

O'Connor Timothy E. 2005

Dr. Timothy E. O'Connor Oral History 2005

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Oral History Interview with Dr. Timothy E. O'Connor (NCI, retired)

Conducted on August 30, 2005
Dr. Lisa K. Walker

National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Maryland

LKW: Dr. O'Connor, you approached the Office of NIH History with a desire to share your documents and recollections of your two exchange trips to the Soviet Union.

TEO: Right.

LKW: So therefore, I would just note here at the beginning that, while today we'll just concentrate on the US-Soviet exchanges, I hope that in the future we can speak more broadly about your career at NIH and at NCI. Could you please explain for the tape how you came to participate in that first exchange visit, which I understand was September 1967?

TEO: That is correct. The [beginnings of this project] I have to guess at, so let me leave what I'm about to say as an informed guess. No more than that. And the way I see it, I believe it started with President Kennedy at the fall of 1963, a few weeks before he was murdered. And he, as I recall, gave a speech -- I believe at American University. I could be wrong of the university, but he gave a major policy speech to the university. And, essentially, the essence of that speech was that we'd come extremely close to Armageddon in the Cuban [Missile] Crisis a few weeks before, and that there was a grave need to establish contacts between the United States and the Soviet Union, which were not [dominated by] competition, but [by] cooperation. And where there were not -- way down, [dealing] with any defense matters -- [rather] where it was purely an attempt at building trust by sharing information, and to be open about these things, and to do it in any area where national defense was not [of primary importance].

So it began, and I regard that as one of the seeds of Détente. And I thought no more about it. I must admit I was a great admirer of the President, and I felt his speech was historic, and it was tragic when he was killed, and I think it set things back for a few years. And President Johnson brought [the project] forward again. The first I heard of it was on a day in late summer 1967, when [Dr.] John [B.] Moloney, who directed the NCI Viral Oncology Program, invited me to his office, informed me of the proposed trip to the Soviet Union, and invited my participation. [John and I were close friends. He explained that family matters precluded his personal travel, but he wanted me to go.] I can still see him in his office smoking like a chimney, and telling me, "Tim, I want you to go, and I want you to remember that you're a representative of the United States, and you will do us proud," etcetera. It was a real pep talk. I liked John; I said, "John, you won't misplace your trust," something like that. So, anyway, the delegation was drawn up and you'll see the list of the names [in the documents donated by Dr. O'Connor to the Office of NIH History]. There were six guys, under the leadership of the late [Dr. Wallace P.] Wally Rowe of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID).

LKW: Right.

TEO: I think the six were brilliantly chosen for compatibility with each other and diversity of interest. It was not just viruses, it was infectious diseases, strong immunology. It really was medical; it should be named "medical."

Well, then we decided on going and what would happen and so on, and we finally went. We went, and we stopped off in London for the briefing. John again informed -- not John, but Wally Rowe. I should state that Wally Rowe was universally liked. He was extremely competent. He was probably the best virologist among us, a tremendous virologist. Despite his brains, he was a very low caliber guy, very gracious, very warm, and extremely well informed, and very slow to lose his temper. An ideal leader. I will say that until his death, I was very fond of Wally Rowe. Everybody who knew him, loved him.

LKW: I've heard that.

TEO: Wally became the head, and the team was picked with three people from NIH, and three people from outside.

LKW: Yes, I was wondering about that. Were they involved in NIH extramural research, or how exactly were they chosen?

TEO: Right. You have to see this thing against the backdrop of the [NCI] Viral Oncology Program.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: The Viral Oncology Program was essentially that Congress mandated monies, and so on. The time had come to launch almost a military campaign against cancer. That was it in a nutshell. There was great dissent on some of this: a lot of outsiders felt we should stick only with the grant system, while others felt we should not, in addition, involve to industry and so on. Now, my background -- I happen to come out of industrial chemistry, where I had been nine years with a major company, and I left to pursue biology. Then, I came to this [NIH] campus [under a Special Fellowship and] I had the benefit of studying [initially] under [Dr.] Peter [T.] Mora and Dr. Murray Shear the head of the department of pharmacology. A major mentor was Dr. W. Ray Bryan, a major figure in avian virology. Now, Ray Bryan had an international reputation in cancer virology, and he had trained [several] people including Dr. John Moloney, Dr. Frank Rauscher, Dr. Robert A. Mannaker. I was delighted to be added to this list. Additionally, I had the benefit of working with two wonderful lady scientists: Dr. Sarah [E.] Stewart and Dr. Bernice Eddy. Ultimately I accepted an invitation to join the Viral Oncology staff and assumed a position as Section Head of Molecular Virology and assumed overview of several contract programs within the Special Virus Cancer Program.

LKW: Yes.

TEO: Well, at any rate, the six were organized, and we took off for Moscow. And I'll summarize by saying that we got a cool reception. We got a cool reception -- first, I think, from the beginning, the Russians were very worried about the status of this. They were more concerned about status. We didn't give a damn about status; we were interested in finding out what they knew in virology, what we could honestly exchange. But at any rate, they immediately raised the question -- two questions came up. The first one you may or may not know, but when you enter the Soviet Union, you have to declare any other finances you carry with you. They're so scared that you will bribe someone with Western dollars, and Western dollars were so much more important than their rubles, etcetera.

So I was asked a question coming in: was I carrying any other funds with me, and exactly how much? And I was already scheduled to go into Stockholm, Helsinki, Paris, London -- Ireland, even, was included. And I felt I was not going to tell any Soviet guy what -- I said, "That money is the property of the United States government, and I'm going to ensure that it's not revealed to anybody who's not got written permission from the United States government to disclose these monies." But they did what very often I began to recognize later that Russians do when they get into real difficulty, they are afraid of getting themselves hammered. So what they do is: they walk away. And they disappear for a period, a very short period. But then they'd reappear about half an hour later, and they never mentioned the subject again!

LKW: And can I just clarify, was this at the airport, this was like at Customs, as you entered?

TEO: Oh, yes.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: I'd regard it as just happenstance, but I suspected very well that every detail of our arrival had been planned out.

LKW: Right.

TEO: And I was not going -- so they said --

LKW: I understand your concern.

TEO: They asked, "If you can't tell us how much money, why, what are you going to do?" I said, "If you don't let me in, I'm simply getting on the next plane out, and we'll have no delegation. And we'll have -- discussions between your people and our people will be -- to a halt, and I don't think that's why you brought us here" and so on. I think that this a little confidence at the beginning worked wonders.

LKW: Do you, in that situation? Go ahead.

TEO: [Dr.] Murray [J.] Shear was the name I couldn't remember [when referring to the head of the department of pharmacology at NIH].

LKW: Okay.

TEO: Murray Shear was one of the three of four founders of NCI.

LKW: I do know this name and you were referring to him when you were talking about your mentors at NCI.

TEO: He was a wonderful guy. He was head of pharmacology, and I was officially in the department of pharmacology. Then I was transferred over into Ray Bryan's area: viral oncology.

LKW: Before we go on, I have a few more questions about -- before the trip actually happened.

TEO: Right, ask these.

LKW: You mentioned a little bit about what it was like, and you also mentioned, before we started taping, that you had some ideas about [the novel] *Doctor Zhivago* and, maybe, fiction, and your own history in Ireland, and the way that Russia and the Soviet Union -- Could you say a little bit about your pre-conceptions, your impressions -- maybe fears, maybe worries -- before you went?

TEO: Before I went, I did two things to do the best job I could. I had John Moloney award an immediate contract that I study Russian.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: Now, I can only tell you this, 99% of it is gone, because I haven't used it, but those few sentences were very useful when you met, and so on. The first thing was that Maloney approved, and I studied on a contract basis with a lady who was hired to teach me Russian. So I had a little Russian language going in, and that was helpful. "Spasibo" ["thank you" in Russian], etcetera, will get you certain places. So, the thrust of your question...?

LKW: Well, were there any particular things that you can remember about before you went: were you concerned, were you worried, were you excited?

TEO: Oh yes, before I went. One of the things that ended up in a very funny story that I will tell you later. But to keep on with what we're doing. Among the other things I did was, I read any book I could get my hands on in Russian. Now, I had read *Zhivago* before, but the next one was John Gunther's "*Inside de*" books. He had *Inside USA*, "Inside" this, "Inside" that... and *Inside the Soviet Union*. So I read him in depth. And I must say that I found the book very entertaining to read, and, from my observations during the trip, pretty accurate. This is a matter of opinion, but I found his stuff useful. And it's good knowing certain things, and you know some of the sensitivities of your host from reading a book like that.

LKW: I see. So I'm not familiar with his books. That was a little bit of a guide, a little bit of a cultural?

TEO: Right. Essentially, he got a thing going for him: he assumed that you're a traveler, and you're going to go to a place, and what are the things you should know that you don't upset your hosts. What are the things you should, that you must express to the host, and how can you get -- etcetera, etcetera. That was useful. The other thing was: I'd studied the White Wars vs. the Red Wars, 1918...^[1] I'd studied the Revolution, the October 17th, or 11th, I'm not sure which, Revolution of 1917 I believe it was. I'd studied that. So, history and biography are one of my main hobbies, and so, frankly, I read everything I could before I left, and that was very useful.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: Now, next question.

LKW: Again, before we really talk about the trip itself, you mentioned that this should be seen in the context of the Viral Oncology Program.

TEO: Right. Oh yes, this is important. We must come back to this.

LKW: Yes, I'm curious to know a little bit more.

TEO: Right. Bear in mind that since the NIH functions and has functioned for many years -- at that time exclusively, almost -- by the grant research, [on the basis of] competitive grants. There were people who felt that that was not enough, and that we should bring industrial organization to it.

LKW: I see this is what you mentioned earlier.

TEO: Now, I was appointed to a job I invented and sold to Moloney and Ray Bryan. And it was that, since I came in with nine years of industrial experience, two years of post doctorals at different universities, and that I now had a few years of training under special fellowship from Bernice Eddy, [Dr. Albert J.] Jack Dalton, and such people. And that at least I was a competent virologist; I didn't regard myself as a super one. I felt very honored to be with the ones who [I worked with].

So, the thing came up that viruses were beginning to be important, and there were a number of virologists who believed that cancers are caused by specific viruses. Now, there was good evidence for that in animal systems. The question was: is it true for the human system? And there were a number of us believing, including me -- I'll be frank and say that I was one of the people who believed that viruses could cause -- and we could even *use* viruses as genetic vehicles to conquer cancer, both kind of thing. And there's good evidence for that, particularly if you confine yourself to the chicken, to the dog, to the cat. The place where it really broke down was the human. It didn't -- viruses at that time produced very little cancer. And, in fact, looking back over the whole thing, finally [Dr. Robert J.] Bob Gallo, after he'd isolated jointly [with Luc Montagnier] the HIV virus, he also came up with leukemia, human leukemia 1, 2, and 3 viruses, and they are causative agents of cancer.

LKW: Yes.

TEO: But essentially the thing was up in the air and the community...

LKW: At the time when you went?

TEO: That's right, at the time -- or a little before I went. Before I went there was a vigorous argument as to whether we should concentrate on viruses or not. And this went to the Council.

LKW: And this the council... within NCI?

TEO: The NCI Council.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: The NCI Council, in effect, said, "You folks should aim to get viruses, isolate them, and characterize them, and so on." And the Russians were doing the same thing at the same time, and we were each hearing what the other was doing.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: And we were, I believe, exaggerating unconsciously what each was doing.

LKW: Interesting.

TEO: So we were in that, and frankly we were a bit paranoid that this could lead into germ warfare. [We did not explicitly formulate this fear, but it surely lurked in our subconscious.]

LKW: Were you?

TEO: So, we were thinking in those different dimensions. But the upshot of it was that a new program was started: the Special Virus Cancer Program.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: And the important feature about it was that a young, brilliant virologist -- the youngest guy of the group, [the late Dr. Frank J.] Dick Rauscher became the head of Cancer Virology and the Virus Cancer Program. Now, it happened that I got on extremely well with Dick Rauscher, and he started off the Virus Cancer Program. This was inherited by Moloney. Now, how long -- two or three years -- it was going, before Moloney became the top chief, and Dick Rauscher moved up another rank to be Director of NCI, the total NCI. So, they started the Cancer Virus Program, and we said, "We're going to use national resources, which are both NIH and the academic community." And it would be run differently, and not on a grant, but on a competitive contract. This was both a strength and a weakness, because the academic community outside deeply resented things being given on contract, and above all being given to industrial firms to do it.

LKW: I see.

TEO: Now, I was then appointed to a job, as I mentioned, that I created myself, and that was the Molecular Control Unit. It sounds very nice: "molecular control," you control things. But, essentially, it was an effort of a multi-technology approach. And I recruited, for instance, to participate in this program: General Electric -- companies you might not think of: General Electric recruited Ford Motor Company. We recruited -- we didn't confine it to the United States; we brought in the English, [Dr. M. A.] Tony Epstein from [the University of] Bristol, and his Ph.D. student -- both of them joined -- and they isolated what we called the "Epstein-Barr" virus after their names, which was a herpes-like virus. So, essentially, by [1967] -- I think October. Well, anyway, we had organized this program, and we would meet every six months, review it just like a company would review it. And my goal, in the Molecular Control, the aim was to bring any agent that can be used. We brought in things like new forms of spectroscopy, new types of [virus counting machines]. Frankly, I think it was a very exciting period, but a very controversial one.

LKW: I see. And in part, this controversy came from these new methods like bringing in industry, using different funding mechanisms?

TEO: That's right. It was new.

LKW: Okay, a lot of new; a lot of innovation.

TEO: A lot of new. And there was a lot of money that was in the thing. So the two things you need -- and, number three, it had the support of Congress, very strongly, and Dick Rauscher was a very adroit politician -- I'm using this in the best sense of the word; I believe in politics. He did a wonderful job in this; he got many awards. And he, in effect, before he [officially] became director of NCI, he was "director" of the entire virus [program] on a world basis, supported by the US Government. So that was a very exciting thing. But after [a time], then we began to ask ourselves, "Are the Russians copying us? Are we copying the Russians? How much is going on [in parallel]?" We had very little knowledge of what they were doing. And we assumed several things that became dogmas, which turned out to be wrong. Among these things, the first was there was a mythology that Russia took its top scientists and gave them a glorious, good time: travel, better dachas, better this, better that -- while [we had access to more modest resources].

LKW: Right. That was your first assumption.

TEO: I'd like to come back to that, because what we did find in the Soviet Union when we got there [was different]. This was one of our goals. We wanted to find out: what viruses were they working with, how to -- we could tell it was a germ warfare or was it the other, from the characteristics -- we wanted to know that. We wanted to know: who were the top, dominant guys? So, it was a political thing to find out who did what and where? Where did they stand in the Soviet system? What was the Soviet system? How did they run their budgets? What travel did they allow? How did they view us? If they viewed us as a menace, they might move and we're not being a menace at all. So, all of these things led up to an invitation that was worked out in discussions with the Soviets that they would receive this delegation, and that's why we went.

LKW: Okay. And you said "they would send [this delegation]," meaning that you all would be sent there? Because I know that there were different delegations coming back and forth. You were not referring just then to any Soviets coming here in particular, were you? You're talking about your delegation going there, right?

TEO: We're talking, frankly, to get our foot in the door, but to keep the foot in the door to let them in if they would help us.

LKW: Okay. You're trying to find out information but you're --

TEO: I think the dominant event was the Kennedy [speech]. This is a guess, I don't know that, but this is a thing you might be able to flesh out from the files in the State Department. What we were concerned with -- we thought what Kennedy had proposed was just the way to do it, and so we were aiming for the best possible relations we could have with the individual scientist. I'll tell you that I think we were remarkably successful in doing that and in accurately describing our interactions with the Soviet scientists in our trip reports in 1968 and 1972.

LKW: Good. Maybe before we talk about the successes and the results --

TEO: The longer trip report, written for internal government use presented an accurate portrait of Soviet biological science in 1967.

LKW: Okay. Well, I'll be able to look at the documents that you've referred to. So then, to bring us back to what you just started to describe: a bit of the logistics as you came, and some of your first impressions as you arrived in Moscow, I assume, in 1967.

TEO: The first meeting was very interesting. They met us, and they were very gracious. And they had taxis reserved for us to take us into town, which was nice. But I told you at the desk, we had trouble about the money. They disappeared, then they reappeared, and we got off to a start. The next day we went to the Ministry of Health. And right there we knew the answer to part of the problem. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw the way it was. The Ministry of Health -- I have the name of the street; it was a minor back street in Moscow. And we came in, and the guy who was the Soviet representative raised the thing about our status. Status: "What are we?" And it was very clear that they, but not us, were deeply concerned about "what is the political status that you're coming in as." So, that went on with discussions back and forth. And, immediately they said that, "since you're not an official delegation, you can't do this and you can't do that." It was very negative. And since he was pretty far down on the totem pole...

LKW: This is Dr. Rowe? Or everyone?

TEO: This particular Soviet guy.

TEO: Oh, this particular host -- your host at the Ministry of Health?

TEO: That's right the Ministry of Health. He's going on that your status is very low, and you're very poor in letting us know where you want to go. So I said, "Gee whiz, we sent off stuff to you, all the details of what we want to see, and we want to see the following things: we want Moscow, we want Leningrad, we want Kiev, we want Novosibirsk, and we fought very hard. Wally Rowe and I, both of us -- I think, I got -- it was a wonderful thing, because Wally played the nice, soft, low-key guy, and I'm the impetuous Irishman.

LKW: Really? So you were a good team, it sounds like.

TEO: And I didn't pull a punch. I said -- I've got to tell you, I remember reading in Gunther's book that, if you're dealing with the Soviets -- you commit them to something, they will do it. And so I kept that in mind, and the main thing I said: "I've got to get them committed." So what I did was -- I look back at it -- you know, here I'm going into the Ministry of Health and telling them how to run their affairs. But I was hit by an idea, and I said, "Listen, we had our annual meeting of the Special Virus Cancer Program in which we had 200 people involved about two months ago, and you know what? One of your people, a beautiful lady from Latvia, turned up and she was wearing a beautiful red dress, and she sat down in the middle of our meeting. And you know what? Dick Rauscher got up and welcomed her --[Dr.] Rita Kukaine [of the Kirchenstein Institute of Microbiology and Virology, in Riga, Latvian S.S.R.] -- invited her to stay and make any notes she wanted and go any place she wanted." And I said: "That was our reception of your representative. Now, I am asking that we visit Rita Kukaine in Latvia, so let's put Latvia on the list. If I can't get Novosibirsk, I want Latvia." But what I didn't know was that -- and we weren't to know this for some time -- the relations between Latvia and the center were very precarious. I'll come back to that, and say it's one of the weirdest experiences we had on the trip. But, so I said, "I would like to see us -- I regret we can't go to Novosibirsk." And they said, "You've got to understand, " they said, "the Soviet Union has problems with some of its Republics." And they may not want you to come.

TEO: And this is what the Ministry of Health said? I'm sorry, this is what the Ministry of Health said to you?

TEO: That's right.

LKW: Oh, interesting that they --

TEO: I look back at that and [note that] here's a statement that was made by a government official of the Soviet Union, years before the break-up with Latvia and that happened. So they said, without any -- he didn't promise Rita Kukaine could come or anything. But, in effect he said, "We'll see what we will do, and we will inform you next Wednesday", it's now Sunday evening, this kind of thing. We're now having lack of status, "where do we stand?" We were very confident in ourselves. We said, "Listen, we read the literature, these are the names we see. We want to meet these people. So let us suggest to you that the best way to meet these people is to have a joint meeting with the people. Have a joint meeting. And let us exchange information at the joint meeting."

LKW: Sounds reasonable.

TEO: Oh, did that create a stir!

LKW: My goodness!

TEO: And why? It turned out, when we looked into the situation, they were getting our literature coming in; we were getting their literature.

LKW: You were?

TEO: But what we discovered was, we had touched a nerve, because there were five or six different laboratories -- institutes -- involved, and each one had its own director, and each one was a law unto itself, and there was absolutely no cooperation going on between the different --

LKW: I see.

TEO: It was a feudal barony, and it was all political heft. Now, two things changed that completely -- we will come back to it later. Just to finish up your side. We managed to organize this seminar, and to our knowledge, it was the first one. A joint seminar covering the whole Soviet Union.

LKW: So you really got representation from all your different institutes that you were interested in, at this meeting?

TEO: That's right. So, this was about day five or day six of the visit, and we've now lined them up, and we're going to have this joint meeting. And two things happened: number one, they enjoyed it! That can be a potent force, if employed.

LKW: Very, very true!

TEO: So we essentially -- they did the invitations, but by three days later we were in -- I forget which institute it was, I think it was the Gamaleya Institute [of Epidemiology and Microbiology, in Moscow], but that in itself was important, because that's mainly devoted to infectious [agents] other than viruses. And, so, we went, and we gave the seminar, and we invited them; that they present, we present. But they'd never done that before, and now the directors are suddenly being exposed to each other.

LKW: Fascinating, that they really had no -- they were so at odds with one another over funding and staffs that --

TEO: I hate to say it, but I think part of the thing was, they appreciated: we're not doing this in a political sense, that we're honest to God trying to do something about cancer and viruses, and we're totally ... back and forth.

LKW: Very interesting.

TEO: So, the two things that happened: one, we held the thing. And it went on for, what, 8 hours. And this was perfect. The second thing I have to tell you is that both Dr. [Herbert R.] Morgan [of University of Rochester School of Medicine] and I got up and dedicated our talks to [the late Dr.] Lev [A.] Zilber [of the Gamaleya Institute for Epidemiology and Microbiology, in Moscow], who was Russia's top virologist. Now, talking of *Zhivago*, his [Zilber's] family's history reads just like *Zhivago*'s. During the German thing, his wife was captured by the Germans; he was nearly killed by Stalin in the Doctor's...

LKW: Right, the Doctors' Plot of 1953.

TEO: And we had done two things: the first thing was six months before I had been at the American Association for Cancer Research meeting in Chicago. And, it turned out, Lev Zilber was at the meeting. And Lev Zilber wanted to get from one side of Chicago to the other, so I said, "Come on Dr. Zilber, into the cab." Hired the cab, and he and I chatted for about 30 minutes. The only time in my life I ever met the man, but we chatted for 30 minutes, and very friendly, warm on both sides.

LKW: And he spoke English?

TEO: I'm sorry?

LKW: He spoke English, I assume?

TEO: Oh, he spoke perfect English. He was really -- his opposite number was Ray Bryan. He had -- they were both the same kind of men, same work, stature -- and so, here we're now dealing with a man we can respect and admire, and that came across.

LKW: And one more thing, can I make sure, what year was that when you met Zilber in Chicago?

TEO: It was the same year as --

LKW: It was earlier in the year before you went --

TEO: A few months back.

LKW: But he had passed away by the time you were there [in Moscow]?

TEO: This is what I'm coming to --

LKW: Oh, okay, sorry.

TEO: What I'm coming to is, they had yet to gather for the seminars, and we were on our wit's end, what to do to kill time. And, so, what we did was we went to the Novodevichy Cemetery, and Lev Zilber's grave is in an honored position, two tombstones away from Stalin's wife!

LKW: My goodness! I did not know that. How fascinating!

TEO: I didn't know that --

LKW: You just came across it; you didn't know this ahead of time?

TEO: I knew nothing! I'd known not even -- except that Lev Zilber had trouble at the time of the Doctors' stuff, and he narrowly escaped with his life, because Stalin got killed or died.

LKW: Died -- well, yeah, no one knows.

TEO: Who knows -- at a convenient time. So, when it came my time to talk, I got up and I said, "I would very much like to dedicate my talk today to a great Russian and a great scientist whom we admired immensely: Lev Zilber." Dr. Morgan, who was one of the other delegates, followed up, and he had the stage. And he said, "I've have had the pleasure of traveling before to the Soviet Union, and Lev Zilber was a wonderful help and a wonderful man," and he paid tribute to Lev Zilber. Well, I got up, finished my talk and sat down, and these two young men came up to me and they said, "You probably don't know it; our name is Kisselev -- we're named after our mother (instead of Lev Zilber) -- but Lev Zilber was our father. And we are deeply honored and touched by two American scientists, and so on, and we would like to invite you to come to our dacha this weekend."

LKW: Very interesting.

TEO: We went.

LKW: You were able to go?

TEO: His elder brother, a biochemist, Dr. Kisselev, a virologist, Dr. Morgan, and I went. They picked us up in the car. I must tell you, it was funny: we were going through Red Square, when we were halted for speeding. Here [we had an opportunity to see] how the cops behaved if someone was a scientist. I mean, now, the scientists were on a pedestal? Well, the cop gave him a ticket very fast, and he had to pay it right there -- I think seventy rubles. And a ruble, at that time, was pretty expensive. It was a pretty hefty fine, and there was no attempt to bribe the policeman or anything else. So, we drove on, and we came on the outskirts, about fifteen miles southwest of Moscow, and we were entertained by Madam. They had a new baby in the house, and we had a lovely evening with the Zilbers. I must tell you that it was a country cottage; nothing at all -- there was nothing out of the way. I would say, she was a charming lady; the boys -- the men -- were magnificent. And I can tell you that after that day, we supplied Lev Kisselev with the Rauscher leukemia virus and other viruses. And we established a working relationship right away. Now, the very fact that they could establish those kinds of relationships, at this stage -- détente was already beginning. And then, they had their fingers to the breeze, and they could see the way the thing is blowing, and they're adapting.

LKW: I see. That's the way you interpret Kisselev's [approaching you]?

TEO: That's just interpretation -- we may be wrong or right, [actually, such interactions are complex and can involve both Realpolitik and genuine relations] but Lev Zilber's sons we got on magnificently. And the seminar itself established, A: that we were basically competent in the field, and established B: that they were basically competent in the field. Well, essentially, the climate is now improving.

LKW: I guess one question I have is: how did you come to have this joint meeting happen? I mean, it sounds like there were real roadblocks. What did you do? Do you know?

TEO: Well, I think we played up the fact of the kind of meeting we had in the Virus Cancer Program. And Rita Kukaine, of course, can tell you all about this. Now, I could jump to Rita Kukaine and tell you about her, or leave it and come back to her?

LKW: It's up to you. It sounds like Kukaine's participation was important, so let's [go on].

TEO: Rita Kukaine's participation was important for two reasons. Number one, she was in Latvia. We did not appreciate that at that time.

LKW: The significance.

TEO: But she appeared to be a competent virologist, and it was of interest that an institute that was getting very little play in the world literature, that she was, A: a woman in charge, and, B: that she was publishing there, and that, C: she had been to our spring meeting. So we could start there. So, we were invited to Latvia, as one of the things. And we headed off for Latvia, and we got there. Oh, I must tell you one small episode. Back up: this happened before going [to the Soviet Union]. Rita Kukaine had been to our meeting here at the Viral Cancer program. My wife and I at the time had five children, very young children, and it's a lot of work taking care of five kids. So my wife had hired a lady to assist her with them. Well, Rita Kukaine, at the meeting, got up and made a presentation, red dress and all. At Rauscher's meeting! And I admired her savvy, among other things. So I invited her to dinner at my house. And she came to dinner. But the lady that was helping my wife, she left the house. Rita Kukaine arrived, and instantly, the look on her face changed. Something's terribly wrong here. And she said, "Is this your house?" And I said yes. But she couldn't believe that someone who was at a low-level of administration at that time could afford a house of this kind. And she thought it was propaganda, that we had hired my house for the day.

LKW: Really? You could tell that was really what she thought?

TEO: Oh, yes, I know: she was quite open about it. I will tell you, Rita Kukaine is not a tactful lady. She is very blunt, in fact I don't know if she's alive or dead at this stage. But I always found her very blunt, very straightforward, and she was very straightforward about this. But then the delegation met with her, and when the delegation met with her, she shook my hand as if she had never met me in my life.

LKW: Really?

TEO: Right. So here she is now, on her home base, in front of the other scientists, and she has had contacts with the West, but she's not admitting any contact in the public domain. So the Stalinism stuff still alive and pretty well in the Soviet [Union] at that particular time.

LKW: This is the way you interpret that.

TEO: Interpretation at that particular time.

LKW: I mean it's just interesting, because like the Kisselev [sons] -- men -- were willing to approach you, but... I understand; I agree with your interpretation, but it's an interesting two cases.

TEO: Well, it's not ended yet.

LKW: Oh no. Okay.

TEO: Now she's on her home turf, and she shakes my hand. Never mentions that she's met me before, even though we've talked extensively in the Rauscher meeting here, before leaving, and extensively on the science. But now, this is an O'Connor, she has never seen him, never heard of him -- this kind of thing. Until the delegates were out of the room. And as soon as she was alone in the room with me, she said, "How is Elizabeth?"

LKW: Interesting!

TEO: "How is Elizabeth?" I said, "She's just fine. She's having a busy time with all these children." "You have a beautiful house." I said, "It's pretty regular for Bethesda, Maryland. It's neither better nor worse, no big deal." Then she said, "Have you been to the cemetery?" You know, we go from discussing family matters to the cemetery! I said, "No." She said, "You've got to go to the cemetery." Well, I know my history, and I began to think, "What about the cemetery?" So we go to the cemetery. And what we quickly find out is that there are two classes of burials in this cemetery. The first class are true Latvians, who have never supported the Germans, when the Germans were in control of Latvia during World War II. And those who had collaborated with the Germans during that particular time -- what did they do? They came along, and they wiped their names off of the tombstones. So you knew who were the politicals who'd sided with the Germans, and so on. And we came back, and Rita said, "Did you see the tombstones in the cemetery?" "Yes I did." "What did you think of it?" I said, "I found it interesting." Kept it as neutral as I could. But this animosity and stuff still existed in Latvia. That evening, I decided to have a nightcap before going to bed. And I walked into the bar at the hotel. Immediately a burly guy came up to me and said, "You can't come in here." I said, "Why can't I?" He said, "Only Latvians come in here." And I said, "Well, I'm a guest of the Soviet Union." And he turned to me: "We are not the Soviet Union! We are the Independent Republic of Latvia!"

LKW: Very interesting.

TEO: I said, "Now, this is diplomacy. Do I fight this with my Irish thing, and then go back to Rauscher and explain that we've had a row on the trip? Or do I..." So I very quietly just turned on my heel, and I walked out of the bar, and decided I was not going to get into any...

LKW: Confrontations.

TEO: And I didn't want anybody changing my tombstone. Whether I was a good guy or a bad guy! But this gave us the atmosphere.

LKW: Very interesting. So she never made a comment about the cemetery either? It was left to that level?

TEO: That's right. "What did you think of the cemetery?" "It was very interesting." We left it at that. So, I think I've exhausted that point. For further questions, go ahead.

LKW: Well, okay. Let's see, you were telling me about Kukaine, and her participation, and her importance in setting up the joint meeting. You've told me a little bit about Kukaine; I'm wondering about some of the others that you met in your 1967 trip.

TEO: Another person who had a big part to play -- and may still be playing it -- is [Dr.] Boris [A.] Lapin [of the Institute of experimental Pathology and Therapy, in Sukhumi, Georgian S.S.R.]. Boris Lapin -- he was another person who had come through [NIH] singly, by himself, before we went to Russia. He'd been -- and he immediately established himself, because he had, on paper, what appeared to be the most provocative evidence that there could be a virus causing [human] cancer.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: This was very central to our thinking: Is this work reliable? Is it correct? Have the Russians scooped us? Etcetera, etcetera. So, I must tell you, Boris is a colorful character. He was a pilot in World War Two, had his leg blown off in combat --

LKW: I didn't know.

TEO: I'll jump ahead to show you his quality. His quality was: we were invited to leave the place, and we went out to the airport at about eleven p.m. to get our plane, and then it turned out the weather reporter, that all planes were grounded. That lasted five minutes. Boris Lapin came in and took over the airline. Walked in, went over to the counter, and took over the airline!

LKW: Really?

TEO: And tried to talk these pilots down. And the pilots were not going to obey Boris Lapin and fly in very bad weather over the Caucasus Mountains. So, the upshot of it was that, now we can't get in the airplane, our rooms are gone, they've been booked to a bunch of Germans. And we go back to the hotel, and Boris says, "Hold. Hold until midnight." So we had about five minutes to wait until midnight; well, it came to midnight, on the dot! The door opened up, and a bunch of five or six Germans were evicted from their room and came down the stairs, heading for somewhere. And we were escorted up and ensconced in the building!

LKW: Back in your rooms.

TEO: And our guide -- who we suspected was KGB -- just went on the floor, and starting doing pushups, his thirty-four pushups, and we could only marvel at the Soviet system.

LKW: So you think it was Borin Lapin --

TEO: Oh, let me continue with Boris -- these could be separate chapters, because he does...

LKW: Okay.

TEO: So Boris went directly to proving that there was cancer, that viruses did cause cancer. And what he did was, he decided that leukemia was the most likely one. So, his approach was to get patients with leukemia, and collect their blood, and inoculate chimpanzees, baboons, gorillas, with it.

LKW: Yes.

TEO: And this is quite logical, provided he does it cleanly, with no cross-contamination, or anything like that.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: And so we're to evaluate his results. Meanwhile, we sense that the other Russian scientists hold this work in very poor repute. And I think it was [Dr. Mikhail P.] Chumakov [of the Institute of Poliomyelitis and Viral Encephalitides, in Moscow] at the meeting, and Chumakov said, "This should be evaluated." Well, we said we were ready to look at it with open-mindedness, and see what the... Well, we went and we flew down to the Black Sea, and I think again it was the second Sunday after we arrived, and the first thing Boris said was, "Where, in Moscow, did they tell you that you could not go?" And we mentioned one or two places. And he said, "Let's go." And we took off. I don't know whether you have ever been to Georgia, but my impression of it is a lot like the South of France.

LKW: Yes.

TEO: It's wine, woman, and song...

LKW: Right.

TEO: The food is excellent and very different people all together. And the place where we were was a subset of Georgia, I forget the name.

LKW: I think it may be -- is it Adjara?

TEO: Abkhazia.

LKW: Abkhazia -- that's what it is.

TEO: It was Abkhazia. And they had -- Boris had set up a monkey colony: primates. And this was a large one. It was all outdoors. So there he was, taking human patients, taking their blood, inoculating chimpanzees and other animals, and he was claiming that they were coming down with a disease. And he gave the pathology of that disease. Well, the first thing that happened was that Chumakov attacked the validity of this evidence.

LKW: And where did he do this attacking? This was at the joint meeting?

TEO: No, this was down in Sukhumi.

LKW: So he went with you to Sukhumi, okay.

TEO: Right. From this on, we were followed by a top director of any of the top three to four institutes. We're not let out of their sight from this point on. So, we go down, and we come -- it turned out, at the first meeting, Chumakov in effect attacked Boris Lapin's work as being not quite properly done. And Boris Lapin's wife, who is a scientist at this place, attacked Chumakov and defended "Comrade Lapin." Wiped the dust off his feet -- I have never seen a defense better mounted. And she said, "You are not going to get this brilliant scientist," etcetera. Never admitting she's his wife. And then, as she's attacking Chumakov from Moscow, and laying it on, and so on. [We delegates carefully avoided taking sides but agreed that the Lapin virus be evaluated.]

LKW: Lapin's wife was pretty brave!

TEO: Well, it was interesting. I prefer the neutral -- like the tombstones.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: But anyway, I'll jump to one of the other things with Chumakov. We went in, and we examined the monkeys, together with him. It was clear they had some disease. But whether it was virus-caused or whether it was a conventional leukemia was totally open. And the results were very much in doubt, because there were flies all over the place, there was no protection, there was no standard of controls. And the last thing was, to see World War Two biplanes, flying in from the Crimea, bringing blood from a patient in the Crimea, and then we went into the field, and we inoculate the monkey right there. No controls and so on.

LKW: I see, so the methodology --

TEO: But Boris believed that he'd isolated the virus. So, it was very clear to us that the Russians were trying to use us to point -- saying this is lousy work, condemning Boris Lapin, and Chumakov was there for the "hanging." And they were going to do them in.

LKW: I hadn't realized, yes, I see, now that you point it out. That's kind of what's going on...

TEO: Right, well it gets even worse than that, because Boris then decides that we have a banquet. The next thing that happened was that Boris wanted to show me something with the monkeys -- and I went in with him, into the field, where the monkeys were, and we caught one of these monkeys, and the next thing was, a bunch of baboons picked on me, they just seemed to like me! I had visions of being eaten alive by a bunch of baboons, so I got very fast out of that field. I'll admit I [moved fast] to get away. Then it came time for the banquet. It turned out, though, that the water supply stopped at three o'clock, and we had nothing but cold water. And so, we American delegates turned up scruffy, unwashed, and they were dressed to the nines for the dinner. And we had a wonderful dinner. [Boris acted as host at the banquet and insisted that each of us perform. I recited the [Yeats] poem "[The Lake Isle of] Innisfree" and sang "Waltzing Mathilda," even though the other delegates threatened my life if I ventured any repeat performance!] But, then we go back to Moscow, and again they interrogate -- they really were out to get Boris Lapin. I learned later that Boris Lapin came out smelling like roses.

LKW: Really?

TEO: I understand that Boris achieved scientific prominence in the later Russian Republic.

LKW: He did? Okay, I don't know that later history. I mean, so did you see, despite the shoddiness of some of the methods and the conditions, you saw something there, it sounds like: you weren't willing to just crucify his work.

TEO: Like I say, we made a scientific judgment: no political way whatsoever. That the six of us, with different specialties, said: one can't accept work in the scientific field when you're leaving more questions than answers. And that you're not abiding by criteria that most virologists will feel. [Boris is a complex person but a kind and generous host. He provided a van for our sightseeing in the Caucasus Mountains...] Now what struck me was: we had a drive through the Caucasus Mountains. And we stopped in several places. Two things hit me: number one, we saw an awful lot of veterans of the war with minus legs and so on, projecting themselves on boards. They don't have the American regard for veterans who've been injured in combat. That was one aspect. The second aspect was, there was a sense of -- I would say corruption. Because the next time I went, on the second trip, I said, "Gee, [look at all the] potholes in the road!" -- the old road was potholed down in Georgia. And it turned out later that many of the road contractors had been diverting funds.

LKW: I see.

TEO: Diverting funds into criminal activities.

LKW: But that had been changed by the time you went in 1972?

TEO: In '72 actually it had gotten worse than '67.

LKW: Oh, I see.

TEO: [My final impression from the first trip is of Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), a beautiful city with many parallels to Venice. We had time to wander and sightsee in lovely warm weather. It was early October 1967, and the city was bustling with activity being refurbished for the fiftieth anniversary of the October 1917 Revolution. In the center of the city is an immense building -- rather like the Pentagon in the Washington, DC, area: the Admiralty building, which is the headquarters of the Russian Navy. On this occasion the building was encased in scaffolding and was swarming with women, each with a bucket of paint and a broom applying a fresh coat of paint, slapdash. Not a man in sight! The building looked terrible on close inspection, but lovely from a distance. These ladies were sure to complete their tasks in time for the anniversary of the Revolution ten days later]. Now, in contrast, our [day-to-day host] host on the second trip was Dr. [Nikolai N.] Trapeznikov [of the Institute of Experimental and Clinical Oncology, in Moscow]. Now, he was our host, but surprisingly he was not a virologist, he was a surgeon. He was our host in Moscow, Leningrad, Latvia, and Georgia. He was a very gracious man. He visited here at NIH several times. And our discussions with him left us with the impression that he was an honorable person, that we could rely on what he told us, that he was a good surgeon. And he was really on the surgery side, although he was an unofficial escort for all of us.

LKW: So we're recording again. This is Tape 2 of Dr. O'Connor's experiences.

TEO: And we're still on the first visit, really.

LKW: And we're really still on the first visit, you were saying something about [interactions with] Trapeznikov's [family], talking about -- I think you were going to say that there was a lot of family connection?

TEO: That's right. I think we warm to certain people.

LKW: Okay, that was what you said.

TEO: Just on the human --

LKW: Level. Sure.

TEO: That we warm to people, yeah. And I think we have a sense that most of the Soviet scientists we were talking to were telling us the truth. It was very interesting that in all the laboratory buildings we were in, we never got into actual operating laboratory; the door was always shut.

LKW: You never did? Interesting.

TEO: Never did. We got to the outside, we walked through the buildings, we had lots of talk, but the buildings themselves – they were, I would describe as Germanic in the sense of the labs were large, high, rather tall, there was a peephole on the upper -- that somebody could look in.

LKW: I see.

TEO: But it was above the height, ordinary height.

LKW: I see.

TEO: So unless you brought along a little stool, you couldn't see into the labs. Now once or twice when the door was open in the lab, there was stuff on the blackboard. Now I can tell you that I can walk through a lab and if there are a few things on the blackboard, I can form a pretty accurate impression of what's going on. So when, with all these shut labs, you get one or two open like this, like, you know, a suspicion that there is a plant -- that you're being drawn into something and that you had better be cautious about it, and so on. So, I think we were. We were not a bunch of stooges, but we were not fooled either; we watched it. But rather surprisingly the biggest surprise we had was we anticipated the Soviet Union acting as a colossal unity. In reality, it was a bunch of fiefdoms under individual institute directors. And some of these were highly competent, and some were not. The top guy on the Soviet side on the first trip was [Dr.] Viktor [M.] Zhdanov. Viktor Zhdanov, of the [Ivanovskii] Institute of Virology [in Moscow], Viktor Zhdanov. We have these, actually the tables the guys involved and what they're doing [in the folder donated to the History office.]

LKW: Okay.

TEO: But these people, Viktor Zhdanov, Dr. Nikolai N. Blokhin, with whom the delegates interacted only on the second trip, was a powerful man, adroit, a born politician, good politician. And we were all convinced that he was operating for what he thought was the best interests of the Soviet Union from the point of view of health.

LKW: And he was in the Ministry of Health, remind me? I know Blokhin's name.

TEO: Right.

LKW: Do you remember yourself? I can, of course, look it up as well.

TEO: Right, it would be listed. Viktor^[2] Blokhin had two roles. Number one, he was head of the Academy of Sciences.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: Now I must clarify immediately that there are two Academies in the Soviet Union.

LKW: Right.

TEO: The first one, there's the Academy of Medical Sciences.

LKW: Right.

TEO: It's very important to note that training in medicine is not conducted in the universities, it is conducted in the Academy of Medical Sciences.

LKW: Right.

TEO: And Blokhin is one of the, if not the top guy of the medical sciences.[\[3\]](#)

LKW: This was the Medical Sciences.

TEO: Academy of Medical Sciences.

LKW: Okay, where he was, okay.

TEO: He was honest, he was straightforward, he was deeply concerned obviously to get the best data he could for the Soviet Union. He was not a virologist himself.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: It's of interest that I think he's simply a thorough product of the political infighting that goes on, and he won out by better brains and dedication.

LKW: I see.

TEO: And by integrity, that he was trying to do the best thing he could. I have a picture of him here at the last interaction with Moloney.

LKW: Okay. On the second visit?

TEO: Yes, and my impression, without going into too much about my colleague, but I think Moloney got on extremely well with Blokhin.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: And this, I'd have to say in passing, Moloney, with the various ups and downs we had with these people, was very cool, very well contained, never tried to sneak a victory on things, and was very well liked by the Soviets.

LKW: By the Soviets, okay.

TEO: So, this was a big help that both on the first visit, having a first-rate virologist like Wally Rowe, and on the second, also having a top-rate virologist, Moloney, much of the success [can be] given [to] that. And to a degree, I would put the secondary role that we, other delegates, played in the delegation.

So Blokhin is a big wheel, Viktor Zhdanov is the top virologist. They both paid massive tribute to both Salk and Sabin.

LKW: They did?

TEO: So that was part of it. I think Sabin had a place both in Italy and in the Soviet Union that's unmatched for any other [biologist] I know.

LKW: In terms of respect that he's garnered there?

TEO: That's right. I worked in the lab next door to Sabin at Fort Detrick for two years.

LKW: I see.

TEO: It was a fun experience. I had an experience down in South America, attending an International Congress on Hematology, where I had a private conversation with a lady who filled me in on the conditions in Brazil. I didn't know I was being eavesdropped by a newspaper reporter, and the next day I picked up the Sao Paolo paper, and there it was in the headline: "American Scientist Says Brazil Would Choke in its Own Poisons," or some equivalent to that -- wild, wild speculation.

LKW: Strange.

TEO: I remember I told this to Sabin, and he said, "Tell my wife this story, she'll appreciate it." And like a darn idiot, I walked right in and told his wife what had happened in Brazil. And then Albert came in and said, "Oh, by the way, Tim, did you know that my wife is a journalist from Brazil?"

LKW: Oh, from Brazil!

TEO: But the Soviets, and the Italians, really esteemed Sabin from the success of the polio vaccine.

LKW: Is that right? So still when you were there it was spoken about a lot?

TEO: Well, of course this had happened long before we did --

LKW: Right, right.

TEO: Sabin was not on the trip, but he was, if you like, the saint of virology, the standard. And they were ready to admit -- but, we come back [to] our recognition of their Lev Zilber --

LKW: I see.

TEO: It was a mutual practice --

LKW: There was mutual respect, I see.

TEO: Cooperation, but very successful.

LKW: I see.

TEO: So, we're on the first trip.

LKW: Okay. Maybe, as you say, it makes sense to go then to the second trip. Well, one of my questions, but I don't whether this is best saved for later, is whether the things that you wrote about in your brief report in *Science* -- those conclusions -- whether you would broaden those, change those in light of later trips, but, so that the results --

TEO: Right. I'll be frank, and say that the short note I wrote was essentially a list of people we had met, and it was done to give them a certain amount of stature.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: Their contact with us brought them stature, and so it was -- it's the poorest paper of my life. It was just a shopping list.

LKW: Just a report, yeah.

TEO: We've been, we've enjoyed your hospitality, etcetera, and it's moved forward.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: I didn't leave it at that though, I wrote a second report [intended for Government use only].

LKW: Oh, okay.

TEO: And that is a very detailed second report.

LKW: And that's in the documents?

TEO: Yes, because we wanted the science down hard. What recommendation are we going to make, for instance, to the Council when we come back? So that second report -- I took great care with the second one. And it is a very detailed report of who's doing what, what the prospects are, what are the judgments, etcetera.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: And bear in mind, the aim of [the second trip] was totally different from the first. The first was information: get to know the people, what can we construct? The second one was that we have to translate what [United States Secretary of State William P.] Rogers and [President Richard M.] Nixon have wrought in the Détente documents, and now we have to have the [substance of our agreed interactions spelled out in Russian and English Protocols.]

LKW: Right.

TEO: We wrote the Protocol.

LKW: Okay, yes. So let's hear more about, as you're saying, about the second trip. So, now you said Rogers and Nixon? Rogers was?

TEO: The United States Secretary of State at the time. We went as I told you there was an argument about what status we were having on the first trip. On the second trip, there was no such argument. The Presidents of the US and of the USSR had reached mutual agreement in broad areas and now it was our task to fill in the details with protocols of mutual understanding, as experts, at least in the areas of biology and particularly in the area of virology.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: They brought in research directors from twenty Republics. They went to outside Siberia to bring their top scientists in.

LKW: Wow.

TEO: And we had a "snafu" in this, because -- it was very revealing -- and it involved me for a change [laughs]. It turns out that for this one we were going in, and our product coming out, we hoped would be a Memorandum of Understanding, in which each side would lay out what they were going to do. And we were aiming at exchange not only of information, but reagents and people, and all of this was spelled out in detail.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: Now the development of that report was somewhat different than the development of the first. It was aimed to achieve and produce a Memorandum of Understanding, and then to write up the Memorandum of Understanding, so that it was essentially in sync with what the Secretary of Health of the United States wanted and [what] the Minister of Health of the Soviet Union [wanted].

LKW: I see.

TEO: So, we were essentially minor diplomats.

LKW: I understand. Following up.

TEO: That's right. And the way we approached it was, on the way over, I had a reputation of being a good writer, whether it was accurate or not. But I paid a price for it now and again, because on the way over, our first stop was Paris. And Moloney drew me aside and said, "Tim, you know, we've got to have a proposal to present to the Soviets when we get there. So why don't you go back to the hotel and write the protocol?"

LKW: Lucky you.

TEO: Well, I got a beer and a sandwich, and I worked from about eight o'clock that evening until about three to four in the morning. But you actually have my handwriting, some of the pages of that which is a memento. Well, anyway, the upshot of that was, well, let me show you my paranoia at that particular time: I said, "By God, I've now written this, I don't want the Soviets to know it in advance." So I put it inside my pajamas, so that nobody could break in and steal the protocol. It's crazy when you look back at it, but it was a different era. There was lots of stuff going on on both sides. Well, anyway, the upshot was -- incidentally, I'll draw your attention, you will note that the proposals for the Memorandum of Understanding, which were typed, they stand out clear and clean as the day I wrote them. Whereas you find that Soviet inks have partially decayed; I haven't a photograph except the one we took indoors. The photographs I took, after about eight to ten years -- I had several boxes of them, and they just disintegrated.

LKW: Interesting, so the poor quality -- of paper.

TEO: Nothing to do with us, I think it was just product of their film, they are lousy, etcetera. But anyway, I wrote the first draft of that, and then, during the week, the Soviets wined us, dined us, and entertained us. And we began to suspect that they were trying to kill us with kindness, and that they were laying all these banquets, that we couldn't get serious. So, right or wrong, we had that suspicion in our minds. Right or wrong, we had the suspicion that they'd be very happy to have us investigate Boris Lapin's virus.

LKW: Again? You thought that Lapin was...

TEO: While we wasted time confirming that virus, when they, in fact, would now be going ahead, changing things and weeding out -- but that might have been paranoia, too.

LKW: And what exactly, I didn't quite understand, what would they be doing while you would be investigating Lapin?

TEO: Right, right. Bear in mind, you say, why did they tolerate Boris Lapin? They see a red herring, and as a red herring he's pushing his virus. And to evaluate his results, we have to divert significant resources. And they know full well he ain't got the thing. So, in effect, they would have us busy, evaluating Boris Lapin's virus, when in fact, they were proceeding with some -- and I think that's absolute baloney. But it crossed our minds at the time. And like me in the pajamas, it was an indication of the tenseness of those days. And how, while you're beginning to develop trust, there's still a high element of distrust. So, now it had come to the protocol itself. I had the first draft; I think I did the second one. Then, we finally came, and we had to do the final one. And for this, it turned out, this was going to be a big stage production. It was going to be from coast to coast in the Soviet Union, television, we are now really escalating things. So we have to sit down and decide what viruses we're going to exchange, what cell lines we're going to exchange, who were we going to send to the Soviet Union, who were they going to send, these kinds of questions. So, I wrote a draft of it, and then everything went fine until the final morning. And the final morning, we came down to breakfast, and Moloney said, "Tim, we must have a clean version of our protocol for the Soviets. We cannot hand them your handwritten stuff." I knew Moloney, and he said, "Get over to the Embassy."

LKW: Oh, I was going to say, where could you type -- okay, at the Embassy.

TEO: This is a Saturday morning -- Saturday or Sunday, I forget which. I checked it out. The Soviets provided me with a car and a chauffeur, and I drove off to the American Embassy. The car stopped right at the entrance to the Embassy. It didn't go in. I went in, and first thing was I came up against the Marine guard within the Embassy. And I said, "I need your help. We've got a document to be typed. Could you have it typed for us?" Well, I learned a piece that weekend, ninety percent of the staff at the Embassy apparently had taken off to not have the rigors of life in Moscow as compared to Helsinki. They had practically all gone to Helsinki.

LKW: Oh, for the weekend.

TEO: So I was stuck at the Embassy with this document, and I look around, and I try and I can get nobody but nobody -- but finally, after searching through every department in the place, I found this charming lady who was in the naval attaché's office. And she said, "I'll type it for you." So, I was delighted at this. So, she typed it. And my version had a number of medical words in it, and she had no idea how to spell them. And doing her best, it still took time. Meanwhile, there are twenty directors from as far away as Siberia gathering to put their imprimatur on this Memorandum of Understanding. So, it was one-thirty in the afternoon before I finally had a clean copy, got my driver, and drove back. Well, I must tell you, there was near chaos. Apparently, the Soviets had drawn certain conclusions. Apparently, now and again -- at least we were under the impression that now and again the Soviets shifted the members of the delegations so that the guy who is in charge is a front man, and the number two is apparently the real authority. Well, we got back, and there was [disarray]. They were now convinced I was number one, not number two. And I've been to the Embassy, and I have consulted our fellows in the State Department in Washington. And they have, for once, been caught with their shoes off. That they've assembled all of these guys, and meanwhile "this guy has been off contacting Washington, and we, for once, have not contacted our State Department."

LKW: I see.

TEO: And it was very difficult to persuade that this was and so on. In fact, I don't think they believed it.

LKW: Yeah, not in the end.

TEO: Right. So anyway, it mounted. And finally I said, "Listen, gentlemen. Would you believe me if I simply tell you that the Embassy of the United States of America is a wonderful place, where even it has days when it's not at [top working order]? And I'm sure that somewhere, you may have a place that is not so wonderful, too. I am proposing, why don't you allow me to take your charming translator, Dr. Rita Kukaine -- you'll see, she's in the photograph -- your lady. She's highly competent; she will make sure that everything is just right for the Russian side. And I would -- so, "may I come over to your side of the table, or she come to my side?" She came over to my side, and we did it. Meanwhile, the State Department has turned up -- his name is in the document file. And he has -- he checked the accuracy of the Russian and the English versions. Moloney put us all working. O'Connor caught hell for being late -- "We've only an hour to go before cameras roll, and we're exchanging these viruses and everything." So, all six of us jumped in, and each took a piece of a page, and they worked it over, and we checked each other. So, what I have to tell you is that all the documents on the first trip in 1967 to the Soviet Union were written solely by me. In contrast to that, at the second meeting, you're going to find that the final Memorandum of Understanding in 1972 was written by six guys, and the accuracy of the English and Russian versions of the Memorandum were checked by a member of the US Embassy staff

LKW: I understand.

TEO: And it worked out very well. We subsequently then wrote individual reports for the whole trip, each of us. Some were big, some were small. And that's what these reports are. And they are very revealing of the science, the politics, and so on.

LKW: Very interesting.

TEO: They also have a sequel. The sequel was: we've done everything now, and then they come in and say, "Well, we've done the treaty, let's call in the press." And so we called in the press. I never knew Moloney was such a good film star, but he did a tremendous job of presenting these empty pots! The stuff had not arrived!

LKW: Well, yeah, I thought.

TEO: And so, the Soviets were handing over cardboard boxes, we were handing -- and we were having high language about this wonderful Memorandum of Understanding that is buttressing, etcetera. And it was all --

LKW: Theater.

TEO: Theater.

LKW: So you're signing a protocol about, I thought, the *future* exchange of information and reagents in viruses. But there was some kind of theater for the televisions?

TEO: Oh yes, we started with actual transfer. The Rauscher leukemia virus, Moloney leukemia virus.

LKW: And you had brought these with you, brought samples of these?

TEO: We had them flow in, but they didn't come in time.

LKW: I see, so the intention was that they would be there.

TEO: The intention was and furthermore, there's provision in there for renewing supplies of these for a number of years.

LKW: Right, that was the part that I assumed. Okay.

TEO: We ended up with a very good Memorandum of Understanding. I think we all agreed it was a common sense approach, which was good. There were no hard feelings, I think, at the finish. The final, small snafu was kind of funny, because now they've apparently decided I'm number one, and I couldn't persuade anybody! The worst thing happened. We were headed that evening for [Leningrad's Kirov Theater]. And, they provided us with cars. And now that we've had a successful meeting, they decide that they're going to have a car for the leader of the delegation, and they're going have to have a second car for the others. So there's two guys, and they're pushing me into this car! I said, "Nyet, nyet! [No, no! in Russian]." They're making a mistake -- "Oh, no, no, no, no." Moloney wasn't too happy about that. And then we get to the ballet at the Kirov in Leningrad, and they usher us in to the balcony -- you may have seen it, where the Tsar used to sit. They immediately push me down in the Tsar's seat. I said, "Wrong, wrong, wrong." And Moloney said, "Get down, sit down in your chair."

LKW: He doesn't want any trouble; he just wants everybody sitting, huh?

TEO: That's right! So what did we do? We became diplomats! What we did was, we waited until the first act was over, and at that I got up and said, "John, the other guys must sit where the Tsar sat. Why don't you lead them and sit down?" So John sat. Once John sat, [Professor Robert] McAllister, you'll find McAllister was from Los Angeles. He was a wonderful human being, and he brought so much fun to our endeavors that I think you'll enjoy reading it. But he made a great thing of sitting in the seat of the Tsar, so you'll find that, in the report, that the sitting in the seat of the Tsar was such an important thing. So, I hope I've conveyed to you that the second trip was essentially a sub-[negotiation] for the State Department.

LKW: Yes, I understand.

TEO: And essentially, it ended up in what the Russians called a "Protocol" and we called a "Memorandum of Understanding."

LKW: Right. I don't want to keep you too long, but I have some more questions about how you made the draft in the Paris hotel room, and then, it sounds like you had a few drafts while you were in Moscow?

TEO: I'm sorry?

LKW: It sounds like you went through, from your handwritten draft to a couple of other drafts of this Protocol or Memo? And then we ended up at this televised ceremony. What were the meetings like; there certainly must have been a lot of back and forth. What was that all like, those negotiations?

TEO: I normally don't believe that collective actions work well. This time it did. I think we'd been wrapped up in the drama of the various personae, what we're aiming at, and the importance of having these two countries, the world's leading [nations] and so on — that they cooperate together on something. And so, I think we were conscious of that; I think we were conscious of being US citizens, looking for the day for the freedom of [these two peoples]... And we had one or two experiences that were very moving. One I haven't mentioned, but when we got to Leningrad, we perceived that the controlling power in the medical research lay in Moscow, [and that] Leningrad, on the other hand, was very low on the totem pole. So, there was a structure that the work -- Boris Lapin was obviously a front guy -- that there wasn't anything of substance there. On the other hand, Blokhin was [overseeing some] solid, good science, but that's out of Moscow. Sukhumi: secondary science.

LKW: Okay. That [Sukhumi] is where Lapin 's institute was.

TEO: Latvia: in between. So we formed these judgments. I think we were all pretty much in agreement on these, and very frankly, when there were 20 directors waiting for that Memorandum, we split that work up fast. And I think it really impressed the Soviets to see these six delegates cooperating, working together, and getting the thing done. And we got it done.

LKW: I see, so now I think I understand better. The American side basically worked on -- after having seen a bit more of the science, you all created a Protocol -- your Memorandum on your own, and the Soviets did their side on their own. There was not a lot of negotiation.

TEO: Right. It's rather interesting; you find at the end of the second meeting, there's a series of six individual reports in which we set forth our understanding of the science. But we had that. So that had been done. It was like a jury: it was very easy to reach a consensus. And for once, the consensus worked, and there was no ego, that I saw, involved. I think it was a very impressive performance. And, sure, we and the Soviets stage-managed it a bit by having the empty cardboard boxes, that were not to be mentioned outside of the room. But we came away from it: (A) that we were exchanging certain reagents, that we knew each other well; we would respect what each other was doing; that we would be following each other's work; that there would be an exchange of people. Now the part I don't have is Moloney came back from that, and three to six months later, he then organized the first joint meeting right here in Bethesda. We brought their people over here. And Boris Lapin and his people were there; Viktor Zhdanov[, who] was a little below Blokhin, but nonetheless a very important figure, especially in virology. Now, I was not involved in organizing these meetings, though Moloney kindly invited me.

TEO: Since I had received appointment as Director of Cancer and Biological Research at [the US Department of Energy's] Argonne [National] Laboratory, and an adjunct appointment as Professor at the University of Chicago.

LKW: Oh, this was when you went to Argonne. Okay.

TEO: So, I'd moved out. So, my only involvement was that I was at a meeting in San Diego, and the Russian Delegation arrived, and a funny thing happened. They came in a big station wagon. And I had my small car; they had a big thing and six top Soviet [scientists], including Rita Kukaine.

LKW: Interesting.

TEO: So, they came along: Boris Lapin was there, Rita Kukaine, Viktor Zhdanov, and so on. And, just as a courtesy, I offered to be their escort. And then, two things happened: Rita Kukaine jumped out of the car, and she took out a camera and snapped a picture. And then suddenly, I saw her face go white, and the Russians -- really still. She had photographed the San Diego Naval base, which in the Soviet Union would be real, real trouble. And so, she was really upset. And I came up and said, "Rita, no cause for concern. Come over here." And I led her over to where there was [an information board], and in it were listed the nuclear submarines in the harbor, and her picture had encompassed it. So I said, "Rita, we give this information to all who come. So you're not going to jail this time. Just don't worry."

LKW: That's funny.

TEO: So, they immediately came up with a request, and the request was: would I take them to Tijuana, down in Mexico. And I said, "Sorry, sorry." I said, "You're going to discover something very important about the USA, and that is: it's very easy to leave, but it's very tough to get back in, if your papers are not in order. So as much as I like you folks, I can't take you to Tijuana." Now that was my last meeting with the US delegation. Because my career, as you saw, went a different direction. But I look back, and the difference between the two meetings -- each was a part, the first one gave a wealth of information, which I think, I hope, was in that large report of the first meeting [typescript "U.S.-Soviet Health Exchange in Virology 1967. Timothy E. O'Connor, Delegation Rapporteur," included in Dr. O'Connor's donated files]. And the second meeting, I think, for citizens who didn't know any formal diplomacy, I think we did a pretty good job.

LKW: That's true, when you think about that. Yes, no training whatsoever.

TEO: Basically these were events that were funny. Let me tell you one final story about -- each of us did something that, we looked back and said, "We were dumb, to do something like this" -- the normal human stuff. So, there's a number of things that happened to each of the eleven of us, but they're not material I would put in the report that might circulate to the White House, or something like that. So, we used restraint on that. But I must tell you that on the first [1967] trip, when we were still in very frigid relations with the Soviets, we were, in effect, waiting for them to tell us where we'd go. I had read in the book that I mentioned -- John Gunther's *Inside USSR*, where he told the story of a guy who played with puppets. This guy was the puppet star in the Soviet Union. The important feature about him though, was that his puppets made fun of Stalin.

LKW: Oh my.

TEO: And I said to myself, a guy who makes fun of Stalin, playing with puppets, is in danger of disappearing very rapidly. And I said, "He must be a remarkable guy, so why don't we go and see the puppet show." The guys said, "Well, we were waiting, 'let's go.'" Well, we had dinner. And we have had experience of cuisine in the Soviet Union: cuisine is good, but at that time, we received a menu which was [distributed] throughout the entire country. And there'd be about a hundred items on it, but when you got down to the nitty-gritty, there were ten.

LKW: Right. I've had that experience, too.

TEO: And, number two, they would take their time in serving you. Dinner would take three hours for you to finish -- beginning to end. So finally, we were barely in time to catch the show, and we said we better run and catch the show. So we ran to the subway station, got on the subway, and so on. We'd now been in the Soviet Union a little while, and suddenly I saw a very pretty lady, and I looked at her, and didn't pay attention to where I was going, and I went up the wrong elevator. Immediately I think, "those boys have gone away from me" -- I'll just go. So I went out -- no sign of the guys. As usual, there was a lady selling tickets in the front. I said, "Drei Amerikanski siuda [Three Americans -- this way]?" "Nyet, nyet, nyet [no, no, no]." They're obviously not there, so I went around. Tried the second theater, there were several theaters at that place -- I didn't know where I was in Moscow! So I went around -- about three ladies, and they all waved me on, not let me in. The next one I came to, number four, I figured, this is where they probably came out. So I went in and I said, "Amerikanski?" "Da, da, da [Yes, yes, yes]." So, this lady waved me in, and now the play is just about to start, and I've only time. I'm way up front in the front seat. And I look around, and I say "Well, this is very peculiar. Puppets require intimate, close -- but this is a very large building." Then I realized I was in the wrong theater. The lights went out, the ballet began, and the ballet was beautiful, except that it was all consisting of tyrants victimizing these poor ladies, the capitalist tyrants versus the [others]. I said, "Gee whiz, this doesn't look like the puppet show to me, and it sounds like downright Communist propaganda thing!" And then I looked at them [the audience members surrounding me], and every one of them had a special badge in their pocket and so on.

LKW: I see.

TEO: Then I realized I was at a fiftieth anniversary celebration of the October Revolution, the October 1917 revolution, and they were all deputies of the Soviet Parliament. And here am I, a U. S. civil servant.

LKW: And you're with them.

TEO: Without tickets, without payments, sitting in the front row. I saw that there was an immediate problem: do I applaud? What do I do? And I finally came up to that -- wait, the second act was just about to begin. When it did, the whole propaganda stopped. It was beautiful; I was fascinated. I said "The heck with this, I'm going to watch this for a while. Then they started building to the climax; this is when I got out. So I slink out, come out, and there's cabs outside. I go up to the first cab -- okay, and I said, "Gostinitisa Varshava, pozhaluista [Hotel Warsaw, please]." "Nyet, nyet,!" And he throws me out of the cab. I move over to a second cab. I didn't know -- I assumed -- what happens in New York and other cities all the time: a taxi will take you if he's going your way.

LKW: Oh, only if he's going your way?

TEO: I didn't know. When I said, "To Gostinitisa Varshava [Hotel Warsaw]," they weren't going my way.

LKW: I see.

TEO: So after I've been thrown out three times, I formed a conclusion: I've obviously got a rough night ahead, unless I find my way back.

LKW: Yeah.

TEO: So I said -- I remember in the theory of searching for something. Aim in any direction you choose, continue that direction until you see something you recognize and then follow that. So I did, I started to walk. And I started to walk about eleven o'clock at night through the streets, etcetera. "How do I get home?" The bus, you probably know -- up front, the bus driver is usually a lady. Number two, she pays no attention to anything except stopping the bus and starting it.

LKW: Right.

TEO: You can't talk to her, there's a glass between you, and it's an honorific payment; you pay on the honor system. I think it was four kopecks I had to put. I checked my pockets, what kopecks do I have? The tram stops, I said, "Gee, this looks familiar." Then I realized we'd been on the road when we went to the Embassy, the Great Circle Road. I didn't know this was -- and I have a problem, do I go north or do I go south? Of course, I didn't know it went in a circle. So I climbed aboard this one, and there was a lovely, old babushka lady sitting on the seat opposite me.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: And she saw I was flustered, and she saw I was obviously foreign, which -- the clothes I was wearing. I mean they come up and try to buy your suit off you often, in the streets. So, I went aboard -- I was shuffling to get my money, when she comes with four kopecks, and drops them one by one into the receiver. And I said, "Isn't it -- there are lovely people in Moscow. It's not all bad here, there are lovely people as well as others."

LKW: Interesting.

TEO: And I said, "I've got to thank her." And I froze -- I couldn't think of the word --

LKW: How to say...

TEO: Please or thank you, "Spasibo [Thank you]" or, etcetera. She smiled benignly at me, and I tried to smile benignly, and I said, "What am I going to do?" And finally, we came to a stop, and she waved to me to get off and I -- it suddenly dawned on me -- "Goodnight" -- "Spokoinoi nochi! Spasibo! [Good night! Thank you!]" And I climbed out. Now, I recognize, it's next to Gorky Park, and the hotel and so on. So I walked through the part of Gorky Park --

LKW: You recognized it, I see.

TEO: And I went back to my hotel. I go upstairs, and of course, I get ribbed by the rest of the boys, and they're ribbing me. And they said, "We thought you were lost forever." And the KGB guy, who's our host, he said, "Did you know that we had all the police in Moscow looking for you?"

LKW: Oh.

TEO: Well, I said, "If you had, they weren't very effective."

LKW: Yeah, right. "Where were they when I needed them?"

TEO: So I look at that, and I learned one lesson that night, and that is. whenever you're going to a foreign city, particularly one with a different language that you don't speak, that your first purchase is a map, a street map, of the town and locate your hotel. I said I'm not too smart.

LKW: And I noticed you have a map in there [in your briefcase]; I didn't think you could buy a map of Moscow, though, at that time.

TEO: I'm not sure that I bought it in Moscow.

LKW: Okay, because you're faulting yourself for not having a map, but I don't know that you could have bought a map at that time.

TEO: Well, I'm not sure whether I bought it in Moscow or Helsinki.

LKW: I see, I see.

TEO: Where I went to next. I can only tell you that in Helsinki, you flew in, and as you're coming in -- you probably have seen it -- the beautiful red painted barns, clean farms. You can tell when you've gone over the border!

LKW: That I'm sure of.

TEO: A new land. When we got there -- I think, the Prince Hotel in Helsinki -- and we were invited by the scientists there to come and share the family sauna that evening.

LKW: I see.

TEO: So, after Moscow, the sauna was wonderful. I'll always remember, I'm sitting in the sauna with sweat pouring off me, and I remember those advertisements, at the time, on a Saturday night, you'd see an advertisement: "Go to church on Sunday." And "the family that prays together, stays together." They'd have this thing. It suddenly dawned on me -- here we are in connection of this person's family, and I said, "The family that sweats together [laughs], stays together."

LKW: That's funny.

TEO: But the contrast between Helsinki, with brilliant science going on in Helsinki and everything done in wood and so on, it's amazing to me that two places so close together can be so different. I look back and I think, it certainly was a very interesting trip, the two trips were.

LKW: I guess we probably should wrap up, but I think my question, my last question, you've indicated a little bit about the results, and how you feel that the diplomacy was effective, and the exchange of information and learning was good. Could you comment a little bit further on the results that you see? Was it mainly diplomatic; was it mainly scientific; was it both? If you could comment.

TEO: The first meeting was practically all information exchange, and it went from being very poor to reasonably good exchanges with the Soviet opposite number.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: It took time. I don't think anybody wanted to write any reports on it when they got back.

LKW: After that first trip?

TEO: After the first trip. I think part of it was twenty-one days was too long.

LKW: I see.

TEO: It was pretty rough. The hardest part of it was, frankly, once the Russians decided to deal with us, they wined and dined you so much that it was just a devil to get any work done. And as I think I mentioned, we had a suspicion that this was deliberate.

LKW: Right.

TEO: And that, I think, there was not a direct continuity. Our guys, when they came back, dissolved. Us six have never been together since. That's not true, I think, of the second meeting. I think all of us -- and I think the reason is it ended with a diplomatic product. We were effective.

LKW: Interesting. Together as a team.

TEO: And I think reading those reports, I think you'd see there's a mutual respect among the six delegates. There's good compatibility. For a bunch of guys that had never been involved in diplomacy, I think we did a damn good job. We might have done better if I had the telephone number of the place we were meeting when I got to the Embassy.

LKW: Yeah.

TEO: But it was revealing to us, and so on, the way they saw it.

LKW: Interesting.

TEO: Now I think that died out very fast, that once they came for the next meeting, on this side.

LKW: In the US?

TEO: On this side. Now, I don't know how many years that lasted, but what we could say is, there was no biological, immediate threat that we were able to pick to the United States.

LKW: True. There was nothing you were able to view in the Soviet Union that posed a biological threat, is that what you mean?

TEO: Yes.

LKW: Okay. Which was part of the point, was to find that out.

TEO: I think, without stating it, we were all alert to the possibility of watching out for biological warfare.

LKW: I see.

TEO: One has to recognize that something happened later, that there was an agreement that one of the viruses -- smallpox virus -- we didn't deal with that. But, subsequently, the Soviets went ahead and broke the treaty and made the thing.

LKW: Right.

TEO: So, but that's it. The détente that we established was short-lived.

LKW: I see.

TEO: So you have no guarantee in those things.

LKW: Yes.

TEO: But I think quiet diplomacy does work, of exchanging and so on. And I think we were intelligent, we weren't brash, we didn't lord it over them. As a matter of fact, on the first meeting, we had one Italian citizen in the group, who was not an American citizen.

LKW: Oh, really?

TEO: And that really threw the Soviets. And we said, "We're all immigrants." I said, "I'm an immigrant."

LKW: And you were a citizen but this man, this participant was not.

TEO: That's right.

LKW: I see.

TEO: And I regard being a citizen as very serious. And I think the other, I think another guy was also by birth, not United States. And that the government would trust newcomers to the country with any kind of [important international] thing -- I think that impressed them.

LKW: Interesting.

TEO: I think that [the Russians we met had] a genuine respect and liking for Americans, and sometimes it is hidden in language that suggests the opposite.

LKW: That's very interesting, everything that you've said. I think that that covers everything that I had meant to ask you specifically. I don't know if there's anything else you want to add. I mean, that's not to say that there won't be other times that I think it would be good to talk about this. I don't know whether we would consider this the end of our conversation all together, but for today.

TEO: I would like just to set the stage, I'd like to read the last paragraph of the first trip [report] and the last paragraph of the second trip [report].

LKW: Okay.

TEO: Just an impression of what we tried to do on this trip.

LKW: Okay. I'll turn off the tape for a second. I'm going to turn on the tape in case as you're looking at this document you see something you want to remark on from the 1967 trip.

TEO: Just, the last part -- this is, of course, 1967.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: Not very eloquent, it just says, "That afternoon our guide saw us off at the airport. Our last flight on Aeroflot was pleasant. The pleasant stewardess, this time in uniform, served us grapes and champagne. An hour later, the neat housing and tidy farms of Southern Finland were underneath. The courtesy and efficiency of the Finnish immigration and customs officials left an immediate impression. That evening, we had a final meal at the Palace restaurant overlooking the harbor. We reviewed our experiences and the many friends we had made, while we savored our freedom mightily." That was end of '67 [trip]. I tried a little more eloquence in the second one.

LKW: So now you have your -- is this going to be a report that you wrote after [the] 1972 [trip]?

TEO: Right. This was a picture taken at the time.

LKW: Is that -- who was that?

TEO: This is me.

LKW: That was you? Oh my goodness. Dapper in your smoking jacket.

TEO: This is in Moscow.

LKW: I see. And this is a photograph with the two flags.

TEO: This is Boris...

LKW: Is this Lapin?

TEO: No, not Lapin... Blokhin.

LKW: Okay, that's Blokhin?

TEO: And this is John B. Moloney.

LKW: Okay, this is the picture with Lenin and the two flags, we're looking at.

TEO: That's right. We're at the final stages coming down at the last stage.

LKW: I see, when you're coming up with your protocols.

TEO: Right. The list of all the people on that Soviet. Unfortunately [Dr.] Sol Spiegelman was to go, but he couldn't travel. Came down ill. This one, this is the Memorandum of Understanding.

LKW: Yes, I see, and the Russian-language Protocol.

TEO: Have I the right folder?

LKW: Oh, this is your reports here, this other folder, if that's what you're looking for.

TEO: Right. This is the collective report, of which I wrote quite a bit, and Moloney rightly altered some of that, corrected it.

LKW: I see, I see.

TEO: Right. The next one is from the associates and the Coordinator of Molecular Control, NCI. That's me.

LKW: That was your position, right?

TEO: So, essentially, I tried to give the political overview in this one.

LKW: I see.

TEO: Right -- Viktor Zhdanov... Petrov Institute, Leningrad.

LKW: So we're just leafing through this memo right now.

TEO: All right. [Reading] "Each delegate may recall this visit in a personal way. I suspect that after the memories of many gracious toasts have faded, another memory will remain. During our visit to Leningrad, Professor Rakov led us in a cold dusk to the Memorial Cemetery where approximately one million persons who died in the 900 days in the siege of Leningrad lie in a vast common grave. He slowly enumerated the list of his relatives who lay somewhere there. One had an intimation of the hunger and horror of that city thirty years before. Then we visited the Eternal Flame, and a monument inscribed in Russian: "Nothing is forgotten. Nichii [nothing] is forgotten." The thought occurred that our Soviet colleagues and we had honestly labored during the previous week to build a better health for men of all races. Perhaps we had moved to meet the hopes of some who lay there. Perhaps after all, nobody is forgotten." So, that's it.

LKW: So that's your, that would be your closing on what you would comment on those trips, right? Well, I want to thank you, again, Dr. O'Connor for coming to our offices and for sharing the materials and your recollections with us. And I hope that, if there are things that either you feel we haven't touched on, or perhaps if I decide there are some things that I would like to learn from you, that we might be able to speak in the future about them.

TEO: Right. First I'm going to leave all this stuff with you, that's number one. Number two, after you've had a chance to read both the individual reports I think in particular, and the Memorandum, but particularly this first one, '67.

LKW: Okay, the papers from 1967.

TEO: It's interesting to see the difference from '67 and '72.

LKW: Definitely.

TEO: But after you've read them and have a feel for it, if you have any further questions...

LKW: Okay, okay.

TEO: And essentially, what I want is that it find its way, where it's a small advance that contributed at a particular time.

LKW: That's right, that's right.

TEO: But that it is preserved.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: I must say, I wasn't aware of you folks until the week I picked up a magazine entitled "Technology Transfer."

LKW: Is that right?

TEO: And in it there's mention of a new member joining you.

LKW: I see.

TEO: That's the first I heard that you have a history unit here.

LKW: Yes.

TEO: Now, what I would recommend is that you folks, when you've read it through and decide how you're going to deal with it. Do you want to do a scholarly article on it or something like this? I'm for all encouraging that. I think it pays to have it a little more visible than the archives, that, when the next delegation goes over, they will have learnt maybe a little bit from this one.

LKW: Right.

TEO: And again, there are not too many of us left, and it will be nice to have it preserved as a little phase in the history of NIH.

LKW: Certainly, yes.

TEO: So, what I would recommend is that: do a read-through, some of it will be very technical, don't hesitate to call me.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: The one thing I will need though, to answer those questions, I have copies of everything, except that first '67 meeting. The biggie.

LKW: Okay.

TEO: And to send me by mail at your convenience; there's no rush. But if any problems came up, I would have it to answer your questions.

LKW: That's the one document [that you need]. Well, I'm going to take this chance then to turn off the recorder, since I think we're done with our recorded conversation and thank you once again.

TEO: And maybe you'd give a call to Dr. Dupere?

LKW: I'm sorry?

TEO: Dr. Dupere, who saw me here.

LKW: Of course. Okay, I'm going to turn it off.

End of Transcript

[1] Dr. O'Connor is referring here to the Bolshevik revolution of October 1917 and the subsequent Civil War (1918-1921) between "Red" forces (Bolsheviks), "White" forces (monarchists) and other political and militarized factions.

[2] Here the interviewee recalled Dr. Blokhin's name incorrectly: Dr. Blokhin's full name was Nikolai Nikolaevich Blokhin. Records indicate that he was Academician in the Academy of Medical Sciences, Chief Coordinator for the "Malignant Neoplasms" program, and director of the Institute of Experimental and Clinical Oncology (Moscow).

[3] Interviewee adds the subsequent comment: "My impression is that Viktor Zhdanov was a major factor in discussions on viruses in both the first and second visits, but that our day-to-day host on the second trip was Dr. Nikolai Trapeznikov, and the overall responsibility for policy on the Soviet side was borne by Blokhin."