

# Thirtyfive Years in Intelligence

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE 1994  
CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM  
2 JULY 96

*A new Farewell Address*

## **Lieutenant General Vernon A. Walters**

In my lifetime, 35 years of being in intelligence has really been not only rewarding in a material way, but fun.

I came into the army in 1941 and I was immediately interviewed by a Master Sergeant who was very impressed by the fact that I spoke a multitude of languages. He sent for a Major — and in those days, you know, Majors were pretty divine beings — and he came over and was equally impressed. This was about the time that the United States Army was commissioning Mr. Knudsen, the head of General Motors, as a Lieutenant General in the Transportation Corps, and David Samoff of RCA, a Brigadier General in the Signal Corps and I thought, "They'll probably make me a Lieutenant Colonel in Intelligence, but if they offer me a majority, I'll take it since we'll all soon be in the war and everybody will have to make sacrifices." So we went on down this assembly line getting shots and various other things, and finally we got to the end and everybody was comparing MOS's and I said, "What's an MOS?" Someone said, "That's your military occupational speciality. That's what you're going to do in the army." So I thought the time had come for some of this leadership I was going to be asked for so I turned to one of the other guys and I said, "Go down and find out what 0506 is." It worked like a charm. He almost saluted; he jumped up; he went away and came back

with a puzzled look on his face and he said, "0506 is truck driver." And I said, "Somebody's made a mistake." But nobody had, and guess who drove a truck?

So, I drove a truck for a while and I finally went to Officer's Candidate School. The only reason I went is that there was just one vacancy in Military Police and I went before this board that came up from Providence and they asked me what I did for recreation and I said I skied — I was the President of the Fort Ethan Allan ski club. Well, that absolutely transformed the president of this board who was also a skier and none of those New York State Troopers or policemen had a chance for that vacancy after that! I was sent down to the Infantry School and I was told that at the end of the Infantry School's three months I would go to one month of military police training since there wasn't any Military Police School yet. So, I went down to this infantry thing and I went through three of the toughest months in my life. As we got toward the end I kept asking, "What about this military police training?"; and I got evasive replies. Finally they said, "Oh, there is a shortage of Infantry Second Lieutenants and you are going to be one."

I was assigned to a new Division at Camp Shelby where I was a Platoon Leader and subsequently a Company Commander. At the same time, I was made the regimental Intelligence Officer, which was a certain amount of duplication which theoretically wasn't supposed to happen, but it did. I'll never forget how grateful I was to the Jewish tailor in New Orleans who made Nazi insignia for me so I could show the troops what it was going to look like! I was happily engaged in doing these two jobs when one day my Colonel called me in and he showed me a telegram, a very cryptic telegram which said, "You'll immediately dispatch Lt. Walters to the military intelligence training center at Camp Ritchie." I'd never heard of this, and he said, "How can I create a new Division when they take people away from me by name?" I wasn't anxious to go, because my job at Shelby called for a Captain and I was a Second Lieutenant — and in those days it could happen in about three months!

## **Camp Ritchie**

Anyway, I was shipped off to Camp Ritchie and here was a real reflection

on the state of American intelligence in peace time — or what was left of peace time. In the United States, we have always built up a great intelligence capability during wars and we've always almost immediately dismantled it thereafter. I arrived at this Camp Ritchie, which had an American Commandant, but the man who was really running it was a British Colonel. The United States was one year into the war and this U. S. Army Military Intelligence Training Center, for all practical purposes, was run by a British Colonel. We had a lot of crazy exercises there and they were very good ones in some respects. The farmers around there had signed some piece of paper allowing the Federal Government to use their land. What they did not expect to see was a bunch of people in German uniforms and with German weapons creeping across their farmyards in the middle of the night. More than once we had narrow escapes from angry farmers who said, "No, no, I just said the U.S. Government; I didn't say you Germans could use my farm!" This was where I first met Archie Roosevelt. We were together on a team. On one exercise they'd dump you in the middle of the countryside. They'd hand you a German map of the area with all of the place names changed, and they'd tell you to go to a certain place using the German name of it. They wouldn't tell you the American name so nobody in the area could tell you where it was if you asked them! The first thing you had to do was find out where you were. You had to walk until you came to a bridge or road or power line or something else. I remember I was very good at this and our team was never worse than third at getting back to camp. One night I was really bewildered as to where we were and Archie said, "Don't tell me you don't know where we are. We'll never get back." But we did. If you got back, you'd get some sleep; if you didn't get in until daybreak you had to go to class shortly afterwards. One day, after we'd been out all night and all day, at 5 o'clock there was great turmoil and all the doors were closed and the phones were cut off. We were going somewhere! I waited and then I finally went to bed and said, "If I'm involved, wake me up." In a little while, someone shook me and said "You're involved. Get up." So I got up and we rode down in trucks from Camp Ritchie to Fort Myer, where I now live, and I remember the little towns we went through at 12 or 1 o'clock in the morning. We were singing the "Horst Wessel" song, the "Marseillaise," the "Internationale," and various subversive enemy songs — everybody was an expert in these things. The great gagline at Camp Ritchie was "I am speaking 19 languages, English the best. When do I make Master Sergeant?" In case you all are wondering, our present Secretary of State was there! As a matter of fact, I'll let you in on a secret which shouldn't leave this building. He was a jeep driver

for Karl Wagner, who has been my executive assistant here at the Agency!\*

So we went to Fort Myer where we were issued helmets — the real new ones, not the old World War I type — and we were told to go to Fort Bragg. We all went off to Fort Bragg and I reported in to the G-2, 9th Infantry Division, and he said, "What are all of you doing here? We're supposed to see you at Newport News in 10 days." So we all took off and went home or back to Ritchie and drove our cars home and did all the other things we had to do.

## North Africa

We sailed out from Newport News and I had a small Intelligence detachment. I opened my orders after three days at sea and found I was going to French Morocco, which was a great surprise since all of us knew we were going to Dakar. The orders said that when we got there I had the initial duty — I hate to mention the word — to kidnap 16 crane operators and bring them down to the dock during the night so that when the ship sailed in in the morning, we would have the crane operators to unload the ships. I think I am covered by the Statute of Limitations on that. By the way, all of them came quite voluntarily and nobody was injured. So we were aboard ship and we had a thing called the Special Missions Detachment. We were universally christened "The Missionaries" by all the other people on the ship. Nobody really knew what we did and, as a matter of fact, neither did we. But, one day the senior officer on the ship called me down to his cabin. He had a box in front of him on the table and in it was a tube-like affair. He said, "Walters, you're Intelligence." And I said, "Yes," looking very mysterious, and he said, "What's this?" I said, "I don't know," and he looked at me and said, "I suppose you wouldn't tell me even if you did." It was a bazooka but none of us knew what it was at that time. It was a rather terrifying weapon in that the projectile had a wire with a ring attached. There was considerable discussion as to what would happen if this ring were pulled. Did it arm the weapon, or did the weapon fire? We finally had a volunteer, a Major Adams, to test it despite the fact that the ship was combat-loaded with bombs and shells and so forth. He went up to the Captain's Bridge and the Captain removed himself to another part of

the ship from which he could control it in case anything happened. The Major pulled the ring and nothing happened, so he stuck it in the tube and pulled the wire and, of course, a tremendous flash came out of the back of the tube and set fire to the canvas awning around the Captain's Bridge, and the projectile went off into the sea. We still didn't know exactly what it was, but we knew it made a lot of noise and that if it hit something harder than the water it probably would explode. The Captain forbade any further experimentation on his ship.

Well, we got to the Moroccan coast and it was really something out of one of those war movies. We were assembled on the deck of the ship and we heard the President announce that we had landed in North Africa. We all looked at one another and said "Now we're in for it. Those people on the dock are all listening." None of them were, as it turned out. They played the Star Spangled Banner, and to the tune of other martial music we clambered down nets out of the boats. I got on to a destroyer, a World War I destroyer that had all its superstructure razed off and we sailed right into the harbor. As we came in, we could see the French flickering at us, obviously inquiring who we were. We didn't answer. We got into the harbor but the destroyer ahead of us had run aground. We pulled up to the dock and as we did, the French opened fire. You know, we'd sat on benches at Fort Benning and we'd seen puffs of smoke of varying sizes at some distance from us, but none of it was like this black-red, unpleasant, noisy business that was taking place quite close to us. We got ashore, figuring that moving forward was probably the best thing to do. We had a Navy fire-control party with us and we said to them, "You'd better do something about this or we're all going to get killed." Actually we said it more urgently than that. So they radioed out to sea where the battleship, *New York*, was standing. There was a tremendous great flash and you could see these great naval shells coming in, which was astonishing to me. They hit about a mile inland and we said, "My God, for twenty years all you do is practice and you can't hit anything." We got another salvo from the French guns and I must say in credit to the Navy that their third salvo was right into the positions of those French guns and they fired no more that night. So we then quietly went about the kidnaping and picked up the 16 crane operators. Through good intelligence we had very accurate information on their movements. Incidentally, the day before we landed, some planes came down from Gibraltar and dropped the very latest intelligence on our deck so that we had intelligence that was about 24 hours old. In interrogating some of the French prisoners, the use of this information so impressed them that they broke down and told us a great many

things they otherwise would not have told us. This was an example of how intelligence can be used to obtain more intelligence.

At daybreak, I had about 200 prisoners on my hands. Supposedly I had a team of six people, all of whom spoke French, but they were always being pirated by somebody and I was down to three to handle 200 prisoners! I took them up to a warehouse, and they all wanted to go to the bathroom at once. The only way I could figure to do this was in alphabetical order, and, since I have suffered a great deal from alphabetical lists, I said "All prisoners whose names begin with Z, Y, and X take one step forward. We will get to the A's and B's later." While I was in the middle of these prisoners, someone stole my gun out of my holster. I was both embarrassed and frightened, so I called the prisoners together and told them that someone had taken my gun and that I wanted it back. I made many references to the Geneva Convention and I said, "I'm going to turn out the lights for 60 seconds. Don't try to rush us because there are four of us here with leveled Tommy-guns and if we hear you attempting that, we're just going to fire indiscriminately." We turned out the lights for about 30 seconds and when I turned on the light there were six pistols on the floor! All these men had been carefully searched, so things don't always go according to the training manuals.

On another occasion General Harmon, who was an extremely violent man who commanded the Division, came in while I had two prisoners who had been captured sniping in civilian clothes. He said "Who are these people?" , I said, "They are snipers." He said, "Shoot 'em, shoot 'em.", and I said, "General, let me talk to them. Maybe they'll tell us something." He said, "OK, if you want to." So I explained to the prisoners that they had violated the Geneva Convention and were subject to unknown penalties which I preferred not to mention and would they please tell me who was organizing the sniping. They very hastily told me who was organizing the sniping and we went up with a tank and got him. He was a French Captain whom I later met on a Commemoration of this day, the 8th of November, under the Arc de Triomphe. He was a Brigadier General and so was I, and it was faintly awkward.

I was sent forward to Rabat and, later, to Tunisia, but before we got to Rabat we came to a place called Mazagan. There was a river there and we figured that the French would blow the bridge. When we arrived we found that the garrison had withdrawn to the far side of the bridge and were making preparations to resist. General Harmon said to me "Walters, go up and tell those crazy Frenchmen we don't want to fight." He said,

"Go up in my half-track and stand up so they'll see you coming in a friendly spirit." I was grieved by this, but I got in the half-track and a Signal Corps Lieutenant volunteered to come with me. I saluted him when he got in and he said, "Why are you saluting me?" and I said, "You're coming voluntarily," We got up to the bridge and the bridge clearly was mined with wires running off the far side of it. We went by a great big French flag and I was standing up so I gave it a great big highball hoping that some hidden sniper wouldn't shoot me. When we got to the bridge the driver stopped and looked at me and I looked at him and, frankly, it was a situation in which I was beyond speech. I just pointed across the bridge! I weighed the differences between being blown up by the French on the bridge or courtmartialled for cowardice by General Harmon, and I decided that in one case I would simply be dead and in the other case I would be dead and dishonored, and between the two I preferred the former. Well, I got across the bridge and two Frenchmen jumped up and announced that I was their prisoner. I was so relieved at getting across the bridge that this seemed like nothing, and I said, "Stop all this foolishness and take me to Col. So-and-so immediately." Well, they were rather surprised that I knew his name. I said "Where is he, where is he?" and they said "oh, his CP is up on the hill." I said, "Get in and take me up there." They did and at least I had a French uniform in the half-track with me. The Colonel greeted me with a very glum expression and said, "What do you want?" I said "Colonel, I have come in the name of the ancient friendship which has united our countries ever since the beginning of our national life." He said "Don't give me that Lafayette stuff. What is it you want?" "Well," I said, "We want you to go back and take up your garrison duties while we go to Tunisia and throw out the Germans." He said, "Don't you know that I have orders?" and I said, "Colonel, if they gave you orders to spit on the French flag, would you do it? Or would you look to see where those orders came from?" It shook him a little bit so I pressed home. I said, "Colonel, I have lived 10 years of my life in France and you can't live that long in a country without feeling something for it. When I think that the Germans are marching down the Champ Elysees as masters and booting Frenchmen off the sidewalks ..." His tears began and I finally hit him with my double whammy which was, "Colonel, every soldier you kill here, whether he be French or American, will be one the less to march under the Arc de Triomphe when dawns the day of glory." He said "Stop." I took him back to General Harmon who promptly made me a first lieutenant and gave me a medal, so that was a fairly profitable morning.

We then went on to Rabat where for 48 hours I was the Military

Governor of Rabat. As a lieutenant I ran everything from requisitioning freezing space to policing up the houses of ill-repute. But a U.S. Colonel who had been a volunteer in the French Army arrived, and suddenly I was out in the forest sleeping under my shelter-half again. Then they sent me forward to Tunisia where I interrogated German and Italian prisoners and found that what they told me at Ritchie was interesting but didn't always correspond to the actual situation. In the middle of that assignment they hauled me back to Algiers and got me involved in the middle of the Admiral Darlan — De Gaulle — Giraud goings-on, which I tried to stay out of but couldn't. In the middle of that I got a telegram saying I was to be sent back to Ritchie to teach Prisoner of War interrogation. I came back via Great Britain and spent a couple of days there. I returned to Ritchie where I enjoyed about a three-month reign in triumph. As the only returnee from the war, I could get away with all kinds of lies and war stories and there was nobody who could check them!

## Stateside Duty

One day I got a phone call from the Pentagon. I was then the head of the Italian Prisoner of War interrogation section because we were preparing for the operation into Sicily. A Colonel in the Pentagon called and said, "Lieutenant, we want you down here tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock to take a group of Portuguese officers around the United States. This is very important because we want them to give us bases in the Azores." I said "Colonel, there must be some misunderstanding, I don't speak Portuguese." He said, "No, but you speak French, Spanish, and Italian and all that stuff. You'll understand them." I said, "Colonel, I love Carmen Miranda's songs but I don't understand them," and he said, "Lieutenant, there is a misunderstanding. You seem to think I'm *inviting* you to be here!" So the next morning at 9 o'clock I reported down there, and fortunately the Portuguese spoke French and Spanish and Italian. I got in an airplane and rode with them for two months around the United States showing them various things. What we were trying to do was show them that we were strong. They didn't believe that we would go into occupied Europe. When we got them to the Curtis Wright factory in Buffalo and they saw the hooks [for towing gliders] on the tail of the C-46's, and when they saw the B-24's at Fort Worth being produced on a

visibly moving production line, and when they saw Mr. Kaiser's ships at Long Beach being launched 12 days after the keels were laid, they began to believe that we might be going in. Well, that worked out pretty well and I went back to Camp Ritchie. Later they wrote a letter to the War Department saying that I spoke Portuguese like the great author of the famous epic poem, and about two weeks later some Brazilians showed up so there was no question as to who would go with them but that great Portuguese expert! I went around with them for a while and I was meditating about everything that was going on and I figured that at that age the three things that interested me from a career point of view most were what we defined as the MM&P Society – the Medals, Mileage, and Promotion Society – of which everyone was a member, admitted or not. I decided that none of these things were to be had in the United States and that if I wanted any of them I'd have to go back to the war. Of course, the man at Ritchie who had me didn't want to let go of me until he got some more people back from the war with even more fantastic stories. I went out to Ft. Leavenworth with the Brazilians and went through the Command and General Staff School. Curiously, the main problem our class went through there turned out to be what was done a year later at Normandy! It was a five-division landing on the base of the Carentan Peninsula. Then I was ordered to Rio de Janeiro to accompany the reconnaissance party from the Brazilian division that was going to the European theater. I went over with them and Mark Clark saw me and decided he wanted me for his multi-lingual army. I took the Brazilians back to Brazil, knowing they were going to come back later, and I was sent back to be Gen. Clark's aide.

## **With Mark Clark**

Being Gen. Clark's aide was very interesting. I guess I learned more during those nine months than in any other period in my life. I probably had more to learn at that period of my life than at any other time. It was not the easiest job in the world. Gen. Clark and I today have splendid relations but we're both mellowed by old age. In those earlier days it wasn't quite the same. Let me give you an example of one of my problems. We were riding along in a jeep and he turned to me and he said, "May I ask what precautions you have taken for my safety against enemy air attack?", and I said, "Why yes, General, The MP alongside the

driver in the jeep in the rear is scanning the sky to the rear; the MP alongside the driver of the jeep in the front is scanning the sky to the front, and I'm watching whatever I can." He replied, "Of all the ridiculous, farcical, theatrical, unmilitary, unworkable, childish, fanciful systems I have ever heard in my life, that is the worst. My dog, Pal, could think up a better system than that." Since the dog was always getting lost, I was gravely tempted to say, "General, why don't you ask the little S.O.B. and see what he can do for you.", ... but I didn't! He continued, "And how are all those bright air-raid wardens of yours going to notify anybody if they see anything?" (Let me put in as a parenthesis that neither Gen. Clark nor I had seen a German airplane since Salerno, and neither of us had recently talked to anybody who had seen a German airplane since Salerno.) I said "Yes, Sir. There's a siren in all three jeeps and the first guy that sees it sounds the siren." I got another series of adjectives, none of which he had used the first time (I marveled at his vocabulary), winding up with, "It is perfectly obvious to me that you have never been strafed." I said, "General, in North Africa, where there was a German Air Force, I had one of my men killed on the beach. And in Tunisia, I was strafed five times in one day on the road between Tabarka and Medjez el Bab. (It was only three, but there was no possibility that he could check on me.) I thought, "Now I've got him." He turned to me with a triumphant smile on his face and he said, "Is that so? Well, it is perfectly obvious to me that you learned nothing from it." Later on I worked up enough courage and I went in and I said, "General, it's perfectly obvious to me that I can't give you the type of service that you want, and I think, in all fairness to you and to me, it would be better if you got an aide who could." He looked me up and down for about 90 seconds and he said, "Walters, let's get one thing straight. You don't quit whenever you feel like it. I fire you when I'm ready and I'm not ready." It wasn't until late that afternoon that I realized he'd said something nice to me, because if he had wanted to get rid of me, he could have done so.

It was a job that required great diplomacy and tact. One day I was riding along with him and we came upon a band of Italian partisans loaded with tommy-guns and belts of ammunition. He said, "Ask these birds if they know who I am." I said to the men in Italian, "You recognize the Commanding General of the Fifth Army, don't you?" They all said, "Generale Clark," and we had a splendid day after that!

On the 5th of June we finally made it into Rome. The senior aide who got lost on the way to the Excelsior Hotel was fired and I became the senior aide because I knew the way to the Excelsior Hotel. That night, about 3

o'clock in the morning, I couldn't sleep so I turned on the radio. I heard the German radio giving the announcement of the Normandy landing. I debated whether to wake up the General or not and decided against it on the grounds that he probably already knew. In the morning at 6 o'clock I went in and said, "General, the landings began during the night." He said, "The sons of bitches! They wouldn't let us have the headlines for the fall of Rome for even one day." (It was on page 5 or 6!)

I stayed with him until the Brazilians came, and I cannot say that my going to the Brazilians was a pure accident. There was a certain amount of conniving involved. Anyway, I went to the Brazilians and almost my first experience was that the Corps Commander came down and asked them if they could handle a particular action and they said, "Yes," and he asked them if they needed any help and they said "No." So he walked out very pleased with his new Brazilian Division. As soon as he walked out the door, they turned to me and said, "Walters, you have to get us out of this." I said, "Get you out of this? How do I get you out of it? You said you could do it." They said, "Yeah, but you can't say 'No' to the Army Commander." I said, "No, you can't say 'No,' but you can ask for so much support he can't give it to you." The Brazilian General looked at me kindly for a moment and he said, "Walters, If you're going to work with us, you will soon have to learn the difference between 'Yes,' which means 'Yes' and 'Yes' which means 'No.' " This was one of my first discoveries in the field of intelligence: That "Yes" does not always mean "Yes."

## South America

Well, I stayed with them until the end of the war, then I went back to Brazil and was the assistant attaché there for a while and then I got involved in the Bogotazo, the riot that Fidel Castro was first involved in in Colombia. General Marshall and President Truman came to Rio, and General Marshall was going to the Pan American conference and he had an Ambassador with him who spoke Spanish but the Ambassador was meeting all his old buddies and they were having a great conversation while General Marshall sat there twiddling his thumbs. That lasted through two foreign ministers' meetings whereupon the Ambassador was fired and I was summoned to be interpreter. Then Mr. Truman came and General Marshall turned me over to Mr. Truman. I always remember,

though, that at the Rio conference I was in civilian clothes and General Marshall looked at me and he said, "Walters, are you going to wear that tie this afternoon?" I was wearing a tie which was in conformity with my age at that time. I knew he wasn't for it but I didn't know why, so I said, "No." He said "That's good. This afternoon when I'm talking and Eva Peron is there I want her to be listening to what I'm saying and not looking at your tie!" When I reported in to General Carter, one of my predecessors here, who was General Marshall's executive officer at that time, he received me in his villa wearing a bathrobe, and he had stars on the shoulders of the bathrobe. I thought this odd, but at that age I thought most generals were odd. They've changed greatly since. So he explained to me what General Marshall liked and didn't like, and what I was to do and what I was not to do, and I said, "Thank you," and left. As I was walking out the door, he said, "In case you wondered why, I've never worn a uniform since I got my stars, and, by God, I'm going to wear them on something!"

That conference went off peacefully and the next year General Marshall sent for me to go to the Bogota Conference with him and I was living in the house with him when the leader of the opposition was shot. This set off what turned out to be a civil war. That afternoon the building was surrounded. There was a lot of shooting; there were dead people in the street outside, and it was very unpleasant. That was Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Sunday, I decided, would be a good day to go to church, so I borrowed General Marshall's car and he said, "Now bring it back because I'm going to need it." I went down with a guy from the State Department and we got into the main square downtown and found that the Cathedral was closed. It filled me with some unease that on Sunday morning in a South American city the Cathedral was closed, but the State Department guy was very calm and he said to the driver, "Drive into the next square." We drove into the next square and as we did, a wild fusillade broke out between soldiers in the middle of the square and snipers in the building. I was greatly distressed by this, but he said to the driver, "Stop the car." I said to him, "Cecil, do you think this is a good idea?", and he said, "Yes. People generally shoot at moving cars; rarely at parked cars." I meditated on that as I examined the texture of the carpet on the floor of the car and the state of my shoe laces and after a little while the square was empty of people and I said, "Don't you think we can go to church now?", and he said, "Yes, we can go to church." We told the driver and drove over to the church. Cecil got out and started up the steps, and without actually turning around he said to the driver over his shoulder, "We will be in here about 45 minutes, come back for us then."

"Oh no, señor," said the driver, rushing past us, "Today I, too, am going to church!" Governor Harriman was there and I took him down to the President's. To make a long story short, we got shot at a couple of times and he was most unmoved by this. He was reading a copy of sugar production of the Province of Pernambuco which he found thrilling. When we got to the President's Palace there were no sentries, so we walked inside. Obviously, we were received with consternation. Finally we were taken up to the President and I will always remember Gov. Harriman, one of our great liberals. As we banged on the door, the butler opened the door in a white tie and armed with a tommy-gun, and Mr. Harriman promptly took off his hat and handed it to him! We went up to the President and he noted that he had invited 23 people to dinner and we were the only ones who had shown up!

## **With Harriman**

Shortly after that, Mr. Harriman asked me to go to Paris with him for the Marshall Plan. I spent two years there getting a liberal education in labor, economics, banking, finance, and all sorts of things of which I'd known nothing. Some of our analysts will tell you that I still don't know too much. Then I went with him to the Wake Island meeting between President Truman and General MacArthur. It is not true that General MacArthur kept Mr. Truman waiting. It was an interesting thing. General MacArthur was there when we arrived, and Mr. Truman arrived after us. I was a little startled when Gen. MacArthur did not get up out of his jeep and go over to the airplane until the President was on the ground, and I noticed that he didn't salute him. Ten years later, I asked Mr. Truman whether he'd noticed this, and half-way into the question he said, "That he didn't salute me? You're damned right I noticed that he didn't." He did not believe the Chinese were coming into the war. Mr. Truman said, "All our indications are that they are." He said, "No, they are not. This is the hour of our strength, not of our weakness. We no longer stand hat in hand." I must say that he said in advance that he would do the Inchon landing and he told Mr. Harriman the day he would do it and he did it on that day.

# With Eisenhower

I then came back to the United States to work for Mr. Harriman again and then Gen. Eisenhower picked me up to take me to SHAPE with him, and I was attached for a number of years. Then I was plucked out to go to things like the Geneva Conference as Gen. Eisenhower's interpreter where he made this offer of open skies: "You overfly us; we overfly you, and I wish I could convince you of my sincerity. If only God would give me the power to convince you." At that time there was a loud clap of thunder and every light in the building went out. The Russians are still trying to figure out how we did it!

Then I went to the Bermuda Conference with him and there the Prime Minister of France got sick and the French came to me and said, "Will you have General Eisenhower's doctor come over and look at him?" I did and when he ascertained the symptoms he said, "No, have Lord Moran, who's Churchill's doctor, go over and see him." So Lord Moran went over and I moved away and they said, "No, we need you. Stay here." So he examined the Prime Minister and he said, "Prime Minister, you've got a very bad case of bronchitis, and you must stay in bed," and the Prime Minister said, "I can't stay in bed. Everybody will think it is a diplomatic illness." He said, "No, I will tell them it is not a diplomatic illness." The Prime Minister said, "Well, I'll tell you, if you promise me that I can go to the meetings tomorrow, I'll stay in bed today." And Lord Moran looked at him and said, "Prime Minister, prophecy is as difficult in medicine as it is in the field of politics." The Prime Minister got pneumonia and he didn't go anywhere.

Then I came back to the United States and worked at the NATO Standing Group which gave me great experience in dealing with our Allies. The Americans in this Standing Group wanted to put everything in writing; the British wanted to put nothing in writing, and the French didn't care one way or the other. I asked the French General why he didn't care and he said, Well, you see, you Americans have a sacrosanct written constitution. You want it all in writing. The British have no written constitution so they resist anything in writing, and we French don't care because when the crunch comes, everybody is going to do what he thinks is in his best interest anyway."

# Italy

Then I went to Italy, where I had one experience that taught me never to underestimate the local service. Before leaving, I was briefed in this building by General Cabell, and I was briefed in the Pentagon by all the intelligence specialists, and they stated that the Italians had a pretty good intelligence service but they hadn't got a great deal of money and they weren't in the "big time." I got to Italy where they had a set-up which would drive Sen. Church crazy, because the FBI, CIA, NSA, and DIA were all the same person. He wore a monocle and looked more like the Chief of Spies than anybody in "Scorpio" or "Three Days of the Vulture" or anything else. I'd known him in Italy during the war, and I made arrangements for my first visit to an Italian military unit in Milan. I started off, and the Pentagon was in one of its economy frenzies, so I didn't take my driver with me because he was a civilian and earned more per diem than I did as a full Colonel. I drove up to the American base in Leghorn, spent the night, and the next day I was lured away from the direct trip to Milan by the memory of a great restaurant in Florence where they had the greatest green lasagna I'd ever eaten. I thought, "What difference does it make, my program doesn't start in Milan until tomorrow?" so I parked the car in front of the station and walked two blocks to the restaurant. The green lasagna was fantastic, and while I was eating, a man came up to me, clicked his heels, and said, "Senor Colonello, there have been several changes in your program and the Chief of Service wanted you to get them before you arrived in Milan." Now, since Florence is a city of 720,000 people and I'd looked in the rear vision mirror and hadn't seen anybody following me, I understood that what I was getting was a demonstration. As he left he said, "Here are the changes, and you are the guest of the Chief of Service." I couldn't pay the bill! Fourteen years later, in my present capacity, I went back to Italy. I finished my business in Rome on a Friday and, as I was not due in Paris until Monday, I rented a car and drove to Florence. I parked the car and went for a walk with my people after checking into the hotel. I remembered that restaurant, so I went to it and the green lasagna was fantastic. I called the waiter for the bill and, although I was in civilian clothes he said, "Senor Generale, there is no bill." I said, "What do you mean, there is no bill?" The young man at the next table stepped up and said, "General, I am Captain Manicale. In order that you may know that in 12 years the service has not lost its skill, once again, you are the guest of the Chief of Service."

# Brazil Again

From there I was transferred laterally to Brazil over my bitter protest, because I had a big empire in Italy and a small one in Brazil. I arrived in Brazil to find Ambassador Lincoln Gordon who had been at the Marshall Plan with me and who knew I'd served with the Brazilians during the war. I went in and I hope it wasn't truculently that I said, "Well, Mr. Ambassador, here I am. What do you want from me?" He said, "Three things: I want to know what is going on in the military; I want to influence it through you; and most of all I never want to be surprised." With pardonable immodesty, when the coup came he was not surprised. Those behind it were all my old buddies whom I'd known in Italy during the war. No, I did not incite them into doing it, but they did tell me they were going to do it and who am I to turn a deaf ear under such circumstances? The Soviet Ambassador at that point said to me, "Now they are going to make you a General." I said, "Mr. Ambassador, you are sadly misinformed about the United States. We do not make people Generals on the basis of imagined services." Thirty-two days later they made me a General, so he called me up and he said, "Walters, how do you explain this?" I said, "The only way I can explain it, Mr. Ambassador, is that I obviously had more professional competence than I thought I did the last time I talked to you." I used to have quite a lot of fun with him. He came up to me one day at a parade and said, "The trouble with you Americans is you never bother to learn anybody else's language." Immediately I thought, "He hasn't read my autobiography like I've read his." He said, "You demand that people speak English to you, and you make no effort to talk to them." I said, "No, Mr. Ambassador, that may have been true 20 years ago, but it isn't true any more." And he said, "Yes, it is true, and as a people you have no gift for languages like we Slavs." At that point I switched to voluble Russian. That shook him, and I stepped in for the kill and that's when disaster struck. I said to him in Russian, "Mr. Ambassador, would you like to try Portuguese?" knowing that I spoke it much better than he did. He looked at me and he said, "Walters, you may be a good soldier, but a diplomat you are not!" He is now the Soviet Ambassador to Bangladesh.

# France

Then I was told I had to go to France as attaché, and I thought, "My God, I'm stuck in this attaché circuit." So I told the Chief of Staff this and he said, "May I ask you a question?", and since he was the Chief of Staff I said, "Yes." He said, "Has it prejudiced your career much?" I was then a Brigadier General, so I said, "No." He said, "OK. Go!", so I said, "Well, you have to let me go to Vietnam first," and he did, which was interesting from the point of view of the French. When I got to France, I almost immediately fell into the student riots, and I was having grave difficulty with all my colleagues in the Embassy who thought that this was the end. I did not. I said, "The General has all the trumps — the loyalty of the Armed Forces and the gendarmes — and that's all he needs." The day he finally banged the door and said, in essence, "Everybody is going back to work and all this nonsense is stopped," I knew that everybody else would send in the text of what he said, so I sent one of my shortest telegrams. I said, "This afternoon at 4 o'clock General De Gaulle played the trumps referred to in my previous message." I had been at the U-2 Conference with General Eisenhower and General De Gaulle\* and I must say they behaved very well there. When I met De Gaulle after I arrived in Paris in 1968, he recalled to me the name of the village where I'd met him in Italy before. There I'd been told he didn't speak English, so I translated what he said loosely with additions like "He says, 'No,' but I think if you push him he'll give," or "He says 'Yes,' but I don't think he wants to do it." Since I'd read in Life Magazine that he didn't speak English, I felt quite safe, but at the end he stood up and he said, "General Clark, we have had a very interesting conversation. It is my devout hope that the next time we meet, it will be on liberated soil of France." He turned, tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Walters, you did a good job," so presumably I was not totally incorrect, but that made me very cautious about fooling with people's translations.

I arrived in Paris at a very awkward time. The French had put us out and closed the bases and everything else. Later on, the retired head of the French Intelligence Service said to me, "When you came here with this long French background, we were convinced that the Americans had sent you here to stir up the Army against General De Gaulle for NATO, so we watched you very closely. The fact that you were a bachelor gave us two possible handles we could get hold of you with, but when neither of them worked out, we decided that you were like the traditional bishop —

never in your own diocese." Before I left France, I got into both the silos and the submarine pens.

## **Talks with the North Vietnamese and Chinese**

Then, while I was in Paris, I got involved in the mysterious adventures of Henry Kissinger. One day Kissinger took me to meet some North Vietnamese and started some negotiations with them which I conducted for a very long time. I had strict instructions that nobody was to know about this, and I was terrified that either the legal attaché would report that I was dealing with the North Vietnamese or the CIA station would report that I was having illegal dealings with them, but it all worked out all right. This went on for quite a long time and they are really the most unpleasant people to deal with. When I got into dealing with the Chinese, which was a little later, then it was easier. I was once called back here by President Nixon and told that he wanted to get in touch with the Chinese, and I was to deliver a message to them, so I went back to Paris. I went to watch the Chinese Embassy three mornings in a row and I saw the Ambassador leave at 8:30. On the fourth morning at 8:20 I pushed open the door and said, "I am the American Military Attaché; I have a message for your Government from my President." I had made one previous pass at the Chinese military attaché in the Polish Embassy when I had him alone, and when I gave him this message he looked at me in absolute horror and said, "I'll tell them," and ran! This time they received me and they took me in and we got involved in long discussions. I had many, many visits with them and many negotiations about Henry's trip and the President's trip and everything else. Several times there were attempts to change the venue, but the Chinese refused to change it. As a little matter of historical interest, I asked them to release Fecteau and Downey. I was dealing with Huang Chen, who is now the Chinese head of the liaison office here, and I asked him. He was very noncommittal and simply said he would transmit it. It took quite a while. I would say it was three or four weeks before we got an answer, and they said they'd release them at different time frames and so forth. I was in the United States. The only other person who was privy to these negotiations was Nancy Lewis and she was the name I'd given them and they called her in. I believe she was skiing. She was off skiing on the weekend — feeling that with me gone the mice could play — and

she had to come back from her skiing weekend to get the message but it was that simple, and it was not in any detail or anything else. We'd just asked them, saying it would be a great gesture in connection with the President's visit if they would do it. It was a request from him. About four weeks later they said they would do it, but they would do it in phases, one after the other.

The Chinese are very curious about the United States, so I finally gave them a World Almanac, and I'm sure they got 500 intelligence reports out of it.

The first time I took Henry to see them, smuggling him in was a major operation. He went in and as we left he said, "Tell me, when you come to see them, is it the same?", and I said, "Oh no. When I come to see them, I'm met at the door of the gate by a low-ranking guy; at the door of the building by a medium-ranking guy, and then I'm taken into the Fu-Manchu Room which is all red velvet and Chinese lanterns and gold where I sit for 90 seconds. Then the Ambassador appears in the door and says, 'Ni hao,' and I say, 'Ni hao.' When you went in, the two guys were at the gate and the Ambassador was waiting on the steps, and you got both background music and incense which I never get." I saw a smile of quiet satisfaction spread over his face at the evidence that even in this egalitarian society there was some respect for hierarchy.

One night he was to come over to France and I was to bring him to Paris. At the beginning of this he said, "Do you have to tell the French?", and I said, "Yes. They're watching the Chinese; they're watching me; they're watching everybody, and they'll know." He said, "How do we prevent it from spreading?", and I said, "You go to Pompidou and you ask him to keep it in the very upper level of French Intelligence." So we did. On the night he's to arrive I am to go to Bourges in central France where he's going to land and I'm to bring him by car to Paris. At about 5 o'clock in the evening I begin to get these frenzied telephone calls from the White House: "There's something wrong with the airplane's hydraulic system; we don't know whether the airplane's going to land; Rogers is going to find out; Laird is going to find out; they will break off the negotiations; do something!" I said, "How can I do something? I can't cover the whole of Western Europe. You've got to tell me where the airplane is going to land." At 9 o'clock, they called me and told me that the airplane was going to land at Frankfurt, which was the worst possible place from the point of view of secrecy, but actually the best place because they had arresting gear at the end of the runway like on a carrier to stop the

airplane in case the brakes didn't work. So I walked down the street to President Pompidou's office and asked to see him, and this caused some consternation. Fortunately, I had taken him on a trip around the United States shortly before and they'd seen me on television, so I got in and I explained this situation and he picked up the phone on his desk. He called his airplane out at the private hangar and then he asked, "Go out there. My airplane will take you. Pick him up and bring him back here." I drove out there, and one hour and six minutes after I left Pompidou's office we were airborne, which I thought was pretty good reaction time. As we flew towards Germany, I thought, "if this airplane crashes, I will have been defecting to the Soviet Union in a French airplane and, once again, I will be dead and dishonored." I had no orders; I had no nothing for this. We landed at Frankfurt behind his airplane. We taxied over and I walked up into the airplane. Kissinger was sitting in his chair. He looked up at me and half a smile came over his face. He said, "Jesus Christ, am I glad to see you. What are we going to do now?", so I said, "Well, walk down the ladder and go up the ladder into that little French airplane. We'll move the baggage." So he did, and we started back to Paris and the French pilot called me up front and he said, "General, this is the President of France's airplane. The Germans know it. This airplane, without clearance and without flight plan, managed to penetrate German airspace, land at Frankfurt, spend nine minutes on the ground and return. Tomorrow morning the Germans are going to be in my office wanting to know what we were doing there." I would like to tell you that I had a snap answer. I didn't. I thought about it and finally a brilliant idea struck me. This was before any of the recent events in Washington. I said, "Tell them it involves a woman. They'll believe it of the French and be discreet." But he said, "What if Madame Pompidou finds out?" I said, "If Madame Pompidou finds out, I give you my word of honor as an American Army Officer, I will tell her the truth." He said, "Fine." Six months later I saw him and I said, "Calderone, did the Germans ask?" He said "Yes." I said, "What did you tell them?" He said, "I told them what we agreed." I said, "Did that satisfy them or did they have any other questions?" He said, "They had one other question." I said, "What was that?" They asked, "Is she German?"

## **The Agency**

Well, some time thereafter, on the 2nd of May, I was assigned to this job. I am about to leave it, and people say to me, "What is it like? Was it worth it?" The answer is an overwhelming "Yes!" They have been four of the most challenging, rewarding years of my life. The people I have met here have been magnificent. I am proud of my association with this Agency as I am of the years I spent in the Army. When I had my confirmation hearings, Senator Stennis asked me what my ambitions were and I said, "Mr. Chairman, when I came into the Army, my ambition was to make Major. If you don't confirm me and I retire as a Major General, I will have had one of the most rewarding careers of anybody who ever wore an American Army uniform." In the Army, and in this Agency, on the many silent battlefields upon which we have been called as a people, not through our own choice, to fight, I have truly had more than my share.

One of the things that I've marveled at during the darker days of my service with the Agency is how steadfast our friendly services have been through all this. They've really been very good. They were afraid we were going to give them away, and then they found that we weren't. They marvel at that. One man said to me: "You know, you Americans are an extraordinary people. No one in history has every tried to run a secret intelligence service in a department store window. You Americans may be able to do it. After all, you're the only ones that have been to the moon." But they marvel; they come in glassy-eyed after they've seen that CIA road sign out there. And one of them told me a great story. He said, "Once the Soviets recruited a spy in Naples, and his name was Agnuello. And they took him to Moscow and they trained him in shortwave and they trained him in micro-dots and secret writing and everything else, and then they sent him back to Naples and said, 'You stay there. We'll be in touch with you in a year or two.' A couple of years later a guy from Moscow went to the address and looked in the entrance. Agnuello was ground floor right. He pushed the button; the guy opened the door, and he said, 'Mr. Agnuello?' He said, 'Yes.' 'I have come from Moscow.' The guy looked at him and said, 'There's a mistake. I'm Agnuello the tailor. Agnuello the spy is on the third floor.'" Sometimes, I think our name is Agnuello!

I must share one more story that the head of the French service, whose mother is an American, told me. It has a point for foreigners. He said, "On an island in the Pacific, three guys were shipwrecked. One was French, one was British, and one was American. And they were captured by the cannibals. The chief of the cannibals said, ' I have bad news and good

news for you. The bad news is we're going to have you for lunch tomorrow. And I don't mean as guests. And the good news, and you need good news after that, is I'm going to give you anything you want in the meantime.' So he turned to the Frenchman and he asked, 'What do you want?' The Frenchman said, 'Well, I'm going to be executed in the morning so I think I would just as soon spend my remaining hours with that beautiful cannibal girl over there.' So they said, 'OK,' and they untied the Frenchman and he and the cannibal girl went off into the woods. Then he turned to the Englishman and asked, 'What do you want?' The Englishman said, ' I want a pen and paper,' He asked, 'What do you want a pen and paper for?' He said, ' I want to write a letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations to protest against the unfriendly, unjust, and unsporting attitude you have adopted toward us.' So they gave the Englishman a pen and paper and a but where he could write. Then they turned to the American and they asked, 'What do you want?' The American said, ' I want to be led into the middle of the village; I want to be made to kneel down, and I want to be kicked in the rear end by the biggest cannibal here.' The Chief looked at his Vice Chief and he said, 'That's a weird request, but those Americans are a weird bunch and since I promised, we have to do it.' So they led the American in, they made him kneel down, the biggest cannibal kicked him and knocked him 15 feet. As the American sprawled out, he pulled out a submachine gun he'd been hiding under his clothes and cut down the nearest cannibals and the rest fled. The Frenchman, hearing the gunfire, came out of the woods; the Englishman came out of the hut. They looked at the American standing there with the smoking tommy-gun and they said, 'My God. Do you mean to say you had that gun the whole time?' The American said, 'Sure.' And they said, 'Well, why didn't you use it before now?' The American looked at them with an expression of hurt sincerity and he said, 'But you don't understand. It wasn't until they kicked me in the rear end that I had any moral grounds for such extreme and violent action.' "

I would like to take this opportunity, before probably the largest gathering I will have the opportunity to talk to at the agency, to thank you; to congratulate you on producing the finest intelligence in the world under a bombardment without precedent in American or any other history; and to tell you that wherever I am, my heart will be with you. I wish you every success because the success of this Agency means the survival of this nation and freedom in the world. Thank you very much.

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# Footnotes

\* Copyright, 1976, by Vernon A. Walters. This is an excerpt from a farewell speech given by General Walters at CIA on 8 June 1976.

\*Henry Kissinger went overseas on a counterintelligence assignment. He and Wagner worked together during the Battle of the Bulge, and because Wagner was senior, Kissinger drove the jeep. (Ed.)

\* For General Walters' account of the 1960 Four Power Meeting which the USSR terminated over the U-2 issue, see "General De Gaulle in Action," *Studies in Intelligence* XVIII/4.

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Posted: May 08, 2007 08:46 AM