

HARRIMAN INSTITUTE  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of

Susan Heuman

Columbia Center for Oral History

Columbia University

2016

## PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Susan Heuman conducted by William McAllister on August 4, 2016, and on January 5, 2017. This interview is part of the Harriman Institute Oral History Project.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that s/he is reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

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Session: 1

Interviewee: Susan Heuman

Location: New York, New York

Interviewer: William McAllister

Date: August 4, 2016

Q: My name is William McAllister. I'm a senior research fellow at INCITE [Interdisciplinary Center for Innovative Theory and Empirics] at Columbia University and I'm here today on August 4th, 2016 to talk with Susan Heuman. Dr. Heuman is currently a visiting scholar at the Harriman Institute and has written extensively on the history of legal and constitutional issues, as well as of legal culture in pre-revolutionary Russia, in Soviet Russia, in Eastern European nations and in non-Russian nationalities within the Soviet-Russian sphere. She's also written on human rights, again from an historical perspective, and has also taught extensively on these and other areas. So I'd like to start just by asking you about the origins of your interest in history and, specifically, history of Russia, Eastern Europe.

Heuman: Yes. Well, I had a certain amount of input from my home life. My parents were refugees from Hitler Germany and my father had spent some time in a German prison because he had gone to a communist school in the 1920s; once or twice had told me that he wished he had gone east, and I reminded him that we would not be alive if he had gone to Russia. Then we settled in a small town in southern New Jersey, inhabited mostly by republicans and some extremists such as the Ku Klux Klan and [unclear]. One of my classmates—it was around the time that Yuri [A.] Gagarin flew around the earth—organized a “better dead than red” rally. My father always believed in watching these rallies from a distance, so stood in the block behind and

he told me about the rallies he used to watch in Nazi Germany and how people feel really strong when they're in large groups, shouting patriotic slogans.

And a year later, this same fellow—who later, as an adult, became a state trooper in the state of New Jersey—invited me to dance at a party when I was seventeen. He suddenly looked down at me and said, “You think you're as good as the rest of us, don't you, you goddamn scum Jew.” After I escaped this situation I said to myself, If the Russians are an enemy and I'm an enemy, maybe I want to find out about them. So that's where it came from, and that started my interest in studying Russia and Russian language. Actually the town that I lived in had a number of Russian and Ukrainian émigrés. They had Ukrainian émigrés, they had Russian émigrés and they had Old Believer émigrés. The Old Believers were schismatics who broke with the Orthodox Church during the seventeenth century. Some of those émigrés became close friends of our family. I still have a little contact with some them.

Q: I noticed that you were—so you were an undergraduate, you were a Russian studies major at Douglas College.

Heuman: I was.

Q: Right. And how did you come to come to Columbia rather than some other place for graduate school? Is there any particular—

Heuman: Well, I had applied to—I had done Russian programs in the summers during undergraduate school. One of them was at the University of Michigan, another was Harvard University, and so I applied to several graduate schools for graduate work. I can't actually be sure whether my mind was so convinced or whether I was afraid to try something else, but I was involved in the Russian world and it was a very welcoming world for students at that time because grant money was available. I applied to several graduate schools, including the University of Michigan and Columbia, and curiously enough, all of my applications were lost, and part of the process of applying to be a guide for an American exhibit in Moscow. As I was going through the application process for that architectural exhibit, I was approached by a man who wanted me to "entertain" certain people in Moscow. I went through rather a tense time because I had met a lawyer in New Brunswick when I visited a courtroom to listen to his case. I was at Douglas College and I told him about the attempt to recruit [me] and that I was afraid for my life because this person told me something that I would have rather not known.

Q: This was an American who came to you?

Heuman: No, he had an accent, and I don't know who he was. I still don't know who he was exactly. But he had a connection to that exhibit which was part of the US-USSR cultural exchange.

Q: And the exhibit was an exhibit that the Russians were putting on in Moscow?

Heuman: No, the Americans were putting on an architectural exhibit, and I had zero expertise in architecture—even though I later married an architect. But what they needed were Russian speakers. But I already knew, because the famous Francis Gary Powers scandal had made me aware, that if you sign up to work with one government agency and somebody asks you to do something for another government agency, you may find yourself forgotten, ignored, or dead, as did the person who helped me find my apartment on 110th Street. Bob Barrett was a graduate student with Edward [A.] Allworth at the [Harriman] Institute and a few years after we guided a trip to the Soviet Union together, I learned that he mysteriously fell out of a window of a Moscow hotel and died. No one believed it was a suicide.

So that was later, but I knew that they—whoever they were—didn't really care about who they were asking to do what. If I was not careful, I too could end up dead and lost and no one would care. They would just cover it. So I went to this attorney that I met in New Brunswick and I said, "I'm really scared." And he said, "Well, I happen to be friends with the head of Soviet-American Exchanges in Washington, so I'm going to talk to him." So I told him the whole story—because I used to observe his law cases—and he came back to me and he said, "I just want you to know that the fact that you're not going to Moscow is probably one of the most important decisions of your life. I can't tell you any more than that."

So my admission to Columbia's Russian Institute was on the telephone because I had called up several times to ask, "Did you find my application?" And finally it was found and I was admitted on the telephone by Zbigniew [K.] Brzezinski, and that was the beginning of my student days at

Columbia. Because I was admitted in that way, there was no scholarship money for me. It was too late to apply.

Q: You were admitted to—so this is 1965 that you came?

Heuman: Yes, it was.

Q: And you were admitted simultaneously to the Russian Institute and the history department?

Heuman: Yes. You had to be in a department as well as in the Russian Institute.

Q: So in general what was your association over your graduate student life with the Russian Institute?

Heuman: Well, it was very close because—first of all, in those days, to get a certificate from the Russian Institute, you had to do three years of coursework to get the certificate and an MA. It was a long haul, and then you went for your PhD if you were going to do the doctoral program. They cut those requirements way down now. The students knew on another well and also the faculty. The professors were all excellent and good professional [unclear].

Q: The courses were courses that were taught under the aegis of the Russian Institute by people from different departments, is that correct?

Heuman: Yes, we had political science courses—we actually had a course on Russian philosophy taught by the father of Serge Schmemmann, who writes for the *[New York] Times*. Father Schmemmann taught us this course on Russian philosophy, which was memorable. And we had literature courses. I mean, it was a very broad background in Russian studies. I studied literature with Professor Robert Maguire, East European Politics, and Soviet History with Professor Loren Graham.

Q: I want to at some point talk to the area studies aspect of that. But just sticking for the moment with your specific memories of the time there and the faculty, are there faculty that you particularly worked with? And speaking to the point you just made before about tension between the faculty, are there faculty that had particular tensions? And what was your sense of the source of those tensions?

Heuman: Well, I didn't fully understand it in the beginning. They didn't do anything overt. It was only later. Well, I worked with Professor Leopold Haimson and I worked with Marc Raeff, and those two people did not necessarily see eye to eye, but I never watched any confrontation between them. I think they kind of operated in separate realms, even though they were both Russian historians, and important ones.

Q: Operating in different realms in what way? Just a field of interest?

Heuman: Well, often one would be on leave and the other one would be there, or you know, you didn't have a feeling that there was a deep cooperation. But they were just different personalities. But at that time, I don't think I understood that very well. I was pretty young.

Q: And how did you come to appreciate it afterwards?

Heuman: Well, a lot of it had to do with politics because Leopold Haimson saw himself as a leftist and a radical and had a very hard time during the '68 uprisings. And I think that Raeff was much more conservative and—I mean, you know, conservative. Haimson wanted to throw himself into what was going on, and Raeff—you didn't see him around. There was somebody else who was wonderful at that time was Peter [H.] Juviler, who I met at that time who was teaching Political Science at Barnard.

Q: Did you have any contact with the kind of political science crowd at the time much? I mean, Brzezinski, [Seweryn] Bialer, John [N.] Hazard—those folks?

Heuman: Yes, well I studied with those people because remember, I had three years of [laughter]. So Hazard, I did his law course and later I got to know him and I traveled with his whole family to Siberia on several trips. So I knew his world and his kids and spent time with him. Bialer, at one point I even worked for him, but for a short time. I studied with Brzezinski—a huge lecture course, which was interesting because some of us didn't think we agreed with his politics, but he was the only guy that came out and warned us to take note of [unclear] about

nationalities and the problems of nationalities before the breakup of the Soviet Union. It is very interesting to look back on this because it was 196[8].

Q: When you were traveling with Hazard and his family, this is—

Heuman: That was later.

Q: —after graduate school?

Heuman: Well, sort of later into, you know, as I was already doing a dissertation.

Q: I was thinking a little bit about Hazard because your work is in law and legal culture and, you know, that was his field.

Heuman: Right, well he said I was one of the first people to do a dissertation in the law area.

Q: What was your sense of the interaction between the history department and the Russian Institute at the time?

Heuman: I don't think I have an answer for that. I think I was too much a student and too lost in trying to figure out—navigate my way through what was happening.

Q: It sounds as if you were more—your identity, if you will, and your more kind of institutional association was probably with the Russian Institute more than it was with the—

Heuman: Oh, it was.

Q: —with the history department, even though your degree is a PhD in history.

Heuman: Right, I took excellent courses in the History Department, but my focus was on Russia.

Q: Partly picking up on your Brzezinski point, and we'll talk a little bit later about nationality studies, but I was wondering at the time, at the Russian Institute, was there a sense that it was too Russia focused rather than, say, pan-Slavic focused or studying the other nationalities, both within the Soviet Union, but also in Eastern Europe?

Heuman: Well, I actually didn't understand that until I was doing my dissertation, and I found myself on a subject, which turned out to be a Ukrainian subject. The [unclear] book that I wrote was about a member of the Russian intelligentsia and I had no idea he was Ukrainian. And suddenly I found myself very isolated because my advisor was not very interested in the nationalist issue [at] that time. I had to find my way through it. I had Ukrainian and I had to learn new material on my own. I was a pioneer in a certain sense. By studying the life of Kistiakovsky and his family, I learned about Ukrainian national feelings and activism. But nothing like what we see now. I remember as a graduate student—this was early '70s I started looking at this subject. Professor Raeff did some very interesting work that he did on the legal reforms of 1822.

Q: Was Allworth doing anything at the—

Heuman: I didn't study with Allworth at that time. I got to know Allworth because I presented the paper of Robert Barrett at a conference in honor of Allworth. So I didn't study with him, sadly. I mean, I think that there were nationality studies. I think I just had to know how to find them.

Q: And you had to find them more kind of on your own rather than at the Institute as a whole kind of, or—

Heuman: Well, unless you were already oriented that way. I mean, I don't know that I was, but that could of have been my shortcoming more than the Institute's, who knows? People were pretty young coming into this and then overwhelmed by all the information they were supposed to absorb, so I'm not sure whether that isn't just my fault that I didn't broaden my horizons.

Q: There are various ways in which the Russian Institute at the time promoted intellectual life. There was the TV satellite broadcast of Soviet news. Was that going on at that time?

Heuman: No, not at my time.

Q: OK, that was later then. In addition to the coursework, would there be, like, brownbag lunches?

Heuman: Oh, yes.

Q: I'm just trying to kind of get a sense of the intellectual life and how inclusive they were with the students.

Heuman: Yes, no, there were a lot of activities. There were a lot of brownbag lunches—and while we were students, the university admitted Soviet exchange students over and students from other parts of the East Bloc. We were encouraged to meet with those students so that we could understand more about that part of the world and improve our Russian, but [laughs]. And later I found out that something else was added—students were being recruited to report on other students that met with those East Bloc students.

Q: So were those students kind of incorporated into the life of the Russian Institute or was it more kind of individual student on student contact?

Heuman: More kind of individual students. I don't know exactly what those students [unclear] studying. I knew something about some Russian students because my Russian was a little better than the Russian of a lot of people, so some of these students would talk to me, and they would just come over to converse. And we were friends. But then they would be followed to my place. And then—

Q: They were followed?

Heuman: One was followed and then questions were asked about what was I doing in my apartment talking to that person? All of these students were sent without wives, without children and so, you know, and some of them might have gotten into affairs. I knew of one student who had an affair with a Russian exchange student. They were young people.

Q: Was there exchange the other way at this time? Did you or did other students go to the Soviet Union?

Heuman: Yes. Those exchanges of Americans going to Russia for research. The exchange program was known and IUCTG [Inter-University Committee on Travel Grants].

Q: Was the Institute kind of supportive of this? Did they provide resources to do this?

Heuman: No, you applied and you applied to something called the IUCTG, the Inter-University Committee on—something, grants and something. That later was IREX.

Q: It was a Columbia—

Heuman: No, it wasn't. It was out in the Midwest somewhere. Maybe it was Indiana or Illinois. But it was run by a different—so you applied to that, and everybody knew where to apply and what to do.

Q: And the money would come from them.

Heuman: Yes, so there were exchange possibilities. But they were mostly for research, for graduate students for going into the archives, if one could get in.

Q: So switching topics a little bit in the sense of kind of a context, thinking about, like, the bigger events at the time and their relationship to how you experienced, and now or then observed, what was happening at the Russian Institute, you had the world events, of course, of the Vietnam War building and crashing eventually; you had the Czech [Prague] Spring in 1968; here in the United States you had the Civil Rights Movement and violence in general in the United States. At Columbia of course you had the famous protests in 1968 in April over Martin Luther King's death, building the gym in Morningside Park and of course the war, and then you had Columbia calling in the police, and in that context—well first of all, let me ask—was there anything else that you see as a kind of major event at the time that was potentially, or did, from your observation, have some relationship to you as a graduate student, the Russian Institute and you as a graduate student, those kinds of—

Heuman: Well, 1968 was a real—it became an intellectual test for a lot of the students. We were all in Professor Haimson's seminar and the radicalization was going on. And so there were a lot of discussions about whether we were talking about the 1905 Revolution or the 1917 Revolution at that time. Where were we? Because we saw it, perhaps in a very distorted fashion, as a revolution. Well, it was worldwide. We were looking at things happening in Europe and all parts

of the United States. We were not just looking at Columbia. And so we saw it as a more dramatic event than possibly it was.

Now, I don't know if you know this, but Professor Haimson actually was accused by one of his students of being a traitor because it was very hard for professors to take a stance in this time. He ended up having a nervous breakdown. His students were dedicated to him, so after his brief hospitalization, we continued having our classes, actually in my apartment on 110th Street. And I still remember the University was on shutdown.

Q: Haimson's breakdown happened in 1968?

Heuman: Yes, late in '68. But it was very hard. And it's at that point that I met Professor Juviler who somehow, in his very formal wonderful way, didn't have any problem. He just operated on principle. And I don't know what caused Haimson to have a crisis whether it was some frailty within him. It probably was. It probably was a little deeper than just the events of 1968.

Q: When you said that Peter Juviler had no problem, what'd you mean? He had no problem—

Heuman: Well, he just stood out there, steady, demonstrating. And it's at that point that we became very long-term friends. And I published articles in two books he did on human rights, one that he edited, and various projects. He even asked me to take his place guiding a trip down the Volga [River] once, giving lectures. He was a very principled guy. I never studied with him, but we knew each other very well through our mutual interest in human rights. My first job at

Columbia was at the Center for the Study of Human Rights, which is where I met Professor Juviler.

Q: What was the response at the Russian Institute to all this—to, you know, what was going on in the world, to the Czech Spring, for example, to the events at Columbia? [Marshall D.] Shulman was, I think, head at this time.

Heuman: I don't know. I remember that Andrew [W.] Cordier, who was the head of the School of International Affairs, gave a speech, which many of us ridiculed at that time. I think I was sitting near Steve [Stephen F.] Cohen and Cordier said, "Are we here to get an education or make a revolution?" And I think he lost his audience as soon as he uttered those words. I remember that. I think many of us who had migrated to the left, if we weren't already there to begin with, didn't go to the University then, because the University was shut down.

Q: This is the spring of 1968?

Heuman: Yes. Either people were involved in the sit in or the University was shut down. I personally at a certain point felt—first of all, many students were very upset about the police going in and negotiating separately with the black students who had taken over in Hamilton [Hall], I think, it was a very, very poorly thought-out way of dealing with things. And the separate negotiation with black students caused some of the white students to go completely crazy because they kept on trying to prove more and more that they were really committed to protecting the interests of black students as well as the strike program; so it radicalized and threw

the whole thing way out of control. But allegedly, the city was concerned about a revolt in Harlem, so the city officials didn't quite understand themselves what they were looking at. And the students in Hamilton were highly disciplined, serious young people. They were much more disciplined than the white students, who were more chaotic in style—some had more hippie elements their numbers.

Q: And were the other students, or other faculty—I mean, aside from Juviler and Haimson—how involved were they in the—

Heuman: Well, the students in Haimson's seminar, most of them were good friends. And we were very committed to the principles of '68 in general. And some of them were sitting in Fayerweather Hall. There was a group of students that was very progressive-minded. That's why we ended up having these discussions about, Are we in 1905 or 1917? And analyzing the various pieces of what was going on around us. It was an incredibly alive period, one in which we felt empowered to contribute to making the world a better place.

Q: Outside of Haimson's seminar, those folks—outside of those folks, were the students interested in getting engaged in what was happening?

Heuman: Yes, they were!

Q: —even the ones outside Haimson's, I mean aside from Haimson's class, or was it more focusing just on studying?

Heuman: No, no, no. They were involved. I mean, they were sitting in. Some of them were not around and some of us went off and did other things. I started doing a lot of other things.

Q: And aside from Haimson and Juviler, were the faculty supportive of what's inside?

Heuman: Well, there was also Alexander Erlich was also a very progressive-minded person. You know that in '68 when we got our certificates from the Russian Institute, you know there was an alternate graduation.

Q: No, I didn't know.

Heuman: And we were presented with our certificates by Alexander Erlich in an alternate space. My memory of this is a little vague, but I do remember that that happened.

Q: And the reason for the alternate space was?

Heuman: Well, opposition to the behavior of the University in relation to the War in Vietnam, the gymnasium, and race relations. All of these issues hadn't been resolved and we were getting our degrees. [laughs] The end of the spring was coming around and we were getting these Russian Institute certificates and I guess that the university wanted to see to it that people weren't held back by the events.

Q: So the people, everyone who was getting a Russian certificate in the spring of 1968 had this alternative graduation?

Heuman: No, only those who elected to go to the alternate grad—and the others went to the regular graduation—I just don't remember. I just remember those people who were committed to the strike went to alternate graduation.

Q: Partly I asked that because I was trying to get a sense of the Institute as an institute. You know, as an intellectual, organizational body of how it was responding to '68 and—

Heuman: Well, that was in part the response, I think, of some of the faculty. It was not the response of the entire Institute. There were many faculty who were horrified by the students actions on campus.

[INTERRUPTION]

Heuman: I guess I should say that we did listen to what was happening on the main campus because we attended a meeting on 113th Street where Andrew Cordier spoke, which was memorable, so we must have been getting these messages by going up there and finding out what was going on or communicating with each other. But it was before the computer era, so it was a different scene.

Q: Switching from the more local events—Czech Spring also happened in '68 and its subsequent crushing. How were people responding or thinking about that at the Institute at the time? Were there particular faculty who were—were there seminars about it or any discussions?

Heuman: I think there was just a sense of desperation about it. I mean, I think the interest was in the reactions among certain people inside the Soviet Union to it rather than our reaction because there were people that very, very heroically stood up against it, like Pavel [M.] Litvinov and some others. I was kind of consumed because I had some family members who were here from Prague and when the Soviets invaded, I still remember the elder's voice saying, "Every time I leave the country, someone invades." And I remember I had a buddy from the law school who called me up on the phone and he said, "Listen, Susan, the Russians have just invaded." And he had just met my Czech family who was staying with me. And I said, "Well, I don't like your sense of humor," and I slammed the phone down. So then the next thing I remember he was hammering on my door and I heard his voice, "Susan, I wasn't kidding." [laughs] So there was this disbelief. I mean, so many things happened in that period, assassinations. But I think the focus in the Institute was on whether this wasn't going to push a wedge into the monolithic Soviet style of rule. There was hope for [unclear] the way the Soviet Union was ruled.

Q: The Czech Spring might have had that impact. That was kind of an expectation or a hope of people at the Institute.

Heuman: I think so. And there was always that iconic video of a Russian soldier sticking his head up out of a tank saying, “*Я тоже человек*,” meaning, I’m also a human being, you know? But I wasn’t part of the administration of the Institute, so I didn’t get—

Q: No, I understand that, and it’s just from your sense as a student at the time—

Q: Right, right, right.

Q: —and I appreciate, you know, obviously as a student you have a very different take on things, but whether you had observed the faculty—

Heuman: But the thing is that we were studying history and looking for historical references to present events. We were focused on the period right at the turn of the twentieth century, or earlier, so the people doing political science would have had more to say about that than I, like Cohen maybe, or people that were, you know, actually looking at current events on a pretty regular basis.

Q: One of the tensions or creative tensions or problematic tensions, however you want to think of it, for the Russian Institute over its history seems to have been one between policy influence and knowledge development or, you know, the policy side versus the intellectual side. And there’s an analogy there perhaps also between its role as supplementing professional training of people versus training PhD students in the humanities and the social sciences. Do you think that, again, for when you were there, this is an accurate characterization of tensions? Or was there no tension

at all between this idea of, you know, influencing policy while also pursuing the life of the mind, if you will, in terms of developing knowledge and doing intellectual work?

Heuman: Yes, I think this is an accurate characterization of tensions. Some of the History students were so alienated from American policy that I don't think there was as much interaction as you would think. I think they lived in separate worlds, and the world of that training of history was very, very rich and there was oftentimes parallels being drawn between what was happening then and what was happening much later in time. So that's about the best answer I can give you. Until the draft touched students lives!

Q: They were leading separate lives in terms of: there were people at the Institute who wanted to be involved with policy, both students and faculty, and they kind of did their thing and then the—

Heuman: Right. Yes, we lived separate lives. We sometimes—I took a course with Shulman and I took a course with Brzezinski, but then you know, I made it through the course and then that's where that stopped. My focus was on the search for social justice in [a] Russian historical context.

Q: From your observation, the ones who were more interested in policy tended to be the political science folks, or is that an overstatement?

Heuman: Well, it might be an overstatement. I think we all looked at policy. We just didn't engage in discussions as often. It was hard when you had, for instance, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia was a dramatic event that might have totally changed the status quo in the USSR and the East Bloc.

Q: Sad because—

Heuman: But somehow, you know, there was a whole—there were some of us that were a little less anti-Soviet than others, and that's maybe where you want to draw the line. There were some of us that were really trying to understand the Soviet Union for what it was doing and what it was trying to do and other people that saw them as the enemy forces, à la Joseph [R.] McCarthy. Some of us in the history field I think had a more open mind.

Q: Yes. One of the other—talking about policy at the time, this was '70, '71, is the whole [Richard M.] Nixon, [Henry A.] Kissinger policy of détente. Did you have a sense that the Institute was kind of—well, A, played any role in advising about this and trying to contribute to this?

Heuman: Yes, they did advise on this, though it was not the center of my world. I forget, when did Marshall Shulman go in as a state department advisor? I forgot what year.

Q: He came and went as director and he went, I think—I can't remember—I don't think it was then. I think later with Cyrus [R.] Vance when Vance was [James E. "Jimmy"] Carter's

Secretary of State. So I think this is under Kissinger. He probably wouldn't have been there then.

But—

Heuman: I'll tell you a cute story about Shulman. Shulman, I congratulated him on his appointment.

Q: Appointment to be the head of the Russian Institute?

Heuman: No, his appointment in Washington [D.C.].

Q: Oh, I see.

Heuman: And his response to me was, "I don't know whether you should be congratulating me or offering me condolences." [laughter] So there you have it. That kind of gives you an idea of [laughs] what we were all facing. It was a very fraught circumstance to be in. I mean, it was all very exciting, but it was also fraught.

Q: And could you elaborate on what you mean by fraught?

Heuman: Well, for me, it involved people constantly evaluating what you're doing. And in his case, I think that he wanted to do something useful and he realized he was going to have his hands tied in many instances. So his situation was very different from the rest of us. I by that time had descended into pretty radical activities.

Q: When you said you had to put up with—referring to yourself—people evaluating what you were doing—

Heuman: If they knew.

Q: —who were the evaluators?

Heuman: Well, anybody that would find out what you were doing. And I mean, in my case, I started running an underground railway for anti-war soldiers who were on the run because I decided that the University was rather narrow-focused and so I had gone to a march in Washington I met some soldiers who needed help. And I started trying to get lawyers to take cases and trying to tell us where these poor guys could turn themselves in. I don't know. I developed a very different view of things because my first year of teaching was in 1969, and it was a year that a lot of people don't realize was the one year there was no lottery system. And I was teaching in the ghettos and I had probably 80 percent non-white students, and there were a couple Columbia graduate students up there doing what I was doing, but maybe teaching slightly different courses. And the students appeared in front of us with tears rolling down their faces and so some people gave them straight A's. I wrote up agreements with the students and I said, you do this and I'll do this. You're in control. But the interesting thing is in one of the 1968 reunions, I encountered Professor [Allan A.] Silver of the sociology department. What was his first name?

Q: Allan.

Heuman: Allan Silver. Since there was no lottery system, students, if they didn't do well in school, they would be drafted. And Allan Silver then told me that the same thing was happening at Columbia, that if a student's grades weren't up to par, they would be the ones to be pulled out and drafted. But faculty members protested releasing grades to government agencies. And that's what got me involved with soldiers, because I felt there was something—I was a very strange feminist and I felt that if these guys were going through this angst, then women should go through it too and at least we have to do something about helping them. It was very, very troubling, because I also knew that since most of those people that I was teaching in the Bronx weren't white, that they were going to be put in risk positions on the battlefield and that was very upsetting. So I didn't do as much research at that time and got very involved in doing this. And we also ran an anti-war USO [United Services Organization] show, which was produced at Lincoln Center with a lot of movie stars.

Q: Where were you teaching when you said that you had begun teaching in '69?

Heuman: Bronx Community College.

Q: At Bronx Community College, okay. Do you think in this way that you're talking about yourself that the Russian Institute within its purview as a research organization and policy influencing organization, that it kind of—did it miss any opportunity to develop itself, or at least part of itself, down a different path relative to these events, to specifically maybe the Vietnam War, since it was also a proxy war between Russia and the United States?

Heuman: You know, I don't know the courses they were offering but my guess is that they probably focus on some of the issues that some of us addressed a little later. I think they might not have looked at the Cold War in the same way that we looked at it ten years later or even seven or eight years later. I think they would have gotten my attention much more, but I still remember during the Vietnam War, which you probably remember too, how many “communists” we killed. We killed the population of Vietnam three times over. It was just a joke. And it was an attempt to build up hatred towards these people [communists], rather than build up understanding. But I did study with people that really, I thought, did a great job in trying to get us to understand human beings in difficult social arrangements, like tsarist Russia or even the early Bolshevik period. I mean, I thought they did a great job. I don't know about the policy people because I only took the survey course. Today I would jump at somebody looking at some of those issues or human rights issues or—Helsinki Watch was founded in 1978 and became Human Rights Watch.

Q: Well picking up on that, I think something you just said a moment ago is that it seemed that you were saying that the events of the time were offering the possibility of the Institute looking at the Cold War in a different way than it had before. And this way has to do with, more from a human rights perspective perhaps, nationalities. Is that kind of the thing that you have in—or was there something else that you kind of had in mind when you said, looking at the Cold War in a different way?

Heuman: Well I think those elements are important. I also think the paranoia, the very

paranoia—and I mean, I can tell you stories. I still remember, I had done some work for Seweryn Bialer and [laughs] we'd go to a restaurant, and there was a team of people, and he would announce, "I never sit with my back to the door." Okay, Seweryn, sit with your front to the door. But I don't think that the effects of communism versus capitalism or our relationship to the Soviet Union were dealt with—they were dealt with on the side by people that had certain sympathies and had certain things in common. And so we discussed them or we organized demonstrations or we did this, that or the other. But I'd have to look at the courses that were offered. But my guess is that they would have lost funding. They probably would have lost funding at that time. I don't know how you see it, but—

Q: Well, I'm more interested right now at least in how you see it. We can talk another time about how I see it. Did you have any sense at all that the Institute—again, I know you weren't associated with the policy people, so perhaps this is not up your alley, but just thinking about policymaking, you know, in terms of the U.S. government, I was wondering about what the Soviet government—was there any sense, again, of people at the Institute that maybe they were having some effect on the Soviet Union, perhaps in these ways of making it less monolithic through the student exchanges, even though the Russians perhaps saw them, or the Soviets saw them as spy opportunities more than as intellectual exchanges?<sup>1</sup> Any sense of that at all? As I say, it may not be—

Heuman: Can you restate it?

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<sup>1</sup> The US also saw these as spy opportunities and recruited students to spy on their fellow students and to become regular reporters.

Q: Sure. I was wondering—we've been talking about, you know, possible influence of the Russian Institute on U.S. policymaking to the extent that you were aware of it. And I was wondering, is there also the possibility that perhaps the Russian Institute tried to have some influence on the Soviet government in terms of its policies, perhaps, for example, trying to encourage it to be less monolithic, to support perhaps some of the people who were inside the Soviet Union at the time of the Czech Spring who were supporting the Czech Spring, that sort of thing?

Heuman: Well, I think they tried, but they didn't want to ruin their own reputation. But I think they made an effort. Oddly enough, this whole effort on the part of the University, bringing East Bloc and Soviet students in and to encourage us to interact with them, was really important. It's true that the students that did that sometimes found themselves in compromised positions, but it was very important. I still remember giving a copy of [Herbert] Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man* to a guy that had just studied it at law school in Ohio State. And he took it back and you knew that when people took these books back to the Soviet Union, there were at least fifty people who would read the book, not like in the United States where somebody puts it on their shelf and maybe nobody reads it or one person reads it. But there it became—so I actually met people that talked about how important it was for them to encounter people and to start to read these revisions of Marxist ideas. And so I think the Institute encouraged us knowing more and encouraged those encounters, which I thought was really constructive. Because I don't think the Institute encouraged intelligence services to come and look at us. I think that was just done on the side. That was just somebody else doing it.

So I think they did a good job in trying to get people out into programs where they could go over there and work over there, and the faculty was pretty accommodating in trying to help people get to their goals. But you know, there was a certain amount of paranoia. The politics of this is all very complex. I still remember a story about Seweryn, who I understand is still alive. Is he still alive? He's still alive.

Q: Yes, as far as I know.

Heuman: But he's not necessarily all there.

Q: I don't know. That I don't know.

Heuman: Yeah, I've seen him. He doesn't—but I remember when I started teaching at Brooklyn College School of Contemporary Studies—that was after Bronx Community, and one of my students was—what's his name? The black leader. Why did it just run out of my mind? Al Sharpton was one of my students. And I was teaching political justice, of all things. And—why did I go there? I just lost why I went there.

Q: We started talking about paranoia—

Heuman: Oh, there was a faculty member from Poland who was about a philosophers of science and taught philosophy of biology or something like that. He was a very prominent scholar and

getting a job at this particular institution, which was an experimental part of Brooklyn College, was very hard. And I think they had like 500 applicants for each position and so getting there was really tops. And so this particular Polish professor told me he knew Seweryn Bialer in Poland. So one day I brought that man, who had told me some things about Seweryn Bialer's political activities in Soviet [unclear]. I think it had to do with his connections to the Communist Party bureaucracy. And when he was sitting in the audience after it was over, Bialer came up to me and he said, "Susie, why did you do that?" [laughs] So I knew that I had struck a chord. It was a very complicated world.

Q: You were talking about this world of paranoia that everybody was in. Are there other examples of this that you can remember, to convey the sense of the paranoia that perhaps both faculty and students felt. And paranoia from whom exactly? I mean, who was to be worried about?

Heuman: Well, you know, it's complicated. Now that I've seen my FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] files, I realize that some people that I knew at that time were definitely reporting to the FBI. And by the time I was in my second or third year, my roommate's now-husband was approached to report on people. So they actually recruited students to report on other students. And once they were recruited, they were required to meet with the agents to report periodically. Once they were in this network, they could not easily get out of it.

Q: This is the FBI?

Heuman: I think. You know, it's not totally clear who they were. I did once tell the agents I saw down in the lobby of my building that they should avoid wearing white socks with penny loafers because it's just not the right outfit. But [laughs] anyway, I don't know what other people experienced. Remember, I grew up in a refugee family. And I published a little memoir and the first line of it is, "My family's home was a bunker in New Jersey." We were very focused on hiding. And I still remember having a conversation with Mark [W.] Rudd at one of the reunions of 1968 and Mark Rudd was talking about why there were so many Jews that were involved in this Columbia uprising. And I said, "Oh, well it was very natural for me." And so I sent him this little memoir and he got very excited about it. Because people felt obligated to do something about what was happening in society. I was brought up in a home in which they said, You have to know what's happening in your country or you're part of the problem. And we were part of the problem. We didn't fight effectively enough, you know? It was clear.

So, I mean it wasn't a Jewish organization, but there were quite a few people of that background. And I said, I think it's because people knew that if they didn't pay attention before it's too late—speaking too late in our society now [laughs]—we may be in a crisis. So I mean, the paranoia was partly my own but partly real. There were people that I did graduate work with who ended up working for the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] later. I have a feeling their jobs were very boring. I think some of them just ended up reading the press and writing reports on what the press had to say. So it's not clear what they were doing. So I didn't fear that person particularly.

Q: Let me switch topics and talk about area studies and your sense of area studies. It seems that perhaps back then was a heyday of area studies and the certificate program as you've described it

is a really good example of the multidisciplinary of it, but yet having specific focus depending on what the student wanted to do. Do you see this kind of as a useful way for preparing people, both for policymaking and decision making—aside from the academics, you know?

Heuman: Well, I think it's extremely important, and I think it's a shame that it seems to be at risk now. I think that perhaps Americans read a little less than some people in other societies, but I think being conversant in the literature, in the issues, in the economy, in the politics and the history of a society really grounds you and gives you a better understanding of what the society is about.

The immersion we received at the Russian Institute is a luxury that we had. It's a luxury because it cost a lot of money, and obviously being a graduate now is like four times as expensive as it was then, so it would be difficult to afford it. But I think it was very important. You could really talk to people about what was going on and you could get a command of the language by going there repeatedly, which I did. And you know, it was a little community. I don't know. I ended up being Joseph [Iosif A.] Brodsky's first interpreter here in the States because I learned that he was coming and he was a friend of a friend and so somebody asked me to interpret for him.

Q: So could you tell me about that and how that both happened and what went down? I partly ask this out of my own appreciation of Brodsky.

Heuman: Well, he was kind of a—he was living in a very—I never understood why he was saying what he was saying, you know? He'd be living in a place above the Paris Health Club,

you know, the Paris hotel down there on Ninety—I think he was living there. And when I saw him, he kept on saying, “*Собаки, собаки, лают,*” “*Dogs are barking, dogs are barking.*” And something was going on. People must have been keeping dogs somewhere where he was and he was very agitated. You know, I can’t tell you a lot about it. The thing that I can say about it is that sometimes the émigrés that came were not altogether nice about their friends. They were pretty blunt. And I was very close friends with a friend of his from Leningrad and we still remain friends, actually. But I think it was too soon to tell much, you know? My memory of it has little to do with him, except that he didn’t have a lot of patience.

And I was sitting with him and a friend of mine called me up and told me that her husband, who recently arrested [unclear] in Poland, had just been killed. He was a Polish mountaineer and he had been killed cleaning the inside of a cement silo. He was a mountain climber and the thing avalanched and he died. It was a tragedy because they had been waiting for years to get together. It was a tragedy. And I started crying, and there was Joseph sitting there on my couch. And all of a sudden he looked at me and he said, “*Хватум,*” “That’s enough.” That was it. There was nothing warm about his words.

Many years later—if you want to hear a funny Brodsky story is—probably seventeen years later, I went to hear him at a reading and I went to say hello to him. And you know, because a lot of interpreting you don’t remember because you’re a machine. You’re saying what has to be said, so your memory of it is not—so seventeen years later I went to a reading and he looked at me and he said, “Susan. You look much better now than you did seventeen years ago.” [laughs] I couldn’t tell whether it was a compliment or a total putdown, but that’s what it was. So, you

know, he was a fascinating guy. I mean, his writing and his productivity. But I know that he together—I believe that he together with my friend carried the coffin of Anna [Andreyevna Gorenko] Akhmatova, great Soviet poet—Russian poet she would prefer to be called.

Q: And how did you come to be his translator? How's that story?

Heuman: I think it was because of somebody at the Institute. I mean, if they knew that my Russian was good enough and that I was available—and I don't think I was paid for that. But I was so excited, I said, "Sure!"

Q: And this would have been what year?

Heuman: We'd have to look at when he came. It was the year he came. Somewhere in the mid '70s.

Q: Earlier, we started talking a little bit about human rights and I'd like to pick up on that thread in the conversation. You are an historian of law and legal culture in Russia and nationalities in Eastern Europe, and Harriman has played or tried to play a role in developing the field of human rights through Juviler's work. This isn't Harriman, but I found interesting your article on the pre-breakup history of law and constitutional law, and especially the role of [Aleksandr I.] Herzen that you had in the Juviler edited volume. And then Harriman has played a role in the development of Human Rights Watch [HRW] through alums and faculty on its advisory committee. Are there other things that you're aware of that Harriman has done, or people to try

to play a role in the development of this field? And then more generally, how would you describe kind of the direction of this influence?

Heuman: Well actually, I deviated a little bit from—while I was a student at Columbia, the Center for the Study of Human Rights was founded with Louis Henkin and Peter Juviler at the helm, I think. And that was my very first job. I worked for them.

Q: First job when you got here as a graduate student?

Heuman: As a graduate student. I don't know if it was my first year or second year, whenever it was founded. And so I don't know that it was very much the center of what the Institute was doing itself, but that institution started existing and I don't know how much cross-fertilization there was between the two. It might be interesting for somebody to figure it out. I was always interested in human rights from family history to, you know, justice and treating people equally and fairly. And I think that there were people who genuinely cared about these principles within the ranks of Russian Institute students. I mean, it was very much part of understanding the classes in society that were unequally treated.

They now have hired several people to teach human rights in various fields. I sometimes question—because I have spoken to that person and they know very little about sort of the history of the human rights that I was working on. And I think it would be a very important thing for them to look more at the roots of this. And in fact, it's something I'm working on now. And I was in Ukraine and presented on my old topic this summer and found that there were people in

Germany and Austria and Ukraine that were very interested—in 2000, my book was translated into Ukrainian—in trying to understand those roots. Because we were in Lviv and Lviv was the home of the man who invented the term genocide. It's very, very interesting.

Rachel Denber came later, but there were people that cared about these issues very much and there was the Center for the Study of Human Rights, and Juviler was always involved in that very much. And there was also a human rights seminar, a faculty seminar, which I'm part of. So, I think the nature of the study of Russia and Russian history and Russian culture has within it the whole issue of the rights of the human being.

Q: How so? It sounds like you think that that's distinctive to Russia and I was wondering if that's true.

Heuman: No, it is not distinctive to Russia.

Q: Okay. Well, in any case, how do you see that as kind of a part of the core of the studying, the history of Russia?

Heuman: Well particularly in Russian history, I mean, our studies really had to do with trying to find out how hundreds of thousands of peasants might become citizens with rights, rather than serfs. They were serfs. And then when they were freed, it wasn't a very simple thing. So the whole texture of the conversation that we were engaged in was social history and trying to understand how those people could get a voice and get some kind of equality and why they

didn't if they. And so it was a part of the fabric of what we were looking at, maybe even more than the stories that you would read in literature of the time.

Q: Do you think that in terms of the development of the field of human rights that this perspective that you were talking about, that new experience as a student, has had much influence, should have more influence in how the human rights field is developing? Is it kind of an opportunity, a path not taken, or not taken as much as it should, then or now?

Heuman: Well, I think it depends on how you're going to define it.

Q: Define human rights?

Heuman: Well, how you're going to define that path, because if you're going to take people that are part of the dissident community right now and have them speak out about the way they're being mistreated, I don't know how far we're going to get. But I think if we went historically and we started looking at the way in which—and I, in this presentation I gave in Ukraine was fascinated because that's what people were trying to figure out: what were the connections? What were the people that went into exile to fight for the rights of nationalities and to fight for rights for other people? What were the connections that later influenced the next generation, next generation? And that's the kind of thing that I think would be really important. It's not that I don't think it's important to know about the people that are oppositional folks now. It's just that there's a fabric that hasn't been investigated adequately.

Q: When this was starting, you were involved, first job there, human rights wasn't much on anybody's agenda for the most part, and I was wondering if you have a sense of the kind of—and now it is. Obviously it's a much bigger part. I mean, Helsinki occurs ten years later for example, ten years after you began school—do you have a sense of kind of the arc of development of the field of human rights and how the Russian Institute/Harriman Institute has kind of, you know, relates to that arc at all? Or if there's no arc.

Heuman: I don't know if there's an arc. I think that someone who attended the Harriman Institute—well, several people—became important in founding Human Rights Watch. But I don't know how much the Institute actually played into that, because they actually went off independently and did this work. In all fairness, the Institute is not supposed to be projecting people in different directions. It's supposed to be giving them the grounding and the understanding so that they'll look themselves and—in my own way, I focused a lot on human rights without being part of an organization, although I always wanted to be part of Human Rights Watch. [laughs] But, you know, and I wanted to be part of the United Nations. And I actually turned down a job with them. [laughs]

But I think it's tricky because if the Institute becomes a center for talking about human rights and human rights is seen is a criticism of what isn't there in the Soviet Union or in Russia now, then it doesn't become a useful tool for understanding if they want to make a connection. So I don't think they failed; I think they've been very circumspect in what they're doing because you can also silence the people that would normally talk to you if you're coming across as if, We have such rights in our country and look at what you're doing. You're killing Boris [Y.] Nemtsov and

you're killing [Anna S.] Politkovskaya and the poor guy in Kiev. I mean, it's horrible. But it becomes an indictment and we have some pretty serious things to deal with in our country. That was one of the things that the students kept on bringing up, that we have some pretty serious things to deal with here too.

Q: Well that strikes me as one—perhaps, I don't know if you would see this this way—but as one, perhaps, site of a tension between what the Harriman Institute might want to do policy wise versus what it wants to do intellectually, which is, you know, intellectually, as you say, it's to prepare people and let them go off and do what they want to do.

Heuman: Right.

Q: On the other hand, if it wanted to have policy influence, say in human rights, it has to take a position on human rights. I mean, would you think that that's a fair kind of statement about kind of a potential tension for it?

Heuman: Again, it depends on how it's phrased. And I think yes. I think they have to. I'm not saying that they shouldn't. I'm just saying that it could cause some silencing on the other side. Because when we would talk about democracy, they would always come back at us and say, you know, We're a democracy too. The Union of—[laughs] we're a republic, we're a conglomeration, we're a federation of republics. It became verbiage. So I think it's very difficult for them to make a statement in which they're going to be effective as policy advisors and at the same time, make things that sound like accusations part of their language. So they have to figure

out how they're going to do this. So I'm even questioning the human rights course that is being taught now. It might be very good, but I know that it's being taught very much in the language of people who are very engaged in dissident activity at this moment. And I'm not sure how many people here really understand what that dissident activity has to do with the revival of the Orthodox Church, which is often mentioned by lecturers.

Q: Well, perhaps a segue from that into the last topic I'd like to ask you about, which is about nationality studies.

Heuman: Right.

Q: So you've published on Ukraine and on non-Russian nationalities and you've taught on these subjects. And there's been nationality studies going back to the '70s with Allworth and Louis, but it's only seemed to have grown maybe in the late '80s and of course in the '90s with the collapse of the Soviet Union. So my first question is to ask you how do you conceptualize, how do you think about what constitutes nationality studies?

Heuman: That's such a simple question. [laughs] Well I think that I'm still learning a lot now. Nationality studies is incredibly complex. This area that I just traveled to is just a hodgepodge of nationalities and what has happened to them. And I think that when we—

Q: Pardon me for interrupting you, you traveled to where just—

Heuman: To Lviv, to Western Ukraine, the borderlands, which were populated mostly by Jews and Poles and Ukrainians and then it was transformed once Western Ukraine was unified with Eastern Ukraine, because they were always in two different worlds: one was part of the Habsburg monarchy and one was part of the Russian empire. So it's fascinating, nationality-wise. I think it's become absolutely critical for understanding the politics and the nature of the Soviet Union. Less than 50 percent of the population in the Soviet Union was Russian. We knew that but we didn't really internalize that as much as we should have. We knew that there were twenty-some million Central Asians. But we didn't focus on it enough. Maybe Allworth did, and I didn't study with him.

But I think nationalities is—I discovered it when I was working on my little book and my man in 1914 got so angry at the Russian intelligentsia because they wanted to focus on the war. And they didn't have time to think about the other nationalities. He organized a magazine called *Nationality Papers*. It lasted for four issues and then the regime shut them down. Obviously, we didn't get it, you know? We didn't get it in our studies. I discovered it because I was this graduate student doing my research. I think nationality studies is about all the different cultures that make up a complicated society. And it's a society that at that time took up a sixth of the world's territory, and we were not paying attention to all the pieces that make that up. So I mean, for me, nationality studies is incredibly important.

But I think we need to look at it as, there are cultures in which only their national languages are spoken. There are cultures in which they finally developed a written language. And some of this only happened in the nineteenth century. So I think it's a very important part of—you know, if I

were to put my two cents in, if there was a focus, I think the focus should be on nationalities rather than on human rights, because you can incorporate human rights into the study of the nationalities much more easily without it becoming an ideological attack, and that way, you would have the ability to understand the rights of all these different peoples with their own religions, languages, and customs, and to appreciate one another.

Q: Kind of in that regard—and I'm about to talk about the Harriman when you were not there.

This is mostly the '80s and '90s up to the present in terms of nationality studies and I don't know if you can speak to this, but have you had any sense that Harriman has been important in helping to grow nationality studies, and if so, to kind of grow it in certain directions where there are kind of some directions rather than others that might have been taken, that it didn't take?

Heuman: Well oddly enough, it wasn't the Russian Institute or the Harriman Institute that started this conference called the ASN [American Studies of Nationalities] that is housed at the School of International Affairs. But I think Hungarians have done quite a bit. I think there are some problems because there are politics involved in nationality studies. And there are people that are involved in Ukrainian studies right now who don't like some of the newer research that's coming out about some of those borderlands and what happened in those borderlands during the Second World War. And I find that the Institute probably needs to deal with this because it's troublesome, because they're closing their eyes to something that is problematic. It's wonderful on one level because you see that the study of Ukraine and some of the other borderlands is increasing.

Q: I just wanted to pick up on that. So when you say politics, politics can be understood in many different ways. In this case, you're thinking of the politics of, on one hand, the clash between nationalism perhaps and historical evidence—

Heuman: Yes, you've got it.

Q: —that gets expressed in intra-faculty conflicts?

Heuman: Well, maybe there aren't even conflicts. Maybe there's just non-communication between different—you know, I just think that if they're going to do nationalities, they have to allow for various voices to be expressed, and I think it's really important. Now, they've done great. The problem is that some of these people—the person doing Central Asia, for instance, is an adjunct. And I don't know. Nothing against an adjunct since I've been an adjunct in my career, but you know, I think that they could incorporate and integrate nationality studies in a deeper way under a rubric of the Russian, or the Harriman and the East European Institute, because they do intermingle so tightly when you read the history. But you know, it's extremely complicated. So, I mean, as long as—my understanding is that the Ukrainian studies people are independent and that they have funding that comes from outside, so it's not necessarily part of the Harriman Institute's domain.

Q: Do you think if that sort of thing happened more, that there were these kind of, if you will, breakoffs in terms of institutes, would that be intellectually problematic?

Heuman: Well, it could be. I think that there have been people that have come under the auspices of the Ukrainian studies program and spoken here or taught at Columbia, who were precisely the people that I think, if they knew what was coming would not have liked them. And I think it's wonderful that they were here because I think that these different voices, particularly the voices that are doing this research, should be heard. Look, I think they're doing what they can, but my question is organizationally whether the Harriman can't in some way broaden its horizon and have some way to make sure these nationality studies don't become little enclaves of national celebration.

Q: Well this raises a question that I had about the relationship between area studies and nationality studies because at least at an intellectual level, the premise of each of them seems somewhat different. I mean, area studies is you take kind of a larger geographic area and you—

Heuman: Yes, but that's a really good point you're raising. On the other hand, the more one studies about some of these regions, you realize how mixed the nationalities were. And that's what some of us didn't address as we were doing area studies. [laughs] We didn't address that. And I think that is so important. I mean, there were areas where it was clearly defined that the Kazakhs were living here and the Uzbeks were living there. But then there were these areas—those borderland areas are fascinating because they're totally mixed up. And the separation is artificial.

Q: So area studies is a way of getting at nationality studies in some sense.

Heuman: Area studies is an area that should incorporate national—in other words, I could see the Harriman Institute, since it's no longer called Russian, broadening its horizons so that—and it has. It has because you've got these Ukrainian studies and it's got some Central European studies in it. But I think that as time goes on and as these works are increasing, there's going to be an understanding that one needs the other to really make sense. And I think we missed the boat, because we were looking at who was ruling. We were always looking at who the bosses were, but we weren't necessarily looking at the texture of the society and who was doing what. And it's fascinating. It's an eye-opener. So a lot of interesting work has come out.

I for one did not know all about the national backgrounds of people in Poland, in Galicia. And my husband and I once interviewed his aunt, and we're both heartbroken because we can't find the tape, but she was describing how the various armies came in and took over and pushed them into a room and this and that. And then you start understanding that the population composition of those parts of the world between 1919 and 1950 totally was transformed. And the population of Lviv, which was primarily Polish and Jewish is now Ukrainian, and somebody organized that. So one needs the other to be complete. And I'd be interested also further to go into Siberia more. I did some research in Siberia on the Buryats. And there is another area where you have these mixes of national groups that are really fascinating.

Q: This sounds like a good point to end the conversation, unless there's anything that you wanted to add that I haven't asked you about that you thought was particularly important.

Heuman: No, I think you're a very knowledgeable interviewer, I have to say. You've read the people's articles. You have— [laughs]

Q: Well thank you, and I thank you very much for your time and your insights.

Heuman: Well, thank you. Well, I hope it is information that's someday useful to someone.

Q: I can't believe it won't be.

Heuman: [laughs] Thank you.

[END OF SESSION]

ATC

Session: 2

Interviewee: Susan Heuman

Location:

Interviewer: William McAllister

Date: January 5, 2017

Q: Hello. My name is William McAllister. I'm the senior research fellow at INCITE [Interdisciplinary Center for Innovate Theory and Empirics] and today I'm talking again with Susan Heuman, currently a visiting scholar at the Harriman Institute. Welcome, Susan.

So one thing I'd like to pick up on that we didn't talk about in our first interview was the physical move in the late 1960s of the Russian Institute. I believe it was in a brownstone and then moved into newly built offices in the International Affairs building, which was just built in 1968. And you were associated with the Russian Institute as a student at the time and I know that the physical environment of where we work can be very important in lots of ways.

Heuman: Right.

Q: So let me just ask kind of a basic question to being: how were the new offices different from the old?

Heuman: Well, they were cold, square and gray. And the old offices were in a brownstone and you would walk upstairs and you would see the papers of the professors hanging off of the [laughs] desks, I mean. And also there was an accessibility—I mean, you wouldn't really walk into somebody's office, but very often they had their doors open.

Q: In the brownstone?

Heuman: In the brownstone. And going into the new building, the best description I can give is one given by Professor Alexander Ehrlich. And we entered the building together and were going up the elevator and we get to the floor for the Russian Institute and he said, “Every time I come to this building, I keep on wanting to ask, “Where is my teller? It actually looked like a bank. So it did not have spaces where people felt welcome to sit and meet. When Cathy [Catherine Theimer] Nepomnyashchy became the Director of the Institute, she reorganized those public areas so that faculty and students felt there was a welcoming space for people to sit down and talk to each other in that area. They were really set up like business offices and it was strange. So it was a different atmosphere and it did play a role in how things emerged as time went on.

Q: I want to get to that, so can you expand on that: how it affected the work of the Russian Institute, or what you meant by how things emerged?

Heuman: I was a student. I was quite young at the time. I think that it felt less friendly after the Institute moved from the brownstone buildings. It felt more ominous. And as I started taking classes in political science as well as in history and literature—we had a very big course load at that time—it just felt that we didn’t have the connection with the faculty and in some cases, didn’t want the connection with the people. So that’s it; it was just much more intimate in the brownstones. Obviously it had its limitations, and clearly the new building gave other possibilities. But I think it did change the feel of the place very, very significantly.

Q: The feel in terms of, not only—you were mentioning the lack of easy connection between students and faculty, faculty to faculty, students to students—

Heuman: Well, there was—they did—then I can contradict myself. There were brown bag lunches, so they had more rooms where people could convene for organized talks and presentations, but there's something about meeting in a messy office [laughs] on your way—

Q: It also sounds as if you're saying that, you know, brown bag lunches are more kind of formal, and what you seem to be saying is that the brownstone allowed much more informal contact with people. You've just got—

Heuman: I think that's right.

Q: —more easily the water cooler conversation, proverbial water cooler, happened more easily in the brownstone.

Heuman: Right, right.

Q: Did it have—did it change in any way the kind of work people did? Was there an impact that way?

Heuman: I don't think I can answer that. I think it just felt much more like the Institute was connected to the State Department; that's how it felt. Although, I have been told that the Russian Institute was discredited because it was too sympathetic to Russia. So that part [laughs] doesn't resonate.

Q: Well what you mean, though, if I understand you correctly, is that the physical setup reminded you more, as you said, of a more corporate or governmental physical setup rather than a more kind of academic setup.

Heuman: Right, and the university obviously wanted that.

Q: Well, let me ask you about that. I was wondering exactly about that point. The Russian Institute now had the space in this grand and new building. Did it have a sense—impact on its sense of itself as an important intellectual place at Columbia that now it was being kind of somehow perhaps elevated by the university and being taken more seriously than it did when it was in the brownstone, or taking itself more seriously than it did when it was in the brownstone?

Heuman: Probably, but I can't speak to that. I was a student, so, you know, that's more of a faculty question.

Q: From your perspective as a student, you didn't see any of that, is kind of what you're saying.

Heuman: Not really, no.

Q: Is there anything else about the physical transformation of the Institute that we haven't talked about that—

Heuman: No, I don't think so.

Q: Okay. Let me then ask you a question or two to follow up on our previous conversation about the Center for the Study of Human Rights. The Center was founded in the mid-1960s, before human rights was really on the general political or policy agenda of anyone. As we were talking before, the Helsinki Accords doesn't come until the 1970s; Jimmy Carter doesn't put it on until he becomes president in 1977. So let me ask two questions related: what was the Center trying to achieve at that time as a kind of outlier, and was it thought of as an oddball thing to be working on at that time?

Heuman: I don't think it was considered an oddball thing to be working on. I had started working with Student Non Violent Coordinating Committee to ensure voters' rights in the USA as an undergraduate. This movement was particularly important to me because in 1936, my parents had been deprived of their citizenship in Nazi Germany because of their Jewish background. I think the focus of the Center was considered something respectable, perhaps not professionally practical if looking for a career. It was established long after the United Nations Declaration on [of] Human Rights and it was important to look at the rights of people of all races, the people serving in the military and the rights of Afro Americans particularly in the adjacent

neighborhood of Harlem. Human Rights was a crucial part of the many issues being discussed on and off campuses around the country.

Q: It did not have to—partly what I'm asking is did the Center itself have to fight for some kind of legitimacy to be taken seriously even though this was obviously a serious topic that deserved serious attention as a new field, to some extent. People might have thought it's intruding—

Heuman: Well, I don't know how much attention it got at the university. It was housed at Earl Hall and founded by Louis Henkin. I'm not sure how much influence it had, but I think it raised very interesting issues about human rights in the political and legal worlds. It was the kind of precursor to Human Rights Watch within the university community. It wasn't only about what was happening at the university itself.

Q: I don't know that we talked about this before, but let me just connect it to the Russian Institute or Harriman. As human rights became on more of people's agenda in general in the policy world and the intellectual world, and as the Harriman Institute began to become more interested in human rights, especially in the context of the Soviet Union and Russia, what was the relationship with Center for the Study of Human Rights? Did Harriman kind of look to make any kind of connections that you're aware of?

Heuman: Not that I know of. I just didn't know of a fundamental connection.

Q: They remained fairly distinct enterprises.

Heuman: Yes, I mean, I think that maybe eventually they did connect, but at the beginning of the Center there was no organic connection.

Q: Let me now—

Heuman: I mean maybe if they were talking about violations of rights and dissidents or something, then there was a connection, so I should correct that. There were discussions about the lives of the dissidents in the Soviet Union and there was later involvement with Helsinki Watch both inside the USSR and outside. But in the early days of the Center, I never felt an organic connection—in part because people were more and more involved in campus unrest which focused on American policies.

Q: Let's talk about nationality studies, again, to pick up on something that we talked about earlier.

Heuman: Yes.

Q: Yes?

Heuman: Okay, go ahead.

Q: In our first interview, we talked a bit about the field of nationality studies and your thinking about such studies, if I understood you correctly in the interview, as a way to understand the different cultures that comprise a country. Would you say that that's a fair summary statement about how you think about nationality studies? Would you want to expand on that?

Heuman: No, that's, you know, enough. I mean, we went on about it. I think I was concerned because I said that there really wasn't a focus on nationality studies at that time, and in fact, the focus on nationality studies broke open after the collapse of the Soviet Union. But what I wanted to say was that there were people who were working on nationalities at that time who came with that in mind, like Ron [Ronald Grigor] Suny who came and was working on Georgia and Armenia and certain other people who were focusing on non Russian peoples, and I ended up being one of those people by chance. So that's all I wanted to say.

Q: And there were faculty working on it too, right? Allworth—

Heuman: Allworth, right, though I feel that he was a bit marginalized.

Q: —was working on Central Asia. Were there other faculty working on—or was it that the students had a particular interest and came with that?

Heuman: Later, Professor Raeff, but later Raeff started talking about Ukraine and he published a book on reforms of 1822 and [Mikhail M.] Speransky, which involved taking over areas that were

remote from the major cities of the Russian Empire—Moscow and St. Petersburg. By the way, there's a memorial for—or drinks at the Harriman for Professor Allworth, who just passed away.

Q: Just died, right. Thank you.

Heuman: You might find that interesting.

Q: Thank you. When is that?

Heuman: Oh I think January 20th. It's in my—

Q: Okay, thank you. Let me just ask you two questions regarding nationality studies just to go a little bit beyond what we just talked about that I don't think we covered in the first interview, and I'm just curious about your opinion about this, especially as I think it perhaps is important for Harriman to consider when thinking about nationality studies. One is, how do we prevent nationality studies from becoming an intellectual site simply for national celebration? There's a possibility in the idea of nationality studies that that could happen—

Heuman: Well, we did—

Q: —and they become nationalists rather than a mixture that you talked about.

Heuman: We didn't touch on that. There is some of that that has been going on and you know, it's—

Q: But how can you prevent that from happening? How do you prevent from going down that road?

Heuman: I don't know if you can prevent it. One of the big issues I think I mentioned the last time is on the borderlands in Ukraine, and the research being done, which is showing that local people had a lot to do with the execution of Poles and Jews, et cetera, and the local people don't want to recognize the local participation in atrocities. They prefer to blame the Germans for all the rounding up of peoples and mass killings of the era. There is evidence that some of those killings took place before the German Army even arrived. The people of those nationalities don't want to hear about that. Even though there's evidence, they don't want to deal with it. So I don't know that you can prevent the interpretation of history that satisfies the nationalist agenda to maintain the innocence of the local population.

Q: Okay. Let me finally turn to the 1960s. Again, another topic that we talked about last time. What I mean by the 1960s, just to be clear between the two of us, is about the politics and how they were refracted on the Columbia campus, especially regarding the Civil Rights Movement, the attempt to build the gym in Morningside Park and the Vietnam War. That was kind of on the American side, but then there was also at the time, as you recount, students coming from the Soviet Union, and specifically you were talking about, because your Russian was good, they kind of liked to pal around with you because you spoke good Russian.

Heuman: Well, I wasn't alone. There were—

Q: No, I'm not saying you were alone but, right, you were one of the people.

Heuman: Right.

Q: So putting these two together—you've got the American side and you've got the Soviet side—what this means, as people know at the time, but has since been confirmed by documentary evidences is that both the FBI and the Soviet agency were watching students and faculty, questioning them, probably bugging phones and so forth. So given this context, were students, associated with Harriman in some way, or Russian Institute at that time, in some ways, were they wary, perhaps more paranoid, about what they were saying and who they were saying it to? And how would this manifest itself?

Heuman: Well, one student who became a pretty successful professor who was not in the Russian Institute—was in Chinese studies—was one of the people who agreed to report on other students. I knew him because he was dating my roommate. He was upset because they demanded that he meet with them and report on a much more regular basis than he ever thought.

Q: Who demanded? The—

Heuman: The agents, the agents.

Q: From the Soviets or from the Americans?

Heuman: The Americans. Yes. I don't know whether they were FBI or CIA, who they were, to be honest. I think that they didn't come to me because I was a hostile [laughs]—I was not friendly to reporting on anybody, so I didn't participate. But you know, it didn't dovetail that way. You didn't feel that the students from the Soviet Union or from East Bloc countries were somehow intermeshed with the student movement so much. I think they—I don't know exactly what the year was that a number of East European and Russian students came to study at Columbia, but I think those students tried to keep themselves away from this. The American students were so engaged in what was going on here [laughs] that I'm not sure—I don't remember being as interested in what was going on in the Soviet Union at that point, because it was very interesting here. [laughs]

Q: What I was getting at is that we did have, at least at the student level—perhaps at the faculty level too—is that you have these two populations: American students perhaps being paranoid or wary of their own domestic government because of the protests about the war and civil rights, and then you have these students from the Soviet Union who, for a very different set of reasons—

Heuman: Or from Czechoslovakia.

Q: Or from Eastern Europe, right, being also paranoid for a very different set of reasons. And so, it suggests the possibility that there was a just a heightened sense around maybe the Russian Institute and people that were associated with it.

Heuman: And the East European—yes, well, there was. There was, there was. And, you know, by that time, people were traveling abroad and they were involved in summer programs and teaching language or teaching—I was a graduate assistant. I still remember arriving in Prague and being met by all these officials who were connected with people that I had met at the International House, and I did not feel very comfortable about that because I had relatives in Prague and I did not want to cause them any more trouble than they had already experienced during World War II. One of the relatives had been an interpreter for the US Army and then was trapped inside Czechoslovakia when the borders closed. So I was not happy at all. So, yes, I mean it was very awkward because they all met me at the same place and time when I arrived. I don't remember whether I came by plane or train, but yes. I think there was that tension. I didn't look for it particularly. I tried to avoid it.

I guess my biggest objection was—and I think I told this to you in the other interview—that I was once interviewed after I had spent some time talking to a Soviet exchange student and they then—these agents then went to people who were my friends—did I tell that story?—and they called me something like a sexual liaison. After that those friends avoided me. My friendship was dead with those people. I could not say anything. I mean, what could I say?

Q: The agents who went to them were American agents?

Heuman: Yes. They went and said this thing, which was totally—we're in the era of false information, but once that false information is there, it kills the trust that was there between people. I couldn't defend myself. I could say—you know who that person was having an affair with. It wasn't me. You know? [laughs] Because he was having an affair with a woman I knew vaguely.

Q: Your friends, because of this, the agents spreading this information were wary of you?

Heuman: I think so, yes. We were students and were building friendships. Those rumors and doubts planted by the agents made it less than desirable to continue building the friendship. It was very, very upsetting. Once rumors were spread, one could only make things worse by trying to explain. That happened a lot during that era. Intelligence agencies—not just in this country, also abroad—tried to manipulate and compromise people.

Q: The basis for this, just—I just kind of wanted to make the connection between the Americans and the Soviets here—is that because you were, quote—

Heuman: This was just one instance. Well there was another instance, but it was in my last year of undergraduate study. I was a Russian Studies major in college and travelled to the Soviet Union several times before graduate school. There was a strange effort to recruit me to “entertain certain people in the Soviet Union and then pass the information on,” which caused me enormous anxiety as a senior in college. I was supposed to get a job as a guide for one of the US

exhibits in Moscow and then I was approached to do work on the side. This job offer was supposedly to be quite well paid, but it sounded dangerous to me. I consulted a lawyer with connections in Washington who came back from meeting with the person in charge of Soviet-American Relations—I don't remember the exact title of the office—with the following report: “The fact that you are not going to do this job is probably one of the most important decisions in your life.” [Pause] When I asked why, I was told, “That is all we can tell you.” After that I lived with some trepidation because I knew that I had information that I wish I did not have about intelligence operations.

Subsequently, perhaps by coincidence, I never knew that my applications to graduate school were lost. After numerous inquiries about the fate of my application to the Russian Institute, I was told to phone the Institute and I was finally admitted by Zbigniew Brzezinski on the telephone. Later I met a professor from the University of Michigan, who asked me why I did not come to graduate school there. I told him that I never received a letter of acceptance.

Q: Right, but you were—but the basis for what the FBI probably—

Heuman: Because I was alone with him.

Q: —was because you were with a Soviet?

Heuman: Right, I was alone with him and I was talking to him.

Q: That's what I just wanted to establish, that that's the basis on which they were making this claim. That's a pretty dramatic example of the manifestation of paranoia that people were ending friendships because of this spreading of false information. Did this kind of thing happen, where the false information had such an impact on people's friendships in other contexts? And more generally, how did people talk about—one way to express it would be to have a dark humor. I knew friends who were politically involved and we'd talk about the bugging of their phones by the FBI or in the wall or things of that sort, and their FBI files—

Heuman: There was some humor about who was listening.

Q: That's what I meant, in the sense that people had—that was an expression of their paranoia.

Heuman: Yes. After that experience I was really very uninterested in talking to anybody about these things.

Q: Do you have a sense that other people also sized up the situation and had that response?

Heuman: I didn't ask, but what's interesting about all of it is that it isolated people from one another, and that was the goal.

Q: Yes. Did it affect people's intellectual activity, pursuits, the paranoia? Did it make them not want to pursue certain areas perhaps, for example?

Heuman: Well, I don't know. I don't know such people, but there might have been people that wanted to get out of the field. But I did—in the previous interview, mention my friend who accidentally “fell” out of a window who was one of Allworth's students. There were a lot of pressures on people.

Q: Well I actually want to ask you about that. Did the Russian Institute try as an institute to—or was it kind of more up to individual faculty to try and deal with the situation, to help students, or did they even see it?

Heuman: I don't think they saw it. I think that a student didn't want to reveal those kinds of things because it might draw unwanted attention to the student. [laughs] It was a no win situation for sure.

Q: It's interesting because, just thinking about specific faculty, when I talked with Elizabeth [Kridl] Valkenier, she told us a story from the 1950s about how [Philip E. Arturovich] Mosely basically said to her, you know, if they come around, the CIA, just ignore them and I'll back you up. Don't get—

Heuman: So he knew. I never spoke about the CIA or FBI with professors. Actually I think the one time I started to speak about a situation in which I felt unsafe, the professor told me that he did not want to know anything about it.

Q: Don't give them any—give them short shrift, you know?

Heuman: He was a good man.

Q: But you don't have any stories like that from the 1960s?

Heuman: No, I didn't get that kind of support, although Haimson was very supportive to people who were known to be part of the protesting students. But—

Q: No, it's different—

Heuman: I don't think I ever discussed any of this with any of the faculty.

Q: For fear of what it might mean?

Heuman: It was self-incriminating and it was irrelevant to the work we were doing, so unless you were talking—I mean, sometimes we would draw parallels, you know, because if students read secret police files during the Russian Revolution, it could be very interesting [laughs]. But we students in the 1960s didn't have access to their own FBI or CIA files. We were just watched.

Q: To me it's somewhat interesting that people may not have seen a connection between possibly their work and what was going on, because—

Heuman: Well, they did. They did. In the history courses, you know, Raeff was much more conservative and very—pretty clearly anti-Soviet. Haimson was not, and so there was a kind of open study of the society and so people who were involved in activities here that resembled the work of the populists in the 1870s in Russia—there were parallels drawn. So it was very interesting, and that's why I made those comments about people trying to do a comparison with the student movements of the 1870's or whether the student unrest at Columbia was like the 1905 or 1917 Revolutions, because that's the way we studied in our classes. We tried to understand how the people in Russian society felt about the injustices they could see and wanted to change. It was very interesting and it was an incredibly intense experience, and a wonderful way to study history—as a sociological phenomenon as well as a political one

Q: This is?

Heuman: Haimson. No, Raeff was not open to that kind of thinking at all. But he also wasn't teaching material that was conducive to that kind of conversation.

Q: No, it strikes me that there are historical moments at times in one's own life that you experience something and you say, Oh, I now understand how these people felt.

Heuman: Right, well, I think there is truth to that. I think that the kind of fervor that people, the students here, felt about changing the war in Vietnam, changing the university, changing policy of the government, made us think back on what people were doing during these revolutionary

movements. It was all about freedom. It was all about what we saw as civil liberties, so it did relate and it was a pretty powerful experience.

Q: It strikes me as rather odd or peculiar that the Russian Institute didn't see this and then respond as an institute, especially for its students who were—and maybe even junior faculty who were at risk.

Heuman: First of all, I should say that I never knew of any students who spoke about the sense of the atmosphere of crisis. For one thing, students were aware that during the Cold War it was sometimes important NOT to know something so that if there were an interrogation of some sort, they would have nothing to say. Well, there were certain professors who did know something of the problem. There were certain people—I mean, Haimson was one, and then he kind of had a crisis. I think Loren [R.] Graham was a wonderful man because he was probably the most psychologically stable of the whole crowd. They were sympathetic. As a matter of fact, I saw him recently and we talked about some of what we had done in that time.

Q: Okay. Let me—one of the things that you described in talking about this era, and specifically relevant and related to the Russian Institute, was you described the alternate 1960 graduation that you participated in. You mentioned that this was, at least in part, organized by Alexander Ehrlich, whom you mentioned earlier.

Heuman: Well, I don't know. He was part of the Independent Faculty Group who issued a statement that was published on May 6, 1968 in the Columbia Spectator the one who handed out—

Q: And he handed out the degrees.

Heuman: I think the students might have—I don't know who organized it. I have to be honest, I don't know. I remember that he's the person who handed out those certificates.

Q: So I wanted to follow up on that, because we didn't talk about him last time and I was wondering—he was an economist.

Heuman: Do you know who he was?

Q: Well I know he was an economist and had been born in the—

Heuman: Russia.

Q: In Russia, right, and his family emigrated to Poland. His father was executed.

Heuman: His father was executed in 1941. They were very important socialists; they were part of the socialist Bund [General Jewish Labour Bund of Poland]—

Q: Of Poland?

Heuman: Yes. So, you know, he had this whole radical background.

Q: So he—

Heuman: So he handed out the—but I don't know the rest of how it was organized. It might have been organized by students because we were worried that there was—they did want people to graduate.

Q: Did you know anything about him as a person and in his role in the Russian Institute and political involvement at the time?

Heuman: I know less than I wish I knew. He was a very interesting—he was an economist and I did not focus on that, so I'm sorry about it, because personally, I knew him and I always cared about him. He was one of those humane—he was a humanitarian and you felt that he cared about people, he didn't just care about political systems. His concern seemed to go beyond ideology and that was critical for the students.

Ehrlich was part of the Independent Faculty Group which issued a statement on May 6, 1968, after the police had raided the campus and beaten students and even reporters on the campus.

The names of all the faculty in that Group was listed in the Spectator.

Q: Yes. That's very helpful. Is there anything else about the paranoia that we haven't talked about of the time, or anything about the Russian Institute or now the Harriman Institute that comes to mind that you'd like to develop further from when you were initially associated with it or over the years or now? Is there—I don't want to leave the interview without—you know, in case I haven't asked something that you think is particularly important that you would like to get on record.

Heuman: There are things to be said. I think that some of us came to the Russian Institute being more sympathetic to trying to understand Russia than others, so there was also that tension of understanding that there were people that were out to destroy that society as quickly as they possibly could. Particularly after Gagarin went around on his spaceship, Americans became even more paranoid about what Soviet possibilities and capabilities were. But I think we've covered it. I was a little surprised when I went back over this and edited it and I said, Oh my God, did I bend McAllister's ear. [laughs]

Q: No you didn't, actually. I found it really interesting and fascinating, and in fact just let me, if I may, pick up on something that you just said. Not to ask more of you, but after Gagarin's successful flight, the people who were opposed, if you will, to the Soviet Union wanted to—they got more concerned that this now actually might be a more successful political system, and therefore economic system, and therefore it heightened their desire to, or their interest in trying to—

Heuman: Find the ways to defeat it. Right. They were Commies and we were the free world. We were still in that era.

Q: And you saw this even when—you came here in '65, right?

Heuman: I came here in '65, but I watched—

Q: You were paying attention before that.

Heuman: I came out of it. I come from a refugee family. The refugee family was always very nervous about what anybody would have to say about us, and it's the immigrant syndrome. My father had been imprisoned by the Nazis in the 1930s for his leftist background, and always taught me to be careful what I said. Perhaps I have said too much already. Also as I mentioned above, there had been an attempt to recruit me when I was an undergraduate, which made me even more cautious about what I would say.

Q: Well thank you again very much.

Heuman: Thank you.

Q: This has been great fun, as usual. [laughter]

[END OF INTERVIEW]