

New U.S. Ambassador to Moscow

Walter John Stoessel Jr.

By DAVID BINDER

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 19— For a short time when he was a student at Stanford University in the late nineteen-thirties, Walter John Stoessel Jr. played polo and rode in what he termed "the last cavalry R.O.T.C. unit."

Now nearly 54 years old, Mr. Stoessel, whose nomination as United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union was approved by the Senate today, still

displays the dash and glamour of a cavalry officer, although he gave up riding in 1968 after breaking his left shoulder in a bad fall in Warsaw, where he served his first tour as an ambassador.

He remains an avid participant in sports—tennis, swimming and skiing—and during his Warsaw days he installed a swimming pool and what was later described as "East Europe's first paddle tennis court" at the embassy.

However, except for a brush with high school dramatics, which led to a bid from a Paramount Studios scout for a Hollywood tryout, Mr. Stoessel's life has been devoted almost entirely to diplomacy.

Interest Began Early

While still at Beverly Hills High School he journeyed to Washington to learn what prospects he might have at the State Department. He interrupted his Stanford studies in international affairs with a course in law at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland, obtaining his bachelor's degree in California in 1941.

He entered the Foreign Service immediately after graduation, worked briefly as a vice consul in Caracas, Venezuela, served in the United States Navy reserves from 1944 to 1946 and then was posted to Moscow as a second secretary. There, at the height of the Stalin era, he began a career interest in the Soviet Union, mastering Russian and accumulating knowledge of Soviet affairs.

Even in Warsaw he subscribed to and was a regular reader of Pravda, the Soviet party newspaper, and, to the surprise of many Poles, he frequently saw the Soviet Ambassador, Stanislav A. Piotovich. And he was Soviet desk officer in the State Department from 1952 to 1956.



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"Ran a happy embassy"

He directed Secretary of State Dean Rusk's executive secretariat during the first year of the Kennedy Administration and then served as counselor in the Paris embassy. A second Moscow tour followed and he served as minister counselor under Ambassador Foy Kohler from 1963 to 1965.

'Polite—But With Hard Core'

Mr. Kohler, now a professor, recalls his former aide as "one of our top pros, deceptive in appearance—so gentle and polite—but with a pretty hard core."

People associated with Mr. Stoessel seem to be unanimous in praise for his kindness, competence and patience. A retired secretary said: "I think he was the perfect boss—if you made a mistake it was your fault because his orders were so clear."

"He ran a happy embassy," said a junior officer who served with him in Poland. "He had a sense of what was important and under him ideas tended to flower." One of those ideas was a proposal that the Warsaw embassy establish a technical document center for Poles interested in industrial developments. The installation was widely copied by other United States missions.

His first ambassadorship fell in a period of steadily improving United States-Polish relations capped by a visit of President Nixon. Mr. Stoessel also helped reopen a United States dialogue with

China in 1969, meeting four times with a Peking representative. These formed the prologue for the secret negotiations conducted by Henry A. Kissinger that culminated in the Nixon trip to China in 1972.

Walter Stoessel was born Jan. 24, 1920, in Manhattan, Kan., the son of an Army officer who became an insurance agent. The Stoessels moved to Massachusetts and then to California.

Wedding Vows Renewed

In 1946, shortly before leaving for Moscow, Mr. Stoessel married Mary Ann Ferrandou, the daughter of a Detroit automobile executive, whom he had met in Washington on a wartime blind date when she was a nurse's aide.

A private man for all his easy charm, Mr. Stoessel allowed friends a glimpse of his personal feelings by inviting them to a re-pledging of his marriage vows on his 25th wedding anniversary in 1971 in Warsaw.

The ceremony took place in a small Roman Catholic chapel and then the party, the men in top hats and the women in formal gowns, went to the embassy residence in horse-drawn carriages and carts, some seated on pillows filled with straw.

The Stoessels have three grown daughters, Katherine, Suzanne and Christine.

Since his return from Warsaw in 1972 Mr. Stoessel has served as Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, a job that has kept him on the run in arduous negotiations with the nine Common Market countries on joint declarations designed to renew United States-European relationships. European officials that he dealt with genuinely like him and appreciate his low-key, professional approach.

Now he has another key assignment from Secretary of State Kissinger, whom he got to know during a year of study at Harvard in 1959.

Stoessel Is Confirmed As U.S. Envoy to Soviet

WASHINGTON, Dec. 19 (UPI) — The Senate today confirmed the nomination of Walter J. Stoessel Jr. to be United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union.

Also confirmed routinely by voice vote were:

Helmet Sonnenfeldt as State Department counsel;

Robert J. McCloskey, Ambassador at Large;

Arthur A. Hartman, an assistant secretary of State;

Robert C. Hill, Ambassador to Argentina;

Lloyd I. Miller, Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago, and

Thomas D. Davies, assistant director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.