

A Diplomatic Rarity

William James Porter

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 28— Not long after he became the United States Ambassador to South Korea, William J. Porter was awakened late at night by an aide knocking at his window.

The aide, apologetic, said the Ambassador should be at the Seoul airport at 6:30

the next morning to meet South Korea's President, who was returning unexpectedly from abroad. Mr.

Porter hesitated a long moment. "Tell the protocol officer for me that protocol begins at 8 A.M." And he did not meet the plane.

Mr. Porter, who was formally named today to replace David K. E. Bruce as the chief United States delegate at the Paris peace talks, is evidently a rarity among diplomats, and not only in his lack of concern with protocol. For he is not a college graduate and having been born in England to British parents, was not an American citizen until 1936.

That was the year also that William James Porter, then 22 years old, started his Foreign Service career; he became private secretary to the United States Ambassador in Budapest. He attained ambassadorial rank in December, 1962, when he became the first United States Ambassador to Algeria.

Keeps Ambassador Rank

As head of the United States delegation in Paris, Mr. Porter, who is 56, retains the rank of Ambassador. He will take over his new job, according to Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, "as soon as possible."

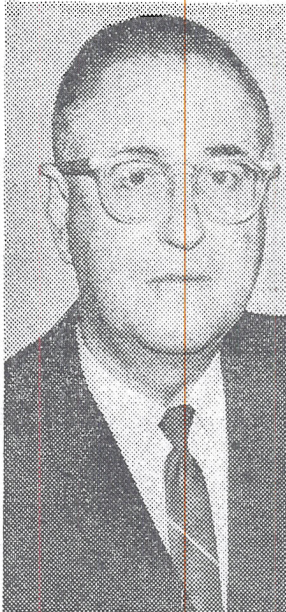
In his new post, Mr. Porter will be dealing with a part of the world with which he is familiar, having served as chief of the rural pacification program in South Vietnam—with the title of Deputy United States Ambassador—from 1965 to mid-1967.

Some American officials were said to have been disappointed that Mr. Porter was not chosen to succeed Henry Cabot Lodge as Ambassador to Saigon. This disappointment was reportedly shared, to some extent, by Mr. Porter. But in May, 1967, he was given his Korean assignment, which he has found challenging.

During his four years in Seoul, he has had to cope with such problems as the North Korean capture of the U.S.S. Pueblo and the downing of an EC-121 reconnaissance plane, as well as the delicate maneuvering in regard to the United States military cutback in South Korea.

Korea, he said in March, has been "perhaps one of the most interesting assignments in my career."

The bespectacled and gray-haired Ambassador, who is 6 feet tall and weighs 175 pounds,



Associated Press

Does not stand on protocol

added: "I believe above all an American Ambassador must conduct himself modestly."

"A diplomat should learn and speak to some extent the language of the country he serves in," he added. He took daily lessons in his office and became fairly fluent in the language.

William James Porter was born in England, Sept. 1, 1914, the son of a Royal Navy officer. After his father was killed in World War I, he and his mother moved to Fall River, Mass., to join relatives there.

He went to school in Fall River, and after attending Thibodeau Business College in 1933, he found that he was "interested in the Foreign Service and wanted to travel." After becoming a naturalized citizen in 1936, he took his first post, in Budapest.

It was while serving in Syria in 1944 that he met and married Eleanore Henry, an Army nurse. They are the parents of 24-year-old twins, William and Eleanore.

Success in Algeria

His promotion to ambassadorial rank followed months or serving as United States Consul General in Algeria during the uneasy period preceding independence. During that time Mr. Porter, who is fluent in both French and Arabic, was reportedly highly successful at developing and maintaining an easy relationship with both the French and the Algerians.

It was this handling of a delicate situation that reportedly led Mr. Lodge to have him assigned to Saigon as deputy.

Although some have termed his manner abrupt and managerial, others have said that Mr. Porter is no less skilled as a diplomat for being an unconventional one—a man with "a very keen political sense tinged with good humor under all circumstances," a State Department official was quoted as having said.