

Interview with Herbert John Spiro

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

AMBASSADOR HERBERT JOHN SPIRO

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is April 25, 1994. This is an interview with Ambassador Herbert John Spiro, this is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. This is a fortuitous meeting since Ambassador Spiro happens to be in Washington. He's normally down in Austin, Texas.

Mr. Ambassador, let's talk about your early background because it looks quite interesting. Could you explain when and where you were born.

SPIRO: I was born in Hamburg, Germany where there have been Spiro's since the late 17th century.

Q: Sounds like a great name. Is it a great family?

SPIRO: It's not a great name. When I was first in the State Department and I served on the Policy Planning Staff for 5 years, before I was nominated Ambassador to Cameroon and to Equatorial Guinea by President Ford, I made my first trip to Europe for the Policy Planning Staff in the Summer of 1970. One of my stops was at NATO Headquarters and, among other things, I was given a very dull briefing by half a dozen high-ranking military officers, about the organization of NATO for planning purposes.

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A Lieutenant Commander, what they used to call the “talking dog,” the briefing officer, flashed diagrams on the screen which always had a “NATO Top Secret” caption. And he'd say, “This committee does such and such and it's headed by Colonel Olaf, a Norwegian officer. Next screen, this committee is headed by Colonel McDonald, he's a British officer and he does such and such.” This went on and everybody was yawning including myself. Then he said, “This committee is headed by Colonel Papadopoulos, he is a Greek officer, he is a wonderful human being!” And he went on and on gushing about this Greek officer.

I was very naive, and maybe I still am. Spiro Agnew was Vice President of the United States at the time, and it dawned upon me that they thought I was a - Hellenic-American, and - probably - a nepotistic appointment of Spiro Agnew's. So I was put in this quandary: Should I correct them, because they really shouldn't be doing that sort of thing, or should I get a free ride. I decided I could not embarrass them and had to get a free ride on my mispresumed Hellenicity. That happened several times, and it still happens from time to time.

The name Spiro is a corruption of the name of the town of Speyer on the Rhine, where there was an early Roman Jewish community that came up with the Roman colonizers.

Q: When were you born?

SPIRO: I was born in 1924 and I left Hamburg a month after Kristallnacht. We left on December 14, 1938.

Q: So I take it you're of Jewish origin.

SPIRO: Yes.

Q: What was your family doing in Hamburg?

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SPIRO: My father was in what you'd call a wholesale distribution firm, for the kind of stuff in this country like Proctor and Gamble products, wholesale for Northern Germany. I was an only child and I attended private and public schools - some of the best schools I ever attended anywhere, or that I have been connected with, including Harvard. And I attended a public school, the Wilhelm Gymnasium, until the day after Crystal Night, that is until Nov. 10th, and I experienced no discrimination whatsoever.

Q: This is what 193-?

SPIRO: 1938. No discrimination. I just returned a week ago from 2 weeks in Hamburg so that a lot of these memories, I've been there many times in between, a lot of these memories were refreshed. Hamburg was, if not an anti-Nazi town, it was a non-Nazi town, it'd always been sort of 'red' communist and social democratic. They used to joke that like a [food] hamburger, they were pink inside and [Nazi] brown on the outside.

Q: A port town.

SPIRO: International port town, right. My family and I just had an unusually good experience, or less bad experience, than people in other cities and regions of Germany. We came straight, after spending a couple of weeks with relatives who'd gotten out a year earlier in New York, we went straight to Texas - San Antonio. There the widow of an uncle of my grandmother, on my grandmother's initiative who had not even told my parents about it, made it possible for us to immigrate to the United States. We were legal immigrants, legal aliens.

I went to one term of junior high school in San Antonio, 3 years of high school and one year of junior college. Graduated at the top of my class of 588 from Brackenridge High School. As one of my old classmates in Hamburg just told me, it didn't surprise him at all that I was first in my class because, again unusually, I had been first in my class at the Wilhelm Gymnasium. In my last year there, when the teachers had to show considerable

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courage to designate a Jewish boy - they could have fiddled the figures -, they declared me the number one student.

...Which in Germany is considered a big deal and I need not have done anything else thereafter. Whenever I go back there, people pay no attention to the fact that I was an Ambassador of the United States or other things. "Herbert Spiro was Primus im Wilhelm Gymnasium."

So we went straight to San Antonio. I then volunteered for induction to the army because I was an enemy alien, officially. As such, I could not be drafted, I had to volunteer, and I did in 1944. Although I could have joined the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP), which, in my case, would have made a dentist or a doctor out of me, I was given the option of going into military intelligence training, and I did.

I was trained as an interrogator of German prisoners of war and served in combat with the 104th infantry division for a couple of months in the Fall of 1944. And then I was pulled back to the Battle of the Bulge, which started on December 15, 1944, to join the 11th armored division with which I spent the rest of the war, ending up in Austria and being awarded a Bronze Star Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster and a Purple Heart.

Then I spent a year after the end of the year in Austria. First in Steyr, which is near Linz, and half a year as a civilian employee of the War Department in Vienna.

Q: How did you find interrogating German prisoners and the whole thing. What were you getting out of this.

SPIRO: It was the most satisfying work, apart from being an Ambassador, that I've ever done in my life, because you got immediate results. I was with an armored division and we discovered very quickly, after we joined the 11th, that unless we got a hold of the prisoners almost instantly after they were captured, the information would be useless because the point of the column was moving so quickly that it would be pass#. So I made a practice of

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moving right behind the lead company, which is what we called a “married” company of tanks and armored infantry.

I would get the prisoners instantly and I would interrogate them by the roadside. Which was useful for two reasons, it intimidated them with the tanks and the half-tracks standing there. And it made for very good relations with the division to which we were attached, and on which we dependent for supplies, provisions, because they enjoyed watching our interrogation.

With the Germans, we'd been trained so well at Camp Ritchie that we knew just how to get at German soldiers, depending on their rank and their age. If they were enlisted men, we'd simply scream at them. They would usually say, “Under the terms of the Geneva Convention all I need to give you is my name, rank and serial number.” And then I would ask, “Who told you that?” And they would say, “Captain Schmidt.” I would scream - we'd been taught to do this, and I got rid of all the innate need for screaming for the rest of my life during that 6 months' period - I would scream at them, “You are now a prisoner of the United States Army and you will take your orders from me, is that clear!” And they would click their heels and say, “Jawohl!”

If they were older or officers of senior rank, we would put it sort of on a professional basis, “What did you think of our maneuvers?” And they would say, “You have such overwhelming superiority of equipment” - as the tanks were rolling by and the supply trucks -, “it's hopeless anyway.”

In extreme cases of resistance, we would use pretty harmless psychological tricks. I remember one case, I'd seen the movie about the Dreyfus case, in which Paul Muni played Zola, where Dreyfus, as he's drummed out of the Officers Corps, has his epaulets ripped off. I once did that to a German major who wouldn't talk—I've written up some of those stories—and his morale just visibly collapsed and he answered all questions, and he didn't have much to say.

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The trouble with most of them was that they didn't know much, but by interrogating lots of them and putting it all together, we could form a pretty good picture. For example I knew at my level, and this is was with the 104th infantry division, that something big was being prepared which turned out to become the Battle of the Bulge, which the Germans called the December Offensive. Because various prisoners told me of seeing large concentrations of troops in Cologne and elsewhere, near where we were, we were in a town called Eschweiler, which is already inside Germany near Aachen. But apparently the people back at Corps and Army didn't put it all together, so it came as something of a surprise.

But anyway, that was a great experience, apart from the danger and the cold and the frostbitten feet that I got, we would be shelled by a German 88s during the night. I would interrogate a prisoner who told me where the gun emplacement was that had been shelling us, and I would pass that information back to our artillery. They would knock it out. In the afternoon I would pass by the knocked out German artillery emplacement and I knew that I had done this.

...Whereas in my later career as a university teacher, 20 years later, you were lucky if they come back, and they do come back. And they come back in very nice ways but it takes 20 or 30 years later: "That seminar that I took from you really changed my life, that's why I'm doing whatever I'm doing."

Q: Because this is focused on foreign affairs, what was your impression of Austria right after the war, both as a civilian and as a military person.

SPIRO: Well, I'd never been in Austria before, I was 18 when I joined the army. I was 20 when we arrived in Austria as the first division to cross into Austria from Bavaria. It was amusing. We were liberating Austria. We had been told, you're liberating Austria. Austria was forcefully annexed to Germany. So we crossed the Danube into Linz, which is a large city. Whereas in German towns that we conquered, not liberated, they would hang out

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white flags, and we would tell them to, as a sign of surrender. Usually those white flags were bed sheets.

When we entered Linz, there were Austrian flags, which are red white red, and I asked myself, these had been verboten during the period of the annexation. And then I took a closer look and they had cut the swastika out of the swastika flag, and put a white bed sheet strip down the middle, so that was red white red. Austria had a famous comic at the time named Hans Moser who composed also some ditties which he sang, and one of these ended with the refrain - "We don't have "character" -in the sense in which Richard Nixon is now being said to have had character, whatever else had been wrong with him [I voted for Richard Nixon in 1960 for President] - but we have a golden heart!".

Q: We're talking now, Richard Nixon died 2 days ago.

SPIRO: Right.

"We Austrians have no character but we have a golden heart..." Conditions were not as bad as in most parts of Germany. Vienna had been destroyed to a much more limited extent than other major cities in Germany.

The wonderful thing which sort of affected my life forever after: The first thing the Russians did after they took Vienna, was to get the two operas going again. The main opera building had been burned out but they put the main opera into the Volksoper, the more popular opera building, and that opera company was put into the Theater an der Wien which they now use for musicals and operetta. That's the first thing, they conquered Vienna in maybe March or April. I spent half a year there from December '45 until June of '46. I went to the opera practically every day and it didn't cost anything. I got a complete basic musical education.

Vienna was fascinating because it was divided into 4 sectors, one for each of the 4 allies. Relations among the 4 allies, including the Soviets, were pretty good but they were already

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suspicious of each other. My job was to track down members of the former German intelligence services in Austria. There were a lot of them around. Some Germans had stayed in Austria partly because they thought that the Occupation, which was not called Occupation, would be less rigorous and less de-Nazifying than it was in Germany. That was true.

Many decades later, I discovered that Kurt Waldheim escaped...

Q: Secretary General of the United Nations and President of Austria later.

SPIRO: That's right. And who, it was later discovered, had served with the Abwehr, which was the German military counter intelligence, and was probably co-responsible for war crimes. That was the kind of fellow I was looking for. He went through my fingers.

Many years later when I was a senior member of the Policy Planning Staff, we were asked whether the US should support Waldheim for a second term as Secretary General of the United Nations. There was a Finnish diplomat named Jacobson who was Finnish and Jewish, who was another candidate running for Secretary General of the UN. And there was some fear that because of Finland's position, he might be subject to Soviet pressures. On the Policy Planning Staff several of the other members and I, who was supposed to know something about Austria, we all had access to all the intelligence that anybody else did. I said Kurt Waldheim was the perfect Viennese head waiter type, and what the UN needed more than anything else at that time was a Viennese head waiter type as Secretary General.

If we had done a little more digging, both 1946 and 1972 or whenever it was, we might have found out about him.

Q: You weren't after, at that point we're trying to find people in order to basically both extract information and to perhaps punish. I mean this wasn't trying to resurrect like the Gehlen Organization at that point.

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SPIRO: No. I was in charge of an office in the counterintelligence branch in US headquarters in Austria. Which was just suppose to locate these people and to put them in, not to incarcerate, put them in a camp where we held all suspicious characters, especially intelligence. It was just to pick them up.

Q: I want to move on then to get to your Policy Planning job.

SPIRO: I had planned to go to the University of Texas at Austin, where I lived and where I taught for two years from 1989 to 1991.

While I was in Vienna, in 1946, I got a letter from my mother in San Antonio, about a distant cousin in Houston who'd gotten directly from the army into Harvard College under the GI Bill of Rights. My mother wrote that if Frank David can do this, so can you. So I applied, and I applied to the Law School. I had had one year of junior college. They wrote back very politely that I couldn't get into Law School without having gone to college and I should apply to the College and I did.

They accepted me and I entered in 1946 and I graduated in 1949 but with the class of 1950, which includes Henry Kissinger and Jim Schlesinger. All 3 of us graduated summa cum laude and then I stayed on.

Q: Did you have any contact with either?

SPIRO: Yes, I knew both of them.

Q: They came from somewhat similar circumstances.

SPIRO: Henry did, Jim was a native New Yorker, Henry had a very similar background except that he comes from Fuerth in Bavaria, a small town. I recently saw a TV conversation between Barbara Walters and him, in Fuerth. She asked him whether he knew anyone of his generation in the town, this little town in Bavaria, very provincial. He

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conceded his provincial origins, whereas my origins are very cosmopolitan. Maybe I've become very Texas provincial, but of course Texans are not provincial.

He said, no. He intimated that he really wouldn't want to have anything to do with his contemporaries in Fuerth. He was kicked out of the public school and had to go to the Jewish school very early on. I was then, as I have been on other occasions, starting when I first met him - he entered Harvard in 1947 - impressed by how different my experience was in Hamburg from his in Fuerth. [This is getting to be a very nice conversation.] In Hamburg; I stayed in public school, a very good school, until the very last day it was possible, November 9, 1938, and never experienced a single act of anti-Semitism, on the contrary.

Henry had the same tutor on the Harvard tutorial system, which is one-on-one once a week, a senior faculty member and an undergraduate, modeled on the Oxford and Cambridge tutorial systems. We had the same tutor. He had him for 3 years or 4 years and I had him for only my senior year. A man named William Yandell Elliott, who was a very impressive man, a very learned man, a very good teacher. [He] had been a Rhodes scholar himself, and had come out of Tennessee and Vanderbilt, where he played football when Vanderbilt had a great football team, and who had been an advisor to all Secretaries of State starting with his kissing cousin Cordell Hull.

Q: Oh yes, from Tennessee.

SPIRO: He sort of adopted Henry and introduced Henry to Mr. Macloy and Nelson Rockefeller and that's how Henry started his career at the Council on Foreign Relations with the Nuclear Weapons project and so forth. Henry got his Ph.D. in '55, I think. I got mine in '53 at Harvard, I stayed on.

Q: What field were you working?

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SPIRO: Political theory and comparative government. My dissertation, which I was very lucky they let me write, was entitled *A Theory of Responsibility in Government*. It dealt with questions of bureaucratic responsibility, individual versus collective responsibility under international law (along lines of the Nuremberg Trials), and political parties as transmission belts for citizens' responsibility. It was very philosophic, it was neither a library nor a field work thing, it was a thought work project. It enabled me to develop a systematic political theory which I found useful both in my later writings and in my work and in my life.

But in 1953 the subject of responsibility in government was of no interest to anyone, not even church related publishers were interested in publishing it. I didn't get it published. I wrote it in 1952 and it wasn't published until 1969. In its original dissertation version, it was not a book but it was a book-length manuscript which later became a book.

Then I had a couple of fellowships including a Fulbright which I used in '53-'54, after I got my Ph.D., to do research and write a book on a new German labor relations scheme called Co-determination. Under it, employees of coal and steel corporations in Germany had an almost 50-50 share in the management and on the supervisory board of directors. That was published by the Harvard University Press in 1958. I've written a total of 13 books, 7 of them my own, the other 6 as editor or as co-author.

The book on German co-determination became very useful to me when I was brand new on the Policy Planning staff in 1970.

Q: How did we get to the Policy Planning staff.

SPIRO: I stayed on at Harvard on the faculty in the Government Department as an instructor and Assistant Professor from '54 to '61. From '61 to '65 I was an Associate Professor of Political Science at Amherst College in western Massachusetts.

Q: Not western Massachusetts, middle Massachusetts.

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SPIRO: Middle Massachusetts.

Q: You're speaking to somebody who comes from western Massachusetts.

SPIRO: Where do you come from?

Q: I went to Williams College.

SPIRO: But the same congressman who represented Williamstown also represented Amherst. He played a very active role on AID, Agency for International Development, legislation. He had an Italian name, a little fellow. That was the seat in Congress

Q: James Magregor, who was an instructor when I had him, who ran fourth and wrote a lot about him, he lost.

SPIRO: I thought of that when I ran for Congress for LBJ's old seat two years ago and again this year from Austin, Texas.

Then in 1965 I moved to Philadelphia as a professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania. I'd gotten to know Senator Hugh Scott, who retired as Minority Leader of the Republicans in the Senate, who was a Senator from Pennsylvania.

Q: Very interested in the Far East too.

SPIRO: He was a senior member of the Commerce Committee of the Senate and as such did a lot of traveling.

I first met him at my wedding to Elizabeth Petersen of Radnor, Pennsylvania, who was the first Radcliffe tutorial student I had after being a tutor in the Government Department for 7 years at Harvard. Her father, Howard Petersen, had been an Assistant Secretary of War during the Second World War and shortly thereafter, and was a friend of Hugh Scott. I met the Scotts first at our wedding in 1958.

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In 1959-60, my now ex-wife then new bride, Elizabeth Petersen Spiro—Clark now, just remarried recently to Warren Clark, a career FSO and Williams alumnus— ...I had three or four Fellowships to study the constitutional politics of the Federation of Rhodesia and the Nyasaland, now the countries of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi. We were living in Salisbury, now Harare, and Senator Scott came through on a trip for the Senate Commerce Committee. We renewed our acquaintance.

In 1967 to '68, from the University of Pennsylvania, I had a couple of fellowships, and a leave to spend a year at Oxford and in London, to study the origins of the adversary process of the common law. Senator Scott spent a term at Oxford as a visiting Lecturer at Balliol College and we deepened our friendship. As I think I mentioned a little bit earlier, I had voted for Richard Nixon when I was a young Assistant Professor at Harvard, where this was not a popular thing to do. It maybe one reason why I didn't stay at Harvard and I've never had any regrets about that.

Senator Scott knew of my support for Nixon, who was then elected in 1968, and Scott started in 1969 to recommend me to Elliot Richardson—he's been on TV all over the place about the “Saturday night massacre,” in connection with President Nixon's death two days ago. In the Summer of '69 I received a very tentative inquiry from the acting head of the Policy Planning Staff, whether I'd be interested in becoming a consultant. And I said I would and I did become a consultant for a few months in early 1970 and then a full time member starting July 1, 1970.

Q: And you were, I always like to get the dates, how long were you doing and until when?

SPIRO: I did that for exactly five years. I was told by Miriam Camps, who was the acting head of the Policy Planning staff, that Elliot Richardson, who was then Under Secretary of State, the number two man in those days to William Rogers who was the Secretary, had sent them this dossier that said, “We have a Republican who's been recommended by

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a Republican Senator to be a member of the Policy Planning Staff. And they said, that's horrible, we don't want any political appointees.

So they looked forward with great trepidation to getting this file and they looked at the file and said, "This can't be true, somebody with this kind of a record cannot be a Republican and if he is, he wouldn't be recommended by the Republicans because they're all hawks."

One of the first things that happened after I made this first trip to Europe for the State Department, where I was mistaken for a nepotistic nephew of Spiro Agnew some time in 1970, George Meany, who was the head of the AFL/CIO, had breakfast with President Nixon and Secretary of State William Rogers. [He] complained about the Labor Attach#s service in the State Department, even at that time. I would think by now almost all of our embassies have Labor Attach#s, who are responsible for contacts with local labor unions and labor organizations.

The AFL/CIO has always wanted to get control over them, or to have them consist exclusively of nominees of the labor unions. He complained about that in the course of having breakfast with the President, and so Nixon turned to Secretary of State Rogers and said, "Bill, will you look into this for me." And Rogers went back to the State Department and called William Macomber who was Under Secretary for Management and said, "Bill, will you look into this for me." And Macomber called in the Director of the Policy Planning Staff, which was then called Planning and Coordination Staff, William Cargo and said, "Bill, will you look into this for me."

Bill Cargo got a bunch of us, the staff is quite small, about 12 or 15, mainly career Foreign Service officers or civil servants, and said, we've got to look into this, set up a working group. I—having had this experience with both German and American labor leaders doing my research on the German Co-determination scheme; and having had lots of contacts with Americans, who were interested in this and who were a little worried about this, and

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at the same time thought maybe they could copy aspects of it— I volunteered, although I'd been taught in the army never to volunteer for anything, but this seemed different.

In the course of doing this work, where we also visited the Labor Department, and the Commerce Department, and other departments in the Executive Branch. I discovered what I call, "Spiro's Law of Replication," about which I have a long manuscript, which I wrote when I was a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in the Smithsonian in Washington, after we came back from Cameroon.

The law is very simple, it says that: In all modern governments, each Ministry or each Department replicates the structure of the government as a whole; within each department, each bureau or lower level office replicates, to the extent this is possible, the overall structure of the department.

And then a corollary of this is: That each department of the Executive Branch in our Federal government contains miniature replicas of every other department. There were little Labor Departments in the State Department, there were little State Departments, there were little Justice Departments, there are little CIAs and FBIs, little Treasury and Commerce, in every other department. This makes for good communication maybe and it makes for proliferation and redundancy.

I recommended to successive Presidents and Directors of OMB, that an easy way to reduce spending is by reducing or eliminating some of the miniature replicas. But I had thought, and this is really to the point of what I did later and what I did before, I had thought that I could be of major use to my colleagues in the Policy Planning Staff, and to the State Department as a whole, because of my substantive experience doing a lot of work on European governments, especially Germany, and on Africa.

By this time, I'd written a couple of comparative government textbooks, and by virtue of my substantive knowledge of politics in Africa, because also by this time we'd spent a total of maybe a year and a half mainly in Rhodesia and Nyasaland but traveling all over Africa.

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I published one book in '62 entitled Politics in Africa, Prospects South of the Sahara and other books, Africa, the Primacy of Politics, I was regarded also as an African expert.

But of course the Foreign Service officers were just as qualified in terms of substance. So I discovered, to my surprise, that the main contribution I could make at that level, was what I called "Conceptual Planning," coming in with new ideas, new concepts. And three years after I started, when President Nixon nominated Henry Kissinger to be Secretary of State, the first thing that Kissinger did was to send a message around to everybody in the Department. He said, among other things, that he would insist on "better analytical and more conceptual reporting."

As a member of the Planning Staff, I attended the weekly meetings of the Assistant Secretaries for Europe and for Africa, every week. At that time Arthur Hartman, who was later Ambassador to France and to the Soviet Union (did you do an oral history?) was Assistant Secretary to European Affairs and I attended that weekly meeting. There were a bunch of senior Foreign Service officers sitting around a long table and they understood what Kissinger meant when he said "better analytical reporting" but they didn't know what "more conceptual reporting" meant.

So I volunteered. Since he grew up with German as his first language and he might still be thinking in German, sometimes he sounds like it: The German word for concept is Begriff and it means handle, like a doorknob is a Turgriff, I assumed what he meant, and this was verified later on, was that we needed to get better handles, by means of which, to pick up new and changing realities, data, facts. And that the old handles, the old concepts, were no longer adequate. It was that sort of contribution much more than my detailed, factual, even my analytical knowledge, that was useful on the Planning Staff.

All along Senator Scott had tried, through the White House, to get me a higher appointment in the Department or an Ambassadorial appointment. And that finally had

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results in March, April of 1975 when President Ford nominated me to be Ambassador to Cameroon and concurrently to Equatorial Guinea.

Q:: Before we get to that, can you tell me, what was your concept or feel about the role of the Policy Planning at that time you were there? Because right now it's considered practically dissolved and other times it's been up, other times it's been down. So we're talking about the '70 to '75 period.

SPIRO: That was always being discussed. Under William Cargo, who was a career officer who later became Ambassador to Nepal, you have him on tape?

Q: He didn't want to be interviewed.

SPIRO: He was a very correct and very nonpolitical officer, very good. One who had, before he entered the Foreign Service, gotten a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Michigan.

Some people on the Staff, and some others thought, that it was down at that time because it didn't have a political appointee. You know this was Walt Rostow's former bailiwick (who is living, and I just saw him and his wife Elspeth, in Austin at the supermarket), who'd been the Chairman of the Policy Planning Council, as they called it in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, and then before Deputy and afterwards Senior Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs on the NSC.

My own feeling was that because Cargo did not have entree to Bill Rogers, the Secretary, the staff could actually concern itself with long term foreign policy planning, and we did. We wrote a lot of planning papers, and made some studies, and tried to sort of push the geographical and functional bureaus in the direction of the US role in a world of interdependence.

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I take credit for reintroducing and refilling with substantive meaning, the concept of interdependence in official US foreign policy, including the “state of the world” reports that President Nixon issued, several of which were taken much more seriously by foreign governments, than they were taken by the Congress or by people in this country.

Serious work was being done. And besides that, the Policy Planning Staff of the State Department is a nice case study in replication. No foreign ministry in the world had one until Secretary of State George Marshall, General Marshall became Secretary of State under Harry Truman, and he had been used to planning from the military. Because the Prussian military, when they reformed in the 19th century, established a Department of the General Staff which was concerned with planning. And the US army like all good armies replicated the Prussian setup.

So George Marshall one day turned to Dean Acheson, his Under Secretary, and said, “Where do we plan in the Department?” And Dean Acheson said, “We don't.” “Well, set up a Planning Staff.” So Acheson called over George Kennan, recently returned from Embassy Moscow and teaching at the National War College, as it was still called, and said, “George, the General wants a Planning Staff so set one up.”

So on May 27, 1947, just before Marshall gave his Marshall Plan speech at Harvard, which I didn't hear because I went home for the summer vacation, the Policy Planning Staff was founded.

To make a long story short, by the time that I got to the Planning Staff, practically every other respectable government in the world had set up a Foreign Ministry planning staff, which was more or less a replica of, and influenced by, the US State Department.

Q: Did you find, talking about, particularly about the Kissinger time when he was sort of running it, how did he use it? I want to say, one thing that has come out of many of these conversations, that Kissinger tended to see everything in bipolar ways. That the Middle

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East and Africa were really not East-West, you know, Soviet Union versus the United States problems. Sometimes things would get mixed up because of this. Did this ever count as a problem?

SPIRO: Shortly before Kissinger became Secretary, Cargo went somewhere else maybe to Nepal. A splendid Foreign Service officer, whom I recommended for the Harriman prize which he got in 1973, named James Sutterlin, became the Director of the Policy Planning Staff. He left and became the Senior Advisor to the Secretary General of the UN. Henry brought with him, from the NSC staff, Winston Lord, who is now Assistant Secretary for the Far East and who, in between, was Ambassador to China. Before that, and after the end of the Ford administration, he was the President of the Council on Foreign Relations, of which I, and many other former Ambassadors, and present Ambassadors are members. I've been a member for more than 20 years.

When Winston Lord became Director of Policy Planning, the functions of the staff changed because Winston was very close and had instant access to Henry. In some ways this raised the prestige of the staff, but in other ways it just made members of the staff go-betweens, who did a lot of operational work and who became sort of desk officers for special problems in the areas on top of the actual desk officers. And the staff was used to do things that the Secretary, meaning Kissinger, was interested in.

But it wasn't a simple matter of when the head has access to the Secretary, the staff is on top of the world, and when it doesn't, it's out of the loop. It's much more complicated than that. For example, shortly before Kissinger came, the Secretary's speech writers were made members of the Policy Planning Staff, they had not been that before, which enabled the staff to put in things that they, as individuals or as members of the Policy Planning Staff, thought should get into a speech. The best way to start a new policy, or to launch a trial balloon, was through speeches by the Secretary and presidential speeches to which the State Department was asked to make contributions.

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A sort of minor example of this, but maybe just the sort of thing that historians would be interested in: Shortly after Kissinger became Secretary in September of 1973, his speech for the United Nations General Assembly was being prepared, as it always is at that season. The speechwriters were a young career officer named Mark Palmer, who ended up his career as Ambassador to Budapest and is now running ex-Ambassador Lauder's real estate operations around Check Point Charlie in Berlin. And I had recommended from the outside, a former student of mine at Amherst, named Lawrence Mead, who is now a professor of government at NYU and is a visiting professor at the Kennedy School at Harvard, and has become a great specialist on poverty on which he wrote a book which was dedicated to me recently.

Larry Mead got a job for half a year as the number two speech writer for Kissinger. Seconded, as the British would say, from HEW where he was sort of an intern, having gotten his Ph.D. at Harvard. Richardson was then Secretary of HEW. Richardson has held more Cabinet positions than anybody in American history and also was Ambassador to the Court of Saint James' and to the Law of the Seas conference.

The Bureau of International Organization Affairs sent up as a contribution to Kissinger's speech to the UN General Assembly, a sentence which said: The United States commits itself to support the worldwide fight against schistosomiasis. Do you know what schistosomiasis is? It's also known as Bilharzia.

Q: It's the disease that gets into the liver or something?

SPIRO: Yes, it ends up in the liver, it gets into the blood stream through microscopic snails that invade the body when you bathe or wade in stagnant tropical waters.

The people who were vetoing this, including the speechwriters, but also the then Director of the Planning Staff, said, "What's this?" It so happened that a friend of mine named Kenneth Warren (MD), who had graduated from Harvard and its Medical School, Ken

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earlier had done his service in the Public Health Service here in Washington, and he was already becoming and he has since become one of the great experts on schistosomiasis. I knew all about the disease so I explained it to the speechwriters.

I called Kenneth Warren, who by this time was the Vice President and Director of Health Sciences for the Rockefeller Foundation in New York, whether there was anything going on. He came down and had a long session with the Health people in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs. Kissinger had a habit of, first time around, not even reading speech drafts but throwing them at the speechwriters and saying, "This is a D, this is beneath contempt."

When I first suggested we actually do something on schistosomiasis, the speechwriter said, or somebody said, "He won't be able to pronounce it." The long and short of it is that he accepted it, it was in the speech, he delivered it, he pronounced it right, and the United States committed itself to, I don't know, a few million dollars. This has had the result that there's much less schistosomiasis in the world today than there was in 1973. And that it is the kind of, on the surface of it, it's not a very grand contribution that you can make, but it all adds up.

Q: How did your appointment to be Ambassador come about?

SPIRO: Senator Scott had been asking the appointments people in the White House for a couple of years, and there was a vacancy, and it was considered suitable. It turned out to be much more suitable than anybody could have imagined.

I'd gone to Hamburg because an uncle, who had left Hamburg and gotten stuck in Shanghai in 1941 and then after the war joined my parents in San Antonio, had gone back to Hamburg in 1956 and he died in March of '75 and I'd gone back for the funeral. When I came back, Larry Eagleburger who was Kissinger's Executive Assistant, called me in and

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said that I was about to be nominated to Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea concurrently and was that all right. I said, it was fine.

The amusing thing was that Cameroon got started as a German colony, but Bismarck didn't really want any colonies in Africa. And Bismarck said at one point, "I'll be damned if I'm going to permit the establishment of a German colonial empire on the French model." But there were some very persistent rich merchants in Hamburg who kept pestering Bismarck, who had his estate near the city, and he finally gave in, they were so persistent. A German consul, who signed up native chiefs for treaties of allegiance and support, got to the Cameroon coast just before a British consul with the same mission.

Cameroon is the only country named after shrimp. And it still has the best shrimp fishing banks in the world and the American company, General Foods, which runs a large shrimp trawling fleet, in one of whose trawlers my younger son and I went out, which is one of the sort of activities that ambassadors engage in.

The British consul was late, so it became a German colony which was then divided between France and Britain as League of Nations mandates, which became United Nations trust territories after the Second World War. But it started as a German colony.

I was sworn in on August 1, 1975, at precisely the time that President Ford and Henry Kissinger were at the European Security Conference in Helsinki, Finland, which meant he couldn't be in my swearing in. I'd invited a couple of Ambassadors whom I knew, including the German Ambassador von Staden, to the swearing-in ceremony. And he had told me beforehand, or one of his top embassy officers, that I must have been selected by the famous State Department personnel computer because I was from Hamburg and Cameroon had really been more of a Hamburg colony than a German colony.

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The idea of a State Department personnel computer was so ridiculous and so off-beam and so contrary to the arbitrary method by which both political and career officers were picked to be Ambassadors. I mentioned this in my little acceptance speech.

But it came about because Hugh Scott thought I'd be very good and because, this was not soon after Henry became Secretary, it was soon after Ford became President. Hugh Scott and Jerry Ford were very close to each other, Hugh being the Republican leader in the Senate and Jerry in the House. In fact, Senator Scott had told me that before President Nixon picked Jerry Ford to be Spiro Agnew's successor, he called both of them in and Hugh Scott might just as well have become Vice President. Anyway, I'm sure it was because the Ford White House was more responsive to Senator's Scott's proposals than the Nixon White House.

Q: What was the situation, we're talking about the '75 period, both in Cameroon and in Equatorial Guinea?

SPIRO: Cameroon was very good, a man who'd been President since independence, very solid, conservative, unflamboyant man, Amadou Ahidjo. They had just found oil but they went about its development very slowly and they didn't make excessive promises. The human rights situation was better than in most other African countries. They were genuinely nonaligned, they had for example both South Korean and North Korean Embassies, they had Soviet and Chinese Embassies, they were responsive to our proposals. I've always thought that our AID was the worst of our Foreign Services, and we can talk about that. They made very good use of our Peace Corps people who were superb young people.

Washington wasn't much interested in it. We had to work very hard to get them to vote with us on issues like the perennial Cuban resolution at the UN that Puerto Rico was a colony. We had to persuade them that it wasn't and then they would vote with us or abstain, being actually honestly nonaligned.

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At one point Ambassador Scranton, who was then our Ambassador to the UN and who had been the Governor of Pennsylvania, from whence I knew him slightly, made the annual trip of the American Ambassador of the United Nations to certain key countries in order to get them to vote with us on certain key issues at the UN. He came in time for our observance of the bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence. He came about 2 weeks before July 4, 1976, so that I had our ceremony which was a Vin d'honneur, a champagne cocktail party, to which I invited the entire Cameroonian government from the President on down, which had never been done, they'd never been in an embassy before, they all came and Scranton was the Guest of Honor. We had very nice little speeches about the Declaration of Independence, and independence and the meaning of it, and freedom, which was perfectly well received, but proclaimed a concept of freedom which went beyond anything that you can find anywhere in Africa even today.

Anyway, so we had to work very hard and they usually went along with us. The nice thing was that Washington didn't really care for other things and they were fairly responsive to my suggestions. We had no congressional delegations visiting except on a private visit. Congressman Quie, who later became Governor of his home state Minnesota, was visiting his sister who was with a Lutheran mission hospital.

The AID people were resistant and stupid and self-serving with a few exceptions. I think one reason for that was that most of them had to be placed somewhere, they'd been in Vietnam, and Cameroon is four-fifths Francophone and one-fifth Anglophone, although both languages have constitutionally equal rights.

Q: They'd just been kicked out.

SPIRO: They were sent to us. I had one major experience which we may want to get back to, I'll just talk about it briefly. Cameroon had completed a railroad from the Port of Douala, where we had a consulate, to Ngoundere, a town about 200 miles up country. They were then engaged in extending that railroad further to the north. All the European countries

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and Canada, which had a particular interest in Cameroon because it is also bilingual and bicultural in the same two languages, were supporting this, and the World Bank was supporting it. And the United States was being advised not to support it by these stupid and recalcitrant and self-serving AID characters. Not so much the ones in country or the country director but a man in Washington, one of many bureaucrats, who said that United States can't support it because it's against the law to give support for railroad projects.

I went home for consultations, which I couldn't do on State Department money because we were on a tight budget. The AID officers from Washington could do more traveling than an Ambassador. I happened to have got an invitation to give a lecture at Heidelberg University in Germany, so I piggybacked my Washington trip on the Heidelberg thing, for which I had to get approval from the Department, which I got.

Before I went to see the AID people, I went to see a Harvard contemporary of mine, John Brademas, who was Democratic Majority Whip, and I told him what the problem was and that Cameroon had a very responsible government and they were developing in a serious way. He sent me to a Pennsylvania congressman, whose name I've forgotten. I first went to see (Republican) Congressman Larry Coughlin, who just retired in the last election, he didn't run for reelection, whom I'd known from Philadelphia and he passed me on to this Pennsylvania Democrat who was an expert on the AID legislation. He explained to me that it was not only not against the law, but that the law specifically provided that, where the United States had previously helped with a railroad project and/or the railroad project was likely to help other countries in the region—and this one going up North would help Chad and the Central African Republic—there were several others, and if it fulfilled any one of those requirements, it was not only covered by the law, there were extra funds provided for it, ready for it.

So after a long and fairly bitter fight, in which the AID bureaucrat fought dirty, like not sending me wires of information, it was pushed through and the United States participated in this aid for the extension of this railroad, which became a great success. But the funny

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thing was, two years after I'd come back—after Jimmy Carter in the first of many major mistakes, accepted my routinely rendered resignation — you can hear that that is a rehearsed phrase, I use it often—I ran into this local AID bureaucrat who said, “Well Mr. Ambassador, I got your project through,” which he had fought tooth and nail. Not only that, but he was the guy who was put in charge of a number of African regional railroad upgrading programs for AID on the Washington end.

But it was a well run country where it was pleasant to be Ambassador. It was interesting for other reasons because they were put together along with many other African countries in this artificial way. There are 200 languages in Cameroon because they'd gone through the German colonial experience which was pretty rigorous. The Germans were pretty nasty and sometimes brutal colonial masters, and then the very different French and British. And they committed themselves to working together between these 2 or 3 traditions.

They, and this is a long story very briefly told, they'd become natural diplomats, they had to get along among themselves. They had therefore supplied many diplomats for the African continental plan, for the OAU, for example, and for the UN. The Chairman, of what later became the first Committee of the Law of the Seas Conference, was a Cameroonian, a senior career Cameroonian diplomat. And that meant that when Richardson had become Ambassador for the Law of the Seas, by this time we're early in the Carter administration, he sent two of his principal aides who had been with him before at Defense and Justice and everywhere else I think. One of whom was Richard Dorman who later became OMB Director and the other one was the son of Ambassador Smith who'd been the Ambassador to the SALT negotiations, way back. They came over to Cameroon in order to meet with this Cameroonian diplomat who was the head of the main committee of the Law of the Seas Conference.

Cameroon was fine, it was fun. Incidentally, since this is about becoming an Ambassador, before I presented my Letters of Credence to President Ahidjo, there was the annual

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Peace Corps volunteer conference in the capitol at a local hotel. The volunteers who had been there for one or two years came back to exchange information. I was asked to come to that conference and to meet the volunteers and to give them a pep talk.

I'd seen lots of Ambassadors in operation, but I had not been an Ambassador before, and I'd seen lots of movies. And what does an Ambassador do at a more or less ceremonial thing like this—the beginning of a conference in a hotel, no functioning yet because he hasn't presented his credentials. So I went around and did what both Ambassadors and politicians do, I went around and said (there was this guy with me who would say, “This is Ambassador Spiro.”), I'd say, “How are you and where are you from?” Expecting them to say, Williamstown, Massachusetts or Austin, Texas or Berkeley, California. But without exception they answered with the name of the town or village in Cameroon where they were stationed, they had completely identified in one or two years with their Cameroonian hosts.

Then during our tour, I'm including Betsy in this, obviously she was a very good Ambassador's wife and more than that. She actually, while we were there in 1976, wrote a pioneering article on the role that human rights should play in American foreign policy. When the Carter-Ford debate took place, we heard it over short-wave, it sounded like Betsy Spiro in the voice of Carter, and Betsy Spiro in the voice of Ford, talking to each other. Speech writers, or advisors to both of them, had read this article which was published just in time for the campaign. Appropriately, Betsy is now Deputy Director of an office in the Bureau of Human Rights.

We visited many Peace Corps volunteers in backwoods places and they were really doing a splendid job. Which surprised me because when the Peace Corps was first invented by President Kennedy, I was very critical of it because in the beginning it looked like a bunch of rich kids just wanting to do their “tour” abroad. In the beginning, I think it tended to be that way.

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Cameroon was fine and there were no problems and they made use of my special qualities. The majority of them, and the dominant component in the government of Cameroon, were the Francophones, although the fifth of the population that was Anglophone, had more than proportional representation. But the Francophones were dominant. In their Parliament and in their Cabinet they always had simultaneous translation.

But the Francophones especially, like the French at home, have enormous respect for intellectuals, I never considered myself an intellectual, we don't have an intellectual class, but they did.

Q: But you had the professorial, you'd written things

SPIRO: I was a professor. I had brought deliberately, I think I had to get special permission to take the major part of my library along. We had bookshelves constructed in the Residence and that impressed them and that got me entree where my predecessors and successors would not have had it. I was asked to give a lecture at the university which was otherwise very reluctant to have political foreigners.

It also meant, I'm almost as down on the US Information Service as I am on AID of that period, it may have improved although I doubt it. We had some really bad USIS people, except for the junior persons. One failure that I had, we had a second tour woman who was the Press Officer under USIS who had served somewhere else before, a young college graduate. She was the only junior or mid-level person in the embassy, who constantly had all sorts of local journalists and other intellectuals at her home to entertain, including especially Africans, Cameroonians.

So I recommended her for a Meritorious Service Award at the end of my first year. The Public Affairs Officer, a fellow named Jerry Prillaman—who rose to heights later on, not on my recommendation—said, you can't do this without my approval. It turned out to be true,

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an Ambassador cannot recommend for special awards AID or USIA officers, he has to get the Country Director's or the Public Affairs Officer's permission. His excuse was, this would be very bad for her career if she gets recognition too early. She did not get the recognition then but I think she's had a successful career since then.

I had made a couple of trips to the northern-most province and provincial capital called Maroua, partly because it was near a wonderful, totally natural, national park, lots of elephants and animals in it. We had only one consulate in Douala, the port city, but there was a wonderful AID officer named Tex Ford, who's obviously from Texas, in Maroua who had been with AID since he was a Young Farmer of America, probably growing alfalfa in Texas. And he'd gotten several awards for work he'd done in Latin America and he'd been in Vietnam and I think in the Philippines, he's great.

On one occasion, a Jehovah Witness missionary had strayed across the Chad border into Cameroon, he'd been held, as an illegal immigrant. The plane that normally went up to that city, which was 300 miles away from Maroua where Tex Ford was stationed for AID, was grounded, so our consular officer, another young woman, couldn't fly up to get the missionary released. So Tex Ford drove his Land Rover, or his jeep, to the other town, the border town. And he knew everybody there because he'd gone around distributing Carter peanut seeds from the Carter peanut seed farm. He knew everybody, they loved him, he was nice, he's a Texan, he was jolly, you'd get along with him, a tall fellow. And he got the missionary sprung.

And then the US Information Service people had habitually, from the time of independence, sent the same French-speaking American professors to the same countries—because they happened to know them, because they were there, and they spoke French and there was a kind of symbiotic relationship between the potential pool of speakers and French West African colonies. Some of them were okay but most of them were dull and they got duller as time wore on.

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I tried to get Stanley Hoffman to come and he couldn't and I tried to get Lawrence Wiley, name mean anything to you? A famous Harvard professor who wrote a famous book in the 50s about a little southern French village. These were well known in Cameroon and elsewhere. I finally was able to get Professor Nicholas Wahl, who was then at Princeton and is now the head of the French center at NYU, to come out. This is after Carter's election and before Christmas of 1976.

I asked the USIS people to set up as many occasions for him to speak, in a two-week period, as possible and especially to include Maroua in the far north of Cameroon. Jerry said, well, we've never done anything up there before. I said, well, you do it now. Well, we don't have anybody up there. So I got on the phone to Tex Ford and I said, can you do this? To make another long story short, it's an interesting one. He got 300 people to come, all the elite of the northern province and it was an enormous success. With prodding, Prillaman and the others set-up a meeting that was attended by 1200 in Ngoundere, it was the centrally located provincial capital. But it was very hard to get them into this.

Then I tried, and this time I succeeded, to get Meritorious Service Awards, two of them, for Tex Ford, from the State Department for his consular services, he got that, he didn't get the USIS one but in the end he got that one too. But there was just this recalcitrance and "service narrowness."

Q: That's reaching down, they want the award, not you.

SPIRO: Right, but I wanted to place it with somebody who had done extraordinary things, beyond and above the call of duty and of his bureaucratic niche.

Equatorial Guinea was a totally different story and one that I've written up. The Spanish had done nothing for their colonies, they pushed Equatorial Guinea into independence for totally ulterior motives before there was any preparation. The motive was to get Third

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World countries to vote with Spain on the issue of Gibraltar at the United Nations. There was no independence movement. There were no college trained people.

There were 2 separate colonies, Fernando Po, the island, which physically looks very much like the big island of Hawaii, and Rio Muni, the mainland colony inhabited by 2 different tribes. Spain pushed Equatorial New Guinea, as the combination of these two, into independence and under a brutal tyrant named Macias who belonged to the dominant tribe. He instituted a brutal regime which led to the flight from the country of about 300,000 Equatorial Guineans, many whom went to Spain.

We never had a resident embassy there, we had a Charg# d'affaires and one communicator. When I was on the Policy Planning Staff, this is a dark chapter in the history of the Foreign Service, do you know anything about this in 1970? Do you have any others on record on this?

Q: I think I have somebody but you might explain.

SPIRO: The Ambassador to Cameroon was also concurrently assigned to Equatorial Guinea, he would visit twice a year. In 1970, maybe it was a little later when I was on the Planning Staff, I got all the cables from Africa. There were these frantic cables from the Charg# in Fernando Po, which has been renamed by the brutal dictator, that a vast Soviet fleet was assembling around the island and was about to take it over.

What actually happened was that the Charg# murdered the communicator, for which he later served 7 years in a federal prison, I think. He possibly went mad because the embassy was right next-door to the prison and I was told that he could hear the screams of the prisoners as they were being tortured night and day. There were also intimations of homosexuality.

Q: Yes, I think there was physical evidence of this.

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SPIRO: There was physical evidence. Then, very much to his credit, the Nigerian Ambassador in Equatorial New Guinea, who was a former Colonel in the Nigerian military regime of the previous period of the civil war, saw to it that the Charg# was gotten out, sort of under guard. He was flown from Douala to Washington and arrested at the airport and tried and sentenced. Then he joined the retired Foreign Service officers club, I think.

Anyway, there was this background in US-Equatorial Guinean relations. We couldn't be too loud because we had a Charg# who went mad.

So I was appointed concurrently to both, I presented my credentials to Macias in the company of the man who was then our consul in Douala, who later became my DCM, an FSO named Bill Mithoefer. That was like something out of Evelyn Waugh's novel, *Scoop*. We took along an LP record of the Star Spangled Banner and a bunch of football songs because they had said that they wanted their National Guard to play the two National Anthems when I presented my credentials. We were worried they'd play, you know, "Fair Harvard" or "On Wisconsin," but they actually played the National Anthem, it was a pretty good rendition. I was able to use my Spanish from San Antonio, I had an interesting conversation with Macias who's Spanish is excellent but who, as I have said, was a brutal tyrant.

Lots of resident Ambassadors in Yaounde, Cameroon, would make 2 trips a year to Fernando Po. We always took along bags of bread and rolls because Macias had declared that bread was a colonial invention, and would not permit flour to be ground or imported, so that you didn't have any bread coming out from the mainland to the diplomats who were stationed there - that was really a hardship post. We closed it after the murder.

Q: I was going to say, it really didn't make much sense.

SPIRO: But it was reopened in the Reagan administration, I think. One of Senator Jesse Helms' aides for whom he insisted on getting an appointment, barring which he would not

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let someone else be confirmed, got that appointment. Apparently it hadn't approved very much.

It was interesting being on the island. It reminded me very much of Hawaii and they had a Spanish cattle ranch high up. They had, until a few years before that, they imported thousands of Nigerian Ibo workers because the local tribe didn't like to do that kind of work. The Ibo workers were being exploited and persecuted. The Nigerian government in an expedition, again headed by this wonderful Ambassador who had brought out our murdering Charg#, had evacuated 6,000 Ibo workers. Since then the production of cocoa, and this is one of the best cocoa beans from Equatorial Guinea, from the island, had a higher cocoa butter content which is how you measure them, than any other cocoa in the world. It had been most productive but after the Ibos were evacuated by the Nigerian government, it went down. Things were just awful.

President Macias had invited me to visit the mainland colony on the occasion of the day on which they celebrate the final victory over colonialism. So the Consul, who had meanwhile become my DCM, and I, in a Peugeot, drove for 3 hours to the Equatorial Guinea-Cameroon border in March of 1976. At the border we were greeted by people who beat the ground with branches cut from bushes, and "Abajo el colonialismo Espanol," down with Spanish colonialism and then they lift up the bushes and "Arriba el gran maestro," long live the great teacher of the people, etc., etc., about 10 different titles, Macias.

This is a separate story which I have written up and I'll be glad to send you copies of it, I don't want to take any time with it now.

I spent a bizarre 3 days there. At the border, it's sort of a no man's land between the 2 countries. The Chief of Protocol, who escorted me back to the border, accused me of being not an Ambassador but an assassin and a spy; and he accused President Nixon, who was not in office any more, of being a communist and a spy; and he denied that his President, who had visited China, was a communist; and it was really bizarre. We were

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in no man's land. I feared for my life for a while, because they could have shot me if they wanted to.

We figured it out afterwards, that they'd been planning to create a diplomatic incident which would get them publicity. But that didn't happen and we drove the 3 hours back to Yaounde and I sent a cable to the Department recommending that we break relations. Meanwhile, they had gotten a commercial telegram because Cameroon did not have an Ambassador in Washington, they did have one at the UN, declaring me and the DCM, "personae non gratae." The US government then suspended diplomatic relations with them and instructed me to present the Demarche stating that, to the Equatorial Guinean Ambassador in Yaounde, which I did. Whereupon he asked for asylum from the Cameroon government, he didn't want to take that message back.

Q: Had anything happened during your trip other than the

SPIRO: Yes, a number of things had happened. First I had a conversation with the President which went off perfectly well. I was lying on the beach, they have beautiful beaches, and dreaming of all sorts of wonderful things that a really good American AID program could do with them, with all the talented and savvy Spanish speaking Mexican-Americans we have in Texas. It would be just great for tourism and the mainland counties had rich country, pigs running around and so forth.

And then we were invited, I'd expressed interest in it, to go to an up-country lumber, precious woods plantation which was being run by a French company and a French manager. We flew up there and we had tea with the French manager in the presence of the Chief of Protocol from the Presidency, who later turned out to be the villain.

I looked, as I often do, it's a terribly impolite thing to do, I looked at the teacup which we were served the tea in, to see where it came from. Oh, I said, this [china] is from China. These were French people, so one of the charges against me was that I said they were communists. I had said nothing about the President's trip to China, I don't think I knew

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about it, I didn't care about it. We were beginning to have non-diplomatic relations with the mainland Chinese by this time.

Q: By this time we'd had relations with China.

SPIRO: Oh sure. Although I was not allowed by the Department, I'd tried to invite the Chinese Ambassador to my residence, unless he invited me to his, which he didn't, so we never did.

Then on our way back, I was taken to his native village where Macias had set up a brand new hospital but it had no patients in it, nor electricity, it had no water. When we were in the President's village, where we spent the night, they tried to put me and Mithoefer into different houses and we insisted that they couldn't do that. We were already getting suspicious because there were all sorts of crowds on our route.

As I say, I describe this systematically and fairly amusingly, everybody agreed with the conclusion that he was trying to set up a diplomatic incident which they could then exploit because it was total backwater. He was trying to get back in and he had this terrible internal human rights record.

Speaking of the Chinese, this is also an incidental story, our sons were then 14 and 12. The younger one spent the first year with us and attended the American International School in Yaounde, and the older one was boarding in St. Albans here and came back for holidays including summers. The younger one was coming back by himself and on a flight from Paris to Douala, he found himself sitting next to 2 men dressed like Chinese functionaries.

Q: Mao suits.

SPIRO: One of them was studying a dictionary. He got into a conversation with the one sitting next to him and he said, "My father is the American Ambassador to Cameroon."

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They said they were going to Cameroon as development assistants or else diplomats. And so Alexander, who was 13 maybe, got into a very good conversation with him defending US-China policy, US foreign policy in general. He's now a lawyer who, in his first year out of Georgetown Law School, earned more money than I earned cumulatively in 11 years after I got my Ph.D., not adjusted for inflation....

When he came back, I actually sent a cable on that. You know they use all sorts of abbreviations in the State Department, which Secretary Vance I think tried to eliminate, the heading was: AMSON's conversation with CHIDIPS - Chinese diplomats.

A week later, this is Christmas actually, there was a farewell diplomatic party at the airport for a departing Ambassador, which the Chinese Ambassador attended. My wife, Betsy—now in the Human Rights bureau of the Department after serving in Oslo, Johannesburg and Reykjavik, in reverse chronological, order—approached the Chinese Ambassador and said, “My son had a wonderful conversation,” she can do this very well, “with two of your diplomats on the flight from Paris to Douala last week. He just thought they were so friendly in talking...” The Chinese Ambassador, who spoke no language known to man, through his interpreter said, “No, no such diplomats. Never happened.” Which just illustrates the larger point that one's family, if you're lucky, do an important part of the job.

Q: Oh they do, absolutely, no doubt about it.

You left there right after the elections?

SPIRO: As I say, it's the first of many major mistakes, Jimmy Carter accepted my routinely rendered resignation. We left the end of May of 1977, the President of Cameroon gave a very nice farewell luncheon for me.

When I'd come back from consultations, real consultations, in October of '76 during the campaign here, I called upon him after my return and he was very much interested in the elections. He listened to the Voice of America, French version, everyday. He said he

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thought that Carter would win. I said, I thought Ford would win, he said Carter, and I said Ford. He said, "You want to bet?" This is in French.

I said American officials are not permitted to bet. He said, not to worry, he wasn't permitted to bet either but didn't I want to bet? I said, all right. He said, champagne? I said, all right. I thought he bet a bottle of champagne. Of course he bet a case of champagne.

The British Ambassador, who was a short fellow, known as Bertie, looked like a caricature of a British diplomat of the 19th century. Because at formal occasions when we wear striped pants and tails, he wore fore and aft sort of hat

Q: fore and aft, yeah

SPIRO: and saber

Q: The whole diplomatic uniform.

SPIRO: Right. He told me, I don't think it was true, that Cameroon imported more champagne than the sum total of British development assistance, which he said was \$300,000 or pounds. But I don't think that was true.

So President Ahidjo said a case of champagne. I said, all right, and we shook hands on it. I reported this conscientiously to the Department and said if President Ford wins, I would get a case of real French champagne because that's what he serves. He doesn't drink himself. What he doesn't know is that if Governor Carter wins, he would get a case of upstate New York Regency champagne which we could get at Burkas (on Wisconsin Avenue NW), then, for \$3 a bottle. You know that Carter won and I ordered a case of Regency champagne from Burkas and had it sent to him.

The day before our departure, the President gave a luncheon in my honor, at which he awarded me Legion of Valor (for which I had previously gotten permission from Washington). Champagne was served, but the bottles were in napkins at this farewell

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luncheon, and I asked him if this was the champagne he won from me, because I wanted to make sure that he had received it. He said no, he was saving that for my return. Which is one of the nicest things, quite touching...

Q: You left then and went back to the academic world, is that it?

SPIRO: No not immediately. First I was unemployed.

From December '77 until March of '79, I was a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in the Smithsonian. The work I did there was this long manuscript, of which I'd used shorter versions in things that have been published, that manuscript has not been published, of my theory of replication which was started by this labor experience.

Then from '79 to '80 I was a visiting professor of government at the Defense Intelligence School in Anacostia of which, incidentally, my old colleague, Robert Neumann [former Ambassador to Morocco and Afghanistan, was a trustee on the Visiting Committee. The Defense Intelligence School prepares mainly Defense Attach#s before they go overseas, but they also have a year long course for junior officers going up to field grade, where I gave a course of lectures on the American people's attitude towards intelligence organizations through our history.

From 1980 until '89, I was the University Professor for American politics at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies of the Free University of Berlin, an integral, interdisciplinary institute of the Free University of (West) Berlin. And since German universities are on vacation half the year, and they don't work very hard the other half, and in Berlin I was entitled to a sabbatical leave after every five teaching semesters, I'd spend more than half my time in this country, mainly in Austin, Texas starting in 1982.

In Berlin, I gave the introductory course on American Politics and Government, I taught courses on the Congress, on American foreign relations, on the Constitution. One graduate seminar comparing Presidents Nixon and Johnson, which is particularly

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interesting today just after Nixon's death. I retired from Berlin in 1989. In between I spent one term in 1983 as a visiting Professor of Government at Harvard, and half a semester in '84 as a visiting Professor at Tufts.

In '82 I was invited by one of the Soviet diplomats in East Berlin to visit Moscow. Herbert Okun, who was an old friend of mine from the State Department,

Q: I came into the Foreign Service with Herb.

SPIRO: started as Ambassador to the GDR, in East Berlin, at the same time that I started as a professor at the university in West Berlin. As a matter of fact, my oldest son Peter and I were walking in East Berlin, and we saw these limousines coming up, and there I happened to see Herb Okun, who was about to present his credentials.

Then I sent Herb a letter, which was a parody of the letters that you send to the other Ambassadors in countries like Cameroon, when you have presented your credentials: Your Excellency, I wish to inform you that I have this day presented my letters of credence and at the same time the letters of recall for my predecessor, the Honorable C. Robert Moore and blah, blah, blah. You conclude by saying: And I hope and trust that the excellent relations that prevail between our two countries, as well as between our two Embassies, as well as on the institutional and personal levels, will continue, and I remain with assurances of my highest regard etc., etc. Then I ended my parody to Herb Okun by writing, "No shit." He called me. We spent a lot of time together.

In '81 '82, US-Soviet relations were at their nadir, as the First Secretary of the Soviet embassy in East Berlin, to whom Herb Okun had introduced me, told me. They therefore invited me to come as a guest of the USA and Canada Institute, the Arbatov Institute, to Moscow, which I did in April of '82. The reason they knew about me was not only that Herb Okun had introduced me to Bogomolov, but I had visited our Embassy in Moscow twice, once in April '73 and once in September-October 1974—did you know Joe Neubert?

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Q: I know the name.

SPIRO: He was then the Consul General in Leningrad, he'd been Senior Deputy of the Planning Staff when I was on it.

I had visited the Moscow twice under U.S. Embassy auspices. The first time I was invited to their Foreign Ministry Planning Staff, which had never happened to any U.S. official before. They took, this is what I referred to earlier, they took the Annual Reports on the "State of the World" of the Secretary and of President Nixon much more seriously than anybody in this country.

When I met with their Planning Staff the first time in '73, they said, what about the Nixon doctrine? I said, well, it's US policy. They said, but Zbig Brzezinski just had an article in Foreign Affairs. And I said, "Brzezinski! Shit!" That closed it then I apologized. Then they said, "But Foreign Affairs is published by the Council on Foreign Relations and what they say really goes."

I always benefitted from the fact that unlike Kissinger, this is really coming to the close of the circle, Kissinger wrote his senior honors thesis, on philosophy of history. It was 400 pages long and led to the introduction of a top limit of 100 pages. I wrote mine under the same tutor, William Yandell Elliott, on the Marxian critique of democracy, Marx and Engel's critique of 19th century democracy, 153 pages, also too long but very good. We both graduated summa cum laude.

That thesis always helped me. Like the devil quoting scriptures, one of the communists once said. In dealing with these communists, who didn't know beans about Marx, they didn't know much about anything else either but certainly didn't know about Marx. I'd given one lecture at the Institute of USA and Canada affairs, so they knew me and they invited me and I came back as their guest.

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I got completely paranoid in Moscow because they kept me sort of isolated, every once in a while I got out and Warren Zimmermann was Charg# and he gave a lunch for me. Arthur Hartman, by this time Ambassador to Moscow, had come back from consultations on my next to the last day, and I visited him and I told him how paranoid I'd gotten because they were trying to do things to me. At the end they tried to keep me there for longer than I'd planned by pretending that my return reservation hadn't been confirmed, and all that sort of thing.

I said to Arthur, yesterday I met with a younger member of the Institute, and I was about to give the name. And he said, no names please, pointing to where he assumed the microphone bug was still hidden. Then I said, the main problem is that my escort officer is, I've forgotten that name but I gave the name. He said, clear case of KGB. I said, he speaks perfect English. He said, I know, he's applied for a visa several times, we'll never give him a visa because he's KGB.

The next day I was taken for my farewell luncheon at the best Georgian restaurant in Moscow by the control officer and a Deputy Director of the Institute. They launched into an attack on Warren and on Arthur which I think was meant to sound as though they had indeed been listening to our conversation. I was a combination for them of a professor and an Ambassador. They thought that ex-Ambassadors were like serving Ambassadors.

They insisted on taking me to Leningrad where I'd been before with Joe Neubert. Joe by this time was the local representative for the American-Soviet trade council. He was in Moscow. They said, we want to take you to Leningrad to meet with our branch of the Institute there. I said, I'd been there. They insisted and I went with the Control Officer on the night train. I was really worried that they were trying to do all sorts of things to me, but they didn't. We were picked up by an officer of the Institute at the station in Leningrad and taken for a ride out to one of the museums - I got sick and tired of visiting museums and different palaces.

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They said, you've been an intelligence officer. (according to Who's Who, I was in military intelligence during World War II.) I said, yes. They proceeded to ask some questions. I said, well I was in military intelligence during the war when I was 20. In my country, when you're out as an ambassador, you're out. When you're out as president, you're out. Nixon wasn't all that out, that was his doing.

They said, in our country, once you are in military intelligence, you are always in intelligence. I said, well in my country it's actually very different from that. I don't know what they were trying.

So I started in military intelligence because I spoke German and I end up at Georgetown University fifty years later talking to your tape.

End of interview