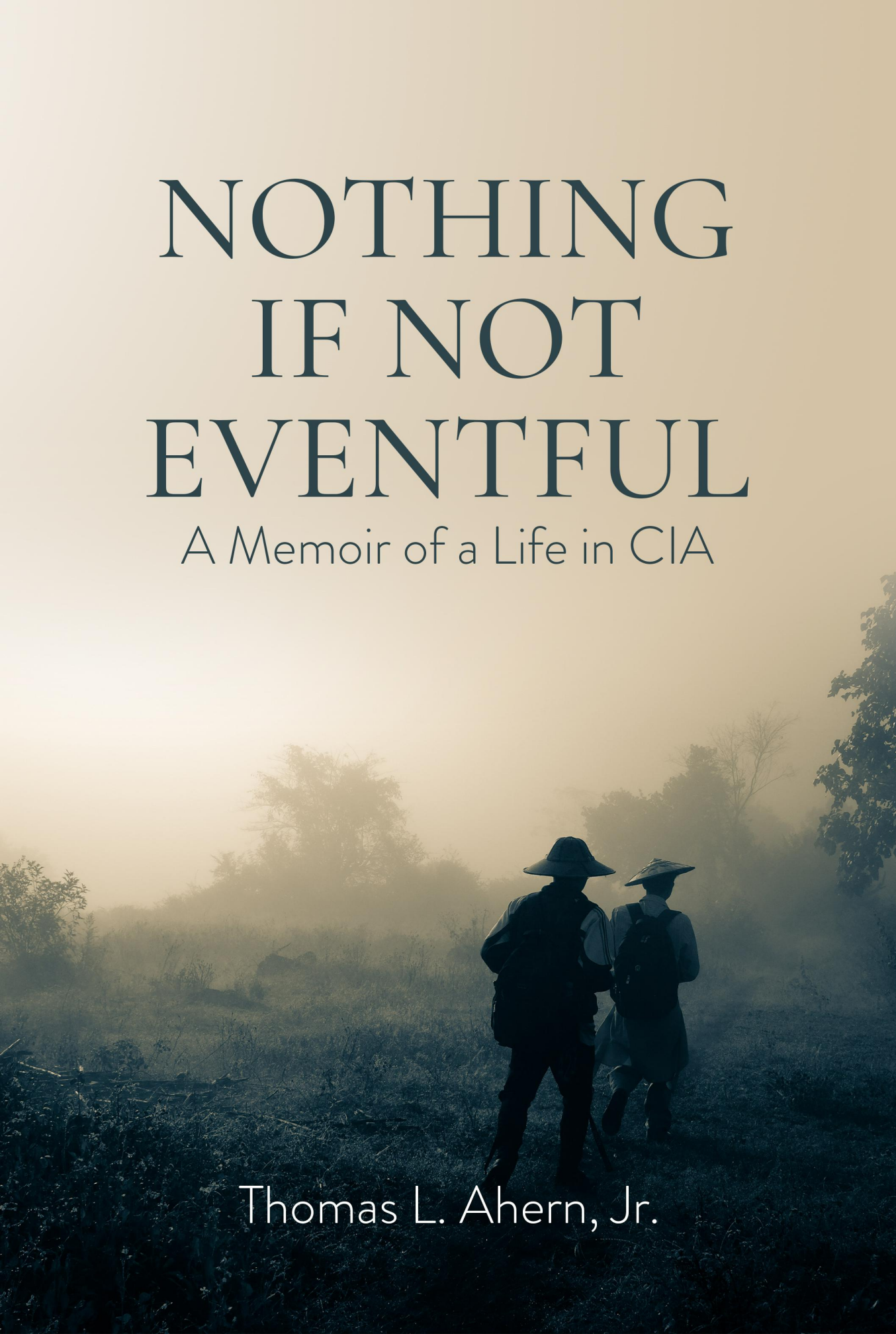
NOTHING IF NOT EVENTFUL

A Memoir of a Life in CIA



Thomas L. Ahern, Jr.

"Nothing If Not Eventful"

Recollections of a Life's Journey in CIA

Thomas L. Ahern, Jr.

Center for the Study of Intelligence
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To my nuclear family—my late wife and companion of 52 years Gisela, our daughter, Christine, and her two children, who have always stood with me through trying times—and my "company" family, which shaped this collection of memories. And in loving remembrance of my twin sister, Betty, who passed away just before this book was published.

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Preface

It was not long after my retirement from the agency, but well into my second career, as an agency historian, that I began to hear suggestions—in a few cases, urging—that I do a memoir of my career as an operations officer. No two careers in operations are identical, of course, but that doesn't mean that all of them merit being recorded for posterity. Although mine was certainly more varied than the average, I wasn't persuaded that it offered the variety, in perspective as well as substance, that a potential reader deserves. And then there was the problem of balancing an account intended for a varied readership of colleagues, family, and friends. Family and friends may have a limited appetite for ruminations about agency culture, while colleagues may find in them the main justification for the entire enterprise.

It is only now, after thirty-five years in the Directorate of Operations and a full thirty more doing history, that I presume to offer a summary of what I saw and what I think I learned. My conclusions are, of course, influenced by my idiosyncrasies as an observer. I want to make these as clear to the reader as I can, and that is part of the reason for attention to phases of my life unrelated to service with the agency. And just by itself, longevity offers opportunities for understanding, and I hope to have taken some advantage of them.

Acknowledgments

Of the five people most instrumental in helping me shape this book, two are veterans of the intelligence profession, one also an accomplished historian and the other a senior operations officer and manager. The others are Mike Cheever and Jamie Baker, both richly experienced legal professionals, who provided encouraging comments on early drafts, and Ken McDonald, who as CIA chief historian taught me how to write history. Their combined counsel has given this account such coherence as the reader may find in it.

Taking the place of her mother, who is sadly no longer with us, my daughter, Christine, generously shared her recollections.

The single most indispensable contributor to the project has been Andres Vaart, like all the others a valued friend but also, in his case, an expert editor and production manager. Without Andy's endlessly patient commitment to it, the effort would never have come to fruition. He would add, of course, that he did not work alone, having had help from his spouse, herself an experienced editor and historian. and from the graphic design work of members of the Center for the Study of Intelligence.

It must also be acknowledged that this work did undergo the review of CIA's Prepublication Classification Review Board, which reviewed the content solely to ensure that it contains no classified information. This the members of the board did expeditiously and reasonably as they could.

Foreword

I first met Tom Ahern in 1977 at the National War College in Washington, DC, where he was a student, more than 20 years into his career, after a tour of duty in West Africa. As a member of a graduate seminar I taught on 20th century US diplomatic history, Tom impressed me by his comments in class and by his term paper on the United States and Vichy France, 1940–1942. As a clear exposition of a complicated historical situation, his paper was an early sign of his later skill as a CIA historian.

Not long after Tom graduated from the War College, CIA sent him to Iran as chief of station in Tehran. I, like so many others, was distressed in November 1979 when Iranian student radicals stormed the US Embassy and took hostage Tom and some 60 other members of the embassy staff. Tom and his fellow staff members would be confined for 14 months. I was able to meet Tom again that same year not long after I had joined CIA as its chief historian.

We kept in touch and when Tom was approaching retirement I invited him to join the CIA History Staff as a contract historian to write about CIA's long and unhappy engagement in Southeast Asia. Over the next 32 years Tom's prodigious work included six volumes on this subject: four on Vietnam, one on Laos, and one on Cambodia. In 2009, the University of Kentucky Press published the first volume, Vietnam Declassified: The CIA and Counterinsurgency. This work appeared after CIA had declassified (with varying degrees of deletions) all six of his volumes before a major conference on the subject in Texas that year. Tom's most recent work on the region appeared in 2022, when CIA's Center for the Study of Intelligence published, *"An Excellent Idea!" Leading Surrogate Warfare in Southeast Asia, 1951-1970: A Personal Account*, by James W. "Bill" Lair, as told to Thomas L. Ahern, Jr. Tom has also turned to other difficult issues in diplomatic and intelligence history, including the role of US intelligence in Iran in the years leading up to Khomeini's revolution and in Iraq after US forces invaded in 2003.

Now, Tom has written a first-rate memoir of his own 34 years' service as an officer in CIA's Directorate of Operations. His work illuminates a notable life in successive tours abroad in Japan, Laos, South Vietnam, Congo/Kinshasa, the Philippines, Cambodia, Iran, West Africa, and Europe. Tom's accounts all reflect on several special qualities— tradecraft, values, leadership and culture—and their evolution. It is these qualities that he believes have shaped CIA into its present form, nearly 70 years after an Agency recruiter came to Notre Dame University and persuaded him to enter a career in the Clandestine Service.

—J. Kenneth McDonald
November 2023

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Initialisms and Acronyms

AF Division	Africa Division/Directorate of Operations
AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
APA	Advance Political Action (South Vietnam)
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam (South)
CINCPAC	Commander-in-Chief US Forces in the Pacific,
COS/DCOS	Chief of the CIA station/deputy chief
CTD/CT	Career Training Division/Career Trainee (CIA)
DCI	Director of Central Intelligence
DDP	Directorate of Plans
DO/DDO/ADDO	Directorate of Operations (renamed from DDP in 1973)/Deputy Director for Operations/Assistant DDO
EA Division	East Asia Division, Directorate of Operations (formerly FE Division)
FANK	Forces Armées Nationales Khmeres (Armed Forces of Cambodia)
FAR	Forces Armees du Royaume (Laotien)
FE Division	Far East Division, Directorate of Plans
GS	General Schedule-US Federal pay scale
GVN	Government of Vietnam (South)
JOTP (CIA)	Junior Officer Training Program
JUSMAG	Joint US Military Advisory Group (Philippines)
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam
MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MPLA	People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola
NCO	Non-commissioned officer
NE Division	Near East Division/Directorate of Operations
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
NKP	Nakhon Phanom, Thailand
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
NWC	National War College
OCS	Officer Candidate School
OP	Office of Personnel (CIA)
OSS (WW II)	Office of Strategic Services
PARU	Police Aerial Reinforcement Unit (Thailand)
PAF	Philippine Air Force
PAT	People's Action Team(s) (South Vietnam)

R&R	Rest and recreation
RLG	Royal Lao Government
RMD	Related Mission Directive
ROTC (Air Force)	Reserve Officer Training Corps
SIS	Senior Intelligence Service (Executive level)
SMSA	St. Mary's Springs Academy
SOD	Special Operations Division, DDP
STOL	Short-takeoff-and-landing (aircraft)
TO&E	Table of organization and equipment
USAID	US Agency for International Development
USOM	US Official Mission of USAID
VC	Viet Cong Communist National Liberation Front guerilla forces in South Vietnam
VIS	Vietnam Information Service

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"Nothing If Not Eventful"

Introduction

In early 1954, nearing graduation from the University of Notre Dame, I expected to enter my father's mechanical contracting business in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, but I was restless enough to be alert to interesting options. It did not, of course, occur to me to put the Central Intelligence Agency on a list of potential employers, and, even if I had, I couldn't have followed through as it had no public recruiting mechanism at the time. I certainly couldn't have imagined that 25 years later I would begin what I can safely call the most trying episode of my working life when, after President Jimmy Carter granted asylum to the exiled Shah of Iran, student radicals seized the US Embassy, taking 63 Americans hostage. 52 of them would be held captive for 444 days. I would spend 14 months in solitary confinement.

Even if I had by chance been aware of CIA as a possible employer, there would have been no way to foresee that, within seven years, I would be charged with the creation and command of a thousand-man paramilitary unit in the tiny kingdom of Laos, part of the former French Indochina. Or that my career would eventually take me to Japan, South Vietnam, Cambodia, the Philippines, West Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Europe**,** as well as Iran. Or that I would enjoy a second career, also more than 30 years long, writing histories of CIA operations. My research during this period provided many of the insights I bring to this account of my work in the field.

I joined an organization whose understanding of the world and of itself was mostly a product of its role in World War II. This was inevitable, as it had no earlier history and no older traditions to inform its response to present challenges. Into the 1960s and beyond, that foreshortened perception of history fostered an almost overweening confidence that the United States deserved its self-assigned role as leader of the free world and that the Agency had a part of singular importance to play, a course that it would chart for itself. Over time, the Agency, and I along with it, learned that this world view had its blind spots and that our self-confidence was sometimes dangerously misplaced. This memoir is in part an account of the gradual

process by which we came to recognize and try to deal with at least some of these misperceptions.

My own experience with that process began with the discovery, as I worked with a succession of agents and covert action partners, that the American way is not the only—and not even necessarily the best or most admired—way of doing something. This was especially true of what we now call the Third World or the developing world (both of which labels convey a certain air of condescension). I recall the chronic frustration of those of us assigned to help build representative government in countries such as Laos and South Vietnam in the 1960s. We assumed—without ever articulating it—that American power proved the superiority of our country's institutions and values, an illusion that survived, with at least sporadic resurgence, almost to the end of the 20th century. We learned only gradually that our clients' resistance to these efforts—often in the form of impenetrable inertia—demonstrated that, at the very least, we had not communicated the urgent importance of our cause.

Writing history about things, some of which I knew about from personal experience, taught me that a sincere conviction about the merits of a course of action may hide its dangers. It may even hide the nature of the challenge being addressed. That lesson may be learned, if at all, only after numerous failures. It eluded me through my six years of service in Indochina, and I absorbed it only in the course of historical work on the Vietnam War. Our pacification programs there recognized the need for civilian participation, but, along with my colleagues, I never inquired into the familial and local ties between the Viet Cong and much of the peasantry and the role of that connection in fueling the insurgency. I also absorbed the prevailing psychological denial of the implications of corrupt and clumsy military government for our nation-building project.

Life in a variety of foreign environments teaches as many lessons at the personal level as at the professional. Most of them involve recognizing and, often, adapting to cultural differences. Two such contrasts are the strength of family relationships and the importance of relationships of mutual trust to the success of professional associations. These vary among cultures, of course, but I generally found that respect for these values, especially the second, added substantially to the productivity of contacts with both agents and contacts in liaison services. These lessons were amplified by my marriage to a bride from Germany and, with that, the acquisition of a German family. I shared Gisela's German culture. My mother's forebears had emigrated to the United States from the Rhineland in the late 19th century. Despite—or perhaps to a degree because of—the similarities, however, my new family added insights to those gained at work. The German indifference to home ownership, for

example, and a contrasting devotion to high-quality foodstuffs are only two of the differences I discovered.

More generally, my life and work abroad taught me about the kind of comportment that facilitates working relationships with people of entirely different life experiences and worldviews—that is, all of the people we call foreigners. One learns that one's job is not to export American values or institutions unless they are wanted, and, in my experience, the appetite for such things is limited. Identifying similar or at least compatible interests usually turns out to be a more rewarding approach to winning the cooperation of potential agents than proclaiming their duty to help us save their country—or the world—from what we perceive as an existential threat.

This account would distort the atmosphere of my work as an operations officer if it did not acknowledge that it was, for the most part, genuinely satisfying. A fellow CIA annuitant who travels from New England for occasional contract work in the Washington, DC, area told me on one such trip that he did it mainly for the company of the most engaging assortment of people he has ever known. I think that's the main source of my own continuing attachment to the service, even more than the occasional thrills and the intermittent sense of accomplishment it has granted me.

Chapter One

From Childhood to CIA Comes Calling

My upbringing in a Catholic household in the 1930s and 1940s had been entirely conventional. I had a devoted, loving mother and an intermittently affectionate, fiercely impatient, and always generous father.

Left: As a Sea Scout in high school ca. 1948.

Below: Christmas gathering at home in Fond du Lac in the early 1950s.

Nothing in my early life would have suggested a future anywhere outside of Fond du Lac, my Wisconsin hometown, let alone a uniquely eventful career in foreign intelligence and covert action. Every assignment posed its own challenges, and, although not every posting abroad involved threat to life or limb, service in Laos and Vietnam during the Vietnam War meant that this was not rare either. Inevitably, I suppose, the Tehran episode remains the one most vividly embedded in my memory. Being beaten with a rubber hose early in my captivity and subsequently threatened with public execution and other psychological torments throughout my captivity, together with a continuous and oppressive sense of utter helplessness, combined to instill in me an indelible set of recollections.

Perhaps my single most vivid memory is of the day I was taken out of my cell blindfolded and—I was always blindfolded, even to go to the toilet—taken by car to a freezing cold building somewhere in or near Tehran (it turned out to have been the Foreign Ministry's shuttered guest house). There I was marched into a silent room and, still blindfolded, placed in the comfort of a padded chair. My spirits rose, but not because of the comfort.

Our captors had told us that, if we were ever to be released, this would happen only after President Carter was no longer in office. They had gleefully informed me of his defeat in November 1980, but, two months after that, we were still in our cells. The luxurious chair seemed like a favorable sign, but I knew that self-deception at such a critical moment would only intensify the despair that would surely follow if it turned out I had been kidding myself.

So, I started feeling around the chair for further signs of where I'd been brought. At first, nothing. Then, behind the chair, my hand encountered what was unmistakably an upholstered wall. The unseen opulence of the room settled the matter: "Tom, you're going home." A couple of days later, after the inauguration of Ronald Reagan, we were on our way in an Algerian Airlines plane whose presumably Muslim crew treated us to generous servings of spirits on the flight to Algiers.

A Conventional Upbringing

My upbringing in a Catholic household in the 1930s and 1940s had been entirely conventional. I had a devoted, loving mother and an intermittently affectionate, fiercely impatient, and always generous father. Corporal punishment routinely

accompanied affection in those years, and, egged on by Betty (Elizabeth), my mischievous twin sister, I got to know it well. A brother, Michael, soon followed us, then two afterthoughts, a girl, Catherine, 12 years younger than Betty and I, and a boy, Joseph, 14 years our junior. My father's generosity extended to putting each of us through the colleges of our choice. I picked the University of Notre Dame for no better reason, as I recall, than the appeal of the 1940 movie about its famous football coach, Knute Rockne. I was in my teens before I traveled as far as Chicago even though it was only 150 miles from Fond du Lac (pop. 27,600), and I knew more distant destinations only as movie settings, if at all, until I reached college age.

Catholic schools, both primary and secondary, were then fully staffed by clergy. Nuns taught the secular curriculum, and priests presided over religion. On graduation from college, I had had 16 years of this sectarian regimen, which featured competent instruction, strict but not harsh grade-school discipline, and, in high school, displays of the traditional American Catholic clergy's fear of—indeed, revulsion at the idea of—sex. A story from my high school years may be apocryphal, but, perhaps especially, it illustrates the atmosphere: One Saturday afternoon, a girl classmate of mine entered the confessional at our parish church, St. Mary's, but she hardly had time to kneel down before everyone in the church heard an outraged scream from her confessor: "Is French kissing a SIN?" That the question was entirely rhetorical only added to the drama.

Not even puppy love was endorsed in an institution run by lifelong celibates. Only one of the nuns took a more pragmatic approach to the subject. In her biology class, the first time she mentioned sex—in the context of plant reproduction, I think—she drew a wave of giggles. She gave us a look that I couldn't quite read—pitying, maybe, or just dismissive—and tartly advised us to get used to the idea that sex is simply how nature works.

It seems only fair to note that, throughout my years in Catholic schools, I never experienced or even heard the faintest hint of any clerical sexual abuse of students. Social inhibitions and the power of the clergy to conceal its abuses have eroded greatly since the unrest of the late 1960s and the 1970s, and it would be naïve to assume that clerical behavior had until then been flawless. Nevertheless, the nuns and priests who taught us displayed nothing but a selfless commitment to our education—always, of course, within the doctrinal framework imposed by their religious commitment.

I was still in grade school when I got my introduction to the possible appeal of a life in the outside world. St. Mary's parish school received occasional visits from priests recruiting for their religious, usually missionary, orders. One of these men, who had served in Japan, played up the exotic missionary environment. He taught my class of seventh or eighth graders the first five Japanese cardinal numbers: ichi

(he pronounced it "itchy," to our great amusement), ni (taps his knee), san (points outside toward the sun), shi (points at one of the girls), and go (moves as if to leave). I didn't buy this soft-sell approach, but I do think it helped plant the interest in Asia that I developed in the years that followed.

My high school, St. Mary's Springs Academy (SMSA), stood outside town on the Niagara Ledge, which passes under the Great Lakes before rising into Door County peninsula on its way south. Like my parish grade school, it was run by the Sisters of St. Agnes and, until just a few years earlier, had been exclusively a girls' boarding school. In 1946, there were only 20 boys in my class of 100, a circumstance that allowed me, tall for my age but a mediocre athlete, to make the basketball team. The Academy ran on a stringent budget, which meant the coaching, by a former University of Wisconsin football player of no distinction, was no better than my playing. This made improvement difficult, but membership on the team helped facilitate one high school imperative, namely, group acceptance. This was not a problem on the feminine side; girls are not allergic to other students' good grades, which I think was responsible for my being elected class president twice during my four years at SMSA (class presidents were always male, by custom if not by rule).

Good grades, however, were not a ticket to popularity among my male peers, and, as mine had come to be known as the best in my cohort, I had to work at being accepted. That I was only partly successful reflected my lifelong aversion to conventional social values when these seem arbitrary or just plain silly. Doing what the gang wanted to do often fell into one or another of these categories. I remember, for instance, my exasperation with the other members of my Boy Scout first-aid team when they seemed more interested in horsing around than in practicing the bandaging and resuscitation techniques that we were supposed to be learning in order to compete with other Scout troops in mock emergencies. They were indeed being childish, but, on the other hand, there was more than a touch of rigidity in my own approach to the issue. This propensity continued long enough to get in the way of the cordiality that, however superficial at times, is so important to productive professional relationships.

An interest in music, especially classical music, was also not to my social advantage, particularly in grade school. Starting at the age of eight or so and encouraged though not pushed by my musically inclined mother, I began my lifelong tortured relationship with the piano. Those of my classmates who were aware of my weekly music lessons might have been less dismissive of such artsy activity if they'd known of my struggle to make music and its mixed results. On the other hand, it might only have reinforced their disdain. Either way, I have persisted to this day. My effort was not entirely devoid of positive effect even in my professional life, which I will treat in later chapters.

On to South Bend

Applications to college did not, in the 1950s at least, try to measure maturity, and Notre Dame promptly accepted me. My parents drove me there the first time, but after that I went by rail, changing trains in Chicago. South Bend, Indiana, was bigger than Fond du Lac but not much more cosmopolitan, and the student body was as small-town as I was, although no one had to conceal good grades. Even so, Notre Dame might have turned out to be an uninspired choice had it not been for its coincidental launching of a new academic program.

My application specified that I was seeking admission to the engineering and law programs. During my last semester in high school, however, the university had sent a brochure touting a new liberal arts program—lots of classics but no major and no electives—modeled on the Great Books concept promoted by the University of Chicago's Robert Hutchins and Mortimer Adler in the 1940s. The brochure for this "General Program of Liberal Education," or GP, made me aware that my interest in engineering—and in business, for that matter—was a more contingent thing than I'd realized. With the approval of my parents, who were paying for the enterprise, I decided to give it a try.

Although the program did not point to a clear career choice, it suited my interests, and I stayed with it to graduation. Its single most satisfying feature was an emphasis on analytic thinking. Teachers did not interpret Plato and Aristotle for us but demanded that we read and then try to parse them in seminar sessions. We got the professor's help only after working ourselves into logical corners trying to explain the arguments in Plato's *Republic* or Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. The merit of this discipline, as painful as it sometimes was, soon became evident in dormitory bull sessions when English and philosophy majors found themselves hard pressed to match even the modest capacity for orderly thought that we were beginning to develop.

Relationships with my classmates were cordial enough, although none developed into lifelong friendships. The friendship that did survive was the most unlikely ever to have started. Father Thomas Brennan, audibly a product of the Bronx, had been working for the New York Central Railroad when he found his religious vocation. In his mid-forties when we met, he was teaching philosophy, with a Catholic school's customary emphasis on Aristotle and his avatar, St. Thomas Aquinas. The last-minute creation of the GP had put the program at the end of the line for campus real estate, and one of our classrooms was a decrepit wooden attic under the Golden Dome. Nearly everyone smoked in those days, and, looking back, I wonder how we failed to burn the building down.

Fr. Brennan smoked Camel cigarettes, lots of them, and they wound up being his undoing. I was a smoker too, but what established a bond of friendship was our

Notre Dame Memories

Graduation Day in South Bend, 1954. Twin sister Betty and little sister and brother, Catherine and Joseph.

In the day, like so many others, I was a smoker, encouraged by peers and full page advertisements of cigarettes in Notre Dame's student weekly, *The Scholastic*, which tended to focus on much other than the scholastic life of the university. My most valued mentor, Father Thomas J. Brennan, would fall victim to Camels.

Father Brennan led a quixotic effort to turn Notre Dame into a paradigm of liberal education. On a visit to him after he had retired, he gave me the gift a fellow cleric had carved for him out of a tree fungus.

mutual love of music, his for Beethoven and mine for the Romantics. I would lend him LP records from my tiny collection—I liked Beethoven, too—and we would correspond occasionally during summer vacation.

With his background in business, Fr. Brennan unsurprisingly displayed a practical mind in his teaching. While discussing Aristotle's *Ethics* as well as other subjects, he would extol the virtue of prudence, a cultivated practice of determining and then doing the right things in given sets of circumstances. Concern for the consequences of one's actions is not a preoccupation of barely post-adolescent males, and we did not wildly applaud his efforts. His no-nonsense commentary on ancient texts was unique in the GP faculty, however, and served to establish him—at least in my view—as the best among his peers.

Fr. Brennan (although his friend, I never addressed him by his first name) disagreed profoundly with the ambitious expansion program of Theodore Hesburgh, the newly appointed university president and his seminary classmate. Brennan was deeply committed to the concept of the liberal education as adapted from Chicago and St. John's College in Maryland. He thought Hesburgh's emphasis on expanding Notre Dame to compete with major secular schools was abdicating an opportunity to make it the premier Catholic exponent of classical education. When he saw that he was fighting a losing battle, he left Notre Dame for parish work in New Orleans. Years later, when Gisela and I visited him there, his pastor told us that Fr. Brennan's Sunday sermons were the most thoughtful and enriching he had ever heard.

Fr. Brennan recognized his tendency to overreach. When I saw my friend for the last time, he had returned to Notre Dame's retirement facility for Holy Cross priests. During our visit, shortly before he died of lung cancer, he gave me a small etching on a tree fungus, done by a fellow priest, of a mounted Don Quixote, lance under arm, charging the proverbial windmill. The artist obviously knew that the original recipient of the piece could take a joke; had he been mistaken, the little objet d'art would not now stand on the desk where I write. All these years later, I still sympathize with Fr. Brennan's goals, which included education in citizenship, not by indoctrination but by serious study of history's great thinkers on the subject. Indeed, watching the decay of our democracy that now threatens the very idea of citizenship as both a shared gift and a shared challenge, my admiration for his commitment is only reinforced. The armistice in Korea had ended the war there in 1953, and the military draft, which was still in effect, was almost the only intrusion of the outside world into our academic cloister. I lost an intended roommate to the draft when his grades slipped enough to land him in the Army the summer before our senior year.

One brief distraction was the Joseph McCarthy House Un-American Activities Committee hearings (1950–54), which came to a head during my last semester and which we watched on what passed for television in the campus coffee shop (the

dormitories had no TV, good or bad). I remember feeling some reluctance, as a good Wisconsin boy from a solidly Republican family, to accept how richly McCarthy deserved Army lawyer Joseph Welch's reproachful question, "Sir, have you left no sense of decency?"

An Aura of Secrecy

Having planted the seed of doubt about my career choice, Notre Dame rescued me from the resulting uncertainty when it introduced me to CIA. Applying to the Agency was not an option, but it could, if it wished, come to you. Dr. Otto Bird, the dean of my program, called me to his office one day in my senior year to say that he was expecting visitors from Washington who wanted faculty suggestions for candidates to interview for unspecified classified employment. The aura of secrecy made up for the absence of any job description, and I signed up on the spot. Weeks later, a middle-aged interviewer with a scholarly manner revealed that CIA was my prospective employer. I could tell my family—but no one else. That ban was not lifted until I retired. The recruitment pitch left open just what I might be expected to do; the description of clandestine operations was particularly opaque. My reaction was the same as it had been to Dr. Bird: the special aura and the country's general atmosphere of anticommunist fervor were more than enough to whet my interest further.

Dr. Bird did not explain why, as it appeared, he had recommended only me, out of his program of 50 students, to CIA. Possibly my career indecision was unusually obvious, or perhaps I just looked like a poor prospect for graduate school. I do know that what made me receptive was a gnawing uncertainty about what to do with my life, reinforced by some youthful thrill-seeking.

Beyond a hint of intellectual discipline and good grades, I had precious little—certainly no relevant experience—to offer, and I was pleasantly surprised when CIA offered to hire me for its Junior Officer Training Program (JOTP), which it touted as its instrument for bringing in new generations of management. Such interest as I had in mechanical engineering disappeared, but I consulted with my parents before accepting. My father, so demanding in little things, was entirely understanding about this transformation, and both he and my mother remained supportive as I launched an unforeseen career.

Off to the Army

The recruitment process and subsequent preparations for my move to Washington revealed some odd features of CIA security and administrative practice. First was the JOTP requirement that all new recruits conceal their CIA employment

from everyone except immediate family. This applied even to people like me whose profiles suggested they were destined for work in intelligence analysis, a job for which cover was not required. This imperative did not come with a story to account for my going to Washington. For this, it turned out, I was on my own. The jovial onetime academic who interviewed me laughed at my question and assured me that he had full confidence in my ability to think of something. An even less sensible rule applied when as a requirement of the JOTP process, I joined the Army that fall; I was ordered to tell unwitting contacts that I was headed for Ft. Campbell, Kentucky, even though I already knew that my destination was Ft. Knox. There was no way to explain that anomaly, and I could do nothing but ignore requests for a mailing address from unwitting friends and family members.

There were more such oddities during my introduction to my new employer. After a night in a Washington hotel in late June, I set out for CIA Headquarters, following instructions to tell the cab driver that I was headed for the neighborhood of the Lincoln Memorial. We were almost there when he asked for the street address. I gave it to him, and he said it didn't exist. The name of the building, "Quarters Eye," didn't work, either. I had been told that it was one of a cluster of temporary buildings erected during the war in a compound on Ohio Drive. As a last resort, I tried that description. To my great relief, it sufficed for him to get me to the dilapidated "tempo" that served as CIA's personnel office.

I wondered if someone had used this misinformation as a ploy to test my presence of mind, but it took only a couple of days of processing in the impersonal, bureaucratic atmosphere of Quarters Eye to dispel that notion. Once "on board," as the saying went (and still does), I underwent the standard process of evaluation for aptitudes and overall fitness. I had been administered some pencil-and-paper tests at a federal building in Chicago before CIA made its offer. As it was hiring people for jobs that would sometimes involve life or death decisions, however, it certainly needed more information than afforded by those exercises to see through the youthful innocence of so many of its applicants. For this purpose, it employed the psychological testing regime created by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in World War II. This had proved to be a highly accurate predictor of success in intelligence work, first in WW II and then in the even more complex environment of the Cold War.

Having survived this scrutiny, I was placed in a small group of new recruits—not JOTs, but people awaiting permanent assignments— cataloging an endless supply of photographs of European ground transportation facilities, apparently taken during the war by the OSS. After a few weeks at this mind-numbing task, which I must have unintentionally given the impression of performing with zeal, I was charged with supervising the output of my fellow newbies.

One of the hiring criteria for the JOTP was the prior completion of military service. The aspiring junior officer trainees who lacked this experience had first to take basic military training and then go to officer candidate school before starting CIA training. I had resigned from Air Force ROTC at Notre Dame when, in my last year there, they told me I was not qualified for flight school because I was colorblind. My nearly four years in ROTC counted for nothing, and I got orders to present myself at an Army recruiting station in Washington and enlist as a private in the Army. In October 1954, I left Washington for basic training with the 3rd Armored Division at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Infantry Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia, and a modicum of troop duty would follow, after which I would return to CIA.

Over the summer, I had met a few of my prospective JOTP colleagues, and one of them, a very bright and very personable Princeton grad named Bill Hawley, joined me at Union Station for the train trip to Louisville. To this point, our treatment by the Army had been almost gentle, even including a bunk in a sleeping car. The reception at Ft. Knox was a different matter. Our treatment was by no means brutal or even harsh, but I still remember it: a recent college graduate who still felt like the center of the universe suddenly found himself nothing but a number in a barracks (another WW II temporary) full of other numbers. Some of these belonged to a clutch of roughnecks from Cleveland who had enlisted in the Army as an alternative to jail. The sergeant who occupied the NCO's room in the barracks—a huge, taciturn, black man—kept order in a calm, effortless way that commanded the respect of all his charges; that he was subject to mysterious nightmares only increased his mystique. I once darted between him and the trainee he was talking to, and he quietly but very firmly delivered an unforgettable lesson in common courtesy.

Training at Ft. Knox included learning how to drive an M-47 tank; our only regret in that respect was not reaching gunnery training before being shipped off to Ft. Benning. Hawley and I, by chance next to each other in a row of tanks, once undertook to find out who's was faster; the instructor halted the race over the public address system. Autumn at Ft. Knox was cold and wet that year, and the training regimen included crawling across a field of near-freezing mud while a machine gun fired live ammunition overhead. A few of our fellow warriors did freeze, figuratively speaking, intimidated by the whip-snapping sound of bullets flying by not far above them. Bill and I, having already finished the run, were chosen to crawl back out and talk a couple of them into moving on. We thought the honor may have reflected an instructor's impulse to give the college boys a little graduate education.

Learning how to live with people of radically different life experiences was, of course, not an item on the training schedule, but it was nevertheless a lesson that got a lot of attention from recruits with backgrounds as sheltered as mine. One such experience also served as an early, informal lesson in agent recruitment, The bayonet

to my M-1 rifle disappeared from my locker, which like all the rest had no lock. It seemed to me a good bet that one of the Cleveland contingent had filched it, but it also seemed imprudent to advertise my suspicion. So, I found an opportunity to engage one of the friendlier of the group in conversation. As we chatted, I mentioned the loss. He came back an hour or so later with the number of the locker in which the item was stashed, and that is where I found and retrieved it. My informant sought no reward, resembling in this the great majority of the foreign agents I dealt with in later years; rather, he indulged me for his own reasons, which did not include material gain.

After only about 12 of the scheduled 16 weeks of basic training, Bill and I were startled to be summoned to battalion headquarters. There, a clerk holding two file folders marked SECRET told us that these contained orders to report to Officer Candidate School (OCS) at Ft. Benning. That is where the fun began. It was immediately clear that one of the essential qualifications for an OCS graduate was a demonstrated capacity to absorb a regime of continual verbal abuse. The sergeant who welcomed us to our barracks managed to intimidate me enough to make me finish my answer to a question with a respectful "sir!" The snarling contempt with which he then instructed me on this point of military protocol—an NCO is *never* "sir"—did at least serve to ensure that the blunder was not repeated. And my company's "Tac" (tactical) officer, a self-proclaimed hog-caller from, I think, Illinois, looked and acted like a parody of Mussolini. His pompous strut would have inspired imitation had it not been for his power to make life miserable for us.

I may have failed to hide my distaste, for he seemed not to like me any better than I liked him. On the firing range one day, we were being taught to use the Browning automatic rifle. Firing in the prone position with the weapon in repeating mode, I got into a such a groove that, after each recoil, the stock returned to my shoulder in exactly the same position as before the shot. Toward the end, I had the sense that I no longer even needed to aim, and I wound up emptying the magazine and scoring only bullseyes. My Tac officer came running down the line to see who had accomplished this feat, but on discovering it was me, he grunted, turned, and strutted off.

It didn't take long to adjust to the OCS disciplinary regime, but we candidates always harbored a touch of resentment of the ROTC students in the next-door barracks. Although theoretically subject to the same training, they had already been commissioned, which entitled them to lounge around their barracks smoking while we did punitive pushups outside ours.

The physical demands of the training agenda were a good deal more challenging than those we had experienced at Ft. Knox. No one would be able to say that we were going to require of our men what we had never done ourselves. Most of my

fellow "candidates" (the term we had to use when addressing an officer: "Candidate Ahern, *sir*") were, like me, recent college graduates, but the Army was then encouraging experienced noncoms to apply to OCS, and we had a few of them too. Their experience made the training much less challenging for them than for us new recruits; the only one I remember who had trouble was the company smart-ass. His commission was revoked when he went out on the town just after we graduated and wound up arrested for drunken driving or some such offense.

None of us were surprised at the fate of this trouble-seeker, but Tac officers' judgments could on occasion seem quite arbitrary. About halfway through the course, one of the most well-regarded men in the company was rejected in one of the screening exercises that periodically reminded us of our vulnerability to dismissal without notice. This man was perhaps a little older than the company average, quiet, composed, and serious. He radiated a selfless honesty that earned his classmates' respect, and we could only speculate that his personality was just too reserved for the evaluation panel. When he left, I realized there was no one in the company with whom I would rather go into combat. I would find out later in Laos and Vietnam that, at least in this respect, my instinct had served me well and that chest-thumping on the parade ground does not guarantee good performance in combat.

I had begun to learn that judgments about people are a highly subjective matter, even when arrived at in a convocation of peers. In the case of OCS, I never discovered whether there existed a formal evaluation system or whether it was entirely a seat-of-the-pants exercise. Either way, I learned a valuable lesson about taking the measure of my fellow man, albeit one that took me a long time fully to absorb.

The main difference between basic training and OCS was one of expectations. At Ft. Knox, the purpose was to get you through. At Benning, the burden was on the officer candidate to prove why he should not be returned to the enlisted ranks; this was demonstrated by the fairly substantial number who didn't finish. Otherwise, as best I recall, Benning was all mechanics: weapons, map reading, squad and platoon tactics, and the like. I recall no attention at all to leadership, to the relationship between officers and those they would lead.

I took no notice of it at the time. Only after a number of years at CIA did I realize that it was just the same there. Not until sometime in the late 1960s did CIA management, then led by Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) William Colby, even begin to express concern about leadership and leadership development as integral aspects of building and nurturing an organization. Until then, I did not question the tacit formula that treated leadership as simply an innate skill, something to be honed by experience but not taught. Nevertheless, I have no doubt that my experience with the Army way of doing things and the gradual recognition of its shortcomings

would, years later, make me a more productive participant in eventual changes in CIA's training philosophy and promotion criteria.

The JOTP requirement for military experience might reasonably have been regarded as being fulfilled by basic training and OCS, which was already more than required of graduates of the collegiate ROTC. Fortunately, however, the originators of the JOTP had provided for six months of troop duty after OCS, thus giving new 2nd lieutenants at least a brief opportunity to practice the leadership skills given such short shrift at Ft. Benning. My company commander, Captain Cole, had served in WW II and then, having been torn away from a civilian career—in what, I forget—to serve in the Korean War, decided just to stay in. He provided a welcome change of atmosphere from the anonymity of basic training and the unremitting pressure of OCS. Although he was aware from the start that there was something unusual about my status—he knew I'd be there only six months—he respected my inability to fill in the blanks. We even became friends; he had a girlfriend and a niece in neighboring Ayer. He introduced me to the latter, an attractive and amiable young lady, and the four of us would go on double dates.

Captain Cole had put me in charge of his 81mm mortar platoon. He made a point of telling me that this was something usually reserved for an experienced officer. OCS offered no training in the use of crew-served weapons, and I knew nothing of the 81mm mortars in the platoon I was to lead. It was his decision to make, however, and, in my ignorance, I had no qualms about taking on the job.

In any case, it was clearly not Cole's intention to leave me to fend for myself. I don't know if he made a conscious practice of coaching his new officers, but he and the company first sergeant, also a veteran of WW II and Korea, taught me invaluable lessons about how to deal with both subordinates and superiors. It's almost a cliché of military life: The grizzled, battle-scarred old sergeant and the company commander mentoring a green lieutenant with no combat experience. My experience suggests that it became a cliché because it's true, at least on occasion.

Sometimes it was little things. The first sergeant noticed that I made more visits to my platoon's barracks than he thought necessary, and he took me aside to suggest that I put a lid on that practice for the sake of rapport with my men. I was already being careful to holler "At ease!" as I opened the barracks door to avoid forcing anyone to stand, but I saw the wisdom in his advice.

One or two other things could have had more serious consequences. Officers from battalion or perhaps regimental headquarters visited one day for a demonstration of 81mm mortar fire. The first salvo landed respectably close to the target flags, but the second came near enough to the viewing stand to send our visitors fleeing for cover. The gun crews— with me standing by, of course—had failed to reset the

weapons after the first round, and they were, in effect, no longer delivering aimed fire. The gun crews were either ill-trained or very rusty, and Captain Cole may have had that in mind in his reaction to the embarrassment. It would have been easy for him to hang me out to dry—it was my platoon, after all—but he let me off the hook with not so much as a reprimand.

Recovering from a mistake is an important skill for anyone put in command of others, and I got a lesson in that on a day when I was preparing to march the company back to the barracks from a training exercise. Taking over from the first sergeant, I gave the command "Right face!" to get the troops into a column, and then "Forward, march!" Some moved, a few did not, or only hesitantly, and I heard some indecipherable complaining. The problem was that the sergeant had forgotten to bring the unit from parade rest to attention before turning it over to me, and I didn't notice the omission until I tried to get it moving, A moment of panic, and then, a flash of inspiration: I would act as if the sergeant had actually given the prescribed order, and I shouted, "Since when does a company not fall in at attention?" The men were looking for a way out, not for a confrontation, and we got back underway. It wouldn't have happened had I not been asleep at the switch, and the episode taught me something about the risks—in this case, fortunately, only of embarrassment—of violating one of the basic precepts in the Army, to put high value on attention to detail.

Not much about basic training or OCS had been truly enjoyable, so I was a little surprised to find how well troop duty suited me. Beyond a few beginner's gaffes, my work had been well received—I began hearing, for example, that I was good at keeping the troops awake in the classroom—and my relationships with Captain Cole and the first sergeant were, I think, partly a cause and partly an effect of my ready adaptation to life as an infantry officer. When the time came, in the spring of 1956, to head for Washington, I felt real regret that this phase was over.

* * *

Chapter Two

Introduction to the Clandestine Service

I still remember the thrilling sense of being part of a crusade as I began the mundane task of typing my first dispatch to Tokyo. It was only something to do with the bureaucratic mechanics of managing an agent but enough to make me feel part of a grand enterprise.

Above: CIA Headquarters—from its creation in September 1947 until the opening of its northern Virginia headquarters in 1961—was situated in this complex of buildings at 2430 E Street, NW in Washington, DC.

Offices not to be associated with CIA were located in the warren of "temporary" office buildings built during the first and second world wars in West Potomac Park and the mall adjoining the Lincoln and Washington Monuments. They would serve for years after WWII ended. Their demolition began in the 1960s and was completed only in 1971. In 1954, Temporary Building I in which the office of personnel was located still proved hard to find for a cabby I'd asked to take me from the Willard Hotel to "Quarters Eye" in the complex bordering Ohio Drive—about a mile and a half as the crow flies—for my first interview on entering on duty.

The JOTP staff had told me, before sending me off to the Army, that my profile suggested intelligence analysis would be a better fit for my skill set than clandestine operations. Knowing nothing about either, especially the latter, I offered no objection, but my Army experience had had the effect of instilling in me a powerful desire for action-oriented work. Once back in Washington, I made this known to my JOTP adviser, who merely remarked that such transformations were not unusual. Having gotten a reevaluation of my aptitudes that found me also suitable for operations, he had me transferred to that side of the house.

The change raised the question: to what country or area would I like to be assigned after training? The program needed to know in order to decide on an "interim assignment" to a country desk that would precede the Operations Course at CIA's Virginia training center. The question evoked memories from childhood, when Betty and I had devoured books on China, especially those of the then-popular Pearl Buck. I had not pursued this or any other geographical interest in school, and, of course, Americans were not at the time being posted to "Red China." Asia still exerted a pull, however, and, after some discussion, my JOTP adviser arranged a place for me in Japan Branch in the Directorate of Plans (DDP), which managed operations and operational people abroad.

It was only then, two years into my CIA employment, that I really got to know some of the people who had been hired in my cohort. The majority came from Princeton and, as a group, now seem to me as having exemplified the level of quality that justified the Agency's claim that it could have anyone it wanted. Their numbers reflected the staffing of OSS, which had drawn heavily on Ivy League universities for its rapid expansion after 1942. But in 1954, seven years after CIA had replaced OSS, that preponderance was declining but still substantial. At least three members of my JOTP cohort had received Ivy League (or "Little Ivy," e.g., Williams College) schooling. I admired their style, but it was not evident to me that an Ivy League pedigree necessarily conferred superior knowledge.

As I look back on that period, I wonder why little displays of amateurism in CIA's management style didn't make me wonder if I'd picked the right employer. True, I had come to the outfit after 16 years of authority-ridden Catholic schooling and may thus have been more immature than most 22-year-olds. If I was not disposed to question authority, however, the same was true of my JOTP counterparts from the Ivy League and other secular schools. I found them enviably self-confident and socially

sophisticated, but I don't recall their questioning authority any more than I did when reacting to our new employer.

At least in one respect, we were all remarkably naïve. In our first months on the job, we kept hearing about how quickly promotions came at CIA. We weren't seeing much direct evidence of that, but there were stories, with names attached, of managers who had reached GS-18 (SIS-4 in today's ranking system) in their early thirties. Something of that nature seems to have taken place in the expansion generated by the Korean War, but those days were gone, and promotions had actually slowed owing to the relatively young population of senior officers. It would not have taken much skill in mathematics to figure that out, but youthful enthusiasm drove out any interest we might have had in drawing the obvious conclusion.

None of us had been attracted by visions of sugar plums, however, and I believe that those who left after training did so after concluding that the intelligence trade was unlikely to be a good fit.

The four of us—me and the three above-mentioned Ivy Leaguers—rented rooms on Dupont Circle in downtown Washington before moving, with one or two more fellow JOTs, to a house at 3109 P Street in Georgetown. The place was fully furnished, down to its decorative ceramics and paintings. The two trusting ladies who owned it—they may have been sisters—were off on a sabbatical of some sort and had left without requiring a lease or any security deposit.

The deal almost came unglued when, a couple of days before we were to move in, one of us, Nick, discovered that he needed access to the house for some errand. When he got there, no one was home, so he tried the doors. Finding one open, he went inside just before the ladies returned. Nick had some difficulty reassuring them that we were actually the proper young gentlemen we professed to be and could be trusted to be responsible tenants.

Once we were installed at 3109 P Street, Nick became the entrepreneur of our social life. Parties became routine yet somehow managed not to inflict any significant damage to our landladies' property. On one occasion, Nick brought in two French girls—from just where I don't think I knew even then—and proceeded to display his nearly non-existent French. One of the girls was named Françoise, or so she said, and Nick managed to frustrate her with his steadfast refusal to pronounce the "s" in her name, thus converting it to the masculine form. None of the rest of us spoke French either, but we did manage to avoid that particular outrage.

In 1956, one such affair got a little tense when a British guest, a young lady, undertook to defend the British and Israeli effort to seize the Suez Canal. The

inhabitants of 3109 P St. were not Cold War ideologues, but we were all categorically opposed to that colonial venture. It took a little effort to keep things polite.

Only a few days after moving, we noticed a man not a lot older than ourselves lounging on the stairs to our basement entrance when we returned from work. Someone asked him what he was doing there and was told he was a member of the security detail protecting DCI Allen Dulles, who lived nearby. It turned out that Dulles too was renting, in his case a house that belonged to Livingston Merchant, then ambassador to Canada and subsequently under secretary of state.

It became clear a little later that protecting the DCI included checking up on his neighbors. Each of us got a call from one of the DCIs secretaries—this was probably in 1956—inviting us to visit him at his "E" Street office. We gathered there one morning in what resembled a classroom presided over by Mr. Chips—but with a bigger desk for the professor. Puffing on his pipe, Dulles gave us a little pep talk. I don't recall that we got much by way of substance, and I would guess that he staged the event as much out of nostalgia for his years with young OSS operatives in Europe as for our instruction.

Introduction to DDP Culture

The collegial style of DDP management made it easy for a newcomer to feel at home in his new environment, and I had the sense that my housemates in Georgetown felt the same way. Not that everything was sweetness and light in every office. I remember a feud between one of my Japan Branch colleagues and an officer then in Tokyo that got so venomous the branch chief ordered the omission of signatures on dispatches to and from the field. He hoped that anonymous correspondence would keep the combatants uncertain about just who was at the other end of a given exchange.

I was surprised but not at all unhappy with the laissez faire tone of Japan Branch management. I was expected to ask for help when I encountered something that neither experience nor common sense would suffice to deal with, but otherwise I was left to communicate with the field largely as I saw fit. My supervisor would see my correspondence before it left, of course, so I was not entirely on my own, but the general atmosphere was one of expectation that I would be able to cope.

Service in the branch made me newly aware of aspects of the DDP culture, one of the most conspicuous being its indifference—hostility is hardly an exaggeration—to planning. The guiding principle—usually unstated but clear from the tone of deprecatory remarks about bureaucratic exercises such as the budget—was that operations worth supporting would be conceived and executed on the scene by experienced

field case officers who needed no advice from the home office. "Experienced" was a buzzword of the period that implicitly qualified an operations officer to make judgments about what needed to be done and how to do it. It seems to me now, remembering various senior colleagues of the period, that length of service, perhaps more than level of achievement, determined one's eligibility for this elite status.

Be that as it may, the "experience" totem supported the enshrinement of spontaneity when initiating operational activity; less attention was paid to the analysis of objectives or the suitability of potential means. An expression of confidence that a proposed action would materially reduce communist influence in a target population or institution generally sufficed to get Headquarters approval.

This dynamic was doubtless part of the legacy of the OSS, which as a new organization had started with no relevant practical experience and very little knowledge of its new areas of operation. In CIA's early years, few saw the need to try to fill these gaps. One result was the pro forma quality of such planning as was done. No bureaucracy could admit even to itself that it was flying by the seat of its pants, and, in any case, there was always the budget to be justified. So, we had an annual exercise to update the Related Mission Directive (RMD), the document that described the following year's projects.

The RMD was never, so far as I knew, used as a guide to action, let alone an examination of operating assumptions; rather, it was only a response to purely bureaucratic requirements. Its objectives were outlined in general, aspirational language (for example, recruit Japanese intellectuals who can support our student union program or perhaps augment existing programs). The means would be specified mostly in terms of the project's financial and material requirements; the rest was left to the field.

It was much later, after I had retired into my second career as an intelligence historian, that I discovered the basis for this casual approach to planning. The first CIA directors (and the leaders of its short-lived predecessor, the Central Intelligence Group) were military officers. Except for Walter "Beedle" Smith (1950–53), who had struggled to rationalize the new Agency's structure, they were at least as much concerned with its bureaucratic status and functions in the US defense establishment as they were with honing its professional competence.

The result was that, when I joined CIA in 1954, Allen Dulles, OSS veteran and brother of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, was presiding over an organization that both retained the structural changes mandated by Smith yet was in thrall to a spirit that glorified every day as a new day and disdained the lessons of the past. One is reminded of Henry Ford and his comment that "history is bunk." Accordingly, CIA saw its mission as finding and seizing opportunities to frustrate Soviet expansion.

In this "Just get on with it!" atmosphere, we ran operations with scant attention to tradecraft, i.e., protecting the security of covert operations, because we knew that compromise, at least in the noncommunist world, would probably have no grievous consequences for either our officers or their agents.

When I arrived at the Japan Desk in 1956, the Allied occupation of Japan had ended only four years earlier. Cold War tensions had already become the main preoccupation of Washington's national security establishment, however, and CIA's main task in Japan was to support the overall US effort to ensure that the now-sovereign government in Tokyo remained aligned with the anticommunist Free World.

Our efforts took the form of covert operations of the type that became public knowledge in the mid-1970s, when the Church and Pike Committees held their hearings. We wanted to build institutions like those that we saw as supporting representative government in the West: anti-communist student associations, labor unions, and veterans' organizations—all of which were sanctioned by the Tokyo government. I still remember the thrilling sense of being part of a crusade as I began the mundane task of typing my first dispatch to Tokyo. It was only something to do with the bureaucratic mechanics of managing an agent but enough to make me feel part of a grand enterprise.

In 1956, the Directorate of Plans which had resulted from the merger in 1952 of the separate organizations that had managed covert action (Office of Policy Coordination) and intelligence collection (Office of Special Operations) was only four years old. It had been imposed on the previously autonomous elements by DCI Smith. Famous for his hardnosed leadership in World War II, Smith did as much, I think, as any man could have to integrate the two functions. He did succeed in ending the practice of allowing two autonomous components running covert operations overseas to conduct uncoordinated recruitment efforts in the same population of potential agent candidates. Both cultures put up strenuous resistance even to that commonsense reform, however, and, in the covert action-oriented Japan Branch (now also responsible for collection), I immediately encountered an almost sneering disdain for the practitioners of intelligence collection. Because I was looking for action, I was an easy recruit into branch orthodoxy, and, until it was time to enter the Operations Course in early 1957, I was happily and uncritically engaged in helping prevent Japan from being absorbed by Soviet communism.

Getting Around DC

In addition to acquiring some familiarity with CIA's idiosyncrasies, I found time during my introductory stint at Headquarters to learn my way around the District of Columbia. This involved the waste of much time and gasoline—and a toll on my

equanimity—as I was continually led astray by Pierre L'Enfant's design of major thoroughfares radiating out from the city's center. Because few of them met at 90-degree angles, getting onto the right street in the right direction long remained a trial-and-error exercise for me.

Fortunately, female company was easier to find than street addresses. Washington was still a quiet Southern city, nothing like today's cosmopolitan center, but it attracted young women to its colleges and to low-level government jobs that even then were a mainstay of the local economy. A WWII relic in the form of a small officers' club still stood on New Hampshire Avenue near Dupont Circle. A couple of housemates and I found a threesome of young ladies there one evening, and I played my "aw shucks" country boy act to perfection, winding up with the most personable and best-looking of the three—a Southern girl—and the promise of future dates.

All of this accorded with the conservative moral standards of the era. For something racier, there were the strip clubs that still enlivened parts of the city. These were a real treat, at least for me, as I had no prior experience in these matters. They were a rare treat, too, as I, like the rest of the P Street household, lived on a 2nd lieutenant's pay, and such entertainment was expensive, even just to look at. The local women's colleges, however, could hardly charge admission to visitors picking up their dates. I particularly remember Trinity College off Connecticut Avenue above Dupont Circle. A student who had tickets—I don't remember how we had met—invited me to escort her to President Eisenhower's second inaugural ball in 1957.

Entertainment locales, much fewer than now, were nevertheless near heaven for a culturally deprived small-town music buff, especially for one who favored classical music. My main resource (this is well before the Kennedy Center opened in 1971) was a serendipitous find that I made one Sunday afternoon leaving my first residence near Dupont Circle. I was hardly out of the door when I heard a piano being played at a beautifully professional level, and I followed the sound to its source at the Phillips Gallery down the street. Admission was free and the music wonderful; it became a regular item on my agenda. The only other such performance center I can remember was located at Constitution Hall, the headquarters of the Daughters of the American Revolution, on 17th Street. For me, its big difference from the Phillips Gallery was an admission fee.

Another feature of life in Washington was so integral that I can't remember anyone even mentioning it at the time to either defend or condemn it. That was racial segregation. In the mid-1950s, Jim Crow was alive and well. Restaurant clients were white not only in the District but also in northern Virginia, across the Potomac River. After I returned from my first overseas tour (Japan) in 1959, I was startled to learn that black applicants were now eligible for work as bus drivers in the DC

transportation system. It seemed as if I was as accustomed to segregation as nearly all my fellow White Americans.

This passivity dissolved when I met the son of a cousin—she was at least 15 years older than I—who had married a black lawyer from Chicago after WW II. Their children, all of whom distinguished themselves (one became a Broadway actor), included a son who eventually became a university professor of mathematics and who I remember intimidating me with his formidable intellect when we first met in the 1960s.

Our ensuing friendship dispelled any indifference on my part to the issue of racial justice, but it was not until the 1980s, while in charge of hiring people for the same program that had hired me, that I had the opportunity to help deal with the issue. At that time, I tried to persuade CIA personnel management to encourage more black applicants and to open the door to gays, pointing out that, in the latter case, even incremental progress toward parity was dissolving CIA's contention that a homosexual relationship constituted a vulnerability to blackmail and therefore a security risk. I didn't expect these urgings to be met with, "Gee, why didn't we think of that?" and they weren't. Nevertheless, I like to think they helped stimulate the gradual transformation of the Agency's approach to race and gender questions.

The Operations Course, 1956

In the summer of 1956, after almost a year on the Japan Desk, my number came up for the Operations Course. There had been only two previous sessions, before which, it seems (no one on the staff ever mentioned it), DDP area divisions ran their own training on an ad hoc basis. The training staff consisted almost entirely of OSS veterans. As I recall, some were weapons specialists, and others had skills such as surveillance and operational reporting.

I doubt the present generation, so much less deferential to authority than mine, would have tolerated the obsolete curriculum that we encountered in the training. True, CIA was only ten years old at that point and could have been expected to bear some traces of its OSS origins, but it was obvious even to us innocents that we were being prepared to refight WW II rather than to prevail in the Cold War.

One exercise involved trying to infiltrate a simulated enemy prison camp to rescue Allied prisoners. The staff let us discover that a culvert, a couple of feet in diameter, ran underneath the fence into the "camp," but, on the prescribed night, we all let caution overcome any macho pretensions and looked for a less claustrophobic approach to the target. As I recall, successful entry was our sole objective. I don't remember anything at all about disabling a guard, for example, or helping the notional prisoners escape. In other words, there was a distinctly pro forma air to the whole proceeding.

An exercise in the interrogation of a cooperative subject was more congenial to me and seemed far more likely to be relevant to my real-world deployment. It was designed to stimulate the student's capacity to generate relevant questions for a willing but passive subject. It was almost as if it had been designed to play to my strengths. As the interview proceeded, the instructor/subject began shaking his head to signal that I had exhausted his list of questions on the point at issue.

As for the recruitment and handling of agents—the sort of thing we trainees could expect to be doing once in the field—there was relatively little. There must have been more on the subject—it's just too important a discipline to be treated casually—but it's one that would have captured my full attention had it been as intensively treated as it deserved. I remember just one imperative about agent recruitment: Rapport! Rapport with agents! Rapport with prospective agents! Rapport with contacts in the intelligence services of allies! It almost seemed as if someone had had such a bad experience trying to compel the cooperation of potential sources that the trauma had to be exorcised in succeeding generations of case officers. Overall, the program failed to meet any reasonable expectation of the challenges we would meet in the world of the Cold War.

There were, to be sure, indispensable skills with which we got some familiarization, especially operational and intelligence reporting. Our impatience with the mechanical presentation of much of the material was tempered to some extent by the goodwill of instructors, many of whom displayed an admirable personal commitment to CIA and its mission. A little of the training was actually fun, in addition to being entirely relevant. The course put considerable emphasis on street surveillance, with exercises conducted primarily in nearby cities. One of these was in Richmond, which I admit I remember mainly for an encounter while entering a department store. Coming out was a young woman with the most brilliant blue eyes I'd ever seen; she fixed these on me until we passed each other.

I know that the very mention of such trivia at the expense of more detailed coverage of substance reveals what must have been an almost frivolous attitude toward the tradecraft curriculum. I remember being told by a training officer that I was doing very well at things I liked and not so well at things I didn't.

I was not, however, the only disaffected trainee. As the course progressed, general unhappiness with the regime continued to grow. On graduation night, the fifty or so students—most of us, anyway—drank enough to shed our inhibitions and began looking to create a little mischief. A few of us took notice of some WW II light trucks parked at the edge of a tract of land on which new dormitories were about to be built. A check of their dashboards revealed that no ignition key was required. A push of a button would start one, and we exploited this with some unauthorized joyriding around the campus. We flattened all of the surveyors' stakes on the site of

the new buildings and played some chicken as drivers challenged each other to be the first to swerve to avoid head-on collision. This caper was the main count against us when, on our return to Washington, the then chief of training, a onetime OSS colonel named Matthew Baird, called us into his office and ordered us to explain ourselves.

I was surprised, even disappointed, to find my Ivy League colleagues—usually so assertive—joining me in abashed silence as Baird waited for an answer. It seemed to me that our behavior had a reason, although certainly not an excuse, and, when the silence got too embarrassing, I ventured to summarize my reaction to the irrelevant, outdated subject matter that insisted on preparing us to fight the last war. That opened the floodgates, and it was Baird's turn to sit in abashed silence as the complaints poured out. It seems that he felt some sympathy for our case, as we were spared disciplinary action. Whether the incident resulted in any refinements to the course and its presentation is another matter. I do know that the quality of training for the directorate remained a contentious issue for a good many years, but I am not well-versed in the current state of play.

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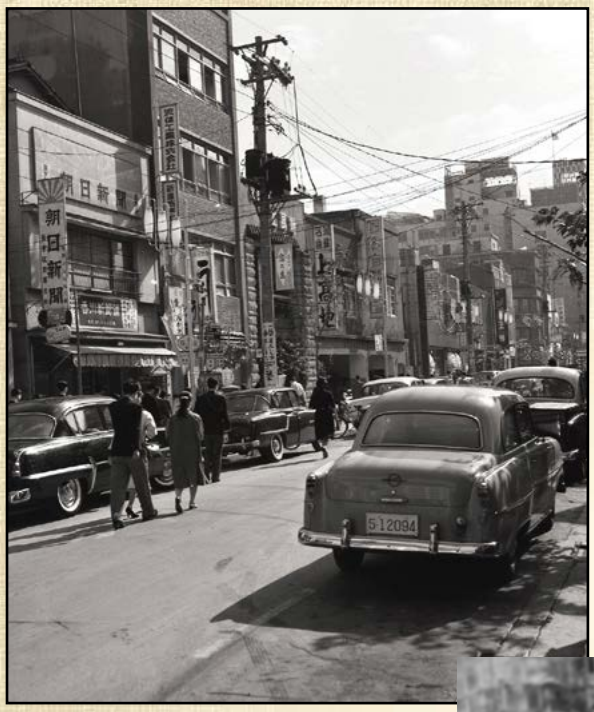
Chapter Three

Apprenticeship in Post-Occupation Japan, 1957–59

The station's covert programs were all "hearts and minds," with no dirty tricks, even against the Japan Communist Party. Japan was now a firm ally against the communist monolith, and our mission was to help keep it that way.



Old Town Tokyo in the 1950s. Photo: © Allan Cash Picture Library / Alamy Stock Photo

More than a decade after the end of the WWII and five years after US occupation, I arrived in Japan and found a city of limitless crowds of silent people. Still only 25-years old, I would learn the language from greatly hospitable people, including a hotel bartender and my cook and housekeeper, Obasan ("honorable auntie", below).

Photo: Thomas Ahern Family Albums

In 1957, Pan American Airways provided air travel from San Francisco to Tokyo. PanAm was then the premier US international airline. Jet aircraft were not yet in commercial service, so I flew in a Boeing Stratocruiser, driven by four reciprocating engines. By today's standards, its range and speed were limited, and the aircraft required refueling stops at Honolulu and Midway Island before landing at Tokyo's Haneda Airport. Nevertheless, the accommodations were far more civilized than they are in this current era of deregulation and the resulting imperative to cut costs. Luxuries included the bunk bed supplied to each passenger and the full meals prepared on board.

My first impression of Tokyo was of limitless crowds of silent people, an impression reinforced by my introduction to a subway in which every train was standing room only. People did not get in line to board; rather, a shapeless mass shuffled—the only sound—each right on the heels of the next in a tactic dictated by the need to keep competing commuters from preempting any unoccupied space. I developed a theory, which I never tested, that, if you consistently left any open space between you and the person in front of you, you would wind up going backward.

The Dai Ichi (Number One) Hotel, in the center of Tokyo, was not as crowded as the subway, but it was not exactly spacious, either. The subway, above ground at that point, ran along the side of the building where my tiny room was located. The almost constant roar of arriving and departing trains made a stark contrast with the strangely silent crowds I encountered when riding those trains myself.

When I finally got checked in, I was ready for a drink and went downstairs to the bar. There I met Hiroshi, the very engaging young bartender. I stayed at the Dai Ichi for some time, for, despite the ubiquity of American installations in Japan, the CIA station in Tokyo had no temporary quarters for visitors or new arrivals. That circumstance encouraged my regular visits to the Dai Ichi's bar, where Hiroshi clearly welcomed the opportunity to practice his English. My Japanese needed a lot more work than his English, but for the time being I was content to get a guided tour of things Japanese in my own language. The age difference was minor—I was still only 25—and we became friends. When he married, a year or so later, he invited me to serve as the wedding photographer.

By then, I had moved to a modest, characterless, Western-style house in the Akasaka district, but I soon jumped at a chance to take over a house being vacated

by another station officer. Little, if any, larger, it had all the charm that the first one lacked. The first floor was done in Japanese style, with shoji (rice paper) windows and tatami (rice straw and rush grass) floors. The upstairs contained only my bedroom and a Western-style bathroom. The widowed cook/housekeeper, whom I always addressed by the conventional honorific, Obasan ("honorable auntie") and her lovely, somewhat handicapped daughter, Eiko-san, lived downstairs. There was not a lot of room for three people, but I found space for a small upright piano I had bought from a departing colleague. Gas heaters kept the place warm during the day, but their use at night posed the risk of lowering gas pressure across Tokyo to a level that might extinguish pilots. I therefore had to turn the heater off at bedtime to prevent a potentially lethal accumulation of gas should it have resumed while we slept.

The previous tenant had informed me that Obasan, who had worked for Americans for several years, spoke passable English, but, when he introduced me to her, he did so in Japanese (he was himself a Nisei, a second-generation Japanese-American), and she responded in kind. From that time until I left, almost two years later, not two words of English passed between us. She was the greatest help I had in learning Japanese, and she seemed to enjoy the role. Part-time study at the famous Japanese-language school, Naganuma, helped too, but not as much as Obasan did. She was the widow of an official with the Manchurian Railway Company, the instrument of Japanese control in Manchuria, and her anecdotes about life there provided food for conversation. Just one thing was never mentioned—I thought it politic to follow her lead in this—namely, the war.

Obasan was well-known to my new colleagues, who had been my predecessor's frequent guests. I carried on the tradition of Sino-Japanese dinners for them. By popular demand, these always featured gyoza— "potstickers"—the pork dumplings she had perfected during her years in Manchuria.

When I arrived in Japan, the occupation had been over for five years. Not everyone knew this. One morning at the Dai Ichi Hotel I heard an American tourist ask his wife if Japan was still occupied. English was already well established as a second language, and, although I continued parttime Japanese language lessons at Naganuma, I didn't need it with my professional contacts. All of them, including, rather surprisingly, an elderly retired admiral, spoke at least serviceable English—his was quite good— and my Japanese served me mainly for travel and to make acquaintances and explore the nightspots of the Ginza and Shinjuku.

Winning Hearts and Minds

The station's covert programs were all "hearts and minds," with no dirty tricks, even against the Japan Communist Party. Japan was now a firm ally against the

communist monolith, and our mission was to help keep it that way. In the late 1950s, world communism still looked like a potentially overwhelming ideological force, and the goal in Japan was to preserve and strengthen the non-communist—preferably anti-communist—orientation of politically sensitive groups such as students, organized labor, and the press. The strategy was the same as that employed in Western Europe: to combat communist front organizations by creating and supporting anti-communist equivalents. Although we operated on a smaller scale than our European counterparts, we wanted to build Japanese versions of entities like the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and the National Students Association (NSA) in the United States.

Our partners in this enterprise were a small group of actively anti-communist Japanese businessmen. My role was to try to create anti-communist student organizations, modeled on our NSA. My Japanese counterparts had already graduated from university, but they still had connections they used to find potential leaders in Tokyo's universities. The case officer handling the project had already left Tokyo when I arrived; it seemed that he had not been deeply engaged with it, and it had not prospered. There was some talk about terminating the effort, but my branch chief decided to give it one more shot. Considering its problems, he might more reasonably have assigned it to an officer with relevant experience, but instead he made it the main item on my agenda.

My Japanese counterparts in the project were two young businessmen chosen to work with the station by the business leaders who formed the core of the station's stable of contacts. I remember a faint unease with this arrangement; there was something counterintuitive about businessmen building student unions and—especially—trade unions. Their anti-communism served to establish their acceptability, however, and I soon lost any inhibitions about our partners.

There were a couple of other things on my plate. One of them was handling a retired admiral who had been recruited for his contacts in the military and political establishments. He might once have been a valuable source, but, if so, his productivity, like that of the student project, had diminished to the point that turning him over to a novice case officer who looked even younger than his 25 years in age-conscious Japan did not seem to put at risk a particularly valuable asset. I can remember only one of his reports being distributed to consumers, something general about Japan's relationship with China, and it was not long before I got instructions to terminate the relationship.

I realized later that I had been given the case precisely because of the prospect of its termination. In the late 1950s and well into the 1960s, the DDP—its Far East Division, at least—nursed an almost crippling phobia when it came to parting ways with unproductive agents. In this case, the station finessed the issue by assigning

the newbie, me, to serve as the bearer of the bad news. Although I hadn't absorbed the general aversion to liquidating empty activity, the atmosphere in the station that surrounded the exercise was nevertheless daunting, and I felt the need to rehearse my announcement until it was automatic. The admiral, a soft-spoken gentleman, absorbed the news with complete composure, and I have since wondered if perhaps he had expected it as he was surely aware of the thin content he had been giving us.

The total lack of drama enhanced the utility of the exercise in that it taught me something about the need to avoid being bound by the constraints of our own tribal values. I would later learn that some of those values exercise particular power over members of an organization that sees itself as elite. Just how they acquired that influence, however, could be rather mysterious. The required display of activism and self-confidence could easily be traced to the exploits of the OSS in World War II, but I have no idea how the aversion to terminating worn-out agents became part of this mental world.

My willingness to defy a tribal taboo by terminating the admiral's services did not mean that my own professional practice was immune to the casual tradecraft practices that characterized the DDP of the era. When I took over the case, the station had been meeting the admiral for years in the coffee shop of Frank Lloyd Wright's famous Imperial Hotel, and I continued the practice. Whether Japanese counterintelligence didn't know about our connection, didn't care about it, or was perhaps even controlling it, it went undisturbed until the end. We would doubtless have been more circumspect had the Japanese not failed in their postwar legal system to prohibit the conduct of espionage on their territory. As it was, we remained free to practice in this nonchalant style.

My boss in Tokyo was Gordon Jorgensen, who had been a Marine intelligence officer in the Pacific Theater during WW II. I grew to respect him as a person as much as anyone I've ever known. Like many people who joined CIA after serving in one or another of the military intelligence services during the war, "Jorgy" was not particularly well versed in the agent management aspects of clandestine operations and was therefore not ideally equipped to mentor a beginner in that aspect of the trade. His honesty and selflessness shone through, however, and, in any case, I was not much engaged with the subject either.

Nevertheless, I learned a lot, mostly about how to induce people of a different culture to accept American ways of building organizations even as I adapted to the highly personal Japanese style of the work of winning friends and influencing people. By the end of my tour, I had refined the student program and quadrupled its budget and, in general, found Japan a fascinating country and my work deeply satisfying. As the end of my tour of duty approached in mid-1959, Headquarters offered me a course of fulltime language study, to be followed by a commitment to long-term service in Japan.

At the same time, Jorgy learned that he had been appointed the next chief of station (COS) in Vientiane, Laos. He was aware of the plan for my future and did not invite me to follow him, but he did mention the tenuous political situation in Laos, whose neighbors included China and North Vietnam. He thought it likely that the United States would sooner or later feel obliged to undertake a major covert program to protect both Vientiane and its noncommunist neighbors, Thailand, Cambodia, and South Vietnam. The combination of my personal regard for him and the lure of action on one of the Cold War's front lines was irresistible, and, not having committed myself to the Japan proposal, I asked him to let me follow him to Vientiane.

Jorgy said he'd be glad to have me if Headquarters approved, and the deal was soon done. There were still a few months left in my Japan tour, which I remember mainly for the fixation of Jorgy's replacement on the recruitment of Japanese journalists to plant anticommunist material in the press. We were to start making blind approaches to reporters with the desired access; "take a reporter to lunch" became the watchword for the proposed campaign.

The Japanese government was far more overtly committed to the Tokyo-Washington alliance than was the Tokyo press. The latter might share our fear of world communism and a perceived need for the alliance, but it did not necessarily accept that every US policy and program was in fact prudent and designed to serve Japanese as well as US interests. Accordingly, it was not hard to imagine one or more of our lunch guests taking issue with this US effort to exert the same influence on the press that it was assumed to have on the government. The effort would certainly become food for gossip in Tokyo's newsrooms.

We at the working level finally persuaded our new branch chief that this was a dangerous as well as almost certainly unproductive tactic, and he grudgingly allowed us to return to the standard practice of identifying and approaching individual prospects using existing contacts or other leads. This may or may not have reduced the number of new recruitments, but it probably did save us a lot of embarrassment. In any case, it was not as if we entirely lacked assets in the press.

Later, in Laos and Vietnam in the 1960s, I found a similar indifference to cover and operational security. Officers engaged in covert rural projects had nothing but the most nominal cover and made no serious effort to conceal their affiliation. This was harmless enough in a war zone in which most of our activity was essentially overt, but the casual attitude they brought to the matter nevertheless served to reinforce the dubious lessons I had learned in Tokyo. Fortunately, I retained sufficient common-sense regard for operational security that, when I later found myself in places with governments more concerned with protecting their secrets, I could still adapt my practice to fit the circumstances.

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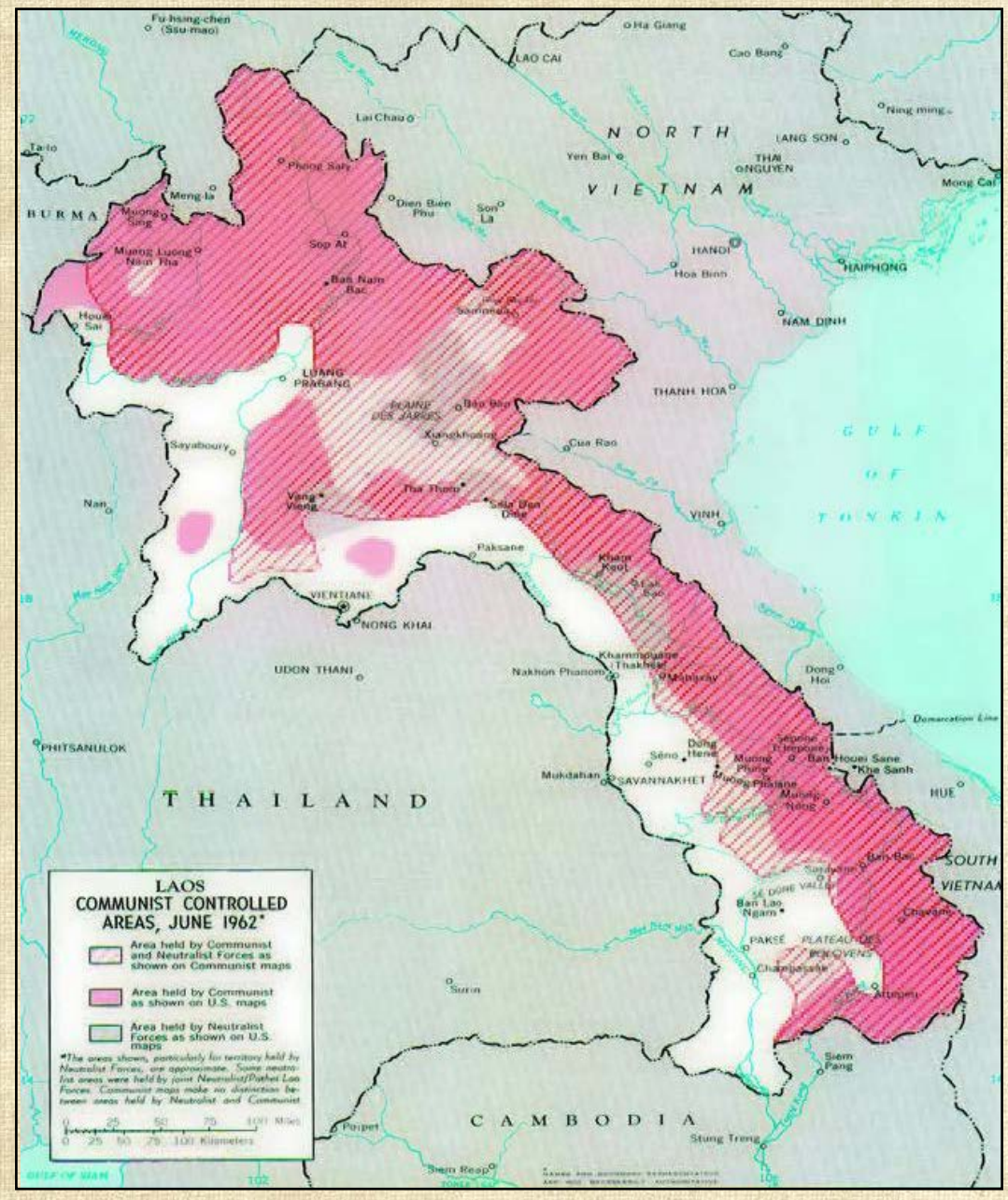
Chapter Four

Into Laos and the Paramilitary World, 1960–62

We were thus free to pursue the strategic concept behind the expansion of the Hmong resistance: Proceed to encircle the Plain of Jars with Hmong volunteers and the FAR units under Vang Pao's territorial command with a view toward preventing Hanoi from driving the Hmong out of the northeast and threatening the Mekong Valley.



This map originally appeared in my history of CIA's engagement in Laos, *Undercover Armies: CIA and Surrogate Warfare in Laos, 1961–1973*. The Center for the Study of Intelligence published the then-classified work in 2006. It was released in declassified form in 2009 along with five other works on the conflict in Southeast Asia that, as a CIA contract historian, I had researched and written over a period of almost 12 years. They can be found on cia.gov in the Freedom of Information Act Reading Room under "Vietnam Histories."

I reported back to Headquarters in September 1959 and, instead of Japanese language training, was enrolled in fulltime French in preparation for assignment to Laos. Unlike South Vietnam, where English was rapidly becoming the country's second language, a working knowledge of French was indispensable in Vientiane. Indeed, French was the language of all education in Laos, and the US presence there was not big enough to have changed the culture of Laos as it was doing in Vietnam. Learning the Lao language would certainly have been an option as field work entailed dealing with people of little or no education and otherwise required the services of interpreters. In reality, however, the absence of Laotian speakers in any other country—with the exception of Thailand—made learning a language that would probably be used during a tour of two or maybe three years and then forgotten an expensive proposition.

The director of the language school at the time placed an interesting emphasis on pronunciation. He was not a linguist but practiced a specialty that emphasized phonics—I have forgotten the exact designation. Leaving grammar and vocabulary to the instructors, he spent hours with my small class in exercises designed to teach us how to make the sounds. Some of these had no meaning at all, allowing students to devote their full attention to imitating the noises coming from the director's mouth. It seemed a little childish at first, but it did facilitate a quicker mastery of the way the language should sound. The most difficult aspect of French, for an English speaker, is pronunciation, and this approach resulted in a very well-balanced program of instruction. Other than language training, however, there was no substantive preparation for the assignment to Laos, either as a place to live or in which to work.

My flight to Laos in late November 1960 coincided with a military insurrection in which the Royal Laotian Army's 2nd Parachute Battalion, a CIA-supported unit, rebelled against the Royal Lao Government (RLG). The unit's leader, a US-trained officer named Kong Le, seemed to have cause to complain of the demands placed on him by the government. It was generally agreed that Kong Le's battalion was the most combat-effective unit in the Army, but this had led to frequent deployments to put out fires, so to speak, while its companion units relaxed in their barracks. Now, having expelled the RLG, Kong Le and his unit were in charge in Vientiane, and the US government feared he might form an alliance with the communist Pathet Lao. He had not, however, interfered with commercial air traffic, such as it was, and my travel orders remained in effect.

Vientiane was ignored by all of the major airlines, and only local carriers connected it with Thailand and Vietnam. So it was that in November 1960, after a layover of several days in Bangkok, I found myself on an Air Vietnam DC-3 of WW II vintage, sharing seating with Lao passengers and a center aisle with chickens, goats, and other small farm animals. After several stops at towns on the Mekong River, we reached Wat Tay Airport outside Vientiane.

Regular military forces (FAR—Forces Armées du Royaume (Laotien)) having fled the city and the rebels having imposed no particular security regime, Vientiane had the look and feel of a peaceful market town, remarkable only for the massive Mekong River flowing along its southern edge. The quiet atmosphere was deceptive, for US officials were even then negotiating with Gen. Phoumi Nosavan, who commanded army forces deployed in the Laotian Panhandle south of Vientiane, to launch an attack on Vientiane to expel Kong Le. Phoumi was notoriously indecisive, however, and, while the standoff lasted, there wasn't much US officials could do but wait.

That's what I was doing when the shooting started. I was playing cribbage with a station colleague in an embassy annex called the Green House when we heard artillery fire. It was distant at first, but incoming rounds got close enough to drive us into the vault used to hold classified material. This went on for almost a day, and, during a lull on the second afternoon, the two of us emerged from the vault to continue our cribbage competition. I had just leaned forward to pick up or deposit a card when a sharp crack sent us both to the floor. Nothing followed, and rather gingerly we resumed our seats. That's when I saw the hole in my seatback cushion. In it, I found an almost perfectly formed 50 cal. bullet that had apparently been just about spent when it penetrated the Green House wall and lodged in the back of my chair. I was grateful to have picked the right moment to play a card, but I soon discovered that others had been closer to disaster than I. When I visited Jorgy's office a little later, I found the interior demolished. He had just left to confer with the ambassador when a shell pierced the wall and exploded.

Outgunned by Phoumi's forces, Kong Le fled north, toward the strategically important Plain of Jars.[a] When it was clear that he was gone and that Phoumi's troops had ceased firing, I climbed into my station-issued Volkswagen for a drive through what now looked like a deserted town. Not a single human being was to be seen. I had no way of knowing whether the townsfolk were still in underground shelters or had fled when the grapevine predicted trouble. The same was true of the stray dogs that normally infested market towns in Buddhist countries. I saw not one animal at any point in my tour of the city.

a. The name Plain of Jars, or Plaine des Jarres, alludes to the prehistoric stone jars, some of them five feet high, scattered across the plain and adjacent plateau areas.

The Green House had suffered little damage, and life and work quickly returned to normal. My own portfolio remained, for the moment, as shapeless as it had been before Kong Le's coup. I was thus immediately available when in early January the embassy began pressing Jorgy to verify a growing number of press stories about Russian cargo aircraft landing at Phongsavan, which lay on the edge of the Plain of Jars, to bring supplies to the Pathet Lao or Kong Le—or both.

Jorgy commissioned me to go find them and ordered a twin-engine C-45 from Air America. With our Chinese-American pilot at the yoke, an embassy photographer—an Air Force NCO, I think—and I took off and headed northeast. We weren't more than half an hour into the flight when our pilot spotted the first Soviet supply plane. We saw at least one more on this run and spotted others on subsequent flights. Washington exploited our photos by distributing them internationally as evidence of unprovoked communist intervention in yet another innocent target country.

A Family Affair—Kind of

My early career was something of a family affair, with visits from siblings at three of my assignments, two in wartime settings in Indochina and the last in West Africa. The first two were from my twin Betty. (right) Not counted in the above number, were the get togethers Betty and I enjoyed in Japan. She was serving as a civilian nurse at the US Army hospital at Camp Zama, Japan, and would visit me on occasional weekends while I was in Tokyo. Later, while I was in Laos, still hunting Russian cargo planes not long after my arrival in Vientiane, the hospital ship *SS Hope* dropped anchor off the South Vietnamese coast near Hue. Having completed her contract service in Japan, Betty was on board as a nurse, helping treat medical and surgical cases and train local medics.

Project Hope was the brainchild of Dr. William B. Walsh, the physician who created the foundation to which the US Navy had in 1969 leased the hospital ship USS *Consolation*. The ship had been decommissioned five years before after service off Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. In 1954, she had been part of the US Navy's contribution to France's efforts to evacuate its soldiers and civilian refugees from North

Vietnam. By 1961, the ship was back in Vietnam, the first of her 11 deployments as the SS *Hope*.

Travel from Hue to Vientiane was more complicated than that from Camp Zama to Tokyo, but Betty managed one long weekend in Vientiane. We explored the city for a day or so, then, on the tip of a pilot friend of mine, drove to Wat Tay Airport in time to catch an Air America C-46 carrying aviation fuel to the royal capital at Luang Prabang. Caucasian drivers were apparently always assumed to be American or French officials and were exempt even from showing an ID card at Wat Tay. Once on the grounds, they could park anywhere except on a runway or the tarmac. This casual procedure helped get us there in time, and, predictably, we found ourselves the only passengers. The open seats allowed us to maneuver around the fuel barrels so that I could point out to Betty through tiny windows not designed for sightseeing the transition from the Mekong Valley to the first mountains of the Annamite Chain.

The C-46 was met by Campbell James, the station's resident officer in Luang Prabang and reputedly, in my memory, an heir to the Campbell Soup fortune—which led to the nicknames "Zup," and "Soop." Many years later, I would learn that he was from a wealthy family connected to the Standard Oil enterprise. Campbell was one of the two most colorful characters in the CIA contingent in Laos, then or later. His only rival was Anthony "Tony Po" Poshepny, a flamboyant paramilitary officer who worked for Bill Lair. Tony dressed his part, always in scruffy field clothes and bush hat, while Campbell created his own image, always elegant in jacket, tie, and vest, even in the hot season—and it was never cool. A British accent and a mustache completed the creation.

By the time Betty met Campbell, he had established himself as the embassy's, not just the station's, prime contact with the royal family, and he took us on a tour of the royal palace (though we did not meet the king). Campbell's affect tended to conceal a generous heart. I don't think he was aware we were coming, and I hardly knew him. Nevertheless, he provided a three-course dinner with a variety of French wines, as well as equally elegant sleeping arrangements. We would board the C-46 the next day with a feeling of having been extravagantly well treated. Betty still vividly remembers the event as a unique and exotic break from the medical routine on the SS *Hope*.

Betty would sail on the *Hope*'s second voyage, to Peru, then to Guinea in West Africa, before serving in the foundation's front office in Washington, DC, and eventually make her way to the Veteran's Administration as the coordinator of its HIV/AIDS response effort years later. Because of her Northern Virginia area location, we have been able to remain close.

Creating Laotian Defense Capabilities

After Kong Le's unit had joined the Pathet Lao—also concentrated in the north—there had been no more hesitation about bolstering the anticommunist position in Laos. With approval from Washington, Jorgy and Ambassador Winthrop Brown began to look for opportunities to create Laotian defense capabilities that would supplement the efforts of the US advisory team working with the FAR. It's worth noting that Ambassador Brown held Jorgy in the utmost respect, noting in an oral history interview conducted in early 1968 for the John F. Kennedy Library that he relied on Jorgy more than on anyone else in his staff for advice.

Jorgy knew where he wanted to start. The station had already met a FAR officer from the Hmong tribe who enjoyed a reputation as a genuine warrior, and his people were known for their hostility to the Vietnamese. Major Vang Pao was a rarity in the Royal Armed Forces, a commissioned Montagnard officer in an army of lowlanders. The king distrusted all of the mountain-dwelling tribes but especially the Hmong, who were not only combative but whose loyalty was in doubt. The Royal Laotian Government would not itself have undertaken to mobilize the Hmong, even against the hated and feared Vietnamese. Nevertheless, it accepted the station's proposal to explore a resistance program with Major Vang Pao and the implicit US commitment to help keep the tribesmen committed to the throne. By the time I arrived in Vientiane, the station, represented by paramilitary officer Bill Lair, had made contact with Vang Pao and had a presence at his command post in the village of Ban Pa Dong (Ban meaning "village"), south of the Plain of Jars.

That presence consisted of a team drawn from a Thai police unit that Lair had created in 1953, the Police Aerial Reinforcement Unit (PARU), which became his main instrument for the creation of the Hmong resistance. As a young, first-tour paramilitary officer, Bill had proposed creation of the unit to the director of the Thai National Police, Gen. Phao Sriyanond, to cope with internal subversion in the tribal highlands of Thailand and covert incursions from neighboring countries, at first China and then North Vietnam. Partly because of Lair's freedom from the US proclivity to tell foreign counterparts what to do—and, I think, Thailand's history of evading colonial domination—the atmosphere was entirely collegial. In my own dealings with my PARU counterparts, I was careful not to claim paramilitary skills that I did not have, and they, officers and noncommissioned alike, treated me as a peer.[a]

The principal order of business in early January 1961 was to prepare for an airdrop of weapons and equipment to Hmong volunteers waiting at Ban Pa Dong. With approvals from other US agencies in hand, things proceeded quickly; CIA's

a. James W "Bill" Lair as told to Thomas L. Ahern, Jr., *An Excellent Idea: Leading Surrogate Warfare in Southeast Asia, A Personal Account* (Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, May 2022), available at cia.gov.

reputation for speedy response to logistical requirements was well deserved. Personnel resources were another matter. Paramilitary staffing had been cut back after the Korean War, and the demands of the Vietnam War had not yet arisen. Lair therefore used what he had, which included me. Although most PARU spoke at least some English, he wanted to ensure clear communication between pilot and drop-master on this initial mission. None of PARU's fluent English speakers was available, so he charged me with guiding a C-47 to the drop zone and relaying to the "kickers" the pilot's command to shove the cargo out the side door.

This mission brought the second Hmong fatality of the war when the parachute attached to a crate of M-1 rifles failed to open. This altered the trajectory of the drop, and the cargo landed in free fall at the edge of the drop zone, killing a Hmong volunteer who had wandered too close. Subsequent drops, directed by PARU, proceeded without incident, and Lair ordered me to a new site, east of Ban Pa Dong and south of the road running from the Plain of Jars to the North Vietnamese border. Called Ban San Tiau, it was to serve as training site and command post for one of the new volunteer units charged with impeding the movement of communist forces into northern Laos. I flew there one afternoon in a single-engine, four-seat, short-takeoff-and-landing (STOL) aircraft, the Helio Courier, called simply the Helio.

The flight to Ban San Tiau took only about half an hour. The Air America pilot brought us onto the improvised airstrip that ran along the base of an escarpment, perhaps 200 feet high, where we were met by the PARU team and a longtime CIA adviser named Jack Shirley. They knew I was coming—I was to be Jack's assistant while absorbing the on-the-job training he was so admirably equipped to provide—but Jack's only greeting was the terse question. "You are staying, aren't you?" A PARU man had just been severely wounded in a training accident, and he and the medic would take up all of the Helio's passenger space on the return.

With the Helio on its way, Jack and I climbed the escarpment back to the command post, where a cargo parachute tied to tree branches served as his—now our—quarters. For the most part, my service at Ban San Tiau involved being a dutiful student, and I suspected that Jorgy, as COS, had leaned a little on Lair to take on a beginner. Shirley, a soft-spoken no-nonsense New Englander, nevertheless proved to be an attentive boss, taking the time, for example, to teach me the finer points of booby trap preparation. I would not have expected a veteran like Jack to have any interest in the company of a newbie like me, but on occasional R&Rs to Bangkok we would tour the bars of the seedy Patpong district, where he was already well known.

One of Jack's companionable gestures was to introduce me to one of the Savetsila sisters, who came from a prominent Bangkok family that included the wives of both Jack and Bill Lair. We dated a few times—I was, of course, only occasionally in Bangkok—and I admired her self-contained, cosmopolitan style. As a young

woman in a culture of casual sex, she had to set her own standards when on her own, which she did on our second date. I had not made a pass at her, but she said she wanted me to know that our relationship would not include sharing a bed. I replied that I liked her for her company, and she said she reciprocated the sentiment. I saw her only once or twice more, but even this casual association, sponsored as it was by a CIA colleague, contributed to a sense of integration—as had Hiroshi's wedding in Tokyo—into a foreign culture.

For someone who aspired to run a multi-national irregular warfare unit, I considered my main imperative in working with Jack to be watching the style that he brought to guiding both his PARU team and the mixed Lao and Hmong force at San Tiau. The Lao were FAR regulars, while the Hmong were either territorial militia or civilian volunteers. All three came under Vang Pao's command, although the military discipline of the Hmong volunteers depended on Vang Pao's authority as a tribal leader, while the Hmong militiamen had both tribal and military obligations.

As the source of both ordnance and funds, plus the occasional medical evacuation, Shirley was naturally positioned to influence what all of these people did, but he fully shared Lair's belief that we were there to encourage indigenous leadership, not to create a band of mercenaries. I never saw him issue an order. He phrased anything he thought needed to be done—or not done—as a suggestion or an opinion, and he almost invariably got what he wanted within the capabilities of a unit with limited training and for the most part illiterate.

Running the command post of a small, dispersed unit is something of a hurry-up-and-wait activity, and, between training cycles and crises like the accidental death of the PARU man, Jack and I had time to explore the area surrounding the landing strip. On one of these hikes, we found a beautifully clear pond. It was irresistible, and we promptly made our way into it. There was no animal or human life in sight, and we took the chance that the water was clean enough to drink. It was not just clean—at least, we suffered no untoward effects—but delicious.

We learned to navigate the boulders lining the nearly vertical slope, maintaining a jogging pace as we jumped from one to the next. The return climb took a lot longer. We limited our explorations to a couple of times a week, but they served to keep us in reasonably good condition.

Even that limited routine came to a stop one day, however. We were examining the megalithic stone jars scattered on the valley floor that contained the airstrip. Varying from waist- to head-high, these vessels were clearly ancient, but none of our troops could explain them. Only much later did I see accounts of their origin that varied from funeral urns to vessels for brewing a Southeast Asian version of mead (apparently for some really heroic drinkers).

On this day, Jack was boosting me up the side of one the larger specimens—the smaller ones were all empty, and we were curious about what the larger ones might contain—when a crushing explosion sent us flat onto the valley floor. It was followed by several more, all in the U-shaped concavity in the mountain that contained this group of jars, a confined space that multiplied the impact of the explosions. We decided that the better part of valor was to climb back up to the command post where, sometime later, word came back from Hmong scouts that our encampment was the target of North Vietnamese Army (NVA) gunners. They were firing 105mm howitzers, captured from the FAR, which they had dragged far enough south of Route 7 to deliver harassing fire. The communists did not immediately follow up with either artillery or ground attack, but we were now on notice that they knew we were there. Helio visits came to an end.

Implementing the Strategic Concept

Our PARU team had completed the weapons distribution and basic training that was all we had intended to achieve at this point, and we were ready to react when reports started coming in that NVA infantry were approaching in a forked pattern that would eventually envelop us. Jack and PARU team leaders consulted with the various Hmong and Lao principals and quickly reached the obvious conclusion: We were running a training operation, not defending a fortified position, and we would apply the guerrilla warfare maxim about living to fight another day. The troops dispersed. Jack and I, the PARU, and our Hmong guides headed southwest, away from advancing units of the North Vietnamese Army.

It was about a four-hour hike to at least short-term refuge at a neighboring Hmong village, but it felt like a month. We had to cross a seemingly endless series of ridge lines, constantly going up and down, and I discovered, as the march wore on, that the burning pain of tortured quadriceps muscles became more excruciating going down a slope than climbing up. Had it not been for the conditioning conferred by those regular hikes with Jack from the command post to the valley, I might well not have made it. Our PARU troopers had not joined Jack and me in our treks up and down the escarpment, and a couple of them finally gave up and asked for relief from the burden of their M-1 rifles. Jack and I each took one, in addition to the one each of us was already carrying, and the challenge to stay on my feet and keep moving grew accordingly.

We finally staggered—well, PARU and I staggered; for Jack, maybe, and certainly for the Hmong, it was more a walk in the park—into the village our Hmong guides had led us to and waited for morning at the chief's little house. The PARU radio operator notified Vientiane of our location, and we were told to expect helicopters in the morning. By midmorning, however, there was no sign of a helicopter, certainly

nothing within range of our tiny emergency radio. We were getting a little uneasy when we finally heard the clattering sound of H-34s. When they came into sight, they were still too far away for us to alert them to our location by either radio or ground signal. We could hear them, however, and had several tense minutes after the lead pilot radioed his partner that he had come just about as far as he was willing to risk. Jack wanted to keep transmitting in hopes that he'd be heard but had to conserve the tiny battery in our emergency radio. We were lucky. An H-34 pilot did hear us, and Jack guided him to our makeshift landing pad.

Back at the Vientiane embassy, we got the wide-eyed reception accorded to people seen as having narrowly escaped a premature end and went back to work. At this point, Vang Pao did not yet have a full-time CIA adviser at Ban Pa Dong, and Jack, with me as sidekick, was assigned to assume that duty. I would have a more substantive agenda there than at Ban San Tiau because my French would fill the gap between Jack's Thai and the Laotian of Vang Pao and his Hmong officers.

We flew to Ban Pa Dong sometime in May of 1961. It was not hard to find out if the weather was clear because it lay just south of the Plain of Jars and west of Phou Bia, at about 10,000 feet the highest mountain in Laos. The helicopter landing pad lay at about 5,000 feet, and, when I exited the H-34 and the main rotor stopped whispering, it seemed that I had entered Shangri-la. The silence was total, and a bank of brilliantly white clouds below us completely obscured the valley floor. We were then almost overwhelmed by welcoming Hmong, headed by Major Vang Pao. His round, smiling face and hospitable style put us quickly at ease, and we set up our tent near his.

In those early days, Ban Pa Dong resembled Ban San Tiau in every respect except for the presence of the Hmong leadership and the number of volunteers. With the headquarters only weeks in operation, we sheltered under used cargo parachutes as we had at San Tiau. The mountains around Pa Dong were not yet completely cleared of enemy troops, and there was sporadic harassing fire, apparently from old French 75mm howitzers seized from the FAR and probably manned by Pathet Lao gunners. Reactions to this fire varied. The Americans usually stood outside their trenches while Vang Pao pursued our conversation from the partial cover of his own.

I half-expected to hear Jack and visiting Americans make fun of this practice—the artillery rounds did not get dangerously near us—but Jack commented only that most of us long-noses would be there for just the length of a single tour of duty, usually two years, while Vang Pao would be there for the duration. Jack understood that for the Hmong leader to take unnecessary chances in a macho display would have been pointless. For us advisers, by contrast, the whole enterprise was to a degree an adventure in addition to its more serious purposes, and a touch of nearly risk-free bravado was the order of the day.

In our dealings with Vang Pao, we were aware of Hmong-Lao tensions and of the tendency of our American compatriots to treat client peoples as subordinates. We didn't know much about the Hmong, however, and we were in uncharted territory when it came to developing working relationships with our new allies. Two self-imposed imperatives were to listen more than talk and to ask questions rather than issue instructions. PARU was a big help in this, thanks especially to the soft-spoken team chief, Captain Makorn, who almost immediately won Vang Pao's trust and soon became his de facto executive officer.

In the weeks I spent at Ban Pa Dong, we were spared any ground attack; the only enemy reaction was the occasional flurry of artillery fire. It was clear that none of our adversaries—neither the North Vietnamese nor the Pathet Lao nor Kong Le's insurgents—had artillery forward observers who could spot our locations because these scattered incoming rounds did no harm. We were thus free to pursue the strategic concept behind the expansion of the Hmong resistance: Proceed to encircle the Plain of Jars with Hmong volunteers and the FAR units under Vang Pao's territorial command with a view toward preventing Hanoi from driving the Hmong out of the northeast and threatening the Mekong Valley.

At this same time, the Agency began exploring means of tracking and perhaps impeding Hanoi's use of the so-called Ho Chi Minh Trail, the network of trails that ran south through Laos from above the Demarcation Line separating the two Vietnams. This new supply route was provoking increasing concern as a conduit for logistic support of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces in South Vietnam. US and RLG concerns about preserving the fiction of Laotian neutrality ruled out the deployment of either US or South Vietnamese forces in Laos. The answer, similar to the one adopted in Hmong country, was to deploy station-directed irregulars into the eastern Panhandle to collect intelligence and, it was hoped, impede the traffic headed for South Vietnam.

Down to Thakhek

I now became a beneficiary of CIA's shortage of experienced paramilitary officers. In June or July of 1961, I was ordered back to Vientiane. Jorgy had presumably heard from Bill Lair and Jack Shirley that I was ready for a project of my own. He wanted me to go down to Thakhek, capital of the northernmost province in the panhandle, and see what I could do there. The station had one contact, Colonel Sounthone, who commanded *Groupe Mobile 14*, a regimental-size formation charged with securing the western portion of Khammouane Province. A station officer and friend named Stuart Methven knew Sounthone (not even Campbell James knew as many people as the gregarious Stu) and took me in a Helio down to Thakhek to introduce us. Stu outlined what we had in mind: Insert a government presence in

the eastern part of the province to contest the Pathet Lao presence there and obtain intelligence on North Vietnamese activity along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Sounthone would provide personnel; we would take care of pay, radio communications, training, and tactical direction. With scarcely any discussion, Sounthone agreed, and Stu and I spent most of the rest of the session explaining the qualities we hoped for in the unit leaders he was to assign us.

The meeting was a lesson for me in the astonishing passivity that the Lao brought to the conduct of nominally joint activity. This syndrome was not absent in Hmong country, but traditional ethnic tensions between Hmong and Lao made it easy for the RLG to give the Americans de facto command without loss of face. I expected Sounthone at least to assign an officer to work with and keep an eye on me, but he kept our subsequent dealings between the two of us. Even later, when he had left Thakhek and I was conducting my liaison with the local territorial commander, I remained in full control of a body of irregulars that eventually numbered almost 1,000 men and was spread over parts of two provinces.

We operated very much on a shoestring in the beginning, and I started out with no staff, no quarters, and no transportation. Fortunately for the prospects of getting a running start, a US Special Forces "A" team was there to conduct training for Sounthone's GM-14, and it found a room for me in the colonial bungalow that served as Thakhek's hotel. More important, the team was taken with my project—it was the kind of thing, after all, for which the US Special Forces had been created barely a decade before—and the team chief, Capt. Sid Hinds, readily agreed to train my people in a program separate from the one with GM 14.

This odd arrangement—Special Forces supporting irregulars run by CIA—stemmed from our near-monopoly of personal relationships with tribal chiefs and FAR commanders. These were developed during routine local liaison activity and were always a priority. CIA's advantage stemmed at least in part from the longer tours of duty its people served, which provided more time to develop relationships of trust. The formula had evolved in South Vietnam during the Diem regime, and we were now applying it in Hmong country and in Methven's exploitation of his contact with Sounthone.

The merit of this arrangement was its flexibility. Its two weaknesses, one of them affecting me and the other my Special Forces collaborators, took some time to emerge. First was the risk it posed for junior Special Forces officers. Lt. Col. John Little, who commanded the SF detachment in Laos, visited Thakhek after my arrival, and wanted to see Colonel Sounthone. Sid asked me to serve as interpreter, and I agreed. It was a long and rather diffuse session, and at one point I could see that Sounthone was fading. It was clear that Little no longer had his full attention, and, at

a pause in the discussion, I suggested our host might be fatigued. Little looked taken aback but ended the meeting shortly thereafter.

I was scheduled to go to Vientiane and proposed flying back with Little. He agreed–I think it was an Air America plane and therefore a CIA property—and we took off. Almost certainly emboldened by my youthful appearance and presumed junior rank, he launched into a complaint about what he saw as my interruption of the meeting and concluded with a threat to expel me from any future meeting that featured such *lèse majesté* on my part. I anticipated no further meetings with him, with or without damage to his self-regard, but I did think he should know what had prompted my move. So, I described the groggy behavior that had caught my eye. Then, not wanting to give the impression that I was apologizing, I finished by telling the colonel he was never going to throw me out of anywhere.

Apparently unaccustomed to pushback from perceived inferiors, Little finished the flight without another word. He remained hostile to my program, however, and, although unable to terminate SF participation, he seriously damaged, if not destroyed, Sid Hinds' career.

"Good luck with that!"

Considering that I started in Thakhek with nothing but the goodwill of Colonel Sounthone and Sid Hinds, it took some luck to get underway as quickly as I did. First, I met the owner of a local bistro, a French-Lao *mètisse* whose father had once governed the province and who was living in the residence on the Mekong that he'd inherited. For what seemed a very reasonable price, I could rent both the house—he and the family would move into the bistro's upper floor—and their rather decrepit Citroen Deux Chevaux ("two horsepower") sedan.

More luck: Two excellent Thai interpreters who had worked for Special Forces "A" teams in the panhandle were suddenly available—I think because their teams were being withdrawn without replacements. As interpreters for training teams, they had learned the required military skills, perhaps not at the expert Special Forces level, but that lack was made up by their ability to inculcate basic skills directly with no time lost in translation. Amroong, known to English speakers as Mr. Ambrose, was a middle-aged former schoolteacher. Small and fragile in appearance, he had a strong personality and soon became the de facto head of my small team, which had another, but much younger civilian, Jimmy, and two PARU troopers, one of them our radioman.

The house was a modest edifice for a governor's residence, but my landlord made a point of showing me the flush toilet. It hadn't been used in years, he said, but he

promised to put it back into service. This proved impossible, and I, a little uncomfortable at being treated like a tourist, assured him that I was already competent with the hole in the ground that everyone else found natural.

Essential as it was to meet staffing and logistic needs, the basic imperative was adequate leadership for the Lao teams. They would be operating in territory claimed by the Pathet Lao, and my own access to the teams would be limited, perhaps impossible. I was aware of the Laotian reputation for aversion to combat; several of my Vientiane colleagues had sent me off with sardonic wishes of "good luck with that" when I left for Thakhek. So, I knew we would have to count ourselves lucky if we could find villagers who were not too risk-averse to join up.

By this forgiving standard, Colonel Sounthone came through very well. He sent me three men, two *nai ban* (village chiefs) and a senior FAR noncommissioned officer. All three were natives of the proposed operational area in eastern Khammouane Province, and the civilians were recent refugees from Pathet Lao occupation of their respective villages. They assured me, through Mr. Ambrose, of their desire to do what they could to undermine the communist presence in the area, partly by harassing the Pathet Lao and partly by obtaining intelligence on both Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese activity. With this understanding, we got down to business. I had learned in Vientiane how long it takes to train radio operators, so I began by getting a commitment to find literate men among their volunteers who could start training at once.

It was soon evident that the best of the three team leaders—so called because Amroong and I decided to emphasize the local origins and missions of these units by using civilian terminology—was the *nai ban* from the Na Kay Plateau. He was short, even by Laotian standards, and I never saw him without his Australian bush hat. At first sight, this suggested a flamboyant personality, but he had a dignified, matter-of-fact style that first emerged clearly through Amroong's interpreting and, over the course of time, enabled me to understand a good deal of what he said during our personal meetings. In those sessions, despite the need for an interpreter (he had no French), I had an odd sense that we faced no cultural barrier, that we were always on the same page.

The other two, a middle-aged civilian and the NCO, were less impressive, but they did their jobs and led their men in enemy-contested country for the remaining year-and-a-half of my tour of duty. Amroong and Jimmy and my two PARU troopers—I say "my" because no PARU officer joined me in Thakhek, so I was the de facto chief of that outpost—trained about 300 volunteers whom we dispatched in late summer 1961. They left in Laotian Army trucks I'd borrowed from the local FAR command, cheering with all the enthusiasm of American soldiers celebrating graduation from training, and headed for the easternmost government outpost on Route 12, the unpaved road that ran east to the Vietnamese border. From there they

would proceed on foot—Team One going northeast to the Nakay Plateau, Team Three beyond that toward Napé, and Team Two southeast toward the Mahaxay area.

The prospect of seeing their families was one incentive for all my volunteers to return to enemy-controlled territory. It was never clear just why they had not brought their wives and children to Thakhek. Travel controls seemed quite porous, as demonstrated when the team leaders went in to exfiltrate their volunteers. This practice was very different from that in Hmong country, where volunteers brought their families with them to areas under Vang Pao's control. I think one difference was that, in the panhandle area, security was much more fluid, especially between the contending ethnic Lao factions. With less pressure on their families than in areas under Pathet Lao influence, my team leaders could leave their families in their home villages as they infiltrated eastward toward the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Their situation thus resembled that in South Vietnam, where the Viet Cong and the Saigon government contested nominally pacified villages until the advent of forced resettlement by Saigon in the late 1960s.

It took a week or so to establish radio contact, but all three teams did come up on the air, and regular reporting got under way. The intelligence, mostly on the Pathet Lao but also on North Vietnamese transiting the area, was nothing earth-shaking, but, given the previous near-total absence of information on this section of the panhandle, it was well-received in both Vientiane and Washington.

It took just a few weeks for the limitations of communication by hand-enciphered messages to become clear. We were using WW II-era equipment, the RS-1 radio and GN-58 generator, that was reliable but only as fast as our neophyte operators. I needed to talk to the team chiefs about enemy dispositions, about their reception in the villages, and about intelligence and military targets, and I wanted to do this without dragging them back all the way to Thakhek. I checked with Vientiane and was told that the H-34 helicopters of the US military's Project MILLPOND were still in-country, so I arranged for one to pick up Amroong and me and take us to a rendezvous northwest of the Nakay Plateau. The H-34 pilots were less hesitant than they had been at first to fly into territory of uncertain ownership, and we found the usual signals and landed without incident.

At this point, already after noon, the pilot looked at the surrounding limestone peaks—known as karst—and a cloud buildup north of our landing pad and gave me only an hour to complete my business. If I wasn't back by then, he would have to return to base without me. Amroong and I consulted with our two team leaders and learned that we were near the mouth of the Kong Lo Tunnel[a], a five-mile boat trip

a. Now known as the Kong Lor Cave.

on the Nam Hinboun river, through a karst mountain to the Mekong Valley. They assured us they could get us a boat, and we went ahead with my agenda.

The two team leaders, the NCO and the Nakay *nai ban,* seemed to be meeting expectations. The NCO was a little given to bombast but was apparently doing his best. The *nai ban* was more analytical and more forward thinking. Both said the villagers in their respective areas were receptive to a government presence, the local Pathet Lao were not a serious threat, and the NVA did not—at least not yet—have forces stationed there. I flew to Vientiane to report to Jorgy and Bill. Fully aware of the Lao reputation for aversion to combat, they were pleased with the teams' success in establishing themselves in even a nominally contested area. Ambassador Brown reacted in the same way when Jorgy briefed him on successful infiltrations into the three target areas.

In the context of communications, Jorgy noted our practice in Hmong country of clearing an airstrip wherever Vang Pao had enough volunteers to exploit and protect it. He thought I should do the same in order to be in direct touch with my team leaders. I pointed out the more indeterminate ownership of territory in government hands and told him I needed to consult the northern team leaders. Although I was not very optimistic about their response, I did consult them and found them positively enthusiastic. They set out to find a site, finally picking a level stretch in the uninhabited foothills between the Nakay Plateau and the Vietnamese border. Team 2, farther south in territory with a larger communist presence, was not a candidate.

It was a somewhat chancy project. For one thing, it did not enjoy the protection of high elevation. Hmong strips usually lay at 4,000 to 4,500 feet above sea level; the Nakay strip was at only about 1,600. The North Vietnamese could have destroyed the site at will, but they didn't. Their resources were, of course, no more unlimited than ours, and we did not yet pose any serious threat to the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The outcome was that the site remained operational until the Geneva Agreements came into effect in July 1962, and, for most of my tour, I could consult fairly regularly with the two northern team leaders. Whether or not by coincidence, the northern teams did, over time, perform better than their southern counterpart.

We continued to rely on airdrops to the southern team and to patrols that got too far from their regular bivouac to be resupplied on the ground. Adopted to improve efficiency, this practice had the added benefit of confirming that the receiving team was where it claimed to be. A smoke grenade or signal fire and a block letter of white cloth would mark the drop site, and there was just one pass over it before the drop to minimize the chances of compromising its location.

A new pilot, Bob Hamlin, worked for contractor Bird and Sons, which had a potpourri of military and civilian aircraft. One of them was a US Navy P2V bomber/

patrol aircraft introduced after WW II. Needless to say, it had no STOL capabilities, and we used it only for major rice and ordnance drops.

Hamlin developed a special fondness for conducting our drop missions with an aircraft that, in these early days, exemplified the impromptu quality of so much of the Laos operation. It was a twin-engine, four-seat Beechcraft Baron designed for executive travel. It moved twice as fast as the Helio but needed an airstrip probably four times as long. As landing at the Nakay strip was out of the question, we used the Baron for local airdrops of rice, munitions, and communications and medical supplies. This required removing the back seats to accommodate the cargo, which I would then lie on until Bob gave the signal for me push it out the cargo door with my feet.

On our first drop, we spotted the signals on the first pass, eliminating the need to linger at the drop site, and I pushed the cargo out on Bob's sign. I couldn't see where it landed, but I heard his triumphant cry. He had already started a turn and was far enough out to see that one of the bags of rice had landed on and extinguished the smoke signal. He drew the conclusion that this was the prescribed result, always to be expected, and I could never persuade him to stop berating himself when, after subsequent drops, the signal went untouched.

The security situation in eastern Khammouane Province remained fluid throughout my time in Thakhek. Our flights to the Nakay airstrip usually passed without incident, but on one occasion—this time in a Helio—the pilot was just crossing Route 8 when we saw tracers flashing up past the right wingtip. He dived down and to the left in an evasive maneuver, and we saw no more tracers. The incident did, however, remind us to maintain a higher altitude and use more varied routes on those runs to Nakay.

Bob and I still managed to do a little experimenting with the flight characteristics of our various aircraft. Bird and Sons acquired a new STOL aircraft, the twin-engine Dornier DO-28, which boasted similar performance but offered more carrying capacity than the Helio. On one early morning mission, we dropped our cargo and started the circling climb away from the drop site. The peaks of the Annamite Chain obscured the sun until, still in shadow, we were completing a turn to the east when we found ourselves almost blinded by the glare of the sun reflected off the South China Sea. We were looking all the way over the waist of North Vietnam, but we decided not to court trouble by lingering so close to the border.

Having cleared contested territory, Bob displayed for me his ability to do a barrel roll in a way that kept gravitational pull completely neutral. At his direction, I held a microphone by a foot or so of its cord, and watched it stay pointed at the floor as he took the plane through its 360-degree roll. During all this time in the air, Bob

and Air America's pilots taught me the rudiments of flying, and later, while back in Wisconsin on leave, I took advantage of their lessons to earn a pilot's license.

From the start, one of the station's objectives in Hmong country had been to increase tribal identification with the Royal Laotian Government. Presumably because of the ethnic uniformity that prevailed in Khammouane Province, no one had thought to set this as a goal for my outpost, but it soon occurred to me that my de facto status as commander of the irregulars—even while in training in Thakhek, they had no formal contact with the FAR command—risked weakening their national loyalty and converting them into something more like the mercenaries we did not want them to be.

Hoping to avoid the appearance of any such intent, I undertook to fly the two most senior officials in Thakhek to the Nakay airstrip for a meeting with the units there. One of them, the provincial governor, required a little persuasion. On this front, I was helped by the more enthusiastic response of Bouahom Souvandy, a member of the national parliament and a thoughtful representative of the modest number of young, progressive Lao politicians. Without Bouahom's insistence, the governor might well have declined, but he finally joined us in the Dornier for the flight to Nakay. They both gave what sounded like standard political stemwinders to a respectably large crowd, but I had no way of knowing what their audience thought about them. I could be sure of only one thing: A civilian government visit to contested territory, however fleeting, was unique for Khammouane Province and probably unknown elsewhere in Laos except for Hmong country. Nevertheless, I think it's reasonable to think that whatever effect it had was probably salutary.

As was the case with my other assignments abroad, my preparation for Laos involved no instruction in intercultural communication. This omission brought me some embarrassment on the day that Bouahom drove me up the road toward Vientiane. We stopped at the bridge over the Nam Hin Boun, the river I'd traversed after the initial meeting with the Na Kay *nai ban*, and walked upstream to a swimming hole that Bouahom had known since childhood. Getting ready to jump in, I had started to lower my briefs when his urgent shout stopped me. I learned that Lao men never disrobe in front of each other and was glad to learn it from a forgiving friend.

My sojourn in Thakhek brought me French as well as Lao social contacts. Not far from the Nam Hin Boun bridge, a French firm was still operating a small tin mine. Probably at the instigation of Emile, my landlord in Thakhek, one of its engineers invited me up to the staff's celebration of Christmas 1961. The festivities featured no religious content, and the little colony seemed entirely at ease in an entirely secular environment. Likewise, although the mine had no security facilities of any kind, my hosts seemed as unconcerned about their security as were the teachers at the lycée in Thakhek. I never found out whether the mine was paying the Pathet

Lao to leave it alone or whether communist influence had simply not penetrated that close to the Mekong.

The Post-Second Geneva Agreement and withdrawal to Thailand in 1962

As already mentioned, station management and I had never expected our volunteers to fight for territorial control. They could compete with the Pathet Lao but would never be a match for the North Vietnamese military, the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN). Having no formal disciplinary authority over my men, I was always alert to indications of the degree of their commitment to the mission. Their consistent observance of contact plans for air drops and our visits to Nakay were encouraging signs, but their willingness to engage in firefights remained to be determined.

The men had been deployed for several months when a member of Team 2, the southern element, limped into our Thakhek command post. He had been shot through the abdomen in a contact with the Pathet Lao, but he had escaped capture and, after recovering enough to walk, had made his way back to us. This isolated incident suggested that our southern element, at least, was willing to make contact with the enemy. It also demonstrated that there was enough unit cohesion to motivate this man to report back to our command post rather than simply take refuge with his family and sit out the rest of the war.

Whether my teams could have developed into light infantry along the Hmong pattern, I never found out. Recognizing the superiority of the North Vietnamese infantry and deeply averse to inserting US forces into Laos, Washington had begun to negotiate the withdrawal of all foreign military personnel in 1961. When talks in Geneva concluded in July 1962, both sides had agreed to withdraw. Although CIA staffing in Laos was entirely civilian and technically not required to leave, Washington, especially the State Department, judged that keeping us in place would look gratuitously provocative. Nevertheless, maintaining Vang Pao's confidence was deemed too important to risk withdrawing our entire case officer contingent from Long Tieng, so two officers stayed with him. The rest of us took up residence in Thailand.

My destination was Nakhon Phanom, across the Mekong from Thakhek. The well-connected Mr. Ambrose crossed the river, got Thai police approval for the move, and rented a house. The Thai asked us to cross the river at night to conceal our point of origin, but, after that, my presence became entirely overt. Visits by air to team leaders in Laos came to an end, however, and we became entirely dependent for communication on the tediously slow RS-1.

My parachute training at Camp Narasuan allowed me to meet the paratrooper ethos that preferred leadership of a jump-qualified officer.

I had indulged the hope that restaurants in Nakhon Phanom would offer cuisine that was, if not tastier, less likely to produce the abdominal distress that had been a constant nuisance in Thakhek. My landlord, although a true gentleman and a considerate landlord, must have been more or less untutored in kitchen sanitation. Things were not much different in NKP, as we called Nakhon Phanom, and our constricted communications with our troops made the job less rewarding. I no longer had an aircraft on call, and our airdrops now originated at Bill Lair's command post in Nong Khai. My team leaders took our reduced contact in stride, however, and, in the remaining weeks of my tour of duty, made perceptible progress in improving their intelligence on the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

The less hands-on agenda at NKP enabled me to respond to longstanding urging from Lair to go to Camp Narasuan for parachute jump training. My PARU partners liked me, he had said, but true to the paratrooper ethos were uncomfortable accepting the authority of someone who lacked a jump school certificate. At PARU Headquarters, I found Jack Shirley, who like me and the other case officers, had been withdrawn from Laos, and he gave me some individual instruction. As had been the practice since the inception of PARU, we had the use of an Air America C-47 for one week of the month, and Jack made the most of it, scheduling two jumps a day for what must have been nearly a hundred Hmong trainees—and me.

My only impediment as a parachute trainee was a common one, the impulse to straighten my legs and reach for the ground before landing. This posed a risk of injury, especially to the knees, but the best efforts of Jack and the Thai instructors failed to break me of the habit. I was spared injury, however, probably because most of our twelve jumps, all on the beach at Hua Hin, were made on dry sand.

My only brush with trouble came during one of the later jumps, when I landed in a massive thorn bush. Movement in any direction was excruciating, and I was paralyzed until a PARU sergeant came running up to check for damage. Finding none, except to my self-regard, he and the other PARU on the scene decided my plight was the funniest thing they'd ever seen, and I got the feeling that their enjoyment was actually slowing the process of getting me out of my predicament.

Otherwise, my reaction to jump school was like everybody else's. The 33-foot tower used to simulate exit from an aircraft was rather intimidating, I suppose, because it gave one the feeling of falling off a three-story building. Leaving the C-47 at a 700-foot altitude, by contrast, had an almost unreal quality, and the effect was strangely exhilarating, at least after the snap of the opening parachute promised a safely gradual descent.

All such programs end with a graduation ceremony, and all the new parachutists were introduced by name, with a round of applause for every graduate. The PARU camp commander saved me for last, and I was stunned by the roar that greeted my name. I wouldn't have thought so small an audience could make so much noise or even that the Hmong contingent knew whom I represented. It was clear that they did know, however, and that they were applauding, not me as an individual, completely unknown to them, but as the local presence of the great power that was enabling them to resist North Vietnamese occupation of their tribal lands. For that reason, it was a very touching moment. They were the ones, after all, suffering the hardships and casualties of war, while my Agency colleagues and I were merely furnishing the means.

My replacement, Richard Holm, was one of a contingent of new JOT graduates Lair had just brought in to accommodate the growth of the Hmong and the Lao projects. Bill's request for these young men was partly a bow to necessity, because there were so few experienced paramilitary case officers, but also a statement of preference because he had gotten such mixed results from the old-timers originally sent him. He had come to value the flexibility of the youngsters in dealing with PARU and local leaders, while the PARU troopers supplied the military skills they lacked. Dick soon confirmed the wisdom of Bill's perspective, serving with distinction at the Nakhon Phanom command post. He later had cause to demonstrate courage as well as competence when a Helio carrying him and his Cuban pilot crashed in the jungle in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The plane caught fire, and Dick suffered burns that required years of reconstructive surgery. [a]

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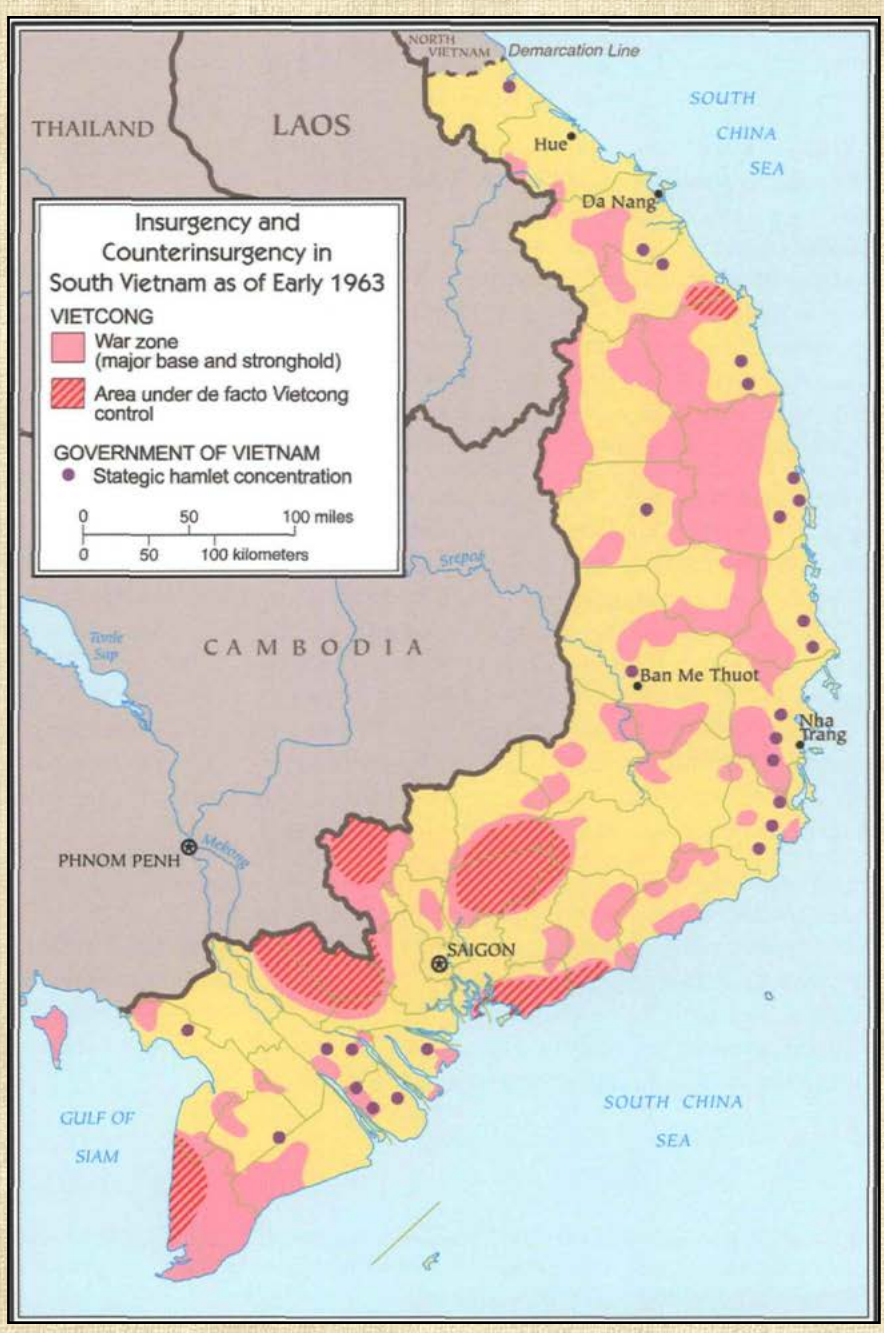
a. Dick told his story in his 2011 memoir, *The Craft We Chose: My Life in the CIA* (D Street Books, 2011). The story of his crash landing and injuries in aircraft is told in *Studies in Intelligence*, Winter 199–2000, "A Close Call in Africa" in https://www.cia.gov/static/aa62741d6cf777a6abd61cd20fdc2820/Close-Call-in-Africa.pdf. He recounted his experience in Laos in *Studies in Intelligence* 47, No. 1 (2003), "Recollections of a Case Officer in Laos, 1962–1964, No Drums, No Bugles" at https://www.cia.gov/static/9260ea9fb9da7824977cf6a10ee7f8b9/Recollections-Case-Officer-Laos.pdf

Chapter Five

"Saving" South Vietnam, 1963–65

I had gone to Vientiane at a time of growing demand for personnel, and my tour there was ending when similar, but even larger, needs were developing in South Vietnam. The Viet Cong insurgency was beginning to threaten the Government of Vietnam (GVN), and CIA officers with relevant experience were in short supply.



Areas of communist control and allied counterinsurgent activity as of early 1963. CIA and US government definitions of GVN and Viet Cong control changed over time, and maps like this one only approximate the state of the competition in the countryside. The map appeared in the last of my book-length studies on CIA engagement in Vietnam, *CIA and Rural Pacification in South Vietnam.* It was published in 2001. The first two appeared in 1998 and 2000, respectively. All have been declassified for the most part and are available in cia.gov Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room under "Vietnam Histories."

Hoping To Be a Station Chief, but Vietnam Called

Although I had served in Laos at my own request and had found the work there exciting and deeply satisfying—no subsequent tour equaled it—an assignment doing clandestine intelligence collection now seemed more likely to serve my long-term preferences and, to be honest, my promotion prospects. I asked for a slot in a small station, but I was not surprised when, without discussion, Headquarters told me my next destination would be Vietnam, soon to become the largest CIA station in the world. I had gone to Vientiane at a time of growing demand for personnel, and my tour there was ending when similar, but even larger, needs were developing in South Vietnam. The Viet Cong (VC) insurgency was beginning to threaten the Government of Vietnam (GVN), and CIA officers with relevant experience were in short supply.

Home leave and a TDY at Headquarters filled my time from late 1962 to early spring 1963. I had no reason to stay longer. The rural security programs to which I was being assigned were for the most part new, and no relevant training or even briefing material yet existed. Operational management and planning were delegated to the station, and Headquarters did little but pay the bills, so there was not much for a case officer to learn in Washington. I did discover that my new assignment would be in Da Nang, not Saigon, and I arrived in Central Vietnam in March 1963.

My orders had originally specified Saigon as my destination, but a well-meaning friend who was then in Da Nang arranged to have them changed. He did not consult me, doubtless on the premise that, knowing nothing about Vietnam, I would have no preference. I probably wouldn't have, but the last-minute change of destination required re-routing my household effects. This task rested in the domain of the station's support element, which I discovered was not overzealous in the protection of its clients' property. It did not look for space in the hold of a freighter but took the easy way out, sending the stuff as deck cargo on a coastal carrier. The resulting saltwater damage was substantial, and my collection of vinyl records was destroyed.

It now seems ridiculous to have been so passive, but at the time it seemed natural, almost imperative, to button my lip rather than seek reimbursement. As I recall 60 years later, the CIA—or at least the Far East Division of the Directorate of Plans—of the period projected such a kind of you're-so-lucky-to-be-part-of-this-splendid-outfit self-image that complaining seemed almost disloyal. I don't know when the organization started paying more attention to the personal equities of its

employees, but it took considerable time, especially in places that permitted our support staff to claim the hazards of war as the reason for what looked like nonfeasance to those affected.

The base at Da Nang occupied a white concrete building, probably once a warehouse, on the quay at the city's harbor. One of its two projects involved the infiltration of agents by boat to intelligence targets in North Vietnam. Occasionally, those involved in one of these missions would launch a rocket attack for harassment purposes, but information was the usual objective. Collection was also the goal of the other activity, ground patrols aimed at monitoring North Vietnamese Army (NVA) infiltration of the South.

The maritime project employed Norwegian mercenaries as boat crews, while US Special Forces "A" teams conducted the ground patrols, which concentrated on the border with Laos. Like other CIA activities on South Vietnamese territory, the boat missions were conducted in liaison with Vietnamese Special Forces, an outfit whose commander, Col. Le Quang Tung, was less a military or even an intelligence professional than a servant of President Ngo Dinh Diem and his younger brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu.[a]

Da Nang Base's projects were compartmented from each other, and I knew nothing at the time of whatever successes the maritime side might be having. Border surveillance was another matter. When I arrived, the base and its Special Forces teams were already continuously frustrated by the absence of either enemy sightings or even evidence that communist forces had used the trails being searched. Management was more sensitive about this than I realized; it seemed that negative reporting qualified as a sign of failure rather than fulfillment of an intelligence requirement.

The issue became moot when the government of Ngo Dinh Diem was overthrown by a cabal of generals on December 1, 1963. The new junta promptly suspended the activities the Saigon Station had been running in coordination with Diem's Special Forces, and those of us who had been doing border surveillance were ordered down to Saigon. (The maritime contingent had to maintain the docking facility and the boats.)

We didn't have to hurry, because Saigon too was essentially paralyzed in the aftermath of the coup. It was almost instantly clear that the generals had devoted little thought to what they would do once Diem was gone. Chief of Station Peer de Silva was well aware of Saigon's deteriorating position in the countryside and wanted to help the new regime replace Diem's rural security programs and reverse communist

a. See Thomas L. Ahern, Jr., *The Way We Do Things: Black Entry Operations Into North Vietnam, 1961–1964,* (Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2005) *https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/5076e89c993247d4d82b62ec*

gains. The generals were so busy competing for pride of place, however, that they had no time for operational planning with their US patrons.

The government headed by Gen. Duong Van Minh never did develop a strategy to improve security in the countryside—"rural pacification" as it came to be called—and, when its incapacity became clear to De Silva, he adopted a practice launched by an earlier COS, William Colby: send people into the field in search of like-minded, activist contacts at the province level and ignore—or mollify, as necessary—the central government. It was a perfectly rational reaction to the situation facing him, and it was encouraged by FE Division's proclivity to endorse self-generated action by people willing to shape their own job descriptions.

The paradigm of this sort of personality was Stuart Methven, whom I'd known in Vientiane and Tokyo. Stu had an enormous gift for creating relationships of trust with foreign contacts and exploiting them for operational purposes. His style was ideal for the Indochina of the 1950s and 1960s as the covert action programs the station intended to launch in South Vietnam needed indigenous leaders with genuine authority who were willing also to accept both US guidance on the conduct of these activities and our control over material and financial support.

After weeks of hesitation, the new military government approved the station's proposal. Deputy Chief of Station (DCOS) Gordon Jorgensen, transferred earlier from Vientiane, assigned me to the branch charged with developing the new programs of rural pacification. In the spring of 1964, I began to survey the Mekong Delta provinces nearest Saigon. The first, and ultimately by far the most significant, was Kien Hoa, led by Lt. Col. Tran Ngoc Chau. The station colleague who introduced us was, again, Stu Methven.

Since 1941, Kien Hoa had been the cradle of the Viet Minh movement in the Mekong Delta, and it had survived French and GVN counterinsurgency efforts to remain the major communist center of action in the upper Delta. Its capital, Ben Tre, was not yet a VC target, and most of the district capitals were still accessible by road, at least during the day. Lieutenant Colonel Chau had recently returned to Kien Hoa from Da Nang, where Diem had sent him to put down Buddhist unrest. He discovered that the progress he had made had evaporated and that he was starting again from scratch.

That Chau did indeed have some way to go was brought home to me a little later when I was a passenger in the pickup truck assigned to John O'Donnell of the US Official Mission (USOM) of USAID serving as the provincial economic aid adviser. He was driving us from one district town to another on a supposedly secure road when a crack of rifle fire from a hedgerow told us we were in VC territory after all. The fire continued, and I told John that, with him at the wheel and between me and

the ambush, I would just hunker down in my seat in case I was needed. We—and the truck—escaped untouched, and we realized that, as ambushes go, what we had experienced was a very modest event, although it had been enough to elevate our adrenaline a bit.

On one of my first visits to Ben Tre—I remained based in Saigon, with day trips to the provinces—Chau told me that the VC had just assassinated his best district chief, and he was about to go to the burial. Would I like to go along? I thought I sensed something hesitant in the request but, not wanting to offend him, temporized until it seemed that he did, in fact, want me to go. I then assured him it would be an honor. I had never been to a Buddhist ceremony, and this was the first time I joined in the ritual of throwing a handful of earth into the open grave. Fifty years later I would be asked to identify a most "memorable" moment in my career, this graveside service quickly came to mind. It was a very poignant experience and a demonstration that we were engaged in serious, life-and-death conflict. The service was short, and afterward we returned to Chau's French colonial mansion and took up our agenda. I didn't know at the time that the incident represented half of a calculated VC tactic of assassinating GVN officials, targeting the best to deprive Saigon of their service and the worst to ingratiate the communist movement with peasants who were being abused.

Despite being a former Viet Minh and a Buddhist in a government that favored Catholics, Chau had somehow won the trust of President Ngo Dinh Diem. He was already renowned in both the GVN and US Mission for his creative approach to counterinsurgency strategy. I knew from the start that my role would primarily be to provide material support, monitor its use, and work up a plan for applying Chau's techniques in other provinces—presumably with modifications to accommodate local conditions and personalities.

When I joined him, Chau had already established one of the three programs the GVN eventually accepted from the station as its rural pacification strategy. In the Census-Grievance Program, province officials such as schoolteachers would visit acceptably secure villages and conduct a census during which they would inquire about conditions including instances of governmental non-, mis-, or malfeasance. A worthy effort in its own right, the program also supported the main objective of eliciting information on the Viet Cong in a setting that provided source anonymity. The second program was designed to establish a government presence in areas contested, but not occupied, by the VC. It was called Advance Political Action (APA) and differed from the GVN's civilian information service by arming its members against VC agents; it later joined the national program in an expanded form with more firepower and a new name, People's Action Teams (PAT).

The third program, initially called Counter-Terror Teams, grew out of my association with Australian Army officers detailed to the Border Surveillance Program. Mostly veterans of the British counterinsurgency campaign in Malaya, they bemoaned what they thought was a dangerous lack of US attention to the vulnerability of Vietnamese villagers to coercion by VC terrorist tactics. "Do unto them" was their mantra, and it seemed to me, at a time of a collapsing government position in the countryside, that it would in fact challenge the VC's access to the peasantry. I don't recall whether it was Chau or DCOS Jorgensen with whom I first raised the project—I called it the Counter-Terror program—but both promptly agreed. I then proposed it to Headquarters, which also immediately approved it. Launched in Kien Hoa Province, the program eventually took root in almost every other province. It provided intelligence, mostly from prisoners, and disrupted province- and district-level VC organizations.

The use, even if only occasional, of lethal force against individual targets was legally uncertain at best, perhaps even when only a reaction to the enemy's prior resort to the same kind of violence. I say "uncertain" by way of acknowledging that I did not then nor have I since researched relevant international law. At the time, station management was more concerned with the survival of South Vietnam than with legal specifics. Accordingly, we were content to leave such questions to the judgment of our superiors at Headquarters, and they raised no concerns.

On the other hand, we were not indifferent to the possibility of our resources being diverted to criminal or other improper activity. Beginning with the counter-terror teams in Kien Hoa, we retained a more direct hand in planning and conducting operations than our more conventional projects required. One feature of the program was our emphasis on capturing rather than killing VC cadres. This was continuously intensified for the duration of the program.

As far as I know, no untoward events ever occurred in Kien Hoa, thanks mainly, I'm sure, to Chau's integrity and detail-oriented management. The collegial style he encouraged both between Vietnamese and Americans and among the various US agencies represented there meant that freelancing by any of his subordinates would have been hard to conceal. Maj. Tom Aaron, the chief military adviser, and his S-2 treated their CIA counterparts as full members of the team and were enormously helpful in training and in the planning, conduct, and evaluation of operations. USOM's John O'Donnell was also well integrated into Chau's strategy; he would, for example, service requirements for agricultural and medical aid identified by our Census-Grievance Teams.

Everett Bumgardner of the US Information Agency (USIA), the only man on the Kien Hoa team who spoke Vietnamese fluently, coordinated the work of his Vietnam Information Service (VIS) cadres with our APA teams. He would assign his people, all

unarmed, to reasonably secure villages while APA took on areas where ambush was a routine hazard. Ev's proficiency in Vietnamese also equipped him to monitor the work of APA when it preceded the deployment of his VIS cadres; he would interview villagers about their experience with my programs as well as his own.

Needed: A Deep Evaluation of Prospects

Like everyone else, Chau had his shortcomings. I told Headquarters at one point that he tended to value docility above competence in his staff officers, something that was impeding the development of at least one of our programs. Nevertheless, for all his strong-mindedness, even stubbornness, he could take advice, at least from his American advisers. When I raised the issue with him, his reaction was not at all defensive; instead, he moved to adjust his staffing. This resulted in very substantial improvements in performance. His approach to his ARVN superiors was less accommodating, and he later wound up jailed by President Nguyen van Thieu on political charges.

What I regrettably did not raise with Chau was the question of whether our efforts—and GVN pacification programs at large—would ever be able to compete with the Viet Cong for the allegiance of the rural population. I had sense enough to recognize that, at no point in our association, could I claim that our efforts had turned the tide and that we were winning. On the contrary, I remember a meeting with Jorgy in late 1964 when I bemoaned the inadequacy of our training agenda and the mediocre performance of some of its products. He did not contest my point; rather, he implicitly endorsed it when he insisted that the security situation simply didn't allow a longer, more intensive training program: "There just isn't time." Neither of us took the discussion to its logical conclusion: if our programs were essential to GVN survival and if they were failing and if enemy pressure precluded corrective measures, the war was lost.

In fact, like even the more thoughtful of my Vietnamese and American partners, I had no understanding of what had allowed the Viet Cong to gain such momentum. I was aware, of course, of the shortcomings of both the Diem and subsequent military regimes but was inclined to share the widespread belief that the Viet Cong relied on coercion for their influence in the countryside. It was only later, after I'd begun research for my history of the programs, that I began to consider the possibility that the GVN had never been able to evoke peasant loyalty and that the VC had from the beginning enjoyed a near-monopoly of political energy in the South (its Catholic minority being an exception).

It seems to me now that our thinking was tainted by the anticommunist fervor that we shared with most Americans, perhaps especially those engaged in crusades

like the one in Vietnam, and with the Vietnamese, mostly Catholics, whom we supported. The question remains: why, after the chaos of Diem's overthrow and murder, did neither I nor my colleagues question the capacity of a military junta headed by undistinguished former servants of the French colonial army to compete with a movement that, under Ho Chi Minh, had defeated the army that produced them?

There was, indeed, intense frustration at the working level with many of the generals' apparent preference to fight each other rather than the communist enemy. There was less of a need to rationalize ARVN reverses as remediable, tactical reverses. Within the station, at least, the mood in the first months of 1964 approached despair even as we worked desperately to stop the bleeding. As US efforts began to slow the pace of Viet Cong advances after the arrival of US combat units, however, some of us began to indulge in a typically American faith in our country's ability to do what it decides to do. This somewhat uneasy confidence in the outcome was at the time supported by the analysts in the station and at Headquarters who were charged with evaluating the course of the war.

I think it's fair to say that only the analysts were positioned to take a hard look at the evolving balance of forces in the fluid circumstances of 1964. Station management was under intense and continuous pressure from Washington to find ways—political and paramilitary—to help establish the legitimacy and authority of the new GVN, and operators like me were fully committed to the war in the countryside. Unfortunately, no one attempted a zero-based estimate of where things stood and where they were headed. Years later, one of our most knowledgeable and respected Vietnam analysts, George Allen, wrote to me after publication of one of the first volumes of my series on Vietnam. He bemoaned at some length the failure of the Directorate of Intelligence to undertake such an effort then or at any other time during the war.

I don't claim that the seizure of Saigon by North Vietnamese tanks in 1975 was inevitable, and Allen wasn't saying that the analytic product in 1964 reflected optimism either in the US Mission in Saigon or in Washington. Indeed, two Special National Intelligence Estimates in that year raised the possibility of the collapse of both South Vietnam and Laos; the second said that "the odds are against the emergence of a stable government capable of effectively prosecuting the war." Both left open the possibility of a change of fortunes, however, and neither undertook the "balance of forces" calculation (to borrow a very useful bit of VC terminology) that might have permitted a more rigorous calculation of those odds. [a]

The sudden emergence of competent, charismatic, and determined leadership might have made the difference as it had in the Philippines in the early 1950s with

a. See https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/collection/vietnam-collection, which contains a collection of declassified estimative products on the situation in Vietnam.

Ramon Magsaysay. Nevertheless, looking at events as they actually fact transpired, it is hard to imagine how the GVN would have survived without the ability either to suppress the insurgency or—an intimately connected imperative—to win the loyalty of its citizenry, both urban and rural. Many Vietnamese were indifferent or hostile to the Viet Cong even though their attitude toward the military government ranged from tolerance to contempt. Such considerations, which now seem to me crucial to any effort to predict the outcome of such a conflict, went unexamined. In that atmosphere, the United States and the GVN settled, in effect, for half a loaf: a standoff with communist military forces and toleration of apathy toward the GVN in the countryside as long as the peasants paid their taxes and provided military draftees.

A later Saigon chief of station, Ted Shackley, purported to be summarizing the motivation of the peasantry when he wrote that only two things were required to assure its loyalty to the government: a rising standard of living and "a modicum of security." This simplistic formulation ignored the fact that the VC had never promised the peasants material plenty, just comprehensive land reform and that only in return for commitment to the VC cause. The VC did not promise security, or even a modicum of it, except as the fruit of that commitment. In the first months after the fall of Diem, we in the station were not conceptually or emotionally equipped to offer a better assessment than Shackley would later make, so we just pushed ahead, expanding the programs and trying to increase their appeal in the countryside by refining their content.

Bound to an Incoherent Strategy

Looking back, it seems odd that, while representing what we saw as the cradle of democracy, we relied so heavily on Vietnamese counterparts to furnish the program's political substance. The creation of a representative democracy in South Vietnam was our idea, not theirs—they were just emerging from colonial dependence and a decayed puppet monarchy—but we had no clue about how to bring it about. We tacitly acknowledged this in our eagerness to find indigenous partners capable of providing conceptual leadership. It was only after beginning my history of the project that I recognized the implicitly authoritarian worldview that Chau brought to our work. He did indeed want to see honest governance by a regime that took an active interest in its citizens' welfare, but I never heard him say anything that suggested his aims included citizen involvement in genuine representative government.

I never met Nguyen Be, the other key figure in the construction of the People's Action Teams curriculum. Like Chau, he was a field grade ARVN officer, but nothing I heard about his views suggested that they were greatly different. When brought together at our training facility at Vung Tau on the beach east of Saigon, the two

quarreled constantly, but their differences seem to have been more personal, a matter of style, than professional.

I could have asked Chau about his philosophy of governance, but, preoccupied with our joint Kien Hoa projects and their emphasis on countering VC influence, I never did. I do think I know how he would have replied: long-standing Viet Minh-Viet Cong influence in Kien Hoa and a succession of indifferent, and/or incompetent, and/or corrupt provincial governments would have produced a vote that might result in an embarrassing GVN defeat if the voters were given a real choice. I would not have disagreed, and I don't remember anyone, American or Vietnamese, who held any other view. The result was an incoherent US strategy in which American advice and support in the provinces focused on economic and security matters while essentially abdicating the effort to build the democracy that our policy declared also to be indispensable to success.

Meanwhile, the US Mission struggled to build national-level institutions, including political parties, but its effort lacked the active involvement of the rural—or even very much of the urban middle class—population. This paradox tortured US strategy for the rest of the war. We proclaimed democracy as the only acceptable form of government for South Vietnam but acquiesced in authoritarian military government as the only way to combat a burgeoning insurgency. The dilemma only intensified after I left the country in early 1965, after Hanoi committed major elements of the North Vietnamese Army to the war in the South.

With no answer to the fundamental political question, the station proceeded with what it had, relying for the political content of our programs on the few Vietnamese with whom we shared convictions that allowed us to work together. Major Mai, our Vietnamese chief instructor at the training facility at Vung Tau, preached a kind of mystical nationalism that our advisers there found almost incomprehensible but in which they saw nothing likely to subvert the effort to encourage peasant resistance to Viet Cong proselytizing. Chau's political program had no ideological content that I can recall, instead depending on a good-government philosophy that honest, if paternalistic, administration would win peasant loyalty.

I continued to visit Kien Hoa throughout the remaining year of my tour, although I did so less often after the arrival of John O'Reilly, a fledgling case officer whose good humor and good judgment more than compensated for his inexperience. With John in charge there, Tom Donohue, the station's new covert action chief, tapped me to set up similar programs in the swath of provinces that crossed the Mekong Delta just below Saigon. The station and Washington had concluded that preliminary results in Kien Hoa and a similar program in Quang Ngai—and, surely, the absence of alternatives—justified expanding these efforts.

Here I (left) stand with the Kien Hoa leadership team. To my left are Lt. Col. Tran Ngoc Chau; Maj. Andy Simko, MACV sector advisor for Kien Hoa; and John O,Reilly. Photo courtesy of Judy O'Reilly.

Some Gains, Weak Vietnamese Leadership, and Influx of New CIA Officers

When led by ARVN officers convinced of their potential, the station's programs materially improved the balance of forces in Saigon's favor. One of the best was Tieu Can District in Vinh Binh, a Delta province adjacent to Kien Hoa. The ARVN captain serving as district chief essentially eradicated Viet Cong political and military muscle in Tieu Can, at least for the duration of his tour of duty there. The remaining six of Vinh Binh's districts suffered from the province chief's inertia and the mediocrity of the district chiefs.

In late 1964, one of my new targets was Kien Tuong Province, home to part of the infamous VC refuge called the Plain of Reeds. My introduction to it came when I joined a party of GVN military and civilian officials traveling by boat up a canal to the provincial capital, Moc Hoa. Much of our route had been rated by GVN and US intelligence as a no-man's land vulnerable to VC attack, and at one point the ARVN complement on board began firing into the banks on both sides of the canal to forestall enemy ambush. Someone encouraged me to contribute to this storm of prophylactic small arms fire. I had taken to carrying an Uzi, a 9mm Israeli-made submachine gun, when engaged in surface travel outside Saigon and joined the fun. This did not, however, prevent the VC from detonating a mine—harmlessly, fortunately—as our boat passed by.

The fire halted as we approached the relative security of Moc Hoa, where local officials had set up a welcoming lunch. As we approached the outdoor tables, we

barely disturbed the largest assembly of flies I have ever seen. Protocol is protocol, especially for an honored guest, and I managed to make a show of eating something. I could only hope it would not lead to a bout of intestinal misery, which for me had usually come as an unpleasant surprise and not as the predictable result of a visibly toxic environment. On that day, I was lucky to have the rule hold. It had also held, albeit in reverse, during my Da Nang sojourn when the harmless looking oysters I consumed over a weekend at the beach at Nha Trang produced a case of hepatitis that resulted in two weeks in an Army hospital.

It was at Moc Hoa that I met Maj. Al Francisco, who commanded the provincial MAAG team there. We had enough time together for me to determine his sympathy for the programs that I was there to sell to the province chief. We soon built an informal partnership in which Al not only conducted training and helped supervise and evaluate the Kien Tuong programs—especially Counter-Terror—but also trained members of similar teams from neighboring provinces.

Al's collaboration with training, like that of Tom Aaron in Kien Hoa, represented a stopgap solution to the closing of the facilities we had operated under the Diem regime. The new facilities at Vung Tau were not ready for the first teams we recruited in 1964, but, with help from Tom and Al and various others, we deployed teams into a number of key provinces while work at Vung Tau continued. The structure of the program was now set, and my work in the final few months of my tour concentrated on further expansion of provincial coverage, contacting province chiefs and their US advisers and helping newly arrived CIA case officers become acclimated to their new surroundings.

This phase confirmed my early impression that cooperation from our military colleagues depended a great deal on rank. As I toured the provinces soliciting cooperation in our programs, I found that I could expect willing, even enthusiastic, support from advisers up through the rank of major. Lieutenant colonels were not to be taken for granted, but, despite occasional skepticism, they responded in a businesslike way, open to a description of our emphasis on the political dimension of our program. As a rule, full colonels seemed more concerned with turf questions: why was I, a civilian, running a quasi-military program not formally coordinated with MAAG or MACV? Above that level, there were few problems as our credentials were known to all general officers with relevant portfolios. The remaining complications seemed to stem from their spotty briefings of subordinates.

I remember arriving in My Tho, the Dinh Tuong Province capital, just as the MAAG adviser there got word that Col. Jasper Wilson, visiting from MAAG headquarters, was on his way in from the airfield. The reaction was stark terror for it seemed that Wilson's style emphasized intimidation—only of his inferiors, of course—and the My Tho adviser trembled at the prospect of having to explain my

presence in the compound. I pointed out that Col. Wilson had no authority over the movements of a CIA officer, but it was clear that, if I was going to win the provincial adviser's cooperation, I had better make myself scarce. This I did until he got word to me that the coast was clear. With his goodwill now assured—he had already agreed about the potential value of our programs—I could turn the My Tho effort over to one of the newly arrived case officers.

It was at about this time that Tom Donohue asked me to serve as his field supervisor for Delta operations. More young, first-tour officers were arriving to staff the expanding programs, and he wanted an experienced eye on their progress and problems. As with the first of such arrivals, John O'Reilly, whom I had sent to Kien Hoa, I was gratified to see the maturity and good sense they brought to what was a truly foreign work experience. They were all young and all volunteers. Although they knew that the government's hold on the countryside was perilously weak, they seemed to see themselves, like Henry V, leaping into the breach and exhibiting full confidence that they'd succeed. Only one of the first half-dozen disappointed me, a rather fey young man whose scatter-brained approach to his work was all the more conspicuous for its difference from the performance of the rest of his contingent. Most of them did an admirable job of dealing with the intractable problems they faced, the most frustrating of these being the incompetence, lack of commitment, and occasional fiscal dishonesty of so many of their GVN partners.

There were other occasional disappointments, such as the pair I saw on a visit to the training center at Vung Tau. A graduating class was about to start a ceremonial final five-kilometer run as students, accompanied by their Vietnamese instructors. Because they were about to be deployed to provinces heavily contested by the Viet Cong, their morale and esprit de corps needed all the support they could get. Unfortunately, our advisers had preferred to lounge on the veranda of their cottage, inadvertently but obviously demonstrating their detachment from the Vietnamese they were there to help turn into effective counterinsurgents. They weren't violating any station protocol, because CIA, like US government agencies in general, saw the Vietnamese not as partners in defense of a joint cause but rather as clients, fully responsible for the use, effective or not, of US advice and support. There were individual exceptions, of course, but these were not numerous enough to alter the tone of the overall effort.

This detached approach might have sufficed had we been working with an anti-communist regime as dedicated and disciplined as the Viet Cong and their North Vietnamese sponsors. As I traveled the Delta provinces, however, I saw more clearly what I already had reason to suspect: leaders like Kien Hoa Province's Col. Chau were scarce, not just in the military but also in the civilian agencies. What I did not see was the reason for their lack of commitment. To the historian of CIA's role in the war that

I later became, it is clear they were influenced by their background as servants of the colonial French and that, as the nominal stewards of an independent country, they were driven more by bureaucratic self-interest than by any attachment to democratic ideals or national loyalties. Whether a more personalized commitment on the part of American advisers would have made a decisive difference is doubtful at best, but, in its absence, we unconsciously endorsed the disengaged attitudes of so many of our Vietnamese counterparts.

A Life Changing Introduction

Working in a war zone does not necessarily preclude romance. Not long after my move from Da Nang to Saigon, Stu Methven and Jim Henderson, a friend of his with the US Information Service (USIS), told me about Gisela Daschkey, a young German embassy employee who lived in the building in which Jim had an apartment. Jim had declared himself out of the running for her attention—he was at least 25 years older than she—and Stu was married. Accordingly, the two decided to try a little matchmaking, and they interrupted her lunch one day so they could introduce me.

I was struck by Gisela's dark brown eyes and rich brown hair, and the glow of her northern European complexion enhanced her attractiveness. With no encouragement from her—she seemed quite indifferent to me—I followed up with an invitation to dinner in Cholon, Saigon's Chinese quarter, at a popular Szechuan restaurant grotesquely named the Esquimaux. (The name may have referred to the gleaming floor-to-ceiling white tile, which was a little short on esthetic appeal but did suggest a concern for sanitation.) She agreed to go, and, as one Esquimaux date followed another, we gradually became an "item," in the parlance of the period. We occasionally went to French movies, ventured out of Saigon to a frog-leg emporium in neighboring Gia Dinh Province, and once flew up to Hue, the ancient capital of Annam.

In mid-1964, we flew together to Cambodia to see the famous Buddhist temple at Angkor Wat. Although not yet threatened by either Cambodian or North Vietnamese communists, the once lively tourist trade was moribund, and, except for a few forlorn vendors of Cambodian snacks, we had the temple and adjacent tourist hotel to ourselves. Our ride on an elephant's back in an elaborate seat on a rattan frame was a standard part of the tourist agenda.

I had never before been attracted to a girl as direct or matter of fact as Gisela or to anyone as adventurous, and her Prussian origins added a touch of the exotic to her persona. We gradually formed a connection such that, after she left for Germany in the fall of 1964, I felt a painful void. Female company, both American and Vietnamese, had always been readily available in Saigon, but it had now lost its appeal, and after about six weeks I went to Stu Methven's house—one of the very few with a telephone—and called her.

Her grandmother answered, and the language barrier—I had no German at the time, and we wound up speaking French, which she had evidently not spoken in years—plus an extremely poor connection (there were no satellite phones in the mid-1960s) made for a tortuous minute or two as I struggled to identify myself. Gisela finally came to the phone, and I popped the question just as the connection went dead. I was left not knowing if she'd even heard me propose but was relieved of the suspense the next day, when I got her telegram saying yes. Our marriage the following April in Offenbach-am-Main, her hometown, marked the beginning of 52 years together during which she became not only wife and mother and expert cook but an American citizen and, later, a CIA case officer engaged in sensitive collection operations.

Marriage of a CIA officer to a foreign national must be approved in advance by the Agency. I knew this, of course, but, as I recall, I thought I could treat it as a mere formality. I procrastinated until probably around New Year's, when I went to Jorgy and told him about Gisela. His dismayed reaction was anything but what I'd expected. He saw Headquarters disapproval as a serious possibility and urged me to postpone my commitment until it was on board. I replied that I really couldn't contemplate such a gesture of inconstancy, for that was how Gisela would see it. He backed me up with a recommendation full of the conventional hyperbole with which we bureaucrats try to establish that we're serious, and approval came promptly.

In the six months between Gisela's departure from Saigon and my own in late March 1965, I watched the growth of the station's counterinsurgency programs. The communist hold on rural areas of South Vietnam was growing even faster, however. By the time I left, US policymakers and their intelligence advisers anticipated a humiliating defeat if the tide did not turn, and the Johnson administration had ordered the first of a series of major deployments of US ground forces. I thought that my own participation in the war was now finished. Colonel Chau came up from Kien Hoa to join colleagues seeing me off, and I boarded an aircraft that would take me to Bangkok and the connecting flight to Frankfurt.[a] I was then on my way to Offenbach and knotting the ties of the most important personal relationship of my life.

a. I would see Colonel Chau again 20 years later as I researched the third of my histories of CIA's engagement in Southeast Asia. Over three-days I interviewed him about his experience in and views of the pacification effort in the 1960s. By then, having been imprisoned for four years by his own government and then for years more by the victorious communists, he had suffered much before managing to emigrate to the United States in the late 1970s, Chau's testimony thus figures prominently in the book *CIA and Rural Pacification* (CIA/CSI, 2021), which is available at https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/3_CIA_AND_RURAL_PACIFICATION.pdf. Chau died in July 2020 at 96 years, a victim of the Covid pandemic. The *Washington Post* published a lengthy obituary, further testimony to the importance of his role in the Vietnamese civil war. See, Harrison Smith, "Tran Ngoc Chau, Vietnamese counterinsurgency specialist, dies at 96 of coronavirus complications" July 9, 2020.

Chapter Six

A New Partnership—and Solo Tour in Africa, 1965

My father's precarious health had kept the family from coming to Offenbach for the wedding, and I was happy to see what looked like his instant bonding with Gisela [in Wisconsin]. I wasn't surprised, however, as I had already seen her gift for effortless empathy with people of varying origins, and it held true with my family as well.

On Gisela's and my wedding in the spring of 1965. The smile I wore on my face that day would only be equaled by the smile I wore the day my freedom and those of my embassy colleagues was assured in January 1981.

Though we had a lovely honeymoon in Italy and sailed home via a freighter, my first assignment on returning took me to an unaccompanied, temporary assignment in the Republic of the Congo. Lake Tanganyika might have made a lovely honeymoon site, but it was the center of dealing with Cuban efforts to undermine democracy in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

A Honeymoon to Italy, and Freighter Ride Home

A honeymoon trip to Italy followed Gisela's and my wedding in Offenbach. On the way, we stopped in Freiburg for a look at the city's cathedral and its stained glass, which turned out to be the most richly beautiful I have ever seen. We had both visited Rome before, but its wonders are endless, as are those of Venice, albeit on a smaller scale. We had already decided to return to the United States by sea and, in the absence of any passenger ships, had booked a cabin on a US-flagged freighter. The captain and his officers treated us—the only paying passengers—with great courtesy, although they sometimes gave the impression of wondering why anyone would ride a freighter for fun. The United States Lines prohibited its crews from drinking alcohol at sea, so there was not much by way of social life. The purser did offer to provide a nightly bucket of ice, a service that turned out not to be limited to the two of us. The captain, in particular, would show up at breakfast quite bleary-eyed.

Entertainment became the least of our concerns when the wind started to blow. For three days, we headed into it, steaming only fast enough for the helmsman to keep the bow pointed into the wind. The waves were higher than the ship, and, when we descended into a trough, it looked and felt as if we might just keep on going down. One of the officers had already let us know that our cargo included the body of a sailor who had died in Europe and was being shipped home. There was some unease among the crew—it seems that seamen really are superstitious—but the ship escaped damage, and we made it to Boston after eleven days, three more than scheduled. We were told that we had experienced the ship's stormiest spring crossing ever, and Gisela and I were congratulated on our more or less successful resistance to seasickness.

We had added one item to the ship's cargo, a Volkswagen Beetle that had come as Gisela's impromptu dowry. It took us from Boston into Canada and back to the States with the conventional honeymoon stop at Niagara Falls. From there, we drove to Chicago and up to Fond du Lac, where my parents were waiting for us. My father's precarious health had kept them from coming to Offenbach for our wedding, and I was happy to see what looked like his instant bonding with Gisela. I wasn't surprised, however, as I had already seen her gift for effortless empathy with people of varying origins, and it held true with my family as well.

A word about my in-laws: Gisela's mother, Elfriede, was born in East Prussia and married a young soldier from her home village of Neuendorf in 1939 or 1940. Gisela was born shortly before he was deployed in the invasion of the Soviet Union, but she never knew him as he died of pneumonia outside Moscow in late 1941.

A year or so later, a German unit arrived at Neuendorf, and its troops were quartered in and around the village. A communications specialist from Offenbach am Main, Hans Schaupmeier, found himself billeted on the substantial farm owned by the family of Gisela's father. She and her mother were living there too, and, when the time came for the unit to move on, Hans—perhaps already uncertain about the war's outcome—gave Elfriede his mother's Offenbach address and invited her and Gisela to take refuge there if they had to leave Neuendorf. In 1944, as Soviet forces threatened the German hold on East Prussia, the family abandoned the farm. Gisela's only recollection of their departure was the crashing of the artillery that signaled the Russian approach. They waited out the rest of the war with Hans's mother in Offenbach. Gisela remembered the arrival of American troops and the gift of an orange, the first she had ever seen, from a huge—from her perspective—Black GI.

Hans was less fortunate. He was captured on the Eastern Front late in the war and spent two years in a Soviet prison camp before being repatriated. He recovered from the ordeal but, remembering the prison diet, never again tasted cabbage. Gisela and Elfriede were still in Offenbach when he returned, and he married Elfriede and gained a stepdaughter. The three were in the same apartment when I arrived. Hans and I hit it off well somehow, despite our ignorance of each other's language. With Elfriede ("Tutta"), however, things were a little strained. She was a gracious hostess but unhappy at her daughter's impending departure, and I could see that I would have to work at being accepted.

Our immediate agenda once we were back in Virginia centered on Gisela's adaptation to a new home and mine to a new job in an unfamiliar component. With the sole exception of getting a driver's license—different rules of the road were the main challenge—I think she felt at home a good deal sooner than I did. Although she was devastated at failing her first driving test, she passed on her second try and soon knew the Northern Virginia road network better than I did.

Building a social life was not a difficult task. Gisela befriended a couple of about our age who lived in the apartment next door, and I had friends from my nearly 10 years in FE Division. Gisela knew several of them from Saigon and from our visit to Cambodia. I had expected as much from a girl who, as a single German Foreign Office employee, had thrived in wartime Saigon on her first tour of duty overseas, but it was nevertheless very gratifying to see her adapt so effortlessly to life as a housewife in the United States.

My own experience over the ensuing year was less satisfying. I would have been content to stay with FE Division as my "home base"—part of a now-defunct system of personnel management. Before I left Saigon, however, Jorgy, then DCOS, had talked me into joining him in the paramilitary Special Operations Division (SOD), which he was scheduled to head upon completion of his tour in Vietnam. On March 30, a couple of weeks after I left, however, a car bomb exploded outside the embassy annex in which most of the station's complement was located. COS Peer de Silva, was seriously wounded, his secretary was killed, and two officers were blinded by flying glass. Jorgy replaced Peer, and his scheduled departure and impending tour as chief of SOD were canceled.

Press coverage of the attack and photos of the damage reminded me of the unease I had always felt when entering and leaving the annex. The street side of the building that contained the chancery and annex had turned into a parking lot for bicycles, any one of which could harbor an explosive. Neither embassy security nor the Saigon police had ever moved to guard the premises, however, and the blast, when it came, was much bigger than anything a bicycle bomb could have produced.

An Unexpected Turn to Africa

Back at Headquarters, having by then developed a reputation as competent in paramilitary matters, I was asked to help set up a string of paramilitary bases in Third World locales with an eye to providing quick reactions to communist insurrection or coup attempts against weak governments seen as likely targets of Soviet expansionism. These would be manned by third-country military veterans whose varied nationalities would provide the US with plausible denial wherever they might be deployed. I was to be the project's point man, soliciting the indispensable support of the area division chiefs who would have to provide sites for quasi-permanent installations.

I quickly found myself trying to parry the objections of the area divisions to which I was looking for support. The more of these sessions I endured, the more I realized that, in their position, I'd be making the same arguments. These encompassed everything: problems of recruitment and cover, the location of base areas, possible international legal liabilities, and the care and feeding—and control—of units between tactical deployments.

The idea may already have been dying on the vine when the need arose to replace the chief of a paramilitary activity based on the shore of Lake Tanganyika in Joseph Mobutu's Democratic Republic of the Congo. Fears of communist inroads into Africa in the early 1960s had been intensified by rumors of Cuban involvement that stemmed in part from reports of Cubans crossing the lake and infiltrating Congo from Tanganyika. (It became Tanzania in 1964.) CIA's portion of the US response

included two entities assigned to intercept and liquidate such efforts. One was a small detachment of T-28 training aircraft modified for use in combat. The other was a pair of aluminum-alloy-hulled Swift patrol boats, designed for service on the rivers and canals of the Mekong Delta of South Vietnam, each of which had (literally) been cut in half for transport by air and welded back together at our base in Albertville (now Kalemi) for deployment on the lake.

SOD had air and maritime officers on site to supervise maintenance and direct the assets' missions. The aircrews were drawn from among the Cuban pilots who had supported CIA's invasion of the Bay of Pigs, while the Swifts were manned by personnel borrowed from 5th Commando, the South African unit created and headed by Mike Hoare. The unit chief's job required supervising this motley organization, making sure its activities remained consistent with rules of engagement, and conducting liaison with the Congolese military and its Belgian advisers.

The intensity of US concern about communist inroads into the Congo was already on the decline when I was nominated for the job. This reduced its desirability as even a TDY assignment, and, of course, Gisela was not thrilled at the idea of being left behind for four months. I wanted out of what I considered the ill-conceived effort to build a third-country army, however, and she generously accepted my need for a change. Adaptable as always, she spent the separation with her family in Offenbach and got a temporary job in an international firm in Frankfurt. She told me later that her boss there suggested at one point that she stay with the company and say goodbye to me.

In 1966, I arrived in Leopoldville (Kinshasa), where Dick Johnson, a veteran paramilitary officer, was running provincial operations on behalf of station chief Larry Devlin. Unlike a good many other paramilitary types, Dick had a reflective mind and a considerate style that augured well for a productive relationship. He showed me around the city, and we had lunch at a well-appointed restaurant featuring *steak cannibale,* the Belgian version of steak tartare.

Having been briefed on the people and programs in Albertville, I boarded a station C-46 for the six-hour flight across the country. My predecessor had already left Congo when I arrived, and finding lodging was simply a matter of moving into his vacated room. The balcony, which overlooked Lake Tanganyika, featured an elephant tusk at least six feet long propped against the wall. I eventually traded it to a Belgian missionary for two much smaller, elegantly polished ones that, in those unenlightened times, I was allowed to ship home. The priest used the exchange to boost the stock of material used to teach orphans in his care how to carve ivory figures for sale.

My superiors in Leopoldville and Headquarters were still preoccupied with documenting Cuban collaboration, past or present, with local communist rebel leaders.

By the time of my arrival, no such Cubans had been identified, let alone arrested or captured, but a cable describing a new lead had an urgent tone that encouraged me to think we might finally be on to something. It gave me the identity of a Congolese operative reported to have had dealings with now departed Cuban visitors. He had just been determined to be in the Albertville prison on unspecified charges, and I was to interview him.

Fortunately, three or four of the purported Cubans had also been identified, and I received a photo of each, with a few dummies, to be shown to the prisoner for possible confirmation of the alleged contacts. Less fortunately, despite his apparent willingness to cooperate, he denied ever having seen any of the subjects in the photos, and the initiative died on the spot. It was a textbook example of the frustrations that accompany so many collection efforts dependent on untested sources: I couldn't be sure that my would-be source was telling the truth or whether he had ever actually had contact with any Cubans. Furthermore, he had turned down an opportunity to win favorable treatment by telling me what I obviously wanted to hear, whether or not it was true. I could only conclude that the lead was just what it looked like, a dead end.

Most of the little tactical intelligence I was getting came from conversation with Belgian officers who were presumably drawing on Congolese Army sources. Whatever the case, the Belgians took seriously a report about rebel activity near M'boko, a village on the lakeshore about two days north of Albertville by lake steamer. My communicator and I joined the party, sailing on one of the two boats that carried troops and advisers. I was ready to provide any needed air support, but the martial character of the expedition was soon diluted by a stop at Bukavu. We disembarked and made our way to the market, where expatriate Belgian shoppers seemed entirely unconcerned about their security. In fact, we encountered no "simbas" before the unit commander—whether Belgian or Congolese was unclear—gave up, and we returned to Albertville.

A subsequent experience with 5th Commando had not been on my agenda but nonetheless provided a valuable lesson. I was sitting outside the hotel one afternoon when a couple of troopers appeared with a handcuffed Congolese whom they had detained for reasons I no longer recall. They were about to turn him over to the police. The circumstances suggested that he might have useful intelligence, and, as he might well be moved out of the local jurisdiction, I undertook to debrief him on the spot. The session was well underway when we were interrupted by Sam Cassidy, a 5th Commando officer who was curious about why I would be interviewing a nondescript Congolese at the hotel. I said that I was seeking information the man might have and asked Sam to let us finish. He looked startled, as if being excluded from anything was outside his experience, but he moved on.

That night, Jim, the case officer for my little Swift boat navy, came to me, shaken by what he said was Sam's stated intention to kill me as punishment for the perceived affront. My first reaction was skepticism. It was not as if there'd been any kind of confrontation, and the proposed punishment really did seem disproportionate to the alleged crime. Jim knew Cassidy better than I, however, and viewed him as mentally unstable and possibly dangerous. We worked out a line of argument designed to soothe Cassidy's apparently wounded ego, and Jim took the first opportunity to engage him in private conversation. The result was his reluctant agreement that he might have overreacted, at least a little, and the issue disappeared.

It was not until after my return to Washington that I discovered that Jim's estimate of Cassidy's mental state had been right on the mark. The Swedish mechanics who serviced our T-28s had their own bar, and, when he visited one night, he got into an argument with one of them. He stormed out, returned carrying a pistol, and shot the offending mechanic dead. I don't know if the incident resulted in prosecution or imprisonment, but I learned sometime later that he had undertaken a vendetta against Chief of Station Larry Devlin. Devlin had by then departed Leopoldville, and, for a while, a substantial effort was devoted to tracking Cassidy's movements in order to prevent an attempt on Devlin's life. (How Cassidy knew Devlin's identity or would know his post-Congo itinerary remains a mystery, at least to me.)

On one occasion, my Cuban pilots proposed some out-of-school mayhem of their own. Their case officer came to me one day to say they had asked for permission to attack civilian boats crossing Lake Tanganyika. They had not specified—and almost certainly could not specify if asked—how they would determine that a given boat was suspicious enough to justify this, and I did not need any consultation with Leopoldville or Washington before responding with an emphatic no.

Generally, my experience in Albertville served to reinforce my earlier skepticism about Headquarters' proposed army of irregulars. The kind of unreflective activism represented by the Bay of Pigs operation, among others, was at least intermittently still shaping the selection of objectives and would continue to do so for another 20-odd years. The irony is that, by the late 1980s, when CIA had become burdened by a widespread public image as a rogue operator, the Agency had in fact adopted a much more prudent approach to covert action. Nevertheless, that spirit of can-do enthusiasm still exerts at least sporadic influence at the policy level. One example that comes to mind is Afghanistan. After 9/11, CIA led a successful campaign to close Afghanistan to international terrorists. The decision to follow that success with an attempt to install a democracy there was not the result of intelligence failure or CIA activism. Rather, it reflected the occasional spasmodic impulse by policymakers of both parties to treat nation-building as a US foreign policy goal.

Chapter Seven

Respite in the Philippines, 1966–69

As I prepared to move to the Philippines, no one mentioned limitations on the potential of military civic action or the effectiveness of our participation in it. Conventional thinking on the objectives of covert action almost certainly did not even see them as weaknesses, and neither Bill Colby nor other managers had expressed any concerns. Given CIA's practice of delegating the design of field work to its field operatives, I would be on my own to shape its development.

Gisela and I settled into a small house in Quezon City. Our daughter, Christine was born a year into the tour in the Adventist Hospital in Manila. Our Philippine household staff treated her as they would have their own children.

Stopover on Samar Island. Hilario "Larry" Mercado, AFP civic action chief, on the right.

An Opportunity in Manila

My stint in the Democratic Republic of the Congo nearly completed my obligation to SOD, and I returned to FE Division in the summer of 1966. With paramilitary experience under my belt at a time of burgeoning demand for qualified people to serve in Vietnam, I faced the possibility of being tabbed for a third tour in Indochina. I felt I had paid my dues there—it later turned out I hadn't—but fortunately, another opportunity arose in Manila.

Military civic action, the use of military resources to promote economic welfare and political stability in a rebellious countryside, had a history in the Republic of the Philippines that dated back to the Spanish-American War (1898). In its contemporary form, CIA engagement originated with the early 1950s service of the famous CIA officer Edward Lansdale, who joined then Defense Minister Ramon Magsaysay in the creation of a program to suppress the communist-led rebels known as the Hukbalahap ("Huks," pronounced "hooks") and restore the government's legitimacy in the eyes of the peasantry.[a] Although the movement was under nominal communist control—the Manila-based party leadership had a strained relationship with Huk leader Luis Taruc—it was more a peasant revolt against the exactions of exploitive landlords than an ideologically based revolution directed by Moscow. As the violence faded during and after Lansdale's tenure, the Civic Action Centers operated by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) became one of the government's instruments for persuading an alienated peasantry of its constructive purposes.

CIA support of Filipino efforts was reinforced by the Kennedy administration's enthusiasm for what came to be called "nation-building." This was a rather diffuse concept whose objectives varied with the perceived causes of a country's rural unrest but was always based on the imperative to support anti-communist governments in countries threatened by communist expansionism. These anti-communist Third World governments were usually intensely conservative and often led by members of the very landowning class whose abuses had sparked rural uprisings. That tension mandated a delicate balance in our dealings with such regimes. Washington tried to promote genuine representative government while maintaining a joint defense posture.

a. Hukbalahap is an abbreviated form of the Tagalog term for People's Anti-Japanese Army and reflecting its formation after the Japanese invasion of the Philippines in 1942. As in many countries under Axis occupation, the leadership of Philippine resistance came mainly from the political left.

In the Philippines, the strategic equation was complicated by the presence of two important US military bases, Clark Air Base, in Central Luzon, and Subic Bay Naval Base. Americans—some of them, at least—might deplore the country's reactionary land tenure system, but the need for a solid Cold War military relationship trumped any impulse to promote America as the champion of the common man. Civic action managers and advisers were thus obliged to avoid proposals that challenged the political and economic status quo. The work I was to support would emphasize useful but anodyne activities such as improving agricultural techniques and primary education. In addition, I was to run two other activities, unknown to Philippine authorities, that will be described a little later in this account.

FE Division chief and later DCI William Colby, an admirer of Lansdale's work in the Philippines, welcomed the Kennedy administration's interest in Third World development, and, when he endorsed my nomination to replace the departing case officer, I took it as a compliment. I soon found out, however, that he had his limits when it came to providing material support to the operation or venturing into politically sensitive terrain. In retrospect, it seems that Colby shared what I came to view as a typically American confidence in the power of our good intentions. In fact, the authority of the advice offered by a rich uncle depends a lot on his openhandedness, and, in this case, the AFP was providing all of the facilities and personnel and conducting the liaison with the civilian agencies that provided technical expertise. For its part, CIA was merely trading on the legacy of its role as adviser to Ramon Magsaysay at a time when it had had a real, if informal, role in policymaking.

That role had been reduced by the mid-1950s when Lansdale, looking to return to the Philippines, visited Manila from Saigon. President Magsaysay, with whom he had shared living quarters at the peak of their collaboration, declined even to see him. Magsaysay died in a plane crash in 1957, and, by the mid-1960s and after the restoration of more traditionally conservative government, the AFP was running a resources-starved program that faced the threat of being reduced to little more than a pro forma gesture by a government whose priorities lay elsewhere.

As I prepared to move to the Philippines, no one mentioned these limitations on the potential of military civic action or the effectiveness of our participation in it. Conventional thinking on the objectives of covert action almost certainly did not even see them as weaknesses, and neither Bill Colby nor other managers had expressed any concerns. Given CIA's practice of delegating the design of field work to its field operatives, I would be on my own to shape its development.

A Military Assignment—After a Fashion

The mechanics of my move to the Philippines were straightforward enough. I would be assigned to the Joint US Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG) in Quezon City, adjacent to Manila. This arrangement provided for natural access to the AFP.

One administrative requirement involved Gisela's citizenship. She was still a West German national, and I was told that CIA policy discouraged sending foreign national family members on overseas assignments. I was also told that the office would make special arrangements to get her naturalized before we left. When we showed up at the immigration office on the prescribed morning, however, we were startled to find that Gisela was but one of 30 or 40 applicants, all government employees. She was the only one sponsored by the Agency. It was just another example of the insistence in those days on seeing even routine administrative procedures as something unique, something special. Indeed, so many components, large and small, had the word "special" in their designation that an outside observer might have thought it a synonym for "ordinary."

In the fall of 1966, Gisela and I settled into our new home in Quezon City. Howell Compound, named for the expatriate American who had built it, was a pleasant JUSMAG enclave containing six or eight modest houses and a small outdoor swimming pool. Our house was perhaps the smallest, but it was also the most attractively laid out. It had just happened to be empty when we arrived. Also available were the services of two Filipina house servants and my predecessor's driver. All three stayed with us through the three years of our tour. They were competent and attentive, and, after our daughter, Christine, was born something over a year later in Manila's Adventist Hospital, they treated her like their own family. In minor ways, our residence in the JUSMAG housing compound might have been seen as a departure from normal JUSMAG practice, but Gisela and I were always treated as bona fide members of the team.

Credit for this collegial atmosphere goes mainly, I think, to JUSMAG's deputy chief, a fatherly Air Force colonel whose style reminded me of Captain Cole at Ft. Devens, and the adjutant general, Don Dement, a major of about my own age. I must have met the chief, a major general named Gomes, but I have no recollection of any conversation with him. He was possibly among the few officers who objected to the assignment of our folk to military organizations, but he seemed just as distant with his own people as he was with me. His attitude may have inspired a reaction in kind; although he pronounced his name in the Portuguese mode with two syllables (as in Gomez), his subordinates sometimes referred to him with the one-syllable pronunciation "Gomes." The absence of a personal connection with me did not matter, as my own guidance naturally came from the station. The deputy chief there, Ralph

Katrosh, was a more active supervisor than many, but our views on ends and means nearly always coincided, an advantage for me as I could always count on his support.

My success in the Philippines would depend primarily on the quality of my indigenous counterparts and our relationships. My predecessor had already left, so I began by introducing myself to my new colleagues. As in Vietnam, when I had worked with Colonel Chau, I was lucky to have a local counterpart with whom a meeting of minds was easy, and Navy Capt. Hilario (Larry) Mercado and I almost immediately became partners. He introduced me to the civic action officers of the individual services, each of whom, like almost all the Filipinos I knew, had a Spanish first name but used an American nickname.

They began by taking me to the Civic Action Centers, several of which were located in Army posts in Central Luzon, the locus of the dormant Huk rebellion. The most memorable of the others was at the naval station at Batu-Batu, an island just 40 miles east of Borneo, which one can see on a clear day, as most days are. The importance of the location was the same for the center as for the naval station itself. The area's population was mostly Muslim and presented the same challenge to the Philippine government that it did to the Spanish colonial regime.

The centers' agendas consisted of instructional sessions in which peasants assembled for lectures on improved agricultural techniques and the—rather meager—offerings of civilian agencies responsible for supporting the peasant economy. Participation in these sessions was entirely voluntary, but attendance was large enough to suggest that the very fact of an expression of government interest had some positive effect on peasant attitudes. Nevertheless, I soon realized that the credibility of AFP efforts in this field was limited by their inability to offer much beyond good advice.

One factor was the abject poverty of so much of the rural population. The peasants could not be asked to contribute anything but their time because they had nothing to contribute even if disposed to do so. Their situation was obvious to the most casual observer. On the day that Larry Mercado and I visited a village (*barrio*) in Tarlac Province, another center of the Huk uprising, he wanted to consult with the barrio chief. We stopped at the man's home only to find him away. His wife greeted us in a polite but not at all servile fashion. While she explained to Larry where to find her husband, I looked at the surroundings. Her house was scarcely more than a hut, surrounded by bare earth that had been swept clean. Despite her desperate poverty, however, she had been concerned enough to decorate the house with something beautiful. Outside, she had hung a rusty no. 10 can containing a cluster of brilliant red flowers that somehow transformed her hovel into a home. I found the contrast very moving, although it challenged any optimism that what we were doing was likely to make a difference.

There were other moments that reinforced my sense that good advice was not enough, but it took me some time to devise a formula that would make up even a small part of the deficit. Meanwhile, I deepened my familiarity with the centers and the officers who ran them. A visit to Batu-Batu required air transportation, and Larry would usually requisition a Philippine Air Force (PAF) C-47. Such flights were dedicated to civic action purposes, and they carried little cargo and no other passengers. This left ample room for our wives, who were enthusiastically received by the families of base officers, especially in remote posts such as Batu-Batu. There were always little discoveries to be made. In Batu-Batu, one of these was a small, rather chunky, banana that had a pear-like sweetness and texture that won over even a lifelong banana-hater like me.

I regretted not being able to spend more time in Batu-Batu to see better how the civic action center and the naval station as a whole related to the local, mostly Muslim, community. At worst, there was no overt ethnic/sectarian hostility of the kind involving the Abu Sayyaf movement that erupted several decades later. Attendance at the center's instructional programs was good, and I came away with the impression, admittedly superficial, that civil-military relations were at worst mutually respectful.

It had been evident from the start that neither CIA nor the Philippine military was disposed to raise the civic action budget. Larry Mercado and I had agreed that the single most limiting factor was the lack of vehicles to haul material for the farmers' self-help projects. I fairly soon discovered two resources that would, I hoped, allow the centers to make a material contribution to the population they were serving and in so doing enhance the centers' influence. First was the retired-vehicle park at Clark Air Base. Some of the trucks sent to Clark to die were still in operating condition but had reached the mileage specified by the Air Force for retirement. I went to Clark to ask the officer in charge if he could release such vehicles to the PAF and, if so, if we could send mechanics to confirm their serviceability. The answer to both questions was "yes," and Larry arranged for PAF mechanics to go to Clark to see what they could find.

It was at this point that Larry discovered a little stumbling block: Before the AFP could take ownership even of vehicles acquired at no cost, the civic action program's TO&E (table of organization and equipment) would have to be changed to include them. Larry convened a meeting of the services' civic action chiefs, and we invited their views on their respective needs.

I think it was the Philippine Constabulary, the national police force, that proposed beginning with staff cars for Manila-based headquarters elements. I could have stalled on the pretext that Clark had no passenger vehicles, but, even if that was true (I didn't know), it would have left open a requirement that I didn't want to impose on the American side. I said truthfully that the complaints I was hearing at

the centers had to do with the shortage of transportation for materials destined for village self-help projects. It worked—no one wanted to admit that his own convenience trumped field work—and we settled on trucks as the addition to the TO&E.

Visits to Clark by Larry's people identified a number of promising vehicles, mostly three-quarter ton but also a few 6x6 two-and-a-half-ton trucks, which were duly delivered to the most active centers, especially in Central Luzon. It seemed—indeed, it was—a very modest achievement, but perspective can affect value judgments, as I discovered while talking to the JUSMAG engineer adviser I had invited to the TO&E planning session. More familiar than I with the JUSMAG style, Larry said that we had accomplished more that morning than advisers he knew who had completed two-year tours of duty.

In fact, one essential requirement remained to be filled. Larry and I recognized that, however thorough our vetting process, the vehicles being offered us were, by Air Force standards, simply worn out. We could therefore expect them to be expensive to maintain, but neither the PAF nor JUSMAG nor CIA was going to pay the bill. The answer came from USAID, whose local branch, the US Operations Mission, ran a program that made pesos available to Philippine government entities seeking to improve and increase agricultural production. I don't recall the exact details, which were worked out by the PAF and USOM, but, as I recall, they got the activity going with admirable dispatch.

Exerting Sub Rosa Influence

One of Washington's purposes in sponsoring an assignment like mine in the Philippines was to exert sub rosa US influence on government policies in directions that it thought would advance the interests of both parties while bolstering our clients' resistance to communist subversion. Two of my assets[a] fell into this category, one of them a nongovernmental organization (NGO) and the other a one-man show, a self-styled expert in rural social and economic development. Both espoused policies consistent with US and Philippine goals for the country but were also committed to the more rapid and comprehensive agricultural land reform than Manila's conservative government endorsed. Another consideration was the practice of nationalist and communist organizations to expose US ties to such entities whenever they could, always ascribing imperialist motives to Washington's interests. Accordingly, our support to them, as to other such entities, remained covert.

The one-man band quickly turned out to be tone-deaf, at least as far as my interests were concerned. His self-professed organizational efforts in the provinces

a. Asset" is a DO term of art referring to an individual or organization over which the Agency claims substantial influence or, ideally, control. It is often used in a more aspirational sense—although this is hardly ever acknowledged—to refer to an entity that has exhibited some responsiveness to Agency requests but remains uncommitted to formal collaboration.

never rose above the level of empty talk, and, using an agent I had inserted into his office, I discovered his hand in the till. I dissolved the operation. The DO phobia against termination was not a problem in this case as the directorate had been almost puritanical in its emphasis on financial integrity. I would probably have met greater resistance to its liquidation had it been based solely on lack of production.

The local NGO was quite different. Its leader, a professor at a local university, was a dedicated advocate of land reform, which he saw as much as a matter of social justice as of economic progress. The professor, who enjoyed the support of local clergy connected to a social justice movement, accepted no money for himself or for his organization and seemed to value our connection mainly as a token of US encouragement of his efforts. At our regular meetings, always at Howell Compound, he provided information on what to expect, especially on government and landlord attitudes toward land reform, that facilitated my efforts to encourage AFP participation in rural reforms.

I digress here for a word on the near irrelevance in Third World countries like the Philippines of the tradecraft designed to preserve the secrecy of a case officer's meetings with an agent or contact. The standard practice that had evolved in Europe relied on extensive public facilities such as parks, hotels, and railroad stations or the classic safehouse, attributable to neither of the parties at a meeting. Ethnic similarities between officer and contact also contributed to the anonymity of any contacts that local authorities might observe. Meetings at the home of either an agent or a case officer were considered bad practice precisely because they abdicated this anonymity.

The developing world offered far fewer such meeting sites, and, at least in countries that enjoyed cordial relations with the United States, meetings at one of the parties' homes were often the least vulnerable of the few options. The professor always came to my house; it had a gate on the street, so he could reach the house without having to walk through Howell Compound. An evening session was thus discreet if not totally secure. One risk that I overlooked was our dog, Fritzi, a small product of Doberman and terrier parentage, whom I left in the yard one night when the professor was coming. As always, my visitor reached in to open the gate on the inside. Fritzi, good-natured but protective of her domain, nipped his hand. The professor was understandably annoyed at my nonfeasance, and it took some time to restore his usual cordiality. (I often walked Fritzi through the compound, mostly to enjoy watching her possessive strut even as I remained unsure whether it was the compound or me to which she was laying claim. On Sunday mornings, knowing exactly what to expect from me, Fritzi would intercept the weekly *Stars and Stripes* newspaper and shred it before I could get hold of it. I would then chase her around the living room trying to slap her fanny with what was left.)

Awarded a Joint Services Commendation Medal

Land reform in the Philippines had languished after the Magsaysay years, and any subsequent progress was taking place at the provincial level. The only move to expand it during my tour there was being contested in Laguna Province in southern Luzon. The professor had long had people working the issue there, agitating for more equitable land tenure legislation, but resistance was stiff, and obdurate landlords had been known to resort to violence. At one session, when he once again voiced his anxiety, I noted that he had not cited any specific threats in Laguna either to his people or to himself and said I hoped he would not abandon an effort that he had known from the start would spark resistance. To say even this much was an implied accusation that he was being timid, and I left it at that. He stayed the course, and within the next few months, thanks largely to the agitation of his provincial organizers, the Laguna legislature enacted a reform that met our joint objectives.

Victory sparked a rare congratulatory cable from Headquarters. Although I had long ago stipulated the peripheral nature of the CIA role in the professor's endeavors, it had at least produced a measurable success, and this evoked a real sense of satisfaction.

Unlike Laos and Vietnam, the Philippines was at the time free of armed conflict. Ralph Katrosh requested that I stay for a third year. The invitation was easy to accept thanks to the satisfying work, cordial relationships with both Filipino and American colleagues, pleasant living quarters, and, not least, the arrival of Christine, who was indulged by house staff as well as her parents.

At this point, my agenda was largely the refinement of existing programs. I was not unhappy with their results but was nevertheless fully aware of their modest scope when judged by the scale of the national-level problems they were trying to address. It seemed, however, that Larry Mercado and his superiors thought the JUSMAG contribution to civic action had exceeded expectations. As the end of my tour approached in 1969, they put me in for a presidential decoration. President Marcos presented it at an annual ceremony honoring Philippine military personnel, and JUSMAG followed up by awarding me the Joint Services Commendation Medal.

Chapter Eight

Back to Southeast Asia, 1970–72

Bill Nelson, chief of FE Division, was reported to have called Phnom Penh the best of all his stations. It was certainly the best I ever worked in; not even Laos, perhaps because of its much larger staff, matched its harmony and efficiency.

President Richard Nixon announcing the US invasion of Cambodia May 30 1970. Photo © Everett Collection Historical / Alamy Stock Photo.

Ready for a Home Assignment, But . . .

At this point in my career, I certainly shared the view dominant in the DO culture that assignments in the field were the most valuable and desirable for those below senior management. In 1969, however, after four consecutive overseas tours (two in war zones and one labeled a hardship post, the Philippines) and with a young family, Washington seemed at least a tolerable prospect for me. Before leaving for Manila, we had bought a small house in Bethesda, Maryland, and, with the Capital Beltway completed, I expected a tolerable commute to Headquarters.

It turned out that getting settled in Bethesda was more complicated than breaking in as chief of the DO's Philippines desk. Ralph Katrosh, my boss in Manila, was also back in Washington running the branch that included the Philippines desk. Our collegial association in Manila simplified re-adapting to the Headquarters environment. We quickly found that the country desk and regional branch levels still did little more than set the general direction of operational activity and handle finances, security, and administration. The field station did the rest.

With no real challenges to be met, the assignment could have become a bore, but, after only a few months, the FE Division front office pulled me out to join its new Cambodia Task Force. In mid-March 1970, Cambodian ruler Prince Norodom Sihanouk had been overthrown by his parliament at the instigation of the anti-communist military leadership—this without any US encouragement that I know of—and replaced by Army chief and Prime Minister Gen. Lon Nol. At the end of that month, alarmed by reports of stepped-up shipments of Chinese munitions through Cambodia to the Viet Cong in South Vietnam, President Richard Nixon ordered US ground forces into Cambodia to put a stop to this traffic and to destroy or expel the North Vietnamese Army headquarters thought to be located near the border with South Vietnam.

These events followed two major developments in US dealings with Cambodia. In early 1965, Prince Sihanouk became convinced that the United States had conspired in separate Thai and South Vietnamese attempts to weaken Phnom Penh's control over several border provinces. In response, he provoked Washington into suspending diplomatic relations, partly by his instigation of a mob attack on the embassy in Phnom Penh.

Since 1966, Sihanouk had been allowing Chinese munitions shipped to Cambodian ports to transit the country into Viet Cong-controlled areas of South Vietnam. Unknown at first to US officials, this practice, when discovered, soured an already tense relationship with the prince, and in late 1969 the US had closed its embassy. It was now to be reopened, with two main tasks, first to negotiate and organize the shipment of military aid to the new Lon Nol government, and second to create an intelligence collection capability to fill the gap created by the interruption of diplomatic relations.

My work on the task force involved a lot of back and forth with the division front office, where I often had to wait for an ongoing meeting to conclude before my own session could start. I got to know the secretaries well, and they were quite uninhibited about sharing their frustrations. Tensions would rise toward the end of the workday as they hammered away at their typewriters on the third or fourth draft of a cable that management kept revising. One looked up at me at one point, moaning, "There's never time to do it right, but there's always time to do it over!"

Headquarters had the responsibility for staffing the new Phnom Penh Station. One day I saw John Stein, a fellow trainee from the 1950s who had just been named chief of station. John had no Asia experience, which for management was the point. It wanted to send someone with no CIA profile to a country in which armed US intervention was already producing intense opposition in the United States. John did have good French, however, as well as a wife who, like Gisela, was unfazed by difficult and potentially dangerous living conditions.

Management's concern for invisibility did not last long. FE Division had not yet approached me about following John to Phnom Penh, but I could read the handwriting on the wall. It was already clear that the priority assigned to the new station would reflect both the intensity of the Vietnam War and Cambodia's new role in it. As a French speaker and already an old Indochina hand by CIA standards, I was therefore not surprised when management told me it wanted me in Phnom Penh, the sooner the better. An essential element of the new station's agenda would be intelligence on communist order-of-battle, and I was to create the program to collect it.

Security in Phnom Penh had not yet deteriorated to the point that it posed a serious risk to families, so mine, like those of other officers who had children not yet in school, would go with me. In 1970, however, the Palestine Liberation Organization launched a terror campaign on what seemed almost a world-wide basis. Although our cross-Pacific flights would not have taken us over Europe or the Middle East, Gisela and Christine wound up effectively quarantined in Fond du Lac while I went on my way.

I had largely forgotten what Phnom Penh looked like and how little it seemed like a national capital. It had just a few major boulevards that were crossed at intervals by two-lane streets, not all of them paved. My quarters were for the time being a room in one of the two commercial Western-style hotels. I was the only Western guest, however; the others were South Koreans in Cambodia in some official capacity, albeit not one in which they would have dealings with the US embassy. The facilities were a bit spartan but not uncomfortable. The food, however, reminded me of the bistro in Thakhek; its taste was merely tolerable but its threat to digestive health considerable.

While I waited for my family to be cleared for travel to Phnom Penh—it took several weeks—I started organizing my office and getting to know my Cambodian counterparts. As in Vietnam, they were all police or military men and, also as in Vietnam, very territorial in dealing with their Cambodian compatriots. If there was a centralized analytical component, even one limited to the military, I never found it. I had the impression that the chief of each service reported to the head of state.

My counterparts were a surprisingly diverse lot, and not all of them were even ethnic Cambodians. The most interesting, and most helpful to me, was Brig. Gen. Les Kosem, the de facto leader of the Cham minority, an Islamic group with an extraordinarily complicated history in Cambodia and the highlands of South Vietnam. As I got to know him, Kosem came to remind me of another of my Indochina counterparts, Vang Pao, the Hmong general in Laos. Each represented a minority whose main concern was the preservation of its ethnic identity and a measure of autonomy in areas dominated by more numerous groups, especially the Khmer, in Cambodia, and the Vietnamese. Each man was a rare example of not just assimilation but the attainment of a position of real authority. Kosem's clout rested on the Cham predominance in his military command; his troops may have considered themselves Cambodian, but their loyalty was to him.

I established working relationships with two other services, the G-2 of the Armed Forces (*Forces Armées Nationales Khmeres,* or FANK), and the national police. The station was small, and at first I had only one assistant, Charles, a highly capable young man who took on the handling of police intelligence. John had a deputy, Harry, another JOTP product and a French speaker with Asia experience similar to mine. The number of intelligence targets demanding our attention always exceeded our capacity to fully exploit them, but it was a businesslike, collegial operation. In time, I did get two more officers, both with the requisite language skills and operational experience.

Fortunately for us, the modest size of the Cambodian bureaucracy helped to mitigate the staffing problem. As in Laos, governmental institutions were so small that any business requiring the commitment of people or money went right to the top.

Having started with Les Kosem, I introduced myself to the G-2 of the General Staff, Colonel Kouroudeth. Like his counterparts in Laos, neither he nor anyone in his office asked for credentials. I was accepted as what I said I was, namely, a colleague of the officer he'd been dealing with before my arrival. My colleagues practiced a similarly casual approach to their contacts, including John's with Prime Minister Lon Nol. The rest of us covered other military and civilian cabinet ministers; mine was the minister of interior, an elderly man who seemed free of pro forma optimism and therefore disposed to give me a candid view of the government's security situation.

The basic task facing the station in the order-of-battle collection context was the construction of a collection mechanism. Although my intelligence targets resembled those I'd worked against in Laos and Vietnam, the circumstances were different, more on the US side than on that of our various Cambodian clients. In Laos and Vietnam, where we were deeply and directly engaged in creating irregular units capable of building village militias, intelligence was important but ancillary. By 1970, the United States, under the Vietnamization label, was actually drawing down in South Vietnam, and CIA, far from seeking another paramilitary account, was looking for a way out of an already unsustainable level of obligations. Accordingly, when John rather hesitantly asked me if I intended to imitate the larger programs, I could assure him that I didn't, even were Headquarters ready to support such a move. I wanted instead to infiltrate natives of our target areas, equipped with radio communications where feasible. I would have them exfiltrated for debriefing where it was not.

It would not be the kind of quick-reaction system that permitted real time exploitation of intelligence on bombing targets, for example, but it would partially fill the intelligence vacuum that then faced us. If refinements became necessary and possible, we would see to them when the time came. Having no experience with irregular military units and apparently doubtful about the relevance of what he'd heard about Laos and Vietnam, John accepted my proposal on the spot. I was then free to follow my own preferences in building an order of battle collection capability.

My early discussions with Kouroudeth made it clear that he had few if any controlled sources of information on contested or enemy-controlled territory. We would be starting from scratch, but—like Col. Sounthone in Thakhek—Kouroudeth gave me personnel and carte blanche to train and deploy them into communist-controlled territory. He also provided at least some of his own reporting, and it gave us a reasonably reliable picture of the government's own perception of its military position.

Kouroudeth was a strange-looking little man whose nose seemed as if it had been squashed in some kind of collision. He was always most cordial. When I entered his office, he would take me over to the sofa, where we would sit side by side like old friends. One foible that initially made me a little uneasy was his practice of resting his hand on my knee. It was just a collegial gesture, however, and I got used to it.

A Willing US Partner

In Laos, the station had been obliged to conduct a search for Vang Pao before it was able to discuss a working relationship. In Cambodia, Kosem was the one who took the initiative. He had been assigned by Prince Sihanouk to work with the North Vietnamese in the transport of Chinese munitions being sent to the Viet Cong in the Mekong Delta region of South Vietnam. Sihanouk was now gone, and the Lon Nol government had cut the connection with Hanoi. Like the leaders of so many tribal minorities, Kosem was always alert to the possibility of outside support for him and his people. At the moment, the only such prospect was the United States, which now had a military representation at the embassy in Phnom Penh. Using that conduit, he volunteered to give CIA the records of all the Chinese munitions and supplies sent to the Viet Cong through Cambodia.

Kosem could not have known that a highly contentious debate on precisely that subject had been roiling the Intelligence Community for the previous three years. CIA had adopted a relatively conservative model for estimating the quantities being delivered, while the Department of Defense had insisted that the evidence pointed to a far higher volume of traffic. Headquarters jumped at the opportunity to settle the issue once and for all and sent its most knowledgeable analyst to work with Kosem's officer to decipher all the Cambodian script. The result was an embarrassed CIA. The Pentagon's estimates, much larger than ours, were also much more accurate. Ours were revealed to have been the product of flawed assumptions about transportation facilities through Cambodia and about projected Viet Cong logistic requirements.[a]

Nevertheless, the episode was an intelligence coup in which Kosem had demonstrated both his access to information of high value and his willingness to share it with us. His first Agency contact, Bob Bodroghy, had left Phnom Penh before my arrival, so I walked in on Kosem, unannounced, and, simply by mentioning Bob's name, found I had an eager partner in a collection program against both Cambodian and Vietnamese communists. As I had done with Kouroudeth, I adapted my Laotian formula, using even smaller teams that, where possible, exploited Cham villages for support and security.

Kouroudeth had startled me with his casual willingness to leave full control of radio communications in my hands. I would have expected him, as chief of FANK intelligence, to take a more proprietary approach, but he did not even ask how I proposed to deliver the product to him. Kosem was less of a surprise. Our intelligence interests were identical, and what I assumed to be his essential objective for

a. I addressed this topic in a monograph published in 2004, "Good Questions, Wrong Answers." It is available, though in heavily redacted form, at cia.gov, FOIA Electronic Reading Room under "Vietnam Histories."

the collaboration—US support for the protection of Cham interests—reinforced his interest in cooperating with us. Even he had surprises for me, however. He occasionally volunteered privileged information on the Lon Nol government, some of it critical enough to be brought to National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger's attention. On one occasion, before a visit to Phnom Penh by the Commander-in-Chief Pacific (CINCPAC), Kosem spontaneously furnished us the talking points that Prime Minister Lon Nol intended to raise. Although Kosem had treated it as a routine feature of our collaboration, CINCPAC was duly impressed.

Order-of-battle reporting, almost all of which came from Kosem and Kouroudeth, was less likely than high-level meeting agendas to reach policymakers' desks. Nevertheless, it filled gaps, especially at the tactical level, and facilitated both military and civilian field planning.

I had only one opportunity in Cambodia to recruit an agent for direct guidance by the station. One morning, while sitting at my desk, writing up that morning's intelligence take, I got a call from the lobby saying that a uniformed Cambodian was asking to see me. He turned out to be an Army intelligence sergeant I had met in passing at Kouroudeth's office, and I invited him to sit down in the otherwise empty waiting room. He wanted to voice his alarm about the deteriorating military situation, going on at length about the reverses being inflicted on FANK by communist forces.

The sergeant said that he was about to be transferred to Siem Reap, the city near Angkor Wat, and he seemed disposed to work for the station when he got there. I was already getting a little nervous about spending so much time with him in a public—if still quiet—place, so I merely said I'd like to see him again. We made arrangements for me to pick him up that evening at an intersection a block or so from the commercial district, far enough to have little traffic but not so far as to make a foreigner conspicuous.

In our first meeting at my house, the sergeant reiterated his pessimism about the Army's performance and implicitly asked what he could do and how I could help him. I responded by describing the importance of intelligence on enemy activity, plans and capabilities and by asking if he would undertake to help me fill some of the gaps that were impeding our planning. Communication would be crucial, so, if he were to be of significant help, he would have to let me train him as a radio operator and provide regular reporting.

The reaction was enthusiastic, and I promptly arranged to get a communications instructor sent to Phnom Penh. I was aware of the obstacles to success in such an extemporaneous enterprise. The location and duties of the sergeant's assignment remained unknown, and even his access to enough privacy to prepare and send messages was not guaranteed. Furthermore, he had no training in CIA reporting,

and there would be no time to give it to him. I knew there would be a lot of back and forth with him to clarify individual reports, but a productive, controlled source in northern Cambodia—someone explicitly working on our behalf—could make a qualitative improvement in our intelligence on the area, hence the high priority that Headquarters assigned to supporting the effort.

Communications training went smoothly at first, with the sergeant always on time (a virtue not to be taken for granted, in the Third World) and always receptive to instruction. Then, in a freak accident on an embassy staircase one morning, I damaged a knee seriously enough to prevent me from driving. (I had a driver but using him in an operation undeclared to his government was out of the question.) I had scheduled the next training session for that very evening, and it was up to Gisela to save the day. She had some trepidation about finding on a dark corner someone she'd never seen before—I would have questioned her judgment if she hadn't—but I briefed her on the pick-up point and the man's appearance, and we worked out a quick explanation in French for my absence. She found him with no difficulty and drove him to the house, where he and the instructor completed a productive session. He attained adequate proficiency with the radio gear before his transfer north.

What did not go well was the operational phase. The sergeant and I had worked out a fully detailed contact plan that included alternative times, but our commo center never heard a peep from him. I don't think his own service caught him, as Kouroudeth would surely have complained about my out-of-school maneuverings. Maybe he simply couldn't find a place to set up the radio. There was also the possibility that a man who had seemed almost passionately motivated had simply lost heart. After John and I left in 1972, Headquarters mandated the stationing of officers in several regional FANK command posts. They presumably made similar efforts; I hope they had better results.

Life in Phnom Penh with Family

When my family and I were reunited in Phnom Penh in 1970, living conditions were a strange mixture of scarcity and near-luxury. The family quarters of all embassy officers were situated within a mile of the Presidential Palace in the neighborhood in which Sihanouk's coterie and other upper-class Cambodians had lived until he was ousted. Now, nervous about their future, they were all gone, mostly to France. Our house had a modest number of rooms, but the marble walls and floors, which were everywhere including the bathrooms, bespoke its owner's affluence.

Local wage rates, like those in other Third World countries, were low enough to permit us to employ household staff. In both Laos and Cambodia, the domestic help in foreigners' homes was almost exclusively Vietnamese. We found a cook and a

maid, both of whom were competent and a delight to deal with. The 1965 bombing of the Saigon embassy had prompted the assignment of a local driver to those officers serving in Indochina whose work called for stops at unprotected sites. Mouon (a Cambodian and therefore an exception to the rule about domestics' nationality) was with us until we left; he was then picked up by my successor.

When we arrived, the US military presence in Phnom Penh consisted only of the defense attaché and his modest staff. As a consequence, we had no access to the post exchanges or commissary facilities common in posts with major US military presence. Never one to tolerate inactivity, Gisela joined with another embassy wife to establish a small embassy commissary that stocked items such as canned food, toiletries, tobacco, and beverages, both hard and soft.

Most of our food came from the local market, and some of it, especially the fruits and vegetables, was superb (anyone who has not eaten a tree-ripened mango has not lived). Eggs were another matter entirely. In Cambodia, as elsewhere in Indochina, chickens are fed with fish, and the resulting taste is something that we never learned to tolerate. Gisela's solution was the acquisition of a clutch of Australian laying hens, which promptly took over the front yard. That meant, over time, no grass, and our Cambodian landlord would surely have deplored the way the place looked during our tenure. The feathers literally flew when one of the hens became the target of bullying by the others; they pecked at her until our cook put her out of her misery.

Entertainment facilities were among the scarcities. I can't remember seeing a movie theater in this national capital, and the golfers among us (I was not one of them) had not so much as a nine-hole course. The local zoo, no longer the Royal Zoo, but now the zoo of the Democratic Republic, had a modest collection of animals, and one Sunday afternoon we took Christine to see it. The only memorable animals were the elephants, a few of which were tethered so close to visitors that they could easily have reached us with their trunks. None of them did, but one took notice of us by blowing us the foulest-smelling breath we'd ever encountered.

The State of Security

All local staff were subject to security checks, of course, but the reliability of those searches depended on the diligence of the local police and was always a matter of uncertainty. I don't know of any security incidents attributable to betrayal by local employees in any of the three countries in which I served during the Second Indochina War— the local work forces throughout Indochina were remarkably loyal to their American employers—but it seems impossible that there were none. Whether those in Vietnam received comparable consideration when the evacuation

began in 1975 is a separate question. The reluctance of Ambassador Martin and COS Thomas Polgar to reveal even a hint of American pessimism about the outcome delayed what could have been timely preparations for the departure of both US officials and their Vietnamese staffs.

I think it's fair to say that Foreign Service officers over the years have displayed reluctance to accept that bad things can and do happen to US facilities and people. A risk denied is a risk accepted, however, and the absence of a serious security program in Phnom Penh reflected the same attitude that had allowed the attack on the Saigon embassy in 1964. CIA's history has not been significantly better in its own area of responsibility, but, with respect to embassy security, that would include only such intelligence as might come to hand. Nevertheless, when the Khmer Rouge began shelling Phnom Penh in 1971, the attack generated some CIA and State Department concern about the security of staff and their families.

The frequency of these attacks—sporadic and scattered—did not seem to any of us, me included, enough to justify evacuating all families, and our response reflected this irresolute frame of mind. In late 1971, I think it was, the embassy assigned a civilian Cambodian guard to each residence. They were all unarmed, more like watchmen, and on duty only during the day. The one assigned to Gisela, Christine, and me became a regular fixture, watching the street from our front veranda. He seemed to welcome the company of Christine, who was not yet three when we moved to Phnom Penh, and we would hear the two of them conversing in what to us was just babble but must to them have been easy communication. She had already learned to banter with the household staff, and before long she knew at least as much Cambodian, Vietnamese, and kitchen French as she did English.

Shared danger promotes brotherhood, at least up to a point, and Phnom Penh Station confirmed that rule in spades. No one pulled rank, and we were all reminded it was Friday afternoon when COS John Stein would appear with the vacuum cleaner and proceed to clean the station's floors while the rest of us processed the morning's intelligence take. Morale was further enhanced by Washington's increasingly cordial reception of our intelligence product. Although it may have smacked a little of gamesmanship, we took advantage of the 12-hour time difference between the Phnom Penh and Washington to get most of our reports to Headquarters quickly enough for them to be received and distributed on the day before the Phnom Penh transmission date. Bill Nelson, chief of FE Division, was reported to have called Phnom Penh the best of all his stations. It was certainly the best I ever worked in; not even Laos, perhaps because of its much larger staff, matched its harmony and efficiency.

The station reflected John's irreverence toward bureaucratic niceties. Because of its small size, it required a disproportionate amount of assistance from TDYers, and on one occasion, this gave John the opportunity to treat Headquarters to a

demonstration of the station's independent spirit. At one point, we had with us two such visitors, both named Stein. Some kind of emergency at Headquarters prompted a cable to the station with a request to communicate with "TDYer Stein." Neither was in the station that morning, but John thought he knew which one was meant and sent someone to get him back to the embassy. This took some time, as he was working with our Cambodian liaison somewhere outside of town. When the man finally read the cable, he saw that it was in fact intended for the other Stein, John. The confusion resembled a Marx brothers' skit, and Headquarters reproached the station for the delay. John answered with a quasi-apology that ended, "Anyway, in Phnom Penh, a Stein is a Stein is a Stein." Whether or not his Headquarters correspondent got the allusion to Gertrude remains unknown, but there were no more reproaches.

Station and embassy morale was put to the test one Sunday afternoon in late September 1971, when two embassy softball teams, one military and one civilian, met on a vacant lot a few blocks from the mission. As I reconstructed it later, Gisela, Christine, and I were just approaching Phnom Penh's Pochentong airport, returning from a few days of R&R in Hong Kong, when two terrorists on a motorbike paused to fling hand grenades onto the playing field. The explosions killed a Marine security guard, a member of the Army attache's office, and local girl, in addition to wounding others. John Stein, a former member of the Yale team who was pitching for the civilians, escaped injury. The incident illustrated the powerful urge to deny risk when effective defensive measures are not at hand. I experienced it again in Tehran as anti-American feeling metastasized before the seizure of the embassy and its entire staff in 1979.

The shelling of Phnom Penh continued and, although obviously conducted without any forward observers, was obviously intended for the compound of the Presidential Palace. This meant that there was also some danger to the embassy housing in its vicinity. As in Siem Reap, FANK seemed unable even to locate the communist firing positions, let alone silence them. The resulting sense of being under siege was reinforced by the distant thumping of aerial bombs directed at North Vietnamese forces located to the east, toward the border with South Vietnam.

The tension increased with the addition of a new dimension to the security situation. Up the street from our house was a *lycée* whose students were beginning to emulate South Vietnamese students in their opposition to military government. It ended in gunfire one day, and I had to dash out and haul in Christine, who was playing in the front yard.

In mid-1972, instructions finally came from Washington to evacuate all embassy families—I don't remember there being any nonofficial Americans left in Cambodia at that point. This followed anxious deliberations by Ambassador Emory Swank and the Department of State as they tried to judge whether the risk to the families' safety

would outweigh the effect of their departure on Cambodian confidence in the US commitment. As usual in such circumstances, the embassy emphasized indigenous morale, and it was Washington that pulled the plug. Gisela and Christine flew to Germany, leaving me with a couple of months remaining in my tour of duty.

Promoted to DCOS

At this point, DCOS Harry Slifer had already left Phnom Penh, and John had asked that I replace him. The new title had two effects. One was the universally dreaded task of writing performance reports on other members of the station. The other was mandatory attendance at the daily embassy staff meeting whenever John was absent. The latter seemed at times an almost empty exercise. The younger of my Foreign Service colleagues used the occasion to display their command of State Department jargon with knowing references to "*tranches*" (French for "slices") of foreign aid being delivered to the Phnom Penh government. Ambassador Swank, a genial enough man, was by no stretch of the imagination a forceful manager, and time that could have been devoted to planning and coordinating the mission's activities was given over to chitchat about personalities, usually one or another of the embassy's Cambodian counterparts.

All of the station's contacts lived in Phnom Penh, and there seemed no need to seek new access to lesser officials in the provinces. Later, after John and I left, new management adopted some of the practices that I had helped develop in South Vietnam, installing resident case officers at the regional level. Meanwhile, I broke the pattern with a return visit to Siem Reap and Angkor Wat, eight years after Gisela and I had visited. The FANK officers I met there were cordial but not very open in their remarks about the tactical situation.

I got a hint of the reason for this reticence at the lunch served in the hotel dining room. The food was French—apparently standard practice for the local FANK staff—and, when we began to hear the thump of incoming artillery—perhaps mortar—rounds, I couldn't help but think that we resembled the officers of an occupying army, strong enough to protect the amenities of urban life but challenged by a resistance force in the countryside. My hosts reinforced this impression by assuring me that the communists were always doing that and that there had been no damage or casualties. There was not a word about the enemy's composition or strength or about any plans to silence his artillery, let alone to clear the area of communist forces.

In retrospect, I regret not having given Headquarters the benefit of my experience in Siem Reap. Having witnessed the decay of the allied position while I was still in Vietnam and aware of its similarity to what I was now seeing, I should have

commented on the apparent passivity of the FANK regional command and the resulting implications for the outcome of the war. I didn't. Despite my self-image as an independent thinker, I had bought into the DO's team-player culture enough to hesitate to rock the boat. Would it have mattered if I'd tried? No, at least in the short term, but it might have helped over time to encourage a greater working-level disposition to tell truth to power.

My tour in Cambodia ended in late 1972 in a setting very similar to that in Vietnam in 1965. The scale of American military and economic aid—though not, in this case, American troops—was accelerating even as the reverses inflicted on the Lon Nol government made its survival look more and more problematic. This holding action kept the regime alive until 1975, when it went the way of South Vietnam and Laos.

The ensuing Khmer Rouge bloodbath took Col. Kouroudeth among so many others, but Les Kosem survived, for the time being. He had complained to me about sinus distress, which he feared might be cancer, and I had brought in one of our physicians to examine him. The doctor saw no need for lab tests and proclaimed Kosem to have some insignificant problem, perhaps an allergy. Kosem died of a sinus cancer a couple of years later, and I wondered if his examination had represented best medical practice.

My driver, Mouon, fared better. Taking matters into his own hands, he somehow got himself and his family onto an evacuation helicopter at the last moment. They eventually wound up in northern Virginia, where his last boss in Phnom Penh, my successor as DCOS, sponsored him for Agency employment. Mouon eventually became the driver for a series of senior officials, including a DDO, before his own retirement.

Chapter Nine

JOTP, West Africa, National War College, 1973–79

Nothing, it seemed to me then, could have been further from the operationally oriented work so prized in the DO culture and by me personally, and I felt that personnel management had gone overboard to make their point. They could, I thought, at least have put me on a DO staff. To my considerable surprise, the job developed into a challenging and fruitful experience that kept me absorbed for the next two-and-a-half years.

The National War College offered a respite from the stress of the operational tempo I had been experiencing in Africa. Its program of studies also opened a window to me post-retirement career as a contract historian.

Return to the States

As my departure from Phnom Penh approached, Headquarters followed its usual, sometimes pro forma, practice of asking my preference for the next assignment. There was, at the time, only one reliable route to advancement for an operations officer, namely, becoming a chief of station. As I was still a GS-14, the only reasonable prospect was a small post in Africa or perhaps Latin America. I consulted with Gisela, who questioned whether assignment to a small station in a backwater country would be either interesting or career enhancing. I had no doubt about the selflessness of her concern; she had always been comfortable with so-called "hardship posts" and was in any case never timid about expressing her views. The COS pot of gold at the end of the rainbow still beckoned, however, and I followed my impulse.

The answer came back in a week or two: Headquarters would be pleased to name me the next chief of station in a small West African country. That was when the pot of gold lost its luster. I suddenly had visions of searching a miserable, landlocked backwater of no intrinsic intelligence value in which I would look for a Soviet or Red Chinese embassy official—probably a low-ranking misfit—willing to entrust his life to me in return for the promise of freedom from communist tyranny.

Gisela might have welcomed an environment more comfortable than she was likely to find in that country, but she did not applaud my change of heart. She had experienced enough bureaucracy in the German foreign service and in CIA to know that one does not reject the offer of something culturally revered—however trivial in a particular case—without paying a price. I decided to pay the price and turned down the offer. The result was my assignment to the staff of the Junior Officer Training Program, the same program that had hired me 18 years earlier. Nothing, it seemed to me then, could have been further from the operationally oriented work so prized in the DO culture and by me personally, and I felt that personnel management had gone overboard to make their point. They could, I thought, at least have put me on a DO staff. To my considerable surprise, the job developed into a challenging and fruitful experience that kept me absorbed for the next two-and-a-half years.

Once installed in the JOTP offices in Arlington, I encountered Don Gregg, an acquaintance from our time in Tokyo, who was performing some kind of advisory function with the Office of Training while assigned to the National Security Council.

Only a few years older than I, Don had benefited from CIA's rapid early expansion and was now considerably senior to me. (In 1982, he became national security advisor to then Vice-President George H. W. Bush, in which capacity, he had the misfortune of being involved in the notorious Iran-Contra affair). Always a helpful and gracious colleague, Don devoted substantial time to persuading me that being directed to help hire the future generation of operations officers and improve the process of doing so was an opportunity, not a curse. Knowing him to have an unusually broad outlook on our profession—and wanting, of course, to be persuaded that I was embarking on something useful—I listened with a degree of openness others might not have inspired.

Don deplored the DO's obsession with agent recruitments and the accompanying neglect of the health of the organization running them. He thought that, among other things, this had resulted in the abdication of personnel matters to the offices of personnel and training, which he thought were dangerously unfamiliar with the DO's unique requirements. In the area of case officer acquisition, the DO had adopted a practice of detailing two people to the JOTP staff to interview case officer candidates but was otherwise passive, neither specifying required qualifications nor judging program results against DO needs. Don was about to leave for the White House, and he was clearly trying to leave behind someone who shared his aspirations for the program's development. As I was the senior of the two DO program officers, he elected to put the pressure on me.

The JOTP chief, John Hopkins, though a permanent member of the Office of Training, had some DO experience—a tour in a Middle East station—and had a good sense for candidates who could work in the DO. As a trained academic with a Ph.D., however, he seemed most comfortable with potential analysts. The program hired for all four directorates, but it did substantially more for the DO than for the others, which relied more on direct hires. I soon discovered that, despite its emphasis on the DO, the program lacked any systematic guide to the evaluation of prospects for operations. The OSS-era psychological assessment tool was still there, and we saw its reports, but there were only rough estimates of some essential qualities—depth of interest in our work, adaptability to foreign climes, potential as a recruiter and handler of agents, and so forth.

Program officers like me, case officers had no experience or training in personnel acquisition, had to rely on their own experience as they tried to judge the potential of prospective colleagues. We were not, of course, trying to compete with the psychologists' expertise; we were working in the even more abstruse areas of adaptability and motivation and doing so with no expert knowledge. It seemed to me that knowing what our predecessors thought they had learned would increase our chances of

producing useful judgments. I therefore took it on myself to assemble such recollections as I could find and did a series of essays on how to get the most out of interviews.

One of the salient points that came out of this was the danger of accepting an applicant whose exceptional qualities in one or two important areas tended to obscure possibly disqualifying weaknesses. I don't mean things like intelligence or mental stability or financial probity; these were the province of psychologists and polygraph operators. Things like finding the depth of an applicant's interest in a career in intelligence were also important and sometimes defied determination by both specialists and program officers. I discovered a tendency among some program officers—perhaps even more pronounced among their Office of Training supervisors under pressure to meet hiring quotas—to invoke the mantra, "But he speaks *native Chinese*!" This would, for example, be used to rebut evidence of inability to adapt to difficult living conditions or to the prospect of making a living exploiting the weaknesses of an agent prospect on the way to recruitment.

Assignments of DO officers to administration of the JOTP were usually dead-end affairs that led only to retirement. That was one reason for the dismay mine had provoked. It turned out, however, that, when Bill Nelson exiled me from East Asia (EA) Division[a], he did not intend it as an unconditional dismissal or even as rejection for promotion prospects. It took another two years—Bill had been replaced by the renowned Ted Shackley—but I was still with the program when EA Division promoted me to GS-15. In those days, that was regarded as a fairly substantial achievement, even for someone working in the sponsoring component, which at the time I was not.

With respect to recognition for a self-assigned task, my main satisfaction with my work came several years later, when I met an officer who had also completed a tour with the program. Like me, he had developed an interest in what we now call "lessons learned," in this case the accumulated insights of DO program officers. He too had set out to collect whatever testimony he could find that in his judgment was worth preserving. He found, he said, that I had written nearly all of it. My efforts to develop a conceptual basis for judging applicants for case officer positions turned out to be of longer-term utility than I would have guessed when I returned to personnel management after my sojourn in Iran.

a. In 1973, the Directorate of Plans had been renamed the Directorate of Operations and FE Division was renamed East Asia Division.

Looking Again at Africa

Near the end of 1974, with no new assignment in sight, I went to see John Stein, then chief of Africa (AF) Division. I had by then belatedly learned that the personnel system was not a precision machine and that human intervention was a major factor. John was characteristically cordial and, more than that, disposed to give me what I wanted, a COS assignment. He offered me the leadership of one of his division's larger stations. Although it was only a little bigger than the one in Cambodia during my time there, its significance was enhanced by the relative economic importance of the country and its possession of substantial oil reserves. I was delighted.

My family and I arrived there in mid-1975 and encountered a world utterly foreign even to someone like me, with 11 years of overseas service that included several months in Congo/Kinshasa. Even the claustrophobic subway stations of Tokyo could not match the sense of being overwhelmed by the masses of people in this capital city. Where the Japanese managed their huge urban population with a system of rigid social protocols, these residents seemed to revel in a kind of willed civic anarchy.

Civil order existed of course, but it was one that sprang from tribal affiliations and family loyalties, an organizing principle hard for foreigners to see. My only exposure to it had come when the national police member of the ruling military committee invited Gisela and me to his house for dinner. His wife would serve it, and the children ate with us. Otherwise, we tended to think of the social mores we encountered more in terms of the conventions assumed in the following scenario. You approach an intersection, and an oncoming driver flashes his lights. Is that the equivalent of waving you on? Yes, sometimes. At other times, however, it is an assertion of right of way followed by a left turn in front of you. A foreigner has to learn to calculate the infinitesimal yet varying differences in distances and closing speeds that seem to determine such decisions. Caution was therefore always well advised. While we were there, a foreign contractor installed a system of traffic lights, all of which were still flashing yellow when we left. We wondered whether even a functioning system would alleviate the endemic traffic jams caused as much by the people overrunning the streets as by motor vehicles.

We got a demonstration of the country's political style only a couple of weeks after our arrival, when an Army faction seized power. Information on this country's domestic politics had not, at least in the recent past, been a priority for the Agency, and it had no sources with useful access at the time. I therefore had no advance warning of the coup, but Headquarters did not complain that all I was able to report was the atmospherics.

My home and that of my deputy were both part of an enormous housing project built by another foreign contractor some years earlier. The living experience was much the same for both of our families: chronic power outages, irregular water supply, and a garbage collection service whose trucks appeared only at New Year's. At that time, jammed with singing workers we had not seen all year, they would make their rounds, expecting the tips that would keep their goodwill until the cycle repeated itself. My deputy's house had a colorful waterfront view that also overlooked the slow currents that occasionally carried along the floating bodies of victims of accidents or violence.

Gisela and I kept my predecessor's house staff, and, except for the utilities issue, we were seldom really uncomfortable. Water had to be boiled, of course, and fresh vegetables disinfected, but we ate at local restaurants with no serious aftereffects. Christine suffered the only mishap, and this became evident only after the end of my tour and our return to Washington. At that point, she produced a giant tapeworm, probably picked up at the International School, that her mother disposed of.

As we had done in the Philippines, we acquired a dog from a departing colleague. Heidi was perhaps more affectionate and more cognitively challenged than most beagles. She once managed to fall off the 2nd story balcony. Although she somehow avoided injury, she did not necessarily become any more alert to her surroundings.

Another Lesson in Speaking Truth to Power

The capital city hosted embassies from the major communist countries, and I would eagerly have accepted local support for technical collection operations against any of their installations, especially Soviet or Chinese. Our chief contact, the police chief, directed internal security matters as well as criminal justice. In that capacity, he controlled the resources needed to protect such activity. I spent as much time as seemed prudent trying to talk him into helping me, but I didn't succeed. I didn't really expect to, because at the time the country's leaders were concerned about their position elsewhere on the continent. Angola had just achieved independence from Portugal under a Marxist-Leninist government immediately challenged by two rebel groups, one supported by the United States and one associated with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The leaders there did not want to take sides, at least publicly, and any exposure of clandestine cooperation with CIA would have been embarrassing.

Nevertheless, I was on the record with the police chief about our interests, and it seemed to me that, if something I might do unilaterally were to be exposed, he would at least not feel blindsided. In addition, I was not without resources. When I

arrived, we had some agents with good access to the Communist Bloc countries of greatest interest at the time, but they had not led anywhere.

There being no indication that our activity against communist targets troubled the authorities in this country, I thought it only sensible to try to get what we could out of past efforts to lay the groundwork for recruitments. We would examine what we knew about the people in the Soviet mission and coordinate the tasking of our access agents to understand better those who seemed worthy of cultivating. Given its delicacy, this process took several months. In time, we began to focus on a possibility and set about trying to evaluate his vulnerability to a recruitment pitch and what we would gain if it succeeded. We duly reported all this to AF Division, which loved it.

Our reporting included knowledge about the man's standing with his superiors, which was as low as his regard for them. We became convinced that we were dealing with a psychological disaster looking for a place to happen. I cabled AF Division with our findings and, although ready for some pushback, was startled by the almost frantic tone of the response. Perhaps I should not have been surprised; it now seems to me likely that the DO's traditional timidity about approaching ten-foot-tall communist bloc targets had made any apparent low-hanging fruit just too tempting to resist. If necessary, Headquarters insisted, a station officer should just knock on the man's door and make a pitch on the spot.

In my judgment, the likely fallout vastly outweighed the probability that the man would have the qualities that would make such a case worth the unavoidable risks: self-discipline, a serious commitment to working with us, and a career that gave him access to protected information. None of these could be fully tested except in practice, but I saw little reason to believe that he would display any of them, let alone all. AF Division did not rebut my argument and did not order me to proceed, but it made plain its resentment at my stance on the issue. In the end, we in the station simply returned to the search for a more promising prospect.

The main lesson for me was that I had a lot to learn about conveying truth to power without antagonizing it—perhaps even about picking which truth to convey. In this case, I would have been hard pressed to reconcile acquiescence with my professional conscience.

Working the Soviet Bloc Target

Other station operations against Bloc targets boasted more promising agent material. While I was still reading agent files at Headquarters, I was struck by one that described a diplomat of the country, then in the capital, who had ostensibly been recruited in the United States. He had also studied in the Soviet Union. The record was full of promises from him to his case officers and from the latter to

Headquarters about his desire and ability to exploit his diplomatic access on our behalf. The record also described the disappointing results of his return to the capital: little useful reporting and a rather casual attitude toward appearing at scheduled meetings.

This putative agent—I'll call him Wisp—was taking no payment, so I had no leverage there. He was, however, interested enough to maintain contact, irregular though it might be, and I thought his obvious potential merited more calculated handling than he seemed to be getting. A recurring theme in his agent file was repeated case officer invocations of the evils of world communism as a motivating device. Reminders of his duty to help defend the Free World were not inconsistent with his declared values but were having no visible effect. I decided to try my hand at finding some other way to reach him.

It took several meetings over a period of months, during which I too encountered his rather casual attitude toward making our meetings, to make a diagnosis. He was certainly as anti-communist as the next man; his student days in the USSR had disabused him of its claims to represent the working class. What revealed his motivation, however, was the glee he displayed when talking, say, about having maneuvered a colleague or a Soviet contact into disclosing classified information. I came to realize that he was a thrill-seeker, someone who got deep satisfaction from outwitting people in a game they didn't know they were playing.

My task, if I was right about Wisp, was to present myself as a teammate in his game without revealing my manipulative purpose. He responded as I hoped, and visitors from Headquarters later told me he'd become one of the division's prime producers on the Soviet target. Our implicit agreement expanded one night at my house. I was still hedging about levying requirements, but he saw what I was doing and interrupted me to say that he'd give me whatever I wanted.

Tasking became easier, and we worked for several months on expanding his access. Then, suddenly, Wisp announced that he was being transferred abroad and AF Division continued to track him there.

I regretted Wisp's departure. He was not just the source of the station's best reporting but also very satisfying to work with. He was responsive and imaginative, although, as already mentioned, a bit unpredictable. When he left, I took some consolation in the thought that I had succeeded in consummating the recruitment of an agent who had previously been no more than a developmental contact, however he might have been labeled in his file.

It turned out I was wrong. Although my handling of the case may have deserved AF Division's later description as "exceptionally strong," Wisp was still not a recruited agent. Incomparably more productive than before, he was at heart still the

willful little boy doing what pleased him. Whether it was a lack of empathy between him and his new case officer or something as banal as difficulty in arranging meetings, the contact lapsed, and Headquarters sent me to see if I could revive it. There were no emergency contact arrangements with Wisp, and I set up a meeting via the dubious device of a phone call to his office. Wisp was cordial when we met, offering apologies and assurances of reform, but so far as I know never followed through.

The case revealed the irony in my skepticism about the doctrine of rapport as the key to agent recruitment. If anything had turned Wisp into a productive source, it was surely our rapport, although not in the naïve sense of personal friendship or gratitude for material favors. Rather, I had been able to satisfy his psychological needs well enough to win his active cooperation in what we treated as a joint endeavor. When circumstances changed, so did his attitude toward his association with us.

On Political and Economic Issues

Although Communist Bloc targets were of primary interest, political and economic stability was also of interest. At the time, we had no agents with first-hand policy-level access, but I had inherited an unusual case, one involving someone who worked in a high-level military deliberative body. He had no direct exposure to its discussions but provided documents that described its meetings.

The agent's case officer had recently left, and I thought his young and unimpressive replacement not ready to take over a sensitive operation. In addition, as had been the case with Wisp, there were unanswered questions about intelligence production. If he oversaw the files, why were we getting such fragmentary reporting? I decided to take over the case and at one of our first meetings raised the question of access. The agent then surfaced an arrangement previously unknown to the station: He was not the man who actually handled the files. It was a friend of his, or a relative, I forget which, who had the direct, physical access; our asset, it turned out, was not much more than a courier. The inside man was naturally already aware of the operation, and the obvious course was just to include him in our meetings. The agent was confident he would agree, and in due course—I must first have gotten him an operational approval—the man began joining us.

The question of a meeting site was already a delicate one. The tone of the relationship—the rapport—was essentially irrelevant as were political and ideological motivation. Money was their sole driver, and I wanted to minimize my exposure to them. I didn't have to acknowledge my distrust of their motivation to raise the issue, and after lengthy discussion we decided to hide in plain sight—although only at night, of course—on one of the country's ocean-front recreational areas. The agents

found one that was as deserted at night as the city streets were teeming during the day, and it became our meeting site.

The next stage involved exploiting our presumably expanded access. Copying documents and carrying them out was not, they assured me, an option, so I suggested photography. That got a more favorable reception, and in due course I supplied them with a suitably small camera and film. The results continued to disappoint. Their photography was fuzzy and the content, when legible, often too bland to merit reporting as intelligence. Refining and repeating my requirements usually got the response that what they were giving me on a given subject was all the files contained.

I was still working to improve production at the end of my tour. It was possible but seemed unlikely that the two were holding out on me, as the material they did give me was already enough to get them into grievous trouble if the theft were discovered. Another possibility was that they were right and that I was getting all there was in a culture accustomed to word-of-mouth transmission of information and indifference to record-keeping. I never discovered the actual reason but did learn something about the limitations of technology as a solution to problems of access.

Although not very productive, our meetings proceeded without incident until an abortive coup d'état, the second of my tenure, called into question the security of our rendezvous site, even at night. The author of the coup was himself assassinated. Those who had joined him were rounded up over a period of several nights in areas such as the one we had used for meetings and summarily executed. These arrests were broadcast on state television, which revealed a scene just like the site of my meetings.

Working with Liaison

In the absence of any joint operations, I cultivated our liaison with this country's national police mainly to preserve a cooperative atmosphere in case a unilateral case should be compromised. On occasion, however, the chief of national police would provide useful—in one case, blockbuster—intelligence.

The new communist-led (MPLA—People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) government in Angola was vigorously soliciting diplomatic recognition around the world. Washington was equally eager to prevent this. It was in this atmosphere that the police chief called me to his home, where we always met, to tell me that the government was about to recognize the MPLA. The implied but clear message in using me, not the ambassador, as the channel for this announcement was that the leaders wanted to give us advance notice but did not want any discussion

with Washington. The decision was firm. My report sparked even more of a furor than I expected. The Department of State dispatched the ambassador to the Foreign Ministry on a weekend in a futile effort to forestall this communist victory. The ambassador had already displayed a certain reserve about clandestine intelligence—its value, maybe, or its morality—and, although the information itself was incontestable, this episode did nothing to make him more receptive.

Here in West Africa, my aspiration to master playing piano provided a bit of operational benefit. On this assignment, I had taken my piano and found a teacher, the wife of an embassy staffer. The hobby paid its modest dividends after I discovered that the British intelligence chief there was also a piano player and not much, if any, more proficient than I. Otherwise a rather difficult personality, he softened up perceptibly as we embarked on a regime of Mozart pieces arranged for piano four hands, and it seemed to me that the liaison relationship, a significant one because of the British legacy in that country, became perceptibly smoother.

Mention of the embassy reminds me of the way in which its working style resembled that in Phnom Penh, where the staff meetings had featured endless and, to my mind, aimless discussions of personalities and local trivia. In Cambodia, of course, there had been a war to be fought and serious matters to be taken up with the military regime. US interests in Africa were important but less urgent, and there were fewer obstacles to finding time for gossip.

In addition, the embassy staff lacked the strong leadership furnished in Phnom Penh by Deputy Ambassador Tom Enders. He was a tough-minded, no-nonsense diplomat, quite different from many of his Foreign Service colleagues, who exhibited a rather detached attitude toward the pursuit of US interests. In my African post, by contrast, the main objective seemed to be the preservation, more or less for its own sake, of cordial relations with the Foreign Ministry. Although certainly not a conscious policy of defending local preferences over our own, the emphasis seemed to me at best a rather feeble approach to Cold War diplomacy.

About an Onward Assignment

Given my intransigence on the early Soviet recruitment case, I had burned my bridges with AF Division's leadership and could expect nothing by way of an interesting onward assignment. I was getting a little tense about the future when a book cable from Headquarters offered a year's study at either the Army War College or its Air Force equivalent. I was perfectly aware that, unlike some government components, the DO did not regard such appointments as a reward that signaled the rise of one's star. On the contrary, as it then seemed to me, the directorate's anti-intellectual

history led it to treat advanced schooling as, at least in part, a way to dispose of difficult personnel problems, and that is what I had become.

I recognize now, if I did not then, that the issue was more complicated. Unlike the military services, which emphasize career-long training, the Agency is continuously and nearly fully committed to its collection, covert action, and analytic functions. Its size, modest when compared to the military, does not encourage long-term investment in what may look like secondary, competing equities.

I had never shared the indifference to intellectual endeavor that then dominated the Agency, and, after more than 20 years in the trenches, the idea of a year of study at the strategic level was actually quite appealing. Aware of the DO's limited interest in the subject and the resulting shortage of competition, I decided to up the ante by making my acceptance contingent on an appointment to the National War College (NWC), preferable both for its broader perspective on national security matters and for its location in Washington. My calculation proved accurate. I was given the DO's NWC slot, and my family and I returned to the States in time to allow me to enter the class of 1977–78.

Instead of returning to Bethesda, which even then was at least a half-hour away from southwest Washington, we rented a town house on Maryland Avenue, close enough to Ft. McNair that I could jog to school and leave the car to Gisela. For my daughter, Christine, I found a Catholic primary school within easy driving distance. The director asked for documentation that she had been baptized, and with that the orderly progress of her education was assured. She was already accustomed to our peripatetic lifestyle and adjusted with no difficulty. Gisela became active in the association of student wives—there were just two women in my class of 160, and neither was married—and this helped greatly with our integration into NWC social life.

Ft. McNair's location at the confluence the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers, created an entirely appropriate university campus atmosphere at the base, which is home to the National Defense University, comprising the National War College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. NWC's Arnold Auditorium, a handsome amphitheater named for Air Force General "Hap" Arnold, hosted all-hands events, often guest speakers, and the regular classrooms accommodated the six or eight homerooms.

Once ensconced in Southwest DC, we had to get used to the nighttime cacophony of nearby public housing, which included the arrival of one or two screaming firetrucks almost every night. On one occasion, while walking toward the nearby Safeway, Gisela encountered a pistol-waving bandit fleeing the store, an experience she found somewhat unsettling. Despite these interruptions, life near Ft. McNair

was generally tranquil. The atmosphere on the campus was even more so, and I was promptly engaged in the academic program.

I had heard enough to know that the title "War College" was a bit misleading in its suggestion of a program devoted to the planning or conduct of warfare. In fact, the curriculum had practically nothing to do with warfare at the operational level, and I'd have been sorely disappointed if it had. What I expected and got was a broadly based, if compressed, graduate course in the political, diplomatic, and military aspects of international relations. The only serious omission was economics (shades of Notre Dame's General Program!). The course content was admirably broad, much of it supplied by guest lecturers from various of the Washington area's rich supply of universities and think tanks.

Numerous civilian academics supplemented the school's military staff, and the best of both were truly excellent. As in almost any serious academic enterprise, we had to do a lot of writing. Some of my military colleagues found this a considerable challenge. An Army classmate whose name began with same letter as mine sat next to me throughout the program and drafted me into service as his editor. Civilian students were as a group more likely to be familiar with such requirements. As one of those, I could exploit the opportunity to refine my compositional style and learn something about the conduct of academic research at repositories such as the National Archives.

Course work sponsored by the George Washington University made up a substantial part of the program. Under George Washington University Professor Ken McDonald—a future chief of CIA's History Staff—I took three courses in British and American diplomatic history, each requiring a substantial term paper. Because history had been another weak element of my undergraduate program at Notre Dame, I took special pleasure in Ken's encyclopedic command of his subject and his emphasis on the influence of personality on the formation of both political and military strategy. His regard for the WW II leadership of Winston Churchill was especially appealing.

More Thoughts on Personnel Selection Processes

One learns a lot about people through close association with them every workday for a year. I gradually realized that the selection standards of the individual services and departments were considerably different. The Air Force sent its best; their participation in class demonstrated a clarity of mind and interest in what the NWC had to offer that no other service or civilian department could equal. The Foreign Service may have been an exception, but the people it sent had the substantial advantage of a profession to which the NWC curriculum was more immediately relevant. It was

clear that the Army also took its selections seriously and, in so doing, contributed to the uninhibited debates that made the course both instructive and pleasurable.

The Navy contingent contained perhaps the most personable group of students in the entire student body, but promotion potential seemed not to have figured strongly in their selection. One was a former POW in Vietnam who made it explicit that he thought of his NWC appointment as recognition of his service; his approach to academic requirements was correspondingly relaxed. An important exception was a female officer who I believe was the only Navy member of our class to become an admiral. We shared the same homeroom, and our frequent seminars soon revealed that she had the best mind in the group.

Given the profound involvement of nonmilitary elements in the planning and conduct of warfare, it is not surprising that the NWC program called for civilian students. It did, however, startle me a little to find that we represented a full quarter of the student body. I once asked an Army member of the staff about this and was startled again at the vehemence of his reply. The point, he maintained, was to broaden the perspective of officers whose agenda at company- and field-grade level was far too restricted to enable them to meet the intellectual demands placed on flag rank officers.

In his view, the participation of civilian students was essential to a really instructive experience for our uniformed counterparts and the reason for our presence. I don't think he meant that his interest in our participation was merely instrumental and that military students were the only beneficiaries, but, even if he did, the experience remains one the of the most valuable of my working life.

An important feature of the NWC curriculum was a study trip, either abroad or at a major military installation in the US. Having entered the NWC direct from a strenuous overseas tour, I had originally chosen a domestic itinerary, but I changed my mind rather late in the game and ended up in the group going to Vienna and Budapest.

Vienna was an education, or at least the introduction to one, in international diplomacy. Arms control negotiations with the USSR were then in progress, and we had a free-ranging session with Bruce Clarke (I think it was), who was leading the US delegation. His description of the US conceptual approach to arms control seemed to me to imply a zero-sum philosophy, with one party's gain being necessarily the other's loss. When I posed the question, one or two in my group made disapproving noises. Apparently, I was considered guilty of some heterodoxy, of questioning the basis for US policy. Whatever the case, Clarke responded with a lengthy, albeit what seemed to me, slightly stilted defense of the strategy's mutual benefits.

It would have been a foolish waste of an opportunity not to go to the opera while in Vienna. I no longer remember whether it took place at the Staatsoper or the Volksoper, but I do remember the performance of Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio* for its overwhelming integration of plot, staging, and music. The transparency of the structure and intensity of the singing exceeded anything I had yet experienced and has only since been occasionally matched.

If I were to visit only one communist country, Hungary seemed likely to furnish the best exposure to genuinely held communist perspectives on the Cold War. In fact, our military hosts exuded cordiality. Nothing they said sounded like mere propaganda, and the relatively open atmosphere prompted me to ask a question about—as I recall—the ability of the military establishment to communicate bad news to its leadership.

I wanted to avoid giving the impression of being just a provocateur and took some pains to find the circumspect phrasing the occasion called for. Once again, my NWC colleagues got a little impatient with me, but our Hungarian military host engaged me on the point. He went no further than to acknowledge the limits of freedom of speech with one's seniors but gave the impression that the subject was of real interest. At the small reception before our departure, he approached me to say warmly that I would be welcome to return. I was left not knowing if I had succeeded in communicating on a delicate subject with this nominal adversary or whether I had come across, not as a provocateur, but as a naive soft touch.

Back to Work: Near East Division

Despite Ft. McNair's proximity to CIA Headquarters, I had no dealings with management during the school year, and, upon graduation in August 1978—after relocating our homestead to McLean, VA, a stone's throw from Headquarters—I had to find myself a job. Someone suggested the Near East Division as a likely starting point. After a little scouting around, I landed a job as branch chief for North Africa. The duties were considerably less demanding than the kinds of things the NWC had helped prepare me for. Indeed, they differed little from what I'd encountered in the Philippines Branch. There was the same atmosphere of operations officers interested mainly in getting back overseas.

A familiarization trip to Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco highlighted the differences among three countries that in my ignorance I had expected to be closely similar. There may have been a touch of confirmation bias in my reaction to Algiers, whose atmosphere somehow reminded me of communist Budapest. Neither Hungary nor Algeria looked like a fear-ridden police state, but the people of both did seem rather inhibited, and passersby lacked the spontaneity that I thought I had

seen in Rabat and Tunis. The latter featured the exuberant activity of retail markets that charmed me into making several purchases I could not easily afford. One of them, a large, richly embossed leather cushion, became an organic part of our household decor.

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Chapter Ten

Iran, A Protracted Stay, 1979–81

Iran had undergone major changes in the years since 1941, when the United Kingdom and the USSR combined to replace the then shah with his son, Reza Shah Pahlavi. The new ruler made modernization of the economy his first and most consistent priority, proceeding in a way that threatened the position of the one potentially competing power center, the Shia Muslim clergy

Iranian radicals storming the US embassy in Tehran on November 4, 1979.
Photo © AFP

A Shift in Focus

I had been running the North Africa branch for only a few months when word came down that I was to go to Tehran as DCOS to Horace, who had been my COS in Manila. Although I did not know him well, I respected him for his intelligence and calm and his composed management style. Farsi language training would precede my move, and a course was about to begin.

Iran had undergone major changes in the years since 1941, when the United Kingdom and the USSR combined to replace the then shah with his son, Reza Shah Pahlavi. The new ruler made modernization of the economy his first and most consistent priority, proceeding in a way that threatened the position of the one potentially competing power center, the Shia Muslim clergy. Like many CIA officers, I knew of our role in the 1953 overthrow of the elected president, Mohamad Mossadeq, but I knew very little about the shah's rule or the evolution of his relationship with the United States. Specifically, I was unaware of the growing opposition—mainly from Shia clergy and their followers—to the shah's distaste for a religious role in government and to the fact that this development had been accompanied by a growing US commitment to support him as the protector of the Persian Gulf region against Soviet expansion.

In mid-1978, gradually spreading opposition to the shah had produced riots and demonstrations. The Carter administration, led in this matter by its pugnacious national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, reasserted its faith in the shah's staying power. By this time, the dissident Muslims had coalesced behind a fundamentalist cleric named Ruhollah Khomeini. In November, the shah's troops fired on several demonstrations, killing numerous dissidents and launching the escalation that would force the shah into exile in early 1979.

With the shah gone, some of the mobs that had intimidated his security forces turned their attention to US facilities, especially the embassy. On February 14, 1979, they attacked and briefly occupied it before the new, transitional, and, for the moment, secular government called them off. The incident dispelled any notion that diplomatic business would continue as usual, and families and non-essential personnel departed for the United States. Most of the remaining staff followed as soon as replacements could be found for the few declared to be essential.

The station required a chief, however, and I expected there would be competition for the job among veterans of Near East operations. It seemed, however, that the can-do style I had encountered in my brief assignment to the division was either a figment of my imagination or merely a matter of style, one that did not extend to volunteering for service in what amounted to a war zone. Management informed me that I would be the next COS as it tried to restaff the station on a permanent basis. Families would stay behind, and the length of the tour remained unspecified.

The appeal of a COS position is strong but not unlimited, and I considered declining the honor. Two considerations induced me to accept. First was the certainty that, if I turned it down, any prospects for advancement would disappear. I had already demurred once and doing so twice would relegate me to some bureaucratic dead end. The other factor was the recognition that, if someone had to go, the present DCOS-designate was a perfectly reasonable choice, at least from a protocol standpoint.

Whether it was right to dispatch a neophyte to the region, especially one with a very limited command of Farsi, into an extraordinarily tense place is a separate question. My predecessor had no Farsi at all, but he had been administering a large station and conducting liaison primarily with the shah and so was minimally affected. A COS running a much smaller station and handling a few cases himself could expect to be handicapped if he did not have a working knowledge of the language. This was not as clear to me then as it became, however, so I didn't pose the question. Now, 40 years later, the lip service then paid by Near East (NE) Division reminds me of a mantra I had heard repeatedly from Bill Wells, a chief of EA Division during my service there. Although he spoke Chinese fluently, he maintained that "English is the world language" and spoken by anyone of potential interest to the Agency. Proficiency in the local tongue, from that perspective, was an expendable convenience.

The occupation of the embassy had made a joke of diplomatic immunity, and I wondered what effect it had had on the attitudes of the staffers who had stayed in Tehran. I got a chance to explore the issue when one of a series of temporary chiefs of station returned to Headquarters as I was about to leave for Tehran. Ken Haas had been a professor of philosophy at Hamline University in Minnesota when I first saw his application for the JOTP in 1974. He claimed no foreign language skills or foreign travel, and I was at first tempted to reject it as frivolous. A young tenured professor presumably had more serious qualifications—he certainly didn't need a job—and I decided to find out what they were. Interviews revealed a thoughtful young man with a very persuasive strength of purpose; he deeply wanted to contribute. Ken entered the JOTP class of 1974, and during our association there we developed a cordial connection that transcended the conventional roles of senior and junior.

In 1979, Ken had been a case officer in Tehran for a year or so and had already served with distinction at a couple of other NE stations. He understood both the DO and Foreign Service cultures. I posed the question: "If the mobs seize the embassy again and line the staff along the embassy wall demanding the identities of CIA personnel, what will happen? Will our colleagues protect our cover?" Ken's response was a rueful laugh, "No." I was not to expect protection from that quarter, he said, and he was at least partly right, although even partly was enough to sink us after the embassy was overrun again on November 4, 1979. I was not surprised. Foreign Service hiring criteria emphasize observation and reporting skills, not risk-taking. Even so, and even though it came as no surprise, Ken's assessment added nothing to the desirability of the assignment.

Neither did the prospect of getting additional staff as no case officers had yet been named to accompany or even follow me to Tehran. I discovered the priority being given this matter on my farewell visit to DO management, when my old friend and boss John Stein was now associate deputy director of operations under DDO John McMahon. The session with them had a pro forma tone, replete with chitchat about the likely impediments to resuscitating Tehran Station. Both seemed a little startled when I raised the staffing issue; they had probably assumed that NE Division was on top of the matter. McMahon responded by instructing Stein to remind him of the requirement before the next DO staff meeting, the weekly convocation of division chiefs.

I knew I could count on their goodwill, especially Stein's, but their stated intention to relegate the matter to a staff meeting was more than a little disconcerting. They would, I knew, issue a plea for suitable candidates. They might even explicitly solicit risk-takers inspired by the embassy's vulnerable position. If their efforts ran true to DO management form, however, they would not impose any minimum qualifications or order any assignments. If NE Division couldn't staff the new station, it would have to settle for what other divisions were willing to offer.

There was no further discussion before I left, and a couple of months later word came that they had in fact taken that route. The oldest of the three case officers eventually deployed to Tehran was a paramilitary officer with limited exposure to intelligence collection operations. The youngest had not even finished the Operations Course when he responded to an appeal made to his class. The third was an Air Force officer who was to oversee the operation of whatever missile surveillance capability we might succeed in reactivating. None had ever been to Iran or anywhere in the Middle East.

The raid on the Operations Course raised again the question of the DO's Iran priority—it had surfaced first with my selection to head the station—but Bill Daugherty, the young volunteer, took exactly the right approach, eager and

responsive but sensible and careful. I was more concerned about the paramilitary officer, Malcolm Kalp, not because I had reason to doubt him as an individual but because of his scant exposure to collection operations, He arrived just before the roof collapsed, and I had not yet assigned him a collection project before we were overrun. He did, however, display his paramilitary élan with three escape attempts, all of them foiled and rewarded with severe beatings.

Arrival in Tehran

As had been the case in Phnom Penh, my arrival in Tehran was followed by several weeks in a hotel, the difference being that the facilities in Tehran, financed by Iranian oil, were far more comfortable—comfortable enough that I dragged my feet when it came time to move into the perfectly adequate apartment the embassy had leased for me. The embassy's administrative officer, Bert, was admirably competent and hard-working but slightly grouchy and, provoked by my procrastination, threatened to leave me to the vagaries of the real estate market if I didn't move. I duly took up residence in the high-rise he'd chosen for me—or tried to. Bert had just had the apartment cleaned, but I arrived to discover that the crew had left enough windows open to invite a thick layer of desert dust to settle in every room. Bert had to call them in again to make the place habitable.

Geographical references claim the elevation of Tehran to be 4,200 feet above sea level as if the city were more or less level. In fact, it lies at the edge of the southern foothills of the Alborz mountains and rises, I would guess, several hundred feet from south to north. My apartment was high enough to have a view of a skyline speckled with the dozens of construction cranes abandoned when the shah's departure ended his expansion program. From this perspective, the city looked dead. For a pedestrian, however, the crush of traffic made merely trying to cross the street an adventure. Conventional wisdom forbade meeting the eye of an approaching driver as doing so would invest him with right of way, which he would then claim without mercy (I don't think I ever saw a woman driving a car in Tehran).

I was walking toward the embassy one morning when two cars approached, side by side and both crowded with young men shaking their fists and screaming insults. Just as they were passing me, the cars started sideswiping each other, not trying to pass but rather attempting to do as much damage as possible. This went on until they were out of sight. I mentioned the incident to an Iranian contact who just shook his head; he saw this kind of tension and hostility as now typical of life in Tehran.

No one in Tehran looked happy. Service at the neighborhood grocery store was not hostile, just sullenly indifferent. I had the impression that the woman at the cash

register, in traditional female attire, had nothing in particular against this foreigner but was just deeply unhappy.

Station Missions

My principal tasks were to help determine, as best I could, the intentions of the new regime with respect to the United States. I was to explore potential dissident elements, especially among conventionally conservative clergy, i.e., the mullahs who maintained traditional Shi'a hostility to clerical involvement in government and opposed Khomeini's drive for power. I was also to try to restore at least part of the surveillance capability, sanctioned by the shah, that enabled us to monitor Soviet missile testing from northern Iran. At first, I had no other case officers than my omnicompetent intelligence assistant. That meant that I had to handle all HUMINT cases myself until I got some help. I no longer remember the cases assumed by new arrivals, but I continued to manage whatever number I could while I had freedom to do so.

The government was at the time composed of secular Shiite Muslims, several of whom had been station contacts, although not agents, during the shah's last years. One was a Tehran businessman who had acquaintances in the government and who had been tasked with finding out whether they were telling each other useful things that they withheld from their station contacts. Operational correspondence touted him as a prolific source, but Ken Haas had warned me that he believed this to be one of those rare cases in which a case officer embellished the product of an operation to promote his own career.

Ken cited enough chapter and verse, including confrontations with the alleged guilty party, to incline me to accept his description of the case, but the record did not confirm it. Lacking positive evidence of wrongdoing, Ken himself had had no basis for a formal complaint, and I had no choice but to pursue the contact. The case officer had left no emergency contact plans for any of his sources other than phone numbers, obtained before the revolution, to be used in case of emergency. Having no alternative, I called this source at his office, using a pay phone but still uneasy about resorting to open communication. He sounded surprised by my call but agreed to meet.

Sitting with him in his office, I found him just as ill at ease as he had been on the phone. I quickly discovered the reason: although Western-oriented and sympathetic to my desire to learn more about the functioning of the new government, he operated on its fringes and was not privy to any of its policy deliberations.

We were periodically interrupted by an elderly clerk carrying material in and out of the office, and my host had asked me at the beginning to change the subject to

foreign business prospects in Iran when we were not alone. During the intervals when we had some privacy, I probed the basis for his reticence. He said he'd tried to persuade my predecessor that his government connections were personal and social, not political. He had given us the few tidbits of information that came his way, but his station contact had pressed him for more.

I couldn't be sure that he didn't have access he was now afraid or unwilling to exploit on our behalf. In the newly hostile atmosphere that prevailed under the Ayatollah Khomeini, he might have seen the risks as just too high. Either that or Ken Haas was right, and he had never had anything to give us. Either way, it was clear that the contact had no future, and, after satisfying myself that I had everything he could or would give me on the subject, I bade the gentleman goodbye.

The second case involved a young Iranian who had been educated in the United States. I don't remember why he'd been recruited, but he was mobile and resourceful, and I tasked him with finding a new site from which to monitor Soviet missile testing. He obtained very gratifying results, and we had been planning the reinstallation of the collection gear when the embassy was overrun. The agent escaped, and the last I heard of him was back at Headquarters, where an officer was trying to advance a compensation package that was stuck in the bureaucracy.

A third case involved one of the leaders of a tribal minority in southern Iran. Our one meeting demonstrated the perils of assigning linguistically challenged officers to work in a hostile environment. I don't recall how we arranged the meeting—again, there was no emergency contact plan—but it involved my picking him up and taking him to my apartment. We were in the elevator on the way up when the power went out. We spent some time in introductory small talk while waiting for it to come back on. It didn't, and we decided to conduct our business while waiting to see what would happen.

The various ethnic minorities had always had tenuous, if not positively hostile, relationships with the Iranian majority, and this man's principal concern was the attitude of the Khomeini clergy toward his people. He made no explicit request for US support, and I was able to keep the conversation focused on the intelligence that he might be able to provide. We talked for perhaps an hour, but the lights stayed off and the elevator remained stuck. We finally decided to ask for help. My contact shouted into the elevator shaft until a female voice responded. Suddenly—perhaps she knew of an emergency power source, or maybe the power just came back on at that point—the elevator was back in operation, and I escorted him downstairs.

It was not until the next day that someone—probably another tenant—pointed out to me the notice posted in the lobby advising of the scheduled interruption of power. My contact had not noticed it, and my language training was limited to the

spoken mode. Even a fluent command of Farsi would thus not have avoided this confusion.

Like everything the station was doing, this operation ended with the second embassy takeover. It was not until after our release that I learned of the man's subsequent arrest and execution. The pretext, it seems, was not our relationship, which as far as I know was never compromised, but accusations of planning tribal mischief against the new regime.

A colonel in the now defunct SAVAK, the national intelligence and security organ that had been taken over by the new regime and was now possibly under the Revolutionary Guard, offered the most promise for intelligence on the mullahs. Until the revolution, he had been reporting to us, I believe, on the Soviet presence in Iran. Had he been involved in domestic counterintelligence, he would have been in grave danger from the newly empowered religious militants. When I made contact in the now familiar extemporaneous way, I found that he was still employed and still disposed to talk to us.

I don't recall whether the colonel had previously revealed to us his clerical contacts, but he almost immediately surfaced his friendship with an ayatollah he thought it would be worth my while to meet. I knew that a window on the intentions of the conservative clergy and of any potential opposition would be well received in Washington; the only drawback was the difficulty of arranging a secure contact. The best we could come up with was for the colonel to take me, hidden in the trunk of his car, to the cleric's house. In late October, he set up the introduction for the evening of November 10. The precise mechanics were still undetermined when the plan evaporated with the takeover of the embassy on the 4th. It was at best a risky ploy—ineffably stupid, some might say—and I still wonder if I would have gone through with it. I'm sure that apprising Headquarters of what I had in mind would have drawn an immediate veto—the DO's appetite for risk-taking had and has its limits—but I had not yet contemplated doing so when the question became moot.

The last of my cases was a reporter for a Tehran newspaper who had useful contacts in the government. He had been reporting for some time, and there was no need for me to probe his motivation. He was Jewish, however, and I assumed that, whatever had motivated his recruitment, he was now mainly concerned to do what he could to keep the United States informed of the stability of the new regime and the danger of a takeover by politically ambitious mullahs. Like the tribal leader, he was eventually arrested and executed, and I still fear that even the minimal information in his file led to his identification.

Sunday November 4, 1979

The mood in the embassy was not as tense as that in the street, but the knowledge that what had transpired in February could easily happen again had everyone a little on edge. Bruce Laingen, the chargé d'affaires, worked hard at maintaining a normal working atmosphere. Coming into the embassy one afternoon, I found him kneeling on the ground next to the gardener explaining how he wanted some flowers planted along the wall. I kidded him about his devotion to the fine arts commission, but it was clear that his purpose was to keep things as relaxed as possible for the staff and perhaps also for himself.

On Sunday morning of the 4th of November, I was pacing my office as I dictated the reports of my weekend meetings. It must have been between 10 and 11 o'clock when I noticed several young Iranians drifting around below my second-story window. It had already become routine to see them at the gate house, along with embassy guards, but as far as I knew this was their first incursion onto the grounds. They looked harmless, but I kept an eye on them as I continued with my dictation.

As time passed, their numbers increased. There was still nothing threatening about their behavior, but they now looked capable of laying siege to the chancery if that turned out to be their purpose. I called embassy security, and Mike Howell, the assistant security officer, told me he had confronted two or three of them and slammed the door on them when they demanded access to the chancery. It was at this point that I decided to destroy the station's modest document holdings, and my intelligence assistant and I set up our two destruction devices. One of these was a disintegrator, designed to reduce paper to the consistency of powder; the other was an old-fashioned shredder that cut documents into thin strips. The shredder's limitations were well known—with enough patience, its product could be reassembled—so we began work with the new, putatively superior, disintegrator. We had destroyed maybe a third of our holdings when it suddenly died. First aid—checking all connections and the power outlet—produced nothing, and we turned to the old shredder. It worked fine within its limits, and we got rid of the remaining paper.

Before the intrusion onto the embassy grounds, Bruce Laingen had left for a meeting at the Foreign Ministry, taking with him the political counselor and primary security officer. I had given the matter of seniority no thought until one of the remaining Foreign Service staffers, looking for guidance on the embassy's reaction to the growing threat, came to inform me that I was now the ranking officer in the embassy. This conferred no particular authority, as all of us were now improvising our respective responses to an unprecedented challenge, and I could claim no unique expertise. Even with classified material disposed of—as I thought—I was still fully occupied with ensuring that my staff was as ready as it could be to confront what

now looked like a forced entry. I also had to keep Headquarters informed of our deteriorating security situation.

Having confirmed that all safes were locked, I went to the commo center, where I discovered that an NCO from the military aid section had unilaterally brought in his unit's defensive weapons. Whether this was at the order of his commanding officer or on his own authority I never discovered; I knew only that I did not propose to have him endanger me and my people by creating the impression that we were in charge of embassy defenses when the chancery was overrun. The soldier argued that my commo section was more secure than the aid section's office, and I had to issue a categorical order. He complied, but I discovered after our release that he was one of the two embassy personnel who betrayed my identity to the militants.

As their numbers increased, the militants became increasingly aggressive, and Mike or one of the marine guards fired tear gas at those who had breached the rear entrance. I was already in the communications center on the top floor giving Headquarters a running description of events. The tear gas halted more forced entry for the time being, and, by dispensing with classified transmission, I could maintain real-time communication with Langley. There was, of course, nothing Headquarters could do for us, and my attention turned to the question of what we could or should do in the time left before the militants took the embassy by force.

By now, I had taken it as certain that we would be overrun. The militants held the grounds and perhaps parts of the chancery, although we didn't know just which. If I ordered our Marine guards to open fire on the intruders, the act would certainly have provoked a bloodier attack. Accordingly, I told the gunnery sergeant—or whichever of the Marines I was still in touch with—under no circumstances to start a firefight. Back at the transmitter, I heard militants pounding on the commo shack door. I signed off and moved to ensure that my communicators had destroyed or at least disabled all the classified encryption and radio gear.

My case officers were in their offices, and I hadn't wanted to compromise their security by bringing them to mine. I surveyed the commo shack and told my people and the other Americans who'd taken refuge with us that I proposed to open the door. None of them disagreed that we had no choice, and, not without some trepidation, I opened up. There to greet me were a dozen or so young militants, all excited to the point of hysteria. They jammed through the door, one pausing to give me an elbow in the ribs so hard that only the adrenaline rush of the last frantic hours kept me from going down. At least for the time being, there were lots of threatening gestures but no more blows as some of the militants explored the radio gear and others tried to open the safes. I don't think any of them had any more than rudimentary English, and I had no Farsi speakers with me. My own was entirely inadequate,

so hand gestures accounted for much of what we managed to communicate, mostly on my part, to protest this act of piracy.

What followed for the next hour or two is just a blur in my memory at least partly because of what looked like the militants' disorganized treatment of us. I do remember spending perhaps half an hour in a line of hostages against the wall in a chancery corridor. We had not yet been blindfolded, but talking was forbidden. Otherwise, our captors were content to mill around as if waiting for guidance from some absent authority. Some of us were then moved across the embassy compound into the dining room of Bruce Laingen's quarters, that is, the ambassador's residence. It was there, as best I recall, that we were first blindfolded, at least for visits to the bathroom.

The youngest of my case officers, Bill Daugherty, had been placed next to me as we stood around the dining room table, and we were able to summarize in whispers how we'd fared up to that point. I doubt that our hosts had then already determined our connection, but Bill was soon taken out, and I did not see him again for 14 months. I saw none of the others even once. There was still no physical abuse, and our captors found blankets—Bruce Laingen's, I guess—to mitigate the discomfort of sleeping on the floor. The hardship was all psychological, at least for me, and, I assumed, my people. Iranian nationalists had despised and feared the CIA since the early 1950s, and we could expect to get the least pleasant of whatever treatment the militants were planning for anyone they considered an agent of the Great Satan.

"More Boring than Threatening," At First

For several days, our captivity was more boring than threatening. The atmosphere began to change when hostages started disappearing, taken out one by one and never brought back. There were perhaps a dozen of us at first, and the number declined by one or two a day. It didn't take me long to see that my future was going to be determined by my place in line; the longer I had to wait, the more likely that I was at least under suspicion—and more probably betrayed.

Sure enough, I was the last to be blindfolded and led out of the residence back into the chancery. We went up to the secure conference room, the SCIF, on the second floor, and, when I was relieved of the blindfold, I found several militants staring at me from the other side of the conference table. The atmosphere was entirely civil as one of them began to question me about my position in the embassy. I responded with my cover job—adviser on control of narcotics trafficking—and described the details of my contact with the responsible element in the Iranian police. After perhaps an hour of this, I was taken back to the empty dining room in the residence.

The captors let me stew for another day or two before taking me back to the chancery conference room, where I was not surprised to find the substance and tone of the questioning entirely transformed. The same group of militants began by demanding that I admit to being a CIA spy, which I declined to do. They pursued this line for half an hour or so until the principal interrogator, Hussein, lost patience and picked up a heavy rubber hose lying on the conference table. Forcing me to sit with palms up, he slammed it down onto one hand, then the other. The pain was intense, and each blow forced a kind of scream out of me. It was not unendurable, however, and Hussein, who seemed to be enjoying himself, chose another target. I was placed face down on the floor, and my shoes taken off to expose the soles of my feet to the same treatment given my hands.

I had already noticed that one of the militants was looking distressed, and, as I was being positioned for this next round, it was clear that he was objecting to the violence. There followed some intense discussion among them, and, in the end, Hussein refrained from resuming the beating. This episode became the only use of force that I experienced during captivity. At our next session, a couple of days later, Hussein had rid himself of the hangers-on, and, with the two of us alone, he turned to psychological attacks, the most viciously calculated of which soon inflicted more torment than use of the hose ever approached.

It was at about this time that I was moved out of the residence and back to the chancery—and not just to the chancery but to my own office on the second floor. The students who would now serve as my keepers between interrogations said nothing about this, and I inferred that this was intended to provoke me into acknowledging that I was the tenant of record. Inference became certitude when, as I sat in the outer office, I made the horrifying discovery that an envelope I knew contained a cable to Headquarters was standing in plain sight in a file holder on a desk. Somehow, both my assistant and I had overlooked it as the tension grew on the day the embassy was seized. Its contents could not have been much more damning; my first quarterly report of the kind that every COS sent to the DCI, it summarized the collection activity now underway and described the preparations to restore the missile monitoring. There was also mention of anti-Khomeini sentiment among the clergy, although I had decided not to reveal my proposed meeting.

The letter left no doubt about its author's affiliation and not much doubt that I was the author, given its presence with me in the same room, but it was not the document that betrayed me. I had signed it with my pseudonym, and that could not have identified me. I think it was there as a ploy to get me to reveal my CIA connection. I kept silent, and no one ever asked me about it, perhaps on the theory that I had not spotted it and didn't know they had it.

I will probably never know with absolute certainty how my jailers learned of my role as COS. Perhaps when the interrogation began to focus on that point, I was seeing the proof that Ken Haas had been right when he warned me about what to expect in this situation, or they might, as Bill Daugherty learned later, have already discovered the embassy file that identified all CIA personnel at the embassy.

Whatever the basis for their certitude, the militants implicitly revealed their knowledge that the office was mine when they began demanding I give them the combination to the safe. I told them I couldn't as we were not in my office. One of the hardliners—in his thirties and surely not a student—was sitting at a desk. He pulled out a revolver, pointed it at me, and threatened to shoot me if I didn't comply. I could see that he was bluffing—killing me would not open the safe—and simply repeated my denial that I even knew the office. He stood up, glowered at me, and left. If memory serves, I never saw him again.

At one point in this series of interrogations, which were usually two days or so apart, my interrogator, Hussein, came in with a triumphant look on his face. Some of the students tending to us had been put to work reassembling the documents we had shredded. They had contained the minimum information necessary to maintain agent communications; none included a true name. Their very purpose meant they could not be perfectly sterile, however, and enough had been gleaned from the contents of one document to permit the inference that its subject was our Tehran newspaperman.

Hussein spent two or three sessions working on me to identify the agent, and, when I continued to deny having seen the document, he temporarily changed the subject to what he alleged was my role in plotting the restoration of the shah. The letter to DCI Turner had indeed alluded to my intention to look for dissident clergy, but I recall it as having been clear that no such contacts had been made. The intensity of the questioning seemed more like an obsession on the part of Hussein and the other hardliners, a conviction that we had to be doing what they expected of a mortal enemy who had connived in the destruction of the Mossadeq government.

The pressure grew. At one point, Hussein asserted that his masters had had enough. If I didn't tell them what I knew about the planned undermining of the new regime, they would stage a public execution. They knew I had a widowed mother, he said (my father had passed away in 1974), and would distribute the film to ensure it was seen in the United States. I don't know if I would have given the information to them even if I'd had it to give, but I was certainly feeling the pressure. As it was, I could only repeat my denials of any knowledge of hostile US intentions.

The intensity of these sessions with Hussein—my only interrogator throughout the ordeal—combined with the numbing effect of solitary confinement to prevent me from recognizing what I now see was probably just an interrogation tactic. I don't

mean that I took his threats as a definitive statement of Khomeini's intentions; I could see from the start that he might be merely bluffing. The fact remained, however, that, if they wished, they could exterminate this agent of the Great Satan at will. In the weeks before the takeover, the press had been full of reports of politico-religious executions. That and the total isolation that deprived me of any supportive human contact may well have affected my perception of my captors' intentions.

This is a subject I still find painful. With some of the material I was shown. Hussein got me to confirm a few identities. I know that on ocasion, I gave them more than I wanted to, though I never simply opened the book on them. But for me, in retrospect years after, mine was a rather pathetic effort to defend both my agents and myself, resting as it did on the unfortunately flawed calculation that by late 1979 and early 1980 the agents would already have fled.

In any case, as time passed and threats of execution continued, I became seized with the determination to foil any decision to stage a public execution. The exact mechanics of the plan I worked out have long since faded from memory, but they involved an electric cord and an accessible water supply. If they came for me—I assumed, I guess, that I would perceive their intention—I would seize the cable, already plugged into a wall circuit, and plunge the end into a container of water.

Twice, I grew sufficiently pessimistic about my survival prospects to go on a hunger strike. I could, of course, have tried self-electrocution, but this seemed too drastic at a time when execution did not seem imminent; preemptive suicide was not on my agenda. I decided instead to try to force my release by means of a hunger strike. I didn't know much about the physiology of starvation but assumed that, to get quick results, I would have to eschew liquids. I began returning my meals uneaten but scattered enough to give the appearance of having been partly consumed. The guards did not challenge this ploy. After four days without food or drink, however, the only effect was an uncomfortably dry mouth. I started fantasizing about the permanent effects on mental function that might precede the physical but gave up until several weeks later when, in a another fit of desperation, I tried again and got the same result.

These many years later, my mental state during captivity defies reconstruction. The beatings, death threats, and isolation are now only abstractions, and it is hard to imagine just what kind of psychological preparation might have made the experience more tolerable. I know now that training programs designed for this purpose exist, but no such help was offered at the time my colleagues and I were held.

Enduring the Long Haul

My watch had been confiscated at the outset, so I can only estimate that the intermittent interrogation by my tormentor, Hussein, continued for about three

to four months. He then disappeared. His interrogations had become increasingly irregular and mostly devoted to an obsession with a CIA plot against Khomeini. The unpredictability of his appearances in my cell initially made me cautious about interpreting his extended absence as a tacit assurance of ultimate release. Even so, I found myself better able to concentrate on maintaining a reasonable level of physical and mental fitness. I was never allowed outside, and cardiovascular conditioning was therefore limited. I had always been physically active, if not highly athletic, however, and I had worked out a daily regimen that included half an hour of jogging the length of whatever room was at the moment serving as a cell. Despite its limitations, this produced a relaxing effect that helped me immerse myself in a routine that would serve what I had early on decided was the single, vital imperative for psychological survival: use your time in such a way that, if and when you are freed, you won't have to accuse yourself of having wasted it.

One of the three amenities offered during my captivity was the use of the international school's library, which had been moved to the embassy after the February seizure. Most, if not all, of the books were stored in the chancery, and, every week or two after interrogation ceased, I would be taken to exchange old for new reading material. In addition to saving me from death by boredom, this practice afforded an occasional insight into the mechanics of our incarceration. It confirmed, to begin with, that we were not all in solitary confinement. When I was taken into the room that served as the library, for example, all of the seats would still be warm. It did not surprise me to learn that I was the last to be brought there, a realization that seemed confirmed by my gradual discovery that the most popular books of classical authors were never on the shelf. Charles Dickens, for example, was represented by *Our Mutual Friend* but not by *Oliver Twist* or *Great Expectations.* This discrimination did have its advantages, as I wound up reading Shakespeare tragedies that I might otherwise never have known. I don't think I had ever even heard of *Cymbeline* or *Troilus and Cressida.*

The second civilized gesture was the loan of a tape player and one or two tapes from a small collection of classical music. My reaction was mixed when I was offered a tape of Schubert's 5th symphony. I almost turned it down because the piece was a favorite of my mother, and I feared that listening to it would cost me the equanimity that was still shaky after the abuses of the first months. Nevertheless, I recognized that staying mentally intact through a captivity of still-unknown duration required taking advantage of any available distractions, so I accepted the tape and player. It took a conscious act of will, but, having suppressed my first emotional reaction to the sentiment of the Schubert, I learned to welcome the sporadic visits of the music man.

On one occasion, the practice gave me the opportunity to point out an irony in their treatment of me. One of the tapes—I forget which—was a particular favorite, and I asked one of our keepers if I could mark it to ensure I got it again. He let me

put my first name on it then took it away along with the player and tapes. This was followed a day or so later by a final visit from an enraged Hussein. What was I trying to do, tell the other hostages where I was? And who had allowed me to do it? I took that opening to inquire if he was asking me to spy on his own people, and he sputtered, looking for something to say, before making an embarrassed departure.

It must have been a little later that the final increment of my survival program was added. One of the guards informed me that I could now ask for personal items left in my apartment. He mentioned seeing my piano. It instantly occurred to me that having my sheet music would give a big boost to my mental equilibrium, and I asked for its return. I had expected to be ignored—it was all too easy to imagine their paranoid reaction to all that printed text, surely a code system—and I was pleasantly surprised when, a week or so later, it was delivered intact. It came along with the reappearance of my watch, which I later learned was returned only because it had a steel case; the owners of gold watches, I was told, never saw them again.

I had guessed right about the music, and its presence became the single most effective way of passing time doing something that felt useful. By the time of our release, I had memorized the entire text of Schumann's *Carnaval* suite. I would visualize first the right-hand notes of a given passage, then the left, and then in combination before moving on to the next section. The musical utility of the exercise turned out to be minimal, however, as I discovered when I got home. For any benefit to performance, I would have had to memorize not only the notes but their designated fingering. Nevertheless, it offered real comfort when it was needed.

Although I never developed any personal affection for even the gentlest of our guards, there were naïfs among them who gave the impression that they wanted me to like them—or at least to give them credit for services rendered. One was the kitchen's most regular delivery boy, who would always stay long enough for me to sample the meal and then ask (I think it was his only English), "Is good?" "Is enough?" Such tentative displays of concern for my morale naturally had just the opposite effect, only emphasizing my helplessness.

Operation Eagle Claw—A Psychic Earthquake

In the spring of 1980—only later did I learn it had been the 24th of April, the day of the Eagle Claw rescue attempt—I was engaged in my usual morning reading session when two or three guards burst into my cell (still my own office, as I recall) and ordered me to get ready to leave the embassy. Unless it was to go home, I was not particularly interested and preferred to be left alone, but my keepers were in a state of high excitement, threatening to force me out empty-handed if I didn't move

faster. They pushed me into the back seat of a car, and we made our way through Tehran's chaotic traffic into the countryside.

After what seemed like hours, we turned into the driveway of a pleasant suburban house, and my keepers took me into my new quarters, where I found myself the only hostage. Although the surroundings were not uncomfortable, there were no longer any books or music, and by then I had come to depend on my sheet music for mental stimulation. This dearth of activity made me sensitive to what soon became an almost unbearable racket from the hundreds of small birds in a fruit tree just outside. Almost soothing at first, within a week or two this nonstop entertainment became something closer to psychological torture.

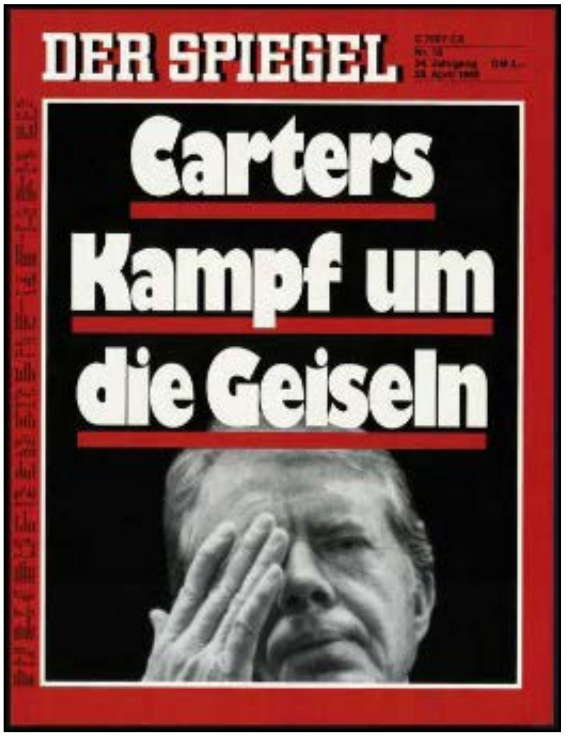
Having little to do and being always alone, I could indulge my curiosity about the ownership of the house. It was still furnished but had no decorations, at least in the room that served as my cell. The most likely source of clues was the chest of drawers that would have held my personal items if I had had any. Regrettably, I had no choice but to wear my one set of socks and underwear until it was my time for a shower, every week to 10 days; I would then wash them along with myself. I had not shaved since the act of piracy that had brought me here, a practice that I continued until told of our impending release. After two or three forays into the chest of drawers, I found a small photograph wedged into the corner of a drawer. It showed a family in Western dress, and, although it was too small to allow anything but guesswork, I thought the man's bearing suggested a military background. I surmised he was an officer in the shah's army or security apparatus who had been dispossessed—or worse—when the new regime came to power.

My stay in the bird sanctuary lasted, I think, a few weeks before my keepers bundled me into a car for a second trip that, like the first, seemed to last hours before we arrived at a destination that instantly made me wish I still had the birds. I don't remember the approach to the building or what it looked like—I was probably blindfolded—but I'll never forget my introduction to the only authentic prison cell of the entire hostage episode. The very sight of my cell in what I later learned was the notorious Evin political prison multiplied every fear, every fantasy, of a dreadful outcome, that had intermittently threatened my self-possession. No light, no chair, just a mat on the floor. Sleep, if it came, was subject to interruption by the screams of prisoners—presumably Iranians—whom I could safely assume were being tortured. The irony in that did not offer much comfort, but it did remind me of the remarkable similarity between the practices of my jailers and those of the SAVAK they so bitterly hated.

The depressing environment was aggravated by what passed for food. It arrived in cans resembling US military "C" rations but—consisting of animal, probably sheep, guts—was too nauseating to be eaten. I survived on bread for the duration. It

was an enormous relief when, after only a couple of weeks, they moved me again. I might have learned to eat the stuff before starving to death, but it would have been a near thing. At this point, I discovered that my earlier resolve to be ready to take my own life was probably just a fantasy.

Just where I was taken after Evin has faded from my memory. Indeed, from that point, I cannot for the most part associate events with the places where they occurred. It's certain that at one point I was back in the embassy because a visit to the library gave me a clue to what had provoked my evacuation. The embassy's magazine subscriptions had apparently not yet expired, and I found a fairly recent edition of the German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel*. Our keepers always censored news publications, but they had missed this one. Although I had not yet learned German, the combination of photographs, cognate words, and place names gave me the gist of the Eagle Claw disaster.



I can't explain why, if there was any reason, a copy of the April 27 issue of *Der Spiegel* was left in a place where I and others could learn about the Eagle Claw rescue attempt. If it was meant to demonstrate the inability of the US military to come to our rescue and demoralize us, it had quite the opposite effect on me. Photo: Der Spiegel Archive.

The effect of this discovery was a psychic earthquake. After the first weeks in solitary confinement, I had developed a growing—and deeply depressing—sense that our country would lose interest in us if our captivity dragged on without resolution. Learning that we were not forgotten raised my spirits in a way that nothing short of actual liberation could have matched. By this time, I had not seen or had contact with any of my fellow hostages since the first days after the embassy was seized.

My captors moved me yet again, this time to a site about which I remember only one thing: it was an office building with windows that extended across two rooms and had a space between the window glass and the end of the partition separating my cell from its neighbor. I could hear faint sounds through this aperture, and I pressed my face to the window and whispered to get the attention of its occupant. That brought Tom Schaeffer, the air attaché, within inches of my face, and the whispered conversation that followed suggested that he was as happy as I to be reunited,

however furtively, with one of his own. We spent much of the next few days sharing our experiences before another move separated us.

I now regret not having spent more time comparing notes with Tom and a few others after liberation, but, except for members of the station, I soon lost track of them as we all dispersed homeward. Now, more than 40 years later, not all of them are still with us.

Another unexpected contact, this one with a perfect stranger, involved a clergyman—perhaps an Eastern Orthodox priest—around Christmas in 1980. He was standing at a makeshift altar in a room that served as a chapel. I was his entire congregation after what I assumed had been an earlier session for my unsegregated compatriots. He proceeded to say Mass, or what I assumed was Mass; it certainly was not said in Latin. I got no particular comfort from the ceremony, but that would not have mattered to my jailers, who were surely motivated more by admiration of their own ecumenical generosity than by any concern for my spiritual welfare.

It was not until after the presidential election that I was put in the company of other hostages. Defense attachés Don Sharer, US Navy, and Chuck Scott, US Army, were already sharing a roomy cell, and I was moved in with them. Having their company was a real treat after so many months in solitary. When we ran out of conversation, there were cards for cribbage and, I think, a board game or two.

Their company would have smoothed the transition to release had it continued, but it lasted only a day or two. One morning, a cleric appeared at our door and stared at us—especially at me—with the coldest eyes I'd ever seen then left without a word. By the end of the day, I was back in solitary. This return to form was unpleasant but tolerable for, by this time, we were reasonably assured of eventual release even if the timing was still uncertain.

It must have been mid-January when, one day, the guards simply disappeared from their stations outside our cells. We had all become so accustomed to acting only on command that it took us awhile to venture out to see what this portended. I was able to talk briefly with six or eight of the others—none of them station people—before the guards came back and we were returned to durance vile. The atmosphere became palpably more relaxed, however, and liberation began to feel imminent.

Freedom at Last

The day finally arrived. We had no baggage to pack, of course, so preparations were minimal. I was awaiting word of the next move when a guard led me to an

office in the same building—still the Foreign Ministry guest house—where I found my old nemesis Hussein sitting at a desk. There were no threats this time. Instead, he launched into a rather inarticulate apology for the beating he had given me on that day in the embassy SCIF. It was wrong, he said, and to prove his regret he was inviting me to do to him what he'd done to me.

I'd noticed a shapeless object lying next to his hand, and, when he picked it up, I saw a coiled length of what looked like a light-weight cotton cord, rather like clothesline. He offered it to me, and I remember wondering how he'd react if I accepted and told him to extend his hands. He had clearly foreseen that possibility because the cord was obviously light cotton and close to harmless. The Iraq invasion and Abu Ghraib were still well in the future, and the moral high ground was mine, so I took the opportunity to stare at him a few seconds before saying, "We don't do stuff like that." He got up and left.

If Hussein had given me the same rubber hose he'd beaten me with, I'd have been tempted to take him up on his offer, but it wasn't hard to turn him down. Like the gift of a Christmas Mass, his gesture seemed to me designed to soothe a guilty conscience, and I saw no reason to collude in his self-justification. In any case, by this point he was surely hardened enough that it didn't even occur to him that his crime, for me, had to have been the repeated threat of recording my execution for the benefit of my family. For that, there could be no balancing of accounts.

We were taken by bus to the Tehran airport. I was seated, by accident, next to an enlisted member of the Defense Attaché's office. I hardly knew the young man except for the episode when I opened the door to the communications room on November 4, so it was a bit startling to hear him urge me not to believe everything I might hear about him. I didn't care enough to press him to explain this odd appeal, and it was only later that I learned from the Office of Security that it was he who had given my identity to our captors.[a]

Most of my colleagues had presumably resisted interrogation on that and other subjects, but State Department and OS later gave me the names of two people, one of them the soldier and the other an FSO, who had volunteered station identities to the Iranians. I never tried to determine which, if any, of our other colleagues had done the same. Revenge probably is a dish best served cold, and I never developed enough objectivity on the subject to be sure I could meet that criterion if I discovered more. The two cases I did know about—I prefer to think there were no others—sufficed to validate Ken Haas's prediction of what I could expect if the earlier seizure of the embassy was repeated.

a. The soldier would be the only Defense Attache Office member not awarded a medal because he "did not behave under stress the way noncommissioned officers are expected to act." *New York Times*, June 2, 1981.

When my turn came to leave the bus at Mehrabad Airport, I was seized with a vision of some hardliner exploiting a final opportunity to exterminate this agent of the Great Satan, and I scuttled in quite undignified fashion onto the plane. I could have imagined a frosty reception from the presumably Muslim crew, but they were all very hospitable, inviting me into the cockpit and offering generous servings of spirits.

The flight to Algiers was the first chance I'd had in 14 months to see what was left of my staff. It was an odd experience. The only one I really knew was Bill Daugherty (my assistant had been released) as we had worked together for some weeks before being separated. Malcolm Kalp, who had arrived just before the hijacking, was a near stranger, and seeing him was more like an introduction than a reunion. My communicators, in Tehran on TDY, had not been there long enough for me to get well acquainted with them. The result was that I had had more contact with Bruce Laingen, the FSOs, and the defense attachés than with the succession of CIA people.

Our reception in Algiers had a festive quality, thanks mainly to the throng of journalists covering our release. The highlight came as we were about to enter the terminal. I heard my name repeated several times in an intense near whisper. I looked around and saw a colleague, presumably then stationed in Algiers, who had worked for me during my assignment to the North Africa Branch, where we had been good friends. I couldn't resist joining this breach of his security and gave him a mock salute. I hadn't seen the nearby photographer whose shot of my response (my colleague fortunately not included) appeared the next day in newspapers around the world. Researchers on Iran still occasionally ask me who it was who got the salute. One of my editors in this project observed after looking through a collection of family photographs for this memoir that only one other smile captured in a photograph equaled the one in that photograph—the smile I wore the day of my marriage to Gisela.

Returning Home, in Stages

Our return home took place in distinct phases. After landing in Algiers and changing planes, we flew to Wiesbaden, West Germany, and the hospital at the US Air Force Base there. Given my eagerness—and that of all of us—to get home, the intensive medical workup there became a little burdensome, but the unfailingly gracious reception from the staff included the assignment to each of us of a doctor charged with seeing to our needs and preferences. I told mine that my German in-laws lived not far away in Offenbach, and he arranged for them to come to a restaurant in Wiesbaden, where we met for a welcoming dinner (The Air Force picked up the tab; at this point I had not a penny). My work on German grammar

had not added a great deal to my vocabulary (its utility emerged later, in language school), and I anticipated some communication problems, but my young brother-in-law, Guenter, saved the evening with his affable, gentle personality and impressive command of English.

On our second or third day at Wiesbaden, we received a visit from Jimmy Carter, now our ex-president, and former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, who had resigned in protest of Operation Eagle Claw, which he considered to be an ill-advised rescue attempt. Beyond conventional expressions of admiration for our powers of endurance and a tribute to the intended rescuers of Operation Eagle Claw, Carter had little to say and, after just a few minutes, invited questions. I had no doubt that all of us harbored the same question, but no one posed it. The atmosphere was growing quite uncomfortable, and, although I had no desire to act as spokesman for the group, I realized that I wasn't ready to let the session end with the question unasked. I inquired whether Mr. Carter still believed that accepting the shah into the United States in 1979 had been a wise thing to do.

His reply was notable more for length than for clarity, and it was obvious that he was not prepared to defend the reasoning behind the decision. I remember trying to recall the logic of his remarks shortly after the event and being unable to do so; they were just too diffuse. The exchange did, however, satisfy my need to ensure his awareness that the hostages fully understood the role of the White House in provoking the seizure of the embassy that day in November 1979.

The flight back to the United States included a stop at Shannon Airport in Ireland, where the welcome resembled a tourist event. Several Irish officials did us the courtesy of coming out to greet us, each bearing a gift of decorative glassware. Very nice, everyone thought, although we did notice that each item was engraved with a Christmas design and the year 1980. It seemed that our hosts were using the occasion partly to dispose of some overstock from the recent Christmas, but their jovial welcome nevertheless made it an enjoyable interlude.

Home was not our first stop even after we reached the States. If anyone ever explained why a visit to a military academy had to take precedence over seeing home again, I missed it. Presumably, it had to do with the proximity of Stewart Air Base to the US Military Academy at West Point. Our home agencies did, however, bring our immediate families to meet us for the most intensely emotional event in the series of celebrations that followed both in Washington and in our respective hometowns. In addition to Gisela and Christine, my mother and all four siblings were there, an assemblage that made the tarmac at Stewart seem something like home.

After the picture-taking, all by military staff, we moved by bus to the mess hall, where the cadets had gathered to greet us. The drop-off point was a block or two

away, and, as we left the buses, we heard a strange droning sound. The closer we came to the mess hall, the louder it got, and, when we entered the building, we were met by an almost overwhelming roar. Even after the warm reception at Wiesbaden, I had no real idea of the intensity of my country's obsession with the hostages' plight until we entered that mess hall. The cadets, all standing at their assigned tables, were giving us the most powerful in the series of welcomes that occupied much of our time over the next few weeks; not even the subsequent ticker tape parade down Broadway equaled it.

The city had assigned one of its employees to escort each hostage family to city-sponsored events. The cool reception we got from our guide left the initial impression that he would just as soon be at work. We were careful not to be demanding, however, and the atmosphere warmed to the extent that, when we left, he presented us with a book that had long been in his family and whose Middle Eastern setting he thought fitting for the occasion: a beautifully illustrated antique edition of *A Thousand and One Nights*. The gesture was all the more touching for being spontaneous, and I saw no reason to note the irony of being presented with a gift of stories being told under threat of execution.

The succession of celebratory events in New York and, later, at home in Northern Virginia and Wisconsin became a little wearing. Wearing, not boring; it would have been impossible to resist the evident goodwill, even adulation, of all those cheering people. At the same time, the constant references to us as "heroes" struck a discordant note. I understand now, if I didn't then, that celebrity in American culture is often identified with heroism. To be well-known without any of the standard credentials of celebrity—fame, riches, political power, etc.—requires a substitute, and heroism offers an easy surrogate. I don't know any hostage who accepted this kind of praise as his due, and those whose views on the subject I heard all echoed mine: having survived a trying experience did not make us heroes. We had not, after all, actually *done* anything to merit applause. Surviving beatings and threats of execution might qualify, but I never heard any suggestion that this was in the minds of any of our well-wishers.

With this mental reservation, I listened to welcoming crowds at Stewart Air Base, in New York, at home in McLean, Virginia, and finally on a visit to my hometown in Wisconsin. The New York portion featured a performance at the Metropolitan Opera and a traditional ticker tape parade. The timing of the parade required a trip back up to New York, and Gisela and I considered staying home. We eventually decided to go and were happy we did when, at one point on the parade route, we heard a woman's voice screaming our names over the noise of the throng surrounding her. It belonged to the wife of Bill Hawley, my friend from the JOTP and Army days, who had taken the trouble to navigate the crowds just to welcome us home.

The final event in Washington, on January 28, was a reception at the Reagan White House. Like the ticker tape parade in New York, it was impressive in a formulaic way, but the emotional welcome from the president and Mrs. Reagan seemed entirely genuine. The receptions in McLean and Fond du Lac featured relatives and friends, which lent them an even greater personal warmth that I still recall with gratitude. The band at Christine's future high school in McLean marched by the house, and I was called on for remarks in which I emphasized, of course, the thoughtfulness of the substantial crowd gathered in our cul-de-sac. I also took the opportunity offered by the presence of reporters to express regret that so few of the veterans of combat in Vietnam had enjoyed a similar welcome.

The reception in Fond du Lac was the same in spirit but took place indoors in the reception hall of St. Mary's church, which I had attended so many years earlier. The event there was positively embarrassing in its generosity and included the gift of a boat and outboard motor. Lacking any use for such equipment, I applied my clandestine operational skills to finding a deserving recipient and donating it in a way that kept the gift anonymous.

It was only after the celebration had subsided that I saw the first and only hostile reception of the entire homecoming experience. The Naval Academy invited the embassy's military officers and at least those civilians living in the Washington area to visit the Naval Academy at Annapolis. The military officers among the hostages were seated on the stage of the auditorium, with the rest of us—only a few, as I recall—down in front. The only part of the session I remember was devoted to questions from the midshipmen, who immediately established their skepticism about our conduct or at least that of their military counterparts during the siege of the embassy. We had Marine guards, after all, and other staff also had weapons, and the basic question was why they had not been used.

The midshipman's assumption seemed to be that at least the embassy's military component should have fought to the death rather than surrender. My colleagues on the stage were obviously at a loss about how to explain that diplomatic facilities had no combat missions and the resulting irrelevance of the question and how to do so without looking defensive or evasive about their own performance. They were in an unhappy situation, and I was content not to be a target of the midshipman's ill-informed questions.

The atmosphere at Headquarters offered its own challenges. Senior management seemed to think that, after months of press coverage, my Agency affiliation could still be concealed if I avoided the Headquarters compound, and I was encouraged to stay home until the dust settled. The NE Division chief, who came to the house for a security debriefing, naturally wanted to know about the station's operations, but he startled me with his concern also for Wisp, the African diplomat whose recruitment

I had furthered in West Africa and whose CIA connection had surfaced in press coverage during my captivity. He wanted to know if the Iranians had squeezed this out of me, and I explained to him their exclusive preoccupation with presumed CIA plotting against Khomeini.

Reporting later revealed that Wisp had engaged in extramarital adventures that eventually came to the attention of his wife. Knowing of both his American and Soviet connections and wanting revenge, she revealed the former to the latter, and the Soviets put it into cooperative press channels, presumably ending his diplomatic career. I winced when I heard about this outcome because I had recognized early on his need for excitement—it was surely an important reason for his work on our behalf—and it was now clear that my efforts to encourage a less devil-may-care attitude toward risk-taking had not taken root.

Chief NE conducted a rather summary interview on security issues that proved to be the closest thing to a debriefing about captivity that I ever received. I was never debriefed about the circumstances of captivity itself. I never learned if or how my experience and that of my station colleagues contributed to the Agency's recognition that bad things do happen and that taking measures to prevent them or mitigate their damage is not a preemptive admission of weakness or defeat.

It took other, more grievous, incidents to generate an effective program to protect CIA officers serving in the Middle East. The April 1983 Hezbollah suicide bombing of the embassy in Beirut killed COS Ken Haas, renowned Middle East analyst Robert Ames, and several other CIA officers.[a] The following year, also in Beirut, COS William Buckley was abducted from his apartment; he died in captivity in 1985. There have since been other fatalities, but it would probably be fair to attribute those not to weak defensive efforts but to intensified conflicts in the Middle East and deeper US involvement in coping with them.

A Difficult 14 months for My Family

The whole episode was, of course, hard on my family. The prolonged uncertainty about when—or even if—the hostages would be released and the absence of any communication with us was a very wearing experience. A picture of Gisela taken perhaps halfway through the ordeal reveals an almost gaunt face, one that I hardly recognized. She was still very much in charge of her agenda, however, continuing her CIA job and becoming vice president of the family association that she founded with Penny Laingen, Bruce's wife and the group's president. In that position, she helped

a. CIA marked the 40th anniversary of that tragic day with a commemorative article on its public website: Never Forgotten: The Deadliest Day in CIA History - CIA https://www.cia.gov/stories/story/beirut-embassy-attack-40th-anniversary/

THE WASHINGTON POST Thursday, February 5, 1981 Va. 5

Neighborhood Hero Comes Home

Gisela, Christine and Thomas L. Ahern Jr., above, pause for a family portrait in front of their McLean home. During the festivities, Daniel Flanagan, far right, president of the Potomac Hills Citizen Association, turned the microphone over to Ahern, who thanked his neighbors for their support.

PHOTOS BY CHARLES K. CROCKETT FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

The Patriots of Northern Virginia, a fife and drum corps, and some neighborhood children, Benjy Ellis, Xander Abbe and Michael Ellis, joined the parade past the Aherns' house.

It may not have matched a reception at the White House or a ticker tape parade in New York, but Cola Drive in McLean was filled with cheers last weekend, as nearly 250 people turned out to welcome home their friend and neighbor, former hostage Thomas L. Ahern Jr.

From their front yard, Ahern, his wife Gisela and their 13-year-old daughter Christine watched a parade that included everything from a fife and drum corps to neighborhood children who decided to join the festivities.

After the parade, Ahern took time to return the joyous welcome by thanking his neighbors in Potomac Hills — and all Americans — for their support throughout the hostages' 14½-month captivity.

Homecoming to McLean in the last weekend of January 1981 brought one more celebration shown in the above weathered copy of the *Washington Post* of February 5.

ensure that our plight was kept in the public eye and that the families' concerns voiced to those government agencies with employees among us.

Gisela's deep engagement with the hostage families ended upon my return. She made a conscious decision to put the entire experience behind her, gently declining the suggestion even of her closest contact among the wives that they maintain their connection. Her attitude meshed perfectly with mine, as I too simply wanted the thing behind me. In this we differed from some of the other couples, who as time passed seemed to be making our captivity the center of the rest of their lives. Forty years later, several of them are still leading an effort, admirable in its own way, to secure for all of us assets seized by the United States from various Iranian entities, but that would prevent the closure that Gisela and I most wanted.

Gisela and Christine had devoted themselves to supporting my mother, who had been widowed in 1974 and found living alone during my captivity very trying. She made frequent visits to McLean, and, after I got home, she often alluded to the extraordinary consideration shown by her daughter-in-law and granddaughter. Her life back in Fond du Lac was complicated by well-intentioned but not always helpful relatives. I remember her telling me later about the almost obsessive concern for me of her older sister Stelle—the favorite among our many aunts—who had lost her two

sons, each at 49. I had reached that age during captivity, and Stelle's fantasy that I was doomed to the same fate did nothing to assuage mother's anxiety.

Although still only 13, Christine displayed the composure under pressure that became one of her most distinctive qualities. Schooling proceeded in a more or less normal way, and the press did not intrude on home life in the way that became standard at my mother's house in Fond du Lac. Our neighborhood also differed from a good many others in not having its trees festooned with yellow ribbons.

As an only child, Christine recalls the pressure created by the absence of siblings with whom to vent her feelings. She understood the sensitivity of my position in Tehran and readily complied with her mother's urging to avoid open discussion of my plight. She remembers nothing about CIA's handling of the family but did recall an interview with a State Department physician or psychiatrist whose impersonal manner provoked her into a refusal to answer his questions.

Christine did need relief from outside the family, however, and found some in the weekly journal entry mandated by her 8th-grade English teacher. The students' contributions were read or discussed only between teacher and student, not in class, but Christine obtained an assurance of confidentiality before using the exercise as an outlet for her feelings about being the daughter of a hostage.

Chapter Eleven

More Forays into Personnel Management, 1981–84

During this period [after my return], John Stein, still ADDO, was generous with his attention to my future. While my next assignment was still open, he would often drop by the house on his way to work to give me a little pep talk and sound me out on my thinking about the future.

Facing Uncertainty

In my first weeks back home, I experienced the professional uncertainty of those who return from an extreme experience such as severe illness or injury or, as in my case, prolonged captivity by an authoritarian regime that harbored special hatred for CIA and therefore for me. During this period, John Stein, still the assistant DDO (ADDO), was generous with his attention to my future. While my next assignment was still open, he would often drop by the house on his way to work to give me a little pep talk and sound me out on my thinking about the future. It was during one of these visits that he mentioned the planning for another rescue attempt already well advanced when Tehran agreed to our release. He assured me that it would have been a vastly more sophisticated operation and that we'd have been freed whether the mullahs liked it or not. Thinking about the constant moves from one cell—even one city—to another prompted me to say that I was content not to have had his optimism tested.

A bit later, John offered a recuperative agenda of a year in language training followed by transfer to a European country**,** where the main order of business would be managing our relationship with that country's intelligence service. With no operations targeted at the host government and of course no paramilitary dimension, it would be the least challenging of all my tours, but I was no longer looking for excitement, and Gisela was delighted.

John submitted my name to the country's intelligence service, which responded that I'd be welcome but that it feared the publicity surrounding my captivity would pose both a danger for me and, although this was unspoken, a problem for them. The terrorist Red Army Faction was at its peak of activity, and the possibility that the publicity surrounding the hostage episode might lead to my being identified and targeted was substantial enough to be worrisome. That ended, at least for the time being, the prospect of another move to abroad. The job that John then came up with almost provoked me to retire. I was to go back into personnel management, although this time in the DO, as deputy to David Duberman, who managed one of CIA's specialized collection programs.

During these discussions, John kept insisting that Dave was a "class act" with whom I would enjoy working. People's judgments in these matters vary enormously, so I was delighted to discover that in this case John's view and mine coincided

exactly. David and I went on to establish the most productive boss-to-deputy relationship of my entire career.

Back to Managing Career Training, Successor to JOTP

In the spring of 1983, almost two years after my introduction to David Duberman, John Stein, now the DDO, called me to his office. He was worried about reports of dysfunction in the Office of Personnel's Career Training Division (CTD) and thought a change of leadership was needed. It was customary for the DDO to have a voice in choosing the CTD chief, as had been the case with the JOT Program, and it was clearly John's intention not merely to have a voice in this case but to make the selection himself.

Theoretically, the call belonged to the Chief of Personnel, Robert Magee, himself a DO officer, whose assignment to the Office of Personnel (OP) was an example of the new practice of assigning officers from one directorate to positions—sometimes very senior—in another. Magee and I had worked together briefly when he was deputy chief of NE Division and I had a branch there, so I was familiar with his swashbuckling style and he with my more conservative approach. Indeed, although we'd had no falling out, I thought he might reject me in the pursuit of someone more like himself. He didn't, and I embarked on the third installment—as unsolicited as the others—of my experience in personnel management. The whole transaction had taken place while Dave Duberman was absent on a temporary assignment, and the only real heat that it generated came from him when he got back and discovered that a deputy he'd entrusted with managing a substantial part of his program was no longer his.

Bob Magee had been tapped—coincidentally, I'm sure—to head the personnel office during a surge of interest in business as a model for DO administration. This consisted of a belief, almost a fetish in some cases, that the structure and practices of American business were transferable to government and could make it more flexible and adaptable. It was not a formally promulgated doctrine—the ever pragmatic John Stein just ignored it—that allowed its advocates to apply it as they wished. I don't remember whether the deputy director for support, Magee's boss, had adopted this new dogma, but he let Bob import it from the DO. It had been the master plan in the Office of Personnel (OP) for a year or so when I arrived.

The key feature of the business model, as Magee applied it, was reverence for competition. OP's network of recruiters, not part of my CTD, often struggled to meet hiring quotas, and Bob found himself dealing with a recurrence of this early in his tenure. He believed that reorganizing the mechanism in order to generate competition among his recruiters would produce more referrals to Headquarters and

thus more new employees. He brought in his most productive source of referrals to generate more job applications from his recruiter colleagues.

Bob had applied the same principle to CTD. In his view, the division of its functional organization into three new geographical units would stimulate an internal competition that would ultimately raise the number of offers of employment. Instead, the result was something close to chaos, in part because of the inefficiency of the fragmented new organization but mainly because of Bob's infatuation with a business model that overlooked the main cause of hiring shortfalls, the seemingly interminable security clearance process. The endemic delays in that process persist, as I understand it, to this day. The byproduct is that many people with superior qualifications and therefore more opportunities become impatient with the long wait and withdraw their applications. My charter as CTD chief did not extend to clearing the backlog except when Bob would press me to help reduce it by accepting a weak candidate. A more ambitious agenda would have run up against management's reluctance to devote the additional resources—especially background investigators—needed to accelerate the processing of applications.

Successful resistance to an ill-conceived policy requires committed backup from supportive subordinates. With the same luck that greeted David Duberman when he took over his program, I inherited a good staff at CTD, especially Larry Newhouse, my deputy chief and a career personnel officer. He had had long experience with the JOTP, was certainly qualified to run the new CTD version, and was notable for his honesty and candor. He was visibly disappointed at not being named division chief, and I urged him to consider the advantage of continuing the practice of having a DO officer in charge, someone who could insulate him from pressure for such things as expedient hiring decisions. I don't know if Larry was persuaded, but he accepted me with good grace, and I had learned enough from David Duberman's management style to take full advantage of the expertise of this superb staff officer.

Immediately after my arrival, Larry pointed out the confusion caused by CTD's newly instituted geographical organization established with a view to creating competing components. Restoring the original configuration would not solve all of the hiring problems, but it was clearly an indispensable beginning. Simplifying the structure meant reducing the number of supervisory positions, but some of the incumbents were already about to retire, and I got no serious resistance. The physical reintegration of applicant files was a little more of a challenge. Once started, the process had to be finished promptly in order to avoid aggravating the confusion it was intended to help solve. Accordingly, I joined Larry and the staff in sorting the files—everything was in hard copy in that era—and carrying them back to their original storage sites.

Even here, Bob Magee had followed the business will-o'-the-wisp, judging his success on the number of applicants accepted. Unsympathetic to my stubborn

emphasis on quality, he would call me to his office to protest my rejection of this or that applicant. He never overrode me but would devote the last hour or so of many a workday to persuading me of the merits of greater emphasis on quantity.

Our debates were lively, even intense, but mutually respectful and surprisingly cordial and without any effect on either party. I could never persuade Bob that hiring candidates with known flaws produced mediocrity at best and sometimes real trouble. He was equally unsuccessful with his standard rebuttal that the employee performance evaluation system would disgorge any real losers with no harm done. Meanwhile, he insisted, tolerating a certain number of innocuous nonperformers was just part of the cost of doing business. There were, after all, jobs that required no great energy or initiative. That I was not hiring for any of those jobs was irrelevant to Bob, and both of us knew of cases of incompetence or dishonesty—even a couple of defections to the Soviets—among graduates of the JOT/CT programs.

Whether all or any of these derelictions would have been prevented by a more uncompromising application of hiring standards remains unknown. In any case, standards had not always been as liberal as those now being urged on me—they certainly weren't under John Hopkins—and it was incontestable that the system had allowed at least a few catastrophic failures.

Everything stayed cordial with Magee even after I torpedoed an application sponsored by John McMahon, then deputy director of central intelligence. The son of a McMahon friend had completed the evaluation process when I received the report of my officer's interview with him; my okay would result in a job offer. The report did not call for rejection but did describe in some detail the applicant's indifferent attitude, which had permeated their session, and I thought this a sign of something amiss. Serious job applicants may say self-damaging things in an interview, but they never look bored. I had the young man called in for a talk. I went immediately to the point at issue and was struck by the way his reaction mirrored that of his earlier CTD interview. Polite, even deferential, but almost apathetic, he did not give me any reason to think he would prosper in a profession in which he had so little apparent interest. Indeed, he didn't display an active interest in anything.

The candidate had already completed the medical and psychological workups, which flagged no objections to his being hired. The only basis I had for rejecting this otherwise qualified applicant was his listless demeanor. Wanting some expert judgment on the matter, I sent my account of our session to the psychologists, asking them to take another look at him. Just a day or two later, they called to say that he had been disqualified on medical grounds. I wanted to know how they could have moved that fast, and they said another interview had not been needed. My report had given them reason to suspect a psychiatric disorder, something they had missed in their shorter interview with him, and this sufficed to disqualify him.

Whatever that said about the rigor of their own examination, the episode left me with enhanced confidence in the power of a non-specialist to contribute to a searching evaluation process. McMahon was unhappy with the outcome, but, the man of integrity he was, let it stand.

A rule-bound, mechanical approach to work is not unknown in any bureaucracy, even in an organization, such as CIA which likes to see itself as the home of self-starters who do vitally important work. I encountered it occasionally in the Office of Personnel, but, with no chance of persuading people who didn't even work for me to take on new risks and on whose support I depended, I realized that I had to work with what I had.

I did occasionally challenge the system. For example, I made an effort to attract more applicants with relevant real-life experience. To that end, I tried early on to persuade OP to waive the requirement for a college degree in otherwise promising applicants. The unanimous reaction was that it was the worst idea they had ever heard. OP would be flooded with frivolous applications, and the processing backlog would explode. Partly because of the intensity of this response, but also because I couldn't be sure it wasn't on the mark, I settled for the status quo.

There was sufficient time before the end of my tenure at CTD to proceed with the effort I'd begun with the JOTP to bring some conceptual order to the DO case officer recruitment process. The DO had never displayed any interest in helping shape hiring standards (or, as mentioned, promotion standards, either), and the psychologists were better at detecting bad apples than at recognizing potential winners. The result was a system that gave the JOTP or CTD chief no systematic guidance for his selections. Given their total authority for hiring into the program, this seemed dangerous. I had admired John Hopkins's shrewd judgment of people, and I appreciated his respect for my views on candidates for the DO. Nevertheless, I knew that our successors might or might not match his insights or even mine, and the system needed to be structured in a way that allowed it to function under managers who needed guidance.

My effort failed, at least in the sense that I never came up with a comprehensive set of guidelines for the evaluation of the qualities relevant to success in covert operations. I did produce a comparative study of recruiting practices—military, business, and that of the Agency—based on a paper I had done during my year at the National War College in 1978. It offered some suggestions, mainly about mistakes to be avoided, but certainly did not revolutionize the process of evaluating applications for work in operations. It may, however, have been a modest contribution to CIA's budding recognition in the 1980s that the health of the institution required its leaders' continuous and rigorous attention, without submitting to any business management fads.

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Chapter Twelve

EUROPE 1985–88

We had originally expected a more tranquil life in this posting than we'd known in Indochina and Africa, but, as already noted, terrorist campaigns were in full swing well before we got there.

A Chance for a Pleasant Tour

In the spring of 1984, with CTD functioning to his and my satisfaction, John Stein asked if I was still interested in the European posting, which would open in 1985. Gisela and I both still found it attractive, and this time, despite the continuing high level of terrorism, the country's intelligence service raised no objection. I enrolled in language training, which, despite its repetitious memorization exercises, I had always found rather enjoyable. I still remembered a few words of the local language my mother had taught me. My work on grammar while a hostage in Tehran eased the progress, and I managed to leave language school at a three, i.e., intermediate, level, which would suffice to handle the basic requirements of the job while I worked at my new post to build vocabulary.

Christine was about to start college at the University of Virginia and persuaded us to let her go ahead with that. A couple we knew from our tour in the Philippines had retired near Charlottesville and kindly volunteered to give her a little stand-in familial support. It was just as well that she didn't make the move with us, as we once again encountered one of the housing glitches that seemed to have become our way of life. We were to have an apartment in one of two US government–leased housing compounds in the city's suburbs, but, when we arrived in August, it wasn't ready. We spent the first weeks of our tour in a small apartment near my office.

We would not see our furniture or personal effects until permanent quarters became available. This made for some inconvenience, largely offset by the charms of the old city, which we got to know more intimately than we would have had we immediately moved to the suburbs. The city's iconic architecture and parks were nearby and enhanced the year-round beauty of our surroundings.

It was nevertheless pleasant to move into the much more spacious suburban apartment. The consulate housing compound was in a residential neighborhood, which contributed to a feeling that we were establishing a new home. An ice-cold and perfectly clear river passed close enough to our house for its left bank to become my favorite jogging route. The daily commute to the old city could be a nuisance because traffic congestion was entirely unpredictable. Nevertheless, we found that even the morning traffic sometimes offered a glimpse of the city's style, which included workers going in and out of the saloons that supplied their wake-up beer.

The consulate's location also offered opportunities for scenic lunchtime walks. It was most popular in the warmest weather, which attracted a good many nude sunbathers. A mountain range visible from various locales, including the consulate's top floor, and the river gave the city an extraordinary feeling of unity that remains vivid in my memory despite the passage of time. The city became, and remains, my favorite in Europe and all the places where I traveled or resided. It was my first and only assignment to a country with a European culture and adjusting to life there was quick and easy. It was certainly the only place where I could be mistaken for a native, as I was a number of times. A couple of these occasions involved elderly citizens who approached me on the street to ask, in the local language of course, for directions to one or another intersection or public building. I liked being able to respond with something more useful than a blank look.

Dealing with confrontation, especially when one must remain civil, is perhaps one of the last things to be mastered in a foreign language. It was a year or so into our stay that, as I was driving my family in the countryside, I coped with such an instance in a way that encouraged me to think that I was now really comfortable in the language. We had turned into a roadside restaurant for lunch, and the proprietor, standing on the balcony, motioned me to a spot directly in front of the building. As I moved forward, I saw that another driver wanted to compete for it, but I was far enough ahead to have established right of way and went to park as instructed. The driver reproached me for my alleged affront, and I pointed out that I'd done nothing but follow instructions. If he was unhappy about that, I said, he should take his complaint to the innkeeper. The latter ended the episode by taking my side, and my in-laws complimented my handling of it.

I had expected my professional contacts in the city to be competent in English, and I quickly found nearly all of them to be highly fluent. Those who had learned English in order to function in the United States clearly expected Americans stationed in their country to return the courtesy. In any case, one of the functions of a liaison job is to cultivate one's counterparts, and, without proficiency in their language, social life with them would have been impossible.

The prevailing fixation on international terrorism meant that I had an equally close relationship with the service similar to our FBI. Several professional contacts that Gisela and I developed became long-term friendships.

The capital was far too small to accommodate all the agencies of government of a modern industrial state, and these were therefore scattered around the country. My charter was the same as that of my predecessors—to supervise liaison with these services. The main item on our shared agenda was the reciprocal sharing of intelligence. Some of this took place at Langley, but I had two Directorate of Intelligence analysts on my staff who kept busy handling the transfer of material for the host service and

processing what it gave them. Meanwhile, I had regular meetings with a senior intelligence service officer and a senior police official. The former spoke English fluently and never addressed me in the local language. I, of course, reciprocated.

My senior police contact was entirely different and this in a way that demonstrated why language proficiency was mandatory for officers assigned to this post. He had served in the Navy during World War II and had a heavy accent that at first made conversation difficult. I soon realized, however, that he was not at all indifferent to establishing a working and even a social relationship. My very amiable father-in-law was exactly the same in his reliance on dialect, in his case Hessian. Both were just speaking the language they knew, and even my limited proficiency was much better than none at all.

The police official was not just a cop but a concerned observer of postwar Europe. At dinner at his home one evening, he expatiated on the country's prospects for consolidation of new political values. An impassioned declaration, "Europa! Europa!" began a summary of his formula for ensuring that his country would remain a democracy integrated with the anticommunist West.

Still Worries About Security

We had originally expected a more tranquil life in this posting than we'd known in Indochina and Africa, but, as already noted, terrorist campaigns were in full swing well before we got there. Consulate security, aware of my hostage background, encouraged me to take advantage of the standard license plates that the local police offered to replace the more conspicuous US diplomatic plates. There seemed no direct connection with my status as a hostage—"dip" plates were no more a threat to me than to anyone else in the consulate—but I saw no reason to refuse.

The arrangement offered a measure of anonymity, but at one point it also brought me to the attention of those very police. I got a call from consulate security saying that someone in the Interior Ministry would like to talk to me. The ministry stood almost next door to the consulate, and one morning I walked over and introduced myself. I got a cordial welcome from an official who began by apologizing for the need to admonish me about my apparent indifference to speed limits. He said the city's ubiquitous CCTV network had indicated that I drove like a local and that it hadn't even occurred to him I might be a US official. Because my case had been entered into the record, however, he'd had to call me in. I had indeed been rather casual about the matter, but I promised to mend my ways, and we ended the session with a friendly handshake.

An interesting aspect of work with the intelligence service was the insights it offered into both its internal politics and its understanding of our mutual adversary,

the Warsaw Pact. As I developed relationships with both its liaison staff and various substantive experts, I was struck by the casual way in which several of my intel contacts criticized their own colleagues. To an old DO hand, it was truly unthinkable behavior; whatever our intramural tensions, we keep them to ourselves. It was offered in such a matter-of-fact way that there seemed to be no malice, however, and it must surely have been a common practice. Another exotic aspect of the service's culture was the identification—not necessarily based on fact—of senior officers with one or another of the country's political parties. I never got a detailed description of this phenomenon, but it seemed to involve informal exchanges of information of interest with political parties that were not conveyed in official channels.

The country's officialdom was much bigger and more complex than the kind I had seen in Africa and Southeast Asia, and its inner workings were even more opaque. I thus got real pleasure from an opportunity as a foreigner to improve its internal communications. It was standard practice for a chief of base occasionally to invite the intelligence service chief to dinner, the only complication being the choice of company. Inviting the consul general was de rigueur, but, on one occasion, I wanted to avoid another evening of stilted diplomatic formalities. With the ConGen couple as the only American guests, I invited the senior police official and his wife to join us. To my surprise, he said he'd never met the intelligence service chief but looked forward to doing so. Although they were so completely different in style they might well have had little to say to each other, they were soon deep in an intense conversation that left the rest of us out for almost the entire evening. I didn't mind for myself; rather, I was glad things had worked out so well. My only regret—it amused me, too, I admit—was the discomfiture of an embassy official who was accustomed to being the life of the party but who now found himself pretty much ignored by the foreign guests so absorbed in each other's company. Afterward, when I escorted the intelligence service chief to his limo, he complimented me on my friendship with the police official, who had clearly impressed him. Although the police office and I had barely spoken that evening, when we did so we used the informal verb forms, unknown in purely business relationships, that identified for the intelligence chief a genuine friendship.

Despite similarly cordial connections with the country's intelligence service**,** it took a while to develop a feel for things such as its perception of the Soviet Union as an intelligence target. Our intelligence interests were for all practical purposes identical, but I could never be sure that there were not particular areas—really sensitive sources, perhaps—whose product was too delicate to be shared. Maybe there were, but I was struck by the similarity of our reactions to the collapse of the Soviet Bloc. I would have expected the country's proximity to Russia to encourage a more nuanced interpretation of internal Warsaw Pact political dynamics. What I found when I visited past European intelligence service friends after the end of my tour

was that we had all shared a sense of a solid if sclerotic USSR that would be around more or less indefinitely.

The country's intelligence service support staff had proved so cordial and helpful that, when it came time to give the customary farewell party, I decided to include these people. On my own, I might have been deterred by protocol concerns, but Gisela encouraged me, and I rented a barge for an afternoon river cruise. The scenery was captivating; the beer flowed freely; and my staff and I later got many expressions of approval, including some from locals who had never before taken the trip. The cordial tone of the event set the atmosphere for our preparations to leave.

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Chapter Thirteen

A Look into the Rearview Mirror

My long exposure as an operations officer and experience with the evolution of DO management practices left me optimistic about CIA's capacity to meet the complex challenges, ranging from terrorism to the digital revolution, of the 21st century.

A Second CIA Career as a Historian

I had accepted the European assignment with the understanding that a tour of duty there could mark the end of my CIA career, and in fact I stayed on for only a year after our return before retiring. The tour had provided both a welcome change of scene and professional satisfaction. Once back in the States, however, I found myself among the majority of supergrades for whom advancement opportunities were disproportionately fewer than those for employees at lower grades.

After exploring possibilities from a placeholder perch in a communications collection element, I retired in 1989 and accepted an offer of a contract with CIA's History Staff. It came from Ken McDonald, one of my professors at the National War College. He had later joined CIA to head the staff and was now looking for someone to help him modify what he considered its excessively Eurocentric orientation.

Gisela had returned to the Headquarters office of the same project in which she had excelled during our last tour. In accordance with protocol, I had not been her supervisor. Meanwhile, Ken put me to work on what developed into a six-volume series on CIA's various roles in the Second Indochina War, i.e., the prolonged North Vietnamese campaign to dominate South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Interviews with colleagues who had also served in one or two of them—I am one of the only two or three officers ever to have been stationed in all three—supplemented the voluminous written record, and the series took almost twelve years to complete. With varying degrees of redactions, the entire package was posted in CIA's Freedom of Information Act Reading Room in 2009.

It was not mere vanity that made me think I brought some useful knowledge to the task—field experience is in some respects simply irreplaceable, and I had spent six years in Indochina. My historical endeavors clarified for me that such experience can also be vastly overvalued and perhaps even misleading. It was only while drafting the first volume, on CIA's involvement in Ngo Dinh Diem's presidency in South Vietnam, that I began to comprehend how little I—and, I think, my colleagues—understood what we were dealing with in Vietnam. Even had we devoted some time to learning its history, we might still not have done a better analysis. The intensity of Cold War animosities might have prevented that. Nevertheless, attention to things like the tortured relationship between Ngo Dinh Diem and his Buddhist

constituency and to the history of Ho Chi Minh's revolutionary Viet Minh would certainly have facilitated a more realistic perception of Diem's prospects and of the ways, if there were any, to improve them.

As it was, facts on the ground in 1964 and 1965 had forced us to recognize the immediate threat to South Vietnam's survival, but, even so, we in the field never examined the assumptions that shaped our programs, and I doubt we could have given a coherent account of them if asked to do so. As far as I know, no one at Headquarters did any more than we did; were it otherwise, we'd have been given a more sophisticated view of the problem and its possible solution than in fact was offered.

It took my examination of Vietnam operations to force my attention to the ignorance that impeded both intelligence judgments and operational planning. Analysis did indeed improve over time while the action programs fell victim to Vietnamization on the US side and a lack of commitment to them by the Vietnamese. George Allen's lament about the absence of zero-based analysis and a rigorous examination of the evolving balance of forces before the Johnson administration's dispatch of major US ground forces in 1965 still encapsulates the conceptual failures that shaped US action in Vietnam.

Another example of the danger of indifference to history, even current history, is CIA's role in the US effort to solidify the rule of the shah in Iran and establish him as the guarantor of Western interests in the Persian Gulf region. Throughout the shah's tenure and up until early 1979, the Agency dealt with his known defects only by denying or rationalizing the gradual decay of his authority. Even toward the end, the analysts insisted that his reign was secure for the next six months or a year or whatever. His prospects of survival beyond these arbitrary projections were ignored.

As in Vietnam, a preoccupation with Soviet ambitions may have deterred analysts from doing a rigorous examination of the shah's prospects. Similarly, the DO might have devoted some attention to correcting his weaknesses, even at the risk of straining its favored relationship with him. In practice, Tehran Station's attention remained fixed on ensuring the continued operation of the collection sites that covered Soviet rocket launches and on the plethora of issues related to US support of the Iranian military. Unwavering support of the throne became an imperative. Neither analysts nor operators were disposed—or encouraged—to recognize the threat to the shah's tenure posed by popular and religious disaffection. When I arrived in Tehran five months after his overthrow, all signs of his absolute monarchy—of his existence—had disappeared.

The Evolution of the "Company"

The duration and variety of my career provide the basis for a few other observations about the evolution of the "company," a common allusion to CIA years ago, during my tenure. I can, of course, offer no more than a personal view, but I did develop an abiding interest in a few of the organization's idiosyncrasies that invite a brief look. The extent to which I could indulge this curiosity depended on the circumstances of my assignments.

Despite my lingering infatuation with the conduct of covert operations, I became increasingly interested in other aspects of our organizational practices, especially personnel acquisition and management and training. One such topic is the poor quality of training in CIA's early years. At least partially the product of a more generally anti-intellectual climate, its aftereffects compelled my contemporaries and me to learn by experience a good many things that could have been more quickly and economically taught—with fewer risks and mistakes—-in a well-designed and well-staffed program of instruction. On the operational side, for example, the "rapport" mantra drove out serious attention to such niceties of agent acquisition as the psychologies of prospective agents. A better calculated approach would surely have increased the ratio of productive recruitments.

On the other hand, experience, especially field experience, reduces dependence on doctrine that may be outdated or simply irrelevant. An example on the operational side is the pacification campaigns in Vietnam and the differences between CIA's programs and those run by other US agencies, both military and civilian. The very absence of any formal doctrine led Bill Colby to delegate the design of station programs to officers in the field, and they in turn recognized the need for a major Vietnamese role. We did not entirely escape the trap posed by our confidence in the American way, but we did work to enlist Vietnamese participation. In the work of leaders like Tran Ngoc Chau and Nguyen Be, this paid substantial dividends despite their failure—and ours—to articulate a political program attractive to the peasantry. Whether the ARVN-dominated GVN would ever have bought into such a scheme is of course a separate issue.

By contrast, the US military and civilian economic aid programs—with allowance for local exceptions—were hobbled by conventional modes of operation. The Army saw information operations and economic development as adjuncts to a fundamentally military effort aimed at neutralizing North Vietnamese and Viet Cong military capabilities. The Marines had tried to incorporate the approach of our People's Action Teams, but the Tet offensive revealed how far they had been from having created local Vietnamese leadership loyal to Saigon.

Economic aid officers often seemed to believe that a higher standard of living would win the peasants' loyalty to the GVN—despite the paucity of evidence for that proposition. There was a corresponding faith among information officers that exposure to US political values and institutions would, or at least should, immunize the peasantry against the appeal of communist propaganda.

Ultimately, the can-do spirit prevailed. No CIA analyses of the 1960s acknowledged that the Agency's or other US pacification efforts had only slim prospects of success. The tone gradually darkened after the NVA offensive in 1972, but outright acceptance of the probability of a communist victory did not come almost until the end.

An Optimistic Bottom Line

Our performance in Vietnam is one of many that might have led an observer to despair of ever seeing a serious-minded Agency capable of recognizing its own limitations. It was my good fortune to conclude my service with two assignments in personnel management and 32 years researching and writing ten volumes of CIA history. My long exposure as an operations officer and experience with the evolution of DO management practices left me optimistic about CIA's capacity to meet the complex challenges, ranging from terrorism to the digital revolution, of the 21st century.

This maturation began, I think, with a bit of serendipity, namely, CIA's capacity, probably inherited from the OSS, to recruit and keep talented, energetic people who do their best to fulfill demanding, even when ill-rewarded, tasks. In the DO, one of these is the more systematic exploitation and evaluation of agents once the adrenaline of a successful recruitment pitch has worn off. Here and elsewhere, CIA's new self-understanding has made for better use of all its talent, notably in the welcome acceptance—belated in the DO, which trailed the DI—that management is itself an art that needs cultivation, especially in a complex organization coping with a fluid working environment.

I am aware that, at least as recently as 2018, there were pockets of discontent with the quality of Agency management, especially mid-management, and I am not claiming the arrival of some kind of managerial Nirvana. Nevertheless, my access to the record of and participants in recent major covert activity does permit a reasoned comparison of past and present-day operations. My volume on Iraq, which begins with the 2002 run-up to the invasion the following year, records a new (at least to me) CIA disposition to tell truth to power and to acknowledge that some goals may be unattainable at any acceptable price.

My research on Iraq emphasized CIA's role in the DO's "nation-building" and internal security programs that followed the collapse of the Saddam regime. Here too I encountered what to me was a new management style, one that mirrored the development of the Directorate of Intelligence/Analysis. Of the dozens of managers and case officers I interviewed, exactly one displayed the damn-the-torpedoes attitude so dominant in CIA's earlier years. All had served at great personal risk in Iraq and had every reason to want to see their efforts as having succeeded.

Instead, they acknowledged that the wishful thinking at the policy level that underlay nation-building efforts inevitably rendered their results tenuous at best. What I did not encounter was the naïve, sometimes tortured, optimism so familiar in the record of similar efforts as recently as those in Iran and Vietnam.

NE Division's abandonment of the macho style it had inherited from EA Division in favor of a more sober calculation of risks and benefits is all the more remarkable for having been achieved under intense political pressure. The near anarchy in Iraq unleashed when tensions between Sunni and Shia sects exploded into violence exposed as a fantasy the George W. Bush administration's confidence in a smooth transition to democracy. The atmosphere of near desperation that prevailed in Washington for the next several years produced massive requirements on the DO to help save the situation. That the directorate responded with energy, imagination, and determination and without a trace of self-deception about the chances of success is to me a tribute to both its respect for the chain of command and its professional integrity. That is why my history of its efforts in that area is entitled *A Good Faith Effort.*

The adoption of a more fact-based approach to judging the balance of forces in Iraq was not merely a one-off aberration as demonstrated by the Agency's tempered view on the subsequent campaign in Afghanistan, which began in 2003. There again, sober analysis accompanied a good-faith effort to help execute a policy based on another administration fantasy—that the United States could give the Afghans a functioning democracy.

It cannot be coincidental that this new realism about covert action planning for Third World conflicts coincided with the qualitative change in CIA managerial philosophy regarding intelligence analysis. Public attention to CIA and Iraq is usually focused on the flawed intelligence on Saddam Hussein's alleged intentions to turn Iraq into a nuclear power. Although the intelligence was indeed wrong (allegations about fabrication display nothing but ignorance of the profession), DCI George Tenet and his staff resisted any temptation they may have felt to double down on the faulty analysis to support the policymakers. Instead, they acknowledged the blunder, perhaps more slowly than they might have, and, more importantly, they continued to pursue a line of analysis on events within Iraq that pointed out the obstacles

to transforming that country into a Jeffersonian democracy eager for American guidance.

In 2002, before the imbroglio over Saddam's putative nukes, analysts had already adopted a skeptical stance about the prospects of a post-Saddam Iraq. They shared those views with the policymakers, who responded by excluding CIA from the deliberations that ended with the decision to invade. This represented a sea change from the approach in Vietnam. There, analysts had tended to look for reasons for optimism, shying away from an unsparing judgment about the prospects of ultimate victory and its attendant risk of losing a place at the table.

The same mindset prevailed in analysis on Iran under the shah. The successors of those analysts, by contrast, no longer see themselves merely as loyal members of the team; their job is not to support a given policy but to assess its progress and prospects. I don't know what produced this transformation of both operational and analytic management styles—it cannot be attributed to any single director—but I do fear for its long-term survival. Telling truth to power is a difficult and professionally risky business, and the Agency perpetually faces the demands of policymakers who bring their own perceptions—and preconceptions and misconceptions—to the search for answers to the crises that bedevil every administration.

A CIA veteran curious about the origins and evolution of the Agency's values and practices might be tempted to try listing the factors that produced them. This would probably generate an inconclusive argument about their relevance and comparative importance, but CIA's origins in the OSS were surely a major factor in the emergence of CIA culture. During my early years in the DO, the sense of being almost a separate tribe, the few against the many, determined much of what we did and failed to do both internally and in our dealings with other US agencies.

Although the OSS legacy was a major factor in this mindset, it exerted its influence in a highly selective way. The early dominance of covert action on CIA's agenda echoed the numerous paeans, especially in early CIA historical documents, to the military operations of the OSS. These gave correspondingly short shrift to its intelligence arm, the Research and Analysis Branch. I can't prove it, but I think it likely that RAB's superb work in Europe contributed a good deal more to victory in World War II than did the harassing operations in Europe and Southeast Asia.

The action bias dominated the Agency's—and especially the DO's—agenda from the late 1940s well into the 1970s. Nevertheless, despite the stubborn resilience of this mindset, the defining quality of the CIA remains, in my judgment, its mutability. This may be less visible to people of relatively short tenure, but it seems to me that today's CIA has undergone a qualitative transformation since my entry on duty 66 years ago. It may sound condescending toward earlier generations to call it

maturation, but this is not out of lack of my regard for colleagues—many of them friends—of earlier years. Nevertheless, the changes are palpable, and they suggest to me the emergence of an organization better capable of meeting a variety of unprecedented challenges.

A Last Thought

When I got home from Laos in 1962, I regaled my family with some of my adventures, and my father listened with intense interest. He also asked, after one such account, when I might be returning to Fond du Lac. He seemed to be suggesting that my years with CIA had been something of a lark to be replaced in due course by truly adult employment. Circumstance made it the worst possible time to induce a son back into the fold. I didn't expect or even want the thrill of running my own paramilitary operation to become a matter of routine but to leave while still on an emotional high was unimaginable. I was right about the uniqueness of my tour in Laos and also, I think, about the sense that I had now found what I wanted to do. That is what I told him. As always, in matters of real import to me, he honored my preference, and I stayed on the path that ends with this set of recollections.

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Mer Glaciale
Glaciale
Nouvelle Zemle
Siberie
Archangel
Moscovie
Asie
Tartarie
Pays de Turkhend
Pays de Tibet
Tartarie Chinoise
Corée
Japon
Mer Noire
Perse
Arabie
Inde
Mer des Indes
Ocean
Oriental
Golfe de Bengale
Tropique du Cancer
Tropique du Capricorne
Ligne Equinoctiale
Nouvelle Hollande
Terre de Diemen
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Isles Marianes
Borneo
Isles de la Sonde
Terre du St Esprit
Nouvelle Bretagne
Nouv. Guinee
Terre de With découverte en 1623
Terre d'Endract découv. en 1628
Terre de Lewin
Terre de Diemen
Avertissement
Cette Mappemonde est dressée sur la Projection dont on se sert pour les Cartes Marines qu'on appelle Reduites. Les Parallèles et les Meridiens y sont représentés par des lignes droites au lieu des courbes qu'on emploie dans la Projection Circulaire, sur laquelle cette methode a plusieurs avantages. Le rapport de la Carte avec le Globe