

Yale-UN Oral History

Interview with Richard Hottelet

May 6, 2005

Wilton, CT

Interviewer: Jean Krasno

RICHARD C. HOTTELET

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WILTON, CONNECTICUT

INTERVIEWER-JEAN KRASNO

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Jean Krasno: This is an oral history interview with Richard Hottelet on May 6, 2005 and we are in Wilton, Connecticut and I am Jean Krasno. Well actually to start out with I was wondering if you could give us a little bit of your background and how you got into journalism and then when it was that you started covering the United Nations.

Richard Hottelet: I got into journalism through the backdoor as people generally do –sometimes happily sometimes not—mine was happy. I was graduated from Brooklyn College in New York City in 1937 and having no money in the family at that time and having a blocked bank account in Germany, a family account, I went to Germany to spend that money and to study postgraduate work at the University of Berlin the so called Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität. I was a philosophy and psychology major at Brooklyn and I signed up for a philosophy course at the Philosophical Faculty as it's called at the university and I signed up for various lectures and seminars. I remember coming to the first lecture at 8 o'clock in the morning in the lecture hall at the university, and in walks a man with a brown uniform, red arm band and swastika and he opens the lecture on Kant with a "Heil Hitler," at which point it became quite clear I wasn't going to do too much studying of philosophy at the University of Berlin. The professor's name was Baeumler and he had been in charge of what they called coordinating the university faculties – which meant nazi-fying the faculty. But I held out for a while and looked around for other things at the university and found nothing much and decided here I am, I'd better go home.

I talked it over with some acquaintances who said well don't go home. Stay in Berlin; there are American outfits in Berlin that may need some help and one of them was the United Press. That was long before it became the United Press International, it was United Press Associations and I went to see Frederick Oeschner who was the bureau manager of the UP and he didn't have anything for me really. He said, "Look, stay in touch, stay at the university and call in if you have stories." And I did that on occasion. I remember various stories, one was going to a concert at the Berlin Philharmonic, at the Philharmonie and noticing that the bust of Mendelssohn had been removed since my previous visit there, and that was an interesting little bit. He sent me out on a couple of trips. But it wasn't until the beginning of 1938 that I did any real work for him. And it started off. By then my German had improved and they were covering Hitler's speeches on the radio. This was the beginning of 1938. And 1938 was a terrific year because it started in January or February when Hitler took over command of the armed forces and shook up the old military command and then in March went into Austria.

We covered his speeches on the radio and when he went into Austria and came back Fred sent me out to the Tempelhof airport which was a tiny little thing in comparison to what was made of it later. And there I was; I was as close to Hitler as I am to you and Goebbels and others were welcoming him back from Austria. This is where I got a first look at Hitler after hearing all these stories about these magnetic blue eyes. He was just an ordinary little character; nothing

magnetic about him at all. Then, with that, there was more work to be done and I was taken on as staff reporter at the UP. That was in March of '38. I stayed with them actually, but left Berlin in 1941, having been arrested a couple of times on Jewish stories in and around Berlin and going off when the expulsion of the Polish Jews to Poland took place, I was on the train with them. I kept in touch with the family of a young man whose name was Greenspan who was in Paris. In 1938, infuriated by the expulsion he had gone berserk. He had killed a German diplomat in Paris, which led then to the reprisal. This was the so called Kristalnacht, the organized destruction by the SS of Jewish businesses, smashing windows and tearing their places, burning synagogues, and killing some. But this was all in the work. But in March of 1941, I was arrested and accused of espionage.

JK: And where were you, in Berlin?

RH: In Berlin yes I stayed in Berlin in the beginning of the war in the first air raids. The UP office was a great place to watch the air raids because it was right there on Unter den Linden 4th floor, four stories up, and with the lights out you could just open the window and see what was going on. And there was no censorship, strangely enough; there was no censorship until much later on until the end of '41 beginning of '42 because they were winning the war there was no need for them to censor anything. And I remember once sitting at the teleprinter and typing too, the connection was with Amsterdam where we had another office, a description of the air raid. I worked with the UP, I got arrested. What happened in 1941, was Robert Jackson who was then the attorney general picked up a few people, the hairdresser on the ocean liner "Bremen," and a man named Zapp. He was correspondent for a news agency the Nazis had invented called Transocean which sounded different from the official Nazi news agency DNB, but he was involved in some hanky panky. Transocean sort of figured for Germans as the number two agency, the counterparts, in a sense, of UP, as was then AP. I was arrested quite obviously in reprisal for the arrest of these people.

And later on in July of 1941, I and several other young fellows, Americans who had been arrested in Norway who had been actually working with the Norwegian underground, and an American who had been arrested in France when he left occupied France to come back to Paris where he had lived, he was arrested. And so a small group of us together with American diplomats who had been picked up by the Germans when the Germans overran Denmark and Norway and also Belgium and Holland. We were all bundled together and we were put on the train to Lisbon and exchanged at Lisbon for the Germans who had been arrested and the German members of the consulate in San Francisco. These arrested Germans were sort of newspaper people. I was sent home in July of 1941. The UP was a remarkable agency. It was dirt poor and so it hired its people for starvation wages but it taught them the trade, which was, of course, priceless.

JK: And then were those articles published back in the U.S.; were they in English?

RH: Yes, the New York World Telegram was the main UP outlet in New York, so my stuff among others would have appeared in that. There was a paper in Boston (I forgot what it was called) which ran bylines an inch high which was a great morale booster. I then stayed within the United States of course and was sent off having been with the German army in Belgium after

they had taken Belgium and at the gates of Dunkirk in May of 1940. I had some small experience with the German army. The UP sent me to Arkansas and Louisiana to cover the big maneuvers, the first maneuvers the U.S. army had until then. The draft law was passed by a single solitary vote in the House of Representatives. It had been 100,000 men; all told, it could have fit in Yankee Stadium practically. A general named Leslie McNair did a fabulous job of sort of sweeping everything together. By August of 1941, he had put together enough people, enough units, to have war games. It was a bit pathetic. They had practically no tanks; the tanks they had, the Sherman tank, was ridiculous. Having seen the low lying German tanks, this thing was a monstrosity a sort of three story tank. But it was all they had and they did that they had those little commercial trucks to simulate tanks and people, not many of them had weapons. But it was a maneuver. And a man named Dwight Eisenhower was the G3. I was with the first army and he was with the 3rd army. He was headed north we were headed south. It was a remarkable thing but a bit pathetic.

JK: A beginning...

RH: A beginning. Leslie McNair was later killed in Normandy by friendly fire but he was the man that put these pieces together. I stayed in Washington with the UP until December, covering the Navy Department until Pearl Harbor which was the beginning of the war. At this point they had organized an office of war information. It was called the Coordinator of Information, the COI. The idea was to organize a news report for the president who couldn't move around much. A man named Bill Donovan was in charge, an acquaintance of his or a friend of his, and the Coordinator of Information very soon thereafter split into two. One was the Office of War Information which did broadcasting and leaflets sort of propaganda to Germany and the occupied territory and the second which Donovan then headed was the OSS. That was the covert operation. But I stayed with the old OWI and helped put together the Voice of America when we moved up to New York on Madison Ave. We put together the Voice of America, the news desk and that sort of thing. I went to London for the OWI and did work for the British, some psychological, political warfare they called it. Working with the RAF and BBC broadcasting leaflets and some of their black propaganda which was very interesting.

OWI didn't do any black propaganda. I think the OSS did. Black propaganda was covert, secret radio stations, which purported to be German radio stations broadcasting sort of anti-Nazi propaganda on short wave mainly to German troop units and others who had short wave sets. I stayed with them went down to North Africa and to Italy with the OWI working with the British. Bill Paley was in charge of spearheading the office of psychological warfare units the American army put together. And then went back to London, and working for the government wasn't so great. I wanted to get back into journalism. I went to Ed Murrow and asked for a job and Ed Murrow knew me, he knew my work because the business of my arrest in Germany had been well publicized. He said well we'll see; we'll check with New York. This was the end of 1943 and the first signs of the build up for the 1944 invasion of Normandy was becoming apparent. We had already invaded North Africa, which was why I had been in North Africa. Word came back in January of 1944, "Sure we need another man; hire him." So I was hired by Ed Murrow and worked for CBS as a war correspondent. After the war, I did Moscow. I had to leave Moscow, alas, because they shut off broadcasting and the radio correspondents had no broadcasting facilities. I tried negotiating with the Russians for several months and had my own

experience in negotiating with the Soviets which was not a happy, certainly not a fruitful experience. I went back to New York, did some broadcasting for a year or two in and out of New York and Washington; news and commentary we called it.

JK: And was that for CBS?

RH: From January of 1944 until October of 1945, I worked for CBS. I worked in Moscow and then worked in Washington and New York to cover political stories, conventions, and that sort of thing and then went back to Germany. The Germans were first beginning to put the government together. I went to Berlin briefly and then to Bonn which was supposed to be the seat of the German democratically elected government. We had a High Commission still but bit by bit the powers and authorities of the Allied High Commission (American, British, French) were transferred to this German government, to Adenauer who then blossomed as the leader of democratic Germany. I stayed in Germany for 6 or 7 years. I left in 1957 to come back to the United States for good.

JK: When did you start covering the United Nations?

RH: Well only somewhat in 1946; the first thing we did in coming home from the war in 1945 was to take a trip across the country to show my wife the United States. Then we came back, having been posted to Moscow, back to New York, and was at the gymnasium in Hunter College in Manhattan for one of the first meetings of the Security Council. Now Hunter is on 68th Street, but they had a campus in the Bronx indeed and they had a big gymnasium and the gymnasium was the site of the first meetings of the UN Security Council.

This first meeting was a very interesting one because the Russians who had been allies, had especially in Iran, during last stages of the war. Iran was the main highway for transmission of logistical facilities, trucks and ammunitions, and food from the west through the southern ports of Iran and on the highway to Russia. Before that, before the war, Iran had been partitioned. Nominally it was an independent country. In fact it was partitioned under the authority in the north by the Russians, and the south the oil fields for the British. The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company was the oil producer. So during the war this partitioning of Iran had continued, the Russians in charge of the north, the British in the south. When the war was over, they were relieved and the British left southern Iran. The Russians refused to leave northern Iran and that was one of the first big problems to come to the UN Security Council, to order the Russians to leave Iran. At the meeting there was a resolution. I don't remember what the resolution said but it was to get out of Iran.

JK: Was this a resolution out of the General Assembly?

RH: No, no, no. This was one of the first meetings of the Security Council in the United States. I don't think the Security Council ever met in London. It was the General Assembly that met in London.

JK: [Actually, the Security Council did meet in London in January 1946; I have a photo of their meeting.]

RH: Andre Gromyko was in the chair; he was representing the Soviet Union. I remember a bald headed Brazilian was the president of the Council; he was bald as a billiard ball. His head gleamed from perspiration in the lights. I've forgotten who, perhaps Stettinius, was there for the United States. But at first Gromyko tried to block the agenda. The agenda was the resolution for the Russians to evacuate Iran. He tried to block it; he tried to veto. And of course it was pointed out that this was a procedural meeting which could not be vetoed, and so he stormed you know why that this is all illegal, and he got up and left. And that was the Russians boycotting for the first time, leaving the Security Council. The question was, is this the end of the United Nations? Is this the end of the Security Council? The reply to that was absolutely not. The Security Council would continue without the Russians if the Russians chose not to attend. The Russians got that message very quickly and within a day or so Gromyko came back. I'm not sure that he vetoed. I don't think he vetoed the resolution; he probably didn't. The Russians at any rate left, the whole thing became moot, the Russians pulled out of northern Iran.

JK: That's actually extremely interesting to hear that because this was a test of the Council and whether or not it was going to be able to function. And there was from San Francisco this whole argument whether the veto extended down into procedural matters then what could they put on the agenda. And it was settled in San Francisco that you could not veto a procedural matter so this was a test of that. And the Soviets were never really happy about that.

RH: But they came back and they didn't learn the lesson that the Security Council could operate without them. Because when Korea came, the invasion of Korea, the Russians had again left the Council in order to compel the UN to seat the Communist Chinese regime in place of the Nationalist Chinese who held the Chinese seat in the General Assembly and in the Security Council. They left the Council in order to compel the UN to throw the Nationalists out in order to seat the Communists. When the North Koreans invaded the South, the Russians were not there to veto the resolution, calling upon all member states to do what they could to stop this invasion of the North. It was Harry Truman who picked up this resolution and sent U.S. troops into Korea as United Nations troops. I think there were 18 other countries sent detachments. The Turks were strong and the British and a lot of others sent their troops to Korea under the UN flag under a Security Council resolution, asking all members of the UN to do whatever they could to stop this invasion. This has been something which was resorted to in 1991 in the Gulf War. All nations were asked to meet the invasion.

This is in answer to your question had I had any experience with the United Nations before I came back. In 1960, Larry Laseur had been our CBS UN correspondent. But he had been moved to Washington. I was the only one. They had no UN correspondent because the UN was no big story, was paralyzed really. Whatever was happening of importance on the world scene was happening outside the UN, the Berlin blockade. So I was the only one who had been just once or twice again out of curiosity and knew which doors to go into. Then in 1960, when things picked up again and the big thing of course was the Congo Crisis. I just went and covered the Congo Crisis and just naturally became the UN correspondent.

JK: Again was this for CBS?

RH: Always with CBS.

JK: Always with CBS, because this brief biography that they had on you at the UN, I don't know if you read it, because they said that you were assigned to the U.S. mission.

RH: Oh no, that was later, that was after I left CBS in 1985. I left CBS and became the press counselor at the U.S. mission and I held that for a year and half and then got fed up working for the government.

JK: All right, ok then let's just go back to the sixties when you were working for CBS and the Congo. So you went to the Congo?

RH: Yes, in those days of course covering the UN not only entailed being there at headquarters in Manhattan, but also in the field since the technology had not advanced to the point where you could cover any story anywhere. In order to cover the UN and to cover the Congo, CBS decided to do a documentary on the Congo and I went to the Congo, spent a month or more on the Congo traveling around with the UN troops in what was the southern province Katanga. The problems there. Tsombe was the leader who tried to, under Belgian influence and Belgian money, tried to secede. It was the copper producer of the Congo. I was with the largely Swedish troops who were there then. So I covered that and I covered really all over the Congo with Brian Urquhart and of course Ralph Bunche. The American, Adlai Stevenson, was the permanent representative and Plimton was his number two man and he was in the Congo too. I spent a good month in the Congo and we did this rather interesting documentary.

JK: Let me ask you some things related to the press because the whole Congo operation set up a kind of crisis for the UN. How did the media play into that? What was the media coverage on that, was it negative, positive?

RH: It was factual and quite dramatic because in 1960 the Russians had voted in the Security Council, for the Congo operation. And it was soon apparent the reasons the Russians had, which of course they didn't divulge, for voting for the operation, namely to get the Belgian troops out, was to get a Congolese government installed which they could then influence. They soon saw that Bunche had no intention of turning the Congo over to the Congolese Lumumba. Lumumba was at that time the prime minister of the Congo. He was not a Communist but he wanted to get the Belgians out and the mission of the United Nations was to get the Belgians out. Lumumba at first asked President Eisenhower for American help in supporting his government and getting the Belgians out. The Belgians didn't want to go. They were in Katanga and they were reluctant to leave. The United States denied Lumumba any direct help. They said, "Look it is a United Nations affair and the United Nations will handle it."

He then turned to the Russians and the Russians promised him help. They tried to give it but in those days with the technology, the distance from the Soviet Union to the Congo was so great they could not over-fly from the Soviet Union. They had to land in the Sudan to refuel. But the British were still in charge in the Sudan and they refused to give the Russians landing rights and refueling rights. So the Russians could never supply any airborne logistical equipment to Lumumba and therefore their influence was cut very short. And it was then the UN that saved

Lumumba and saved a sort of international presence. Lumumba was then killed; I've forgotten, within months. I don't know who did it; some rumor said the CIA did it. I don't, I've never seen any proof of anything. But he was certainly killed perhaps because he had tried to be in bed with the Russians, who knows. But he was killed and the Congo was left in somewhat of a vacuum.

There was an ineffectual president. But the main struggle for the Congo then shifted to New York when the General Assembly was in session in September of 1960. The Russians had already seen that the United Nations would not do their job for them. The United Nations was not going to let the Russians take over the Congo; it was not going to let the Belgians stay in the Congo. It was to provide an international presence to support an independent Congolese government. As I say the struggle for the Congo became a struggle for the United Nations because it was in September of 1960 in the General Assembly that Khrushchev came in a ship with the Belorussians and the Ukrainians who were also members of the United Nations. Dag Hammarskjöld was the Secretary- General and he was presiding or he was present at that day at the UN. The Congo question was brought up, I forget how precisely. The Phillipino delegate was speaking and supporting the UN presence in the Congo. And Khrushchev began hammering his desk with his hands and began shouting about Hammarskjöld. He was called to order and the Phillipino began to resume his speech and Khrushchev began to shout once more.

JK: Were you there?

RH: I was there in the General Assembly; we had a television booth overlooking the General Assembly.

JK: Is there footage of all that?

RH: There must be footage of it. We weren't on because we only did live broadcasts; we didn't know it was going to happen.

JK: Yes, so you weren't covering the General Assembly?

RH: Surely the UN had footage of the General Assembly. They always claimed not to have taken it while the Russians were there because the UN would have run into all kinds of trouble. But as I was saying, Khrushchev having been called to order once for banging his fist on his table started again not only with his fist but took off his old brown shoe and began beating his desk with the shoe.

JK: The famous story.

RH: I'm sure the UN cameras caught it, but they always said they hadn't.

JK: I don't think they did. I've been to the general archives searching for all kinds of things because I just did a documentary.

RH: I always suspected.

JK: Somebody might have recorded it.

RH: Well I don't know who would have been on other than the UN. Because they shot practically everything and I have always assumed that it was delicacy not to annoy the Russians that they just sat on that footage. But you would have investigated and you have found that they did not have it. OK that answers my question.

JK: I think they just don't have it. I think the cameras were off.

RH: But Khrushchev's purpose was that he then made a speech and put up a demand that Hammarskjöld was biased to the West; he could not be trusted; he should be removed from office; and he should be replaced by a troika. The troika would be made up of a Soviet delegate, a Western/first world delegate, and a third world delegate. A Troika would replace this one man who was biased and could not be trusted. Well the question was, what would happen? That would be the end of the United Nations. We would have had a troika with a Soviet representative as one of the Secretaries-General. This came up and it was defeated. For next year, Hammarskjöld was politically dead because the Russians said they would not deal with him. They had no confidence in him. They would not deal with him as Secretary-General and it was just an impossibility for a Secretary-General to be in office and to have lost the confidence and to have the open opposition of one of the permanent members of the Security Council. Hammarskjöld stayed in office. He stayed in office for another year and it was a constant tug of war with the Russians. He then went to the Congo and was trying to fly from what was Elizabethville, now Lubumbashi, to [Ndola] to see what the score was down there. It was a Swedish plane and the plane crashed. It crashed in what was then Northern Rhodesia which is now Zambia and apparently there was a detailed investigation. This investigation came to the conclusion that the pilot had set his altimeter not for the airport in Zambia, in Northern Rhodesian, but an airport that had the same name, I think in the southern Congo. Hammarskjöld was trying to fly into Northern Rhodesia and the altimeter was set incorrectly and the plane crashed. Hammarskjöld and his chief of staff, a very interesting man named Heinz Wieschhoff, and a dozen others were killed in the crash.

JK: What kind of coverage did that get back in the U.S.?

RH: It was headline coverage and at the United Nations because there was no other way of covering a United Nations story except from the UN. It was only subsequently when you had satellites and the rest that all these stories, for example the Middle East war, could be covered outside the UN, but then they were still covered mainly from the UN. I was working day and night covering that. It was only subsequently that the satellites came in and people could with an uplink in the trucks or their cars could get to New York within minutes with sound and picture that the UN stories following crises became coverable from the scene and not alone from the United Nations. Before that in the '67 War I would cover what was happening in the Middle East, Israel, Palestine, Egypt and so forth from the UN. The location was the Security Council. I'd do it after hours, but the Security Council was the set and it was only afterwards that the scene shifted to wherever the crisis was.

JK: You mention that in the early years that there wasn't a lot going on at the UN because it was the Cold War. But was the press in general favorable to the UN? Right now, we're going through a period of a kind of negativity but at that time, how was it?

RH: I think so yes, surely, the correspondents there were correspondents of all the newspapers. Tom Hamilton who was the UN correspondent for the New York Times had a weekly feature in the news of the week in review for UN affairs. The Los Angeles Times had a correspondent; the Chicago Tribune had a permanent correspondent; CBS had me as a correspondent; NBC, ABC had correspondents. There was considerable interest and actually CBS in the early years of 1960-1961 had a weekly broadcast called UN in Action which then disappeared as interest faded. After 1960, it was removed. So early on in the '50s into the early '60s there was considerable interest and considerable favorable interest in the United Nations.

Largely because Dag Hammarskjöld and first Trygve Lie were thought to be certainly very pro-West and very pro-United States. The United States had, under Lie, powers which it will never have again, the anti-Communist, the McCarthyist wave of extreme anti-Communism. The United States had FBI agents stationed in the United Nations building to check the credentials of or the loyalty of American employees of the United Nations, which would be impossible thereafter. Dag Hammarskjöld got himself a very good name in the United States as the Secretary-General who went to China and was able to get the release of I don't know 17 or 18 American flyers, prisoners of war from the Korean War, out of China and back home to safety. So there was a feeling of gratitude to him. Of course, in those years the UN did nothing which was against what the United States thought was in its interests. The UN was in a legitimate sense used by the United States as an element of the projection of American power which was open to any country to do.

The General Assembly and the UN and the Security Council never cut across American interests. In the General Assembly, the debate was always favorable to the United States. It was in fact a Western club. There were 53 members I think at the time. So there was no need for any questioning of the role of the UN. The UN's role was what Roosevelt, and Truman, and Eisenhower had thought it would be. It was only in the '60s with the enormous expansion of decolonization when the membership of the UN grew. First a few African independent countries came in the late fifties, and then there came a wave in the '60s a wave of decolonization and the membership grew to 80 and to 90. There were these all young countries totally inexperienced running into problems and the Russians very cleverly seduced them all into getting a feeling of Third Worldism of anti-colonialism which was then projected against the so-called colonialist countries. Where the United States could not be accused of colonialism never having had any colonies except maybe the Philippines, the United States was included in the colonialist camp as a neo-colonialist. And the Russians mobilized these young countries, these inexperienced countries, into playing a parliamentary game in what was not a parliament, it was a General Assembly which could adopt resolutions but could not legislate.

The debate in the General Assembly took on, under Russian guidance and in Russian seduction, an increasingly anti-American, anti-Western, anti-Colonialist tone. This continued into the '60s, into the '70s, and got to the point where this "Zionism is racism" was adopted and the United States was castigated in every debate. American opinion turned against the United Nations because really largely of the tone of the debate and the resolutions adopted in the General

Assembly and the tone of the debate in the Security Council. In 1965, President Johnson tried to get the Vietnam War onto the agenda of the United Nations to get some kind of negotiations going through the UN.

JK: Johnson did?

RH: Johnson did, very much. He sent Arthur Goldberg, persuaded Arthur Goldberg to leave the Supreme Court and come to New York as permanent representative. Goldberg had won his reputation as a mediator, a persuader in his work for the United Steel Workers as their chief counsel in the '50s. He was sent to New York to get the Vietnam War onto the UN agenda in the hope that this war could somehow be negotiated through the UN, that the UN could use its efforts, its influence such as it was to end the war. U Thant was then the Secretary-General and when Johnson addressed the General Assembly at the 20th anniversary meeting in San Francisco in 1965 it was again to plead for a UN role in ending the Vietnam War. Well of course, the North Vietnamese didn't want negotiations they wanted victory. It was kept off the agenda of the Security Council by the Russians who persuaded the Japanese who were new, I think it was their first appearance in the Security Council. The Russians mobilized enough votes in the Security Council to keep Vietnam off the Security Council agenda. In other words they could not veto the inclusion of the Council.

JK: They could get enough votes?

RH: They could get enough votes to keep it off the agenda.

JK: That's very interesting because the general perception is that the U.S. did not want Vietnam on the UN agenda.

RH: Not at all, not at all Johnson would have sold his left arm, sold his wife, sold his mother, to get Vietnam onto the UN agenda.

JK: To get a negotiated...

RH: To get a negotiated settlement, sure but the North Vietnamese did not want negotiation. U Thant, this was one fine man, a thoroughly honest decent man, had this bee in his bonnet which the North Vietnamese, and the Russians, and the Chinese carefully planted there that the North Vietnamese were ready to negotiate, not through the General Assembly but negotiate with the United States, to negotiate with, well, anybody to end the war, but keeping it off the UN agenda. Of course, the North Vietnamese did not want to negotiate anything. They wanted victory and at the end of the day when they did negotiate with Kissinger and the rest in Paris, it was just negotiating the terms of their victory. That was the negotiation they wanted.

JK: So U Thant's efforts at trying to mediate some kind of solution was useless?

RH: It was pointless because the North Vietnamese, with the Russian behind them all the way, did not want mediation. They did not want anybody negotiating for them. They wanted to win and that's what they got at the end.

JK: That totally makes sense, yes that makes sense, very interesting.

JK: So you were there to observe all the secretaries-general one way or the other.

RH: Yes, I was there through Waldheim. I had left at about the time in 1985. Then in 1992 Boutros-Ghali came in.

JK: Lets see, after Waldheim was Pérez de Cuéllar.

RH: Pérez de Cuéllar, oh yes.

JK: Pérez de Cuéllar served from 1982 to the end of 1991 and then Boutros-Ghali came in January of 1992.

RH: I left CBS and covering the UN in 1985 and I had a connection with the UN as the press counselor of the U.S. mission to the UN from September-October 1985 until I think June, 1987.

JK: OK and that would have been during Pérez de Cuéllar.

RH: That would have been Pérez de Cuéllar's time.

JK: So for the different secretaries- general that you were there personally observing, how did they relate to the media? Were some, Trygve Lie, more open to the media and seek them out; were others more reticent to work with the press?

RH: Well my experience, I can't speak for the general experience of reporters because some may very well have had connections I didn't have. Trygve Lie was very friendly to the press. That was the time the big journalist institutions broadcast and print were at the UN. Hammarskjöld was more restrained. He was very much more a private man but Heinz Wieschhoff was always open. I got all kinds of information from him, I mean all perfectly legitimate. But what the UN had in mind I remember during the Congo crisis when before I went there to do the documentary that we did, talking to Wieschhoff about what was happening in Katanga what was happening with Lumumba and so forth.

JK: Heinz Wieschhoff was the chief of staff?

RH: Was the chief of staff so he knew everything. The Secretary-General was a very private man. But having access to his chief of staff, having achieved a relationship of confidence with his chief of staff who knew that what he said in confidence would be held in confidence; that was as good as knowing the Secretary- General.

When U Thant came in he was also very friendly to the press. He was open to the press; he could be interviewed. I remember doing several television interviews with U Thant. Having access to him, he was fairly active, he was very active during the Cuban missile crisis. As a matter of fact he was instrumental in getting the Kennedy/Khrushchev connection going, the idea of the

American quarantine and holding off hostile action by persuading Khrushchev not to try to break the quarantine. I mean he was a thoroughly decent man with the confidence of all concerned; he was not pro-anybody he was just pro-UN. But because of that he had access to both sides. I think he went down to Cuba after the missile crisis but Castro was unapproachable really and nothing could be done. He was there during the Bay of Pigs in 1961.

JK: [break in the interview] We were talking about U Thant and his relationship to the press.

RH: He was open and he held press conferences and had the respect of the press. But by his time the American public's attitude toward the UN had already begun to turn sour. The UN didn't get the coverage; it got the crisis coverage, certainly Stevenson's appearance at the Security Council, that famous episode with the Soviet representative Valerian Zorin, where the question was whether the Russians had set up missiles in Cuba. The United States had pictures; the Russians denied that they had them and Stevenson showed the pictures and asked them you don't want to admit that you have missiles there.

RH: He refused to do. He said I'm not here in a court of law, or as a prisoner or a witness in the court of law. And Stevenson said that the UN Security Council is the court of world opinion and you will answer that question. I'll wait here until hell freezes over.

JK: Famous line.

RH: Famous line. U Thant was at first the acting Secretary-General. The question was, what would happen if the post were empty. U Thant was Acting Secretary-General until he was formally appointed by the General Assembly. But U Thant had a normal relationship with the press. As I say again, public opinion had begun to sour, but never against him. He was there through the 1967 Middle East War.

U Thant flew to Cairo to tell Nasser that the removal of UNEF, the United Nations Emergency Force, which had been there from the Suez Crisis, since 1956, that removing that was going to be a *casus belli*; and Nasser refused to listen. Nasser's guru Hassanein Heikal, the famous editor of Al-Ahram, sort of Nasser's house organ said in fact that the Gulf of Aqaba had been mined. He said the Egyptians had mined the Gulf of Aqaba. In fact they had not. All Israelis believed that the Gulf of Aqaba was mined. Then that was it; they invaded.

JK: That was considered an act of war.

RH: It was certainly an act of war; they had already got the warning, with the withdrawal of UNEF.

JK: Back in the U.S., what kind of coverage was there on that? What was the attitude toward the removal of the UN troops?

RH: Israel was mainly appalled by the withdrawal of the UN troops, although Israel had never allowed UN troops to be on its soil. It was always out on the border, but on the other side of the border in the Gaza strip and in the Sinai which were Egyptian territory. On the whole though, U Thant was widely criticized for removing the troops. In point of fact, the UN forces were staged

in Egypt in Hammarskjöld's time under the agreement that they would stay no longer than they were welcomed by the Egyptians. If the Egyptians ordered them to leave, they would leave. In point of fact U Thant had no choice but to remove the UNEF. He flew to Cairo to plead against the withdrawal of UNEF, telling them this was a very dangerous thing for Nasser to do. Nasser did it nonetheless. U Thant had no choice under the agreement between Hammarskjöld and Nasser; he had no choice but to remove the UN forces.

JK: But was that adequately covered in the press? Did the public understand that?

RH: I think I am sure I mentioned it but in point of fact U Thant was widely criticized. There was no criticism of him in the Security Council. The Canadians for instance criticized him for removing UNEF. But they were members of the council and they did not ask the council to take any action. The council obviously understood that he had no choice. The council itself did not take any action which it couldn't. Because the idea of the council ordering UN peacekeeping forces into a country against that country's desire was unheard of. It's only very much later that the idea of intervention ever cropped up. U Thant was wrongfully but widely blamed for removing the troops and therefore making possible the invasion, the 1967 war.

JK: The current situation with Kofi Annan with the crisis that he has been facing with press coverage. In this instance with U Thant how did he handle that crisis personally? Was he able to effectively deal with the press on that issue or how was it handled?

RH: I don't really remember how it was handled. I think he made his point that he had no choice. That was certainly reported. Those who chose to believe that he should have done differently then chose to believe it. He was criticized by them. And what their motives were, whether it was misunderstanding, whether it was taking sides, I don't know. But it was no mystery about his position and about the Hammarskjöld/ Nasser agreement.

JK: So then you were covering Pérez de Cuéllar's tenure. were there any similar crisis during Pérez de Cuéllar's time or was he saved from a lot of that? There was the Falklands/Malvinas war, the Iran-Iraq war.

RH: Well Waldheim came in between?

JK: That's right Waldheim came in between.

RH: Waldheim followed U Thant. I don't recall any similar crisis. I think the one big UN story was the seating of Beijing, the General Assembly's removal of the nationalist Chinese and the seating of Beijing. But this was a General Assembly affair and the General Assembly had the votes. President H. W. Bush was the permanent representative of the time. But I remember him scolding the General Assembly for having made this move and saying they would regret it. You might check the verbatim but of course the verbatim are always corrected after the actual event. They do not always reflect the verbatim at the time. I think the consolidation of the Non-aligned Movement was again on Waldheim's watch. But then again this was a movement of the membership that he had no influence on, which he didn't really care very much about. Waldheim was a man who was primarily interested in maintaining his position as Secretary-General; he was

a politician. He was political figure. One crisis that was on his watch was the Bangladesh war, the India-Pakistani War of 1971, and again this was nothing he could influence. He may have tried to influence it but it wouldn't have mattered; the Indians were determined to do it. They stoked up the war with East Pakistan and turned it into the independent Bangladesh.

JK: Lebanon was an issue during Waldheim? And then in 1978 the first Israeli invasion into Lebanon.

RH: I don't recall any intervention by Waldheim.

JK: During Waldheim's time the U.S. went through a period of negativity toward the UN

RH: Yes, the Non-aligned Movement was in full swing. The debates, the tone of the debate and the tone of the proposed resolutions turned the American public opinion off. I'm not sure Waldheim could have done anything to change it or would have tried even if he could have, to change anything. Because the Soviet Union and the Non-aligned were in hot pursuit of anti-colonialism and Third Worldism.

JK: Then following Waldheim was Pérez de Cuéllar?

RH: Waldheim thought that he had the third term sewed up. He was very busy politicking, very busy pleasing everyone. His main shortcoming was in giving all the members whatever he could that they wanted. That included jobs, the suspicious colonel who had to be got out of the capital, or the incompetent brother-in-law that had political influence. Anybody that came, got a job, if there was a job to give him. Waldheim was prepared to do it. That was his shortcoming. The notion that he was a Nazi was ridiculous. He was just a politician; he was pro-Waldheim. He tried like mad to get a third term. But the Chinese refused to do it. The Chinese said, "You've done a good job but we don't want you in the third term," which appalled him because he hadn't done anything to displease the Chinese.

JK: What was their objection, that he was European.

RH: Yes, I think that he was European and they wanted a Third World candidate. Pérez de Cuéllar fitted the pattern because he was Latin American and Latin America counted as a developing area and counted in large measures as a member of the Third World. Of course the United States that had had a fair amount of influence in Latin America was shown with various successive coups and the rest including in Peru. So Pérez de Cuéllar as a Peruvian counted as a Third World candidate and the Chinese were perfectly happy to have him and there was no objection to him. The Russians were perfectly willing to have him because they knew he had been an ambassador in Moscow, and he wasn't anti-Soviet. So he was installed. He was a perfectly decent man.

JK: He came in January 1982 and then through 1991.

RH: He then was the bridge to Boutros-Ghali, It was in Pérez de Cuéllar's term that the Balkan business began to blow up.

JK: And then he was still there at the end of 1991 and he was overseeing El Salvador, Namibia, and earlier on the Falklands/Malvinas War. So there was quite a bit going on because the Cold War was winding down.

RH: Everyone was happy with Pérez de Cuéllar. As you say, there was a lot cooking, but it was not wildly controversial, just things in the normal course of the Security Council. When did Jeane Kirkpatrick come in?

JK: She served under Reagan in 1982; I know she served during the time of the Falklands/Malvinas War.

RH: And actually Pérez de Cuéllar tried to do something about the Falklands war. He had a proposal that in point of fact would have given the Falklands to the Argentines. It was a formula which saved Britain's face, the war had not yet begun. Argentina had not yet occupied the Falklands it was just a bone of contention between Argentina and Britain being far off and having its own troubles domestically and in Europe. The British were almost willing to let it go. And Pérez de Cuéllar's formula was to let the Argentine flag fly there, have a kind of plebiscite which it was known would have gone to the Argentines. This would have saved the British face because they couldn't hold onto it in defiance of the will of the people. And then one of the idiots in Argentina, I remember one Argentine member of the mission bemoaning the fact that the head of the junta was drunk and wanted the popularity of having taken the Falklands, even though they were in his hands under the Pérez de Cuéllar compromise. They would have had them in a month or two. He wanted to seize them militarily.

A military victory is something the British couldn't stand, to have Malvinas seized from them by armed force. Reagan helped the British, helped Thatcher mobilize. I mean it was a remarkable thing to send an armed force, my God thousands of miles away to fight the Argentines and win. But Pérez de Cuéllar would have solved it in favor of the Argentines with the agreement of the British if it hadn't been for these drunken idiots in the military government in Buenos Aires, a popularity gimmick.

JK: You had mentioned that in the beginning the press was really favorable toward the UN, had big presence at the UN and then during the '60s and '70s that fell off. Did physically that make a difference? Did the press move their offices out of UN headquarters and not spend as much time there?

RH: Yes, to a considerable degree. I mean the anti-UN feeling especially after the 1967 war was such that people stopped buying UNICEF Christmas Cards. Yes, because it was UN. It was quite a thing, the real hostility toward the UN in American public opinion. Having blamed the UN and U Thant for having pulled the troops out. What happened then in the UN at the Security Council and in the General Assembly, the tone of the debate factored with the Cold War kept anything from happening that the United States wanted to have, that the Western world wanted to have happen. The big bureaus, the New York Times kept its bureau; I was kept on. I think ABC and NBC stayed. Pauline Frederick was injured and I think had to leave. I don't think a new NBC correspondent was reassigned, they would occasionally send a man perhaps.

JK: Pauline Frederick was with NBC?

RH: She was NBC; yes and she was injured when a press conference was called. The press conferences were held in what was called the bull pen which was adjacent to the Spokesman's office which was then just a small single room. When the press conference was called maybe it was during the '67 war. I don't know; it was something important; and everybody rushed and Pauline Frederick tripped over somebody's crutch and broke her knee or broke her leg and so she was finished at the UN. It happened right there. So she was finished at the UN.

JK: Did you have an office?

RH: I had a tiny office; it was broom closet-size office.

JK: On the third floor?

RH: On the third floor on that sort of press section. ABC kept a man there for a time, Lou Cioffi was the ABC man. But then ABC lost interest and they just had just a body, sort of producer, who kept in touch with UN affairs and was able to whistle up a correspondent when and if coverage was needed. I was left as the only permanent network correspondent for a while.

JK: Within the UN?

RH: Within the UN, and the Times had its Bureau, but the Chicago Daily News was pulled; the Washington Post Bureau had been pulled out. They just had a stringer. The Los Angeles Times I think the same thing they just had a stringer. The Chicago Tribune had a man he had been pulled out in the '60s, so they had nobody. No the press coverage of the UN, the public interest in the UN was at a pretty low ebb.

JK: So when did NPR and CNN start covering issues?

RH: Later, It wasn't until the '80s.

JK: Because now NPR and CNN are very much involved in covering the UN.

RH: Yes, actually a lot of the foreign reporters were pulled back but now I see there is a lot of them there again. The foreign bureaus the foreign agencies, Reuters always kept someone there. AP I think always kept someone there. TASS is now ETAR-TAS, always kept someone there. The Voice of America always had someone there and I don't know if they still do.

JK: What about AP?

RH: AP always had someone there. Yes, they never cut back. The UP cutback only because the UP fell apart. The UP company lost plants, lost revenues. It was a shame what happened to UP; sort of cannibals took it over, venture capitals bought it and sold it off, sold off its assets. It had a wonderful photo archive and that was sold. Bill Small was brought in as the general manager;

he joined them in selling off the rest of it. The UP exists now merely in the form of one man. The New York bureau is one man at the UN because the UP hardly exists. They have some clients, some broadcast radio station clients. They have a few print journalism clients, but it hardly exists. But that had nothing to do with the failure of the UN; it was the collapse of the UP. The rest, as I say, kept their people there.

JK: Now in I believe it was in 1985 Gorbachev came to the UN.

RH: Yes, 1988 I think it was.

JK: He gave a very important speech. Did that attract attention and did that turn the attitude somewhat? He wanted to change the Soviet's attitude toward the UN.

RH: Gorbachev ended the Cold War; he also ended the Soviet Union. His policy of Glasnost which was openness and Perestroika which was reconstruction changed the Soviet system. And changing the Soviet system meant that Soviet tactics at the UN changed completely. The Cold War was finished. The period of Soviet vetoes and sort of countervailing American vetoes which was brought in by Jeane Kirkpatrick in the '80s. She said well if the Russians can veto we can veto. They can veto our things, we'll veto their things. All that ended with the change of Soviet leadership, with Gorbachev. With the change of leadership came a new activity of the Security Council. It was no longer paralyzed by the mutual vetoes of the great powers of the United States and Soviet Union. The Security Council was able to function. Now where was that visible first in 1988-89? I think it was visible first in the Balkans. But it certainly became apparent in the Balkans for the first time with the death of Tito which was about 1980. Yugoslavia sort of stumbled along with its member states and still under the cover of a Yugoslavia. In 1990, I think it fell apart when Milosevic in Serbia embarked on a greater Serbia policy which would have meant the control of those member states of Yugoslavia that had a large Serbian presence. It started with the declaration of independence by Slovenia, which Milosevic allowed to happen because Slovenia only had a very small Serb population. He stood up against the independence of Croatia and even fought the Croats in the name of greater Serbia. He also then stood up in 1991 or 1992 when Bosnia declared its independence as a Bosnian state. He then started the war against Bosnia. By that time the war in former Yugoslavia was in full swing in Croatia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was at that time that the UN set about and the Russians cooperated in setting up UNPROFOR. UNPROFOR seemed to be a good idea. I think, was it done by Boutros-Ghali was it done at the very end of Pérez de Cuéllar, I don't remember. UNPROFOR was a UN protection force. Its mandate was not to have anything to do with the war that was being waged by Milosevic by the member states of the former Yugoslavia. It was to protect the provision of food aid and medicine and that sort of thing to the victims of this war in the former Yugoslavia. It had no weapons, or light weapons; It had no mandate to intervene in the war. Its protection had nothing to do with protecting the victims of the war. Then it ran into trouble. But it was a landmark in the end of the Cold War.

JK: Well, we have run out of time and I want to thank you so much for participating in the Yale-UN Oral History.

RH: My pleasure.