them. During the first weeks of my tenure I made a point of visiting each agency head and their top staffs. Making the effort to show up and learn how the members of the country team view their work was an important way to establish command.

The country team meeting is the key instrument for exercising authority. It must be held frequently (weekly), and kept as small and as short (1 hour) as possible. The short part is hard. One way is to have everyone stand during meeting. Informing the ambassador what he/she needs to know (and nothing more) to make decisions is the ideal work of the country team meeting. Asking for advice is not a sign of weakness. Choosing the right advice to take is the essence of command.

Crises help concentrate the mind and establish authority. Five days after I presented my credentials in August 1987, a charismatic young army colonel named Gringo Honasan tried to shoot his way into Malacañang Palace, then occupied Armed Forces headquarters, and could only be dislodged by the government bombing its own building with ancient biplanes. The army command remained loyal to the elected president, but it became imperative for the embassy reach Honasan and tell him the US totally opposed his action. We had already prepared a message from President Reagan for immediate release, that all US assistance would cease immediately to any force that overthrew a

democratically elected government. This was established policy but a direct channel to those operating the coup was urgently needed.

Did anyone in the embassy know Honasan, I asked the country team? Why yes, replied our assistant army attaché. I am the godfather of his youngest child and send him diapers every month. Do we know his phone number? Of course. Then call Gringo up and read him Reagan's message.

We spent the next two days reading that message to everyone in the Philippine government, an excellent way for the new ambassador to introduce himself. Honasan fled, not to be caught during the next four years. (He is now a senator).

It being the Philippines, I was blamed for the coup. Immediately, "Ambassador Plot" tee shirts appeared on the streets, snapped up by conspiracy-prone Filipinos inclined to believe that the US is behind everything bad that happens,

I sent the assistant army attaché home soon after. Against my orders, he kept up contact with Honasan's family. An excellent officer, his removal did not harm his career, but helped me establish authority.

3. Showing Up

80% of life is showing up, Woody Allen tells us. The percentage for diplomacy is even higher. American ambassadors are in high profile demand at their posts the instant they arrive. They become the top people to meet, persuade, criticize, feed, even kill. Their presence at any meeting, whether it be political, economic, social or athletic, bears a significance equal to any substantive contribution they may be in a position to make.

I arrived in Pakistan August '91 with hands both empty and tied. The Pakistani military had completed development of a nuclear weapon in recent months and, as threatened for many years, the US had cut off all military and economic assistance. The move coincided roughly with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, leading to a general perception among Pakistanis that the US had simply discarded them, "like a used condom" when no longer needed. I expected to be shunned as a pariah. Not so. Not at all so. I found out that Pakistanis wanted to maintain a relationship with the US, and that I was a convenient vehicle for that. If I showed up and took interest, I was more than welcome. So, having nothing material to offer, Sheila and I showed up all over the country during our 13 months there. Boar hunts in Sind, business banquets in Karachi, polo matches in mountainous Gilgit, weddings in Islamabad, picnics in the foothills of the Himalayas, kebab feasts in Peshawar, kite-flying parties in Lahore, no opportunity was missed.

Pakistani politicians were new to democracy. Officials representing the president, the prime minister and the chief of army staff, the competing centers of power in the executive branch, were at each other's throats. All felt it worthwhile to show up

separately for tea at my residence to complain about each other. It was worthwhile for me to know their issues and sometimes build bridges between them.

A smart and friendly wife adds immeasurably to ones' effectiveness at showing up, particularly in a Muslim country. In any home one visited, particularly in conservative North West Frontier province, the women of the house were sequestered in a separate wing called the zenana. No men allowed, but Sheila was welcome and gleaned the juicy news and gossip of the family and the district.

Showing up can be tedious. We classified receptions as follows: 1) substantive- stay and talk; 2) "GTO-grace the occasion", go through the receiving line and the peel off; 3) "Grip and Grin", what we do when hosting our own diplomatic receptions. We recognized the receptions were workplaces where serious information and analysis could be exchanged, protected by the hubbub from electronic eavesdropping. So we went, and went, and hosted and hosted.

Complex and cumbersome as they were, I did not let security concerns keep me from doing my job. Wife Sheila and I showed up at every event worth attending and travelled widely throughout the Islands. The future status of the huge military bases in the Philippines were the major US preoccupation during my tenure. Endless negotiations sopped up much of my time. The need to reach an agreement that the Philippine Senate would approve required me to travel constantly, drumming up popular support for a continued US presence, opening schools built with US base-related assistance, giving speeches, kissing babies and behaving like a US politician running for office.

It is particularly important to show up when disaster strikes. The Philippines had more than its share of these. But offering of assistance was a delicate matter, given nationalist sensitivity about the wide gap between the Philippine governments' shortage of food and logistical equipment, particularly helicopters, and the plenty available at our bases.

Showing up in the Philippines often involved performing. Filipinos love to sing and invite everyone to join them and do solo renditions. It was our misfortune to be practiced folksingers. Perhaps the only memory of my tenure that will last is a twelve bar blues I wrote about how difficult it was to negotiate with Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus. He loved the song and accompanied me on drums when I sang it at Malacañang Palace during President Aquino's New Years' Day reception in 1988. The Filipinos also remember that I had two guitars, including a black one for formal occasions.

Performing as an adjunct to showing up is special to the Philippines. Elsewhere, an ambassador who sang a song at a state function complaining about the foreign minister would instantly be declared *persona non grata*. Zambians and Pakistanis did not expect envoys to burst into song and would have been puzzled if I had.

4. Staying Fit

Every ambassadorial post is a marathon. One should train for it. Regular physical exercise is a must, to dissipate the pressures that build inexorably. Squash was my main device, ideal for intensity, brevity, and the enclosed spaced beloved of security officers. During the grueling years of base negotiations I took comfort in imagining Foreign Secretary Manglapus head to be the ball as I hit it full strength. Manglapus, in fact, was a difficult interlocutor, slippery, procrastinating, often forgetful, stooped under the weight of a large nationalist chip on his shoulder

Squash is not for everyone, however. Any regular activity will do. Tennis and golf are great diplomatic games, affording opportunities for bonding and discussion. I solved many problems with Defense Secretary (and later President Ramos) when struggling together out of rough and bunkers.

President Kaunda of Zambia, a 14-handicap golfer, loved nothing better than to beat the American ambassador at golf. I liked nothing better than spending four plus hours with the head of state, and developed a strong relationship playing by the odd rules of his private state house course. (Examples: a free drop out of hippo hoof prints; permission to tee up your ball on guinea fowl droppings; striking a gazelle cost you the hole, unless you were Kaunda and your shot hit one and bounced onto the green.)

5. Staying Corrected and Connected

Anyone who reaches the rank of ambassador risks losing touch with reality. All of a sudden everyone agrees with you and laughs at your jokes. It is vital to gather people around you who question your judgment and will tell you when you are wrong. Wives, partners, long time secretaries or friends often fill these roles and should be sought out prized. I chose deputy chiefs of mission with strong independent points of view.

Encourage your staff to level with you. I made it a point to tell everyone who worked for me:

--You will never be punished saying something you know I do not want to hear. I will be angry, but not for very long, particularly if it concerns an issue that would become serious if kept hidden.

--You will be severely punished if you do not tell me something you know I do not want to hear and it develops into serious problem.

A candid connection to your staff is crucial to crisis management. Your credibility will determine the degree community responsiveness in times of maximum danger.

I had plenty of practice. Between August 1987 and July 1991, the embassy in Manila coped with two violent coup attempts against the Aquino government, the assassination of 10 American citizens, the kidnapping of a Peace Corps volunteer by Communist rebels and the subsequent evacuation of the entire Peace Corps contingent, a killer earthquake,

four super typhoons, and finally the eruption of Mount Pinatubo, which destroyed Clark Air Force Base and required the relocation of 29,000 American service personnel.

Here is a dramatic example of the connection between candor and crisis management. We learned at 2 a.m. one morning toward the end of 1989 coup attempt that the government was planning to attack rebels holed up in the business district and drive them into a neighborhood where Americans and other diplomats lived. I phoned President Aquino and asked for a delay of 2 hours to get people out. She agreed. Embassy staffers then tuned up our extensive emergency radio network to alert the community. In the next 90 minutes, some 3000 people moved from their homes into safer parts of the city. Not a peep of complaint or question except perhaps 'Can we bring the dog?' to which the answer was 'No.' We had been straight with the community over the years. They did what we said when we most wanted them to.

6. Staying in Touch

Ambassadors' communications with Washington are unique within the American bureaucracy. As George Shultz' Executive Secretary (1985-87), I made sure that every proposal he received was cleared by every office which had a legitimate stake in the policy. As a member of Zbigniew Brzezinski's NSC Staff (1978-79) I did the same for President Carter on issues relating to the areas of Asia I was responsible for. But telegrams from ambassadors abroad can go direct to the President or Secretary of State without being cleared by anyone.

This is a privilege that must be reserved for only the most important matters. Overuse will kill an ambassador's credibility and reputation.

Written communications with Washington are often preceded by daily phone calls, usually to the country desk, to check out the environment for policy or personnel recommendations. This is normally the realm of the Deputy Chief of Mission, an official the ambassador must carefully choose and totally trust. Normally, an ambassador waiting for confirmation spends weeks or even months in an office within the country desk. This time is best spent getting to know the desk, the bureau and the department as a whole, finding the officers on whom one can rely. The desk officers serve as the forward spotters for your written artillery.

I was in charge of the Japan Desk during the first years of Ambassador Mike Mansfield's tenure (1977-78). I knew him quite well from visits to Tokyo as a senator, and could plot the trajectory of his messages onto the desks of policy makers in the national security agencies and the White House. I made a point when I reached the level of ambassadorial appointment to cultivate the desks and the bureaus and to identify just the right DCM.

I found out during my tours in the Secretariat that the most effective policy papers were short and pointed. It was not always so, when communications were slower and officials had more time to read. George Kennan's influential "Long Telegram" from Moscow in

1946 was 5,500 words long. Later published in Foreign Affairs under the pseudonym "X" it shaped US policy throughout the Cold War. Today, against the pressure of the daily flood of instant digital mail, well-argued brevity is at a premium.

Email has become a prevalent medium and is frequent and uncleared between members of the Country Team and their agencies. The ambassador must emphasize from the beginning that proposals out of line with the policies set in the embassy will result in the rapid removal of the official involved.

It is crucial for any ambassador to return to Washington as frequently as possible. Face to face consultations with national security officials and concerned Members of Congress are an essential adjunct to their written communications with the capital. Every excuse to make this happen should be employed.

7. Staying On Top of Things

To know what is going on, who is doing what, to have easy access to its leaders, and to relate all this to US interests, these are the reasons why ambassadors and their staffs are at their posts. Some people think that jet travel and instant digital communications have rendered ambassadors and embassies obsolete. The facts are just the opposite. Travelling officials from Washington usually arrive in a haze of jet lag. They need to know what day it is, the latest developments on issues that concern them, who they will see, what they are supposed to say, how local leaders will respond, and what their responses will really mean. The ambassador's job is to know the answers guide the visit, and help the visitor be successful in furthering US interests.

Vice President Dan Quayle visited the Philippines in 1989. Just as he was about to arrive, NPA hit men assassinated two US military contractors as a gesture of welcome, sacrifices on the altar of US -Philippine relations. Briefed on arrival, he and his staff, in a state of shock, sought guidance on how to proceed. We advised him to leverage the tragedy to emphasize the closeness of ties with the US and the importance of the bases. He made special calls at our bases and on families of the victims as well as conferring with President Aquino how best to manage an awful situation. We prepared a special "pothole memo" to help him deal with the most difficult questions the press might throw at him. He followed the advice to the letter. Quayle proved much smarter than his press notices. His movie star good looks enabled him to sail past ambush interviews with the ladies of the palace press corps, who could be vicious. Quayle left the Philippines having made a strong positive impression. We had done our job.

8. Leaving a Legacy

Ambassadors legacies depend on the history they share with the countries where they serve. I saw the Philippines through nearly four turbulent years of restoring democracy after decades of dictatorship. My instructions were to support the process without looking

like I was doing very much. That proved impossible. To find out what Filipinos remember, ask our classmate Jaime Zobel de Ayala, who I never knew at college, but became a close friend after living through our years in Manila. I was only in Pakistan about a year, but experienced the impact of the end of Soviet rule in Afghanistan on local and international politics. Zambia under Kaunda, where I learned how to be an ambassador, was the Geneva of Southern African politics.

These are topics for other books. In truth, legacies are not as much the stuff of daily worries for ambassadors as those discussed in this paper. These are what face us getting through the days, weeks and months of our assignments, as we work to advance US interests, stay in charge and stay alive.

End of interview