

## Interview with Bruce A. Flatin

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

BRUCE A. FLATIN

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Initial interview date: January 27, 1993

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*Q: Today is January 27, 1993. This is an interview with Bruce A. Flatin and it's being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

Bruce, I wonder if you could give me a bit about your background? When were you born? Where you grew up, and a little about your early education, and maybe about your family.

FLATIN: I was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1930. I attended the University of Minnesota where I got a Bachelor's degree in history as a major, and political science as a minor. I did further graduate studies at Johns Hopkins, and I got an MA degree subsequently from Boston University, in international relations. My wife is from St. Paul; we have four children and seven grandchildren.

*Q: When did you get that latter degree?*

FLATIN: 1967.

*Q: When you were growing up in Minnesota did anything attract you towards the Foreign Service?*

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FLATIN: Yes, I had a professor at the University of Minnesota who called me in one day to ask me whether I knew about the Foreign Service. Like most people in the Middle West, I had not heard much about it. He explained what the Foreign Service was, and discussed ways in which I could prepare myself for the exam, such as different types of courses I should take. I really owe him much credit for steering me toward this career goal.

*Q: Did you get involved in the military?*

FLATIN: Yes, I was drafted into the Army during the Korean War and I served in Germany.

*Q: Did that help to whet your appetite?*

FLATIN: Yes, in a way it did. Having studied German at the University enabled me to go to Germany. I was in a combat unit that was going to go to Korea, but I was sent to Germany instead because I had passed a test as a German interpreter-translator. Of course, that had a lot to do with my entry into the Foreign Service too. I took the German exam at the time. We then had to pass language exams, if you recall. The service time in Germany also interested me in serving overseas. Indeed, later we did serve a five-and-a-half-year tour in Berlin. (I also served on the German-language desk in the Department, dealing with Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein.)

*Q: When did you take the Foreign Service exam?*

FLATIN: In 1955, after I finished my service in the Army. I was at Honeywell working as an advertising editor and had just gotten married to Kay. I took the Foreign Service exam and passed it. And I delayed entry initially because I liked my job at Honeywell, which is a big and interesting firm. But the BEX followed up with a convincing letter urging further action on my part.

*Q: BEX is the Board of Examiners.*

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FLATIN: That's right. Around Christmas of 1955 I decided to take the oral, and was invited to meet the board in 1956.

*Q: You had taken that three-and-a-half-day exam?*

FLATIN: This was only a one-day exam by that time, but still hard.

*Q: Oh, yes, yes. So you came in in early '56.*

FLATIN: November of 1956.

*Q: Did you have a training class?*

FLATIN: Yes, I was in the A-100 course that was completed in February of 1957. My first post was Kabul as junior political officer.

*Q: I wonder if you could tell me a little about the people in this Foreign Service group. Did you get a feel for what they were, where they were from?*

FLATIN: It was a small class. It consisted of only about 20 persons; of that number I think only a third are still in the Service. They were people from different parts of the country and different types of academic pursuits. Almost everybody was a veteran at that time of some service or another.

*Q: Your first post was Kabul.*

FLATIN: Yes.

*Q: Afghanistan. This doesn't sound like something one would just ask for.*

FLATIN: No, as a matter of fact it was a surprise. But we were very happy we did go there. It proved to be the real Foreign Service you had in mind when you joined the Foreign

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Service in every way. It still smacked of Kipling, John Masters, and the old North West Frontier. We enjoyed our tour there very, very much.

*Q: What was the situation, political and economic, in Afghanistan?*

FLATIN: Afghanistan was then called the “Hermit Kingdom” because it discouraged easy entry. It was hard to get a visa for Afghanistan in those days. The royal family apparently was coming to terms with the fact that they had to modernize the country, but how to do it was a real problem. In those days, King Zahir did not give the impression of ruling as much as Prince Mohammed Da'ud, his first cousin and brother-in-law, who was the Prime Minister. Da'ud's brother, Prince Mohammed Na'im, was the Foreign Minister; the two of them were first cousins of the King. Da'ud appeared committed to modernization, but only at the careful pace that he felt was suitable for the country. This was not fast enough for some eager young Afghan activists who wanted quicker changes—particularly those who had been trained abroad.

Incidentally, at that time Afghanistan looked like it was at a stage earlier than the time of Christ in the Holy Land. In fact in Afghanistan today you can still go to villages that show no sign whatsoever of being even in this millennium. There are no electric lines, telephone lines, water pumps, or anything modern. People are dressed exactly as they dressed back in the days of the Persian Empire. This society presented quite an inertia for modernizers to overcome.

We served in Afghanistan from 1957 to 1959. After we left, Da'ud was eventually displaced by the King who then seemed to take a more direct role in the political and economic events of the country. Political life became more stimulated and active. Then Da'ud himself came back as head of a group that overthrew the King in 1973 and created a Republic. This occurred while the King was seeking medical treatment in Rome (where he still lives in exile).

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*Q: Let's stick to the time we're talking about. This is 1957 to 1959. What were you doing there?*

FLATIN: I was a junior political officer, rotating as an FSO-8. I also served for a time in the economic section, and for a time in the administrative section. And, for that matter, I also handled consular matters from time to time when the Consul was sick or away.

*Q: What would a political, even an economic officer do? You say it was a BC time, before Christ type situation.*

FLATIN: At that time our relationship with Afghanistan had become affected by the Cold War, vis-a-vis Russia. In 1955, Bulganov and Khrushchev had visited Afghanistan and had extended a 100-million-dollar line of credit to the Afghans. By the time I got there we were going into phases of increasing competition with the Russians in the economic development of the country. The private U.S. sector had already been engaged through the efforts of an American firm, Morrison-Knudsen, which had won commercial contracts after World War II to build roads. They later constructed dams; since the Afghan government had exhausted its money building the dams, USAID was asked to assist with irrigation and hydroelectric projects. Therefore, our first AID programs grew out of commercial projects that Morrison-Knudsen had started in the country.

Afghanistan came to be regarded as a sensitive East-West confrontation point between the Soviet Union and America. Pakistan was then, as you recall, very recently independent and there was a bilateral problem between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Pushtunistan issue. Because of our friendly relationship with Pakistan, our attitude towards this issue was carefully observed by both sides.

Afghanistan was also in a position of confrontation with its neighbor on the other side, Iran, over the division of the waters of the River Helmand that flow out of Afghanistan into Iran. We were less involved in this issue.

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So there was quite a bit to monitor at that time. Additionally, because very little scholarly work had ever been done on the country, we were also encouraged to submit despatches to the Department dealing with anthropological issues and sociological issues. We submitted some of the very first reports about practices such as qasas, for example, which is a mullah-supervised ritual execution to permit a murdered person's family to achieve revenge directly.

*Q: As a political officer what would you do? How would one go about doing something like this?*

FLATIN: Well, one tried to establish as many contacts as one could within the Afghan official community. It was difficult to establish social contacts with the Afghans, because this was generally discouraged by the government. The seclusion of women through such purdah practices as the veil was required by law which meant that half the population was inaccessible through gender reasons alone. Naturally one would also try to establish contacts with other people in the diplomatic community as much as possible, even with people in the Eastern Bloc missions. In a place like Kabul where foreigners were thrown together willy-nilly, there tended to be a little bit more social engagement between Russians and ourselves at places such as the International Club of Kabul. You tried to ascertain what was being presented between the lines in the government press. Every single written word in that country was monitored by the government, and produced or distributed under its control. A mimeograph machine couldn't turn out a piece of paper without its having been approved by the Royal Afghan Press Office. But if one read the local press carefully, and listened to the radio carefully, one could discern some indications of current government lines.

We tried also to monitor what was going on in the bazaar because one way in which Prince Da'ud tested the public reaction to ideas would be to float them down the bazaar in the form of "rumors." Then his spies would evaluate the reaction in the various tea houses and shops. If there was a lot of public opposition, the idea would be permitted to die. It

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had never had any life because it was just a “rumor”. However, if it were met with some type of approval or at least with not any great negative feeling, sooner or later you'd see a firman launching the new policy. (A firman is an official order.) This is the limited kind of democracy they enjoyed.

When they had elections, of course, the elections were very open. In order to vote, you went to a neighborhood street corner where mullah had an open book where you could sign “yes” for the government candidate. (There were no other candidates.) That wasn't a very democratic election system.

The parliament had not met for several years when I was there, and yet treaties were being approved by the royal family, and ratified—even though the Afghan constitution called for parliamentary approval. We were told to regard them as approved. In their minds, the type of democracy they had in that country suited the times. Most Afghans were illiterate and did not appear to care much about political issues. They were very sensitive about religious and social issues, however. The Da'ud regime was cautious, remembering that King Ammullah had been overthrown in a 1928 revolution caused by his pressing too quickly for social change.

The way in which Afghanistan reached decisions then—as they had for centuries—was through the use of an institution called a loya jirga. A loya jirga is an assembly of the country's leading religious leaders, political leaders, economic leaders, tribal leaders, etc., who come together in a conclave to hold discussions and make important decisions. For instance, if a king were to be succeeded by his son, that son would soon thereafter have to be endorsed by the loya jirga. Or the official Afghan position on some very important issues, such as Pushtunistan would have to be endorsed by a loya jirga—particularly if the regime was seeking to reinforce its position for propaganda purposes. This is a flexible type of consensus politics that brings all the various power groups of the country together to express a generally agreed opinion, or decision on certain very important issues. This was the traditional way in which consensus has been formed in Afghanistan—and it

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possibly could become very useful in arriving at a settlement of the current anarchy in that country.

*Q: What were American interests when you were there at that time what was your impression of what we wanted out of this?*

FLATIN: Well, we certainly wanted to help the Afghans preserve their independence as a free and sovereign nation, as well as to improve their economic strength. We also hoped to be in a position to encourage a peaceful resolution of Afghanistan's bilateral problems with Pakistan on the one side, and Iran on the other. We tried to make it very clear to the Soviet Union that we did not in any way intend to represent any threat to them. From the Soviet viewpoint Afghanistan would be sort of like Mexico is to us. At no time did we ever engage in any rhetoric or any action that would lead the suspicious Soviets to suspect that we were using our position there in any way to threaten their position. Because we really would have had difficulty projecting American power into that very distant and isolated landlocked region, and it would have been pointless to create additional problems for the Afghans in their relationship with the Soviets. Incidentally, they had a very good bilateral relationship with the Soviet Union at that time. In fact, after the Soviets took power in the USSR they made a treaty with the Afghans—which was the very first international treaty that they had negotiated.

*Q: Did you get involved at all in...I would imagine at that time, my dates are a little bit hazy, but we were going through the nationalization and denationalization of oil and all that in Iran—that was a little earlier. Was there a matter of when push came to shove that we were supporting Iran? At least from your vantage point in Kabul.*

FLATIN: That particular issue wasn't a real problem for the Afghans. The Afghans, unfortunately, did not have their own oil. They had some gas which the Soviets were exploiting in the northern part of the country, but they had no oil. And what was happening in Iran with the Mossadegh issue, etc., did not really have much effect in Afghanistan.

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As I told you, the Afghans had this Helmand waters bilateral issue with Iran. It probably wasn't as important as some outside observers thought. The Iranians and the Afghans have elected to discuss this "problem" over the years, and it is an issue that probably won't ever be resolved. In that part of the world some bilateral issues have more utility value if they are not resolved. They like to keep them simmering for various purposes.

When I say "Afghan", incidentally, that word is a classical word which applies to only one of the ethnic groups in the country. This particular people have other names: they are called Pushtun in the western stretch of their range; they're called Pukhtun in the eastern stretch that goes into Pakistan; and the Indians and the British have called them Pathan. That's a corruption of Pushtun or Pukhtun. When you say "Afghanistan," it means "Land of the Afghans," the country of this particular ethnic group. Other people in that country are the Tajiks, a fellow Indo-European group who are Persian-speaking. The Pushtuns spoke a language called Pushtu, which, like Persian, is also an eastern Iranian tongue; therefore, it is part of the Indo-European language family. Although the Pushtuns and the Tajiks are both Indo-European groups, they have difficulty understanding each other's language. The difference is that like that between English and German.

These are, also Uzbek and Turkmen in the north, who speak Turkic dialects. In the center of the country are Persian-speaking. Mongol Hazaras. Additionally, there are little island groups of Arab and other Turkic minorities.

The Hazaras in the center of the country, and some other people, such as the urban Qizilbash, were largely Shi'a Muslims. But the Shi'a percentage of the total population was probably no more than about 10 to 15%. The remainder of the population was Sunni.

The dominant group were the Pushtuns who comprised about 45% of the population, although they claimed they were about 55%. Through being absolutely tough and ruthless, they had ruled that country since the beginning of time. And the royal family came out of

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this particular ethnic group, as did, for that matter, most of the communist leadership after the communist revolution.

These other ethnic groups...I'm jumping ahead in the story—are coming more into their own now in contending with Pushtuns for control of the country.

*Q: We weren't playing around between ethnic groups.*

FLATIN: No, not at all. We were to observe, but not to participate in any politics along those lines. As a matter of fact, one of the key dangers we faced in that country was the ever present danger of the Pushtun tribes from the east, south, and west of Kabul, marching on Kabul should there be some development that offended them. In those days, for example, the issue that worried many observers was the possibility of a premature ending of the requirement that women wear veils. That was still required by law when we were there. And it was felt that should that be prematurely lifted, that these tribes would move on Kabul in their fury—as they had in 1928 when they deposed King Ammullah. This march-on-Kabul was the most likely danger we faced in the country at that time. Interestingly enough, our most logical safe haven was go north to the Soviet Union should that happen—in spite of the Cold War. We, therefore, were closely watching inter-ethnic politics and politico-social developments, but we didn't become involved of course.

*Q: Your ambassador was Sheldon T. Mills.*

FLATIN: Sheldon T. Mills was the first ambassador under whom I served.

*Q: What was Sheldon T. Mills like?*

FLATIN: A very typical, straight-line, experienced career officer — a wonderful boss to have for your first job in the Foreign Service. He had a very nice wife, Francesca. Their daughter, incidentally, is married to a Foreign Service officer. They were an excellent couple to teach us how to begin in the Foreign Service. Ambassador Mills was a very

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good director of operations; nothing escaped his attention. He oversaw all U.S. agency operations and ensured that everything was in sync. We had U.S. Government programs that appeared to serve our interests well. He was followed, incidentally, by Henry A. Byroade who came shortly before I left.

*Q: How did you find him?*

FLATIN: A very interesting person. Byroade's personal reputation in the Muslim world was that he had been “right on Egypt” before the Suez War—and had therefore been “rewarded” by Secretary of State Dulles by being sent down to South Africa. So when he came to Afghanistan, this was regarded by many Muslims as being his return to that part of the world where he was really an expert and a friend. Byroade had a long experience in the Near and Middle East and was very highly regarded. He was also sort of man's man. Because he was a great hunter, the King was especially interested in some of the hunting exploits he had had. He got along very well with the Afghans.

*Q: He was a West Pointer, wasn't he?*

FLATIN: That's right. He was the youngest man ever to make Brigadier General in the history of the U.S. Army. He rode a horse to work frequently. In those days, some of our people rode horses to work and tied them to trees outside the embassy compound. In those days, our embassy was in a compound of buildings where USIS subsequently was located after we built the new embassy out on the airport road.

*Q: That was really delightful and obviously useful introduction to the Foreign Service. Where did you go then?*

FLATIN: Then we went back to Washington, where I served in INR from 1959 to 1961. In INR I was in the section that dealt with Central European affairs, the German speaking part of Europe (I had passed the German language examination when I took my Foreign

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Service test). I had both political and economic duties, not only for Germany, but for Austria as well. I worked on the old NIS. You remember the National Intelligence Survey?

Q: *Oh, yes.*

FLATIN: And I worked on the economic aspects of the Austrian part.

Q: *It is sort of the great encyclopedia of all the world at the time of any crisis. CIA was sponsoring it, and ensured that it was written with great care, and great diligence.*

FLATIN: More people were involved in producing it than probably subsequently read it. I was pleased to see that our particular part of INR was very closely integrated with the desk. The practice in GER at that time was to ensure that all the INR officers participated in all the staff meetings. The purpose was to ensure that GER had a reservoir of expert officers to assign to jobs in Central Europe. There were many Foreign Service positions in Germany, and these jobs were largely staffed by people who had had experience in either GER or in the INR support for GER. All of us at one time or another finally ended up in Germany on assignment. (I had also served in West Germany as an occupation soldier from 1953 to 1955.)

Q: *Germany, of course, was the major place of assignment in the Foreign Service at that time.*

FLATIN: That's right. Germany was the key focus of confrontation in the Cold War.

Q: *I was in INR dealing with the Horn of Africa from '60 to '61, and I never even went to the desk office.*

FLATIN: That's the reason I mentioned it, it was unusual. We were one of the very few INR units that had that close a relationship with our desks.

Q: *What was the view of Germany in this period?*

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FLATIN: Well, I frankly think there are a lot of Ph.D. studies that could be done on the Allied occupation of Germany. It was rather exciting and satisfying work. This was the late 1950s and early 1960s and already at that time, for instance, Helmut Schmidt was being identified by our officers in Germany as a young and coming politician. It was predicted as early as 1959 and 1960 that he would be a future Chancellor of Germany. When he became Chancellor, it was as if a train had come into a station on time.

*Q: Was there a fear though...after all, he was SPD, the Socialist Party, and the CDU had been Adenauer. We always seem to be much more comfortable with a Christian Democrat at least when its in power.*

FLATIN: We made an effort to get along with all parties. In Berlin, where I worked, the SPD was usually in power and we had no problem. The SPD and the CDU were both committed to German cooperation in NATO and the various economic organizations of Western Europe.

*Q: Did you feel any reluctance, particularly from the older staff, the CDU are our boys.*

FLATIN: No, I never heard that. Indeed that would be against the policy. The policy was to address ourselves to all major German parties, not just the CDU and SPD, but also the Free Democrats. I've never seen any American officer in Germany try to favor one party over the other. And, indeed, that balanced policy paid off because we were able to deal easily with the other party when they eventually came into federal power.

We regarded Germany in the context of our Cold War confrontation as being our strongest position. We were positioned right up against the Iron Curtain with a state which fortunately was well-led, politically stable, and economically healthy. We regarded our position in Germany as the linchpin of our defense against the East. A strong, united, and prosperous Germany, friendly to us, was regarded as an absolutely necessary element of our own national defense.

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*Q: I'll ask the question...I think I know what the answer is in view of subsequent events. Was the reunification of Germany even a thought at that time?*

FLATIN: Oh, yes. Yes, indeed, that was our stated policy—as it was the stated policy of the German government. It was in their constitution. Their constitution provided that the other states in the East need only apply to enter the Federal Republic without any further ado. Now there were people who said, at times, that the Germans had lost heart in the possibility of reunification and that some didn't think it was a good idea, or didn't think it was realistic. But if you ever got to know Germans really well, you would learn that this was indeed still on their agenda. You saw how fast it finally occurred when the opportunity arrived. So it was always our intention to support this German goal. In Berlin we kept the discipline of ensuring that Berlin was regarded as one city, and that “East Berlin” continued to be referred to as the Soviet Sector of Greater Berlin. We didn't use the term “West Berlin.” “West Berlin” was the term used by the Communists. We would say “the western sectors of Greater Berlin.” The Germans always intended that Berlin would again become the capital of a united Germany.

*Q: You were in INR when the Kennedy administration came. Was there any feel when they came that there might be a change one way or the other about our policy towards Germany?*

FLATIN: No. One thing I remember about the incoming of the Kennedy administration was the great attention that President Kennedy paid to detail. There was a colleague of mine at a neighboring desk who was dealing with Canadian affairs, she had done a position paper for the incoming administration on our relationship with Canada, particularly in the economic area. One day he got a telephone call at his desk from a person who was asking detailed questions about subjects in his report. My colleague was in a hurry because he was engaged in another project. When the caller said, “I really would appreciate more information on that,” the INR officer replied, “You're going to have to come through channels, because I now have so many other projects it would involve having to shift

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priorities.” The caller then said, “I’m sorry I didn’t explain. This is President Kennedy.” It was indeed President Kennedy, and my colleague swept everything off his desk and addressed the President’s request expeditiously. This illustrated how Kennedy really did get down to the nitty-gritty of detail; it was a stimulating time. (Eisenhower, on the other hand, preferred one-page briefing memoranda; he did not like too much detail.)

Returning to Germany, I still watch developments there carefully. I think we deserve more credit for the peaceful reunification. We’ve followed a consistent, productive policy on Germany. We’ve pursued our own national interests, as well as those of the Germans, very well in this arena.

*Q: Well, looking at this time, and also going back to your time of the occupation, was there ever a lingering wonder, “Gee, will the Hitlerites come again?” or something like that?*

FLATIN: Well, it was among the areas I would watch when I was later in charge of the police in Berlin. We were constantly looking for not only communists in the police leadership, but also ex-Nazis. We observed closely right-wing groups and their activities. At that time (1964-69), there did not appear to be any concern that those extremists were going to be important danger for the future of German democracy and German unity. And yet you shouldn’t forget that Hitler had only about twenty people with him when he launched his bid for power. Therefore, one has to remain vigilant—as the Germans are. Large crowds of Germans often marched in the streets to protest right-wing activities.

I think in the case of the Germans one has to remember that more than one-half of the German population living today wasn’t alive at the time of the Third Reich. And I think Germans are perfectly aware of not only the moral considerations, but also the magnitude of the disaster which was brought upon their heads. The destruction of their country, and the fact that they had to live under alien control for half a century was a high price for rightist extremism. That’s pretty sobering and not easily forgotten.

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*Q: Then you left INR in 1961, and you went to Australia, which was really quite a contrast. How did that come about?*

FLATIN: Well, I just got assigned to the Consulate General at Sydney. You know how it is in the Foreign Service. And indeed this job was multi functional. You know you're supposed to rotate around when you're young. I started as a political officer in Kabul, and I'd also had some experience in the economic, admin, and consular sections.

Anyhow, in going to Australia I was assigned to the Consulate General Sydney as a consular officer. This was to be my primary experience in the consular area, but I also became Sydney's political officer as well. I handled many political responsibilities as well as consular. And in those days Sydney was the largest city in Australia, and it earlier had been the only place where we had a mission. The embassy at Canberra, in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), was just launched shortly before I got there, and Canberra was a little tank town. The present lake you see in Canberra was just simply a dusty bowl that was being dug out by bulldozers at that time. The population was something like 40,000, and there were cows and sheep grazing in the meadows around our embassy.

So, therefore, Sydney maintained a lot of the functions that an embassy ordinarily would have. Sydney, for instance, maintained the administrative and the consular functions for the ACT as well, and most of the important political reporting was done there.

*Q: ACT?*

FLATIN: The Australian Capital Territory, is like our D.C. Canberra is located roughly half-way between Sydney and Melbourne. At any rate, Sydney was more than just a regular Consulate General then. A lot of ambassadors for other countries were still in Sydney; they had not yet started embassies down in Canberra. So Sydney was where the action was. It was a nice place to be at that time, and very educational. An interesting thing about Sydney in those days was that Australia was still very sensitive about World War II. The

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two most important events that occurred in the history of the 20th century in the opinion of any Australian, down to a man digging a ditch, was that: (1) England lost Singapore, and (2) the U.S. won the Battle of the Coral Sea, saving Australia from a Japanese invasion. The way the U.K. lost Singapore destroyed forever any Australian hope that England would ever serve a role in the future security of Australia. On the other hand, our victory in the Coral Sea and subsequently made it clear that we were their only realistic defense option.

*Q: A military defeat at Singapore.*

FLATIN: That's right. If you will recall, the Japanese marched on the city from the land side. All the British guns were pointed the wrong way...

*Q: There were fewer Japanese than on the British side.*

FLATIN: From that time onward, no Australian seriously regarded England as being relevant to their security. As I noted, the second event that occurred was the Battle of the Coral Sea. Now the Battle of the Coral Sea is not regarded in our own wartime history as being one of the most important battles of the Pacific, but to an Australian its very important because in their minds this saved Australia from a Japanese invasion fleet. Therefore, when we developed the ANZUS treaty after the war, the Australians insisted upon being reassured periodically that we really did intend to come to their support. You can see the Australian viewpoint. If you take a globe in your hand, and you turn that globe so you're looking at Australia, you just see a big water expanse all around with two exceptions, lightly populated New Zealand and heavily populated Indonesia, then a potential enemy. Indonesia was a country of ten times the population of Australia — and was at that time fairly hostile in many ways.

*Q: Sukarno, and anti-colonial posturing.*

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FLATIN: That's right. In fact when I left Australia at the end of 1963, Australian and Indonesian forces were already engaged in combat in New Guinea and in Borneo. You could see why the Australians very desperately wanted to be able to depend upon the ANZUS treaty. So this meant that every year they had the Coral Sea week—not just a day, but a week—to commemorate the victory in all the big cities of Australia. We had to have big naval vessels come to all these harbors. Sydney usually got about three big vessels; we even once had the USS Coral Sea, the aircraft carrier named after the battle. We had to have at least one four-star American officer come to Australia, a general or an admiral, and make speeches, once again reaffirming our intention to come to their assistance. We had white-tie affairs, as well as black-tie affairs, parades, etc.

We were invited frequently to Australian social events. If you were to have asked in those days what the most important job in the Consulate General Sydney was, it would have been representation. We had to be present at many of their events. Our Consul General would have to divide up the representation tasks among us. We'd have a meeting in his office and discuss the invitations of the week, and he'd assign us to attend various events. We obviously couldn't cover everything. That was our major responsibility, other than promoting American products and issuing visas.

*Q: This was, "We're with you fellows," and reassurance.*

FLATIN: That's right. Well, we obviously did reassure them. A great issue at the time I was there was whether we'd build a U.S. naval base in the northwest cape of Australia. And it struck many Australians that if you had American servicemen actually on Australian soil it would help ensure that we'd be involved if something happened. There were, of course, left-wing opponents to this base.

In those days they had a strong Australian communist party—and in those days also the Vietnamese war was beginning to heat up.

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*Q: You were there from '61 to '64.*

FLATIN: From 1961 until the end of '63. This Australian communist party organized several anti-Vietnam demonstrations against us, but there was an odd thing happening to them. The Australian communist party of New South Wales was a little bit more conservative than the Australia communist party of Victoria, where Melbourne is. And the one in New South Wales was pro-Moscow, and the one in Victoria was pro-Beijing. So occasionally they would get involved in fighting each other, and ignore us for a while. The N.S.W. wing had a daily newspaper in Sydney. The two branches would chop at each other more than us. Their demonstrations against us were usually not really related to any specific events in Vietnam, per se. They appear to have decided to address themselves to that issue from time to time in a pro forma fashion.

The Australian Labor Party was also like that. The Australian Labor Party in Sydney was more conservative than the one down in Melbourne. And indeed the one in Sydney had controlled New South Wales for years. It reminded me very much of the Democratic Party in Boston. Indeed, Sydney is an Irish Catholic city, and many of the fellows who ran the Australian Labor Party were exactly like democratic politicians from old Boston, like James Curley types. It was interesting to watch that antique political process in operation.

In those days, Robert Menzies was the Prime Minister. He was a very colorful person, a leader during World War II, and an interesting politician. He loved to give big political speeches, and yell down his opponents in the hall, calling them "silly yahoos." He was a great supporter of the monarchy. He regarded himself as "the Queen's man." She came out there twice when we were there. On one occasion, when he was introducing her in a speech, he recited the poem: "I did but see her passing by, and yet I shall love her until I die." Her face turned bright crimson. She knighted him Sir Robert the next day.

Anyhow, Australia was an important market, a country in which many of our primary interests were focused, including, of course, the promotion of American business. We had

## Library of Congress

big American firms on the scene out there. The primary Australian automobile was a car called the Holden, produced by General Motors. We did our best to try to increase the already large American business presence in the country and we were fairly successful in this task. Australia was also certainly a very reliable ally of ours from the strategic viewpoint. You recall the Australians even contributed forces finally in Vietnam.

*Q: I was in Vietnam from '69 to '70 and I remember going past an Australian brigade and watched them fire some artillery. I was on my way to the beach.*

FLATIN: Have you ever been to Australia, incidentally?

*Q: No, I never have.*

FLATIN: There were many strange aspects to that country. The states of Australia all have different histories. They came together in 1901 to make a unified nation, but they were still so different. For example, each one had a different rail gauge. If you wanted to take a train from Sydney to Melbourne when I was there, you had to change carriages or wheel trucks at the border between New South Wales and Victoria. I found that really incredible at that late date.

*Q: It really is. Then you left there and you came back to sort of a place that you had been preparing for for a long time.*

FLATIN: Berlin.

*Q: You were there from '64 to '69.*

FLATIN: That's right. My assignment to Berlin was directly associated with what I told before. A long-term officer in GER, Elwood Williams, kept a card file of German-speaking officers in the Foreign Service. When positions were opening he would be consulted and the system would frequently pick people from this roster of people he had who knew about Germany and who could speak German. Therefore I was plucked out of my idyll in the

## Library of Congress

antipodes. I had been in Sydney for two years and could have stayed there for another two years, but upon being offered this Berlin job, of course I went there—and enjoyed it very much.

Incidentally, on leaving Australia we came back by sea. Between Hawaii and San Francisco we got the bad news of President Kennedy's assassination. I still remember that. One of the stewards came up to me and he said that the Captain wanted to see me up in the radio room. I wondered what he wanted. When I arrived, he said, "You're the only federal official we have on this ship; I would like to have you listen to these radio broadcasts we're getting about the shooting." And then finally we got the broadcast that the President had died. The Captain asked me then to give him some advice on what we should do to deal with the situation suitably. We discussed putting up black crepe and arranging memorial services. Then the day we arrived in San Francisco was the day that Oswald was murdered. It was a very dismal and troubling time to come back to the United States.

So when I got to Berlin, I dealt more with the memory of JFK. If you recall, Kennedy had just been in Berlin. I got there in the beginning of '64, and he had been there the preceding summer to make his famous speech, "Ich bin ein Berliner!" And, indeed, the square where he made his speech was shortly thereafter named after him, John F. Kennedy Platz. Bobby Kennedy came over with his family shortly after I got there in 1964 to be present for this commemoration.

The atmosphere of the beginning of our tour in Berlin was tense. We had lost one president, we had a new president, and we were under very great strain with the situation along the Wall.

At that time the U.S. Mission Berlin had two additional sections more than an ordinary U.S. diplomatic post. My section was the Public Safety Section, which dealt with the police system and internal security. Because we still had an occupation authority in Berlin, we

## Library of Congress

actually controlled the police. We didn't advertise this, but everything in the police system was controlled by the Allies — from promotions and assignments, down to buying bullets for the police.

*Q: You're saying, we controlled. Who is we?*

FLATIN: We Allies. Each ally in his own sector controlled the police of his sector. The police in our sector were called Police Group South; in the British sector was Police Group West; and the French sector was Police Group North. We jokingly called the Volkspolizei ("people's police") in the Soviet Sector of East Berlin, Police Group East. As Allies, we were members of the Allied Kommandatura, which was designed to rule all of Berlin. In the AK we controlled the entire central police system; the three Allies also each controlled the police groups of their respective sectors.

You have to remember how Germany was set up after the war. Germany was divided into zones, and they were designed to be kept together under the control of the Allied Control Authority in Berlin, the ACA. Then the city of Berlin itself was divided into sectors. There's a difference between sector and zone, and this was an important distinction. The sectors were to be controlled by the Allied Kommandatura for Berlin. The four-power Allied Control Authority still existed — until the end of the occupation — even though it had lost many of its main functions — but the Berlin Air Safety Center was a residual part of the ACA still in operation. It operated around-the-clock in the Allied Control Authority building in our American Sector. Officers of the Soviet Air Force comprised the Soviet element. (An American soldier raised all four flags, including the Soviet, every morning.)

The police function was extremely sensitive and important from the political viewpoint. When we first took over Berlin we had regular U.S. Army officers handling this function. The Russians had conquered the city. They completed the conquest in late April and early May of '45. We Americans and our Allies did not come into the city until early July. This gave the Russians enough time to salt many of their own people throughout the police

## Library of Congress

system. One of our main concerns was, where are they? We kept looking for them, as well as police officials with Nazi SS backgrounds. When the city split by the USSR in 1948, the main police praesidium was in the Soviet sector with all the personnel records, etc. We had to start from scratch on our side in 1948. Each of the Allies, of course, had some of their own records which they kept to themselves and from time-to-time made them available should the West Berlin; police leadership need some special information. There were many disadvantages under which we worked.

The Allied Control Authority should have been running all of Germany, but that was no longer possible once the Soviets treated their part of Germany as separate (it eventually became the German Democratic Republic). In the days I served in Berlin, we had not yet recognized the GDR; it was always called the “so-called GDR,” or the Soviet Occupied Zone. When we traveled we had to use the sole Autobahn that went from Berlin to Helmstedt in the Federal Republic because that was the only one where the Soviets were present both at the Berlin and the Helmstedt ends to process us. Shortly after the war, we'd lost the use of the Autobahn that went from Berlin south to Hof on the border with Bavaria which was initially intended to link the Americans in Berlin to their own zone in Germany. (Helmstedt link was in the former British Zone of West Germany.)

*Q: We had the southern zone.*

FLATIN: That's right. And that access was lost through the carelessness of an American officer who early in the occupation accepted the assurances of a Soviet General that maneuvers in that area would require the Soviets standing down their Autobahn controls “for only a few days.” The American said he “understood” this “temporary change” and the Soviets never reappeared to take over these checkpoint controls. Which meant that were we to want to go from Berlin to Hof, we'd have to submit to East German controls and that, of course, was politically unacceptable. We only could go to places where the Soviets performed the transit controls for us. You had to be very careful in Berlin. You could lose

## Library of Congress

something important in Berlin if you were not careful about what was being said...and accepted.

*Q: It was a very exquisite game.*

FLATIN: That's right. You had to be very, very politically acute to what was being said and promised. It had to be looked at very carefully. And in those days too, when I was there, De Gaulle was in charge in France and De Gaulle personally kept a very close eye on Berlin. Indeed, De Gaulle would pass upon real important decisions being made there. The French in Berlin would ship big problems back to Paris and get his orders on what to do—and not to do.

*Q: What was the attitude first, about the Berlin wall when you got there? It had been up about two years, or something like that.*

FLATIN: That's right.

*Q: I'm talking about both the Germans, and our people who were experts in the area, that we had sort of fouled up, and Kennedy had not responded correctly?*

FLATIN: There were people who said that, but you have to remember that the Berlin Wall was constructed by the Communists largely upon their own territory—in fact, some meters back in many places. So in order to confront them over this, would mean that we would have to actually get Allied forces involved in stopping East German troops who were covered by tanks and machine guns, from building a structure on Soviet-occupied territory. It wasn't as if they were building it on our side of the boundary.

They continued to permit the Western Allies access to the Soviet sector. Our insistence was that this was one city, Greater Berlin, and we should have free access to the Soviet sector. This goes back, incidentally, to what I said about the difference between sector and zone. We could go freely into the Soviet sector of Greater Berlin, but we could not

## Library of Congress

go freely into the Soviet zone that surrounded us. Indeed, the Soviets also observed this difference. People who lived in the Soviet sector of Berlin had a different type of ID card in those days from the ones who lived in GDR proper. And indeed the members of the Volkskammer from (Parliament) East Berlin had more limited voting rights in the Volkskammer than the other people from the GDR, such as residents of Leipzig, would have. Representatives who went from Western Berlin to the Bundestag down in Bonn, didn't have full voting rights either. We Allies did not regard the western sectors of Berlin as a state of the Federal Republic of Germany, as the Germans themselves believed it to be.

Going back to your question, to have confronted the Communists again over this important act of deciding to build the barriers, could have conceivably brought about some type of hostilities that I don't think Kennedy would have wanted to risk. Its something that was tough for Kennedy to bear, but I don't see any prudent way that he could have gotten around it. If we had been denied access into the Soviet sector, if American jeeps were not permitted to go in there, then we would have had more of a legal complaint than we had with their putting up barriers which, in essence, were to keep East Germans from getting out of their own "country." (When I use the term "barriers," incidentally, it reflects the fact that there was a masonry wall only in the downtown urban area of the city; the remainder of Western Berlin was surrounded by a triple line of barbed wire fences—with razor sharp concertina wire in between.)

*Q: Was there also a feeling that maybe its not a bad thing to have this? It means that the German population needs this. I mean somebody looking at it from a real political way, it sort of left us stew there.*

FLATIN: Well, the obvious reason was to keep their own population prisoner. They were losing huge numbers of East Germans. It was like a hemorrhage. Indeed the ones they were losing were the very valuable people, the doctors, and the engineers, and the young people. Therefore, had they not put up the Wall, they'd have been bled dry of their most

## Library of Congress

useful population. You could say that that stabilized the Cold War situation there, but it was unpleasant to have to live with the Wall. Berlin's barriers were matched by barriers going down further west between the two Germanies. And this was a very cruel type of boundary, and it created a sort of prison for the people on the eastern side. It divided families; it divided nephews and nieces from their uncles and aunts; it divided mothers from their sons. You just can't cut through a nation like that and not have blood relatives on both sides of the line. When Germany finally became united in 1989-90, it was difficult for many West Germans to accept the expense and trouble it involved. But, in my opinion, after 40 years the East Germans deserved a break too. The West Germans had, after all, benefitted from the fact that they had, through a fluke of luck, ended up on the right side of that line in 1945. They really owed it to their East German brethren to bring them up to their standard of living. It may be expensive, and it may be a lot of trouble, but it is the right and proper course of action.

*Q: I've seen Germany. I saw Germany in '54 as a GI.*

FLATIN: I served from '53 to '55 there as a GI. Where were you?

*Q: I was in Darmstadt in the Air Force security service.*

FLATIN: I was in Zweibruecken, at the USAREUR Replacement Center. We were Adjutant General personnel who processed all incoming troops for Germany and France.

*Q: You were sitting right there. How was the Soviet threat viewed? I mean as far as realistically, what did we think the Soviets might do?*

FLATIN: To begin with, many of the Soviets with whom we dealt in Berlin were usually sharp, intelligent, prudent people. They obviously hand-picked the people who had that duty. I think the Soviets very seriously took our own position on Berlin — that of regarding it as a possible trigger for World War III. Were you ever in our headquarters in Berlin?

## Library of Congress

*Q: I never got there.*

FLATIN: We had a big conference room there in the main building and on the walls in big iron letters were stern and blunt sayings by President Truman, President Eisenhower, and President Kennedy about our determination to stand in Berlin. In essence, these statements by our presidents stressed this as the bottom line. This was the frontier of our own defense system. And I think the Soviets took that very seriously. They appeared to be convinced that we would make trouble if anybody threatened us in our position there.

In Berlin we had an interesting international operation. We had eight different government entities operating together: the four wartime Allies, the East Germans, the East Berliners, the West Germans, and the West Berliners. Somehow these eight entities were able to keep things fairly calm for half a century and not let anything get seriously out of hand. That's a great commentary on the responsible attitudes of the parties involved.

*Q: Well, it is. I think for all of us during this Cold War period, when one analyzed it, the one place it might blow up and cause World War III, was really Berlin.*

FLATIN: Yes.

*Q: And once there was a strict calculation we're going to fight, we're going to invade or something like that, but other than that a place in a way beyond sort of the control...if Berlin got out of control, there just without any desire on anybody's part, we could have gotten into it.*

FLATIN: And for that reason I on many occasions saw the Soviets stand down in tense conflict, rather than to arouse us to a point where it would be unpredictable what we'd do. We're rather unpredictable, you know. They are rather more predictable, but we are very unpredictable. We sometimes bounce like a football on a field; this was something that the

## Library of Congress

Communist side did not want to take a risk with. We saw occasions the Soviets would pull the leash of the East Germans. Do you want me to give you an example?

*Q: Would you please, because I'd like to hear.*

FLATIN: I'll give you an instance that happened in about 1965. The West Berliners wanted to build a major autobahn cutting diagonally through the American sector from the southwest to the northeast. And this was going to be an expensive autobahn, and in certain places it was to be elevated. And as the autobahn construction came down from the north, and up from the south, in the American borough of Stieglitz, they ran into an obstacle. There was a three-story-high brick building which was part of the railroad control system. This involved another complication about Berlin. In Berlin, the regular interzonal train system and the elevated train system, called the S-Bahn, remained under the operational control of the East German Ministry of Transport, even though the tracks and stations were in our sectors (our Western Commandants, retained responsibility for the real estate itself). They even had their own police, but that's another story. This is how complicated the situation was.

This particular station, Bahnhof Stieglitz, was both an elevated station and also a station on one of the main interzonal tracks leaving Berlin to go out to elsewhere in East and West Germany. These stations in West Berlin (to use the popular, although incorrect, name) were usually headed by people who were high officials in the West Berlin communist party. Now, although West Germany in those days did not permit the communist party to operate in West Germany, we permitted it to operate in West Berlin as the SED-W (Socialist Unity Party-West). So the heads of these stations, as well as many of the other high transportation officials, were communists, many of whom actually resided in West Berlin. Some may have resided in East Berlin, but there was nothing to keep them from coming to West Berlin every day.

## Library of Congress

Be that as it may, the point was that this building was a very important building in their system. It housed an important headquarters — and a big switching relay center for the railroad system. The Berlin government had for years tried to get the communists to move out. They had built a nice new building the other side of the station at West Berlin expense, and just asked the communists to move the whole operation over there. They finished the building to look nicer than the old building, but the East Germans refused to move. They wanted to jack the negotiations up politically to a higher level. They were trying to get the West Berliners to negotiate with a minister level of the East German government. We Allies did not want that for political reasons. We wanted the West Berlin Senat to handle this only as a technical matter, and we did not want to have any high-level dealings between the West Berlin authorities and the East German authorities.

We from time to time complained to the Soviets about this impasse—and they just ignored it. But the moment came when the Autobahn approached just a few meters short of the building on either side. Here was this expensive, elevated Autobahn, and this blocking building that prevented the German taxpayer from realizing the investment. Well, matters finally got to the point where it was clear that the West Berlin government could not deal any further with the East Germans for all of these reasons I've given you, and, therefore, because they were following our direction in this matter it was agreed then that the American Commandant would issue an order that the Communists should move to the new building and leave the old one empty for destruction.

We saw to it that everybody was suitably informed about this informally. When you dealt with the Russians you always had to make certain that you had an absolutely solid legal case, and we did in this case. This was a political and legal matter of importance to us, and, indeed—as already noted—the American commandant had residual responsibility for the tracks and the buildings, etc., even though the East Germans had operational control; there's a difference between the two. So we made certain that all the legal points were clear to the Russians. You made it clear to them that you intended to move from point A

## Library of Congress

to point B, to point C. You never wavered on that course once you started. You also left some way for them to back out through a door so they would not be painted into a corner.

So once everything was all lined up, the night of the operation came and I went down to the site with over 80 police. We surrounded the station with police. And our goal was to pull off this change as peacefully as possible, and, if possible, not even to interrupt the train traffic going through the station. That was something we thought we could handle. We had the police check ID cards of people entering and leaving the station on the platform to ensure that only local people could get on and off the elevated trains.

A more serious problem faced us with the communication equipment in the building. We had special Siemens engineers standing by just in case we couldn't get the Communist engineers to move the cables. About midnight we started having police cars go to the homes of the senior Stieglitz station officials in West Berlin. I listened to the progress of these visits in the police communications vehicle. We had code letters like 18, or 23, or whatever, and that would mean that they had stopped at the house of certain station official, and they're going to the door, and they're reading the American Commandant's order. The Commandant's order said, "You are directed to appear at Bahnhof Stieglitz immediately, and be prepared to move your operations to the new building, by order of the American Stadt Kommandant."

Then the most important code word was, is he coming or not? Everyone of these officials came, being disciplined Germans. They showed up on the scene looking very angry and they stiffly protested against being moved from their homes by this arbitrary, imperialistic American power move. We replied that we had noted their protest, and directed them to get to work. Anyway, when we saw what the mass of switching cables looked like, we were thankful that they had showed up, because I think it was probably more than the engineers we had ready from Siemens, may have been able to handle. It looked like you had opened up cases full of technicolor spaghetti.

## Library of Congress

At any rate, this process went on during the evening. We had police actually helping to move things, dumping furniture in the other building. The Communists were upset because the files weren't moved correctly. We said, "If you'd had more of your own people doing this earlier, things could have been neater." We reminded them that the place had to be empty by such and such a time by order of the American Stadt Kommandant.

Well, at a certain point in the operation, about 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning, a special train came roaring in from East Berlin. It came to a screeching halt. This, incidentally, was a snowy February night. Off the train got these very high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Transport, etc., with shoulder boards like Soviet marshals. They came trudging up the snow on the tracks, and they walked toward the old building. The group commander from my Police Group South and myself were standing on the platform looking down at them. The Germans really dislike having someone over them. In this case, they had put themselves in that awkward position. They walked toward their old building up to an office that had German word "Buro" ("office") on a sign attached to the door. One of our police raised his weapon at port arms to block them. They said they wanted to go into "their office," and then our group commander said, "Tell them to speak to your superior officers." So then they turned around and again complained, "This is our office." We replied, "No, it is not your office. Your office is over here." And then that's when our group commander said, "Take care of that sign," and our policeman then gun butted it off the door, and the sign disappeared into a snow drift. That was the symbolic end of that building as a communist installation.

Were you aware about our position concerning trade unions in Germany? We did not permit the East German FDGB to operate in West Berlin. We had the DGB, and they had the FDGB. And as that bulletin board was carried by me I was surprised to see FGDB on it. That, of course, was an illegal organization in our sector. Somehow, the letter "F" ended up on the slush of the platform.

## Library of Congress

This operation earned us a lot of credit with the West Berliners. The building was demolished the next day. The highway was completed. It demonstrated that the Americans had some muscle, and, when German interests were involved and Allied rights were being infringed upon, that indeed the Americans could and would take action. It was interesting to note that it took about three days for Neues Deutschland, the official newspaper in East Berlin to come up with some complaint about the fact that somehow we had willfully impeded rail traffic. In reality, we had at the most, delayed traffic for only about eight minutes — not any more than that.

*Q: But this must have been meticulously planned, including very strict instructions from Washington.*

FLATIN: Oh, yes indeed. And President De Gaulle personally had to pass on the French agreement for the operation. It took a lot of clearances. Indeed we also ensured that the Soviets knew that this was going to happen. We didn't want to surprise them. You never allowed something like this to drop on them out of the sky. The Soviets obviously had told the East Germans to take their losses, and that was it.

*Q: Well, what were you doing? Here you were the Public Safety Officer, what...*

FLATIN: I was the Chief of the Public Safety Section in the U.S. Mission-Berlin (USBER), and, additionally, I was the American Public Safety Adviser at the Allied Kommandatura-Berlin. In the latter tripartite organization we rotated the chairmanship every month; therefore, each American officer became chairman for the month of his respective committee, such as the economic committee, legal committee, or the public safety committee. There was also the chairman commandant. That's how we ran the city during the occupation. Our basic policy was to use German law and Berlin law and regulations, wherever possible. We even used laws from the 19th century which were still in effect. For example, when dealing with the railroads, we observed the Reichsbahn Law of 1928.

## Library of Congress

However, there were occasionally current problems that were not covered adequately by German laws and, we therefore, actually had to issue our own laws. We had what we called Berlin Kommandatura Orders, BK, or Berlin Kommandatura letters, BK/Ls, and these were orders from the Allied Kommandatura which directed the governing mayor of Berlin to do such and such, or not to do such and such. Therefore, we not infrequently were in the position of actually creating special laws for this occupied population. These laws that we issued had all the force of law in any court. Although we don't occupy Berlin anymore, an AK order could certainly be cited to explain why a certain decision was reached in a pre-verification case.

*Q: What was the government situation in West Berlin?*

FLATIN: Well, West Berlin had a governing mayor. These were famous ones like Ernst Reuter and Willy Brandt. Each borough of the city also had a mayor and its own borough authorities. In our sector, which had a population larger than that of San Francisco, we had six boroughs; each had its own mayor and its own government. We tried as much as possible to govern through democratic institutions with the locally elected leaders on the scene. The average citizen of Berlin was usually unaware of the Allied influence over his life. We preferred to keep our operation as low profile as possible while preserving our ability to remain secure and effective in that island position over 100 miles east of the Iron Curtain.

*Q: How did that government fit in? I mean its sort of unusual. Here were Americans, French, and British running the police force.*

FLATIN: Not just the police, but in other parts of the city government too. As stated above, wherever it was necessary for us to become involved to preserve the Allied ability to carry out its function of preserving the independence of Berlin and its freedom, as we Allies saw it, we took the necessary action. In other words, it would have perhaps been possible for a short-sighted Berlin politician to take an initial stand against the Allied position — but

## Library of Congress

if he thought more about it, he could see that it was not a move that would help Berlin in the long run. And that's why it was necessary that the Allies would sometimes have to discuss with the Governing Mayor certain problems. The rule was to permit maximum possible democratic freedom on the part of the Germans to do whatever they wanted democratically, but we had to reserve our authority to act concerning those few issues in which we Allies thought there was a problem which in some way limited our ability to carry out our responsibilities for the city.

Our responsibilities for the city were based upon the fact that we had conquered Germany, and this city was part of our responsibility as conquerors. When you conquer someone, you're responsible then for their safety, their defense, and their general well being. We had all these several responsibilities which were to be served until the day when Germany was again freely united—which finally occurred in 1989-90.

I'll give you an example. Remember I told you the commandant was responsible for his railroad yard in his respective sector? If the East German-operated rail system wanted to move a pile of 36 railroad ties from a yard in the American sector to one in the British sector, they had to apply to the economic committee of the Allied Kommandatura, which had to approve the transfer of the 36 ties (part of conquered Third Reich property). Since these ties were the responsibility of the Commandant in the American sector, and we'd get a copy of that Economic Committee permit at the Public Safety Committee, I'd have the police of my sector ensure that they left properly and then my British colleague would ensure through the police of the British sector that they'd arrived properly at the British railyard location. We Allies were extremely scrupulous concerning our responsibility for their city. I assume that we turned over carefully balanced books to the government of united Germany.

*Q: What about your relations with professional police officers. Here you are an American, and police officers have a difficult job, a proud job wherever they are. Was there an understanding?*

## Library of Congress

FLATIN: I had started to tell you that when we first started the occupation in 1945 we had U.S. military police officers handling this relationship. And indeed this section consisted of about 50 U.S. Army officers. Then in a second phase we had professional American police officials come over to be public safety advisers for the American Zone of Germany and the American Sector of Berlin. Their role was to help train the German police to be more democratic, to follow democratic police measures. I was involved in the third phase, where we had political officers (I'm a political cone officer) take over this responsibility. We had political officers come over because of the obvious sensitive political ramifications of what the police are doing, or not doing. I suppose in many ways you could say my job was that of a "political commissar" in a certain sense of the word.

We were dealing then with a professional police force of a high quality. Some top men had been police officials since the days of the Weimar Republic — and had experienced bloody street riots between the Nazis and the Communists before Hitler came to power. We shared with the Berliners an interest in the ongoing independence and safety of their city. Indeed, at a certain point in the occupation the term "occupation powers" changed to "protective powers." That shift in terminology described the change in the Allies' relationship with the Berliners. We were working together towards a joint goal — the reunification of a free, democratic Germany.

*Q: How did the various Allies operate?*

FLATIN: Different Allies of course had different ways of carrying out their responsibilities. We Americans tried to avoid excessive direction and micro managing. A certain other Ally I won't identify got involved in an incredible amount of micromanagement.

*Q: Why don't you name them?*

FLATIN: It would not be suitable to identify them—but they did go to unusual extremes, even to the point of wanting to approve schedules for the transit of police armored

## Library of Congress

personnel carriers through streets in that sector. We found that a little bit much. I personally, were I a German police official, would have found it difficult to have aliens breathing down my neck, and passing on minor operational affairs. Every weapon they had we had to approve; every bullet they bought for those weapons we had to approve. We had to pass upon senior promotions and assignments. I must say to their credit that they took this oversight with a great deal of patience and professional skill. This patience eventually won the battle. Now today they are independent, in charge of themselves. They have an independent, united republic, in part because of the fact that they cooperated so well. In fact, if you were to write the history of the occupation of Germany, you shouldn't forget to credit the Germans themselves for taking their occupation as a fact of life and turning it to their advantage. Adenauer was the best example. If there ever were an example of a man who snatched victory out of the jaws of defeat, it was Konrad Adenauer.

*Q: He was the first chancellor.*

FLATIN: That's right. In fact one of the great advantages we had in the Cold War is that we had strong leaders in West Germany like Erhard and Adenauer, and the Russians had less talented Party hacks like Grotewohl, Pieck, Ulbricht, and Honecker. They were nowhere near the caliber of the people we had on our side. I must say that I marveled that we maintained the relationship with the Germans on as friendly a basis as possible for almost half a century. I still correspond with the police I knew over there. Upon my departure, they gave me a memorial plaque that thanks me: "For friendly, cooperative efforts for the security of our city." That, after all, was my principal job—to help to ensure the security of their city.

*Q: Talking about a sort of difficult thing. We both are ex-military GIs, sort of reluctantly, but we did our thing so we know what the military is like. And to have a large military garrison running around in a political tinderbox, this must have been kind of difficult.*

## Library of Congress

FLATIN: That was another interesting thing about U.S. Mission Berlin. The U.S. Mission Berlin was an integrated Department of State-U.S. Army operation. The Chief of U.S. Mission Berlin was the American ambassador down in Bonn. When the American ambassador from Bonn came to Berlin, he came in his capacity as the old U.S. High Commissioner. We ensured that his office door read “Chief U.S. Mission Berlin,” not “Ambassador.” When he was in the city, he fulfilled a different function from that he had in Bonn. We didn't regard ourselves as being under the Embassy in Bonn. It just so happened that Bonn and Berlin had the same boss, but with different hats. This was a very important distinction—and one also followed by our Allies. This practice underscored our position that Greater Berlin was not part of either German state.

The next man under the Chief of Mission was then called the Deputy Chief of U.S. Mission Berlin; that man, a two-star general, was also known as the city commandant (Stadt Kommandant) of the American Sector. Although he was the U.S. deputy to High Commissioner, he was the senior American military officer in the city, and he was also the senior operating officer on a day-to-day basis in Berlin. He was certainly a man we regarded as our local boss. When I took actions as American Public Safety Advisor, I usually cited him as being the person in whose name I was making an order.

The third-ranking person in the U.S. Mission Berlin, a man with the title Assistant Chief of U.S. Mission Berlin, was the senior State Department man on the scene on a daily basis. He was usually a minister rank officer. Arch Calhoun occupied this position when I first got to Berlin—and he was followed by Brewster Morris. Therefore, you had the top leadership interfacing of Army and State Department. There was also a one-star general there who was the commander of the Berlin Brigade. That would be the U.S. Army troops. We Foreign Service Officers worked well together with the U.S. Army officers. The political section shared an interest with our Army in the Autobahn operation, for example. Therefore, our political officers who were concerned with the Autobahn operation or the

## Library of Congress

military train link to Helmstedt worked with the military officers who also were responsible for that.

I had extensive contact with the Provost Marshal, who was certainly interested in how the military police interfaced with the Berlin police. I also was a political contact with various U.S. intelligence agencies. It was clear to us that the Army hand-picked the men they put in Berlin. They had officers who worked well with our people — with very few exceptions. If a person did not seem to be able to work well with the other side, he was transferred out. I must acknowledge that on our State side we had a few such cases, not very many thankfully, of people who found it difficult to work with the Army side. That situation was usually corrected quickly.

*Q: What about the helicopter pilot who starts playing around, or the tank driver?*

FLATIN: I had problems with that. For example, I occasionally had problems with tank drivers who came in from the war in Vietnam. Some young tank officer would run his tanks across some newly planted trees in the Grunewald Forest. When he was told that he had destroyed a very important plot of tree seedlings, he might assert, "I'll run my tanks where I want." Occasionally you had persons who said, "Well, they're occupied. We beat these people, didn't we?" Here's a kid that wasn't even alive at the time the war ended talking like this. Well, that's the type of person whom they usually tried to weed out for Berlin because they didn't see the political big picture. Most Army officers who were there were sharp enough to see the big political picture, and to see what we were trying to accomplish in the overall. After all, the Germans with whom we were dealing in Berlin were associated with the Germans who were rich, powerful, and important ally down in West Germany. People had to be practical about how we took action in the city.

*Q: Did you get involved in things like suppression of prostitution, drug trade?*

FLATIN: Yes, but it would be peripheral to my other duties which were primarily political. I would go out occasionally with the vice squad chief to look at his problems in the city.

## Library of Congress

It was no direct responsibility of mine, per se, other than to see what kind of problems with which he had to deal. Prostitution associated with espionage was of course of interest. We had a very interesting case of a rooming house, the Pension Clauswitz, with a prostitution operation which had once been used by the Gestapo and SS for certain types of intelligence and blackmail purposes. Oddly enough East German intelligence agents had been able to take over the very same institution in West Berlin, and were using it in the very same way. We closed it.

I was more interested professionally in the defense capability of the police. The Berlin police were paramilitary, and were armed, inter alia, with 81 millimeter mortars, heavy machine guns, grenade launchers, and 3.5 inch rocket launchers. They were an important part of the defense plan for the city.

We were interested in being on guard against efforts from the East to create problems for our security. We were interested in running a tight ship — remembering that “the price of liberty was eternal vigilance.”

*Q: There must have been a lot of problems with infiltration of the police force.*

FLATIN: Yes, the Russians had control of the whole city more than two months before the Western Allies arrived. Indeed we were finding the people they planted in the system all the time — not a lot, but enough to keep us alert. A person like that could create a lot of damage. In one case, a disloyal police officer in our sector was found to have issued hundreds of West Berlin ID cards to East German spies going through to West Germany. You can just imagine how many East German spies were in West Germany. We also kept looking for former Nazis in the police leadership — and found a few.

*Q: Then you left Berlin. Is there anything else we should cover?*

FLATIN: I really think that more scholarly work should be done on our occupation of not just Berlin, but of Germany, and our relationship with Germany until the unification came.

## Library of Congress

I think it is a very positive story—going back to the Marshall Plan, and everything we did to bring about the unification in a peaceful fashion, with our administration working with Gorbachev. I think it was a very positive accomplishment on the part of the U.S. Government and the Allied governments. In Berlin, on a day-to-day basis, we were among the last Americans who dealt with this type of responsibility. It was highly satisfying work. I was very satisfied when I saw the peaceful reunification come about. We had attained a goal shared with the German people.

*Q: Well it worked. This is the thing that all of us invested a lot of time in, particularly the German one, the way it came about.*

You left Berlin in 1969.

FLATIN: 1969, because I hadn't yet satisfied that law that you had to spend three of your first 15 years in Washington. I went to the Operations Center where I served for one year as senior watch officer, for one year as the senior editor, putting out the classified publications, and for one year as director of the Operations Center. This was a very, very satisfying period of work.

*Q: Could you explain what the Operations Center is, and a little of the history because its not an old creation, particularly when you were doing it was fairly newly created.*

FLATIN: The Operations Center grew largely out of the dissatisfaction of President Kennedy with the response mechanism of the government to crises, such as his experience with the Cuban missile crisis. When first established, it was inserted in a crowded area on the seventh floor near the Secretary's office. By the time I was director, we were embellishing it with much more room. We were spreading out in all directions and had better communications. What the Operations Center enabled the Department of State to do, was to be able to respond to challenges around the world on a timely basis on a 24-hour round-the-clock basis. As Secretary Dean Rusk once said, "At any one time

## Library of Congress

two-thirds of the world's population is awake. And of that two-thirds, two-thirds are making trouble for us.” I think that illustrates our problems, at least in those days.

Our Operations Center was set up differently from the ones at the Pentagon's NMCC, or the CIA, or the NSC. Our Operations Center was headed by an officer, who at that time was an FSO-4, the equivalent of a Lt. Colonel, who had much more authority, and decision-making power, than his equivalents had at other operation centers. At the Pentagon, for instance, the man in charge of a watch shift at the NMCC was a one-star flag officer who did not have the authority of our Lt. Colonel-grade senior watch officer. The latter's authority meant that if there were a problem at 2:00 a.m. in the morning which required some kind of fast response from the Department, that officer was entrusted with the decision whether he wanted to wake somebody up, and have that person come into the Department and get involved in this situation, or whether he himself would take action. He could release a cable over the name of the Secretary of State of the United States. That officer had a very big authority—and responsibility. The next morning, of course, he'd explain to the Executive Secretary why he took such actions, but it enabled the Department of State to respond to specific problems around the world in a timely fashion. Our communications were very impressive. We had the benefit of the White House Communication Agency system as well.

I'll give you an example. When Nixon went to China for his first trip, the White House Communications Agency people went over there to put up satellite stations, and other equipment. We had this white button on our consoles, marked WHCA. One night we got a call from Beijing about 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. Secretary of State Rogers was in a meeting with some Chinese officials on trade, and of the dozens of briefing books he had with him, he didn't have certain types of statistics on iron and steel imports and exports that he needed in that particular meeting. He wrote a note to the FSO sitting beside him in the meeting, the FSO went out to a hallway table and made this call to us, via the WHCA link, for the information. Through a fluke, one of our people on watch knew the officer in the Department who knew that information and called him at home. He actually had it at

## Library of Congress

home (it was not classified). We got the data, pushed the white button, and got the FSO sitting in the room outside the Secretary's meeting. He walked in to the Secretary with the needed data. The exchange had only taken about 40 minutes. The Chinese were stunned that the Secretary of State could reach back to America and get data like that within minutes.

These kinds of responses led to our getting the confidence of the White House as a “can-do” operation. You may remember that Lithuanian defector case of 1972 that involved the Coast Guard?

*Q: Would you explain what the Lithuanian defector case was?*

FLATIN: There was a Sunday negotiation going on aboard a U.S. Coast Guard vessel anchored near a Soviet vessel near Martha's Vineyard on the issue of yellow-tail tuna catches. Our fisheries people from State were on the vessel negotiating. And during the negotiations, a Soviet sailor on the Soviet vessel which was tied up near our vessel, indicated a possible desire to defect. And the Coast Guard vessel passed this information back to Coast Guard flag-plot headquarters in Washington through their Boston First District headquarters and asked for guidance. The Coast Guard flag-plot people in Washington first contacted our State security people, not knowing who else to contact. They were finally put in contact with the duty officer for SOV who in essence said, “Fine, but this could be a possible provocation. If you get any more information, please come back to us and we'll give you some more definitive reply.” That's about all he could say given the facts then available.

Our watch recorded the exchange in its log. The watch changed at midnight that night. As the outgoing watch officers briefed the incoming senior watch officer asked, “Anything new?” The outgoing senior watch officer replied, “There was this threatened defection off Martha's Vineyard, but apparently nothing ever came of it.” He had called the Coast Guard flag-plot watch, and the Coast Guard watch had heard nothing more from the

## Library of Congress

Boston office. So that next watch from midnight to 8:00 a.m. knew nothing about the dramatic event, which had by then occurred off Martha's Vineyard. The log for that shift was completely clean of any mention of this.

However, the next morning, when our fishery people got off the vessel they were fuming and furious because of what had happened. The Soviet sailor had indeed come over, and had hidden himself aboard the Coast Guard vessel. The Coast Guard captain of that vessel consulted his commander in Boston who was a captain-rank man, who was temporarily on duty replacing the district admiral who had called in sick. The Captain then consulted the admiral who was home sick, and probably should have stayed out of it. The later gave instructions in essence that led to the Coast Guard people on the vessel to cooperate with the Soviet recapture of the man. I suppose the Coast Guard admiral believed it was important to have the fishery conference continue without any problem. At any rate, it was a messy situation. The man had to be subdued by force, and removed from the U.S. vessel against his will. And when President Nixon heard about this he was furious, of course. There was intensive press and Congressional interest too.

Well, Nixon called for the logs of the Department of State Operations Center and for the Coast Guard flag-plot headquarters. The logs indicated clearly that the Department of State had very correctly followed all procedure. The Department of State had even endeavored to find out more from the Coast Guard flag-plot, but was given none. And what had happened was that the Coast Guard headquarters in Washington had been dropped flat by the First District people up in Boston. Their people up in Boston had made decisions on their own that created an incredible situation. It ended the careers of the three Senior Coast Guard officers involved up there. They all had to retire early.

As a result of that incident, the President determined that the Department of State was the one place in town in which he had confidence to handle non-military incidents. Therefore, the White House ordered in the Federal Register that henceforth all non-military incidents had to be referred to the Operations Center in the Department of State for primary action.

## Library of Congress

About a week later, I got a call from a lawyer from Pittsburgh. He was calling me about some Polish lady there who wanted to change her status to that of refugee. I asked, "Why are you calling me about this?" He replied, "Its in the Federal Register that we're to consult the Operation Center in the Department of State." I said, "I think that's going a little bit further than the Federal Register intended." We got that a little bit adjusted, so we didn't get involved in every one of these cases.

It was an indication of the realization on the part of the White House that our Operations Center was a functioning, efficient, timely body. And to this day it operates that way.

*Q: Okay, an FSO-4, in our system—this is the old FSO-4—is a mid-ranking officer that's been around as you had, but did they make the officer in charge, whoever it would be, politically savvy enough to understand the nuances of anywhere? I mean, somebody...*

FLATIN: These people were very carefully selected. The personnel system ensured that only the most reliable types of officers were sent up to the Executive Secretary for consideration. The Executive Secretary personally passed upon all these people. In fact, the Executive Secretary in my time passed even upon Secretarial-level people coming in to ensure that he had people in whom he could have confidence. Within the Foreign Service you frequently find that kind of talent. In a given watch, you had a senior watch officer, a junior watch officer, and an editor who was also a Foreign Service officer. You had a lot of good sense and rich experience there. We also had a military representative from the NMCC on each watch—and we had our own representatives over at the NMCC. We also had INR on the deck just below us with their special resources.

*Q: Was this strictly for crises? This was a period of time where you had—the Secretary of State was William Rogers.*

FLATIN: Right.

*Q: And the head of the National Security Council was Henry Kissinger.*

## Library of Congress

FLATIN: Right.

*Q: And Henry Kissinger and the National Security Council were very much, at least this is maybe from the State Department view, trying to really emasculate the State Department while they took on...*

FLATIN: That wasn't exactly the view we had though. When you actually saw what was going on, it wasn't that much of an adversary type of relationship. There were two constant streams of Eliot-to-Kissinger memos that went across to the White House by classified FAXs, called LDX. A steady stream of State input traveled through this busy channel—and messages from the NSC.

*Q: Eliot was?*

FLATIN: Ted Eliot was the Executive Secretary. A lot of business was transacted back and forth between the two; the idea of any conflict has been overplayed. I myself had a lot of contact in those days with Alexander Haig, who was then a colonel on the staff of Kissinger. I had several conversations with Haig in the middle of the night.

I'd say our relationship with the NSC was very good. They had a good center over there. In fact, one very pleasant thing happened one night. We received a very big envelope from the White House. It was a letter from President Nixon to Secretary Rogers. Nixon had read a despatch from our political counselor at Manila who upon reassignment to, I think, Seoul, had written a departure thought-piece, "Whither the Philippines?" And in his letter to Rogers Nixon said, "I think that this is the best piece of writing I have seen during my whole government career." He wanted to make certain that that officer was informed how the President had appreciated his message. And the attached buck slip from Kissinger stated that he agreed with the President, that he had seen to it that the President saw this message because he thought it was so good. I thought that this was a positive gesture. It must have stunned the officer out in Seoul when he got this high-level commendation. This

## Library of Congress

showed the advantages of the old despatch system where the author's name could appear on the document.

The reason they saw this particular despatch, incidentally, is that among our jobs on the watch was to ensure that the most important cables went on to the White House. We prepared, as you know, a summary twice a day. We would occasionally include an airgram or a despatch from time to time, like this particular one, if we felt that it had something of value in it. The reason it ended up in their hands, therefore, is that we had picked it for their consideration on an earlier watch.

*Q: Were there any other major crises that you got involved in?*

FLATIN: We had a lot of problems, as you recall in those days, with hijackings. If a hijacking was occurring we arranged a conference call on our loudspeakers. Everybody got involved. In fact, we even had the airport controller at San Marti Airport in Havana, Cuba, in our conference calls if the airplane was on its way there. We also had other problems, such as assassination attempts.

*Q: Vietnam was...*

FLATIN: Vietnam was indeed a major part of our work. We dealt with everything. There was no limit. We dealt with any problem that the Department of State faced around the world. Vietnam, as you recall, involved a lot of very highly classified traffic which we had to handle. You know the senior watch officer is the one who decides where NODIS and EXDIS goes in Washington.

*Q: I was Consul General in Saigon during part of this time. Maybe you were not there at the time but the American Eagle...this was a ship full of napalm that was hijacked by a couple of American sailors and brought into Cambodia.*

## Library of Congress

FLATIN: Yes. Very interesting. I've often wondered whatever happened to that. It was one sailor, wasn't it?

*Q: Two sailors.*

FLATIN: Whatever happened to them? Do you know?

*Q: I had a Coast Guard officer attached to...these were two Americans. They went in just at the time when the regime was overthrown, and Lon Nol...*

FLATIN: I recall that night very well.

*Q: ...and they came in at the wrong time, and we also, sort of part of the invasion of Cambodia, so they couldn't have picked a worse time. A Vietnamese naval man came to my Coast Guard officer and said, "We have these two Americans in our custody. Do you want us to kill them?"*

FLATIN: How did the Vietnamese get control of them?

*Q: I'm not sure exactly what had happened, but I think when Lon Nol took over he had some Vietnamese support.*

FLATIN: They at any rate came into Vietnamese hands. So what did the Coast Guard man do with them?

*Q: Sent them back to the States.*

FLATIN: Is that what happened? They were sent back? Were they tried in the States? They hijacked a ship.

*Q: I'm not sure what happened. I never heard.*

## Library of Congress

FLATIN: Anyhow, as far as you know they were sent back. Indeed, I remember that case very well. I was on duty at the time that happened as a matter of fact. And I was always curious as to what happened to them because we lost sight of the story once they arrived in Cambodia.

*Q: They were there for a very short time before somehow or other they ended up in Vietnamese navy hands. The idea was all I did was tip a wink and we would lose a problem case. I must say I was tempted because I didn't feel very kindly toward these guys.*

Was there anything else in the Ops center time?

FLATIN: I'm sure it will occur to me later. There were a lot of interesting little things that happened.

*Q: I'm going to make a note at the end of this tape that we'll pick up later but if you think of anything we'll add it at that time.*

*Q: April 14, 1993. Bruce you had mentioned over the phone that there were a couple of things you would like to amend to what we had talked about the last time up to and including the Ops Center, I think.*

FLATIN: I'd like to go back to cover the historical setting in Afghanistan during the late 50s. We arrived in Afghanistan in early 1957. It was still known as the Hermit Kingdom. They did not permit people to pass through there as tourists in those days. Indeed, just shortly before we arrived there an American named Peter Winant, and a Swedish girl named Irmgard Gummelsson had disappeared in northern Afghanistan. This took quite a bit of the embassy's time, trying to investigate this disappearance — which indeed never was ever solved.

## Library of Congress

Another factor at this time was that the Royal Afghan Government was engaged in trying to modernize the country. They realized it was necessary. The country was in a pre-feudal situation. Feudalism was just starting in some reaches of the country. Feudalism is a rigid political, social, and economic system. It involves a noble's receiving the labor and loyal support of the peasants in his region. He, in turn, provides them with protection and justice. You'd find peasants in certain areas living inside a large Qala, or fortress, of a feudal leader and tilling the fields around this. Feudalism was just starting in Afghanistan. It was interesting to watch. People could only enjoy the use of land; Allah owns all land. Indeed, even the nomads who passed back and forth for many centuries from the Afghan mountains down to the Indian subcontinent, had the use of certain fields as they passed through Afghanistan to plant grain crops on way to the highest mountains, and then they could harvest them on the way back.

As you pass through the outlying villages of the country, it looked like the Holy Land must have looked before the time of Christ. There certainly was no difference from what Alexander the Great would have seen in Afghanistan when he passed through there 2,300 years ago. The people were dressed in the costumes of more than 2,000 years ago, and their housing had not changed over all those centuries. There certainly were no telephone wires or high tension wires. There was not one mile of railroad in the whole country.

I was convinced, as were many of us, that the royal family indeed saw the need to modernize. Now, in the royal family in those days the decision makers appeared to be led by Prince Da'ud (Sardar is their term for prince). Sardar Mohammed Da'ud was the first cousin of the king—and also his brother-in-law. Da'ud was married to the king's sister. The king was Zahir. And then the third member of this triumvirate was Prince Na'im, a brother of Prince Da'ud—and, therefore, also the first cousin of the king. The family met on Thursdays at the palace, Thursday being the last day of the working week before Juma, their Sabbath, and they would have dinner and the three of them would sit on a couch and

## Library of Congress

make decisions for Afghanistan for the coming week. All major decisions were made by these three men.

In those days the most important leader appeared to be Da'ud himself. He was a very powerful person. He had a shaved, bullet head, a Nazi SS-officer type of bull neck, and very piercing eyes. He was feared by many, but he seemed to be very committed to his country. He seemed to be a determined patriot.

Now, during World War II Afghanistan had been a neutral country, neutral largely because of pressure from British India on one side, and Russia on the other to keep them out of the war. They were inclined to be pro-German as they also were in World War I. The Germans were the enemies of the British, and "an enemy of my enemy is my friend." Because they were not involved in the war, they acquired a lot of foreign exchange earnings. In fact, Afghanistan usually had a good favorable balance of trade because of its agriculture such as Karakul skins, fresh and dried fruits, nuts, etc.

The Afghans started to use this money immediately after the end of the war to try to improve the country. And one of their first major projects was improvement of the road situation from Kabul to the Khyber Pass, the country's main road. They had a number of firms bid and an American firm, Morrison-Knudsen won the bid, and worked on this road to try to improve the surface. They did not pave it at that time, but they tried to improve its surface and build bridges. After the Afghans did as much as they wanted to do with that road (and I must say it still was not a great road when we served there), they then decided they wanted to resurrect the great classical irrigation works in southern Afghanistan along the Helmand basin. This was another venture where they sought bids; Morrison-Knudsen, being on the scene, won the bids to build big dams at Kajakai and Arghandab.

Now, having built the dams, the Afghans ran out of development money at that point. And they came to us and asked if we would help them realize the hydroelectric and irrigation benefits of these dams. And this was at a time when we were just beginning to look at aid

## Library of Congress

projects in that region, and it appeared logical that this big investment they'd made should be considered. We started to assist them with hydroelectric and irrigation projects.

Also in the year 1955, Bulganin and Khrushchev, who at that time were the dual leadership in the Soviet Union, visited Kabul and offered a \$100-million dollar line-of-credit for Afghan development. This was a big deal. If you recall, the Cold War was hot and heavy at the time, and aid was seen as an area of competition between East and West. Therefore, we were very aware of the fact that the Soviets were coming into Afghanistan in a big way. As a matter of fact, you may recall the Soviets "paved the streets of Kabul." In reality they only paved a few of the streets of Kabul. The Afghans used their equipment to pave some other ones. The latter did a miserable job; the first winter chopped up their work.

However, the Soviets got good publicity about their aid in the country. They built a huge grain elevator and milling complex just outside Kabul, which, interesting enough, the Afghans used for storing the wheat they acquired from us under Public Law 480. One way the Afghans promoted neutrality was to balance Soviet and American projects with each other whenever possible.

Our aid projects developed along an interesting line. With the irrigation system we needed engineers, Afghan engineers, and we discovered that their education system wasn't producing them. So the Americans established an entity called the Afghan Institute of Technology, AIT, which was a secondary-level school, not a tertiary level, to train Afghan irrigation engineers. USAID brought in the University of Wyoming under a contract to run the training. Then it was discovered that we didn't have enough English-language capability in Afghanistan to take on this new training burden. The decision had been made earlier that English had to be used because Persian or Pushtu, the two main languages of the country, were not adequate in that they didn't really contain the vocabulary for modern ideas, like hydroelectric or irrigation engineering, and we couldn't get American engineers to train in those languages anymore. Additionally, the Afghans being trained in that area should subsequently be able to follow journals written in English. So it was decided that

## Library of Congress

English was necessary. Therefore, Columbia University Teacher's College was brought in under contract to develop teaching materials in English for Afghan English teachers in elementary and secondary education. And out of that grew an American involvement at Kabul University on the tertiary level which eventually ended with Americans being involved in education in all three levels in Afghanistan: primary, secondary, and tertiary. This, incidentally, indicated the high degree of trust the Afghans had for us. Of all foreign nationalities in the country, they appear to have liked and trusted Americans the most—and the fact that they allowed us into the most intimate aspects of their educational system indicated this trust.

As I said before, the country had no railroads, and almost no paved roads at all, except within the city of Kabul. Therefore we assisted them by building country airports, deciding to go on to the next stage of transportation which was aviation. Among their big airport projects was the one at Qandahar, which was designed for international flights. At this time, most airlines still had propeller-driven aircraft. The large jet planes, such as 707s, came along just after this project had started and, therefore, the Afghan hope that Qandahar be used for a stopping place on flights from Europe to Asia never came to be. Additionally, it was in competition with Karachi, and the Afghans would have had to depend on Pakistani cooperation in transporting fuel through Quetta to Qandahar. So Qandahar never really became a paying proposition for those reasons.

The American aid program, like the aid program of the Soviets and everybody else, suffered from a lack of the Afghan ability to absorb aid. It was difficult to negotiate agreements, and it was difficult to execute them, or to carry them out to completion. Additionally, we had shortages of local currency to pay for local labor and for local materiel. The Afghans had a very conservative monetary policy which led to a very sound currency, the Afghani, that was highly prized in Asia for hoarding purposes. The Afghani was sort of the Swiss franc of Asia, but the problem was there just weren't enough of them. Therefore, Public Law 480 was of great use to us because, through the sale of U.S. foods,

## Library of Congress

it generated currency like this for our use. The Soviets actually had to sell tea sets, books, and valuable consumer items in order to generate Afghans for their programs.

At that time too, the sociological structure of Afghanistan was of interest to us. There had been very little done on this by scholars and, therefore, we in the embassy were encouraged to report through the old despatch system on such topics as the role of women, the operation of Islamic law, and other scholarly topics. In those days women were veiled by law, and indeed this was a very sensitive situation. We who lived in the country were concerned that were there to be a rapid change in this requirement, you could possibly have violence. In 1928, King Amanullah was overthrown in a violent revolution, among other reasons, because his wife was shown unveiled in public. Amanullah was trying to pursue a modernization program like Ataturk in Turkey, and he went a little too fast.

When we left Afghanistan in May of 1959, the veil was still required by law. Da'ud had it lifted in August of 1959, just shortly after we left, and there was some violence here and there in the country, but it went rather well. That is, that the veil was no longer required by law, but a large number of women still elected to wear it. Indeed when we came back for our second tour in 1977, we were surprised how many women were still wearing the veil. Middle class women appeared to regard it as a sign of respectability. The poorest women usually didn't wear it, nor did the more sophisticated, Western-trained women. But middle-class women preferred it; they seemed to feel comfortable with it. When we talk of the veil, we mean a total burqa—or chadri—from the top of the head down to the ground.

Other interesting aspects of their society involved the relationships among Afghanistan's many ethnic groups. The two dominant groups are the Pushtuns and the Tajiks, who are Indo-Europeans. They speak eastern Indo-European languages, Farsi (or Dari, as some call it), and Pushtu.

## Library of Congress

There are Turkic-type peoples in the country, such as the Uzbeks and the Turkomen who are related to the peoples just over the Oxus River in the former Soviet Union.

There are Mongols in the center of the country, the Hazaras. The name Hazara means “thousand” in Persian. There are people who believe that they are the remnants of the occupation armies of Genghis Khan, whose Golden Horde was comprised of units of one thousand each. However, other scholars think the Hazaras were there a lot longer before Genghis Khan's time. After all, Genghis Khan invaded Afghanistan only 700 years ago, which is fairly recent history for that country.

There are also a few groups of Arabs around the country, although, as you know, the Semitic world ends at the Iraqi-Iranian border.

There are some people in the northeastern part of the country which used to be called Kafiristan (“Kafir means unbeliever”). Their land was renamed Nuristan, the Land of Light, after they were forcibly converted to Islam in the 19th century. They are also Indo-European. They believed themselves to be descendants of Alexander the Great's armies. However, it was not unusual to find blond, very European type people among the Tajiks as well. I visited one village, for example, where the people looked like English persons, they were so Indo-European.

*Q: In a way this isn't so much a briefing about Afghanistan. I'm trying to capture as much about your dealings and perspectives.*

FLATIN: I was in the political section in Kabul from 1957 to 1959. This was my initial junior assignment, and I rotated through the economic section and the admin section—and did some work in the consular section as well. From the viewpoint of U.S. national interests, we saw many things in the country as linked. Obviously the economic and aid programs were of great interest from the political viewpoint because of their effect on the Afghan political scene and our relationship with the Soviet Bloc. Other Soviet Bloc countries, such

## Library of Congress

as Czechoslovaks and the Poles, were at that time involved in aid in the country too, albeit on a smaller scale.

*Q: I think we've covered some of this in the last one.*

FLATIN: Are you interested in any of the sociological aspects such as Qasas or the feudal system?

*Q: The way I see this, we're trying to capture what we were doing and let somebody else go into the...why don't we come back to walking through your career?*

FLATIN: Fine, good.

*Q: Because you left the Ops Center in 1973, and you were in Central European Affairs.*

FLATIN: That's correct. I spent the first year on the desk handling Berlin affairs. This is at the time, incidentally, that we were trying to nail down the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin; that was finally achieved. This was an attempt on our part to have the various parties involved in Berlin look afresh at the role of the Allies in Berlin, and the rights of people to pass freely to and from the city, as well as throughout the sectors of the city. It really didn't greatly improve the lot of the Berliners in terms of the division of their city, however. The city still was divided by a Wall, and it was difficult for Berliners to move from one side to the other. But we did the best we could as Western Allies to ensure their security as a free people. This involved a lot of involvement with the Soviets on the legal level. We found that we had to be very careful not to weaken our legal leverage vis-a-vis the Soviets. They were very quick to seize upon any possibility of being able to change the rules to expand their role in the Western sectors of Berlin. For example, they would have been willing to return to the Allied Kommandatura if its scope of control was limited to the three western sectors. We insisted that they had to include the eight boroughs of their sector as well. (They had pulled out of the Allied Kommandatura in 1948.)

## Library of Congress

*Q: Like dropping tail gates...*

FLATIN: That's right. You remember the Soviet attempts to introduce new limitations to make life difficult for Western Berlin. Or the height planes could fly through the Berlin air corridors. This was a great issue at one time.

*Q: Were you back here getting detailed reports? Don't do this, or watch this, or something like that.*

FLATIN: That's right. We were trying to give support to the Mission out there, with the Washington help from the various interested parties at the Department of Defense, CIA, and other offices in Washington. We did our best to ensure that our various programs, such as leader grants, brought the Berlin leadership to the United States for a good introduction to the American scene. Ensuring that the city was economically healthy was essential. It was extremely important that the Berlin economy be vibrant and strong to provide an attractive working place for Germans who lived there. The disadvantage of being 110 miles behind the Iron Curtain should not be allowed to affect adversely a factory in Berlin. The economic health of the city in a sense was much more important than the number of military troops stationed there.

*Q: From a practical point of view the troops there could only act as a firebreak.*

FLATIN: That's right. What we wanted was a Berlin which was attractive to fresh migrants. Let's just say, for example, there would be a young electrician in Duesseldorf with a wife and two children who was thinking of leaving Duesseldorf. He was trying to decide between a move to Munich or a move to Berlin. We wanted to make certain that Berlin was an attractive option for him. Whether that young electrician came to Berlin or not was important. In fact he would be more valuable to us than one more Allied soldier in the city. The city otherwise would eventually look like an artificial oasis, and would cease to be viable. We were very interested in attracting young people. Berlin had a population that

## Library of Congress

was already too old—and too female. As a matter of fact the most common type of West Berliner in those days was an old female. They then comprised more than 25 percent of the population.

*Q: I don't want to be disrespectful, but speaking of old females, was Eleanor Dulles still a power.*

FLATIN: She was no longer involved in Berlin at that time. For that matter, she was no longer active in either German or Austrian affairs. However, I did run across Eleanor quite frequently subsequently when I was desk officer for Austria. In fact, I escorted her to the 20th anniversary of the Austrian State Treaty in Vienna. I think Eleanor Dulles is still alive right now. When I last saw her not too many years ago she was still very alert and very interested in following Austrian and German affairs.

At any rate, I was in Berlin affairs for one year and, following that period, I became desk officer for Austria, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein. I found this interesting. You'd think that Austria and Switzerland were identical. Although both Alpine countries, they're really very unlike each other, and operate entirely differently from each other. The Swiss heavily emphasize their own military strength, and the Austrians really do not have much military strength. Switzerland actually is a stronger country militarily. The Swiss economy is extremely important. They're a great power in terms of their monetary activity and economy. The Austrian economy, while not that strong, was not doing too badly either at that time. The Austrian shilling was even doing rather well vis-a-vis the German mark. There was a lot of German investment there.

I found that the job involved much more attention to Swiss affairs because of the nature of the large Swiss financial and economic involvement with this country. One of the biggest responsibilities I handled at that time was the Swiss purchase of a half-billion dollars worth of military aircraft from Northrop Aviation. The Swiss end of the job as desk officer was far more demanding in terms of time. Also, the economic aspects of both jobs, both the Swiss

## Library of Congress

and the Austrian, were far stronger than the political demands, although we had a political officer handle this job.

*Q: From a practical point of view they both have very stable governments. So there weren't communist parties or something that were really threatening.*

FLATIN: That's right. Speaking of governments, the Austrian regime was lead by Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, who was one of the most prominent socialists in Europe. And yet, interestingly enough, the Kreisky government created an atmosphere that was extremely favorable to business. Austrian business thrived under Kreisky. He was a very interesting person—a man of great integrity and interested in not only Austria, but also such outside issues as peace in the Middle East. He was among the foreign leaders who kept demanding that the rest of Europe and America look at the problem of Palestinians. He kept insisting that there would be more trouble there, and indeed there was a war on the very day one of his representatives delivered a strong warning to us that there was one coming.

As for Liechtenstein, a very rich little country, I had much contact with Senator Pell, who was a close friend of the ruling family of Liechtenstein. For instance, when then Crown Prince Hans Adam came here and we were able to make it possible for him to see quite a few people, including Vice President Ford. He's now the reigning prince. Senator Pell, as you recall, had been a Foreign Service officer. When he was in Bratislava, I think that is where he may have started his relationship with the Liechtenstein family, who had large holdings in Czechoslovakia—actually larger than the whole country of Liechtenstein itself today. Do you have any specific questions about that period?

*Q: Not really because I think we'd like to move on. You then decided to go back to your...*

FLATIN: I went to the National Defense University. I was in ICAF, and found it a useful experience because it gave me, as a political officer, an exposure to economic and managerial considerations. That was the very first year in which ICAF and the War College

## Library of Congress

were joined together as the National Defense University. We were in the 1976 graduating class. It was a very stimulating year.

Then I took a year of Persian, and went back to Afghanistan. I went there as political counselor in 1977.

*Q: You were there from when?*

FLATIN: '77 to '79, exactly 20 years after our first assignment.

*Q: What was the political situation at that time when you went there?*

FLATIN: Prince Da'ud had been squeezed out of power after we left the first time, and his cousin (and brother-in-law), the king, appeared to take over more in his own right as leader of the country. This was rather surprising for those of us who had been there earlier because we always had the impression the king was more or less under Da'ud's influence. Da'ud was out of office for most of the '60s, but then he came back in a revolution in 1973 where he unseated the king, and created a republic with himself as president. Helping him in this revolution were certain left-wing elements, such as the Khalq and Parcham branches of the communist party of Afghanistan.

So when I arrived on the scene again in 1977 (twenty years after the beginning of my first tour of duty in that country), Da'ud had just held a loya jirga which is a large special-purpose national assembly which had called to create a constitution for this new government. He had waited quite a time to do this. It was clear to the leftist elements when they looked at this constitution, that they were going to be squeezed out of any real influence. In fact, Da'ud planned to create a one-party system. The party was going to be called the Party of the National Revolution, PNR. Da'ud by this time was getting a little senile, he was a little slow on the uptake of how to handle this complex business. The party was being created, but Da'ud had to pass upon every member. At the time of the

## Library of Congress

Afghan revolution in April 1978, only 41 people had been approved for the PNR party—so you can see that the pace that he developed wasn't fast enough.

Da'ud was regarded by the Afghans themselves throughout the country as just like another king. He called himself the President of the Republic, but as a member of the royal family who had seized power, he could have easily called himself king. I think most people in the country had the concept that he was king.

Da'ud was trying to continue his modernization programs for the country, but you just can't believe the inertia he had to overcome. It was just incredible. Things just were not done. During the whole time before the revolution, for example, we kept discussing with his education ministry where we were going to place a women's dormitory for the university—and what it was going to be like. There were constant discussions about the women's dormitory, for which one brick was never put upon another.

We were going to build schools in their country. We thought one way to get them done was to have the Afghans build the school first and then we'd give the money after we inspected it. There were about 200 schools which were to be built under the system; and I don't think any more than three were built. In one case one of our engineers from AID went out to a stone building they had built, and he physically tore the building apart with his bare hands because of the cheap mortar holding the stones together. The Afghans were dismayed, and he said, "The U.S. Government certainly couldn't certify a building like this to be safe for children."

Projects were either never built, or they were built inadequately. It was like our history of our aid program during our first tour. We never spent all the money we had available for aid in Afghanistan because of the inability of the Afghans to absorb it.

Politically, Da'ud ran the country with a one-man type of rule. He would head cabinet meetings at which people would make reports; he would make no comment, just look impassively at them. From time-to-time he'd whisper something to an aide on his side

## Library of Congress

which presumably was an instruction to be carried out. It wasn't clear to his cabinet what he'd said. There was still a certain amount of fear on the part of people as to what he would do if he became dissatisfied with them. This carried over from the earlier time when people with whom he had lost patience simply disappeared. At the same time, he appeared to be giving inadequate guidance. The country was being inadequately guided at that time and it was clear that the man was not any longer up to it. He didn't have enough energy to found and run this new republic of his properly. There was dissatisfaction everywhere.

Then the events leading up to the 1978 revolution occurred. The Parcham and Khalq wings of the Afghan communist party, who had been feuding with each other, reached some type of agreement in 1977 which enabled them to work more in unison because they knew they were being squeezed out by Da'ud's new government, even though they had participated in bringing it about. And in the early part of 1978, a labor leader was killed. That man had been leading the first strike in Afghan history, an aviation strike. Not too long after that an important communist ideologue, Mir Akbar Khyber, was shot. There followed a parade of leftist demonstrators, protesting his being killed. This group of demonstrators, numbering over 2,000, passed our embassy and in very well-organized fashion hurled curses against the U.S., somehow identifying us with his passing.

This was our first look at the Afghan communist party. As we said at the time, it was like watching the Loch Ness monster rising out of the water. We were able to see the nature of this large and well-organized movement for the first time. What had been as often described in rumors was at last in the open. A West German police officer, who was then a police adviser to the Afghan Ministry of the Interior, told me that the same weapon was used to kill Khyber, the communist leader, as had been used earlier to kill the striking pilot union leader. That fact indicated that both killings may have been a government-type assassination.

## Library of Congress

The Da'ud regime appeared to be shocked by the events that followed the murder of Khyber. They started to arrest members of the communist politburo. They were ineffective at doing this; they didn't get all of them. That was unfortunate for the Da'ud regime, because the revolution itself then broke out during the time they were arresting these people.

The morning of the revolution was rather interesting. The night before we had had our Marine party, and Ted Eliot, who was our ambassador, told me...

*Q: ...November 10th?*

FLATIN: No, this was in April of 1978. Ted Eliot, on the Thursday night before Friday (Juma, the Muslim holy day), had told me that he'd like to send a cable out as soon as possible discussing the arrest of the politburo members. So I went into the embassy the following morning; this would ordinarily be a non-working day. I was working on the cable when my secretary came into the office, disturbed because she and a friend had wanted to go to the Kabul Gorge for a picnic, and she had been stopped by troops at the Pul-i-Charkhi tank base on the way to the gorge. She said they were very firm and wouldn't let her go by. There had been heavy rains the previous evening. I wondered whether there were some road erosion problems that they were concerned about. Then she explained they were wearing helmets and were fully armed; that struck me as being a little bit more serious than a case of troops just guarding a road.

I asked my deputy, Jim Taylor, to go out and check the roadblock situation, and I talked to the ambassador about it. We decided we should also send the military attach# down there to take a professional look. These two U.S. officers were stopped. It was clear that a major force was coming into being, that it was preparing to launch some type of operation. Indeed, very shortly thereafter a tank force broke loose from that base and came into Kabul at high speed. It took over key intersections, sent a few shells through the Ministry of Defense building, and got engaged in a fire fight with the loyal troops of Da'ud. The

## Library of Congress

latter did not appear effective at dealing with this tank force. The invading force were quickly successful in taking key government buildings in the central part of town. It wasn't until they got to the other side of Kabul that they ran into a stiffer resistance on the part of the loyalist forces of Da'ud. They were able to get to the prison where the politburo members were being held, and liberated them. Many were puzzled why Da'ud hadn't dealt with these people beforehand. The usual Afghan practice would have been they would go from cell to cell to shoot these prisoners. The important party leadership, therefore, was freed by the communist troops early in the conflict—and led them to victory.

We had heavy fighting all over Kabul, much of it around our embassy. Our embassy, unfortunately, is across the street from the radio and television complex. This leads us to exposure whenever there's an attempt to takeover power. Our embassy at Kabul has a little fort-like structure on its roof—sort of a concrete Fort Laramie where we keep our burn boxes. There's a parapet wall, behind which we could get a good view of everything going on in Kabul. From there we saw much of the battle.

We kept our embassy flag up that night, thinking that with the spotlights on it we would be clearly identifying it as the American embassy so the fighting parties wouldn't target us. However, I still remember that later that night we were watching a group of helicopters hanging north of the embassy, launching red rockets at the downtown part of Kabul. I next saw a triangular shape coming across the face of the moon on the other side of the embassy and realized it was a MiG jet making a turn up there. It launched four rockets right at our roof. We ducked, and the four rockets streaked over, barely missed the back edge of our embassy roof, and demolished the house behind us. Our Air Attach#, who was up in our fort opined that the plane clearly saw the American flag; he thought that there was no doubt that the pilot knew what he was shooting at. We then took down our flag and turned off the lights.

*Q: Why were elements of the army on the side of the communists?*

## Library of Congress

FLATIN: Because many army leaders had been trained in the Soviet Union. Going back to the 1950s, you will recall, there was the Eisenhower Doctrine through which we were offering defense support to various countries in the Middle East following the Suez war of 1956. The Afghans were not invited to participate in this. The United States Government, for a number of reasons, had avoided much involvement with the development of the Afghan armed forces. One reason was that Afghanistan was geographically beyond our ability to project power realistically. We also made it clear to the Soviets we did not intend to challenge them in that region. From the viewpoint of the Soviets, Afghanistan would be like Mexico for us; it was right on their southern border. You will recall, we were very touchy about Mexico when the French went in there during the Civil War.

Also, the Afghans suspected that we would favor the Pakistanis in such regional confrontations as the Pushtunistan dispute to the point where we certainly wouldn't be interested in developing Afghan military strength to deal with Pakistan. We ourselves did not believe it was in our joint interest to be involved with them militarily. The Afghans then decided to use the USSR to a large degree as a place to train Afghan military personnel and obtain military hardware. In fact, they already had MiG-15s when I was there in the 1950s.

Now, not all people being trained in the Soviet Union necessarily became pro-communist, but certainly some of them did. Therefore, there were elements of the army who were very convinced communists. Other elements were not. The 1978 revolution involved a lot of heavy fighting between communists and non- communist elements. Indeed there were still mutinies after the communists took over. The revolution took about two or three days to secure Kabul, but much of the country remained beyond communist control. Indeed, as the situation developed you saw the Mujahideen resistance created almost immediately after the revolution. They were already fighting communist forces within weeks. Some soldiers and entire military units went over to the Mujahideen side. The military situation was mixed from the very beginning phase of the "Great Saur Revolution."

## Library of Congress

*Q: How did we see this thing happening? Was this considered a terrible threat to our side? Or was this seen as a local...from the embassy's point of view?*

FLATIN: To begin with the people who took over were from two leftist factions who called themselves the Khalqis and the Parchamis. Khalq means “masses” and Parcham means “banner.” The Khalqis and the Parchamis had an early falling out. The latter leaders were exiled to diplomatic posts throughout the world. The new leaders did not use the term “communist” at first. They called themselves the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. They went through an early phase during which they called each other “comrade,” and then they stopped doing that. There was an attempt on the part of Washington to not rush at trying to label this new regime because we had USAID programs going in the country and we wanted to see how the new regime would sort itself out. But then when the new regime eventually came up with a constitution it was clearly a communist document.

The first dictator was a man named Taraki, a man who was sort of a figurehead. The real leader was a man named Hafizullah Amin, who was his number two man. Amin eventually killed Taraki in September of 1979, and took over sole power. Amin, who had studied at Columbia University at our expense, was definitely a convinced communist. Amin tried to push communization of the country too rapidly. This exacerbated the Mujahideen reaction throughout the country and was, therefore, a concern to the Soviets. The Soviets kept trying to get Amin to “broaden the political base,” but he kept trying to push communist advances too quickly. He moved ahead on many fronts which are very sensitive. He pushed ahead with “land reform” which had the effect of disrupting Afghan agriculture. He disrupted the economic credit system for agriculture. Amin also got involved with family life by trying to get rid of barbaric codes, and medieval customs dealing with women. This enraged the men of Afghanistan.

We were trying our best to deal with these people. I'll give you an example: the Khalqis talked about the need for land reform. Washington instructed us to tell them that the U.S. Government had also long been interested in advancing land reform in Afghanistan. We

## Library of Congress

had urged it in the past. If they were now interested, we would be willing to send some of their people to the University of Wisconsin where there was a special land reform program. We also then had a land reform expert with AID who was currently at that time working in East Africa. We offered to move him to Afghanistan to advise them. The Khalqis thanked us very much for our offer, but never responded. We tried to keep our other AID programs going. We kept talking about building the girls' dormitory at the university, but nothing happened. All the other programs we tried to keep moving just became bogged down, largely through the disinterest of the central government.

The important point to note is that many who supported this revolution originally were not necessarily communists. A lot of people had wanted to get rid of the Mohammedzai clan who had run the country for 200 years; they were relieved to get rid of this elite royal class. Additionally not all people who were communists were necessarily anti-American. There were a few communists in that government initially who were either neutral toward us or were quietly friendly towards us. They were weeded out eventually. Anybody so identified was dealt with harshly, but initially it wasn't all that unfriendly.

However, when our ambassador was murdered, then the break occurred and we terminated our programs.

*Q: When was Spike Dubs...how did that happen? Were you there at that time?*

FLATIN: Yes. He was murdered on Valentine's day, 1979. I was at the embassy as political counselor meeting with Bruce Amstutz, the DCM, shortly before 9:00 a.m. to discuss the staff meeting we'd be holding at 9:00. The ambassador was not yet in. The security officer, and the ambassador's chauffeur burst into the DCM's office to announce that the ambassador had been "arrested by the Afghan government" and was being held at the Kabul Hotel.

Well, by this time in Kabul one could be paranoid enough not be surprised that an ambassador would be arrested by the host government. In other places that may strike

## Library of Congress

you as being unusual, but in Afghanistan that was not a concept that was impossible to grasp. I told Bruce I'd go to the Kabul Hotel and call him from there. When I passed my office I told Jim Taylor, my deputy, where I was going and what had happened. His first reaction was, it must have been the human rights report. We'd just delivered it shortly before. It was not a very pleasant report. Once again, it may seem strange, but there it was not out of the question that such an unpredictable government would react in that kind of a fashion.

I traveled to the Kabul Hotel with a couple of other people from the embassy. We used the ambassador's car. I saw letters he had been prepared to post—and noted that he had been reading the New York Times. When we got there the hotel lobby was swarming with police and troops. We were told that terrorists had seized the Ambassador. They had one down in the lobby as a prisoner, and the other ones—they didn't tell me how many there were—were up in a room with the Ambassador on the second floor. (The original report stated that four men had seized the Ambassador.) It struck us as odd that the terrorists would come to a hotel in the center of town to hole up with the Ambassador. Soviet embassy people were there as well. I was talking to the Soviet official, and the Afghan police and military leadership on the scene. They told me that these people were demanding the release of some anti-regime people in return for Ambassador Dubs—specifically a man named Yunus Khalis.

The important point to note is that we Americans never ever had any direct contact with the people holding the Ambassador. Everything we knew, about who was holding him, and what they wanted, was through the Afghan communist leadership and the Soviets. This is an important point. We brought up our embassy doctor, ambulance, nurse, and the ambassador's blood type—just to be ready in case there were problems with his being injured. We wanted to make certain we could take care of him right away.

In the meantime Bruce Amstutz, the DCM, got in contact with the Department and was told that Secretary of State Vance wanted to ensure that the Afghans did not do anything

## Library of Congress

precipitous—and that they should negotiate with the people holding the ambassador and not do anything that would in any way bring about any danger to the ambassador. We conveyed this message frequently at the hotel. The DCM was trying to reach Foreign Minister Hafizullah Amin. We sent officers out trying to find him like process servers. He was not available anywhere, and couldn't be reached on the telephone.

At the hotel, I kept telling the police that our embassy was trying to reach Hafizullah Amin with a special message from Secretary of State Vance urging that there be no precipitous action. This was the theme we repeated all morning. I was assured by the Afghans and the Soviets that they would not endanger the Ambassador. I was assured they were going to do their best to negotiate. I said that we would like to get someone up to the second floor to talk to the Ambassador, so we could reassure him that things were going all right. They did not respond to this initially, but later at a certain point a Soviet officer came up to me—the Soviet I'm referring to was a person whom I knew to be a Soviet security type. He asked me, "What languages does your Ambassador know besides English?" I replied, "His best language, of course, is Russian." He responded, "Besides Russian?" I said, "He knows German rather well." He asked, "Do you know German?" When I replied that I did, he went away.

Then a little later, the chief Afghan police official came up to me and he said, "Would you please come upstairs with me?" This was finally the moment to see what the situation was upstairs. He said, "We'd like to have you talk to your ambassador in German so that the people inside the room will not be able to understand what's being said." I replied, "Fine." As we walked down the hallway, I could see a group of troops and police outside this one room. I noted that the suite next to it was open too. I asked, "Do you want me to talk through the wall from this suite on the other side?" The police official replied, "No, its best if you talk right through the door into the suite where the Ambassador is being held." When I looked at this keyhole through which he wanted me to talk, I could imagine myself swallowing a bunch of bullets. I said, "Are you sure the people inside the room have agreed to this procedure?" And he replied, "Yes." I said, "I want to hear you once again

## Library of Congress

talk to them to hear their agreement.” So he talked to them and they appeared to have agreed that this embassy political officer could talk to the Ambassador. (I suppose his captors were assuming this was going to be in English, because it was an American officer who would be talking to the Ambassador.)

And when that was made clear, I knelt by the keyhole, and I said in German, “Good morning, Mr. Ambassador. How is it with you?” And the Ambassador replied in a strong voice, “I am all right.” Then the police instructed, “Now ask him what kind of weapons they have.” So I asked, “What kind of weapons do they have?” The Ambassador started to answer but unfortunately in his German he used words close to “pistol” and “revolver.” By that time, his captors caught on to the fact that English was not being used, and they ordered, “Stop this conversation! We won't stand for any tricks. There'll be no further conversation.” The Ambassador then remained silent. The police tried to get the captors to loosen their controls, but they refused to let any more conversation continue.

Then the police official said to me, “Tell your Ambassador that exactly ten minutes from now he's either to try to go to the bathroom, or he is to fall to the floor.” I replied, “Just a minute, I want to talk to you elsewhere.” So we went down to a cross hallway where I said, “We've spent the whole morning telling you that we don't want any precipitous action here, and you're now telling me to help you light a fuse that's going to go off in exactly ten minutes.” I said, “I want to repeat once again that we're trying to find Foreign Minister Amin to deliver an urgent request from Secretary Vance that there be no attack on this room.” He shrugged his shoulders, and muttered, “I have my orders.”

So then I went to the Soviet security officer, and I said, “Once again, I want to tell you that we have said this many times that we don't want any precipitous action here.” The Soviet then talked to the Afghans and that particular raid appeared to have been called off.

But later in the morning, I'd say about an hour and a half later, it was clear they had received an order to hit the room. They got prepared. The Soviets came forward and

## Library of Congress

provided some with some special weaponry. They had police and troops on a building across the street who were responding to hand signals from the Soviets in our building. At a certain point there was a loud shot and then a gun fight lasted exactly 40 seconds; I checked this with my watch. That's a long time. The floor just shook with the gun fire coming from the hallway where I was standing and from the bank building across the street into the room.

When the whole thing was over there could not have been one cubic centimeter in that room that didn't have a bullet pass through it. A gnat flying in that room would have been hit.

Other Americans had in the meantime come up the stairs and were on the opposite side from this cross corridor with me, and they had the stretcher. When the initial burst of firing stopped we were ready to go to the room with the stretcher, and the Afghans told us to wait a minute. Then there were four more loud shots. Then we were told to come.

When we looked in the room, the room had water all over the floor because the gunfire had shot up the radiator. There were some two or three inches of water on the floor. The Ambassador was slumped in a chair against the wall, but one-half of his body was wet as though he had been lying on the floor. He was taken out on the stretcher, clearly dead. He had many bullet holes in him. There were two men in the room; they were brought out and dumped at my feet. One was probably dead, and the other one looked definitely dead; they were taken away.

The third man they had held as a prisoner, who appeared to be a confederate of theirs and had been used from time to time to talk to them through the door, was held nearby in the hallway—as alive as you are. They put a brown bag over his head and took him away screaming and kicking.

Then I went downstairs and saw the police official in charge and said, "I just want you to know our Ambassador is dead." He's the one who had kept assuring me that if anything

## Library of Congress

happened there would be a very small chance of any problem. He said, "I'm very sorry." He did not sound very convincing.

I went back to the embassy then and after about a hour I got a call from the Afghan authorities asking me if I wanted to come to the military hospital to see the dead bodies. So I went there with the security officer and our consular officer. We were brought into a hallway where there were four nude, dead bodies on the concrete floor.

I should point out, incidentally, that one of the earlier reports, including that of the Ambassador's driver, was that four people had seized the Ambassador. One of our USAID wives thought that she saw four people going into the hotel with him. One of these people, incidentally, was reportedly in a police uniform. He was said to have stopped the Ambassador's chauffeured car in front of the USIS building. So, since we were told there were four men, they apparently thought they had to account for this number. As I told you, there were only two "captors" in the room, and both were now definitely dead. The man who was just as alive as you are with a brown bag over his head was now dead too. He had contusions all over his body, and was turning greyish blue. Then there was a fourth person whom I had never seen before in my life lying there. The police colonel, who was showing us this display, said, "These are the four men shot in the room during the shoot-out." He and I had been standing together in the hallway, outside the room. He knew perfectly well what we'd seen—but this was going to be their official story.

The Ambassador's body was then brought by our medical crew and ambulance to the American AID compound, where they brought him into the dispensary. Afghan troops then entered the AID compound in violation of our diplomatic status. When we complained about it, they said they were in there to "protect" the Ambassador. We were very concerned that they would try to seize the body. The White House, responding to the situation, sent a special plane from Washington. We let the Afghans know that it was on the way to pick up the body. So they didn't press us any further inside the compound.

## Library of Congress

The body was brought back here to Washington for autopsy at Walter Reed. There were many bullets in the body, but the ones that caused death were .22 caliber bullets in the brain, about four of them. The official Afghan incident report to us, in the form of a diplomatic note, had listed weapons found in the room — and none of them were .22 calibre. And as you know, police and troops don't use .22 caliber, but certain types of official security agency assassins do use .22 caliber as a favorite weapon.

*Q: More an assassination type.*

FLATIN: Anyhow, this became a focus of ours. We insisted on seeing these weapons taken from the room, and they promised us we could. We went after this issue time and time again. It must have been ten or eleven different times we insisted upon this in notes and personal conversations. (Bruce Amstutz became our Charg#, and I became acting DCM.) Whenever we saw Foreign Minister Amin or any other appropriate official, this subject would be raised and we would receive slippery answers. On one occasion Amin told us, "We have all kinds of weapons we pick up here throughout the city for various crimes all the time." We were apparently to get the impression that weapons were being thrown in some coal bins somewhere, and who could tell which weapons were which anymore.

In June of 1979, we sent a note to the Afghan Foreign Ministry telling them the results of the autopsy at Walter Reed, and, in essence, telling them they were liars, and challenging them to give us a straight account as to what really happened—in view of the fact that their original note was incorrect. It had conveyed false information. Well, we never got an answer to that note. That was the end of that subject from their viewpoint. We also discussed this with the Soviets who drew the obvious conclusion that we were saying the Afghans had murdered the Ambassador.

## Library of Congress

Therefore, you couldn't help but reach the conclusion that his death certainly seemed to involve the responsibility of the Afghan government, and probably the Soviets—but it always puzzled us as to why they would do it.

*Q: One can say obviously they were involved, but what the hell was in it?*

FLATIN: Some people said it was because Spike Dubs was a Soviet expert, and the Soviets wanted him out of the way before they went into the next phase of their Afghan adventure. But that made no sense, because we have many Foreign Service experts on the USSR who could have been assigned there. He was not the only Soviet expert we had.

*Q: I served with him in Yugoslavia.*

FLATIN: Others said it was because they wanted to terminate our relationship with Afghanistan. And, indeed, that did happen. It did terminate the AID relationship, but that wouldn't have made any sense either, because if I were the Soviets I wouldn't give a damn if Americans were shoving money down that rat hole. I didn't see any communist purpose served by getting us out of our AID programs there. Whatever the reason, he was dead. It was a hardball game there. This occurred, as I said, on Valentine's day 1979. Our bilateral relationship went steeply downhill from that point onward.

The Mujahideen reaction, as I mentioned before, started right after the revolution and got worse and worse for the regime. We reported that huge amounts of military materiel were being brought in the country. Far more tanks were brought into Afghan tank parks than there were tank crews in the Afghan army. At the same time the Afghan government army was melting away, as we described in our messages, "like an icefloe in a tropical sea." Entire units were deserting to the Mujahideen. Therefore, the Russians had to face this manpower leak. Something had to be done to give the regime replacement manpower. We were evaluating what the Soviets were going to do along these lines. There were

## Library of Congress

people who said maybe they'll bring in Cubans. We said, "No, that wouldn't make any sense." Soviets then started to beef up their strength in the country with Soviet forces. They actually took over military installations, such as the big air base at Bagram, north of Kabul. It was put under direct Soviet military control. Then things really got rough on the political scene.

In September, Amin killed Taraki in a botched attempt on the part of the latter to eliminate Amin. It appears that Taraki was more favored by the Russians, and the Russians had hoped that Amin could be eliminated. Something went wrong in this bloody encounter. The Soviet ambassador was physically present at the palace when this happened. Amin was the one who survived, and Taraki was the one who died. Therefore, the Soviets now had a dangerous man who was clearly alerted to their hostility—although he was a convinced communist. Things became very tense toward the end of 1979. At Christmas time, Soviet special forces came into Kabul, where they killed Amin themselves. Other Soviet units joined Soviet forces already in the country — and launched a direct assault against the Mujahideen.

*Q: When did you leave?*

FLATIN: I left at the end of November.

*Q: At that time it sounds like our relations were in absolute tension.*

FLATIN: Yes. I should point out that we had a security committee that met every day at 9:00 a.m. to decide whether or not we should evacuate. Our decision was based upon the safety of our evacuation routes. We only had two ways out of Kabul; either to go overland through the Khyber Pass to Pakistan, or to fly out of Kabul from Kabul airport. Therefore, we decided in our security committee that should we lose either of those two routes, we'd immediately use the remaining route to evacuate our women and children—and least essential personnel.

## Library of Congress

*Q: How would you lose them?*

FLATIN: Well, I'll tell you how we lost the route to the Khyber Pass. We started to have Europeans being attacked as they drove that road. The incident that decided us was that a French car was shot up on the road near the Kabul Gorge. It was a very demanding trip to go from Kabul down to the Khyber Pass, even in the best of times. One tough feature was a switchback road called the Kabul Gorge. Kabul is on a high plateau 6,000 feet above sea level. In order to get to the city from this desert valley, coming from the Khyber Pass, you climb on a switch-back road, going higher and higher. You're like a sitting duck in a shooting gallery. Anybody who doesn't want you to go up or down that road could pick you off very easily. Once it became clear that Europeans were also being shot on this road, we decided that we had lost that route. So we evacuated our women and children at the end of June and beginning of July of 1979. Next, we drew up three different lists of the embassy people who were the least essential, the next essential group, and then the most essential group, who were to turn off the lights as they left.

The evacuation went off very well. You see we had just had that evacuation problem next door in Iran. Our embassy at Tehran had been taken over earlier, also on Valentine's Day, in 1979 (it was taken twice that year). The first time it was taken over, if you recall, they evacuated our people in a very ragged evacuation. For example, we had women coming from embassy Tehran arriving at Kennedy Airport missing one shoe. Others arrived carrying their valuables in pillow cases. Well, we had every single one of our Americans leave Afghanistan safely in an organized fashion, with suitcases, on regular airliners. We had absolutely not one single scratch. It was a successful evacuation. We drew down our embassy to a bare-bones strength. By the time I left the country we had very few people left there—and no wives.

*Q: How did we regard Mujahideen. I'm talking of the time you were there. We want to stick to that. Did we sort of watch it with a benevolent eye, or did we have contact?*

## Library of Congress

FLATIN: Well, we certainly would officially deny any contact with the Mujahideen. Indeed, the regime accused us at that time of providing them with arms, and we denied it. This is in 1979, before the Soviets finally came in with their full forces. We portrayed ourselves as observers. Everybody was certainly interested in the developing spread of the Mujahideen uprising. We reported what was going on, and did not at that time maintain direct contacts in the Mujahideen leadership. We couldn't move outside the city of Kabul. It was unsafe if you were to go anywhere in the country. The roads were subjected to Mujahideen activity all around the city. Mujahideen would come out of the mountains just west of Kabul, and frequently cut off the road going down to Qandahar.

*Q: I'm talking about when you left in November of '79, how did you see this thing playing out?*

FLATIN: We had long reported that the regime would be unable, in the final analysis, to maintain enough military personnel strength to save itself. Our reporting indicated that if it was going to be saved, it would have to be saved through some augmentation of personnel. That augmentation finally came in terms of the Soviet incursion of December 1979. Otherwise, the Khalqi revolution would have gone down the tubes. Remember, I said that entire military units were then going over to the Mujahideen side.

One incident I remember very vividly involved an army garrison in the eastern part of the country near the Pakistani border, surrounded by Mujahideen. It was cut off, with this constant sniping going on, but it was being supplied from time to time by helicopter. Then one day, the army commander in this besieged fortress asked for the district communist leader and his Soviet advisor to fly in more weaponry. He also wanted the top district Khalqi and Soviet leadership to come in for a conference. When these helicopters landed, the troops in the besieged fortress took the communist district governor and the Soviet advisor as prisoners. They turned them over to the surrounding Mujahideen. It turned out that the communist government garrison had decided to defect to the Mujahideen who had been surrounding them—and their last act was to entrap as much of the district leadership

## Library of Congress

and get as much weaponry and ammunition in as possible. That whole garrison unit then became a Mujahideen unit.

The Mujahideen were very tough, you know. Once I remember, a convoy of trucks coming up to Kabul from Qandahar in the south was stopped by Mujahideen, and taken prisoner. In fact, this was an interesting engagement where Mujahideen cavalry was involved. The Mujahideen tried to disable escort tanks by firing into their barrels and blowing up the shell in the barrel.

They brought their captives, including Afghan truck drivers, up to some tents on the side of the mountain. The Mujahideen commander went into this one tent where the civilian truck drivers were, and issued a strong invitation to join the Mujahideen forces. Then he left the tent. One of the truck drivers commented to his buddies that he didn't think that was a good idea to join the Mujahideen, and he certainly didn't want to. Whereupon Mujahideen, who had been listening outside, came into the tent and pulled him out and shot him outside the tent. Everybody decided to join the Mujahideen at that point.

Or the Mujahideen would stop buses on a road to “cleanse” them from all Khalqis. Once I remember they stopped the bus, got aboard the bus, and started to argue with an old mullah sitting near the front of the bus. (Incidentally, I should mention they were dressed as Afghan government soldiers.) They berated this mullah as being from the old order and a blood sucker of the people—and gave him a generally rough time. And then they said, “How many real Khalqis are on this bus?” And two or three people put up their hand, and they were immediately brought out and shot. Then they apologized to the mullah for having used him for this purpose, and then they gave the driver a chit which said the bus had been “cleansed of Khalqis,” and the bus was able to go on its way. The bus driver could show the chit to other Mujahideen roadblocks.

We also started running into trouble on the roads. We used to ship our household effects from the embassy back to Europe overland through Iran and Turkey. Some of these

## Library of Congress

shipments were ending up arriving in Europe full of bullet holes. Our people complained that there were bullet holes in their mirrors, rugs, and other household effects. The reason for this damage was the way the Mujahideen stopped the convoys. They didn't just simply swoop down and point their weapons. They would instead rain the trucks with gunfire. That would be their way of ordering the trucks to stop. Therefore, we had to shift to air shipments for our people out of Kabul from that time onwards because it was just impossible to send anything overland through the country. The Mujahideen never made any attempt to contact us at the embassy. And each Mujahideen unit had its own agenda. As you know some Afghans are Shiites and some are Sunnis; therefore, some of their Mujahideen would shoot at each other. There were these different ethnic differences that made a big difference. The communist leadership, like that of the earlier royal regime, were Pushtun, not Tajik. Your tribal affinity in Afghanistan is all important.

I'll give you an example. Najibullah, the last communist dictator, supposedly is still being given refuge in the UN compound at Kabul. (He may be elsewhere.) His Ahmadzai tribal affinity is so important that when he was deposed in Kabul, his tribe said they wanted him back—and that they didn't want him hurt. They made it clear that if he were hurt they'd come up to Kabul and take retribution. Your tribal affinity in Afghanistan is far more important than to be known as an “Afghan,” per se. (Note: Najibullah, who was unfortunate enough to be in Kabul when it was subsequently taken by the Taliban, was hanged in public.)

*Q: Well, you left there in November of '79, and then what did you do?*

FLATIN: I came back to the Department, and I entered INM.

*Q: Which is what?*

FLATIN: International Narcotics Matters. The reason I was wanted by INM was that I'd had a lot of experience in Afghanistan with the control of opium. I took over as an office director in an office in INM that provides global support for our worldwide programs, such

## Library of Congress

as the aviation that we provide to various countries to combat narcotics. Then I went from INM to refugee programs, and I became director of the office of Refugee Resettlement for the whole world. We brought refugees to the United States from all regions. In the case of the refugees coming from Southeast Asia, we also had them trained. We had big training camps.

*Q: We were still getting quite a few boat people?*

FLATIN: In addition to the boat people we were taking people directly out of Vietnam. It was called the Orderly Departure Program. Then I went on to the Board of Examiners, and I served there as head of the political part of the Board of Examiners, and also as the deputy chief of BEX. I retired from there on September 30, 1989. Since then, I have worked as a WAE in the Freedom of Information Act office.

*Q: Just a couple of things. On the narcotics matters, what was your impression...I mean you were watching this, how did you think our battle was going while you were there?*

FLATIN: I'll be very frank with you, even given our best efforts, we probably don't even get ten percent of the narcotics entering this country. It's a constant fight. We should be doing more to limit consumption in this country. If you go overseas to talk to the officials in Columbia, they'll say, "Why should we endanger ourselves and pay high domestic political costs here if you can't control your own population? If you didn't have this demand in the United States, we wouldn't have the supply situation here." You're talking about a commodity that's so valuable that when you go into a valley in the Amazon region of Peru, and try to get these people to move from coca production into some substitute crop, there's no substitute crop that provides that much money. Therefore, you have to do it with a fairly profitable substitute crop plus police power. It has to be strictly policed. I mean if you're in a situation like that in Peru where you have the Shining Path terrorists operating, and you have the corruption of police and military people being bought off, you're missing that important element of control. You cannot get people to raise coffee, or tea, or similar

## Library of Congress

crops, unless you enforce it strictly. The same thing is true in Burma. The government in Rangoon controls very little of its own country—and that's where most opium is coming from.

*Q: I guess in a way it is not a very encouraging project to be involved in.*

FLATIN: No. INM, however, was trying to work on the demand reduction side and was working with NIDA in HHS, to do something in this country. And we had a consultant in my office who was extremely good at demand control. One of our arguments with these drug-supplying countries that we were trying to get cooperation from was, if you don't join with us in a joint effort to stop the trafficking you yourself are going to have a problem in your own country. And it's true. It has happened in Pakistan, and in Thailand, and in everyone of these countries that they themselves have developed a huge domestic nightmare of domestic usage. There would be successes. We have been able to destroy large amounts of this stuff, but what's coming through just is immense...

*Q: Then in resettlement, you were there from '82 to '85, we had the orderly departure program. What were the major issues you were dealing with at that time?*

FLATIN: Well, this was the one job I had that was most exposed to domestic politics. There was no decision you could reach on refugee resettlement in this country where you wouldn't have 50% of the people supporting the program urging that you do it, and 50% saying you shouldn't do it. State officials of California or Florida were frequently very hostile in calling you, and screaming about excessive refugee resettlement in their areas. One could certainly sympathize with the taxpayers in California because a lot of refugees ended up there. However, as we used to point out, we would put a refugee family in Butte, Montana, and there would be nothing to stop them from buying a Greyhound ticket the next day to go to Fresno, California. The sheriff in Butte is not going to prevent their getting on that Greyhound bus with a pistol. We also tried to argue that in many cases the refugees were becoming very good and useful citizens. They were getting jobs. They

## Library of Congress

were doing jobs other people wouldn't do. Not many people realize this in this country, but Asian-American families actually earn more money than Caucasian-American families in terms of median income. This has been the case for over a decade now, because they're diligent, and well organized. They were not creating much of a burden on the taxpayer; indeed they pay more in taxes than they receive in government assistance. However, California saw an excessive number of refugees arrive and they confused this program with the wetbacks coming up out of the south; they're two entirely different situations.

*Q: Were you there when there was trouble in Texas with the fishermen?*

FLATIN: Yes, the Vietnamese shrimp fishermen were regarded as unfair competition by the Texas shrimp fishermen. No matter where we put people, there would be some type of irritation. As you know, in south Florida people are irritated because there seems to be an excess number of Cubans and Haitians there. Some refugees were harder to resettle than others. The Hmong, who were a mountain tribal people from Laos were so primitive that they were difficult to settle in this country. To this day, they're having difficulty becoming acclimated. They're very eligible for our program, however, because they had been very involved in supporting our effort in Vietnam. Of all the refugee groups they're among the ones that qualify very readily.

*Q: ...they picked the wrong side...*

FLATIN: One refugee program of which I was very proud was the one bringing in young Solidarity activists coming from Poland. After martial law was declared in Poland, we brought those Poles who were members of the Solidarity Movement and who could no longer function freely in Poland. This was a flow of people who really needed our protection. This consisted largely of young men and their wives and their children—people with good professions, such as tool-and-die makers, who were the life blood of Poland. They came over here and established themselves very quickly. It was a program that went very smoothly. We had a little resort hotel near Frankfurt where we processed them.

## Library of Congress

Among the programs we had this was the one that I really thought was a pure refugee program. As you know, a refugee has to be unable to return to his homeland for political reasons, he cannot be an “economic migrant.” Unfortunately, people use the word “refugee” too loosely. The U.S. legal definition for refugee is similar to the UN definition, and it should be adhered to.

*Q: Then you were in BEX from 1985 to 1989. What was your impression of how the system worked at that time? What were the priorities, and what was your impression of the people who were being selected?*

FLATIN: The Board of Examiners consists of experienced Foreign Service people who are endeavoring to bring the very finest new blood into the Foreign Service. To the credit of the Department, the Department tries to keep—no matter what type of personnel limitations there are elsewhere—a normal flow of young people entering the Department.

We tried to be very fair. We tried to maintain to the greatest degree possible a Foreign Service which is representative of the American public as a whole; therefore, we tried to ensure that we got as many qualified females and minorities a possible. But we were under a lot of pressure. As you perhaps know, there were many suits that we had to face in federal courts, such as those launched by Alison Palmer.

*Q: Suits concerning the blind, women, blacks, everything you can think of.*

FLATIN: Exactly. Most of our court controversies were about women, however. My observation was that, if you look at the statistics, that the Foreign Service, in terms of people who take the exam, does not really attract American women in the same percentage you find them in the population. Over 51% of the U.S. population is female. Well, that is nowhere near the percentage of women taking the exam, because many women are not as interested in the Foreign Service as men are. Many of those women who were interested, however, did very well in the exam process, and, as you can see

## Library of Congress

in the Foreign Service, have done very well. It is, therefore, frustrating that they can't constitute as high a percentage as some of the critics would have desired.

*Q: I think it would show by the majors that women tend more towards majors which would not necessarily lead...they're not taking history, political science, which involves the core where we get recruits...*

FLATIN: That's right, and indeed is the substance of our work. In fact, we have been talking about women, but you can include men too. Our type of career is not really attractive to a large percentage of Americans, male or female. Most Americans want to live in one community, go to one church, have their kids go to one school, and do not find it attractive the idea of living around the world. Therefore, the problem, as I saw it, was how to get people to come in the front door to begin with. We tried our very best to have potential applicants know about the Foreign Service. Indeed, it was difficult to attract women and minorities. If you went to a university and you found some very good minority candidates, you would find that they've already been offered jobs by big American corporations and, therefore, are not interested in coming into the government.

*Q: I was talking to somebody who said going to the traditionally black colleges found very few take the exam.*

FLATIN: Exactly. They had very little interest at all. Therefore, the minorities who were of interest to us, in terms of promising black candidates, for instance, were those from such schools as Harvard, MIT, Stanford, and UCLA. Therefore, we tried to think of ways we could work on those campuses for that particular group. But we were in heavy competition with corporations who'd already picked them up. There was a special type of advance degree program in international affairs at the University of Minnesota which was just made to order for our needs, but these people were all hired by the third year of that program. We looked for Asian students too, but it was very hard to find Asians who were interested in government service.

## Library of Congress

*Q: Again, these things change, but for the most part Asians would go into businesses or sciences.*

FLATIN: Now, there were very good strong women and minority candidates who did very well in the orals and did well in the Service. The fact was that they didn't exactly match the percentage of the population. Let's just say that the black percentage of the population is 12%, that doesn't mean that you're going to guarantee that you are going to get that percentage of that particular race.

*Q: Did you find, particularly in cases of black minorities, that we were using a different set of standards?*

FLATIN: Well, in order to meet the directions of the courts, the scoring systems were arranged to ensure that a suitable number of women and minority people were coming in. But I want to go back to say that there were women and minorities who did extremely well in competition with white males. In fact, the person who got the very highest score in the oral exams while I was in BEX was a black female. Females did slightly better than males, as a matter of fact, on oral exam day. The percentage of females passing this stage was always higher than the percentage of males. And that's perhaps because females could bring to bear certain aspects of their presence and personality which were unique—and those qualities could be of value overseas.

*Q: Well, Bruce, I want to thank you very much. I appreciate this.*

FLATIN: I'm certain there'll be more things I'll think about later. When I look at your draft I'll be able to add some more ideas.

End of interview