Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

JOHN D. CASWELL

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is the fourth of August 2000. This is with John D. Caswell. This is being done for the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Let's start at the beginning. Tell me when and where you were born.

CASWELL: I was born on August 15th 1947 in Attleboro, Massachusetts, which is a suburb of Providence, Rhode Island.

Q: Tell me something about your family. What was the date again?

CASWELL: August 15th 1947.

Q: Almost 'happy birthday'.

CASWELL: Thank you very much. Well, my father was a salesman for his working career with a company called Burroughs, which made office equipment. They eventually merged into and became Unisys. He graduated from Brown University in Providence. He was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and essentially my father's side of the family came from southeastern Massachusetts, Cape Cod area. His father had also attended Brown and was briefly in the Coast Guard. My father was also in the Coast Guard during the war and, listening to my father tell his stories over and over and over again, I think he probably should have stayed in the Coast Guard when the war ended. He developed a great affection for the Coast Guard and it seems as though those were the brightest moments of his life even though it was wartime. In his stories about the Coast Guard, he always relishes the stories, and the stories that talked about his business career were many times bittersweet. My mother was born in Boston, and her father had been a haberdasher and essentially she moved around an awful lot throughout New England. She seemed to have lived in just about every substantial city in eastern Massachusetts and Maine at one time or another when she was growing up. She earned a secretarial degree from a junior college in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Q: How big was your family?

CASWELL: It was just my sister and I and my parents, a relatively small family. I had an aunt and uncle that lived in Cape Cod and a couple of cousins, but it was a fairly small family.

Q: Where did you grow up?

CASWELL: For the most part I grew up in Connecticut. When I was about four the family moved, because my father was transferred from the Providence office down to New Haven, Connecticut, so we moved and we lived in a place called Milford, Connecticut, which is between New Haven and Bridgeport on Long Island Sound. Except for about two and a half years when we moved up to the Hartford area - my father briefly got an assignment up in the Hartford office - we lived in Milford the whole time that I was growing up, from four or five until I graduated from high school. My parents still live there till this day.

Q: Where did you go to school? Let's talk about elementary school first.

CASWELL: Various elementary schools because we moved a little bit. I started out elementary school in Milford in a place with the delightful name of Pumpkin Delight Elementary School. The school was located on Pumpkin Delight Road; I think at one time there must have been a huge pumpkin patch there or something like that. When I was in about third grade, my father got that transfer, so we moved to Newington, Connecticut. I went to an elementary school there through fifth grade, and then we moved back to Milford again and I went to Central Grammar School which went up through eighth grade. There was no junior high school in Milford, so I went to high school at a place called Milford High School, which now is an annex to City Hall. In the dearth of kids in the '70s they closed down that high school and reopened it as an annex. I graduated from high school in 1965.

Q: Let's talk about elementary school first. In elementary school was there anything that particularly interested you - reading or sports or activities or anything like that?

CASWELL: Well, I was fanatic about baseball. My grandfather introduced me to baseball when I was very small, and we played a lot of baseball in the neighborhood, so I became really interested in baseball. I played a lot of Little League baseball and organized baseball. That was always sort of my biggest hobby. I did the sort of things, I think, that most boys would do, collected coins, collected stamps. I think maybe that was my first introduction to thinking about the wider world outside of my home community. I must have been in maybe first or second grade when I started collecting stamps. I inherited my grandfather's coin collection; he particularly had a good collection of British coins. Fairly early on I became interested in geography and maps and the broader world. My parents tell me stories about how when I was in first grade I'd be sprawled out on the living room floor thumbing through an atlas looking up maps of the countries of the world. I was always very interested in travelogs and things like this.

Q: Did you take the National Geographic?

CASWELL: Yes. As a matter of fact, a great thing happened, for me at least, when I was about in seventh or eighth grade, when a great uncle died on my mother's side. He had been keeping National Geographics dating back to about 1940 or so. So in addition to the contemporary stuff, all of a sudden I inherited boxes and boxes of National Geographics dating all the way back to the war years. I became increasingly interested in history, to go along with the geography, starting in maybe sixth or seventh grade, not that much before that, and had been very interested in historical recreations and living history sort of places. In New England there's a couple of them that are not as grand as Colonial Williamsburg but the same sort of idea. One's called Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts, and another one's called Mystic Seaport in Connecticut. I became quite interested in those sorts of things. I think I became increasingly interested in that as I went on into high school.

Q: What about reading?

CASWELL: I certainly did reading outside of school, did some reading of fiction, the usual sort of Jack London, White Fang and Call of the Wild and those sorts of things that appealed to boys that age, but I was more of a practical bent and I tended to read histories and biographies and that sort of thing.

Q: While you were in high school were you getting any particular encouragement in historic or geographic fields?

CASWELL: It would be hard to say that I particularly got encouragement other than the fact that I just enjoyed those courses. I think it was kind of self reinforcing. I enjoyed them, I did well in them. I remember in seventh grade there was kind of a theme of looking at Latin American countries and for the first time we sort of looked at countries in greater depth. We had this teacher Mrs. Reynolds. I was in what was called the accelerated group. In those days the idea was to group people in classes by their skill levels, so you'd have an accelerated group and then the B group and the C group and the D group or whatever. She would put us through our paces, and she had this one much feared project that everyone heard about in advance called 'the 100-page report'. Of course, for somebody in seventh grade a 100-page report sounds really daunting. You would either select or be given a country and then you were supposed to delve as much as you could into this country, its people, the geography, the history, economics, products, natural resources, and so forth and so on. Essentially it was an excuse to get out the Encyclopedia Britannica. My country was Chile. Despite the 100-page report, it was the beginning of my particular interest in Latin America which, when I then got into high school, I followed on and studied Spanish. I guess in that sense that might be a way, what happened to me in elementary and secondary school, that encouraged me towards this sort of career.

Q: How about newspaper reading or TV? Did news intrude much into your life? Was this something that the family followed and you picked up?

CASWELL: My father was a big reader and my father was also a big believer in subscribing to news magazines, newspapers. We always had a lot of reading material around the house. He was also a big supporter of the public library and was constantly checking books out at the library. So in that sense, yes, I think the family background that I grew up in was encouraging me to look at public affairs and to read it. When did it really start to have an impact? I think in the beginnings of puberty, seventh or eighth grade, your horizons begin to expand a bit more, and that was definitely the case for me. I was in seventh or eighth grade in 1960 and this was the time that John Kennedy was running for President. I really at that point became very much intrigued. I remember we had, in our social studies class, mock elections, following the race, Kennedy against Nixon, and the TV debates. That was the period, I think, when I really started to pay a lot more attention to public affairs and politics. Before that, I was dimly aware of things. I remember in 1956 the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian rebellion, and the Suez Crisis. Even though I was in about third grade or so at that point, I can certainly remember these big events on TV, but I didn't follow day in and day out what was going on in the newspapers. That started, I would say, in seventh or eighth grade, about 1960 or '61. Then I began to voraciously follow politics and I used to watch Meet The Press and all, the equivalent to talk shows, on TV and even on radio.

Q: Which side were you on, being from New England, a good Democrat?

CASWELL: I guess you'd say my family was more sort of fence-sitters. I think, going back, they had leaned toward Republicans. I remember my mother even confessed that the first time she voted was in the election of, I guess, 1936, and she voted for Alf Landon; she was maybe more Republican by heritage. But they became big supporters of Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman, so they weren't the sort of folks that hated Roosevelt and hated Social Security and that sort of thing.

Q: They didn't talk about 'that man' in the White House?

CASWELL: That's right. They weren't rock-rib New England Republicans, but they would occasionally vote for Republicans. But by and large, I think they were more oriented towards moderate Democrats.

Q: Still talking about your neighborhood and your school and all, was there an ethnic mix? Did the outside world intrude at all there?

CASWELL: There definitely was an ethnic mix. It's probably a point that is not appreciated by people who didn't grow up in New England, but the public image of New England is sort of isolated little Yankee villages with white clapboard Congregationalist churches and everybody is a WASP or whatever. That image tends to be true in northern New England; it is decidedly less true in southern New England where I grew up. Actually, Rhode Island and Connecticut are proportionately the two most Catholic states in the United States. I'd say roughly about half the kids in the neighborhood, or families, were Catholic. There were some Jewish people. Not an enormous number of Jewish people, but I had some friends who were Jewish. There were in the nearby cities, New Haven and Bridgeport, substantial populations of black people and, particularly in Bridgeport, Puerto Ricans. We had a lot of Puerto Rican population, together with a lot of ethnic people from Italy, Poland and so forth. When I say 'ethnic', in New Haven you had people who spoke English with an accent and got newspapers from the old country, that type of thing. So, yes, it was a very heterogeneous area that I grew up in.

Q: At one time there was a tremendous divide between the Protestants and the Catholics, and the Catholics all went to their schools. It was not just a school, it was a social divide and everything else; the twain weren't meeting. How was it by the '60s when you were growing up there? Was this changing?

CASWELL: Well, the Catholic church, St. Mary's, had a parochial school, but that only extended up through eighth grade or so - maybe it was even sixth grade - and there were Catholic high schools, a girls's school called Laurelton Hall and a couple of boys' prep schools, Notre Dame and Fairfield Prep. So I had some friends either in the neighborhood who went to these schools or I had friends in the public schools who at some point, maybe when they finished elementary school and went to high school, didn't go to Milford High School but went to Fairfield Prep or Laurelton. But it was not like some sort of Northern Ireland type of social divide. My parents, who were more old school, weren't really terribly keen about me dating Catholic girls. Sometimes I would hear stories about 'oh boy, if you end up marrying a Catholic girl or Jewish girl, there would be all kinds of complications and problems', but it wasn't a big deal, it wasn't something that was an absolute social barrier. There certainly were no problems in terms of socializing with those people, and the neighborhood was very mixed, although, to be fair, there were relatively few black people in this town. We're only talking about a town that's 10 miles from New Haven or Bridgeport. In those days you might have a handful of black people in the high school. It was a very, very small percentage. I think it's a bit higher now.

Q: When you were in high school - you said you played baseball - did you follow the Red Sox?

CASWELL: Actually yes, but I was not a fanatic Red Sox fan. As a matter of fact, the Red Sox have had many years of futility and they were at a bit of a low ebb. When I first started following, I actually followed more National League baseball - this town where I lived was within, say, 70 miles of New York City, so you got a fair amount of coverage of the New York teams - so what happened was I started out rooting for the New York Giants, mostly because I had friends in the neighborhood who liked the New York Giants. Of course, in those days anybody that rooted for the Giants hated the Dodgers - that goes without saying - but they really hated the Yankees. When 1958 came and both the Dodgers and the Giants moved out to the West Coast, this was a very bleak moment.

Q: Betrayal.

CASWELL: Betrayal, exactly. And I tried in vain for a year or two to follow them out in San Francisco, but the time zones were just too great. And I loathed the Yankees - they were all that was on TV - and the Red Sox were so inept in that time period. Ted Williams had about retired and they really didn't have much, so I was looking around for teams that could give the Yankees [a run for their money], and I found out that I could get WBAL, of all things, the Baltimore radio station, on the radio at night. It seemed the air waves seemed to travel well over the ocean - we lived near the shore. The Orioles had a good, young team in those days - Brooks Robinson was a rookie - so I started rooting for the Orioles and I turned out to be a lifelong Baltimore Oriole fan. It was quite ironic that I ended up living in the right area to follow the Orioles every day.

Q: Or did you show up in the right area because of the Orioles?

CASWELL: Well, I think that was just a happy coincidence.

Q: When you were getting ready to get out of high school, what were you pointing towards?

CASWELL: I thought I wanted to go to a liberal arts college. Although I did alright in math and science, I wasn't thinking about becoming a doctor or a dentist or a mathematician or an engineer. I was more thinking in terms of maybe I'd go to law school eventually and become a lawyer, but I was very interested, as I said, in the world and I actually at that point was thinking vaguely in terms of maybe I'd like to try a career in government or in the State Department. In government in general because it was the Kennedy period, encouraging young people to think about public service. These were exciting times with the civil rights movement and so forth. I had the idea that there was a lot that was wrong with the world and government was a significant engine to try to change things for the better. I was not necessarily thinking of making a career in politics per se but someplace in government service. I had a strong inclination towards international affairs. One thing I might interject: it wasn't a particularly public affairs thing, but I had an opportunity to participate in a church-sponsored project when I was a senior in high school, and I went down to Puerto Rico to work for several weeks in the rural area of northeastern Puerto Rico. It turned out we were helping a small village build a new church. But this coming on top of having studied Spanish in high school and having kind of a lingering interest in Latin America dating back to seventh or eighth grade, this was my first experience actually getting into an airplane and flying someplace. It was really quite exotic, going to live in a foreign environment where people spoke Spanish every day and they ate different things and the music was different. We went down in the middle of winter and the climate was wonderful, February getting out of New England. It really sort of hooked me on the whole thing about living overseas and working overseas. It made me think maybe I would try a stint in the Peace Corps when I got out of college.

Q: The Peace Corps, of course, was really at its acme then with Kennedy and all.

CASWELL: The only other thing that I thought vaguely about when I was in high school about maybe was a religious career., I was very religious and I thought at one point that another possibility might have been the ministry.

Q: What church, denomination?

CASWELL: The Congregational Church, which the successor to the old New England Puritans.

Q: Was the Congregational Church puritanical at that point?

CASWELL: No, the Congregational Church by certainly the 1960s was what I would call a more liberal, mainline Protestant. It was not particularly fundamentalist or Bible belt. As a matter of fact, it's just the opposite; it's rather more liberal and oriented towards trying to right social wrongs and things like that. Frankly, there's not much difference between the Congregationalists or the Methodists or the Presbyterians.

Q: What happened? Where'd you go to school?

CASWELL: I ended up going to Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, which was not actually, when I first started looking at colleges, what I was thinking about doing. But from the time I was very small my father had been prompting me to go to Brown University, as he had and as his father had. Of course, in my adolescent rebellion I therefore decided that the last place in the world I was going to go to school was Brown University. As a matter of fact, I was sort of intrigued with getting out of New England. I had been there all my life, my parents had been there all their lives, and I wanted to get out and see something different. So basically I was thinking about other schools, not all the way out on the West Coast but sort of in the Mid-Atlantic Region, to put a little bit of distance between me and my parents. Actually at one point I was thinking about Johns Hopkins, I was thinking about maybe William & Mary College, I was thinking maybe about the University of Virginia or Washington & Lee or Lehigh University. Ironically we went on one of these trips where high schoolers go with their parents to scout out colleges and do tours of campuses and all of that. One of my father's business colleagues heard me talking about this in the office and he said, "Well, if you're going down to Pennsylvania and Maryland, check out my old alma mater, Franklin & Marshall College." I'd never even heard of Franklin & Marshall College, but my father thought highly of this colleague so he said, "Sure, I'll do that." The idea was we went there first. I, of course, was very skeptical about this place, but he said, "Well, it will be sort of a rehearsal. You don't care that much about this school. You can check it out and do an interview and practice on interviewing, and it won't mean anything." Well, I went up and did the tour and had the interview, and I was very impressed, and they seemed to be favorable towards me. I left thinking a little differently about the place and went off to see Lehigh University, and was really turned off. Basically Lehigh's facilities didn't seem nearly as good, and all they ever talked about was their engineering program. It seemed as though the liberal arts program was sort of an afterthought. Then I went to Johns Hopkins University, and that was more impressive in a way, but there it was much colder and again they seemed to talk all the time about how wonderful their medical school was and how wonderful their graduate programs were. I thought to myself, I will be an undergraduate; am I going to get lost in the shuffle here? By that point we'd sort of run out of time and my parents said, "We can go down to Williamsburg if you want to," and I said, "I think maybe I've seen enough." I really thought a lot more about Franklin & Marshall, so I ended up applying for early admission there and that's where I ended up going.

Q: You were at Franklin & Marshall from when to when?

CASWELL: '65 to '69.

Q: Let's talk about Franklin & Marshall. You're the first person I've talked to who'd been there. I've heard the name for a long time and I've seen the campus. It's really very nice. During the second half of the '60s, what was Franklin & Marshall like, where did the students come from, and what was its thrust?

CASWELL: It was still an all-male college at that point. It only went coed actually the year after I graduated, 1970, and that was the subject of some agitation the four years that I was there. It was a very traditional liberal arts school that had a curriculum that made sure, through a series of distribution requirements, that you were exposed to a variety of disciplines. Although it was a liberal arts school, it also seemed to be rather pre-professional in its orientation. By that I mean the place had over the years developed the justified reputation of being a really good school to go to if you want to prepare yourself to go to medical school. For example, it had very, very strong, very, very selective chemistry and biology departments and a good psychology department as well. The story was that if you could get admitted into the pre-med [pre-medicine] program and succeed and get the recommendation of the pre-med program, you could pretty much name your ticket as to where you wanted to go to medical school, including Harvard and Johns Hopkins and Jefferson Medical School in Philadelphia and so forth. It also had a very good government department. They called it a government department, not a political science department. As a result of that, it produced a lot of people going on to law school. The classes were small. The faculty was very oriented towards teaching and working with students, not so much doing research and publication, so the best professors were in the classroom and they were your advisors; they weren't isolated off someplace doing research and getting published. There were no graduate programs; it was strictly an undergraduate college. There were about 2,000 students roughly. It drew its students mostly from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, some from New York, a lesser number from New England, but some from New England. It didn't really draw that many students internationally although there were some, particularly Japanese students. We had an odd mix. We had one or two from the Middle East and a student from Belize, of all places. Most of them came out of public schools but I'd say that a good 10 to 15 percent came out of private schools, and a very high percentage of the graduates went on to graduate school in one form or another, either medical school or law schools, which was the vast majority, or some went on to Ph.D. programs. Because it was an all-male school, it was not that great a place to go to study foreign languages. It had a very weak sociology department in those days. If you wanted to get into something really arcane like archeology, there was no program there. The town it was located in was extremely conservative and there was a big social and, if you will, political gap between the pinko lefties on the campus and these very conservative Pennsylvania German Republicans in the town. The town itself was then in a sea of an even more conservative rural farming area with many Amish and Mennonites.

Q: The town was what?

CASWELL: Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Actually it's a historic town. It was sort of the first town of the frontier in Pennsylvania back in the 18th century and at one point had the distinction along with York, Pennsylvania, of being a place where the Continental Congress hid out briefly when the British were threatening Philadelphia. It's an old red-brick city. Even today it hasn't changed that much from what it was when I was there and frankly I don't think it's changed that much from what it was like 100 years ago.

Q: As a graduate of an all-male college myself, the most important thing: where'd you go for girls?

CASWELL: This was a sore subject. Franklin & Marshall's nickname was F&M, and one of the jokes when I was there was that the F&M stood really for frustration and masturbation. There was a state teachers' college, as they called them in those days, called Millersville State, maybe 10 miles or so away. That had a poor reputation: 'the girls weren't very attractive and they were dumb as doorposts' type of thing. There were the sort of classier schools that we would have mixers with or that you would go off and attend mixers, Goucher College a little north of Baltimore in Towson, or Hood College in Frederick, Maryland, or a place called Wilson College in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, which is sort of west of Gettysburg. Occasionally people would go in to Philadelphia, to Bryn Mawr or there was another one with the incredible name of Beaver College in a placed called Glenmont, Pennsylvania, which is in the suburbs of Philadelphia, and there were a couple small junior colleges, too. But the problem was that if you didn't have a car - and, of course, I didn't have a car, and in those days most students didn't; a few of the richer students had cars but most students didn't have cars - one needs to get to these places. So I didn't have much of a social life. I spent most of my four years kind of grinding away. As I always had been kind of a conscientious student, I felt compelled to do the best I could.

Q: At what were you grinding away?

CASWELL: I became a government major, so I studied political science for the most part. I took a number of history courses. I kept up taking courses in Spanish, and I also had the serendipitous opportunity to begin studying Portuguese there. It was very unusual for a small college, and one that wasn't particularly strong in foreign languages, and in a place like Pennsylvania to offer Portuguese, but one of the Spanish professors was actually Portuguese. During the '60s, as you may recall, this was a period moving towards greater liberty and self discovery, and one of the pressures on the college was to get rid of distribution requirements. When I started there, you had to take four semesters of social science and four semester of physical sciences, etcetera, regardless of what your major was. One of the requirements was four semesters of foreign language. Well, when they got rid of all the distribution requirements, one of the areas of the faculty that was really hard hit was the foreign language department because most of the students who went to Franklin & Marshall didn't go there to study foreign language and most of them viewed studying foreign languages as a waste of time, which meant all of a sudden the faculty didn't have any students. So they had to do things to try to attract students. Since I'd been taking courses in Spanish, this professor made it known that people who had a good background in Spanish, if they wanted to, they could sign up and take a sort of tutorial in Portuguese and it would build on their knowledge in Spanish. The sales pitch was that you'd get the equivalent of four semesters on Portuguese in two semesters, a kind of rapid, intensive Portuguese. So I signed up for that. As a result of that, it was very useful when I came into the Foreign Service. I was one of the relatively few people who had Portuguese. That was one of the reasons why my first assignment was to Rio de Janeiro.

Q: This was the period, '65 to '69, of 'the '60s'. How did the '60s hit you all? Vietnam, civil rights and all sorts of movements were going on.

CASWELL: Franklin & Marshall was certainly not in the forefront. We're not talking about Berkeley or Columbia or even Harvard. It was a fairly sheltered campus and very conservative sort of place, so we were not immune to it. A lot of the student agitation and pressure and so forth was focused initially, I remember, on getting rid of things like the distribution requirements and how the school was run, getting a bigger student voice on the college senate and that type of thing, a lot of agitation pushing for coeducation, sort of in-house issues. As the '60s went on, it would be fair to say that it wasn't just all in-house things. Of course, I think it was almost de rigeur in those days that ROTC was a bad thing because it was linked with the Vietnam War. Well, because of student pressure, the school jettisoned Air Force ROTC within a year or so of the time that I got there. I think maybe 1966 was the last year they had any ROTC, so by that time they had gotten rid of that and that was no longer a lightning rod for protest. There were protests at the local Hamilton Watch factory because it became known that Hamilton Watch among other things built time fuses for bombs in Vietnam, so there were some protests that involved the students out there. Through the four years I was there, there was increasingly the sort of lifestyle revolution, if you will, which was reflected; you could see it in the yearbooks of the four years that I was there. The first year I was there it was a very traditional yearbook, everybody had fairly short hair, people wore ties, it was very, very socially conservative. There were fraternity parties and beer blasts, but you didn't have drugs. By the time I graduated, my senior year, the place was flower power and a lot of people were doing drugs and the atmosphere of the place had changed considerably. Also, I should say, reflecting on the civil rights movement, the school had made an attempt to increase the number of black students studying at the school, with some success. It was not a huge number, but there was a very coherent, cohesive group of black students, who became increasingly radicalized, if you will, by the civil rights movement which culminated with the assassination of Martin Luther King. They staged a number of protests. I can't honestly recall why they would think that the school administration was to blame for the civil rights situation in the country, but they pressed for black studies and some changes in the curriculum to reflect some of their interests, that was the focus of their protests, and some attempt to involve themselves with the black community, such as it was, in Lancaster. So, yes, certainly these things were reflected at the college, but the place was never closed down in any serious way like Columbia. We didn't have major occupations of administration buildings or things like that.

Q: Were the studies affected, particularly in government or things like this? Were you beginning to feel a different goal because government was no longer the...?

CASWELL: Oh, in my personal sense? No, I didn't particularly feel that way. I guess I wasn't the most radicalized of students. I felt disenchantment towards the Vietnam War and had serious doubts about whether it was all worthwhile and whether U.S. national interests were really on the line. I was skeptical of the domino theory and all this, which was certainly not original on my part but I bought into that, but I was not alienated. I guess my view on Lyndon Johnson was that he did a lot of really good things and his heart was in the right place, particularly domestically. All the programs weren't overwhelming successes, but he was trying to do the right thing, and he stumbled badly in Vietnam and maybe he shouldn't have been so prideful. Maybe he should have reconsidered his policies, but then on the other hand it was difficult. Once you'd embarked on a certain course, I could see where it would be difficult to just turn things around right away. Let's put it this way. I liked Gene McCarthy like a lot of people. I didn't like Gene McCarthy so much that I would drop out and travel up to New Hampshire to help him with the New Hampshire primaries. I was not that unhappy when Hubert Humphrey won the Democratic nomination. That was the first election I could vote in and I actually voted for Hubert Humphrey. Of course, the alternative was Richard Nixon, whom I would never vote for [at that point]. I think I still thought in terms of a possibility in government service and a possibility that a career in the State Department was something that I was interested in. When I looked at what I wanted to do with myself beyond college, one of the first things I was thinking about was going to where I ended up going, the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, and to try to pursue a career in the State Department. I had pretty much given up on the idea of becoming a lawyer. I had taken a couple courses in constitutional law in the government department with probably one of the toughest, most demanding professors in the department. I had done okay in the courses, but I decided that I wasn't really that enthused with pouring over case decisions and remembering precedents and that sort of thing. That pretty much decided me against going to law school.

Q: Had you heard about the Foreign Service? People talk about the State Department and all, but at a certain point you have to get kind of specific. Were you able to get information about it?

CASWELL: You know, that's an interesting question. I must have. I couldn't honestly say exactly when was the first time. I must have read something; I think I did, and I don't think it was when I was already in Fletcher, I think it was when I was at Franklin and Marshall, the little brochure that would come out from the Board of Examiners about careers in the Foreign Service and 'you have to take the exam and here are some sample questions from the exam and there are four cones' and all of that sort of stuff. I definitely remember reading that brochure. I think I probably saw it for the first time when I was a senior in college, not when I had already gotten to Fletcher, but I can't say for 100 percent sure. That was something that I really thought about. The other thing I was frankly thinking about for a career would have been academia and to go on for a Ph.D. and to try to become a college professor.

Q: There are two things. What prompted towards graduate school, and how about the draft?

CASWELL: I'll answer in reverse order, because the draft was a very immediate, real thing for me, in part, because growing up in Connecticut, my draft board was the New Haven Draft Board, and for years during the Vietnam War the prime hecklers of the New Haven Draft Board were the Yale undergraduates running around down there burning their draft cards and picketing the draft board. The New Haven Draft Board was full of crusty old people who said, "By God, we're going to make patriots out of all those college students, and they're all no good, and they all need experience in the military to turn them around." So they, informally, I think, but it was sort of common knowledge at the street level that their policy was that come June they started drafting nothing but college graduates until they got every able-bodied college graduate, and then they started taking high school dropouts again. So I had in earlier years seen people who graduated from college, they were at Fort Dix for basic training by the fall at the latest if not as early as July. They would get their call for their physical in, say, February or March, and they were gone. I dismissed the notion of running away to Canada. I thought about, but then decided not to do the Peace Corps. I figured, well, I was just postponing the inevitable. So I decided to look at some other alternatives that will protect me from the draft. So I looked at essentially Air Force OCS, Coast Guard OCS or Navy OCS, OCS being Officer Candidate School, and I decided Navy was the best deal because it in effect was a three-year commitment, whereas the Coast Guard and the Air Force were four-year commitments. So in November or so, October or November of my senior year, I started pursuing an application to Navy OCS. It was a relatively complicated thing. I had to go first to an office in Lancaster, then I had to go to an office outside of Harrisburg, and then I had to go all the way to Pittsburgh for certain specialized tests, interviews, physicals, and so forth. So I pursued this the same time I was applying to graduate school, and I was fortunate enough to get accepted into the Navy program. By about February or March they said, "We'll sign you up and put you in the Naval Reserve so you won't get drafted into the Army." At the same time I was looking at graduate school. Essentially by '68 I had dismissed pretty much by that time applying to law school. So I just took the regular graduate record exams in political science rather than the law boards, and I looked at Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts, and I looked at the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins (SAIS) most closely. I also looked at programs in Latin American studies at the University of Texas and Stanford University. Those were the closest. I looked at several others, the University of New Mexico and a couple others. Indiana University, I think, was another one. Anyway I finally narrowed it down. I went up and visited Fletcher, had some interviews, saw the campuses at work, read all the materials about the place as well as SAIS, and I was just much more impressed by Fletcher, what it had to offer both in terms of its program and physical setting. I liked the Boston area even though arguably Washington's a better place to be. So I applied to both as well as Stanford and the University of Texas. I got accepted by Fletcher, SAIS, and the University of Texas. By that time the question was could I go or not. If you recall, Nixon said that he had a secret plan to get us out of Vietnam, to get elected. By this time we were discovering that the secret plan was the Vietnamization, and because of Vietnamization, we were turning over assets and gradually lowering our profile in Vietnam. Well, the personnel pipeline getting people into the armed services was still operating full force, so that resulted in a backup of people. So I called up the Navy people and I said, "When do you want me at OCS?" and they said, "Well, you know, we don't really need you right now. Got anything else to do?" I said, "Well, I've been accepted into graduate school." "Oh, good, well, why don't you start graduate school then." So I took out a loan and I went off to Fletcher initially thinking I might get a semester in. As it turned out, I was able to get an entire year in. Another thing that was nice about Fletcher was in those days you were able to get an M.A. degree in one year's time if you applied yourself. So I applied myself with great industry and I got the M.A. by the end of May, and by, I guess, July fifth I was inducted into Navy OCS in Newport, Rhode Island.

Q: Let's talk a little about Fletcher. Did it have a particular thrust? You had shown an interest in Latin America. How did you find Fletcher?

CASWELL: Fletcher's curriculum is a multidisciplinary curriculum essentially divided between what they call international law and organizations, diplomatic history was in the second area, economics was the third area, and the fourth was essentially political science, international affairs but looking at it from more of a political science perspective. And they had some areas that focused on issued associated with economic development and public diplomacy. I liked the multidisciplinary approach. In effect you needed to take courses in several of these areas. You might concentrate mostly in one area, but you still had to have a smattering of courses across the board. I guess was accustomed to thinking that way from a liberal arts college, and it still seemed to make sense. Whereas most graduate school programs tend to be much more narrow in their focus, this multidisciplinary approach was broader. One thing that disappointed me was that Fletcher was not all that strong in Latin America. They did have a couple professors who did courses with some Latin American content, particularly a diplomatic history course that focused on the history of U.S. diplomatic relations with Latin America and there was another one that was little more oriented towards business and investment issues in Latin America. But I enjoyed my time period there, and I found it a quantum jump academically, just like going from high school to college, going from college to graduate school in terms of the amount of work that I was expected to do. In both cases, both college and graduate school, I felt a little bit overwhelmed at first and a little bit insecure, so I really spent a lot of time grinding away to make sure that I wasn't overwhelmed so much that I couldn't pass the courses. But I liked it. I remember some of my colleagues felt sort of disappointed and felt that it had not lived up to its promise and felt that the school was not as good as it should have been. I had a roommate who decided he really wanted to get an M.B.A., and in his year at Fletcher he decided that all of this was just too much - how can I say it?

Q: Peripheral or...

CASWELL: It just wasn't concrete enough, it wasn't practical enough. He didn't see where it was going. He was more hard boiled and decided, "What I really want to do is get an M.B.A. degree because that's the key, that's the ticket to punch to go out and..."

Q: Can you describe the student body and kind of what they were pointing at, sort of a background on where they were pointed?

CASWELL: The student body at Fletcher was significantly different from that at Franklin & Marshall on two counts. One, it was, if you will, more selective or elitist. A very high percentage of the students at Fletcher had gone to Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, University of California at Berkeley, Cambridge, Oxford, the very finest universities. Secondly, there was a very large number of foreign students at the Fletcher School, including students who were there on government scholarships. They were either almost like mid-career or junior diplomats who'd been sent by their foreign ministries to develop certain skills, or were people who were being groomed, who'd been picked out or won scholarships in their universities at home but were being groomed eventually for a career in the foreign ministry or the central bank or whatever and were being sent to the Fletcher School for that purpose. We also had some mid-career people State Department people that went there, State Department and USIA, and the military was a very big believer, particularly the Navy, in the value of a Fletcher degree. They were, I guess, trying to produce their in-house "brain trust" that they could have over at the Pentagon that could go to meetings with the State Department types in Washington and hold their own in arguments about what should be foreign policy issues, to defend the Pentagon's point of view. So it was very different in that way. Also another interesting point was that the Fletcher School was quite the lightning rod for protests at Tufts about the Vietnam War, because the dean of the Fletcher School at that point was a man named Edmond Gullion, who was a retired FSO who had served in Vietnam a couple times in his career. I think his last posting was as ambassador to Zaire, but he made himself kind of a lightning rod because he became a spokesman in favor of what the government was trying to do in Vietnam and justifying the Vietnam War to the Boston community. Boston being a very liberal university-oriented community, he was not very popular. So there were all sorts of strange stories. The SDS, the Students for a Democratic Society, were constantly having protests at the Fletcher School. There were wild rumors that somehow - they were called the war room rumors - somehow there was a war room at Fletcher, or that Fletcher contracted out to the State Department or the Pentagon to produce studies relating to the war in Vietnam, because we had these mid-career military officers there and because of Gullion's prominent role as [a defender of the war], which culminated in the school being firebombed. So it was much more serious, if you will, the anti-Vietnam War protest that I saw when I was at Fletcher than what I had seen as an undergraduate at Franklin & Marshall.

Q: Sometimes when you see sort of the radical element, that can turn one off. How did this affect you?

CASWELL: I thought they were comical frankly and rather inept. There was some fear in their being disturbed about what was going on in Vietnam and the barbaric role that they saw the United States military and the United States government performing in Southeast Asia. But the way they would go about protesting it and carrying on and so forth and somehow holding the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy responsible for this and somehow thinking that Dean Gullion was an influential player in all this was laughable. Their naivety and immaturity was one of the things that struck me most. There certainly were among my colleagues, though, people who, although they didn't go along with the pack and thought that the undergraduate SDS people were also laughable, were just as alienated about the war and the dean as some of the protestors and very skeptical as a result of just about anything that came out of the government. Most of those people eventually ended up pursuing careers either not in government service - the closest they came to government service, they became involved in Congressional campaigns - and there were a couple of my colleagues who have been very active in politics in the Democratic Party, but some of them went on into academia.

Q: This is one of the things I find interesting. Actually this is my bias but something pernicious about that generation that went into academia is that it sort of poisoned the well about American foreign policy and how we go about things. What we're doing is not always for the best, but I feel that we play a positive role, but you have this group who've been teaching students to sneer at whatever happens, or ending up on congressional staffs. This educated group of which you're talking had not been very helpful.

CASWELL: Looking back on my experience, I think there's some truth to what you say.

Q: This is '71 or so?

CASWELL: It gets a little bit complicated because of the two tracks, Officer Candidate School and Fletcher, and what happened was I went to Fletcher first for one year, the academic years '69-1970. Then the Navy called up and said, "It's your turn," so then I went into Navy OCS in July of 1970. I stayed in the Navy through the beginning of September 1973, and then I was released. I had, while I was in the Navy, decided that I wanted to go back to Fletcher for a second year, particularly to study a bit more economics. I thought I didn't know enough economics, and economics in [my view] was becoming more and more important. So I did that but also while I was in the Navy I took the Foreign Service exam; failed the first time, but passed the second time. In effect what the State Department said when I told them what my thinking was, "Sure, go ahead, get out of the Navy, go back to graduate school for a year, take those extra courses you want to take, and then probably by that time there'll be a good chance we'll be ready to have you come into the Foreign Service," and in fact that's what worked out. So I went back to Fletcher '73 to '74. The atmosphere was totally different than the first year. Then I came into the Foreign Service in July of '74.

Q: Let's talk about the Navy. What did you do in the Navy?

CASWELL: Very untypical Navy career: I came in, I did quite well at Officer Candidate School, I received what they called - I forget exactly what they called it, something like 'distinguished Naval graduate - I graduated from Officer Candidate's School with distinction, so they offered me a regular commission in the Navy as opposed to Reserve commission, which was the standard fare at OCS. Although I was flattered, I decided to decline the regular commission because that made sense if you really wanted to make a career out of the Navy, but I came into it feeling that I just wanted the Navy to provide me cover against the draft and that my professional interests lay elsewhere, so I just took a regular Reserve commission. As I mentioned before, the impact on me about the Vietnamization program, allowing me to defer OCS for a year and go to Fletcher that first year, the impact continued so that when I came into OCS... I remember this very, very well. OCS was quite large in those days; I think there were about 20 companies of officer candidates and in each company you're talking about probably 150 officer candidates in each company, and they were all Americans. In the twenty weeks or so that I was in OCS from July of 1970 until November 1970 when I graduated, it changed from 20 companies of American OC's (Officer Candidates) down to eight companies of American OC's and eight companies of Vietnamese OC's. When I came in, approximately 10 percent of every graduating class...; you were told, "Ten percent of you when you graduate will get commissions and will go to Vietnam. The other 90 percent will go to an assignment at sea." By the time it came for me actually to graduate, nobody was going to Vietnam and only a small fraction of the graduates were going to billets aboard ships, because there weren't any. The Navy was downsized seriously in this period. Many ships were being decommissioned - a large percentage of ships in the fleet were ships that were built at the final stages of the Second World War and were reaching the end of their useful lives - they were either being scrapped, mothballed, or given to the Vietnamese navy. At the same time the fleet was being shrunk drastically, the role of Americans in Vietnam as we were Vietnamizing the conflict also was shrinking drastically. So in effect my personal situation, when it came time to talk with what they called my "detailer," which was in effect your personal counselor, I told him about my background and the fact that I had gotten a master's degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and reminded the detailer that the Navy thought highly enough of this program that it would send about six senior lieutenants and lieutenant commanders a year to go to the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and so maybe they might have some use for me either in doing intelligence work in Navy Intelligence or in DIA or...

Q: DIA, Defense Intelligence Agency.

CASWELL: Defense Intelligence Agency. I had also been prompted by some of the Naval officers that I knew from Fletcher to look to see if there might be an opening for me at the Naval War College, and I said, "Plus you might just call over to the Naval War College, which is just across the inlet from OCS in Newport, and see if maybe they could use somebody like me with my background." Well, initially they were going to send me to a job in Intelligence, but then about ten days before my commissioning the detailer called me up and said, "You know that job you were going to be assigned to? It's been 'disestablished' in a budget cut. I'm not quite sure what I'm going to do with you." And I said, "Remember I suggested you call over to the War College? Why don't you try it again?" So he called over to the War College and indeed they did have maybe about a half dozen openings for junior officers over there on the staff, and they said, "Yes, we'd be delighted to have Caswell." So I went over there as a newly minted ensign. I was initially assigned as an administrative assistant to Rear Admiral Fred Bennett, who was the Chief of Staff of the Naval War College, and I did some stuff for him. They were trying to set up the beginnings of some sort of computerized management system, keeping track of costs and things like this. Fred Bennett was very into "bean counting". I was not very well suited for that. I did my best at it, but after I had been there for a few months I found out that they had a publication called The Naval War College Review, and I got to know the editor of that, a Navy commander named Robert Lasky. He became intrigued at the thought of getting me to work as his assistant. He had a junior officer before who had a Ph.D. from the University of Kentucky, a historian, and it had worked very well for him, but he had lost that guy, so he was looking for a replacement. So I sort of finagled it so that I would leave Fred Bennett's "bean-counting" shop and move down to work on The War College Review, and essentially that's what I did. The original plan was that they would send me to the War College for six months and then I would go to sea, but I never left the War College. I spent three years essentially, first as the assistant editor and then later I got moved up at least to a better title, associate editor of The Naval War College Review. There basically my job was to work the content, come up with content for this publication. It was published 10 times a year. It published mostly articles about international relations, international law, military history, and strategy. At the Naval War College their great patron saint is Alfred T. Mahan, the guy who developed the concept of sea power and the sort of relationships between naval strategy and grand strategy, national strategy...

Q: Influence of sea power on history.

CASWELL: Exactly. Basically this publication was a professional publication for the Navy. It was a mouthpiece for the President of the Naval War College, but they were trying to reflect what was being done at the College and publish articles in these areas. My job basically was to work with content. I had to read all the student theses for possible publication as articles. It was a little bit of an introduction to maybe what it would be like to be a college professor. I read many, many bad papers to get a few really good ones, or a few that could with judicious editing put into shape for publication. It was an interesting experience. Here I was a 23-year-old ensign and I was put in the situation of telling a Marine Corps colonel or a Navy captain or an Army colonel or Air Force colonel, "We don't like your paper," or "We like your paper but I'd like to make some changes to it," dealing with the sometimes difficult egos of these people. Also we would work with guest lecturers to take transcriptions of their lectures and put those into publishable form. Part of the job was to go to academic conventions and try to find papers that might fit the mold of military history or international relations, that had kind of a military aspect to it. That was the job, and it was a great job for me. It was not like a typical Navy job.

Q: How about the Naval Institute Proceedings? Were they your rival?

CASWELL: Absolutely. They did some articles like us but they were also much more into hardware, weapons, and engineering articles. They would do articles about the procurement process or how does this new class of destroyers really stack up against what the contractors were selling us 10 years ago, and how well is it really performing. They would have some engineering articles and things like this that were not the sort of thing that we would do.

Q: Can you sort of do a little ranking of the intellectual depth of various services you were getting and seeing? Did you see any sort of differences between the different services?

CASWELL: That's a hard one. I think anything that I would say would be subject to 'well, that's just a stereotype'. It'd be real easy to say that the Marines weren't very bright and that the Navy was more stodgy and that the Air Force was maybe a little bit more technical and a little bit more modern. I think there's some truth [to these stereotypes, but they are overdone]. Well, the Army, interestingly, seemed to send some of the brightest officers. They seemed to have a way in their service of encouraging the intellectual development of officers that had the capability of going that way. They would create in their personnel tracks a primary specialty, a combat arms specialty, but there was also room for a secondary, sort of more academic or erudite studies type of specialty which officers could pursue. I think it was linked to their approach to Army attachï¿½/Defense attachï¿½ program. The Army tended to develop people in those programs because they made an effort through what they called the Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Program to introduce junior officers who had an orientation towards a certain part of the world, get them there, get them an early assignment, maybe send them to a command and staff school with the local military, and during the course of their career they would develop [that area expertise, eventually becoming an Army or Defense attachï¿½ to that country.] The Navy basically was mostly interested in promoting ship handlers and pilots and they didn't get any points at all for deviating from that. As a matter of fact, if you spent any time away from your combat arms specialty in the navy, except for the brief ticket punch at going to the Naval War College or whatever, it was lost time and put you out of the race for promotion.

Q: Are you saying the Air Force?

CASWELL: I was making a general observation in response to your question, but I think there is some truth to it. That's not to say that there weren't Navy officers that could be very intellectual in their orientation.

Q: Admiral Crowe is an example, atypical.

CASWELL: Atypical. Another one that we dealt with - and as a matter he was the third president of the War College in the three years I was there - was Stansfield Turner. But the two preceding presidents, Admiral B. J. Semmes and the man before him, Richard Colbert, sort of illustrate the diversity, if you will. B. J. Semmes, his whole approach to the War College was it's a nice year off. These guys have worked hard doing their Navy job, which is driving ships and being efficient, training and fighting wars or whatever, and they deserve time off with their families and to recreate, and that's what the War College is really all about. It's a country club. Admiral Colbert was sort of in between the two. He was rather more intellectual, but he also, I think, essentially saw the War College as kind of a grand tradition, but not too much more than a ticket puncher, a place where one might expand one's thinking for a bit, but then it's time to get back to the real world. He was very internationally oriented, rather cosmopolitan, but he wasn't that much of an intellectual at that point. He was more of an operator. He was a real politician, that's what he really was. But Stansfield Turner really tried to turn things on their head at the War College when I was there and basically said, "We've made some terrible mistakes in Vietnam and we have to try to get people to start thinking in a whole new way about strategy, and some of this can best be done by going back to the [classical military history] classes. Some of this can be done through systems analysis." It was an odd kind of renaissance mix of different approaches, but he literally brought distinguished historians and studies of the Peloponnesian War back to the War College. So you can't say that Naval officers were all traditionalists and anti-intellectual and didn't really pay attention to things outside of engineering and ship driving, but there was that tradition in the Navy. I felt that the Army really in some ways was the broadest, most intellectual of the services.

Q: One of the things I've gotten from people who served at the National War College, Foreign Service officers - I never have - they said that, oddly enough, they found some of the most advanced thinkers were coming out of the Marine Corps and then the Army. Of course, both the Navy and the Air Force spent an awful lot of time driving ships and flying planes. This was fairly technical, and it's time consuming and you don't have much time to do other things, whereas the Army just has an awful lot of down time.

CASWELL: Yes, and also they're more down on the ground dealing with people, and maybe it's therefore more incumbent upon them to develop regional expertise, country expertise, language expertise, expertise in history and cultures of places where they might be assigned.

Q: And the Marines are that way, too, the ones that rise to the top, whereas maybe in the Air Force it's different. It's interesting to look and compare.

CASWELL: Certainly there were outstanding officers I came across in all of the services.

Q: One of the things I think was important in what you were doing and the background of so many people of your generation that got into the Foreign Service was that you were both in the military, whereas I think today an awful lot of officers are coming through now who really never had any time with the military and don't really understand the nature of this beast and they have stereotypes and it has not served them well.

CASWELL: I think that's very true, and certainly during the course of my career, although I never served in the Political/Military Affairs Bureau as such, in many of the jobs that I did I had a number of times when I had to work with people from the Pentagon very, very closely or with people in the Defense Attachï¿½'s office to do my job as political officer or as a desk officer. I think I had more credibility with them and I knew how to deal with them as a result of the experience that I had in the Navy, being socialized within the military even if I didn't spend three years aboard a ship.

Q: Well, you were back at Fletcher from when to when?

CASWELL: The second time from '73 to '74, and the atmosphere was very, very different. We had gotten out of Vietnam and we had the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oil embargo-related recessions in the economy. The changes on campus were incredible. Instead of an atmosphere of outrage and protest and suspicion of all authority, the second time I came back all the students were more interested in getting a degree and getting a job. If the dean said something or a teacher said something, students weren't running up to the barricades to protest, they were sitting there taking notes and writing it all down. The orientation of a lot of the students became very much more towards business and economics and towards getting careers not in government so much but in business. In this time period the big international banks became major recruiters at Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. If I hadn't gone into the Foreign Service, I probably would have gone to work for Bank of America. I got job offers from Bank of America and Continental Illinois Bank the second time I was at Fletcher. I went just for the heck of it to do some job interviews, and I had a particularly good job offer to go with the Bank of America, but I had been accepted by the State Department and I knew by this time that the Foreign Service indeed was prepared to offer me a position in the A100 class in July right after I was going to graduate, so I figured, well, compared to the examination process of getting into the Foreign Service, it was a fairly simple thing to do a job interview and to get a job with the Bank of America, at least this was my reasoning at the time, so I figured I'd better follow through and try out the Foreign Service, at least one tour, to see if I liked it, and if I don't like it, then my thinking was, well, I can always go back and get another job with a bank.

Q: Do you recall the Foreign Service oral exam, when you took it?

CASWELL: Yes.

Q: Do you remember any of the questions or how it went?

CASWELL: What I remember was that in essence you went into a large room in an old Boston customs house in downtown Boston, and I sat down in front of a table and there were several people - I can't remember exactly how many - at least three or four examiners, along this table, and they would ask me a series of questions. My recollection that the overall interview lasted maybe half or three-quarters of an hour. It wasn't an all-day thing and it didn't involve desktop exercises like it does now apparently. They started out with relatively simple sort of biographical type of questions to set me at ease. What I remember was that they would sort of start asking me questions in different areas starting out with a certain level of generality and then trying to pursue follow-on questions that got into a little bit more detail, trying to probe the depths of my knowledge in a certain area. But I don't recall specific questions, what they were.

Q: What did they tell you? Did they tell you at the time that you'd been accepted?

CASWELL: Yes, pretty much. What they did was after this oral examination which resembled the oral examination for my master's degree. After the interview they said, "Thank you very much for your time. If you just go out and wait outside in the hall, we'll be back with you in a few minutes." Then apparently they had sort of an informal polling amongst themselves about what they thought, and then after several minutes the chairman of the board came out and said, "Congratulations. You've passed, we'll be getting back in touch with you and they explained about the rank-order register and all that sort of thing."

Q: I think this might be a good place to stop this time. So we're in 1974, and we'll pick it up next time when you go into the A100 course.

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This is the 30th of August 2000. John, did you get an impression of the group of people who were in your A100 course?

CASWELL: I guess my impression would be that they were quite democratic, notwithstanding the traditional image of the Foreign Service as being all WASPy, all ivy. By the time I came in in July of '74, things had progressed beyond that. Everybody was rather outstanding in his or her own way, but they were not all ivy by any stretch of the imagination. There seemed to be a good geographic distribution and gender mix. I can't remember exactly, but there were a substantial number of women and there was representation of different racial minorities as well. As I recall, I thought it was a fairly impressive group. We had some people who had been to the service academies. We had people who'd been to Ivy League schools. We had people from small liberal arts colleges, state universities, from all over the country. Plus we had also, interestingly enough, a couple of women in the class who had been Foreign Service Officers, but under the old practices had been forced to resign when they got married. It's surprising that that had actually gone on; I thought they only did that to airline stewardesses. I guess the Department had changed the practice or there had been a court suit or whatever, and this was one of the first classes, as I understood it, where these women were being allowed to reintegrate back into the Service but, because they had been out of active service for awhile, they were required to go through the A100 class again.

Q: How did it all meld together during your training then?

CASWELL: You hear that the A100 course is something that in effect keeps you busy while the personnel system is trying to figure out where to assign you, but I felt that the course that we had was a useful experience, a kind of quick and dirty introduction into how the State Department is organized and how it interacts with other agencies like INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service)- (end of tape)

Q: In the A100 course did you get any feel for where your class was coming from in the political spectrum, because we'd just gone through the pure tumult of the Vietnam protests and all, and it represented a highly selected group of people, but you have Kissinger as Secretary of State? In your class what were you thinking about?

CASWELL: Interestingly I didn't really get the feel from this group that there was much at all of alienation or feeling that government was simply not to be trusted or that the government was incorrigible or the government needed major reform because of the whole Vietnam experience. Rather I had the impression that there were people who like myself felt that the, if you will, the institution wasn't fundamentally flawed, maybe there had been policy mistakes and blunders, and then the blunders were compounded by refusal to recognize them and try to tough things out, but these were people who were determined to get to the Foreign Service and who were really interested in it. There were a lot of people who had been in the Peace Corps, a lot of people who had been overseas who had either worked overseas or traveled overseas. A lot of them had taken temporary jobs for extended time periods as it turned out, waiting to get called into the Foreign Service. These people were really more, I would say, sort of gung-ho. They wanted to learn as much as they could and to be successful in the Foreign Service. I didn't really get that sense of alienation, profound alienation, because of the Vietnam experience or the Watergate experience with government and international affairs, just the opposite.

Q: When you were there did you have any place that you were pointing towards, when they came around and asked where'd you want to go, or did you sort of say, "Be my guest"?

CASWELL: You mean from my perspective? Well, I was interested in Latin America. When I was in college and in graduate school I had sort of self-selected my studies as being interested in that area, and so I told people when I came in at the sort of initial counseling sessions with Personnel people that I was interested particularly in Latin America. I can't remember whether I said this or not, but I probably did, that I had a particular interest in Brazil. One of the things that people asked you was did you speak any foreign languages when you came in, and I was a little bit unusual in having Portuguese. As it turned, felicitously for me, there was an open position in Rio de Janeiro at the time. For some reason somebody had curtailed, I think it was, and so the position had been gapped for awhile, and it seemed to be a very neat fit. So I learned fairly early on that I was likely to go to Rio, which for me was just ideal. I couldn't believe my good fortune. I did not go through a lot of the agonies that other people did, kind of wondering where it was that they were going to go. But we had a rather differentiated group, particularly because of the Peace Corps experience, that angle. There were people who came in speaking Turkish or Farsi or one of the languages of South Asia or whatever, who were keen on going to these places, and some of them did get assignments in those parts of the world. I don't really remember, when it came time for the assignments to be announced, very many long faces or people saying, "Oh, my God, how did I get sent to this place? What am I going to do?" By and large, I thought people were rather pleased with the way it worked out.

Q: Did you get more Portuguese training before you went?

CASWELL: Indeed, I got some to bring me up to speed, because I hadn't really used the Portuguese. The last time I had studied Portuguese was the academic year '68-'69, so we'd had a five-year gap, and so I got about eight weeks at FSI (the Foreign Service Institute).

Q: With Portuguese, you've got your African Portuguese, you've got your Brazilian Portuguese, and you've got your Portuguese Portuguese. Was there much of a difference?

CASWELL: Oh, yes, there's a substantial difference between Portuguese Portuguese, if you want to call it, or continental European Portuguese, and Brazilian Portuguese. I guess I would kind of liken it to the differences between, say, British English and, say, Texas English. There are both accent differences, there are differences in slang and in everyday language. They use some different words for foods and things like that. And there are even some minor grammatical differences, so it's pretty distinct. I had studied Brazilian Portuguese and then my initial posting was to Brazil, and so when I encountered for the first time continental European Portuguese, it was enough to sort of set one's head to spinning, it was almost incomprehensible.

Q: Well then, you went to Rio and you served there from when to when?

CASWELL: From 1974 until 1976.

Q: What job did you have there?

CASWELL: It was kind of like being a political apprentice for the most part. I was a junior political officer in Rio de Janeiro. Rio had been the site of the embassy until about 1972, as late as that, even though we had opened up operations in Brasilia way back in the early '60s. For a long time it was like a trailer and one or two guys in it. Most of the embassy was still back in Rio because most of the Brazilian government was still in Rio. Gradually there was a kind of a shift, and the shift of the center of gravity of staff really took place in the early '70s. So Rio was still a pretty substantial place when I got there in '74 although it was definitely being downsized, but there was still the idea that they needed to have - in those days an 04 political officer and...

Q: It's about a major.

CASWELL: ...sort of a mid-career type fellow, not quite mid-career, and a junior officer. It was almost like a training assignment. I did end up spending some time in the consular section because they set up an informal rotational program within the consulate itself but it was not a rotational assignment in the pure sense of the word.

Q: In '74-'76 what was the political situation within Brazil proper and then within sort of the Rio area?

CASWELL: I think the most striking thing was that the military had been in power since 1964 when there was a revolution, they would call it. The military consolidated their power in the latter part of the '60s. At first when the military took over, there was a feeling on the part of many people that they would right things, stop the chaos, expel some people from the political game and then politically acceptable politicians would be in effect allowed to come back in charge again. As it turned out, that wasn't the way it was. When the military got in, developed a taste for power, and they thought they knew better than the civilian politicians how to run things, and they were going to hold on. This in turn generated some urban guerilla violence and even some guerilla movements out in the countryside in the late '60s which then led to further crackdowns and polarized things even more. By the time I got to Brazil in '74, the military president, a man named Ernesto Geisel, was thinking maybe this was the time to try to calm things down a little bit. The Brazilian economy had been growing well in the early '70s - it was called the Brazilian economic miracle - and he decided to pursue a policy of, he called it, distensï¿½o, which means 'relaxing of tensions', if you will, kind of like a domestic detente. So he began to try to encourage that process and he began to try to get the military security services to back off a little bit. The argument was that the situation merited it, that many of the most dangerous guerillas had either been run out of country, captured or killed, and it would make the political situation more acceptable. So that was what was going on, but not everybody in the military agreed with him. There was a hard-line faction in the military that felt that this was a very dangerous policy, that Geisel was deluded, and that in effect dangerous characters were still out there that needed to be rounded up, needed to be tortured until they talked, and if unfortunately they died during the torture itself, well, that was just too bad but 'you couldn't make an omelet without breaking a few eggs,' that type of mentality. So there was a kind of rollercoaster of tensions, as it were, as Geisel types pursued this distensï¿½o policy and periodically there would be embarrassing things that would happen when the military security services, despite this distensï¿½o policy, rounded up people and tortured people, and occasionally these people would end up becoming martyrs to democracy. That was the major domestic dynamic. It wasn't at that stage the military trying to find a graceful way to leave power - they still felt that they could run the country better than anybody else - but they were trying to make it a situation that could be maintained over the long term.

Q: In Rio where did your mayor, where did your civic government come from?

CASWELL: They had in effect kind of controlled or limited democracy, as it were. They had set up a system. Before the revolution there was a wide spectrum of politics. The military theorists thought this was part of the destabilization, this caused Brazilian politics to be unstable. So they said, "We're going to ban certain parties, we're going to terminate the political rights of certain politicians who we think are dangerous and irresponsible. People who are acceptable, we will allow them to continue the political game but under circumscribed rules," and one of the rules was that there would be only two parties. There would be the sort of pro-government party which was willing to play ball with the military and they were essentially conservative people, and there was the legalized opposition, as it were, the sort of tame left. Those two parties were allowed to contest elections at the local level. When I got there, I think maybe the existing mayors of large cities were still appointed, but in the two years that I was in country they did have mayoral elections. They had elections for city council, they didn't had elections for the state assembly, but governors were still appointed, and the next step was going to be to have directly elected governors. So basically it was a kind of limited, ersatz type of democracy. The politicians were allowed to play the game, if you will, but really ultimate power still rested with the military.

Q: This is a period of real politik as far as the United States was concerned, with Kissinger as Secretary of State and all. There was obvious promotion of democracy, human rights, which is so much part of our repertoire today. Were those much in evidence during your time?

CASWELL: They were in evidence. Certainly one of the major elements of our brief was to look into allegations [of torture, violations of human rights]. When these came to light, they were no longer allegations, they were actual incidents - of people disappearing or being tortured. Relatives would come into the consulate and want to talk with somebody about their missing son or daughter or whatever and trying to find out what happened. Yes, we certainly followed and tried to learn as much as we could about those cases. When there were celebrated cases that began to affect, if you will, the political health of Brazil if not the ultimate stability of the country, we would report on the political impact of particular cases. It was not pushed as vigorously as when Jimmy Carter came into office. In fact, Jimmy Carter actually sent his wife, Rosalynn, down to lecture the generals about human rights, which they really hated. Human rights together with what became another major concern of ours, which was the 1974 - I think it was signed - German-Brazilian Nuclear Accord, which we were gravely concerned about the proliferation, the potential proliferation, of weapons technology out of that agreement became big issues. Our concern on those two points, human rights and the German Nuclear Agreement, really came to a head under Carter's Administration and really alienated our relationship with Brazil, which lasted for a good 20 years or so. Only we began to see the damage being repaired in the mid-'90s or so. So, yes, we did follow human rights. We did lecture them some on it under the Ford administration, but not as vigorously as when Carter came in. Our great concerns about the German agreement, trying to block it and, once it was signed, trying to get it annulled were the major issues that we had with Brazil at the time.

Q: As I recall, there was an Argentinean side of the equation. If Brazil was going to get an atomic bomb or nuclear weapons, then Argentina obviously had to have one. God knows what they were going to do with these things.

CASWELL: It was then kind of historic contest between Brazil and Argentina for leadership, political leadership, of the South American continent, and this rivalry expressed itself in different ways. When the Brazilian military did their military exercises and planning, it was always premised on an Argentine attack into Rio de Grande do Sul state along the border with Argentina. It's a little hard to conceive of it, but that's what they would worry about, and conversely the Argentine military predicated their arguments for weaponry and so forth based upon the supposed Brazilian threat. The Brazilian military had a very great sense of, concept of, grandeza they would call it, grandeur. You know the old joke about Brazil that it's the country of the future, but it always will be; they'll never get themselves organized and straightened out. Well, the Brazilian military kind of felt that, well, they could get the country straightened out and in fact they had been doing a relatively good job of running the country and straightening it out after they booted out the incompetent or dangerous civilian politicians in the mid-'60s. The Brazilian economy started growing great guns in the late '60s into the early '70s. They had a view of themselves and the country reaching kind of a lift-off point. As part of Brazil's gaining the international recognition that it should have, a seat on the UN Security Council and all that, they felt Brazil needed to have the bomb. There was definitely that kind of thinking in the military and that was part of the reason why we were very concerned about a hidden agenda on the Brazilian part in getting this enrichment technology from the Germans, because that was part of what the nuclear agreement was going to be. It wasn't just buying German equipment to set up a nuclear power plant, but it was also buying German enrichment equipment which would supposedly allow them to enrich their own natural uranium resources, which they have in Brazil, without full international safeguards, and we were concerned that they might then divert some of this enriched uranium into a bomb project.

Q: As a junior officer speaking some Portuguese, I would have thought you might be sort of pointed towards the university students and all that: 'Go for it, fella'. If I were an ambassador, that's what I'd do. We had gone through our own university students. University students are an important bellwether and maybe an important political factor.

CASWELL: You're absolutely right, and that was one of the projects I did work on in my first two years in Brazil. University students traditionally had been highly politicized in Brazil, as is befitting of the sons and daughters of the social, economic and political elite, because those are the only people who go to university in Brazil. They would get very involved and they would have different slates for university councils and these slates would be affiliated with different political parties. For the most part they were left, lefter and leftist. Universities were always on strike and the students were sort of the shock troops in street demonstrations for the left political parties in the period of the '50s and early '60s. So when a military crackdown in politics came in the mid to late '60s, one of the things that the military did was initially close down the universities and then, when they reopened them, they made sure that they were depoliticized as much as possible, since student involvement in politics was a real "no-no" for a long time. Part of the whole distensï¿½o process that I mentioned before was gradually taking the wraps off of these things, and there was a process, if you will, from the students' perspective of testing the waters to see how much more they could do. This was just beginning in 1974/75/76. So my job in effect was to go to these different universities and try to find out, meet with students, meet with university administrators. Actually I was given the job, even though I was sitting in Rio de Janeiro, of doing this as best I could on a nationwide scale. So we talk with colleagues in Sao Paulo, I would read the press and so forth, to try to get a feel for what was happening countrywide. Then also I had a chance to do a little bit of traveling up to the northeastern part of the consular district as well to do this. So I ended up at the end of my tour producing - I guess in those days it would have been an airgram - a research piece that described what was happening, putting it into its historical context. Essentially at that point not much was still happening. It was just very much the early stages of students testing the political waters and it was still much a controlled situation, but they were just beginning to allow student organizations to open up again. It was probably the first paper - as a matter of fact, I think that was what the ambassador said - the first paper that had been produced on this issue for probably 10 years or so.

Q: Who was your ambassador at the time?

CASWELL: John Crimmens his name was.

Q: Usually the faculties of these universities have a good solid core of resident Marxists. They must have been gone.

CASWELL: They were pretty much hounded out, that's correct. I think some of them had been really fired and driven out of the country; some of them, I guess, had been imprisoned in the period before I got there. There were other people like the man who went on to become president of Brazil in the 1990s, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who had been a leftist sociologist at the University of Sao Paulo. He went into voluntary exile because he could see the handwriting on the wall and he just said, "I don't need this sort of stuff," and he spent some time in France and in Chile. Actually I understand he also spent a little bit of time in the United States.

Q: Speaking of Chile, I'm not sure but it's very close to the time of Allende and all that. Had that taken place while you were there?

CASWELL: The Allende Coup took place in '73 just before I got there. It took place while I was still in graduate school.

Q: Has that had any repercussions in Brazil, saying: 'here's another one of our fellow officers that's gotten rid of those leftist scum' and that sort of thing?

CASWELL: Well, it wasn't the subject of too much public debate, I don't believe. There was the notorious Operation Condor, which supposedly developed between the Brazilian military, the Argentine military, Uruguayan and, I believe, the Paraguayan - I do not believe it involved the Chilean military (but it may have) - in which they decided they were going to form kind of a working alliance, which was not supposed to be something that was publicized, but a kind of agreement they had to cooperate against a common problem with leftists. Some Argentine leftists fled into southern Brazil, and some Brazilian leftists fled into Uruguay, or whatever. So it was a kind of intelligence sharing supposedly and, if possible, to round some of these people. To this day it is an issue, particularly in Argentina apparently, of wanting to find out more about this shadowy Operation Condor and what actually was done and what were the records. There's a way for the parents or relatives of the deparecidos (disappeared persons) in finding out the fate of the people who disappeared, finding out what really ultimately was the fate of their loved ones and where their remains might be.

Q: How about our contacts? Were we pretty much sticking to sort of the government supporters or could we get out and talk to people who were coming out who were basically opposed to the government?

CASWELL: I think, it would be fair to say from my perspective, which was a pretty lowly one at that point, that we were able to certainly talk to people in the legal opposition, if you will, and we regularly did, people in what was called the MDB (Brazilian Democratic Movement party), which was the legally sanctioned opposition party. These people were certainly not self-described Marxist-Leninists and they certainly weren't revolutionary, but they were democrats and they were people who were concerned about their constituency, which in many ways was the poorer classes in Brazil, and they had differences with the policies of the government, the economic policies, human rights, and social policies the government was pursuing, and they felt the government was not moving... They thought distensï¿½o, that it should proceed much more vigorously, and that they needed to have direct elections of governors, and they needed to have direct election of the president, instead of this sort of rigged system which Brazil had, an electoral college but basically everybody knew that the "rules of the game" were such that the man who was baptized by the military would be chosen president and so forth. We could certainly talk to these people in congress and in the state legislatures and we could talk with journalists. They had still at this point in Brazil censorship of the media, but not withstanding that, that didn't mean that every political columnist or every political journalist agreed with the government. In fact, many of them took a rather jaundiced view and they would also test the waters and see how far they could go in criticizing the government. Indeed some of the consulate's better contacts - and one of the things the consulate could do to help the embassy out was that we could talk to people in the media, the political columnists and journalists, and get their opinions and using their sources of information, getting other views on what was really happening and why it was happening, to add additional color or balance to the information the embassy could get. Working in Brasilia, Brasilia was very much a government town, if you will. You had pretty good access to the government, but what you got was the government line.

Q: My understanding was that come Friday afternoon the government took off and headed back to Sao Paulo or Rio.

CASWELL: Yes, that's true. That was less true by the mid-'70s than it had been in the '60s, but yes, to some degree, although what we found was, while we could sometimes get access to Senator So-and-so or Congress Deputy So-and-so when they were back in Rio for the weekend, for the most part they didn't want to see somebody from the embassy or the consulate over the weekend. They said, "I talked to your colleagues up in Brasilia. Don't bother me." But sometimes they would make themselves available.

Q: I'd like to comment on this and get a little flavor for things. Somebody I interviewed - I'm not sure if it was this period or not - arrived in Rio and said that something that bothered him was that a number, particularly at the senior level, of the officers had sort of picked up the Brazilian habit - we're talking about the guys - of having ladies on the side and boasting about it, which is very Brazilian, but they'd sort of fallen into this habit. As a junior officer, you notice something like that. Did you feel this, or was this of any concern?

CASWELL: No, I did not feel that and I did not perceive it. It may have been going on and I was so naive that I didn't particularly understand it. But the reputation Rio certainly had as a post, I guess it's fair to say that all Brazilian posts had that reputation, Rio in particular, that if you were married your marriage was at risk and if you were single there was a good chance you were going to end up getting married during your tour in Brazil, because the Brazilian women were very attractive, they worked very hard at being attractive, and they didn't let the fact that a man might be married stand in the way. They were rather aggressive, and I think many of them might have seen it as a ticket out of Brazil as well. I went there as a bachelor and I, too, was attracted to the Brazilian women, who were really quite exotic and very friendly. That was also one of the arguments among supporters in Brazil of the concept of building Brasilia, was getting the government out of Rio de Janeiro. Rio was considered such a flesh pot, and the local culture, the local carioca culture in Rio de Janeiro itself, was so hedonistic and, if you will, anti-work, that it would be a positive thing just to get the government out of Rio de Janeiro. That may have been argument made by people from the rival states of Minas Gerais and Sao Paulo who have a real disdain for people from Rio de Janeiro. But I think there might have been some truth there.

Q: Did the poverty of parts of Rio impede at all? One thinks of the movie Black Orpheus and other things of this nature. Was this just another world?

CASWELL: It certainly existed. I would tell people, foreigners who came to visit or my friends back home when they when they asked me, "What is Rio de Janeiro really like?" I would say, "In some ways, it's one of the most beautiful places in the world. The natural setting of the place is just incredible. But it's kind of like looking at a beautiful rock on the ground; it's shiny, crystal, gold and it's really spectacular, but when you turn over the rock, there's a lot of ugly things crawling out from underneath it." I think that's a pretty good metaphor because there's the tremendous disparities of wealth and poverty and really sort of "cheek by jowl." The rich people in Brazilian cities tend to live in the cities themselves; they do not flee to the suburbs like has been the pattern in the United States, and the poor people in effect many times were living out in the suburbs. But you would have the phenomenon of squatters just squatting on any available bit of territory which would emerge, and many times they would live on these famous hillside favelas (slums), which were not proper terrain to build houses on and so they were vacant, but people would put little shacks on them and then over the course of years the shacks would become more and more permanent. That would be one of the local political issues. In effect leftist politicians looking to appeal for potential votes in these favelas would offer public services to the favela dwellers so the favelas would become more and more permanent. They'd offer electricity and try to pipe water and so forth up into them, and many of these favelas had been around for decades and had become rather permanent. Whereas conservative politicians, their constituency, the rich sectors of society would want to tear these favelas down, and this would be a recurrent political issue within the city of Rio de Janeiro, conservative politicians bragging that they had eradicated favelas and returned the beautiful vistas and nature, and leftist politicians vilifying these "urban beautification" campaigns. It very definitely had an impact on the daily life of people there. It contributed to crime problems that were substantial even in those days, not as bad in the 1970s as it came to be in the '80s and the '90s, but still very substantial crime problems. I was not personally mugged in my two years there, although my car was stolen in my two years there and I had the misfortune of coming back while it was in the process of being stolen and I was young enough and stupid enough to accost the guys. As I was walking up to the car, they got the car started and they tried to run me over with the car. As they came at me, I bolted up onto the hood of the car as the car peeled out. I escaped with just bad abrasions as I fell off the speeding car and hit the street pavement. Living with crime was something that was a result of this poverty and wealth side by side.

Q: In your contacts with people in Rio, the people you mixed with, what were their attitudes towards the United States? When you get to Mexico, they're always talking about the colossus of the Americas and all that. How did you find the Brazilians viewed the United States?

CASWELL: Brazil's different than Mexico, that's for sure. I would describe the Brazilians' psychology in the following terms: They look at the size of Brazil and the resources of Brazil - and, like I say, the old joke about Brazil's the country of the future - and they get a very grand sense of themselves and they say, "We've got all the potential in the world and we're going to be the next super power. There are many things that are similar to us as with the United States. We're a multicultural, a multi-ethnic society; we're a country of continental proportions; we've got all these natural resources; we're a democracy; and so forth and so on. So they've got a little bit more self-confidence and they're not immediately threatened by any of their neighbors. They're not up against and border with the United States and suffering from historic conflicts where they lost half their territory to their neighbors like Mexico did with the United States. So in that sense they don't have the traumas and they have a relatively positive self-image of themselves, but there's this niggling thing about "but we've never become a super power, we've never really achieved our potential," so there is a sense of inferiority underneath the braggadocio and a kind of annoyance with countries like the United States or the European countries that they don't really take Brazil seriously. It's not that the United States is a threat, but "you don't really consult us, you don't treat us the way you treat the Europeans." Brazil is not really a player. What really cut them to the quick was the time when de Gaulle apparently - and I'm not sure whether it was just before or just after a visit to Brazil, a state visit, de Gaulle was asked by some journalist what he thought about Brazil and he said, "Brazil, it's not really a serious country." That really cut them to the quick, also because historically a lot of the Brazilian elite was very European oriented, so when somebody like Charles de Gaulle would say that they weren't a serious country, it really wounded them. In the time period I was there, Nixon actually had tried to appeal some to the Brazilian psyche and sense of grandeur by making a statement something like, "As goes Brazil, so will go South America." On the one hand, the Brazilians sort of publicly said, "That's not really true," because they were afraid that this would offend Argentina and some of their neighbors as though Brazil had designs on becoming the hegemony of South America, but secretly down deep I believe that many Brazilians really liked it and said, "Yes, that's right."

Q: I realize you were working at this time in a consulate, but one of the things that I've heard repeated ever since I've been in the Foreign Service is that the Brazilians had a top-notch foreign service, but somebody once said, "Yes, it really is very good, but it's a very legalistic group. It's not really very forward looking. They're looking out for Brazil's interests but not sort of projecting Brazil's power." Did you get any feel for this?

CASWELL: I'd say there's probably some truth to both of those comments. In fact, they do have a professional foreign service, probably the most professional foreign service in Latin America. You have to pass very rigorous examinations to be able to get into it. Then you go through a service academy. So in effect you had to be very well educated. To start out with, you had to speak foreign languages to even pass the exam. Then you went through this academy for at least two years, and that's when you began your career. They had regular examination processes and things that you had to do during the course of your career to get promoted. So, yes, as individuals they were very bright diplomats, and they tend to be charming, cosmopolitan, sophisticated people. That said, I think there's some truth to the fact that they did tend to have a legalistic foreign policy. They had sort of a doctrinaire, if you will - addressing your point about projection of Brazilian force - rejection of interference in the domestic political affairs of other countries. That was one of the hallmarks of their foreign policy. Dating back to really the beginning of the Brazilian foreign policy in the earlier part of the 20th century and latter part of the 19th century, that's fitting where they were in the world at that time. They were, although a huge country, a weak country, and relatively on the periphery of things, and so they would side with the small countries, not with the world powers, and so they would be concerned about other people interfering in their internal affairs and telling them what they should be doing. So, of course, their foreign policy would sanctify the notion of non-interference. It would be antithetical to them to run a policy of projecting force. I'm starting to get a little bit ahead of myself, but if you get back to the 1990s or so, they began to do precisely that sort of thing in dealing with the problems in Paraguay or taking a leading role in trying to solve the border conflict between Peru and Ecuador. They were becoming by that time much more involved in using Brazilian power and influence to try to promote solutions of problems in countries along their border out of concern about what impact these conflicts might have on Brazilian interests if they were to continue to fester and get worse. But in the 1970s, basically, Brazilian foreign policy was very much Third World oriented. In fact, they were sort of moving from what had been a pro-U.S. orientation in the mid to late '60s. They were so pro-U.S., they were the only Latin American country, for instance, to join U.S. forces in the intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965. They were since then trying to live that down. The foreign ministry thought the DR intervention was a very bad idea. It was the military who thought it was a good idea. By the mid-'70s they had decided that really where Brazil's role in the world would be would be as a sort of self-anointed leader of the Third World in opposition to the first world and using instruments in the U.N. system to try to pursue their rights and interests and so forth through the U.N. system.

Q: I'm not very sure of my dates, but this is about the time when the Portuguese revolution happened in Portugal itself.

CASWELL: 1975.

Q: And, you know, you had Angola and Mozambique and major repercussions there, and, of course, particularly in the black population this is where so many came from. Did that have any effect on events while you were there?

CASWELL: I would say that it was something that would appear in the press. You could certainly read about it in the newspapers and see it on TV and so forth, but I would say in terms of domestic impact inside Brazil itself, minimal to none. The reason I say that is, one, the Brazilians, as part of their psyche about we're a great country or we're on our way to becoming a great country, even a future super power, but we haven't reach it quite yet, and part of this is the reason why is the flaws that we inherited, the flaws of character which we inherited, which are the fault of the Portuguese. To many Brazilians, the Portuguese are this funny little folkloric country, poor little country on the impoverished southwestern edge of Europe that really had their day in the sun 500 years ago, but today are inconsequential, and are really not very bright. Brazilians see Portugal as having kind of gone to seed over the last 500 years. And the Portugese speak funny with that accent. The equivalent of a Polish joke in Brazil is the Portuguese joke. And the Portuguese are the brunt of humor in Brazil. In part that reflected the impact of immigrants from Portugal during the '50s, '60s, into the '70s being manual laborers or they'd be taxicab drivers. They were very humble people and not particularly well-educated people who would emigrate from Portugal, which sort of reinforced this notion. Okay, it was the mother country once, but we've long ago outgrown that, and these are silly people. They had this kind of funny comic opera, civil-military thing going on, and of course nobody gets killed and there's lots of posturing, and those silly soldiers they put carnations in their guns, and aren't they kind of funny? Ha, ha, ha. As for what sort of impact the liberation of Angola and Mozambique and so forth would have on public consciousness, not really very much on the politics of Brazil at that time. Black and brown people in Brazil had no political power. They were very marginalized and it's kind of a joke to me to call Brazil a racial democracy. Now by the 1990s an incipient wave of black consciousness had begun to arise in Brazil that they have gotten the short end of the stick for 500 years and they need to mobilize themselves to be proud of themselves and their heritage and to mobilize themselves to try to keep more political power and economic power and so forth. But in the 1970s, no. When the areas where the ancestors of these people, the Afro-Brazilians, came from originally were now beginning to achieve independence as a result of the political dust-up in Portugal, it really doesn't affect general public thinking in Brazil of the 1970s, but it did excite people in the foreign ministry and I think in the military as well that Brazil could become the tutor to newly independent Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa now that the Portuguese have been booted out of there after mishandling these countries for hundreds of years. If you just looked at the map, Brazil is here and just across the south Atlantic is Angola, and Angola is another fairly large country with a lot of natural resources that could be exploited and could become an economic or political partner with Brazil. So, yes, I think there is an interest and some ambitions in the closed circles of the foreign ministry and the military thinking about military relationships [with Portugese-speaking Africa], but that was it.

Q: In 1976 what did they do to you?

CASWELL: In 1976 they sent me back to Washington. I volunteered for it. I had been interested in possibly getting a job in the Operations Center ever since my A100 entry-orientation class, because one of the things they did was take us for a tour over to see the Op Center. So when I was thinking about what would be my onward assignment from Brazil and I was sending back messages to my handlers in PER, I said I would be interested in getting a job in the Op Center. Indeed that's what came up, so I came back in, I think, October of '76 and began in the Op Center in November of '76.

Q: You did that until when?

CASWELL: For about a year. It would have been probably the fall of '77. The tours in the Operations Centers, at least for the junior officers at that point, were 12 months long. There have been periods earlier and later when they were 18 months long, but that time period was 12 months. So I worked in effect half of the tour as what they initially called junior watch officer, then it came to be called watch officer, and the second half of the tour I was what was called an editor. Essentially a junior watch officer worked in a team with a man called a senior watch officer who was a mid-career officer, and this two-person team also had in the back room the editor, who produced the Secretary of State's overnight summary of key message traffic. Essentially your responsibility was that you were manning the phones, you were monitoring all the immediate precedence and higher message traffic, and you were monitoring and all the EXDIS traffic.

Q: EXDIS is very limited distribution to only very need-to-know people.

CASWELL: Right, and as a matter of fact, we did more than monitor the EXDIS traffic; it was the watch that decided to whom these cables would actually go, so we controlled the distribution of the EXDIS cables. And the basic job was, mine was, to look at the traffic and say, "Here's fast-breaking stuff. You need to make sure that the appropriate officers of the seventh floor, in effect the Secretary of State and his immediate principal colleague, like the Deputy Secretary of State and the counselor and the Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs and the Undersecretary for Economic Affairs and so forth, would be alerted to situations that maybe they need to know, as well as the proper regional bureaus or functional bureaus within the department, at least the front offices. So we would do that. We would also monitor the regular press ticker traffic. Sometimes things would come in across from AP or UPI wire first, and we would get telephone calls all the time. So we were basically an alerting and coordinating center on fast-breaking events affecting U.S. foreign policy.

Q: Who would call you?

CASWELL: It might be an embassy; one of our embassies overseas might call up and say, "We're sending off a cable. There's just been a coup d'etat or whatever in our country," or "The ambassador has just been kidnaped," or "A kidnapping has been foiled," or "There's been a hijacking of an airline." We might get a call from somebody at FAA or somebody about that, or we would do the calling. What else? Other agencies: probably one of the biggest things that I got involved in when I was on the watch was I was working one, I guess it was Saturday, and this was about the time when we had established the 200-mile economic zone off the coast of the United States and we were concerned, increasingly concerned, about our maritime resources and so forth, and this was being tested by the other fishing superpowers, particularly the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries but, I guess, also the Japanese or Norwegians or whatever, about how tightly we would enforce these. There was kind of a feeling-out process of what was acceptable and what was unacceptable behavior. So we would periodically get calls from the Coast Guard saying, "We've been watching such-and-such a trawler and we think they've got an illegal rig," or "they've been taking the wrong kind of fish," or "they're taking too much, or whatever, and we want permission to board and seize it." This had not been done yet, at least not with a Soviet vessel, and I got a call one night from the Coast Guard operation center saying, "We've got a cutter out off of George's Bank," or someplace off of Massachusetts, "following this Soviet trawler and we're convinced that they've been violating our regulations, and we want permission to seize it." So my job was to find out as many details as I could about what they'd been doing and why they thought they had a case against this ship, then alerting the White House situation room, alerting, I guess, the Agency, alerting principals within the Department and OES, the Oceans, Environment and Science Bureau, the European Bureau and so forth, and then following the case. They would then say, "Well, you know, that's not quite good enough. We need to have a little bit more information," or "Keep us apprised." I worked through the shift gathering all this information and then eventually towards the end of the shift I had worked my way up the ladder in terms of people I had briefed and finally got to the point where I can't remember precisely who it was but somebody said, "Well, I think the Secretary needs to know." So I called up Cyrus Vance at home on a Saturday night and I told him all that I had been doing and what I had learned and what the situation was, and he said, "Yes, I think this time they've got a case, so tell them to go ahead and authorize the seizure of the vessel," and so they did. That was kind of an insight or an example of the type of thing that we would be involved in.

Q: You were there sort of at a transition time.

CASWELL: Exactly.

Q: Was there a different checklist or something you'd go through of what you would do under the Kissinger Secretaryship and under the Vance Secretaryship, different areas that were more important to one than to the other?

CASWELL: I'd say in our day-to-day operation in what we did at the level that I was doing, which was essentially this alerting people and trying to handle these fast-breaking situations, we weren't in the business of setting priorities so much. I don't think there was a major difference. Obviously personalities changed and there was a transition team and they came in and wanted to be briefly about not only the policies, but the way we did business and so forth. There were changes in the executive secretariat after the Kissinger team left and the Vance team came in and a turnover in the front offices of all these different bureaus and so forth, but no, I must confess, I don't remember there being a big change in terms of priorities or how we did business. I think it might have been a little bit more evident on what they called 'the line." We were the fast desk, if you will, in the executive secretariat that handled fast-breaking events. There was the other side which was called "the line", if you will, the slow desk that was handling the paper for a trip or the paper for making a policy decision, or should we alter our policy towards country X in this area and, if so, why, and how might we do it. Those sort of decision memoranda and that type of thing, briefing memoranda were all handled on the other side. I suspect that the different policy priorities of a new administration would be more reflected on "the line" side of the operation than it was in the Operations Center.

Q: What did the editor do when you moved to be an editor?

CASWELL: Essentially what the editor did was he put together - I forget now exactly the title for it - the overnight briefing book that was prepared for the Secretary of State and other principals. While they were asleep, actually, the editor would start reviewing cable traffic, say, after most people had gone home for the day, so would really start looking about seven or eight o'clock, start watching the new Embassy cables coming in from, say, seven or eight o'clock at night through the wee hours of the morning for the hottest issues, the things that might most likely be of interest to the Secretary of State or one of the other Department principals, and doing a brief summary, a short paragraph, ideally, say, three sentences, no more than five, characterizing what's going on in that cable, if there's a decision to be made, if there's a deadline for something or other coming up that they need to be aware of the first thing. This would be put into the Secretary's book during the "graveyard shift" from midnight until eight in the morning, together with another summary that was produced by the INR watch, INR being the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and that would go to the Secretary of State and the other principals. The driver took it out to his house, and I think he got this as breakfast reading or something like this. During the time period I was there - talking about these procedural changes - one of the things that was done was that formerly there was a separate summary done by the watch and a separate one done by INR which was based more on reporting through intelligence channels, and we were told to meld the two products. So one of the jobs I was involved in in my period was to work with the INR watch about how we were going to go about doing this. I guess sometimes there could be egos involved, but I'm sure institutionally at a higher level there were some hard feelings that they had lost their separate product and, as a result of the melding of the two, the INR folks couldn't put as much of their stuff in as they could formerly when they had a separate thing, so maybe there were some hard feelings although I don't particularly recall there being a real problem about it, but it was something that we did.

Q: One of the things that is well known is that a session in the Op Center is really... One, there's a selective process when you get there. These are people who are considered to have potential and all, the junior officers. And two, you really get a feel for how things operate. What was your reaction?

CASWELL: I would agree with that portrayal. One, it seemed to me that everybody that was working there was very, very sharp and very, very motivated, so I could believe that these were high-flyers as it were. Secondly, it was an exciting place to work. When Idi Amin grabbed a bunch of Westerners and held them hostage in a football stadium, you were involved. When a plane got hijacked in the Middle East, you were somehow involved in it. Maybe it was nothing more than calling up somebody at breakfast and saying, "We've just got a cable in here out of Embassy in Amman; you've got to read this. Send your staff assistant down to get it," or whatever. It was vicarious but we were involved in a lot of stuff that was going on and it was kind of fun and exciting, and you got to talk to the Secretary of State on the phone, or you would come in. All that was kind of fun. Also, one of the reasons why I applied for the job as my first job in Washington after being overseas was this argument that it was a good place to get a feel for how the Department really worked and how it was organized, but more than how it was organized, where the action was and where the action wasn't and how things got done. I found that in a way that was true. You never dealt in any issue in real great depth. Everything was sort of fast and dirty, and you didn't follow an issue over the space of weeks or months. Every day was different. But you did get a kind of feel for which bureaus were the most active and maybe in some ways the most impressive and where it was at as opposed to other bureaus where it wasn't at.

Q: A question I often ask is: in your impression could you give me sort of a ranking thing about the bureaus of where it's at and where it wasn't at at that time? We all have these tucked in our back pockets.

CASWELL: Certainly. I had the impression that the NEA, the Middle Eastern Bureau, which included also South Asia at that time, the European Bureau and the East Asian Bureau were the most central, the most active, particularly the Middle Eastern Bureau and the European Bureau. Maybe the East Asian Bureau was down a notch from that but it was still pretty important. Then considerably lower down would be the Latin American Bureau and the African Bureau. As far as the functional bureaus, one had the impression that EB was a big, important bureau but it was very, very specialized. I think Political-Military Affairs was more involved in bigger issues across the board. The International Organizations Bureau, I think, was considered to be a lesser bureau. The only office in it that was really terribly important was the one that was called the UNP which dealt with political affairs in the United Nations. Hot issues before the Security Council would be the province of that particular office within that bureau. That seemed to be where the action was there. But other functional bureaus like Oceans, Environment & Science, not so important; Consular Affairs, oh gosh, they were sort of buried off doing their thing concerned about visa cases and so forth and, except for maybe a sensitive visa refusal, it was all rather arcane stuff. I guess the Human Rights Bureau had come into existence at that point. I can't remember exactly how far back it was, but there was a woman named Pat Darien, who was the head of the Human Rights Bureau in Jimmy Carter's period, and because of Carter's interest in human rights, that bureau was established and became very, very important and was an active player, so I'd say it was a fairly active place. The Bureau of International Narcotics Affairs less so, but it was an important issue.

Q: In '77 whither?

CASWELL: It's interesting you asked, because I just turned around and said that the International Organizations Bureau was not terribly important...

Q: International Organizations.

CASWELL: International Organizations, I'm sorry, and that's precisely where I ended up going.

Q: You were in IO from when to when?

CASWELL: IO was what the Bureau was called from essentially '77 through '79.

Q: What were you doing there?

CASWELL: I ended up going into it because I was wooed for a job there by a man named Charles Frank who had been a senior special advisor in the Undersecretary for Economic Affairs' office. I don't know, for some reason several issues had come up while I was in the Op center and I had called up that office to brief somebody about them and I had gotten Mr. Frank and I had briefed him, so he seemed to think well of me. At the time that I was finishing up in the Operations Center, Mr. Frank was moving over from the Undersecretary's office to become a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the International Organizations Bureau and he would become in effect the guru or the specialist on economic issues in the International Organizations Bureau. The Carter Administration, in differentiating themselves from Nixon-Ford, were saying, "Well, we're going to take seriously the north-south dialog and the pretensions of the developing countries to use the U.N. system as the proper forum for discussing economic and trade issues and not continue to ignore them the way the Republicans had. We're going to make this a priority in our foreign policy." Well, I sort of bought into that and I thought, well gee, this might be an interesting time and place to go and work in this operation, and Frank said, "We have an office, an economic policy office in IO, and I want to beef it up because I want to make this one of the central points of trying to forge our policy in the north-south dialog. This is going to be an important, exciting time, new administration," so forth and so on. I had studied a fair amount of economics and trade issues when I was in graduate school even though I had done more political science and diplomatic history, but it was a subject of some interest to me and I thought, well, I wanted to not be typecast as just a political officer, but I wanted to show that in effect I could do some economics work as well. After having seen in the Operations Center maybe the Latin American Bureau wasn't the hottest place in the world, I didn't want to be typecast as just as Latin America hand.

Q: Which is easy in our system.

CASWELL: Which is very easy and a natural thing to do, so I thought, well, here's a chance to branch out and do something that I think might be interesting. It sounds like maybe the issues are coming to the fore at this point in history, maybe it will be the right time and the right place to be. So I said, "Sure, I'll go off and do that," and it would give me an opportunity to sort of delve into issues in greater depth, whereas the last year or so I'd been sort of skittering across the surface of fast-breaking issues. So I took the job. It was called IO/IEP, the Office of International Economic Policy in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs.

Q: Could you talk about what was the north-south dialog or confrontation or whatever you want to call it? How was it seen at that time?

CASWELL: Essentially the developing countries put themselves together into a caucus in the international system. They called themselves the Group of 77. At one point there were 77 countries. The developing countries felt there would be strength in numbers, as it were. It was almost kind of like a union movement. Individually we're weak and we're poor and we don't have much political influence vis-ï¿½-vis the rich countries was their thinking, but if we gang up and we get a whole lot of votes in the General Assembly or whatever, we could maybe shape policy, get the developed countries to take us seriously and so forth. In their thinking, they wanted to pursue something that they called a New International Economic Order, which became known as the NIEO. Essentially it was a bill of particulars which they wanted to achieve. It was based on the premise that the developing countries were poor because the rules of international commerce and finance and investment were stacked against them and international trade and commerce and investment in effect impoverished them and enriched the rich countries. In this view, poverty did not have much to do with productivity or educational levels or anything like that, it was these other things, so they felt, "We have to change the rules of international trade and investment and we have to alter the institutions which governed international trade and investment in which the rules were also stacked against the poor countries. Who controlled the IMF? Who controlled the World Bank? The rich countries, the advanced industrial countries, even though they're relatively few, whereas we are the victims. We don't shape policy; policy shaped us. So they tried to do this through the U.N. system in the U.N. General Assembly, in the Economic and Social Council, and particularly in a special forum called UNCTAD - stands for U.N. Conference on Trade and Development. It originally started out as a conference and then it metamorphosed over the years into an institution in Geneva, located at the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva, with its own bureaucracy which served as kind of a think tank developing these ideas of the G-77 on overturning the rules of international commerce and investment to give the poorer countries a fairer shake. So that is essentially what the north-south dialog was about, the south pushing this agenda and the north, which had traditionally responded, "Don't bother us with this stuff; it's cockamamie, it's stupid; we'll ignore it." But under Carter, the European countries with varying degrees of hypocrisy or sincerity also said, "No, maybe we ought to sit down and talk about this; then we can be reasonable. Maybe there are some points here that have some validity; others are maybe misguided and need to be sort of shunted off and studied, but maybe we can reach some accommodations, and this would be good for the world." So that's what we were about. But it still was largely kind of a defensive process in which we were trying to turn around these different initiatives and make them more palatable and, from our view, something that would legitimately help everybody. For instance, one case would be the G-77 wanted to have a code of conduct which would govern and, if necessary, sanction multinational corporations, or as they were called in those days in the U.N. System "transnational corporations", what they could do. When it was proposed by the G-77, it was proposed on the premise of the multinational corporations are all rogues and bandits which need to be pinned down with as many controls as possible to keep them from exploiting and sucking the life's blood out of the poor countries, so that the poor countries can keep a greater percentage of the benefit of the investments. In other words, the multinational corporations should invest in what government of the host country wants them to invest in and should hire the people that the host country wants them to hire and should not repatriate any profits ever under any circumstances, and so forth. We tried to take that idea and say, "Well, the way it's currently conceived by the G-77 is probably not a good idea and it's probably not workable, but maybe we could make it into a code of conduct in which there are both rights and obligations on the part of the multinational corporations and on the part of the host government." You've got to realize there's something about the investment climate and the business climate in the country in which the multinational corporation invests that has something to do with the benefits that are going to spread throughout that society. It isn't just all obligations on the part of the multinational corporation and all rights on the part of the host government, as it were." There was also a proposal for another code of conduct - this time on the transfer of technology. There was another big negotiation on what was called a Common Fund which was an idea trying to stabilize commodity prices. The idea was that, if commodity prices were either in secular decline or had too much fluctuation in them, developing countries which depended for their foreign exchange reserves entirely on export of one or two commodities, be it cocoa or copper or whatever, they were subject to vicissitudes that unfairly harmed the welfare of the people and the economic development of these countries. So in all these cases this is what we were debating about.

Q: One of the things - correct me if I'm wrong - in looking at these 77 countries, so many of them had a sole rule by one party or one leader and tremendous corruption.

CASWELL: That was one of the things we were pushing, by the way, developing and international code of conduct on illicit payments. A lot of people didn't want to hear us talk about that.

Q: As you say, it sounds like almost a non-starter. In a way it reminds me so much of what came out of the London School of Economics.

CASWELL: That's where a lot of these Third World economists who inhabited UNCTAD were trained.

Q: As I understand it, they look upon the pie as being finite and you just change the slices to give us more of a slice, as opposed to making bigger and better pies, and it has a stultifying effect. How were these things brought out, say, in your bureau, in the IO? Who were the personalities?

CASWELL: I think essentially this may be a bit unfair characterization, but people in the International Organizations Bureau were trying to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear wherever possible and to take the debate as seriously as possible and to give the developing countries the benefits of the doubt that maybe they were just misled and that reason could prevail. Our colleagues in the Economics and Business Bureau (EB) tended to see it even much more so as damage limitation. They felt all of these ideas are just really cockamamie crazy, but they recognized the political necessity of the fact that we really had to engage in this dialog. If we weren't there, maybe something even worse would happen. If our European colleagues or whoever want to do it, we've got to do it. The people in EB were more opposed to it or more cynical about it than we were in the International Organizations Bureau, but they realized the end of the game. As much as they didn't like to go off to these meetings, it was going to have to be done and it would be better if they were there than if they weren't there and the meetings went on without them. Then you had to deal with other agencies. For instance, on the transfer of technology you had to deal with the Patent Office, and these people were just really very hostile to the whole process. Then in each of these cases there would be - what would be the proper term for them? - kind of like constituency groups that our negotiating team or at least the head negotiator would have to go off and meet periodically and brief these constituency groups about what we were doing, what the challenges were that we were facing, what was the nature of the dialog. For instance, in the case of the multinational corporation code of conduct, there was a group of business groups that were very concerned about what might come out of this process, and they had to be briefed. Of course, those people would be the most negative about the whole process, could see no good coming out of it, or might see some good coming out of it if indeed we could come up with what we called the balanced code that had rights and obligations on all sides not just obligations on the multinational corporations. So, yes, I think it's a good model to think of making foreign policy in any area if there's going to be kind of - maybe not dialectic as the right word - dialog between different bureaus within the State Department and other agencies that get involved that have interests on questions. No single bureau has the ultimate wisdom; it's a process of pull and tug [that results in foreign policy being reached.]

Q: Was there sort of a feeling, when you all were dealing with it, that this Carter Administration's got a lot of fine ideas but they're not workable?

CASWELL: Well, I'd say in the time period that I was there I wouldn't want to say that we became totally disillusioned with the North/South process, but I think there was kind of a gradual recognition that this thing is really a long-term process at best. Are we going to get something that comes out of it that will be worthwhile? This is going to be a longer term struggle to achieve something. Another thing we were trying to do was restructure the U.N. system which had grown up over the years willy nilly, committees set up here and there and so forth, and it was really kind of a Rube Goldberg type of bureaucratic structure. The U.S. idea was somehow it could be streamlined and made more cost effective. That also was something that in concept seems like a good idea at the time, but actually to be able to achieve it politically... because every committee had its group of supporters who would say, "I'll fall on my sword before I ever agree to allow you to abolish this particular subcommittee of a committee of the Economics and Social Council, which meets twice a year in Geneva and has a secretary that costs hundreds of thousands of dollars." In theory everybody would kind of agree, "Yes, maybe we ought to streamline this a little but," but nobody could agree to ax their favored sacred cow. In that process, I think, even sooner than things like the Common Fund or the code of conduct on multinational corporations or the code of conduct of the transfer technology, people became disillusioned with the restructuring exercise pretty quickly. In the other ones I think there was a kind of feeling longer that, "Well, this is going to be tough and this is going to be hard, but if we stick to our guns, we'll slowly move it in our direction," and in fact we did slowly move the talks in our direction in the two years I was there but never to the point where something was going to be signed. There was always lots of bracketed text in [these documents reflecting disagreements between the Developed countries and the G-77 position].

Q: Did you get any feel for some of the leaders of the Group of 77? Did you have much to do with them, or were you sort of think-tanking in Washington?

CASWELL: I was more think-tanking in Washington. I got to go as a junior member of delegations to the transfer of technology code of conduct meetings in Geneva. I went to a couple of meetings of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean where I was like the State Department desk officer, if you will, for everything that came up before that group, and one meeting of the Economic and Social Council in New York, but I was more think-tanking or backstopping delegations out in the field from Washington. We would work on the briefing book. We would be on the receiving end of kind of panicky phone calls in which our representatives would say, "Well, we know what our position is, but at the end of the day this is what the resolution looks like it's going to be. Can we abstain? Do we have to vote against?" this type of thing. That was more where I was involved. But from the times I went to Geneva what was quite apparent would be that you'd have the Group of 77 but there were a relatively small number of ringleaders or ringleader delegations that were the most active in shaping the G-77 position. They might be Brazilians, the Algerians of all people - the Algerians were very big in this. I don't particularly remember anybody else in Africa. The Argentines were moderately active but not too much so, and a number of Asian countries, the Indians were very involved, the Pakistanis. Indonesians were involved big-time, Indonesians were very active in these things. So it was the Group of 77 but you're really talking roughly a half dozen delegations in countries really had the expertise and that were really driving it.

Q: Of that half dozen, was any a particular bï¿½te noire as far as you all were doing, all this kicking-over proposals and causing problems?

CASWELL: In the transfer of technology talk, yes, there was a diplomat that was from Algeria who was particularly disliked by people in the Western caucus, which in the arcane terminology of UNCTAD was called Group B. For some reason the Western and market economy countries were called Group B. (End of tape)

Q: You were saying there was an Algerian diplomat.

CASWELL: Yes, this Algerian diplomat in particular - he was a rather slight, small man who was really a driving force on the transfer of technology code of conduct, and he was really hard over the position basically that technology should be a free good, companies have no patent rights at all, everything should be given to developing countries lock, stock and barrel. He was a very clever parliamentarian and diplomat. Anyway, because he was small and he was such a difficult person, he became known as the poison dwarf. But I can't remember what the man's legitimate name was. The Brazilians were also very wily, very insistent, and were also difficult people for us on technology transfer issues.

Q: You were saying that while you were there, this was sort of working out some of the system but with no great accomplishments.

CASWELL: Right. The only thing I can remember that actually resulted in a final agreement was on the code of conduct on illicit payments. We didn't get everything that we wanted.

Q: That's bribes.

CASWELL: Bribes, exactly. In effect, our position as a country was that we felt that many times frankly our firms were less willing to engage in bribery and could be punished under U.S. law for paying bribes to foreign officials and, therefore, were losing business to French firms or German firms or Swiss firms who were prepared, as a cost of business, to pay bribes. So we were the most sanctimonious and puritanical in pushing for this thing, and our Western European and Japanese colleagues sort of rolled their eyes and said, "Well, of course, we can't be opposed to something like this. Let's be realistic about how far we push this." But they couldn't oppose. Of course, nobody could really oppose it. Even the Group of 77 countries, they would try to water it down, because bribery in some of these countries was a way of life. We actually did get one through, but that's the only thing that I can remember in my two years that actually emerged from this whole process.

Q: Okay. Well, then we'll pick this up in 1979. Where were you off to? What happened?

CASWELL: I was recruited to go to Bulgaria. I had been interested, from the time that I went to college and graduate school, in Eastern Europe, and so I made it known that I was interested and bid on some jobs in Poland and Yugoslavia and even Romania, I think. What came out of the process was, "Those actually have all been filled, but we've got this job in Bulgaria. Would you be willing to go there?" and I said yes. But first I went off tFSI (Foreign Service Institute) to learn Bulgarian.

Q: So we'll talk about going to Bulgaria and Bulgarian language training, and we'll pick it up then.

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Today is the 31st of August 2000. John, you were saying they said, "Why not Bulgaria?" What was the job that was being offered you in Bulgaria?

CASWELL: It was a pretty responsible in what was a small embassy. It was the Political Economic Section Chief, so I would oversee the econ commercial officer and another political officer, and the section two local Foreign Service National employees, one that focused more on political issues and the other one was more econ commercial.

Q: Let's talk a little about the training. You took training from '79 to '80.

CASWELL: Right, 44 weeks.

Q: Often when one takes a course in a language, you pick up an awful lot about the country from your instructor. I certainly did when I took Serbian, and we had two unreconstructed Serb nationalists, so I was able to understand the situation there. How did you find it with your Bulgarian instructors? Were you picking up a bit about Bulgaria?

CASWELL: I think that's true. I had an interesting combination. I had essentially two language instructors, and one of them was roughly my age, which at the time was early 30s, so she had gotten out after the Communists had been in power. She was born, I guess, about the time the Communists came to power in '47, and she managed to escape. She didn't go into great detail talking about it, but essentially it sounds like she got to Yugoslavia and she managed to somehow walk out. She had a long experience in an internment camp for refugees in Austria and then eventually managed to marry an American. So she had the very un-Bulgarian-sounding name of Virginia Brennan. She was a very funny character. She had a very lively personality and she was given to very great swings in emotion. I don't want to call it manic depressive but she was very, very happy sometimes and kind of down in the dumps other times. She would talk a lot about how much she missed not being able to go back to Bulgaria, especially when her father died and she couldn't go back. Her mother was still there alone, and so forth and so on. She suffered quite a bit. The other teacher was an older woman. I would say she was easily somewhere in her 60s. She had left Bulgaria long before. She actually married a Serb, and she left Bulgaria before the Communists ever took over. I can't remember exactly her story when she came to the United States, but she had been in the United States for some time, she was from a very different generation. She was a very cultured lady. She had been an opera singer. Bulgaria has a tradition of raising opera singers. She had traveled in Europe and was rather more cosmopolitan before she eventually ended up in this country.

Q: How did you find Bulgarian as a language?

CASWELL: I found it challenging, let's put it this way. I had never studied any Slavic languages, so the first challenge right off the bat was, unlike Polish and Czech - Hungarian is not a Slavic language - unlike some of the other Eastern European languages, they use the Cyrillic alphabet. That was the first challenge you had, to get used to the Cyrillic alphabet. Then, of course, the grammar structure was different. Fortunately Bulgarian doesn't decline nouns, so you didn't have to deal with that. But it was rather a more alien language, had fewer English cognates than something like Spanish or Portuguese, so it was harder. There was a reason why it was 44 weeks long. I also found that you really had to work harder at it and you had to keep working at it. If you took a break and you didn't think about it for a week or two, if you were on vacation or something like this, it was harder to get back into it. It seemed to escape your mind faster than Spanish or Portuguese.

Q: You got out there in 1980, and you were there from 1980 to when?

CASWELL: Essentially July '80 till July '82.

Q: Who was the ambassador there?

CASWELL: We had two. The first ambassador that I worked under was a man named Jack Perry, and the second ambassador was a man named Robert Barry. Both of them were seasoned Soviet hands and so brought that kind of perspective many times, looking at Bulgaria through a Soviet lens.

Q: I remember Bob Barry as being a young vice consul in Zagreb when I was a senior consular officer in Belgrade.

CASWELL: Well, he's still out, you know.

Q: He's in Bosnia with OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe).

CASWELL: Right.

Q: What was the situation in Bulgaria when you got there in 1980?

CASWELL: Well, essentially Bulgaria was the most loyal probably of the Eastern European satellites. The joke was that it was the 16th Soviet Socialist Republic, more Soviet than the Soviets sometimes it seemed, at least the leadership of the Bulgarian Communist Party was. Bulgaria had some importance to us. I think primarily what we were focusing on was narcotics, because it sat astride one of the principal over-land trafficking routes, transit routes, for narcotics from Turkey and the Middle East into Europe and then onward to the United States. I can't remember where the initiative first came from, whether they were showing themselves willing to cooperate with us or whether we were pursuing it first and then they were responding to us, but we were in effect exploring and trying to expand some limited cooperation with them. It was one of the few areas where it seemed like we could find some common ground. I was the narcotics coordinator amongst other things. Right off the bat when I arrived, for example, we were in the latter stages of organizing a regional counter-narcotics cooperation conference which would be co-hosted by the Bulgarian Customs and U.S. Customs, to which customs services in the region, meaning European and some from Turkey and the Middle East - no, actually the Turks were not invited because the Bulgarians were not getting along with them - mostly Europeans, would come and kind of compare notes about what worked and what didn't work and what were the latest intelligence trends and what might be training initiatives and so forth and so on. This was pretty revolutionary for that time period, to have the United States and the Bulgarians, of all people, actually cosponsoring something together and working pretty constructively. So this was probably the major positive thing we were trying to do. The time period that I was in the country was when the Papal assassination attempt involving the Turk, Mehmed Ali Aja, took place. As investigations into Mr. Aja's background proceeded, it emerged that he had links or connections to the Bulgarians, the Bulgarian Secret Service, and there were some suspicions that perhaps through the Bulgarian Secret Service the Soviets were involved in trying to kill the Pope [who was Polish and having an impact in his native land the Soviets disapproved of]. That was the other thing that was of major interest to the United States at that time.

Q: The Bulgarians, hadn't their Secret Service killed somebody in England?

CASWELL: Georgi Markov with the umbrella - they were also notorious for that.

Q: The Bulgarians were kind of looked upon as being kind of nasty in this particular respect.

CASWELL: That's exactly right. They were kind of the Taliban of the Eastern European satellites and seemed to be willing to do the dirtiest work, or at least that was their reputation. And being down in the Balkans and along the border with Turkey and so forth and Greece, there were lots of stories about smuggling and not just drug smuggling. It was a rather Byzantine sort of place. That was one of the things that impressed me from my service in Bulgaria, that it was not just a communist country. Yes, it had a Marxist-Leninist superstructure, if you will, imposed on the society, but in many ways it was also a developing country and it was also preeminently a Balkan country and a Byzantine country and the way business really many times got done was through unofficial personal connections, family connections. I knew a dissident sort of fellow who at one time earlier in his career had worked as an accountant, he joked and said, "I understand in the West you have two sets of books; you have one that you show the tax collector and you have one that really reflects what's going on in the company; but here in Bulgaria typically we have at least three sets of books. There's one that you show the officials from the planning ministry or whatever or the economic ministry that you are subservient to, and there's a second set of books which you show to your colleagues and your immediate supervisor, and there's a third set of books which reflect reality, what you're really doing.

Q: Let's talk about dealing with the government. How did you find it at this period of time? Relations with the Soviet Union went sour at this point - we're talking about the invasion of Afghanistan and its aftermath. You sort of straddled the end of the Carter and early Reagan administrations. This is not a very happy time between certainly the U.S. and the Soviets.

CASWELL: No, they were difficult, the way we had to conduct business. In fact, what I highlighted, the dealings that we had in terms of narcotics coordination, at least initially when I was there, was a real exception. It was one area where we could get ready access to the senior and action officers within Bulgarian Customs. Anytime I wanted to talk to my counterpart - he was my counterpart but he was also the Deputy Director of Bulgarian Customs, so he was a fairly senior guy, a man named Theodore Tsvetkov - I could literally pick up the phone and call him, and I could actually get him on the phone right away, or if he weren't there and I left word with his secretary that I needed to speak with him, he'd actually call me back and we could actually do things together and we could accomplish things. Otherwise, we really were restricted to a very small number of contacts that we could actually talk to. Essentially I could call up the America desk at the Foreign Ministry the America desk at the Ministry of Foreign Trade - somebody, say, at my level. The Ambassador or the DCM could call up the Director of what they called, I recall, the Third Department or the Fourth Department of the Foreign Ministry, but essentially the department that dealt with the United States and the Western European countries, and they could talk to the Director or Deputy Director of that department. But everything had to be channeled through them, and if you wanted to try to talk to anybody else, to set up an appointment, you had to call what was euphemistically called "protocol", but everybody understood that this was a euphemism for essentially the security service, and they would decide, probably together with the political department in the foreign ministry, whether to grant the meeting or not grant the meeting. Depending upon the state of political relations, if things happened to be going along relatively well, we were more likely to get access. If things were doing poorly, we were not granted access. They would either never call you back, or each time you would call them they would kind of stonewall and say, "Well, we don't know yet. Don't call us; we'll call you when we have an answer," and never called back. Or they would call back weeks or sometimes months later and say, "Sorry, your request was turned down." Moreover, there were substantial parts of the country which were permanently forbidden zones for diplomats to travel in, so in effect considerable swaths of the country, from the border with Yugoslavia and the border with Greece and the border with Turkey many kilometers back from the border, were forbidden zones, security zones which we were not able to go into. If you wanted to travel around, if you wanted to go to one of the other cities, again you had to program everything through the central protocol at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. So it was a very mechanistic, clumsy way to do it, and it was in effect a tap which the Bulgarians could turn on and turn off according to their political whims.

Q: What was in it for the Bulgarians at this particular time, to be so cooperative over customs?

CASWELL: That's an interesting question. Certainly, without going into any kind of conspiracy theory, you could say that what they were looking for was legitimacy. They were looking for legitimacy in the eyes of their customs counterparts, and to a certain extent you could argue that this would rub off on the government as a whole, that here drugs were a scourge that we all could agree to combat. Regardless of whatever our ideologies were or our policy predilections on social and economic policies or international security questions, this was something we could all agree was bad and as professionals and as human beings we could cooperate, and so they wanted to cooperate. The darker theory which emerged in the time period that I was in the country was we noticed that there was a contradiction in this and that, yes indeed, they did cooperate with us, yes indeed, they did catch some traffickers, they did confiscate some illicit drugs, they did destroy the illicit drugs, they did cooperate with the U.N. on these sorts of issues and Interpol, but what appeared to be the case was that some smugglers who were in fact notorious smugglers, particularly smugglers who were well known to the Turkish authorities, seemed to have carte blanche to operate in Bulgaria. The Bulgarians were always attuned to trying to trade on their location and the natural beauty of the country to try to attract Western tourism, whether it was along the beaches, on the Black Sea, or they have some very beautiful mountainous areas that are great for skiing or hiking in the summertime, so they would build luxury hotels in these areas. After a while they learned that they didn't really have the know-how to really run a four-star international-class luxury hotel themselves very well, so they would purchase on a sort of a turnkey basis, but with also some technical assistance, hotels to be constructed and run initially by French hotel firms, Japanese hotel firms, Swedish hotel firms, etcetera, and these were scattered around in different places. They would have amenities in them - beautiful indoor heated swimming pools, bowling alleys - and they also had other amenities like casino gambling, which in socialist puritanical Bulgaria was a "no-no." Ordinary Bulgarians could not go into these casinos, but people who had hard currency, Western tourists or whatever, were welcome, and this was seen as a way to attract them. Well, they had a big hotel like that on the outskirts of Sofia called the Hotel Vitosha, and the Vitosha had a well known gambling casino up on the top floor, about the 19th floor or so, of the hotel. Interesting enough, they had Lebanese croupiers, but they didn't entire trust the Lebanese croupiers so they hired British overseers from private clubs in London to come down to be the managers to watch the croupiers to make sure the croupiers were not skimming off some of the profits. I guess they felt the Brits were more honest. I got to know some of these guys. You'd go into the casino and sometimes it was a little bit like - do you remember the first Star Wars movie, some of these unseemly nightclubs with all these kind of weird galactic characters hanging around, tough-looking characters? Well, in the Vitosha Casino, they didn't have three heads, of course, but they were really tough, burly-looking kind of guys with sort of suspicious-looking bulges in their jackets. Who were some of these guys? With time I found out that at least some of them were Turkish smugglers. I talked with my colleague at the Turkish embassy, and he said, "Oh, yes, we're sure those guys have sweetheart deals with the Secret Service, Bulgarian Secret Service and, in effect, for a share of the profit, they are probably turning a blind eye to these guys smuggling. Some of it undoubtedly is smuggling untaxed cigarettes, bootleg liquor, gold, but we also believe they're involved in gun running and we also believe they're involved in running heroine and hashish and some other stuff." So out of that, I went down and had a conversation where I talked to a Bulgarian official about this. We happened to be in a restaurant, and it was at the end of a very nice conversation and everything was very warm and friendly and easy-going and so forth, and I said, "By the way, we noticed this anomaly. I've seen them myself. I've talked with other people," not saying I was talking to Turkish officials about it, and I said, "What gives?" My interlocutor suddenly became very nervous and started sort of looking over his shoulder and said, "Don't say stuff like that. I can assure you that we're doing our very best." I can't remember his exact phraseology, but what he was intimating was that they were doing the best under the circumstances that were presented to them but their hands were tied about certain things, and really it didn't do any good for me to talk about and it was only going to rock the boat, and so forth and so on. Well, of course, we did confront them about it, and it did sour the relationship a good deal in the time period. As a matter of fact, when I left Bulgaria, this was just coming to a head, and after I left Bulgaria in 1982, the cooperation on counter-narcotic issues with Bulgarian Customs became rather testy. When I came back into Bulgarian affairs in 1985 when I was working as the Bulgarian Desk Officer in the European Bureau, some of the worst of the bad feelings were beginning to subside and I guess we had decided either no more hard evidence was coming to light or really no hard evidence was confirmed, it was just putting two and two together from what we could observe, and the Bulgarians were saying, "Let's put this behind us and let's see where we can find areas to cooperate," and I think we had decided, well, this was maybe a better basis than none to try to do something, and so we were again moving back towards reestablishing some cooperation, but it really cooled things off for a while.

Q: Were you getting information about truck license plates and trucks and all these, TIR trucks, I guess, or trans-something or other?

CASWELL: I forget what TIR stands for, but in effect the idea was that those trucks would be inspected by Customs at the point of origin, certified that they were good, and then the cargo was sealed. They were sealed vans, and the notion was that then these trucks would pass borders through Europe and did not have to be opened and reinspected by customs people at every single border as they made their way across Europe. Then they were reopened and, I guess, inspected again at the end destination. It was a customs facilitation procedure.

Q: Were you getting information, say, from our drug people in Ankara and Istanbul or from somewhere else about shipments, and you would pass them on to Customs, or from Turkish authorities and all this?

CASWELL: Yes, that was part of my job. We would periodically get information from the DEA. We didn't have a DEA agent in Sofia, but there was a regional agent up in Vienna who would cover several of these countries including Bulgaria. Periodically I would get messages from him saying, "We have reason to believe, or good evidence or whatever, that this passenger or this truck with this plate number or whatever is going to try to cross the border coming from Turkey to Bulgaria at" - whatever the international highway border crossing point was called; I can't remember now - "and they should search it." I would always pass this information to Mr. Tsvetkov, and he was pretty good about then getting back to me subsequently and saying either, "A truck of that description never came across the border," or "It came across the border and we didn't find anything," or "Indeed the information was good and we got X number of kilos of heroine off it."

Q: How about the Turks? The Turkish embassy would be aware of who some of their guys were. Did you have the feeling that in the Turkish establishment some people were being given a free ride because of the influence?

CASWELL: Oh yes. The Turkish-Bulgarian relationship was very difficult, and it had to do with the fact that both there was a Turkish ethnic and linguistic minority in Bulgaria which was not particularly well treated. Secondly, the Turks had a lot of suspicions, as the case of Mehmed Ali Aja came to reveal in public these suspicions were well founded, that the Bulgarian Secret Services were supporting Turkish leftists who were interested in overturning the political system in Turkey.

Q: The Gray Wolves or...

CASWELL: That's right. The Gray Wolves was one notorious group that Aja was involved with. Dev Sol was another one. They were concerned in particular from their security perspective that Turkish underworld types and leftists were working hand in glove with the Bulgarian Secret Service and they were buying weapons in Bulgaria or they were being allowed to take weapons through Bulgaria and then smuggle them back into Turkey to arm the underworld, just ordinary criminals, and armed leftist groups, urban guerilla types, in Turkey. Now, I can't remember particularly whether they were concerned about these arms going from Bulgaria and getting out to eastern Turkey where the Kurds were also active. That probably was in the formula, but I don't particularly remember that. So, yes, and they felt, like when they went to the Bulgarian authorities and were asking for help about this stuff, that the Bulgarians basically would feign sincerity but were really cynically doing this behind their backs and were not cooperating. So the Turks were very cynical about the Bulgarian regime.

Q: What about terrorist training and this sort of thing? One has heard about camps, in Eastern Germany and Czechoslovakia and all, of essentially terrorists, often of Middle Eastern terrorists, getting training in weapons and all this and going out and doing nasty things to Israelis and to the Western countries. Were you getting a feel for the role of Bulgaria in this particular business?

CASWELL: I have to confess that I never saw any real good hard evidence. I agree with you that we were suspicious that that sort of thing was going on, but in terms of in-country hard evidence that it was going on, no. It was obvious as could be to anybody who had their eyes open in Sofia that you would walk into any cafe, particularly around the larger hotels, and see lots and lots of Middle Eastern people and you could hear Arabic being spoken and you would wonder to yourself why, what are these people doing here.

Q: I assume they're all hunched over smoking cigarettes and looking furtive.

CASWELL: Yes, and drinking little demitasses of what was called Turskato cafe, Turkish coffee. Other than just sort of wondering aloud to yourself why are these guys all here. Some of them could be legitimate transients and some people might be businessmen, but how much business is there to do in Bulgaria and what did Bulgaria really produce that these people would be coming here to buy. And Bulgaria had very good political links with the PLO, with - what do they call it? - the Patriotic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which was George Habash's group. George Habash was a regular visitor to Sofia and would be lionized in the press. Bulgaria had a great relationship with Libya too. It was one of their major commercial partners. There were lots of people going back and forth, particular Bulgarian engineers and construction firms, going off to do large infrastructure projects in Libya in return for payments in petroleum. They had a similar sort of relationship with Iraq and Syria, basically all of the kind of nefarious, notorious, suspicious Arab countries or regimes or guerilla groups, ones that we were most suspicious of being involved, either directly involved in terrorism or supporting or harboring terrorists. Bulgaria seemed to be kind of like in the Soviet bloc almost "designated hitters" for dealing with those sorts of regimes and those sorts of countries. It made you think that some people were, and maybe in some of those areas where we were prohibited from traveling, that we could not get into, there may have been indeed camps where these people were trained, but I never personally saw any evidence that we gathered in country that could confirm that.

Q: Did you have people trying to seek asylum or coming to the embassy or people coming and bringing you information and that sort of thing?

CASWELL: Remarkably little of that, and I think a major reason for that was that we had a very prominent downtown location which was a source of irritation in effect in the relationship. But what would happen, we made use of this and we tried to encourage people to come into he building. The embassy building was right on one of the principal squares in downtown Sofia, but what Bulgarian authorities did to counteract that was they would post never less than one and usually several uniformed, armed militiamen right outside our door parading prominently up and down the sidewalk in front of the building to discourage anybody from trying to go in. About the only people that would come and go in our embassy were the embassy employees themselves, the FSN local employees which we were permitted to hire by the protocol department, so they were all in effect cleared with state security, and Third World, or third country but they were usually Third World, students who were studying at Bulgarian universities and wanted to come and make use of USIS library. The U.S. Information Service had a library which was on the ground floor of our building, so foreign students would come in and use the library. What we did was - it was kind of a cat-and-mouse game - we turned the front of the building into display-case windows like you would see in a department store or whatever, and so we, or USIS specifically, would then mount photo exhibitions, photo and text exhibitions of various themes about life in the United States or what was going on in the world or whatever so that, even though Bulgarian people on the sidewalk would be intimidated against actually going into the building and using the library or reading newspapers or whatever, they could look at the windows. This was, if you will, one of our propaganda platforms in the embassy. One of the reasons why, during the whole time period I was in the embassy and still when I was on the desk later on, the Bulgarian authorities were constantly trying to get us out of that building, because, I think, it was an irritation for them, because large crowds would all the time be milling around looking at these windows, so they wanted to force us to take an embassy that they were building, which was maybe ten miles or so out of town. Ambassador Barry remarked that a lot of the way we conducted relations was very much governed by reciprocity. If they're going to do this to us, then we're going to do something to them in their embassy back in Washington. So he used to refer to the fact that, if we were going to be forced to move to this other location out in the suburb called Ovchekupal, which literally means 'the sheep's cupola' - as though there was like a little bandstand or a cupola out in a sheep meadow - then we should reciprocate with something he called 'the Rockville solution', which was that we should force the Bulgarian embassy to move to Rockville, get them out of Washington, and isolate them there.

Q: You mentioned the students. I was in Belgrade around '64 or '65 when there was a huge exodus of African students from the universities in Bulgaria. The students didn't like to be called Cherni, black monkeys, and other things, and they peeled off and most of them ended up coming to the American embassy where I would interview them before we got them on back to Western Europe and to the United States. Where were the students coming from? Were they mostly African, and how were they being treated?

CASWELL: I guess I would say that 'mostly' is probably the right word; at least a large number of them came from African countries. From the stories that we got from talking to them, they weren't treated particularly well by ordinary Bulgarians. I guess some Bulgarians might treat them all right, but they could be expected to receive insults or whatever from other Bulgarians riding the trams around town or whatever. So, yes, I think we felt that the experience in socialist Bulgaria was not necessarily something that would turn these students into good socialists and think that this was what they should try to work for in their home countries when they return. The consular officer would meet these students most often, because they would come into the embassy and they would be asking about what were the possibilities to get scholarships and/or visas to go to the United States to study at a 'real university' as they would put it. I don't think it necessarily was very effective [from a Bulgarian perspective to bring these students to Bulgaria]. There were also certainly Latin American students. There were about a half dozen Latin American embassies in Sofia and I got to know diplomats from all of them rather well given my background. It seemed as though in all of their cases one of the principal briefs at their embassies was to watch the students, both in the sense of helping them and help take care of them if they had any problems or had to communicate some messages back home, but also to be aware of what their political inclinations and activities were and associations. I don't remember hearing about Asian students so much. There were Middle Eastern students, there were African students, and there were some Latin Americans. Undoubtedly there were probably also some Pakistani and Indian students, too; I just don't remember them.

Q: What about traveling around? Were you able, getting yourself cleared to go and all? Was this at all productive, getting yourself off and calling on local officials and industries and that sort of thing?

CASWELL: The way I would describe it was that we could travel in the central part of the country, which was not in the permanently restricted zones. The permanently restricted zones would run anywhere from, say, 10 kilometers from the frontier alongside Yugoslavia to 40 or 50 kilometers from the frontier along the Greek and Turkish borders. In those areas you could never go. In the rest of the country you could pretty much drive around. You would pick up tails where you have milizia or an unmarked car following you, but you were quite sure there were some burly policemen in it riding around following you wherever you went. But the utility of that sort of thing was rather limited, I think, because, while you could travel around without calling ahead in advance, you couldn't just walk in on an official and say, "I want to meet with you. Would you meet with me?" And it was very difficult to get the appointments. You had to call up Central Protocol in advance to say, "I want to travel to this place to meet with somebody," unless the Ambassador did it and it was in connection with something like the Plovdiv International Trade Fair, which happened every year. (End of tape)

So what you could do - and I did this on occasion - would be to say, "Okay, I'm going to go to this place," down as far as I could go in Macedonia or this place in central Bulgaria, "and I'm going to drive around and see what I can see, maybe go in and try to talk to somebody in a coffee bar or go in a park and see if I can strike up a conversation with somebody, or go and ask somebody on the street directions and then see if I can strike up a conversation," and you could do it many times until they saw the big, burly policeman behind you. I on a number of occasions had instances where I was talking to a Bulgarian and all of a sudden I see this look go across the Bulgarian's face like he understands that this foreigner he's talking to is a no-no because there are all these secret police types or militiamen come up and they'd clam up or they would just go, they'd just run away. So it was rather difficult. The exception to that would be I had a colleague who could speak Turkish, and we would sometimes go out into the Turkish areas and particularly talk to those people. If you could get away from the tail and you didn't see the police around, these people might open up to you. They wouldn't open up to you necessarily if you spoke to them in Bulgarian, but they would open up if a person was speaking Turkish to them.

Q: Did the Bulgarian secret police play games like try to entice you with girls or that type of thing, or was that pretty much a Soviet specialty?

CASWELL: I think that did go on. There were instances where I became suspicious that that was happening and got myself out of the precinct or didn't go over and strike up the conversation with the rather striking young woman. For example, I was interested in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Remember this is the time period, this coincided with what was going on in Poland where the Roman Catholic Church was really in the forefront of organizing and encouraging people to stand up to the system. This was not happening with the Bulgarian Orthodox Church; it was a different beast. But I was still interested in the church and sort of the people that would go into it and what was happening or not happening and why it wasn't happening. Frequently I would take a break during the middle of the day and just go out for a walk. When I'd go for a walk, I would walk around town and I would walk into an Orthodox Church, and I would maybe just walk around, look around, look at who's around, maybe go up to an icon and say a prayer, buy a candle, light a candle, do some of the things that you do. One time there was a rather striking young woman just sort of hanging around outside the church who walked in when I did or followed me in, and I was suspicious because that's not the sort of person you usually see around a Bulgarian church, and I was suspicious that maybe she was somebody that the Secret Service thought that I would be interested in.

Q: Did you run across the Macedonian thing. I served both five years in Yugoslavia and four years in Greece. Is Macedonian really a language? It is this or that? Anytime they try to get these three countries, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Greece, together, they usually explode because of the Macedonia thing. I was wondering on your part, what was the state of that in Bulgaria during your time there.

CASWELL: They did engage periodically in I guess I would call them dueling editorials in newspapers. A story would emerge in the Yugoslav press or media that would be making assertions about Macedonia, Macedonian culture and Macedonian history and so forth and so on that just taunted the Bulgarians, and then you would find stuff in the Bulgarian press mocking this saying that obviously this is [Bulgarian culture and history because there is no such thing as a separate Macedonian culture. But it didn't really get beyond that. There weren't any real major tensions or any indications that we picked up of Bulgarians or Bulgarian agents trying to intervene or cause problems in Varder Macedonia, which was what the Bulgarians called the Macedonian Republic in Yugoslavia. I wouldn't call it a major issue, but it was something that was always in the background and periodically an ember would brighten and then it would die down again.

Q: The Greeks, I assume, had an embassy there. Did we have much to do with them?

CASWELL: Yes, we found that the Greeks seemed to be among the best informed of the Western embassies in Bulgaria. We had 26 people in our embassy and that included secretaries and Marine guards and communicators and so forth, which by U.S. standards is relatively small, but by the standards of Western embassies in Sofia was fairly large, and we found that there were really only a handful of other embassies, Western embassies, that had much in the way of capabilities. A lot of people would come and try to pick our brains to learn what they could from us, but we didn't really have kind of a two-way exchange. The Greeks were among the better. The British embassy was also pretty good, so was the French embassy, the German embassy was pretty good, and if you want to call the Turks honorary Westerners, you could say that they were good for some issues, but the Greeks seemed to have a little bit of a favored relationship, if you will, with Bulgarians, because both of them distrusted the Turks, I think, and they also had some commercial interests. There were some Greek traders who would come up and sell stuff to the Bulgarians, and I think there were historic links back with Thessaloniki in northern Greece with Bulgaria, so a lot of the Western goods that found their way into the hard currency stores in Bulgaria did so through Greece. The hard currency stores in Bulgaria were called CORICOM, an acronym; I'm not sure what it really stood for, but we used to say it stood for Correction for Communism. But anyway, a lot of the Western consumer goods that would appear in the CORICOM, I think, got there through Greece, and in fact a lot of Greeks would travel up to Bulgaria to buy stuff. They could buy it cheaper in the CORICOM stores, then bring it back to Greece to their homes. So it seems like that there was substantial, relatively speaking, of cross-border trade between Greece and Bulgaria. And then the Greeks, I guess because they're Balkans and they understood the history and the region and so forth, seemed to be wily and seemed to be relatively well informed as to what was going on.

Q: What was Bulgaria producing? I can think of tobacco and attar of roses.

CASWELL: These are traditional products, that's right.

Q: What role were they playing within the Soviet orbit?

CASWELL: One of the major things that they were producers of that most people don't appreciate is wine. As a matter of fact, I forget the exact statistic now, but after France and Italy certainly Bulgaria is one of the largest wine producers in the world. The problem is they've always had great problems with quality control, so you can get some very good wine and you can get some ordinary wine which is not bad and inexpensive and you can get some real lousy wine. They didn't know anything about marketing, and so you'd go in a store and the bottles were all scratched and it didn't have a label on it or the label was upside down. It just didn't look attractive. You could go into the store one time, buy that label, try it and say, "Wow, that's really good wine. I've got to buy more of that," go back again, buy the same label, and it's undrinkable, it's like vinegar. So their attempts to sell wine in the West for hard currency have often floundered on that problem, the lack of marketing and lack of quality control. But they were addressing that. As a matter of fact, in the time period I was in the country, one of the big deals they did was they struck a deal with Pepsico, which had, at least in those days, a wine subsidiary with the non-Pepsico-sounding name of Monsieur Henri, and Monsieur Henri struck a deal with VINIMPEX, which is the big wine conglomerate in Bulgaria to produce wine under what came to be known as the Trakia label. They designed a nice label with ancient gold coins with the head of Alexander the Great on it, and you had to look real hard to find that it was Bulgarian wine, but it was not bad wine. It was pretty good, drinkable wine that sold in the United States in those days for three dollars a bottle, and it was a very good wine for three dollars a bottle. So they were getting into that. They had some industry. They never had industry before the Marxists took over, but if you're going to have a proletariat you have to have industry, so they during the Stalin era sort of force-fed, created heavy industry which by the time I was there basically had badly deteriorated. The steel works and chemical works and so forth produced far more pollution than they did steel or chemicals. The did employ a lot of people. They produced forklift trucks, for some reason, within the CMEA. They were given a specialization for producing forklift trucks and certain relatively simple, early, small computer systems, and they did those sorts of things. Particularly the forklift trucks were more successful than the small computers. They did sell some of those around the world. And they seemed to have a specialty in doing civil engineering projects and construction. So what they tended to do was to export agricultural commodities. They had large hothouses for doing winter vegetables. They were able to sell those in places like Germany and particularly Greece. They were able to export some of those hothouse tomatoes and things like that in the wintertime. But you're right when you say tobacco was a big deal and the attar of rose for the perfume industry. I think that was virtually all exported to the French - and the wine and, as I say, the forklift trucks and the Bulgarian engineers for construction projects. They used to send a lot of their other stuff that they couldn't really sell on the Western markets, of course, off to the Soviet Union. I guess that's where a lot of their wine went, a lot of their inferior beer maybe, and in return they got back most significantly petroleum. They got back petroleum at below-world-market prices, and then this became a significant economic subsidy to Bulgarian economy. I guess it was a reflection of their political loyalty, but they were able to get such a quota of Soviet petroleum at below prices or in barter arrangements, more than what their national needs were for petroleum, so they would then either turn around and re-export the Soviet petroleum or they would re-export petroleum products refined from the Soviet petroleum, and they got considerable hard currency for that.

Q: How about the role of the Soviet embassy and all that when you were there?

CASWELL: Well, it was a huge place, and we suspected that they were extremely well plugged in and in effect, if not necessarily running the country, were well informed as to what was going on at all levels of the country both politically and economically. But it was a very large place. I never set foot in it.

Q: Who was the leader in Bulgaria while you were there?

CASWELL: Todor Zhivkov. He had been in power for a real long time. I'm not sure exactly when he first began to emerge in a triumvirate, but by about 1954 or '56 he had pretty much jettisoned Mr. Chervenkov, who was his leading rival, and he was pretty much numero uno and he basically was in power until the wall came down.

Q: In '89.

CASWELL: In '89. There was a time lag before the Communist regime fell in Bulgaria.

Q: '90.

CASWELL: Yes, about the early '90s. He lasted until '90 or '91 or so.

Q: Did you all spend much time sort of playing criminology, who's doing what, who's staying on top of Dimitrov's Tomb, too, and on May Day and that sort of thing, figuring out what was what within the party? That came with the Eastern European circuit in those days, I guess.

CASWELL: Exactly, because you were very much into reading the tea leaves, as it were. One of the less enjoyable aspects of my job was being an assiduous reader of Rabotnichesko Delo, the Workers' Cause, which we used to refer to in our cables as just RD. The Brits, I found out, in their cables called it Rab Del, which was even better; we should have used that. But it was a really boring, turgid, ugly newspaper written in the most arcane, formulaic, stilted language, and it seemed we would just sometimes read the same stuff over and over. The articles just seemed to go on and on, and they were largely the same. You had to try to find little differences. We had the 12th Party Congress when I was working in the country, and party congresses were a big opportunity to try to get insights in the changes in the pecking order, who's up and who's down and what might be the implications for policy coming out of all of this. But you would go to the May Day parade, and the ninth of September, which was Bulgarian independence day, the anniversary day that they were liberated by the Red Army. In those two days there would be the kind of standard parade in front of Dimitrov's tomb and listen to the speeches and see who's standing up on the podium and that kind of thing. But apart from that, the party congresses were your best opportunity. Yes, essentially Zhivkov, one of his standard tactics was to be constantly reshuffling people in the cabinet to, I guess, keep people off balance and in theory to bring in some new blood with some new ideas. He always seemed to be trying to strike a balance between old-guard guys that had been with him for a long time and maybe represented important constituencies among the old guard and the party, people who were in good odor with the Soviets and thought that was a strategic relationship for them, but also trying to bring in some younger technocratic people particularly in the economic ministries to try to make the economy a little bit more dynamic or responsive or whatever. In the latter group there were some people, like there was man named Ognyan Doinov and Andre Lukanov who, while certainly to all outward appearances were died-in-the-wool Marxist-Leninists, but they were of a younger generation, they were more, particularly Lukanov, cosmopolitan and aware of the outside world beyond the Soviet orbit. Lukanov was very fluent in English and French. He was kind of like the point guy in the Politburo for dealing with Westerners, trying to encourage investment or trade, this type of thing, and Doinov was a little bit of a heavier type but he also seemed to be sharper, more intelligent than the average in terms of making the system work. So the communist leaders weren't all knuckle draggers, but there were certainly those elements, too.

Q: Did you get any feel for the increasing stagnation of the Soviet Union which was going on? I'm not sure when Brezhnev died, but he was getting towards the end of his time, and the invasion of Afghanistan was sort of the last gasp of a very stupid move on the part of that Brezhnev group and all. But anyway, it was a time when the Soviets were really going downhill.

CASWELL: Yes, we certainly had that impression. I would say we had that impression more from what we saw going on in the Soviet Union and the succession of funerals, Brezhnev and then Chernenko, Andropov, and they were dropping off like... That seemed like it was one of George Bush's major jobs in the Reagan administration, going to funerals in Moscow. The other obvious sign of malaise, in effect, was what was going on in Poland, which was something that we were watching very much asking ourselves would the contagion spread. Look what was going on in Poland; was the Soviet Union going to do anything about it? Were they or weren't they? And what were the Polish authorities going to do, and how much were they being pressed by the Soviets? Or how much did the Soviets trust them to resolve it locally? Did the Soviets trust them to resolve it locally because they had to or because they really did trust their judgment or whatever? But in terms of what was going on in Bulgarian-Soviet relations or happening in Bulgaria that we could attribute to the malaise and problems in the Soviet Union? No, not really. I think we understood or we felt, from what they said and what we understood about the petroleum connection that I had talked about before, the petroleum subsidy, if you will, to the entire Bulgarian economy, that this relationship to the Bulgarian leadership was very, very important. They understood that they needed that subsidy, that those economic relations were very important. They were trying to find ways of opening up their economy a little bit or being able to trade more with the West, encourage Western visitors to come to the tourism facilities that I talked about before. They recognized the need for the Bulgarian economy on its own to be able to earn more hard currency because maybe they were looking down the road to the day when the Soviet economic subsidy wouldn't be there. But whenever Soviet leaders would come to visit, the Bulgarians were real apple polishers and they were all the time talking about the wonderful economic relationship and how vital this was to Bulgaria. They clearly were hoping that it would never end, but yes, I think they probably had been warned by the Soviets that, "Hey, we can't go on helping you this way indefinitely, and you guys are going to have to learn to grow your economy a little bit," and that's part of why people like Lukanov and Doinov rose to some prominence in the Politburo, because they were seen as guys that maybe could deliver some improvements to the Bulgarian economy.

Q: On the military side, we were still in confrontation. Bulgaria, I assume, was a member of the Warsaw Pact.

CASWELL: Oh, yes.

Q: What role did we see Bulgaria playing? What was considered the Bulgarian military threat?

CASWELL: My recollection of DAO briefings and so forth was that we didn't have a terribly high opinion of the Bulgarian military as a force projection agent. What we understood their role to be would be was to in effect hold, maybe try to make some small incursions along the borders into northern Greece or, more likely, a thrust towards the straits into European Turkey or even conceivably to Yugoslavia if that were the need, but that they weren't expected to do the job alone, not for very long. The contingency we understood was that the Soviets would by air and also across the Black Sea through naval units, would send their units down into Bulgarian territory and then Soviet forces operating through Bulgarian territory, either jointly or whatever with Bulgarian forces, would really do the job and push through to seize Istanbul or whatever the immediate objectives were.

Q: When you left there, were you entranced by the Balkans, or how did you feel about this excursion?

CASWELL: I found the place kind of fascinating. I liked it. It was not an easy place to live. It was hard on my wife.

Q: You'd gotten married?

CASWELL: I'd gotten married. It was particularly hard on my wife. I think it was hard on many, if not all, wives. The husbands tended to be overemployed, preoccupied, working all the time or much of their time, because it was a difficult environment to work in. And the wives for the most part were totally unemployed or underemployed. The American embassy was making efforts to try to create jobs or part-time jobs for different spouses, but there wasn't that much. There was the community liaison officer position and there were some part-time jobs helping out in the admin section or whatever, but there wasn't too much. I think it put a lot of stress on families. Also, there wasn't that much available in terms of a local school for Western children. There was what was called the Anglo-American School which was available up through eighth grade, so many times people with older children had to send them off to boarding school, which could be another additional stress. It was a hard place to live in in that way, but in terms of the country and the kind of work we were doing, I thought it was interesting, it was intriguing. It was hard to get things accomplished, but when you did get a little nugget of truth out of it all, it was rewarding. It was a small enough place that as a relatively junior officer in my early 30s I was a relatively big fish in a small pond there. I got to be acting DCM several times, and one time I was actually the virtual chargï¿½. I don't remember exactly, but my recollection was that the ambassador was on vacation, was out of the country, and the DCM was either also on vacation out of the country or he was someplace else still in the country but he wasn't available. For one day I was it, and on that one day, believe it or not, ex-President Nixon came to visit. Maybe both the ambassador and the DCM decided to be away because former President Nixon was going to visit, but I was involved very much in the preparations for his visit. The Bulgarian officials were absolutely pleased as punch that the great Nixon, the great proponent of detente who attached a lot of importance to the U.S.-Soviet relationship, the pioneer of visiting China and so forth would actually deign to visit Bulgaria and sit down and talk about world affairs with Todor Zhivkov. They just thought this was the most wonderful thing in the world. I'd never seen secret service agents so happy in my life. We've all dealt with other presidential visits, and secret service agents could be kind of overbearing and demanding and saying, "You've got to do this, you've got to do that," and the local security people or whatever would sometimes raise hackles up and say, "No, no, no, we don't do that this way in our country," but whatever the secret service wanted in Bulgaria they got, no question. It was as though they were on the same wave length with the local authorities. It was very relaxed because basically Nixon was traveling alone. He had maybe one or two personal assistants, and the secret service delegation was really rather relaxed and the advance team was relaxed and basically it went very, very smoothly, but it was kind of the opportunity to be out there at the head of the receiving line at the airport as the acting chargï¿½ for the day.

Q: How about relations with Romania? Ceausescu had been there for a long time.

CASWELL: I don't think their relations were particularly close. They had some bilateral irritations that for the most part related to pollution-type issues along the Danube border and feelings that Bulgarian chemical plants, the fumes, were wafting over to the Romanian side and damaging crops. Bulgaria had a nuclear power plant which was up on an island in the Danube, and there had been some suggestions that it was not well maintained and dangerous, which subsequently later on became confirmed big time. By the '90s everybody knew that this was a very problematical power plant, and after Chernobyl, people were worried that this plant might be the next one to go. But there were some concerns even back in that time period about that. But aside from those sorts of things, I think basically Zhivkov ran his show in Bulgaria and Ceaususcu ran his and they sort of mutually respected each other and stayed out of each other's affairs.

Q: Was Yugoslavia...

CASWELL: Actually I neglected to mention the Yugoslav embassy when I was talking before about other embassies. They also we considered to be quite well informed. You could sort of consider them, I guess, honorary Westerners.

Q: Well, they often acted this role, particularly during the Cold War, as being one of our most, in a way, dependable - information's not the right term - people who knew their way around and would talk rather straightforward.

CASWELL: Exactly. When you were looking for somebody to talk to and bounce an idea off - the ambassador would have monthly luncheons with the Yugoslav ambassador - it would be a satisfying conversation. It wasn't just one sided where you were telling them things; you could actually learn things in return. And because of their historic relationships as neighbors and so forth, they seemed to understand a little bit better what was going on in Bulgaria and help us with sorting out. We knew what happened, but why did it happen and what was significant about it and what was really behind it. You had to be aware that many times the Yugoslavs had axes to grind and a peculiar lens that they were looking at these things through, so you had to sometimes take it with a grain of salt or put your own analysis on their analysis. But I think they were useful people to talk to, and the relationship between the two countries, there would periodically be meetings between senior Bulgarian and Yugoslav officials and publicly there was a lot of "We're brothers and we love each other, and everything is hunky-dory," but you always had the impression that maybe things weren't quite as rosy as what they were saying. But other than, as I say, the periodic little things about Macedonia, which they basically sort of agreed to disagree when they had these bilateral meetings and just sort of said, "Well, we'll just put this off to the side, and we don't want this to get in the way of better relations." 'Better relations' usually meant in these meetings "How can we improve trade? Are there any opportunities for joint ventures? How can we together find inroads into Western markets and find ways to earn hard currency?" I think these Bulgarians sort of saw the Yugoslavs as pioneers in that way and maybe they could learn a few things from the Yugoslavs. What the Yugoslavs thought they could learn from the Bulgarians I don't know.

Q: I guess we pretty well touched most bases. Is there anything else we should talk about?

CASWELL: That's pretty much it.

Q: When Ronald Reagan came in, he was known as an extreme-right movie actor and all this sort of thing. How was that played while you were there?

CASWELL: The press would blast Reagan and mock him and his speeches about the evil empire and so forth. The propaganda people had a heyday because they just felt that Reagan was just the ultimate hypocrite and dangerous warmongering cowboy that was going to set off an international conflagration and destroy the world, irresponsible and a fool. Yes, he was a favorite sort of target of the propagandists. We didn't have too many visitors when I was in Bulgaria. Whenever I was working places where we had lots and lots of visitors, I would sometimes harken back to the "halcyon days" in Sofia when almost nobody came to visit. We had two one-man CODELs come to Sofia in the entire two years that I was there, and ironically they both showed up at the same time. Frank Shakespeare from the U.S. Information Agency came, and we had Assistant Secretary Eagleberger came one time for a visit. At the foreign ministry they were just pleased as punch to think that an assistant secretary of European affairs would actually come visit Bulgaria. Other than that, I don't really remember having very many visitors. We were not very high up on people's radar scopes back in Washington. I sometimes wondered when we sent back our cables whether anybody actually read them. I found that, when I came back to Washington, indeed in certain circles there were people who regularly read what we wrote and we were the voice, the authoritative voice on what was going on in Bulgaria and why it was going on and what it might mean and what it might not mean. But when you were actually out there working, you felt you were at the end of a very long telephone line.

Q: Was there any university in the United States that sort of had Bulgarian studies? Cornell used to be for Indonesia.

CASWELL: No, I'm afraid not really. I think there were some communities in Ohio and around the Pittsburgh area where there were people who had originally come out from Bulgaria back in the 19th century or whatever, but there wasn't a real locus of Bulgarian-American community, and it didn't manifest itself in any prestigious university program as a center for Bulgarian studies.

Q: '82 whither?

CASWELL: I went off to Lima, Peru. I had decided for a variety of reasons, some of them personal, owing to the fact that I had a Peruvian wife, to bid on a job at the American embassy in Lima that was the deputy head of the narcotics control office, and I was quickly accepted into that. I do not know how many people had actually bid on that job. I found myself on a direct transfer to Lima.

Q: You were there, I guess, from '82 to '85, weren't you?

CASWELL: Actually '82 to '84, a two-year job. The first year I was the Deputy Director, and then the Director, who was an 01 level officer, was leaving and I was considered to have done such a good job as the Deputy I got sort of a "battlefield promotion." I moved up to become the Director, and they brought in another guy the second year to be my deputy.

Q: In Peru in 1982 what was the situation there?

CASWELL: The situation essentially was that they had emerged from a military dictatorship which had ruled the country from the late '60s, and it had been a leftist military dictatorship, a leftist sort of populist dictatorship, unlike the one in Brazil. But the military had badly mismanaged the economy, and so they were coming out of a period of economic isolation and deprivation and everybody was fed up with the military and their leftist Third World posturing and their nationalizing of whatever industries Peru had and the way they disrupted the agricultural sector, all of which caused production to plummet and national income to plummet. So the Peruvian military, I guess the generals who had been running the show, all either died or went off to retirement, and the next generation said, "We've got to get ourselves out of this. It's time to turn the government back to the civilians." So they had elections just before I got there and elected Fernando Belaï¿½nde Terry, who had been the last elected president before the coup, and had been booted out by the generals. Well, he was voted back into office, and there was still very much kind of a honeymoon atmosphere and people were feeling pretty good about themselves with the restoration of democracy. It was also a period after many years of economic stagnation where they were opening up the economy again to trade, and Peruvians managed to get some credit so they could afford some imports for the first time after many years, so this also made people feel a little bit better. But it was also a period of increasing challenges, because at the same time that people felt kind of good about Belaï¿½nde Terry and for the first time there were new cars on the road and things were available in the shops in Lima. The Sendero Luminoso terrorist movement was seriously underway in the southern highlands, and the narcotrafficking problems were growing and were becoming more serious. People had traditionally grown coca, which is the raw material from which cocaine is derived. It's a shrub, and the leaves are harvested from this shrub. It had been traditionally grown in the Peruvian highlands. As a matter of fact, it may have even been a native plant to Peru or the Bolivian highlands. Dating back to ancient times, the Indians would chew these leaves together with some calcium, lime-like material, and by chewing a big wad of these leaves, kind of like a chaw of chewing tobacco, they would get kind of like a mild narcotic effect from chewing these leaves. It was something that helped stave off the effects of cold, hunger, and altitude sickness and gave people energy to work long, hard days. It was a traditional sort of thing. But what happened was that the entrepreneurial narcotics traffickers in Colombia had been coming down and saying to the Peruvians, "Well, this traditional crop you guys grow, if you grow it for me, I'll pay you a premium for your crop."

I was talking about how they could use the coca leaves, and in effect the farmers were taught that you could harvest the leaves and, instead of just selling the leaf for chewing purposes, you could begin to do a little bit of elementary refining of it with kerosene and a little bit of sulfuric acid and so forth, get a precipitant which was called coca paste - really you could do this in your back yard with a bathtub or even a hole in ground in effect lined with some plastic - you could get this intermediate product which is called coca paste and would reduce the bulk and the weight of the leaves. The Colombians would fly down and buy this coca paste and then fly it back to Colombia for further refining into cocaine hydrochloride, which is found on the streets of the United States. Well, with this demand, all of a sudden a lot of farmers decided, hey, it makes a whole lot more sense to be growing cocoa leaves than it does potatoes or tomatoes or whatever else. So there was an expanding production of coca much beyond what was needed for the traditional legitimate uses, and it was beginning to result in addiction problems, crime problems, social problems in the Peruvian cities. What was happening was this coca paste wasn't all being bought up by the Colombians. Some of it was finding its way into Peruvian towns and then ultimately into Peruvian cities, and the Peruvian young people were beginning to smoke the coca paste mixed in cigarettes, tobacco cigarettes, and getting highs from this. So they were beginning to have social ramifications in Peru itself. It wasn't just a problem for the foreigners. It wasn't just a quick way to make a buck. So these two threats, if you will, the political security threat posed by Sendero Luminoso and the growing threat of the narcotics trafficking, together with the underlying weakness of the Peruvian economy were the major challenges to Peruvian society and particularly to the Peruvian administration.

Q: Could you explain what the Sendero Luminoso was and what it was doing. This is the so-called 'shining path'.

CASWELL: Right, that would be the translation to English of Sendero Luminoso. Essentially it was formed by some alienated university professors who were Marxist-Leninists who looked at Peruvian society and its domination by a small elite of European ethnic origin and said, "This is corrupt, this is rotten, this is bad for most of the Peruvians. What we need to do is create a society in Peru which is good for the majority, and to do that it needs to be a Marxist-Leninist state as opposed to a capitalist exploiting state." It harkened back a lot to mystical Indian values and it was communitarian. I don't pretend to understand its ideology very well, and it wasn't part of my job to learn in depth about Sendero Luminoso, but the key thing to remember about them was that they were fanatical, they were very secretive, they went off to the highlands. Actually their intellectual gurus that formed it were alienated, underemployed, grossly underpaid university professors at the University Ayacucho which was this colonial city isolated down in the southern highlands of Peru, and they set up this movement far away from the central authorities. And there wasn't much of a effective presence of the Peruvian government or authorities down in that part of Peru, so this cancer, if you will, could grow in these local circumstances and was not seriously challenged. These people were fanatical and real true believers in what they were doing. Essentially they believed that their objective had to be achieved by any means necessary, and if you were not with them, you needed to be killed and all of your family needed to be killed. They were just absolutely ruthless, and they basically terrorized people in isolated communities down there. They were stronger in the countryside. They didn't really control even a provincial city like Ayacucho, but in the surrounding countryside they would march into little Indian communities and tell them their vision and, "Are you with us? If you're not with us, well, chief and the local constable or whatever, we're going to chop off their heads right in front of you. This is what we do to people who are not with us. Now, who's with us?" Of course, everybody put their hands up. And they grew and became very powerful down in this redoubt of theirs. They were difficult to get to and, as I say, the central institutions of Peru weren't particularly strong, to start out with, so they weren't very capable in responding to them. They didn't really get to the point, in the time period that I was in Peru - and subsequently they really never did - get to the point where they could threaten to overturn the government and take over the entire country. But neither was the government really capable of coming to grips with them and attacking them effectively in the whole time period that I was in the country. So they weren't about to take over the country, but the government was not about to eradicate them either.

Q: Did they intrude into the narcotraffic?

CASWELL: This was one of the things that we were watching, that we were concerned about, that we thought would happen. In the time period that I was in the country, I wasn't really convinced myself that it was happening, in part because where the Sendero Luminoso guerillas were located was not the prime area where coca was being grown. Not that much coca was being grown, period, where they were, and certainly it was not the prime area of expanding coca production for export. Coca grows on what they call the high jungle where on the eastern slope of the Andes goes down into the Amazon jungle. Coca requires a good deal of rain and it requires warmer temperatures and it requires good, well drained soil. The roots don't like to be too wet, so Coca does not grow well in low, moist jungle. It does not grow well in the very high sierra where it's too dry and too cold. The Sendero Luminoso was located in the high sierra in the south-central portion of the country. Where the prime coca area was located was an area called the Upper Huallaga Valley and that was northeast of Lima on the eastern slopes of the Andes going down into the jungle, in effect the eastern foothills of the Andes. So Sendero and prime coca country were in two different areas. On the other hand, there was the argument that Sendero Luminosos might not get involved because the Senderistos, the Sendero leaders and most of the cadre who were the true believers, were very puritanical in their outlook, so there was the feeling among some people that this might keep them from getting involved in narcotic trafficking. Other observers said, nah, they'll get beyond that and the opportunity of money to support their political objectives will be a temptation. In the two years that I was in the country, towards the end - we're talking about mid-1984- there were indeed signs of Sendero slogans being written on walls [in the Coca producing region of the Upper Huallaga], threats to local officials saying, "We're going to come get you," signed, "the Sendero Luminoso. We know all about you," etcetera, etcetera. There was considerable debate at that time as to whether it was really Sendero or whether these were just narcotic traffickers who were trying to terrorize the authorities into not messing with their narcotics trafficking activities, and saying they were Sendero because they wanted to sow terror in the hearts of these people, but they really weren't. They were basically criminals who were looking to make a buck, and anything that could scare the police away, that was a fair tactic. I'm not quite sure subsequently whether more convincing evidence emerged to say that indeed Sendero was in there and a second locus of legitimate true believers, true Senderistas, had established in the Upper Huallaga, but I suspected there probably was a bit of both going on, that there were some opportunists who were basically narcotic traffickers who said they were with Sendero Luminoso just to scare people and there were other people who were in fact the Sendero Luminosos who [were getting involved in drugs trafficking or charging protection money to traffickers] to raise money for the organization.

Q: How did you go about your job, first number two and then number one in the narcotics business? What were you all up to?

CASWELL: Essentially our program fell in between what DEA was doing and what AID was doing.

Q: Drug Enforcement Agency and the...

CASWELL: Agency for International Development. So we had a kind of continuum of programs and activities which we were doing, for example, the narcotics problem in the country which affected American interests. The DEA essentially were down there to exchange intelligence with the police and give them some advice, gather intelligence for our own purposes. Maybe they could learn something in Peru about somebody who was going to be taking drugs up to the United States. But they were doing essentially police work, and while they were doing police work, they might give some informal advice to the Peruvians, like, "If we had a problem like this in the States, this is the way we would do it, guys." But they didn't have big bags of money to pay for training, they didn't have big bags of money to help support Peruvian police in doing operations in Peru, they didn't have big bags of money to pay for training of the Peruvian police. That's where the State Department programs came in. In effect we had three pots of money, if I can call them that. With one pot we funded training programs for the police, purchasing equipment for the police, helping build up the infrastructure in the form of buildings and barracks and things like this that would help the Peruvian police to establish a presence in the coca-growing and drug-trafficking areas. So equipment, training, presence essentially was what we were paying for. Also, we had money to help pay for operations. Many times what would happen was the Peruvian police - they had a Guardia Civil, which was the uniformed police in Peru - would have a drug section and their headquarters were in Lima. Well, they might get information that led them to believe that an operation would be worthwhile in a certain provincial area, but to do that they would have to send officers from Lima up to this provincial area. They wouldn't trust the local police because they figured the local police were already being bribed, so they had to send in police from Lima to do that job. Well, who was going to pay for the travel of that officer or those officers to go from Lima to Tingo Maria, for example? Who was going to pay their per diem costs while they were living in a hotel in Tingo Maria? Well, Peruvian police would say, "We don't have the money for that. We can pay their salaries, but we don't have the money for the operation." Well, if we became convinced, and the DEA was convinced, that, yes, there was reasonable cause to believe that such an operation was worth pursuing, we could help bankroll that operation. Those sorts of programs had gotten underway when I had arrived.

The second major area that was still on the drawing boards and had not begun, was crop eradication. One of the ways to get at the problem was to go to the source and to try to destroy in effect the illegal plantations where the raw material was being grown. This was the heart of the problem, this was the toughest nut to crack, but arguably it was a whole lot more efficient than playing cops and robbers and chasing all up and down the Andes trying to catch the bad guys. If all of the raw material could be destroyed, then you wouldn't have to worry about it. So we had programs/projects that were funded which we were going to work with the agricultural ministry in paying for the location and then the eradication of illegal plantations. Easier said than done, this was a very big problem in, one, trying to find generally small plantations in areas where there weren't very many roads; two, actually physically getting to them; and then, three, providing security for the people who were doing the work so they wouldn't be shot while they were eradicating the crop. Also we had to pay for a certain amount of research about what was the most effective way to kill the plants, because they're pretty hardy plants and at least at that time it wasn't clear that an aerial spraying would be effective, so we ended up hiring some agricultural scientists to do some research on what was the most effective way to use an herbicide to kill them. So there were tremendous organizational, logistical, and security problems associated with actually getting a crop eradication program up and going, and it would have to work hand in glove with the police. The first thing you have to do is you have to get the police in the area where the stuff is being grown to establish some law and order, equipping them and making sure that they do the job. Then once you've sort of established at least a police presence, then you could begin to address the eradication.

The third area of what we did was in effect consciousness raising which was aimed at persuading the Peruvians that it was not just an American problem, this was not just easy money for Peruvian farmers but that there is a blow-back effect, that this has deleterious effects on Peruvian people. So these were lesser programs. We also had some support for the justice people and in effect trying to see to it that people charged with crimes in narcotics trafficking actually came to trial. But, as I said, we sort of worked in the area between DEA, which was working with the police but didn't have any money to help the police, and AID, the Agency for International Development, which dealt with the third part of the problem, and that was, if you were trying to put the farmers out of the business of growing coca, that's not the same thing as saying you want to put farmers out of business altogether. There would be an enormous social and political and economic problem if you just drove all these farmers out of business and then they had no other legitimate livelihood to turn to. So AID had projects that fell under the heading of crop substitution. What they were trying to do was first do research to learn what might be the most attractive and economically feasible substitute crops that could earn the best income for the farmers, maybe not earn as much money as they could get for growing coca but might be better suited to the local conditions and earn a pretty good return, better than, say, growing potatoes. So there was a certain amount of a research-and-development aspect to those projects, and then helping the farmer - not only the farmer but also the processor, the agro-product processors. It appeared as though one of the most possibly favorable products to encourage was the production of cocoa, which is the basic raw material for chocolate. The conditions were pretty good for growing cocoa in the Upper Huallaga Valley, but then the question was: How do you get the raw material from there to the marketplace? [So to encourage farmers to switch from coca to cocoa] you would have to develop refining facilities for cocoa, and you had to pay attention to quality and you had to be to teach these people how they would fit into the whole international chocolate industry.

Q: How did you find working with the Peruvians in all this?

CASWELL: The police loved us because we had money and they saw, I think, getting into the counter-narcotics business as a fairly popular thing to do in the Peruvian police in those days. I think you could be cynical and say they wanted to get into it so that they could collect the bribes, the corruption that was associated with it. I think they also saw it potentially as a high-profile place where one could build a career and maybe get ahead quickly, kind of a growth industry, if you will. Because the Americans were willing to pay and buy equipment, you could get access to better equipment. You could travel, you could get per diem to go off to do operations. It had a kind of a "sexiness" to it, where some gung-ho officers and people thought it was the place to be, and so they were enthusiastic. We helped set up within the police a special mobile anti-drug unit which was called UMOPAR, an acronym meaning it was a mobile police unit, and they were kind of an elite unit of the La Guardia Civil. They were established up in a base in Tingo Maria, which we basically built for them from scratch. Morale there was pretty good. So I felt pretty good about dealing with the people in UMOPAR. There were other elements of the police which seemed to be rather ineffectual and bureaucratic, fat old police officers sitting around Lima talking about doing stuff, but really never did it. Furthermore, the police were riven with rivalries. The police force I mentioned before and have been talking about up till now was called the Guardia Civil, which was kind of a national, uniformed police, kind of cop-on-the-beat kind of police, but they also had an FBI of sorts called the PIP, the Peruvian Investigative Police, and they were generally speaking a little more intelligent. Some of them had university educations or at least partial university educations. They seemed to be a little bit more suave but they were also generally considered to be more corrupt and duplicitous. Nevertheless, but you had to deal with them. They did get some things done, but you wondered what was the cost-benefit analysis there, were we getting as much benefit or more benefit for the corruption that was going on. Of course, there were always rivalries going on. The Guardia Civil guys would always say, "I wouldn't support that project with the PIP because they're all a bunch of corruptos, they're all on the take. You're wasting your money. You should put all of your money with us." Of course, the PIP guys would tell you just the opposite. They would say, "Oh, those bozos over in Guardia Civil. They don't know their you-know-what from their you-know-what. What are you wasting your time with those characters for?" And then, of course, there was Peruvian Customs with which we had another project and they wanted more money, but they were believed to be the most corrupt of the lot. So you had to deal with these professional rivalries amongst the police, but you could do stuff with them, and that in part was why we did the bulk of the earlier work with the police. They were easier to work with, they were enthusiastic, and there was a certain logic to helping establish law and order or more law and order before you could do anything else; it was sort of sine qua non. People in the Agricultural Ministry were much more difficult. Essentially they didn't want to deal with the coca crop problem. They didn't want to deal with eradication, they didn't want to really make farmers angry at them. Whenever high-level people would come down from Washington, or the American ambassador spoke to the Peruvian authorities, they of course, at the senior level said, "Anything you want, anything we can do; we're in this with you 100 percent. We're poor, we need help, we need money, technical assistance technical assistance from the United States." "After all, that's only fitting, because you caused the problem. It was you, the Americans' demand, for these illicit drugs that has created the problem. Before your demand came along, there were a few Indians growing a few bushes and chewing on a few leaves and there was no big problem, so it's really appropriate that you should be helping us poor Peruvians to deal with this problem. But it's really up to you to do it. You have my blessing. When you come back down, talk to my friend the Agriculture Minister and bring his money, and talk to the Interior Minister and bring money to help the police." Well, as I said, the police took the bags of money and did some stuff, but our friend the Agriculture Minister didn't really want to deal with it so he said, "Well, I'm going to appoint this unemployed entomologist to be in charge of coca eradication," He was a little guy who specialized in entomology, specialized in killing insects. I guess we decided he would be an appropriate guy to think about killing coca plants. Anyway, he had no political weight, he was not a go-getter; he was this nervous little man who didn't really want to come to grips with the problem. He basically was interested in getting an office, buying furniture for the office, having a xerox machine, getting lots of typewriters and paper, and he would work writing up plans on papers. Every time you'd come to talk to him, "Oh, yes, I'm working on it, but we have to study this problem very carefully. By the way, I need some more money to get another xerox machine," or "I need another telephone." He just was getting nowhere. He was kind of a haughty guy also. He was just a real petty bureaucrat, not the kind of guy that would get out and shake things up and get things going, get dirt under his fingernails and be willing to do the head knocking that would really be necessary to get something like this going. Well, one of our major accomplishments, that really didn't happen till like the second year that I was there, after doing everything that we could to try to get this guy going and working with the police and hiring him a staff, Carlton Turner, who was the White House drug advisor - there wasn't yet a drug czar like Barry McCaffrey, but Turner was sort of a junior Barry McCaffrey at that time period - came down and he had gotten increasingly fed up with our inability to make headway on eradication, as had the Counter-Narcotics Bureau in the State Department and people in Congress who were watching us and so forth. Well, Carlton Turner came down and made a fuss, and because he represented the White House, when we took him around to talk to all the usual suspects, he was actually able to raise enough of a ruckus so that at the political level and through the government they decided to tell the Agriculture Minister he had to fire Mr. Ingunza, the entomologist director of the Coca eradication project. So we got rid of Mr. Ingunza and we got another guy in who was much smarter and much more a politician. He understood that something actually had to be done to satisfy the U.S. government, but he also understood that he could find a way to sell farmers that, "Yes, I'm going to eradicate your coca crop, but this is also going to lead to other things that you can do." He was a smart enough guy that he actually was able to get the project going in the Upper Huallaga area and did it in a way that he figured out places where we could push and move forward without making people too angry at us so that we could actually get the program going. I'm trying to remember. I did a little bit of reviewing before this just to see if I could find some statistics. In the first year that I was there we had only gotten 100 hectares - and a hectare is about two and a half acres - maybe we'd gotten about 250 acres of coca eradicated in all of 1983, and by 1984, getting this new director and getting things actually going, we got 4,000 hectares, almost 10,000 acres, eradicated in just the first part, the first six months of 1984 before I left. So we really succeeded in getting the project really started off, which was a great satisfaction. The down side was, as the program began to bite, the bad guys began to bite back and we started to have increasing problems with threats, and actually just as I was leaving we even had an attack on one of the eradication teams and some 20 people got killed.

Q: You were talking about the problems between the various police elements, bureaucracy. What about you? Here you are, a line Foreign Service Officer. Did you find that getting involved in this? This is a pretty new game. Were there problems careerwise or just workwise?

CASWELL: I think in the time period that I was there - how can I put this? - essentially the job was a snake pit. When I bid on the job, I thought intellectually this was going to be a challenging job. I was thinking maybe this would be interesting to do because it's something that's concrete, it's real, it really relates to real American interests and it would be rather different than sitting around and reading Rabotnichesko Delo, pouring over the tea leaves, sending back cables to Washington about what's going on in Bulgaria and wondering whether anybody ever reads the cable and whether it really was having any impact or not. This was real, maybe I want to do this, but it will be hard, it will be a challenge. I don't think I had any idea how challenging it was going to be, because really we were in the middle trying to do a hard thing in which there were a lot of mixed feelings on the Peruvian side frankly. This was the kind of relationship in which whenever visitors would come from Washington, as I said before, they would say, "Sure, no problem, whatever you want. We're in this with you. We're poor. We need your help. We need money." They conveyed this impression to the visitor from Washington, be it Senator Paula Hawkins from Florida, who was rabid on the subject, or someone from the White House, or the Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics Matters or anybody else that would come down. We had a lot of CODELs (Congressional Delegations), a lot of visitors and so forth, Congressmen Benjamin Gilman, Charlie Rangle. They were really concerned about Peru because nothing was happening to end the drug problem. They would come down and in two or three days everybody from the President of the Republic on down to the lowest police officer said, "Yes, sir, we're going to do this. No problem, just you provide us assistance." Then they would leave and say, "I solved the problem. Now we're going to see some action." And, of course, as soon as the visitor from Washington went back and you were dealing with the rivalries, the bureaucratic foot dragging, the fears, such as, "If I do this, I'm going to get killed." The Peruvian politicians had their own concerns. They didn't necessarily want to stir up a hornet's nest. There was a fear that if they pressed too hard on the counter-narcotics front in the Upper Huallaga, the Senderistas would take advantage of them and then they would have a second front of the fight against Sendero Luminoso. So, of course, the results never were as good as what Washington would have expected. So we'd get a lot of people coming down from Washington and we were investigated by GAO...

Q: General Accounting Office.

CASWELL: ...General Accounting Office, by the State Department inspectors. As I said, everybody came to visit us that I mentioned before, and we had a steady stream of visitors from Congress and from the White House. We had the Attorney General, William French Smith. We had a whole series of people from the State Department, from both the Latin American Bureau and the International Narcotics Bureau, from Assistant Secretary, Deputy Assistant Secretaries, etcetera. They were all coming to complain, "What's the matter with you? Why can't you get this project started? Why aren't you doing more?" But the satisfying thing was at the end of the day we were able to show improvement, particularly the eradication project. Those figures I cited before did a lot, and by the time I left the country I had won a Superior Honor Award out of it thankfully and ended up getting the projects going. But it was an uphill battle. You could have a good run and then all of a sudden things could come undone again very quickly.

Q: Like pushing a wet noodle.

CASWELL: A little bit like pushing a wet noodle, so I felt myself very lucky that, one, I survived professionally and came out of it smelling good, because there were certainly periods in the two years I was there when I was thinking I'm not going to come out of there smelling good professionally. I'm frankly thankful that I survived with my life. I was involved in a helicopter crash up in the Andes that could have killed me. As it was, we survived the crash and we got out alive. But I was just very thankful that at the end of the two years I was out of there, and I said, "Never again." I had become something of a star in the International Narcotics Bureau back in Washington and, of course, they said, "When can we get you to go to Colombia or one of these other countries? You can work on other projects and turn them around, too," and I said, "Thank you very much. I'm flattered, but I don't think I ever want to do this again."

Q: So in '84 you went back to the Bulgarian desk. Is that it?

CASWELL: No, actually what happened was I was feeling a bit burned out and I had learned about the possibility of applying for a year of university studies, so I did and I applied to the program and said, "I'd like to do advanced university area studies either in the Eastern European/Soviet area or in the Latin American area." I got a favorable response and they said, "Well, actually we've got somebody else who's already been chosen to do Latin American studies, but if you'd like to do Soviet/East European studies, we think you'd be ideal. I said, "Sign me up for it," and I got selected and I ended up going to a new program at UCLA that was being set up. It was a joint operation between the University of California at Los Angeles and the Rand Institution in Santa Monica. So I spent a year doing academic work.

Q: Well, we'll pick this up the next time, '84 to '85, at UCLA. We'll talk about the program and then we'll move on.

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This is the 20th of September 2000. John, '84 to '85, you were going to... was it UCLA basically or was it a joint thing?

CASWELL: It was a joint thing between UCLA and the Rand Corporation.

Q: Could you explain what the Rand Corporation was.

CASWELL: It was basically a think tank. It does a lot of consulting work. I think it primarily started with the Defense Department. I think they have over the years tried to broaden their clientele a bit, but they were very heavily oriented towards Cold War issues in those days, defense issues. Some projects they worked on were rather more political and others were rather more technology oriented. I think their single biggest client in the time period that I knew of was the Air Force. They seemed to have done some work for the Air Force that the Air Force brass liked, and they just kept giving contracts to Rand. They were located in Santa Monica, California.

Q: Rand stands for Research And Development.

CASWELL: There you go. I didn't know that. But it's a rather unimpressive physical facility they have. It looks kind of like a rambling motel but in an absolutely beautiful location just across the street from Santa Monica beach in downtown Santa Monica. It's a lovely area. It's only a few miles, five miles or so, from the UCLA campus, and they had a nucleus of Sovietologists, Kremlinologists at Rand and then they had another nucleus of professors, a number of whom were of Eastern European origin themselves, at UCLA, and they hit upon this idea of pooling their resources and coming up with, they called it, the Center for the Study of Soviet International Behavior. This was a new initiative in the mid-'80s. I think they did stuff also on internal Soviet things, but their major focus was on how the Soviet Union was an international actor, and obviously this would be of interest to the United States. As it turned out, the State Department was becoming aware of this program and thought it would be interesting, I guess, to send a Foreign Service Officer there in their first class to in effect evaluate it amongst other things.

Q: This is an interesting period because the Soviet leadership was literally dying off about this time.

CASWELL: That's correct, and it also came right after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. I think that probably was in part the germ of the idea. Other people have operations that look at Soviet leadership and Communism in the Soviet Union and so forth and so on, but maybe not so much as how they act and why do they act within their sphere of influence and maybe new thrusts that they're going to be making into the Third World.

Q: I must say that the Soviet move into Afghanistan in December of 1979 has always puzzled me. It was basically they brought down another Communist regime and there didn't seem to be any great reason for it. What were you getting at that time? What was the considered the opinion of what is this is all about?

CASWELL: My impression was that there was a good deal of consternation, both puzzlement when they first did it and a great deal of consternation, what this might portend for the future. Certainly in retrospect, I think, the school of thought that tells that it was a blunder and kind of an almost defensive move because the Soviets were concerned about that part of the world because of their own vulnerability in the southern part of the Soviet Union, in the Soviet republics where they had large either Islamic minorities or Islamic majorities proved to be the case. I honestly am not an expert on Afghanistan, so I would hesitate to say exactly what was going on, but my suspicion was it was a certain amount of feeling of vulnerability on the one hand and on the other hand a certain amount of arrogance and feeling as though they could do it and they could get away with it. Carter in his performance in Iran about that time period would lead them to believe that the United States was not going to be particularly vigorous in responding to whatever they might do. The Soviet leadership probably felt that they could just go in and help their friends, the pro-Moscow Afghani Communists, and thus keep a more dangerous group from coming to power, which might turn Afghanistan into a base like Iran for fomenting unrest in the southern Soviet Union. Obviously their calculations were off, and the Soviet invasion generated exactly the sort of problems that they were fearing as well as a good deal of discontent in the Russian population- (end of tape)

Q: As you were taking the course, did you get a feeling where they were going, the people who were dealing with this, about whither the Soviet Union in international affairs?

CASWELL: I think that in part they were, as far as their institutional interest, UCLA and Rand were getting themselves set up. I think basically they were taking advantage of the people that they had on board, and these different professors had different areas of interest or expertise according to what their backgrounds were and what they had developed over their careers, and those tended to be the courses at least that they were initially offering. I didn't get the sense, at the time I went there because it was the first year, that there was some sort of master plan or well-thought-out curriculum that was balanced in a number of different ways. They just had different professors and they were offering courses according to their backgrounds. They had, for example, a fellow named Andre Korbonski, who was a political science professor at UCLA, who was born in Poland. Well, his particular interests were obviously centered around Poland in particular, but more generally the sorts of things that were happening in Eastern Europe at that time. Solidarity was obviously going on and there was the bubbling up that was going on in Poland and everyone was looking at what might be the spillover from Poland. Would the Soviets really crack down or not, or could they work through the Polish army and the Polish Communist Party to keep the situation under control. Professor Korbonski would offer courses in Eastern European politics and Soviet-East European relations. Another man they had was Edward Gonzalez, who was of Cuban extraction. Well, his particular interest obviously was Cuba and the Soviet-Cuban relationship. He offered an interesting course that I took in what he called leverage in international relations. His thesis was under the right circumstances a puppet or satellite country could exert leverage on the guarantor or the sponsor party [like Cuba influencing Soviet actions or Israel manipulating U.S. foreign policy].

Q: We've seen this again and again and again.

CASWELL: So the question was: How do they go about doing it? Under what circumstances can smaller countries leverage themselves? There were other professors. Another professor named William Potter was particularly interested in arms control issues, so he ran a course in arms control with a simulation in which the students would be divided up between a Soviet negotiating team and an American negotiating team. He set up mock SALT negotiations in which the students would play out the parts according to both what they studied from their books but used their own creativity to either try to come up with a solution or not. It was that type of thing. We had another professor, Abe Becker, who was a specialist in Soviet economy, so obviously he offered courses in the Soviet economy. So my basic approach was to look at what was available and pick and choose, also talk to some of the professors, maybe set up sort of a tutorial or independent study where I would do research and reading on my own and maybe write a paper or talk in a seminar that the professor would organize. Part and parcel of this academic year that the State Department would sponsor, at least in the time period that I did it, you had to have arranged already your onward assignment after the academic year to insure that the academic year would be of benefit to the State Department. So, in other words, you wouldn't spend a year studying China, for example, and then go off and do a job in Africa and never use the knowledge that you supposedly developed during your year. So I had been already assigned to go work in what was then called the Office of East European and Yugoslav Affairs after the year at UCLA/Rand. I was specifically going to be the desk officer for Bulgaria and Albania with back-up responsibilities for Yugoslavia. So I tried to, as much as I could during this year at UCLA/Rand, tailor my coursework and my independent reading and so forth towards Eastern European affairs, Soviet-East European relations, how the place of Eastern Europe, between the Soviet Union and the United States, how it had evolved, say, in recent history, that type of thing. So there was a heavy focus on Eastern Europe and in particular on the Balkans.

Q: You finished there in '85. You went to the Bureau?

CASWELL: Yes, I went to the Office of East European and Yugoslav Affairs in the Bureau of European Affairs.

Q: And you were there from '85 to?

CASWELL: '87.

Q: Let's take the countries. Albania was just something you kind of looked across Lake Ohrid, wasn't it?

CASWELL: Yes, in those days Albania was as familiar as the back side of the moon. Nobody had been there for a terribly long time. We still had an embassy building, believe it or not, in Tirana which was occupied and used by the Italians. The Italians maintained an embassy in Tirana, at least in the early to mid 1980s. I'm not quite sure how long they had been in our embassy, but essentially it had been our embassy building up till the Second World War. Then when, I guess, the Italians invaded, we withdrew from that embassy, and it probably sat vacant for a while after the Second World War. Then at some point we arranged for out the Italians to occupy it to keep it from being seized by the Albanian government. But the principal issue that we had with Albania was what was called the Albania gold question. Essentially the Albanian government had its gold reserves, or at least the major part of its gold reserves, on deposit with the Federal Reserve Bank in New York City before the Second World War. So when the Italian invasion during World War II came and the government fell, we held onto the gold for safekeeping so that, when things were sorted out and a proper government could be reconstituted in Albania after the war, then we would presumably return the gold to the proper authorities. Well, in the meantime the Communists took over Albania, seized all private property in Albania including the private property of some Albanian American citizens, so our position became that we will return the gold to the Albanian government when we negotiate proper settlement of the private properties which had been seized from American citizens in Albania. Of course, the Albanian government wanted the gold back, no questions, and no concessions, and so we were at loggerheads.

Q: We had no diplomatic relations.

CASWELL: We had no diplomatic relations. That almost goes without saying, but it shouldn't go without saying. Sorting out the gold and property issues would have been part and parcel of reestablishing diplomatic relations. Well, in the mid-1980s the Albanian government was making some cautious signals to us that maybe they were prepared under the right circumstances to talk about some type of settlement or some type of reconciliation that might lead to returning the gold and reestablishing diplomatic relations. Well, it was all very tentative. It didn't get very far. I'm trying to remember how it was that we received the word, whether it was through the Swiss. I think it was through the French; yes, it was through the French. There were what were called proximity negotiations in which the office director for Yugoslav and Eastern European affairs, Roland Kuchel, would go and sit in one hotel room in Paris and the Albanian authorities would sit in another hotel room in Paris and French liaisons would shuttle back and forth with our respective positions. It didn't really go too terribly far, but that was the principal thing that was going on about Albania at that time, plus obviously we were trying to learn as much as we could about what was happening in Albania. Would there be any impact on the domestic situation there? The long-time dictator of Albania, a man named Enver Hoxha, was reaching the end of his life and actually died in early 1985, and the question was would his successors, looking at what was going on in Poland and potentially in other parts of Eastern Europe, would there be any easing up, any progress, in terms of both bilateral relations with the United States and easing the very oppressive political economic situation in Albania itself. [The Albanian economy was virtually bankrupt. That was undoubtedly another factor as well.]

Q: How serious were we in pushing to reopen relations with Albania? Was this pretty far down on our agenda?

CASWELL: Yes, it was pretty far down on our agenda. My work on Albania was episodic at best. I think we were hopeful when I took the job that the gold negotiations might go someplace, but in fact, although they had hinted to the French that they were willing to cut a deal in fact when we pursued the talks, they were pretty hard line. "Give us the gold first and then maybe we'll talk about some possible concessions [on claims for compensation for confiscated property of American citizens.]" So nothing really much happened, and Hoxha's successor, whose name I forget right now, the first successor who was one of Hoxha's long-term cronies, really didn't do too much initially.

It was a very cautious process. The really rapid changes in Albania only started occurring more like 1991, in that time period. One of my major tasks or one of my major challenges was trying to write the annual Albanian human rights report with no U.S. embassy in Tirana to provide any kind of draft or input, so I had to scour around as many different sources as I could to try to update the report. But we really didn't do that [much else on Albania]. I had occasional, I would almost characterize them as crank calls from some Albanian Americans. Some of them were not crank calls. Some people were legitimately concerned about their family in Albania, or had questions about how they might try to get money to their relatives in Albania, asking could the United States government help them and so forth and so on. Frankly there wasn't much that we could do because there was no relationship [with the Albanian government], there was no embassy on the ground there. So most of my time was spent doing Bulgaria and on occasion backstopping the Yugoslav desk officer.

Q: Again back to Albania before we finish this, the normal thing is the United States is willing to open relations with any country, particularly if there's no great issue to inhibit them such as a huge massacre in recent times or something like that - that usually puts a stop on it - so I would think that it was really Albania that was calling the shots as far as - it really didn't want to open up relations. I was wondering if that were true. What was the rationale?

CASWELL: Mr. Hoxha and his immediate coterie of aides and supporters and so forth had very peculiar notions, very extreme notions, of building a communist society, and basically they had gotten really out of line with the thinking of just about everybody else in the world. They were, from their perspective, "holier than thou" and saw what was going on in the Soviet Union as a hopelessly corrupted society and a failed attempt at building communism. They saw what was going on in China after Mao had left the scene, how China was evolving by the 1980s, and they saw China as hopelessly corrupted and compromising. So Hoxha basically seals himself off from the rest of the world and saw the United States obviously as totally antithetical to everything that he was trying to do. So they weren't particularly interested in relations with the United States. They wanted the gold because, I think, even they understood that their economy was breaking down and was rather hopeless, and they were interested in the gold. It was a rather extreme sort of society. It proudly proclaimed itself the first totally atheistic society in the world, and they either knocked down or burned down or converted all the churches and mosques in Albania and didn't allow even a captive, controlled church to exist like the Russians did, for example. So in addition to questions like the gold and the property of Albanian Americans, certainly a big obstacle to better relations between the United States and Albania was the way the Albanian government treated the mass of Albanian society. It was a very extremely repressive police state. So we would have had major problems. Of course, that's what the Albanian human rights report was all about, this cataloging, as best we could from refugee reports and reports that we got from other countries that did have embassies in Albania, on what was an appalling human rights picture.

Q: They were suffering from real paranoia, weren't they? They had small, individual...

CASWELL: These pillboxes or bunkers that they had built all around the country. I'm not quite sure why Mr. Hoxha was quite so paranoid, but I guess from his point of view he would say, "Well, look at history. We've been invaded, incorporated by bigger neighbors so many times in our history, so we have to always be vigilant and we really can't rely on anybody else." He took a kind of guerilla mentality to paranoid extremes and structured the country to fight a kind of a guerilla war against any invader, pillbox by pillbox against any would-be invader.

Q: Was there any connection at that time between Albanian government and Kosovo, the Albanian ethnic population or whatever you want to call it in Kosovo.

CASWELL: Well, I think that there certainly was in a kind of a propagandistic sense. I think the people in Albania, the authorities, had a vision at some point of a greater Albania and that all Albanians should be incorporated or be part of this great Albania and this would involve Kosovo. This was a very neuralgic subject to the authorities in Belgrade, of course. They didn't want to see Kosovo go. They said Kosovo for historical reasons is an integral part of Serbia and therefore Yugoslavia, and whether or not the majority of citizens in today's Kosovo happen to be of Albanian ethnic extraction is irrelevant. But I think most of the Kosovars, most of the Albania Kosovars, understood quite clearly that the situation in Albania itself under Enver Hoxha and his immediate successors was so impoverished and so oppressive that they didn't have any particular interest in joining Albania. I think that their interests were in achieving a more equitable share of positions of political importance and economic importance within Kosovo, within Yugoslavia. Tito did a pretty good job of apportioning enough benefits and recognition of the place of the ethnic Albanians that they fit in, although they were obviously getting the short end of the stick. I don't think social relations between Serbs and Albanians were ever good within Yugoslavia. They were the second class citizens of Yugoslavia the way the Turks were in Bulgaria, but I think the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo understood their possibilities were better in Yugoslavia than they would be in Albania, so there wasn't any restiveness pushing for joining Albania. I think in the minds of Albanian nationalists, they probably thought, well, someday circumstances will be right and the truly just thing would be that they would be part of greater Albania, but it was not a hot issue.

Q: Any problems that you had to deal with between Albania and Greece?

CASWELL: Not at that point. There was always the potential for it because there was a Greek minority in southern Albania, and that particular area of southern Albania some Greek nationalists called it northern Epirus. This is typical in the Balkans. In just about all of the border regions, you can find little pockets and enclaves where across the border you have some of your ethnic brethren. There are nationalists in each one of these countries that can harken back to the "halcyon days of yore" when there was a greater 'fill in the name of the country' and can point to some point in medieval history when their nation's boundary did include that territory - that's how those people got there - and these nationalists feel that to right historic wrongs this area ought to be either incorporated, ideally incorporated into their territory, or at a minimum that their country - in this case Greece - had a right to defend the rights of their fellow ethnic members living in the other country. So this whole question of the cultural rights of the Greek community in Albania was always a potential irritant, sometimes a very real irritant. I don't remember, other than maybe some occasional polemics - and this would get reflected in things like the human rights report - about the sorry state of the Greek minority in southern Albania - they can't exercise their religious rights and so forth and so on. We would get some of this information from Greece. Other than that, I don't really recall that particularly affected us. It wasn't a flashpoint issue in the Balkans at that time period. Frictions between Greece and Albania came more to the fore later on when things rapidly started changing in Albania in the '90s, and then what you had was Albanian economic emigres coming out of Albania into Greece to work in jobs in Greece that no Greek would do, and there were social tensions between some of these people and the Greek people. And then there was also the charge that there were mafias operating out of Albania, gun runners, smugglers, whatever, and that was the cause for criminal problems in Greece. And so you would get those sorts of problems but not in the mid-'80s.

Q: Let's go to Bulgaria. Again, Bulgaria was not very high on our list, was it? When you're looking at Eastern Europe, it's kind of down in the corner.

CASWELL: True, but it was more important than Albania. I think the questions there were some of the ones that I mentioned the last time when we were talking about Bulgaria when I was actually working in Bulgaria. They were the alleged Bulgarian Balkan narcotics smuggling coupled with questioning could we get better cooperation with the Bulgarian authorities to try to stop more effectively narcotics coming from Turkey and the Middle East passing through Bulgaria into Western Europe. It would either affect the Americans or American troops in Western Europe or the drug passing on to the United States. There were also a lot of allegations and suspicion about Bulgarian involvement in the Papal assassination plot. And a new issue, an issue which really had become much more inflamed by the time I was on the desk in 1985 - it wasn't an issue at all in 1980, '81, '82 when I worked in Bulgaria - and that was the so-called "name-change" campaign, which was, I guess you would say, a form of ethnic cleansing. It was aimed at the Turkish minority in eastern Bulgaria, but it wasn't the kind of ethnic cleansing that came to be practiced in Yugoslavia by Mr. Milosevic and his Serbian ultranationalists. It was an attempt to ethnically cleanse the Turks culturally by claiming that the Turkish minority, which amounts to about 10 percent of Bulgaria's population, were not really Turks at all, that they were actually ethnically Bulgarian, but that during the Ottoman Empire, the 500 years of the Ottoman yoke...

Q: When I was in Serbia, if the elevator didn't work and I'd say "God dammit, the elevator doesn't work," somebody would turn to me and say, "Well, you weren't 500 years under the Turkish yoke."

CASWELL: Exactly, that explained all of their inadequacies for the Bulgarians too. A specious argument, but the argument of this name-change campaign was that these people weren't really Turks, they were the descendants of ethnic Bulgarians who had been forcibly Turkicized during the 500 years of the Ottoman yoke. The Bulgarian government maintained they had been forced to adopt Islam and to adopt the Turkish language and to adopt Turkish names, but that, because of the many cultural achievements and economic achievements of Bulgaria under the enlightened rule of the Bulgarian Communist Party since 1945, these people were now spontaneously rediscovering their Bulgarian origins and voluntarily changing their names back to Bulgarian names and dropped Islam and reunited in one big happy ethnic Bulgarian family in Bulgaria. Well, of course, this was ridiculous. The police were using strong-arm tactics to force these Turkish people to adopt new names and, if they didn't adopt new names, the police beat them up or they arrested them or recalcitrant Turks they would disappear or whatever. There were a variety of horror stories coming out. Well, this became the preeminent human rights issue in Bulgaria at this point. We spent a lot of time in effect gathering information about what was really going on as opposed to the public relations job that the Bulgarian government was putting out, and confronting them about this, we tried to come up with information with which to confront them that they could not deny and to make this a bilateral issue along with the hardy perennial human rights issues which we had.

Divided families was [another big human rights issue for us]. We had families in which some members of the family had gotten to the West, specifically in this case the United States, but they had relatives back in Bulgaria. Well, at a minimum the American relatives wanted to be able to go back to Bulgaria to visit their family in Bulgaria, or preferably they would like the Bulgarian family members to be able to come and visit them in the United States, or in some cases they would like the Bulgarian members of the family to actually be able to emigrate from Bulgaria to the United States. Well, of course, most of these - I guess almost without exception - these Bulgarian Americans got out of Bulgaria by fleeing, by some kind of subterfuge. They were viewed as traitors by the police, the Bulgarian Communist authorities, and so, of course, the Bulgarian authorities would want to make examples out of these people and to in effect punish these traitors. So, of course, the last thing that they would want to do is to let them freely visit their family members or allow the other members of the family to go. So this was a very thorny issue and one which we were working on a lot.

And the last issue area that we were working on fell under the heading of what we called reciprocity issues. Essentially our embassy in Sofia and the diplomats therein worked under very difficult conditions. They weren't able to travel around, they weren't able to do their job very easily, they weren't able to get appointments to meet with officials, they were very limited in where they could live, the embassy was very limited in its operations. If we were looking for a new building, for example - we had a very ramshackle, crowded building downtown in Sofia - we weren't free to go out and look around for a new building. Or if we needed new housing or better housing for our people, we weren't free to just look around. We always had to go to the same [government officials], and in effect they used this as leverage over us to try to extract favors. Well, the thinking came to be in the mid-'80s, well, we ought to do the same thing to [their diplomats in Washington].

Q: This was very much an initiative on the part of the Reagan administration, which many of us felt was long overdue.

CASWELL: Exactly. I think the feeling was that that's the only thing they understand.

Q: It wasn't just Bulgaria. It was Chinese, Eastern Europe...

CASWELL: Exactly and, as a matter of fact, a whole office was set up in the State Department called the... I can't remember now; maybe it will come back to me.

Q: Like the Office of Reciprocity

CASWELL: With Bulgaria reciprocity was in many ways the name of the game. So because of that, I became sort of the reciprocity guru for the whole office. In that period actually we actually enjoyed some success in this, and for the first time in years we were able to get the Bulgarian authorities to show our embassy, say, new space for an embassy warehouse, a new building. We were able to get new housing, new apartments, offered to our people. We were able to get some of the travel restrictions eased, not totally taken away however. But the point was that we imposed kind of tit-for-tat restrictions on their people, and then when they complained, we said, "Well, we'd like to do something about this and we can do something about it but only when you agree to do something reciprocal for our embassy back in Sofia." All of these were the major issues that we were dealing with.

Q: A real clash point in our relations with that area was over Cyprus when the Greek Cypriots started beating up too much on the Turks. The Turks launched an invasion and took over a third of the island.

CASWELL: Yes, in 1974.

Q: Yes, July. That started as the Bulgarians were messing around with their Turkish minority. Turkey is not a small power. Was there any concern that the Turks might move?

CASWELL: Not on our part. I think however this was part of the motivation of the Bulgarian Communist leadership, that they saw this Turkish minority as at least a potential traitorous fifth column, that their birth rate was relatively high and the birth rate of the ethnic Bulgarian population was low - I guess it was even questionable even whether they were replicating themselves at this point; maybe the Bulgarian population had even been declining - and the Turkish minority tended to be located in the eastern part of Bulgaria down towards the Turkish border along the Black Sea and they were unassimilated. They were the sort of Calibans of Bulgarian society, down-trodden, the hewers of wood and drawers of water. When, for example, the young men of the ethnic Turkish minority were drafted into the Bulgarian army - and they were drafted into the Bulgarian army - they were never issued firearms. They were always drafted into what were called construction brigades, and that's what they essentially did. They dug ditches for a couple of years, or when the Bulgarian army was sent out to help with the harvest, it was these guys who were sent out to help with the harvest. So they seemed to be unassimilated and maybe unassimilable, and Bulgarians didn't particularly like them. I remember one time - I didn't usually do consular things - but the consular officer was traveling and they asked me to fill in, and there was an American who'd been arrested for drug smuggling. He didn't have much. He was a small-time guy. He probably just had some hashish with him for personal consumption, but he was caught on the train coming over from Turkey going through Bulgaria. So I went over with the consular assistant, who was a Bulgarian foreign service national of the embassy. We went over to call on this poor fellow at the local prison, and we had a chance to talk with him, not in his dingy cell but in the warden's nice office and so forth. We talked with him and he was a relatively nice young man. At the end of the thing - the point of my story - as we were leaving and driving back to the embassy, this woman - her name was Rumiana - said, "Oh, poor Mr. So-and-So," whatever it was, "He seems like such a nice young fellow. It's just terrible to think of him locked up in that prison with all those dirty, horrible Turks and gypsies." That was her view. Those were the appropriate people to be locked up in prison, and maybe the bulk of the prison population were Turks and gypsies in that prison. Yes, the Bulgarians sort of viewed Turks and gypsies as kind of subhuman. I've never had a Bulgarian official tell me this, but I can kind of imagine from their mind set that they saw the name-change campaign as, one, addressing a possible traitorous fifth column and avoiding a possible situation like happened in Cyprus and, two, that they may have thought they were doing it for the Turks' own good, that by bringing Bulgarian culture to these people, even though they didn't want it, somehow you would be bringing enlightenment to them, that you would be raising them up, and maybe this generation wouldn't understand it but their children would. [A kind of Bulgarian "white man's burden" if you will.] If speaking Turkish was made a finable offense and it could be driven out of society and the kids were forced to speak Bulgarian in school, eventually at some point they would forget Turkish, they would forget their links to Turkish culture and Turkish society, and it would be better for them as well as better for Bulgarians, the country and the society, [these Bulgarian officials may have reasoned for themselves].

Q: But the Turks weren't sort of moving divisions up or anything like that?

CASWELL: No, I never heard that. The name-change campaign was a situation that was of political concern to Turkey. It was all the time in their newspapers. It was an issue that they would try to raise with the Bulgarian authorities. It was an issue which, whenever we met with Turkish diplomats, they were always saying, "Oh, the United States is so wonderful. We really appreciate what you're trying to do in terms of raising these human rights issues," and then compare us favorably with their Western European allies who weren't doing as much on this issue, maybe were kind of two-faced about it, but they really appreciated what was for us a very genuine concern. I think the Bulgarians tended to think, oh, well, the Americans are just using this as a political tool to whip us, it's not really a human rights issue for the Americans. In fact, I think it was a human rights issue for us.

Q: During this time how did we see Bulgaria fitting into the "Soviet threat?"

CASWELL: I used this analogy before of calling the Turks the sort of Calibans of Bulgarian society. I think our view was that the Bulgarians were in effect the Talibans of the Warsaw Pact. Their capabilities were relatively limited, but the Bulgarian leadership seemed to be content to do certain jobs for the Soviets in certain parts of the world, and maybe it was a dirty-work kind of thing, but they were content to do it. They had certain parts of the world that they focused on. The Middle East was one of them, for example. I mentioned before the Bulgarian engineers that would do projects in certain countries. Sometimes I think they did it primarily to make hard currency in the countries that could pay hard currency, like Libya, but other times they would go off and do projects in much poorer places like Mozambique that I'm sure didn't really earn them much of anything. They were doing it for political reasons. I don't think we saw the Bulgarians as major actors in this. Like the East Germans seemed to have a role of going in and training the local secret police in some of these countries, the Bulgarians tended to be more engineers and agronomists and sometimes doctors. They weren't so threatening in that sense. I think our major concern was more what I've alluded to before, unholy alliance that we saw that might be going on, that we believed was going on between the Bulgarian secret police and certain Turkish radicals and underworld characters with a view towards destabilizing Turkey, and that this involved among other things drug smuggling and arms smuggling and the whole question of the Bulgarian involvement in the Papal assassination plot, whether it was real or just a figment of Mehmet Ali Aja's fevered imagination. It was indicative of other things, ugly things, that were going on underneath the surface. There was a Bulgarian company, a trading company, called Kintex that we believed was owned and controlled by the Bulgarian KGB. The Bulgarian KGB was called DS, or Durzhavna Sigurnost. We believed that Kintex, one of the major things that they were involved in was arms trading, and they also seemed to be involved in other sort of luxury goods trading, things like liquor and gold and cigarettes and things like this. So there was a question of somehow guns, drugs, gold, whiskey, these sorts of things, were the kind of currency for a political relationship which existed between the Bulgarian secret police and particularly the Turkish underworld. I think if the Bulgarians were assigned any kind of special responsibility within the Soviet bloc vis-ï¿½-vis NATO, it was probably targeted particularly at Turkey, and perhaps to a lesser degree at Greece. (End of tape)

Just to complete my thought: I think that sort of threat, that kind of underworld threat and relations with Turkish leftist parties, which had been driven underground by the Turkish military regime in the '80s [and which sought the overthrow of the Turkish government], was the real threat of any Bulgarian threat against Turkey. I don't think that the Bulgarian army per se or the Bulgarian navy or air force posed a major threat to Turkish defenses.

Q: How did you find dealing with the Bulgarian embassy, its effectiveness and all?

CASWELL: I think they saw me as a major, if not principal, conduit for their doing business. It's curious. I don't know all of their activities obviously, but from my perception in dealing with them, they had a kind of mind set that, because the American embassy in Sofia is supposed to channel all of its dealings through the American desk at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, then therefore we need to channel all of our operations or at least the bulk of them through the Bulgarian desk at the State Department. So I tended to have regular contact with their ambassador, their DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission), their political officer, and their economics trade people, all of them, and their consular people. It wasn't a big embassy. One of the reciprocity issues, for example, between us was the size of the missions. The Bulgarians wanted to hold down the size of the American presence in Sofia, so at one point before I arrived on the scene the negotiated total was 26 people and that would include secretaries and code clerks and any custodial staff or whatever that you might want to have. And we imposed the same limit on them obviously. Since they didn't hire foreign service nationals, they didn't hire American citizens to work in their embassy the way we would hire Bulgarian citizens to work in our embassy, that was really, 26 was a very low ceiling for them because they had to have their char force (janitors) and everybody would be Bulgarian. So they really had a fairly small embassy and all of them dealt with me quite regularly, and they also liked me or appeared to like me and felt that I understood something about Bulgaria because I had worked and lived in Bulgaria and therefore I was a kind of friend in port, if you will. They knew that I had my job to do and I would say things to them that they wouldn't necessarily like, but I think they also said, "Oh, you understand."

Q: Were there any major things that you got involved with during this time other than sort of dealing with the problems of reciprocity and drugs and that sort of thing?

CASWELL: I think I sort of touched on all of them. I think the things that were satisfying for me in the two years were that we were able to get some dialog and make some progress again on the narcotics front. We had had a period kind of spitting at each other over this question of whether the Bulgarian authorities were turning a blind eye to some smugglers. In effect, when I got back to the desk, that spitting match had pretty much run its course. It had gotten to the point where we had had some cooperation before, then we got into this accusation about what was really going on. We were never able to really prove anything - suspicions were always there - but finally by '85 we were beginning to say, well, maybe there would be still some areas where we could cooperate, and the Bulgarians were, I think, reaching the same conclusion. So in effect while we continued to harbor suspicions and we were looking for the smoking gun, as it were, to try to prove that the Bulgarians were really big-time narcotics smugglers, we were able to reinitiate counter-narcotics cooperation and seizures of illicit drugs transiting once again. So I think that was all to the good.

Through the reciprocity program we were able to make remarkable progress in terms of the ambassador getting to see a lot more high-ranking officials, at the working level we had broader contacts, we were able to get things like a new embassy warehouse and some better apartments and living conditions for our people. That was gratifying.

Personally I felt on the human rights front we didn't end the name-change campaign while I was there but I think we were able to make forceful enough arguments that had contributed to an ending of the name-change campaign a couple years further down the road. I think we convinced them that we really did understand what was going on and that they couldn't pull the wool over our eyes or anybody else's eyes and that it was going to make a different in the bilateral relationships and that, if they wanted certain things from us, they were going to have to end this.[And we did resolve a number of divided family cases favorably as well, which was gratifying, but it was a slow, frustrating process.]

Q: Did you find that the United States was sort of on our own in this campaign? Were the French and the British and the Germans weighing in?

CASWELL: I think they weighed in some. I don't think they weighed in as vigorously and as repeatedly as we did. This was the impression that we had and that the Turks had. I'd say more immediately personally rewarding was that we were able to make some progress, very definite progress, on the divided families list, and after years of no progress, no reunifications, no visitations. In this period '85 though '87, just like we began to see renewed progress on the narcotics, just like we began to see better access and better reciprocity, we were able to actually resolve most of the divided-family cases. I can't remember the exact number but say there were about 20 on the list; I think we resolved 15 or 16 of them. It was just wonderful getting the phone calls and letters of gratitude from the American relatives: "Oh, Mr. Caswell, I thought this was never going to happen. I never thought we were going to get my father out," or whatever. Sometimes they would call back every few months to keep on telling me how much they really appreciated it. It was really nice, to think that this wouldn't have happened if we hadn't made a big issue out of it. I think things like the reciprocity probably contributed to some of this. Obviously it was a calculation on the part of the Bulgarian authorities also, that they might get some benefits if these irritants were removed from the relationship. So I think all of these things were to the good.

Q: Well then, in '87 whither?

CASWELL: Down the hall to become the Portugal desk officer in the Office of West European Affairs.

Q: You were doing that from '87 to '89?

CASWELL: Correct.

Q: I was thinking of the Portuguese desk officer as being the desk officer for the Azores.

CASWELL: In a way that's right, because one of the most important parts of the relationship, certainly from the U.S. government's point of view, was, if you will, the NATO relationship. The NATO relationship involved both Portugal's vote on the North Atlantic Council in the circles of NATO on different issues, and there were a number of them where we were talking about arms control issues with the Warsaw Pact and so forth. The practical, preeminent NATO issue for us with Portugal was access to Lajes air base in the Azores, because the Portuguese armed forces, appropriate to a small country of only about 9,000,000 people, their army, navy and air force weren't particularly formidable military forces. The military contribution that their armed forces could make was fairly modest, but by providing us access to use this base in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, this was a very valuable contribution.

Q: The Portuguese-American relationship was pretty solid, wasn't it?

CASWELL: Yes, absolutely. It was a very different sort of relationship than, say, dealing with the Bulgarians, but in some ways I find a relationship like the U.S.-Portuguese relationship can be more difficult than a relationship like the relationship was with the Bulgarians where there were very low expectations on both sides. In a relationship like the U.S. relationship with Portugal, you could have high expectations on both sides and maybe the expectations were not reciprocal or maybe they weren't always realistic, and so therefore the role of the diplomat in trying to get around disappointments or trying to assuage occasional hurt feelings was more important and tricky in a relationship like that. And that would be, I'd say, the major challenge of the time period when I was on the desk, because essentially from the Portuguese viewpoint they saw the relationship as revolving around Lajes, they saw Lajes as a major asset in which the Americans were interested, they saw it as their contribution to NATO, which is true - we saw it that way also - but they also had a much more of a landlord's viewpoint about the whole thing. "We've got this valuable real estate. We want to get the highest possible rent for it that we possibly can. We like the Americans. The Americans are our allies and so forth, but business is business. In real estate the name of the game is location, location, location, and we have it." Lajes was very important as they would always remind us, specifically they would remind us and they would always remind me about the role that Lajes played, for example, in reinforcing Israel in the 1967 war.

Q: 1973 war.

CASWELL: Or '73 war, right. In '67 the Israelis walked all over the Arabs; they didn't need help. It was the '73 war. So they'd say, "We know this is very strategically important for American interests in the Middle East and in the Persian Gulf. Therefore, you guys should be willing to pay for it." Well, we always tried to finesse that and say, "We're allies, we're all members of NATO. This is your major contribution to NATO, and we're all very happy about this," but then our implication was, "Don't talk to us about the rent." But the Portuguese always did talk about "the rent", and they were always unhappy, in my time period on the desk, with how much we were paying in "rent", and the "rent" was military assistance. They had been pressing earlier on in the Reagan administration for more military assistance, and in the time period of the early '80s military assistance budgets were growing globally, so the administration in that time period was able to, could afford to, provide more in the way of FMS monies - I shouldn't lapse into jargon - Foreign Military Sales loans or grants, and also other monies called ESF, Economic Support Funds, which were in effect a kind of cash transfer from the U.S. Treasury to, in this case, the Portuguese treasury, which could be used for a variety of reasons, more like budgetary support. The ESF weren't to be used for buying guns or fighter aircraft or whatever. There was also IMEX, International Military Education and Training funds. In the early '80s the military assistance trend line was up and it reached sort of a peak for Portugal at, I think, something like 125,000,000 annually, I think about the peak - maybe it was even a little bit more than that, 135,000,000 or 145,000,000, whatever. It got up to that level about 1985, and then what happened was the global budget for security assistance started to go down, so every year we would have these cut throat intramural battles inside the State Department and inside the Pentagon about how you divide up the pie and what are the different competing interests and which country should get how much of what kind of assistance. Well, Portugal started losing out, seeing its total military assistance going down for several years. So by the time I got there in '87 they were quite unhappy and they felt that the Americans in effect had been welshing on understandings that were reached the last time the base agreements were negotiated. I should have mentioned also before that their security assistance funds were going up in the early '80s not only because the global budget had gotten bigger but because we were negotiating a new base agreement. When we reached the base agreement - we signed it, I think, in '84 or '85 - the level that they achieved that year they came to feel was new rent level and that for the life of the agreement, 10 years or whatever it was, seven years, it should stay level. What happened, of course, was, because of shrinking global budgets, it started to go down. The first year it went down a bit and they got angry and they said, "This isn't right. We want more next year." In fact, however, they got even less the next year. So by the time I got on the job in 1989, they were very angry about this thing. They couldn't call to renegotiate the agreement, but there was a provision in the agreement in which either party could call for a review of implementation and how procedures were working out, so they called for a review. It was very clear that they were unhappy and what they wanted was more military assistance, because they had in effect two primary domestic constituencies which had to be addressed. One was the Portuguese military, which saw Lajes as their cash cow to help support the modernization of the Portuguese armed forces. The other constituency was the regional autonomous government of the Azores, which also saw Lajes as their cash cow for money. Although technically speaking ESF money would go to the national treasury, the Azorean government expected that at least a lot of that money would in turn flow back from Lisbon to the Azores to support projects of local interest in the Azores. They had a very influential politician who was in effect the governor of the Azores. His name was Mota Amaral; he was a savvy politician and he had connections. He was a member of the governing party in Portugal, the Social Democratic Party, and he had good connections both in Lisbon and he also made a point of currying connections in the United States through the Azorean community in the United States. Whenever he wanted to call people up in Massachusetts and Rhode Island to ask favors and so forth, he could do it, and he made a point of over the years currying relations. He frequently called Senator Kennedy's office, Senator Pell's office, and we would hear from them, Barney Frank's office, various people, Congressman Gary Studs from - I forget the Congressional district number, but basically it was southeastern Massachusetts. So that was the primary challenge of the two years on the desk, negotiating our way through this review process so that we could come to a happy outcome of the review that would not impact negatively on the operations of the base, and to do that meant fighting a lot of bureaucratic battles over the security assistance project to make sure we got enough money, FMS money, for sales, both credits and loans, soft loans, and at the same time trying to work with our friends in the Pentagon and other agencies to come up with other kinds of assistance in kind in to supplement the dollar figure, inflate and puff up the package in any way that we could. That meant looking at trying to spring used F16s out of the DOD larder, which could make the money go further, and then of course you had the challenge of trying to convince the Portuguese that used F16s were as good as new F16s.

Q: Did you have a problem with the Portuguese whenever sort of a pronouncement would be made - I would imagine Portugal would be one of the last countries to be named on the list - and making sure they were included in trips that people were making or what have you?

CASWELL: It wasn't so much of a problem. I'll tell you what the major problem was, but it's kind of along the same lines as what you're talking about, whether they felt they were taken seriously or not. They had a major blow to their egos and made them feel as though they weren't taken seriously by the fact that when Allen Holmes, who had been a very successful ambassador in the mid-'80s and was the ambassador at the time that the base agreement was negotiated, left there was no immediate successor named. Then when the State Department did name a successor, it was a man named Richard Dietz, who was also, like Allen Holmes, a distinguished career Foreign Service Officer who'd been ambassador in several places before, in Jordan and, I think, Tanzania. I think he'd been a DCM in New Delhi and he'd been ambassador several places. He's a very intelligent man, very articulate man, had silver hair. He really looked the role of ambassador and everything was fine, and they couldn't wait for Richard Viets to show up. What happened was that Richard Viets had earlier on run afoul of Jesse Helms. I can't remember now - I'm not sure I ever knew - all of the twists and turns of the story, but I think Richard Viets became kind of a victim of Jesse Helms' longstanding problems with the State Department. If I remember correctly now, there had been an ambassador who had been named to go to Switzerland, I think - I forget the name of the ambassador - but somehow some questions had arisen - this was a political appointee by the Republicans - some questions had arisen about that political appointee's conduct while ambassador in Switzerland and specifically about abusing some of the facilities, some of the accounts, abusing the use of residence for private purposes or using vehicles for private purposes or something like this. There was a scandal. Or maybe it was the ambassador in Vienna, someplace like that. Jesse Helms felt that the State Department as an institution and the career Foreign Service had hung this political appointee ambassador out to dry and had humiliated this ambassador, and I think in Senator Helms' view this ambassador really hadn't done anything wrong or hadn't done anything that career Foreign Service Officers who had been ambassadors hadn't done. Well, he, through or his staff or whatever, had fortuitously gotten information or tried to dig up information; somehow they came up with information that convinced them that Richard Viets had done many of the same sorts of things in terms of abusing the privileges...

Q: I think he had a disgruntled GSO, General Services Officer, more or less, who was giving this so-called information.

CASWELL: Exactly. Probably it was just fortuitous and Helms got the information from this disgruntled GSO, but whatever, he then basically decided he was going to make an example out of Ambassador Viets and he was going to do anything and everything he could to prevent Ambassador Dietz from being confirmed. He had hearings and sent many questions over to the State Department and asked for documentation, and when he got that documentation, he asked for more documentation. Anyway, he dragged the process out for, I don't know, a year and a half or two years. The Portuguese got angrier and angrier and couldn't understand, or said they couldn't understand, why the State Department couldn't deliver an ambassador to Lisbon. By the time I got to the Desk, the process had been going on for at least year - I think it was about 15 months or so - and they were saying to me, "At first we understood there could be the necessity of having a Senate confirmation and there could be some difficulties and it could take some time, but it's gotten to the point now where we think - now they didn't use the term - 'you don't respect us' - you don't attach enough importance to see to it that this is done. It got to the point where the Portuguese ambassador was just livid about this. They felt that it was part of the problem, that was part of the reason why Portugal wasn't getting the "rent" that it was supposed to get for Lajes. If there were an ambassador with some oomph in Lisbon, he would have seen to it that the security assistance level stayed at that $150,000,000-a-year level, which they, Portugal, felt entitled to. Even though we never felt that we agreed to a specific dollar figure, they felt in their own hearts that this was what it was. So they saw the problem of this being all lumped together. So that was the principal thing that I think kind of fed on a sense of, like Rodney Dangerfield, they didn't get any respect and they saw this as emblematic, so this was another one of the principal challenges.

Finally Ambassador Viets got fed up with the whole process and said, "I don't need this anymore. I don't think I'm ever going to get confirmed. I've answered all the questions they put to me both in writing and orally, and they still have more questions." After all the various attempts by various people including the Secretary of State to try to force this thing, nobody would stand up to Senator Helms and force it, so Viets just resigned. Then suddenly we looked around for someone we could get in as fast as possible, and we in effect "slam-dunked" a man named Edward Rowell, who was at the time ambassador in Bolivia but had formerly been a DCM in Lisbon and was well known to the Portuguese authorities and they liked him. We got Ambassador Rowell quickly into Lisbon, and it improved matters considerably.

Q: Ed Powell is president of our association right now, and there is extensive oral history with him. When did you leave the Portuguese desk?

CASWELL: 1989 and I went to become the Political/Military Affairs Officer in Lisbon.

Q: You did that from '89 to...?

CASWELL: Until '91. I got ill. I developed a chronic kidney disease. When it was diagnosed in early 1991, I got medevaced out of Lisbon and then I ended up losing my medical clearance and never got back except to pack out, so I left quickly in 1991.

Q: When you got to Portugal, were you right back doing exactly what you'd been doing before more or less?

CASWELL: Essentially that was it. I had done a good job as the desk officer, and because the political/military affairs issues were preeminent in the relationship, I probably spent at least two-thirds to three-quarters of my time doing political/military affairs type issues. So it seemed like I was the natural person to fill this job when it came open. I was the embassy's choice and it was just natural, I just went over there to do it. Essentially the principal thing that I was focused on there was to follow up on implementing, carrying out the things that had been agreed during the review process on the base, the review of the base agreement. Well, what had been agreed was a package of military assistance, because all of the issues that the Portuguese had raised about the agreement in their review, as soon as we came up with a military assistance package that they were satisfied with, then they just said, "We can now close the review process. There's nothing else to review. Everything else is just fine." So the job then, from '89 on through, was to make sure that the military assistance package was implemented in a satisfactory fashion, and basically that involved particularly the centerpiece in the assistance package, the F-16 package, and that involved - the old saying 'the devil is in the details' - there were a lot of details in getting the F-16 package implemented. You might have agreement that we're going to finance the transfer of 12 F-16s, but then what kind of widgets and what kind of antennas and what kind of doo-hickeys go on those F-16s, can we afford them within the military aid budget, and how quickly will they be delivered and the training and all of that. Believe me, there were a lot of details, a lot of things that can go wrong, a lot of issues that just have to be ridden herd.

Q: What was your impression of the Portuguese military and their role at this time, because, of course, in '74 or '75 the military had taken over and they were quite concerned about it? How did we see the military then?

CASWELL: Well, they were not politicized by this time period of the late '80s. The officers that had been in the forefront, the politicized officers, if you will, that were very much in the forefront during the revolution in '74-'75 and then the immediate years after that, that were leftist to varying degrees in their political orientation, had all been retired or were gone. They had either been forced out or had gradually reached mandatory retirement age. The succeeding generation basically said, "We don't want to fool around in politics. We leave the governing of the country to politicians. What we want to do is professionalize the armed forces," which for a generation or whatever had been caught up in these colonial wars in malaria-ridden pest holes in Africa and maybe had a lot of conscript soldiers but all of the budget had gone into operations and salaries, so therefore they had either no equipment or antiquated equipment or equipment that didn't work. They didn't really have a contemporary mission anymore, because the old mission had been to keep the colonies and now the colonies are all gone. So they were looking for a new mission. Well, the new mission was going to be NATO and Europe. That was always there, but it was more sort of a lip service mission because the real fighting was down in Africa. Well, now they don't fight that war anymore. The real story is Europe and it is NATO, but "how could we be taken seriously in NATO Europe with our woebegone equipment, and we don't have up-to-date military doctrine and we don't have properly trained people and so forth and so on". So that was the big issue for them, and that meant money first and foremost. Where was the money going to come from and how was the money going to be spent? - two sides of the problem. Okay, in terms of where's the money going to come from, well, Portugal's not a particularly big, rich country. The treasury's not particularly big. They would try to get as much as they could, but they saw the relationship again with the United States through NATO and through Lajes as the way to finance a lot of the modernization. If you can't get it out of Lisbon, get it out of Washington. That's why the Portugese military were such an important constituency for the Lajes base agreement, because they were one of the primary beneficiaries. Secondly, the other issue was how were they going to spend it. A lot of their money, a lot of their budget, had traditionally gone to pay salaries of people and particularly the army - the army was the biggest service and, even worse than that, the army had a lot of antiquated facilities scattered around Portugal. Many times these were old historic buildings. Portugal's a little country that has a lot of history and a lot of past, and it seemed like almost every town, from big cities right down to little itty-bitty villages, seemed to have some local quartel or some army building or sometimes a grandiose building that had at one time been a monastery but then nobody else could keep it up anymore so it fell to the army and now it's the local barracks and is falling down. Well, they had a lot of budget tied up in paying the salaries of an army that couldn't really go anyplace, that wasn't equipped to fight anything, and that was basically sitting around and painting barracks or painting old monasteries, trying to keep up this large inventory of antique infrastructure in effect. They couldn't get rid of it, they didn't want to get rid of it, but it was sucking up all of the money. It's a little bit like the military in this country and all the unwanted bases that they would like to get rid of but the Congressmen won't let them get rid of the bases because they create jobs in the home district. Well, it was that way. So they faced the institutional problem of shedding a lot of that, becoming a smaller, leaner, more professional force that could contribute in a meaningful way to missions within NATO, and to be able to afford to do it, they had to get the revenue but they also had to stop wasting a lot of their money, their scarce money, on a lot of the stuff that they'd traditionally done. And there were a lot of sentimental attachments to the old buildings and the old this and that, and the old practice of conscripting boys from small towns, letting them stay at home and painting the local monastery or whatever, and that's their national service, but it was a waste of time. That was for them the major issue. But outside of those sorts of issues, by the late '80s or early '90s they weren't interested in trying to play politics about who was going to be running the country or anything like that. There wasn't an army candidate for president or anything.

Q: What was the government like there at the time you were there?

CASWELL: Well, the Prime Minister was a man named Anibal Cavaco Silva, who was an economist, a rather dour, very intelligent but not charismatic, not colorful, not a warm and cuddly sort of politician, but he was a respected man. He dominated the Social Democratic Party, which was the one of two principal parties in Portugal by this time. There was still the Portuguese Communist Party and there was a small center-right party, but they weren't really politically significant. They had their set constituencies but they seemed unable to grow beyond that and they weren't major forces anymore. The second major party was the Socialists who were sort of left of center but politely left of center - they weren't radical at all - and that was the party of Mario Soares. The Social Democrats of Cavaco Silva were sort of the Republicans, if you will, of Portuguese politics and more free enterprise oriented and wanted to generally stake out a kind of center-right position kind of like the Republican Party in this country. Anyway, Cavaco Silva was the Prime Minister, and in the Portuguese system the Prime Minister drives things. Mario Soares was President, but the President is more of a chief of state position, doesn't have a lot of power in the day-to-day government, and Soares was content to do a lot of state visits and make everybody feel good, whereas Cavaco Silva was more of a lean, no-nonsense kind of guy, and his major focus was modernizing Portugal which had come into the European Union and was getting a lot of - I forget the exact term but it was economic assistance to help them make the adjustment and to modernize their economy so they could fit in better into the European scheme of things. His whole focus in his time in office was to try to revitalize the Portuguese economy, make a lot of infrastructure investments, try to streamline the laws, and try to modernize Portugal so that it could benefit from having joined the European Community and not just become some sort of a retirement backwater, if you will. As some Portugese observers would put it, they didn't want to become the Florida of Europe, they wanted to become the California of Europe.

Q: And he really was quite successful, wasn't he? Portugal has in the past 10 years, the next 10 years, made considerable progress.

CASWELL: Indeed, I think Cavaco Silva was very successful. He ended up retiring from politics and the Socialists are back in power in Portugal, but I think what he set out to do in terms of modernizing the country and spending wisely this restructuring money, I guess it was called that - I can't remember just now - but Portugal had a really woebegone infrastructure in many ways, their roads and the electric lines, telephone lines, everything, as either nonexistent or terribly antiquated when they entered the European Union. They did not waste a lot of that money that they had gotten from Brussels. I think they invested it wisely in building up the necessary infrastructure so that Portugal could integrate itself with Europe. So I think they've done a good job.

Q: How was the Portuguese-Spanish relationship?

CASWELL: An awkward sort of - I don't want to say testy -but sensitive relationship. One might make the analogy of Canada with the United States where the Canadians are always afraid of being overwhelmed or absorbed into the United States, that their distinctiveness and their difference will somehow get lost and that border disappear and Canada will disappear. It's similar between Portugal and Spain. Portugal's a much smaller economy and much smaller population in comparison with Spain and certainly in that period was much less dynamic.

Q: Spain was really hitting its stride.

CASWELL: Yes, and I think the Portuguese were afraid. Now, on top of that, if you go back to the history, whereas U.S.-Canadian history - well, I guess there was an American invasion or two right during the Revolutionary War and so forth...

Q: 1812 and all that.

CASWELL: But there were certainly were instances of Spanish armies invading Portugal back in the medieval period, and there was a period in which Portugal, because of dynastic issues - the Portugese king was died without any direct heirs and connections between the royal families of Spain and Portugal - there was a period in the late 16th century/early 17th century, about 60 years, when the two countries were merged and Portugal was ruled from Madrid. That period came at the end of Portugal's glory period and the beginning of their decline, and the Portuguese see that period of 60 years as a very black period in their history. Basically Portugal did become a backwater in the Spanish kingdom, and they've always been, as a result of that experience, feeling that, if they ever were absorbed into Spain, their best interests would not be looked after. So historically the Portuguese have conducted their diplomacy always looking overseas for an ally. Initially historically, it was Britain. Today that role is played by the United States, but a kind of an ally, an ultra-marine ally they would call it, to backstop their sovereignty and their independence from Spain, because they're always afraid in the back of their minds that they will be overwhelmed and absorbed by Spain, either by military means in the old days or the current threat is more with this European Union. The northern Europeans just sort of always lump Spain and Portugal together in their minds. The two countries are down there on the end of the peninsula by themselves and, well, isn't it kind of an anachronism thinking of Portugal and Spain as being separate countries. The Portugese were really afraid of these economic forces maybe leading to their ultimate absorption.

Q: Okay, John, why don't we pick this up the next time. We'll have you going back. You had to leave on a medical thing. Where did you go? We'll put it at the end here.

CASWELL: I came back. I got to go back to pack out, but after that I came back and I was essentially without a job and I was looking around, and I found one of my old ambassadors from the time period when I was in Bulgaria, Robert Barry, who had just been made the coordinator for assistance to Eastern Europe. This was the period after the Berlin Wall had come down and we were ginning up economic and political assistance programs to help the new Eastern European democracies make the transition. He recruited me to not work directly in his office but to go over and work on the AID side to help them organize themselves and provide some in-house experience in Eastern European issues in AID, so I went off to work in a new office that was called the Regional Mission for Europe in AID.

Q: And you did that from when to when?

CASWELL: 1991 to 1993.

Q: Okay, we'll pick it up then.

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This is the 31st of October 2000, the first Halloween in the new century, new millennium actually. All right, John, from '91 to '93, were you actually in AID? This was, what, basically dealing with the demise of the Soviets?

CASWELL: Exactly. This was after, of course, the fall of the Berlin Wall, which was in '89, if I remember correctly, and then the situation was that we had new governments coming to office in central and eastern Europe - we used to call it just Eastern Europe - and the West in general - the United States was certainly in the leadership of this - wanted to try to reach out and help these democratically elected government make what is really a very difficult transition both politically and economically and socially from the old command economies and dictatorial styles of government to make transitions to democratic practices, a free-market economy, and help to build up not so much the physical infrastructure, but to provide the kind of know-how and help them set up in effect rule of law and court systems and all the things as well as help them with the privatization problems and making decisions about which industries just need to be scrapped, which could be broken apart and sold off and so forth. Basically there was a tripartite structure to the AID portfolio in this area, and one was democracy building and there was a series of projects in that area. The second was market transition, the transition to free market, and the third could be generally considered to be sort of social assistance, I guess, to help them through the rocky transition period, and a lot of that was a lot of health and nutrition projects and things like that, because the social safety net basically disappeared in all of these countries and so you had a lot of people, the elderly and the young and so forth, who would fall through the cracks.

Q: Can we put this into context? If I recall, during this period the Soviet Union was in the process of dissolution, but actually when you started we're not talking about the Soviet Union. What countries are we talking about?

CASWELL: It was focused on what we called central and eastern Europe, which basically started out as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, which was still a unit at that point, and Bulgaria.

Q: What about Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania?

CASWELL: That came along in the couple of years that I was doing this job, but the original six were the ones that I named. Then after that the seventh one was Albania and then after that came the three Baltic republics which were let go from the crumbling Soviet Union but it was still the Soviet Union. In the time period that I was detailed or assigned as a State Department officer to AID, this period, AID was working together with the State Department to design or beginning to see, well, we're going to have to do something similar for the former republics of the Soviet Union because the Soviet Union was dissolving into the Commonwealth of Independent States, they called it, and obviously most of it focusing on Russia but also programs and so forth in the Ukraine and Kazakstan and the other 'stans' and so forth, Moldova. But in the time period that I was doing this and the original structure was set up, they called it the regional mission for Europe and it really focused on was this area of central and eastern Europe. Then subsequently another office was set up to deal with similar programs in the former Soviet Union.

Q: What was your particular slice of the action? What did they get you for?

CASWELL: What they got me for was basically my, if you will, kind of functional experience, i.e., I was a State Department officer who had worked in the Office of East European Affairs and I knew something about how that office works and more generally how the State Department works, because these programs were very, very closely coordinated with the State Department and AID has a rather different operating culture from the State Department. So they needed some help in terms of facilitating their dialog and coordination with State. They also looked for me to provide them with some area expertise on the Balkans, which is the area where I had worked, and particularly what they were looking for was for someone to in effect set up kind of a country desk operation for them. The way this regional mission in Europe was structured there would be project officers that were, if you will, specialists or focused on designing and administering projects which tried to do specific things, like there would be a privatization project or there would be a series of democracy-building projects and these projects would be deployed or have activities throughout the region from the Baltics down through the Balkans, but they didn't particularly have any expertise or country-specific brief in which they were operating. So these project officers didn't know particularly much about what the project problems were in Bulgaria and how they differed from Czechoslovakia, for example, and they dealt with contractors that were trying to deliver services, technical assistance they called it, which basically was expertise, know-how, in this particular function area whether it was in Bulgaria or whether it was in Czechoslovakia, but they were looking to me to sort of help set up an in-house expertise on the Balkan countries and to work towards developing, if you will, country-specific strategies. Bulgaria's problems are different from Poland's problems, so you would want to deploy a different mix of project resources to address those problems. So our job was to backstop the AID representative's office in the American embassy in the different Balkan countries and provide expertise, guidance, briefing memos, etcetera, to what they called the Assistant Administrator, equivalent to the Assistant Secretary of State, that headed up this regional mission for Europe, a woman named Carol Adelman. So basically they said when I showed up, "Gee, we're glad you are here. Here's your desk. You're responsible for Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia. By the way, Jim Baker is going to Tirana next week, and we're sure that we're going to want to set up programs for Albania. We don't have any files and we don't have any..." Well, they had some piles of information, but it was just sort of over in a corner in some shoebox, this type of thing. They had no desk officers, they had nothing, and they said in effect, "Build us an organization, and after you've built an organization, then try to develop some country-specific strategies. Work together with the project officers to have these resources" - they had the dollars and cents - and try to persuade them what is the right mix of the different projects that they should be doing in the different countries. Of course, Yugoslavia was in the process of self destructing during all of this process. So I went from having in effect three countries to by the time I got through I had Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Yugoslavia, the former republic of Macedonia, so I have five where there had just been Yugoslavia before. Then we had, of course, Bulgaria and Romania that stayed the same, and then we added Albania. So we went from three to eight different country programs. Of course, we had to take down what had been the programs in Yugoslavia which we had been building up, and they just all got frozen, and then those resources then got scattered around different countries. Then, of course, with the ongoing war between Serbia and Croatia, we had to develop quickly a lot of humanitarian assistance - the programs in the former Yugoslavia became in effect all humanitarian assistance, and forget for the short-term the idea of facilitating the transition to market...

Q: In some ways that almost made what you were doing easier, because I'm sure there must have been experts. You know, you have a war, you've got refugees. Essentially we've been dealing with this for a long time.

CASWELL: Well, yes and no. I think a lot of the expertise that we may have now for dealing with some of this stuff was developed in what we were dealing with in the Balkans. But anyway we worked a lot with OFDA, the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, which is a kind of a special operation within AID. Still a lot of things got done on the fly because frequently what would happen would be there would be some horror that would be reported about in the newspapers and then all of a sudden there was this mad scramble of we've got to come up with money to provide some humanitarian assistance for it, and then as soon as the money somehow has been identified, then there is this great Chinese fire drill trying to come up with people, and get people lined up, try to find out which assistance organizations would be in a position to bid for a contract, to be able to deliver specific services, and how fast can they get out there, and so forth.

Q: Let's confine ourselves right now to your Yugoslav time, and then we'll move to the others. This was a developing war. During this time I don't think it came to a conclusion, did it?

CASWELL: No, no, not at all. It started out in effect with, the first thing was, the Serbs sending tanks and so forth up against Slovenia and there was dust up or two there. The Serbs thought initially that they were just going to walk all over the Slovenes and bring them to heel very quickly. It didn't turn out that way, so Serbia-dominated Yugoslavia quickly sort of wrote that off and just said, "That's just too far away. Well, the Slovenes are kind of homogeneous and they are kind of different up there in the mountains and they're not worth a fight, and there aren't any real Serbs that live up there anyway." So the federal Yugoslav army sort of withdrew from that, and Slovenia in effect won independence very quickly. It was a much longer slog with Croatia, and the stakes for the Serbs were much higher there because there were substantial pockets of Serb population within Croatia that had these led to terrible battles like Vukovar and places like this where the place just ended up looking like World War II.

Q: To my mind, looking at this having watched wars, as most people in our generation has, it seemed like it was mainly a bunch of guys sitting around drinking their Slovitz (plum brandy), then going out and killing people.

CASWELL: I guess it helps steady the nerves.

Q: I was not impressed.

CASWELL: But the worst was Bosnia, and Bosnia really came to a head in that time period. Within our government there seemed to be an awful lot of hand-wringing about should we get involved, should we get involved, how much should we get involved; if we get too far out in front, the Europeans won't be doing their share. During the Bush administration there was an awful lot of agonizing about that.

Q: I imagine that, particularly when you're dealing with Serbs and Croats, you would all of a sudden find yourself up against major lobbies. Particularly the Croats are very influential in Chicago and San Francisco and places like that, and Senator Dole had somebody on his staff who was...

CASWELL: ...very, very interested in Kosovo. He still writes about Kosovo today.

Q: What were some of the pressures you were finding on this? Was it just a matter of they need so many cans of beef and we just get them to them?

CASWELL: The major lesson I learned from this project, from my experience in all of this, is... I don't want to belittle it and say it's easy to make a political decision about whether we're going to deliver assistance or we're not going to deliver assistance and how much is it going to be for country X or country Y. That's one level of dealing with the problem, but where I was was much more involved was in preparing briefing papers for the Assistant Administrator who would be going off to meetings that would deal with these sorts of subjects - more it was: Once the decision was made to deliver $20,000,000 of assistance to either provide humanitarian or, trickier still, to support the democratic forces within Serbia who were trying to resist Milosevic and his supporters in this nefarious process, how do you go about doing it: how do you deliver it, how do you make sure that the assistance gets to the people that it should and that it isn't plundered by troops, or that the money is effectively spent, it isn't just siphoned off or it isn't just sitting around not being used? Many times there's a lot of nitty-gritty problems to actually delivering the assistance effectively that aren't readily apparent. It's in a way, I think, easier to say, "Well, yes, we'll find $20,000,000." In effect State would say to AID, "Find $20,000,000 and then deliver the assistance." So first there's the problem of finding the money, because inevitably the money has already been in effect obligated for other projects. So you first have to go through making a decision about identifying where the funds come from and then de-obligating them from their original purpose and then coming up with a useful way to spend the money, and then finding an agent, usually of a relief-delivering organization like World Vision or whatever, that would be in a position or felt it could be in a position to deliver the assistance. Then you have to monitor them and many times help them resolve problems on the ground when they're actually trying to do it. They'd have a pretty good plan but then when they'd come up against trying to deliver the assistance to Albanian Kosovars, in those days, you had to make sure that it doesn't get hijacked by the Serbian authorities. This isn't necessarily that easy to do.

Q: How did you find the basically nongovernmental organizations that give out relief stuff?

CASWELL: That was another interesting revelation. I'd never really had that much experience with it before and never really thought about it, but there's really quite a population of them and the number seem to be growing, at least in the time period that I was associated with this. There seemed to be a growing network, a universe, of groups that wanted to be involved in this process, would in effect bring assets in terms of their people, their expertise in delivering assistance in other countries, their experience, to the table to bid for projects. I think one of the problems that increasingly came to be of concern was to coordinate all of the activities of these different projects, to make sure that we didn't have overlap in one area and things falling through the cracks in another area, and I think this was the major role for the AID representative's office in places like Belgrade. They would work with the UN people, and they would have in effect weekly if not daily meetings - because these situations could be rather fluid - about who's covering this: "We heard about this problem over in this pocket of Bosnia. Somebody needs to go and help those people. Who's going to be in a position to cover it?" Where I was sitting in Washington that wasn't so much a problem that I was dealing with personally, but I was aware that it was becoming increasingly a consuming concern of the people on the ground.

Q: Say, we've got to do something about the Bosnians after the expulsion of some refugees in other places like that. Who was sort of looking and saying, "Okay, Sweden will send so much. Turkey will send so much, and the United States..."?

CASWELL: They would have conferences; usually they would be in Geneva - donor conferences. I wouldn't guess I would go so far as to say 'always convened' but the UN High Commissioner for Refugees offices in Geneva frequently served as a coordinating body for these things, and they would have what they call 'pledging conferences'. But between the formal pledging conferences there would also be, as I said, weekly if not daily meetings on the ground amongst the representatives of these different organizations, and the aid-giving organizations of the United States and the European Union and so forth, that would try to coordinate these with the NGOs (non-governmental organizations) on the ground. The EU, the European Union, had its own coordinating function. Frequently what would happen was we would be in touch with them all the time but they would sort of make up their own minds about what their priorities were and sorted them out internally amongst themselves, and then they would meet with us frequently at meetings in Geneva under the auspices of the UN High Commission for Refugees.

Q: How did you find it as a system? Did it work?

CASWELL: I think it worked, but it was cumbersome, because you had a multitude, a community, of aid donors and then you had another community of aid-delivering non-governmental organizations and then you had, if you will, a rats' nest of problems that had to be sorted out and a lot of different competing priorities and always more needs than resources to go around. So you had a variety of messes, if you will, rats' nests of problems with different priorities and so forth, and then you had to have this group of aid donors get together with this group of aid deliverers to address this group of problems. It was a dynamic process. The problems weren't static; the problems were always evolving, so it was an ongoing process.

Q: In Washington, how about political pressures? Were they saying, "Don't give those Serbs anything but give those Croats a lot," or something like that?

CASWELL: Oh, sure. The political pressures basically derived from the fact that the Serbs early on were identified as the aggressors and the bad guys and the people who would dominate or control the former Yugoslavia. So when things came unraveled, the pressures mounted very quickly to stop all programs and assistance that had been underway, had been designed, for what used to be called Yugoslavia, because everything got funneled through Belgrade, got funneled through the federal Yugoslav authorities, which were dominated by the Serbs. So the first projects were stopped dead early on - we're talking 1991, by the end of 1991, certainly by early 1992 at the latest. Then, as I say, Slovenia wasn't so much a problem because it was over with very quickly, but as the bloodshed and communal violence got worse in Croatia, then there were pressure to aid Croatia. You also have to remember that we agonized in this period about whether to recognize Croatia or not. Were we really in favor of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, or might it make more sense to try to support a working-out of the problems within Yugoslavia? It was the Germans who took the very controversial first step of recognizing an independent Croatia, and a lot of people harkened back to the special relationship between the Germans and the Croatian fascist government during the Second World War as to why there was a special connection between Germany and Croatia.

Q: Apparently Genscher, the German Foreign Minister, made the decision and it's never really been adequately explained.

CASWELL: So then the question is: How do you deliver assistance to a country you don't even recognize? And this was a theme that came up repeatedly. It came up in spades with the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia. While we were very sympathetic to the people in Skopje (the major city in Macedonia) and so forth and wanted to help them and felt that they had just concerns, it was a difficult political decision to decide to recognize Macedonia because of the whole problem with the Greeks being so terribly upset about it. That was an issue that tied NATO up in knots for quite a while. But this was another case of where we were told: "Set up an AID representative's office where there's no American embassy, no bilateral relationship, and work out a program to provide, if you will, depoliticized assistance in a country that we don't have diplomatic relations with." It happened several times in the case of Yugoslavia. We didn't run right out and recognize Bosnia-Herzegovina either initially. So the pressures early on were: don't help the Serbs. Then it was help the good Serbs who are anti-Milosevic through some sort of democracy-building projects, but you can't do it by working with the government authorities, you have to work with private authorities, and provide initially humanitarian assistance in countries like Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - or FYROM as it became known because nobody could call it Macedonia lest we offend the Greeks - and then it expanded out from humanitarian assistance to selected elements that made sense given the situation in each country, from this portfolio of development assistance projects which had been worked up regionwide which we had in our quiver there in Washington. And then eventually embassies came along, the AID representative's office got folded into these embassies, and portfolios and programs were built up.

Q: How did your job work out? It was really dealing with a rats' nest. But you were sort of the Balkan man there, weren't you, the only person who understood some of these esoteric things about Kosovo or the battle of Kosovo or is Macedonia a language. You and I know this because we lived there.

CASWELL: Well yes, but, interestingly enough, parallel to what I'm describing to you as the mess on the ground overseas, if you will, there was another mess that we were trying to grapple with and to be responsive to the State Department in this case, to the White House and Congress and so forth, there was also the internal mess of trying to build up an organization within AID to cope with all this, because the demands were growing exponentially. Your description of me as 'the Balkan expert' implies I could or was able to do absolutely everything entirely by myself. Part of my job was to grow the operation from me and a few shoeboxes full of loose scraps of paper in a corner of an office into an operation with desk officers who would report to me. I was trying to become like a mini office director within this organization. I didn't get to recruit people; AID sort of thrust people on me, and ironically what they tended to come up with were kids that were just out of college. Many times they were political appointees who had had jobs initially in, say, the Bush campaign in Ohio, that were licking stamps or junior advance men setting up rallies or whatever for the Bush campaign, and afterwards they were looking for a job and their reward was, "We'll find you a job over there in AID." So gradually I got several of these kids. I got one Foreign Service Officer/AID type of person, but everybody else essentially was something like this, a 22- or 23-year-old kid right out of college. So my job was to try to train them and to work closely with them and gradually get them going in producing the papers and reading the cables. It's funny: you talk about different cultures in AID and State. One of the most, to me, elemental things or elemental differences I saw: AID people tended not to read cables; and in the State Department an embassy cable, if it's not in a cable it isn't real, it isn't really true, it doesn't really represent the embassy's formally considered opinions and does not form a basis for actions or decisions in Washington if it's not in a cable. In AID they wouldn't even read the cables; they didn't get them, or if they got them, they just sort of threw them in the burn bag. It was incredible. They operated essentially on the basis of sending faxes. There was sort of a nascent ability to send e-mails - it was starting to come along at this point - but for the most part business was done over the telephone - and you can imagine what it was like getting phone calls to Eastern Europe - and over the fax machine, which also depended on getting a phone line out to send a fax off. And it was never really clear, when you got something from the AID representative's office, whether in fact he had cleared it or worked it through with the ambassador or the DCM or whoever, with the authorities on the other end of the line. So I was dealing with a very different kind of corporate culture. I was dealing with developing staff that really didn't know anything about the region, didn't really know much about working within government, and it was all a huge learning experience.

The other thing that was interesting about AID is that it's not as much a hierarchical an organization as the State Department and they tend to make decisions in huge meetings. They will call a meeting and say, "Okay, we're going to talk about the transition-to-democracy projects in country X," and you go to that meeting where somebody's going to present a proposal or whatever, and there will be like 35 people in the meeting, and these meetings will go on and on and on. Many times they would end inconclusively as the participants groped toward a consensus rather than thinking out problems, presenting an options paper to the regional mission director who then chooses option A and then everybody gets clear marching orders and they go out and do it. It was this sort of elephantine, consensual organization which was slow to move. I think the good thing was they consulted everybody and everybody had a hand in shaping these projects, but it was one of the reasons why it was slow to develop these projects. My job in part many times was to inject a note of reality about whether a proposed action makes sense in terms of what I know about this country and what's going on in this country, or would this be politically acceptable either there or here, from what I know. Another part of my job frankly was to improve the coordination at the working level between the AID bureaucracy and the State bureaucracy as well as to improve the coordination between the AID representative's office in the field and Washington. So it was a big organizational mess or challenge as well as humanitarian...

Q: Sometimes when you've got this, you have a distinct mission. At least - let's get away from the democracy stuff; it's just amorphous - but you've got to feed the refugees in Srebrenica. I would think that as you watch this process you could almost get on the phone and say, "Do this," and then cover up afterwards. In other words, it looks like a system you could really actually bypass when the chips are down.

CASWELL: The humanitarians projects kind of were that way, but my work was not entirely humanitarian. We had started so far focusing on the former Yugoslavia, but I had a lot of stuff going on in Albania and Bulgaria and Romania as well.

Q: We'll come back to that, but let's talk about this encouraging democracy in Serbia.

CASWELL: A typical project would be, for instance, there was a group in Serbia - I can't really remember the details - but essentially they got themselves started in developing an independent radio station which was called something like B103 - it was B for Belgrade and then a number after it. Well, through, I guess, personal connections because that's usually the way you get things done in the Balkans, they managed to get a studio and got permission to go on the air. I can't remember all of the details now, but they got themselves started. They at least got a license to have an independent radio station. In these early days - I guess it was just the Milosevic crowd didn't notice that it could be a potential problem or didn't think it would ever grow into anything or whatever - anyway, they got started, and a big part of what we were doing at that point was buying for them equipment and providing them some technical assistance to establish this radio station, get it on the air. I remember we brought over some people like reporters that they had on their staff and people who would be the station manager and so forth, to give them a few insights about how things are done, or how from our experience they might be done, which they could adapt to their local circumstances, and provided them with funding. Then they went out. We didn't tell them what their editorial line-up was supposed to be, but we knew enough what their editorial line-up was going to be and that was why we were supporting them. It would be that sort of thing. We provided aid to some of the early parties and so forth, as I remember. We would provide some democracy-building assistance to some of these parties that were independent of the Socialist Party in Serbia, and this was done through the National Republican Institution, NRI, rather than... Well, we always had to do both, NRI and NDI.

Q: The Republicans and Democrats both had these international democracy-building foundations.

CASWELL: Exactly, and they had these organizations to promote contacts with democratic parties overseas and to help strengthen, in effect, to share some of their expertise about building party organizations and building democracy. AID had contracts with both NRI and NDI. As I recall it, because this was a Republican administration, they had more and bigger contracts with NRI than they did with NDI, but one of the political necessities was to have links with both. We financed these NRI activities in the former Yugoslavia, which did a lot of bringing over party people to visit the United States to see how things operate in the United States and helped them with polling, helped them figure out what are the issues that are on people's minds so they could then run on those issues. There would still be elections from time to time in Serbia, and our job was to try to help those who were opposed to Milosevic.

Q: Was Milosovich seen as the problem?

CASWELL: Yes. Many Milosevic people thought like him and with him, but I think early on he was identified as the dark prince and this wily character who was trying to make the transition from the end of communism. Not being able to justify his career and his continued rule with the old communist dogma, Milosevic began pulling out the nationalist card and playing it in a particularly brutal way to self-aggrandize himself and his coterie of supporters and, in addition to using a nationalist card, unabashed use of corruption and patronage and handing out deals to his buddies, and then of course his buddies would be his supporters to make sure he stayed in power.

Q: How did you view what we were trying to do? Did you feel that it was almost futile to try to do something against a well entrenched, nasty political machine, or was there room to maneuver?

CASWELL: I think we felt that we were trying to do the right thing. I don't think at that point there was a great air of cynicism in the offices where I was working that "Oh, this is doomed failure," and "We're just throwing money down a rat hole." It seemed to be the right thing to do, and there was the hope. In the time period that I was there, we had these international sanctions, and the quality of life of Serbs in Belgrade and in the rest of Serbia was going down. I was not personally involved in it, but there were lots of meetings dealing with the setting up of the international sanctions and reviewing what could be sold and what couldn't be sold to Yugoslavia (Serbia), and so forth and so on. So I think the feeling was that by working to sustain an independent opposition to Milosevic, together with the war dislocations and the costs on the Serbian people associated with the war and sanctions, the costs on many of the Serbian people because of the rampant corruption - some people like Arkan and his ultra-nationalist Serbian thugs were getting real rich and driving around in Mercedes- (end of tape)

I think adding up all of these things, supporting independent opposition, the costs of the sanctions, the costs of the war, we thought that this would erode the popularity of Milosevic and that it sooner rather than later could lead to his downfall. We thought there was enough integrity in the system that he could be voted out. What I think people didn't count on in that early stage in the early '90s was how long it would take. You knew that the opposition was politically divided, that there were personalities that didn't get along in the anti-Milosevic opposition and that this would be a problem, but we didn't understand how much of a problem it was going to be. And I think there wasn't adequate enough understanding of, I guess, the strength of Serbian nationalism and the sense of Serbian victimhood that somehow "We're not understood, we're not respected by the rest of the world. They don't understand that we're standing up and defending the rest of Europe from the Islamic hordes and the threat, that we're standing at the gates and protecting the rest of Europe. They just don't understand it, that we're just the victims, but we'll soldier on because we're Serb." I don't think they understood that because of that the Serbs might withstand deprivations as long as they did and stick with Milosevic just because he was a Serbian nationalist.

Q: As this interview is taking place, Milosevic has been ousted from power just a couple weeks ago, but it's still a little bit dicey what's going to happen there. Did you find from your perspective coming across the problem early on when Yugoslavia started coming apart - Jim Baker was quoted as saying, "We don't have a dog in this fight," but the whole idea was the Europeans were more or less, whatever you want to count for European leadership, were saying, "You Americans stay out now. We're a European Union. This is a European matter. We really should take care of it" - that we were delighted to move away from it, at least in some aspects, and then it turned out the Europeans couldn't get their act together or at least they weren't very decisive. Did you get caught up in this, your work?

CASWELL: Yes, I think from my perspective it worked out the following way. I think politically the Bush administration, as embodied in that remark by Secretary Baker that you quoted, didn't feel that we really wanted to get deeply involved in this mess in the Balkans, and that it was part of Europe - if you want to call it Europe's back yard or whatever - and that the Europeans, especially, I guess, the French and so forth, were chomping for leadership. Well, great, let them do it. We don't want to get out in front and we don't want to take on too much of this stuff. But on the other hand, what would happen was that on the nightly news there would be all these Balkan horrors and you would see these poor pathetic people, refugees, going down these snowy paths with a few ox carts and these terrible stories about these Croatian and Bosnian women being raped by schlegovitz-filled Serbian irregulars, and all the rest of it. And then there would be the political sentiment, I think that you were talking about that before, alluding to, that you just don't sit there, you've got to do something, you've got to do something about this. What happened was in effect AID became the designated doer for the United States, to salve the conscience that 'while we don't want to have American soldiers out there putting their lives on the line, we certainly don't want to have ground troops, we don't want to get out too far involved in this, let the Europeans take the lead, let them put their boys' lives at risk; but we have to do something, so let AID take care of it, let those guys do something and let them find NGO people, humanitarian assistance people; we'll put their people on the ground and put their people's lives at risk in an insecure environment to deliver humanitarian assistance to the poor suffering Bosnian people or Croatian people or, God forbid, somewhere down the line the Kosovar Albanians, and so forth'. So I think what we were trying to do was very difficult. It was not easy to deliver this humanitarian assistance in the security environment which was developing there, and the security environment was as bad as it was because there was little or no American troop presence; and if the Europeans couldn't get their act together, certainly the UN and UN peacekeepers couldn't keep the peace in places like this. So it really compounded the problems, but it also put pressure on AID to deliver the assistance and to do it yesterday.

Q: Were you running into problems of American-supported aid givers being attacked, food or aid being diverted by militias?

CASWELL: There were problems, yes. There definitely were problems.

Q: Were you getting much from our embassy in Belgrade about what was happening?

CASWELL: Oh, Embassy Belgrade reported voluminously on the political situation and their dealings with the Yugoslav government such as it was. There was an AID representative's office in Belgrade, and they did as much as they could sitting in Belgrade to provide guidance and assistance and so forth to people who were trying to deliver the assistance in places like Croatia and Bosnia. After a while, the AID representative was moved from Belgrade to Zagreb and we had an operation there, and then increasingly it was run out of Zagreb, but, yes, I think they did really in a way a heroic job given the circumstances that they had to deal with every day in Belgrade.

Q: Then let's talk a bit about some of the other places you had to deal with. Did Slovenia, because it was separate, did that represent any particular problem?

CASWELL: No, Slovenia, the only problem there was when we opened up an embassy...

Q: In Ljubljana.

CASWELL: ...in Ljubljana. I can't remember the first ambassador's name now. He was a career Foreign Service Officer who was a rather dynamic kind of guy, a hard-charging guy.

Q: I interviewed him. He had been in Saigon; he had been our man inside the embassy when the embassy was attacked in Saigon.

CASWELL: It completely escapes me now, but anyway the problem was that here you had this really hard-charging activist kind of guy who wanted to do a lot of stuff, and the problems of Slovenia were so minute [compared to elsewhere in the Balkans]. I remember one time the man at the time, who was in effect the head of the regional mission for the Bureau went off on, if you will, a fact-finding trip and he went to several different places and, because we were under pressure from this ambassador to open up an Aid rep's office in Slovenia, he decided to go visit Ljubljana. He came back and, sort of chuckling to himself, said, "There are so many really either sad countries or disasters out there, like in Bosnia, and all these humanitarian problems, and you just go up to places like Bucharest and it's just pathetic and you just feel bad, and then you go to Ljubljana. I thought I was going to see Heidi coming around. This is a happy, relatively nice, prosperous sort of place. It's almost Western European in its atmosphere. It's right on the border with Italy and Austria. It's very prosperous. There are no great dislocations, and they were always the most savvy of the Yugoslavs in terms of market economy sense of how to trade and so forth, a fairly open economy, and dislocations in Slovenia were fairly small and fairly manageable, and the local authorities seemed to be fairly well on top of things. They'll always want to have more money and they want to have foreign investment and so forth, but it wasn't a really major issue. So trying to come up with new things that could become a little portfolio, a little privatization program, for Slovenia, mostly to keep the American ambassador happy, was the issue there.

Q: Let's take Macedonia, the former FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) or something, but anyway let's talk about Macedonia.

CASWELL: That was one of these more pathetic situations. Macedonians were basically nice people who were left behind in the rump of Yugoslavia after everybody else had gotten out. They didn't feel any particular kinship towards the Serbs or didn't support the political line that was coming out of Belgrade. They felt that their interests were not well served, and increasingly they thought their best interests would be to move towards independence, but there were a lot of international pressures on them not to declare independence: "If you guys declare independence, we won't recognize you, we won't have anything to do with you," because the Greeks have this incredible sensitivity that, because the northern part of Greece is also called Macedonia dating back to [the days of] Alexander the Great and King Philip of Macedon, which overlaps areas of what are now called Macedonia in Yugoslavia and thMacedonia region of northern Greece. The Greeks rattled on about how "The Yugoslavs had stolen our patrimony, they had stolen our heritage, they had stolen the name..."

Q: They had stolen the flag, too.

CASWELL: "...the symbol of King Philip and so forth and so on." And they see in all this - incredible to me - as the potential threat that someday the Slavic republic of Macedonia would have eyes on an outlet to the sea and will somehow try to overpower and seize northern Greece and take northern Greece away. Given the military realities (Greek membership in NATO) and the social realities, I don't see this possibly happening, but Greeks just raised a terrible ruckus about don't recognize the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia. And of course the Turks made a political issue of it and started arguing within NATO that it was a good thing to recognize the Republic of Macedonia. Just because the Greeks were against it, the Turks were for it, and that made the Greeks all the angrier. So this became very difficult. I think there was a feeling that the poor Macedonians, given the circumstances, really shouldn't be punished by association with the Serbs and would be better off if they were independent, but there were concerns because Macedonia has a mixed population and there are a lot, in addition to the Slavic Macedonians, if you will, there are a lot of ethnic Albanians, and there was a lot of concern about whether an independent Macedonia would then lead the Albanians in Kosovo to agitate for an independent Kosovo from Serbia and that this would really inflame Serb passions and might provoke a more generalized Balkan war in which the Serbs would come down and fight to maintain the integrity of Serbia and retain ownership of the cradle of Serbian civilization in Kosovo and that the Albanians in Macedonia might want to link up with the Kosovar Albanians and might want to link up with the Albanians in Albania proper to form some greater Albania. There were lots of different sort of nightmare scenarios that could be conjured up. So while there was the kind of feeling that the Macedonians were nice guys and they're poorly served being kept within Serbia, but we're on tenterhooks here and Macedonia gets independence, maybe the Greek fears are unfounded, but maybe there could be these other fears of a greater destabilization and, my God, the situation's bad enough in Bosnia already with system overload, we don't need any more. Well, gradually the concerns about the welfare of the Macedonian people overwhelmed the concern that Macedonian independence would be destabilizing, and there was greater confidence that the Macedonian government could stitch together coalitions which could govern sufficiently well that it would hold the country together. Initially again AID was put in the vanguard of all of this because the U.S. government said, "We think maybe someday we will be in a position politically to recognize Macedonian independence, but we're not going to be in a position to do it now. But the Macedonians were creating a fait accompli on the ground. They'd declared independence." The Serbs in Belgrade said, well, they had too much on their hands already dealing with Croatia and dealing with Bosnia, so they in effect let the Macedonians declare independence, maybe thinking that it would be a fiasco and Macedonia would end up coming back to Serbia and asking for readmittance. So the Macedonians had a real big problem with the fact that they're landlocked. Their economy was very weak. They had to trade, in effect, to be able to survive even at the low level that they had been surviving on. The Greeks said, "We're not going to accept any cross-border traffic from Macedonia. We're going to blockade this Macedonian republic." There was no way that they could trade up through Serbia because of the international boycott on Serbia, so their economic situation was very, very constrained. Their economy was very weak and underdeveloped to start out with. It always had been probably the poorest of the Yugoslav republics. So they asked the U.S. to send a mission into Macedonia to survey the situation to try to decide where we could help, what were the great needs, what were the most pressing needs, what were the priority developmental needs, and to come up with a portfolio of projects and then set up an AID representative's office to administer those projects. So AID did that. In effect what we came back with was these guys need absolutely everything, they're really nice people, they know they need a lot of help and will do essentially what our experts tell them to do, they don't have their own agenda, and it would be nice to help them. What they need is a certain amount of food assistance just to keep people fed because they couldn't feed their own people. Secondly, there wasn't that much to privatize in terms of important assets, so privatization projects were not that important, but what they needed was an agricultural assistance program, so there was emphasis put on that. That's basically what we did.

Q: You're old pals with the Bulgarians. They were about the only opening that Macedonia had. Did we sort of pressure or do anything with the Bulgarians to say, "You've got to help here."

CASWELL: They were basically cooperative. Logistically you're right; that's the way we did [support our mission in Macedonia]. Initially we sent people into Macedonia through Sofia and then overland from Embassy Sofia into Macedonia. The food assistance that was brought in had to be brought in that way. The highway links were very, very limited. Initially the AID rep's office was staffed by people coming TDY over from the AID rep's office in Sofia, and then we got an independent person there to work full time. The Bulgarians were not a problem. As a matter of fact - it's funny - Bulgaria had during the Soviet era a reputation for being the nefarious thugs, the handmaidens of the dark side, and they really suppressed their Turkish minority, they had the name-change campaigns, and they would regularly cross words, not swords, but words, with the Yugoslavs over the Macedonian issue. But by the 1990s the democratic governments in Bulgaria were models. These people were model citizens in terms of dealing with minorities and dealing with their neighbors compared to other people in the region. They did not push irridentist claims on Macedonia or anything like that. Bulgaria had a lot of problems with making the transition to market economics and a great reluctance to give up their old, sort of dinosaur, heavy industries that employed a lot of people but produced more pollution than marketable products. They were very reluctant to make that kind of leap. And they had real problems in privatizing their agriculture and they had real problems dealing with their financial system, but on the political side they were not troublesome, not at all.

Q: From your work did you get much involved with Bulgaria?

CASWELL: Yes, episodically. Because of my background and experience and so forth, I would have been interested to try to do more for Bulgaria, but in fact what happened was we had a good AID representative's office in Sofia. They were one of the first ones to open up, and they were rather more self sufficient. They needed less backstopping help than the AID reps in Belgrade, Zagreb, Tirana. We had a very testy man in Bucharest who was all the time on the phone, sending faxes, and had one demand or another. No, in Sofia they basically had a pretty clear idea of what needed to be done, how they wanted to go about tackling it. They came up with a strategy, they could articulate, they could defend. They had a good working relationship between the ambassador and the AID rep. The problems in Bulgaria were that politically the government changed a couple of times. There were weak coalitions. They had a president, but the president was kind of like a German president, a more ceremonial post, and then they had a prime minister who ran the government day to day, and he depended upon a coalition or support in the parliament. Things weren't going well with the economy, so he lost his support, and as they got voted out, actually the socialists, the former communists, got voted back in. They tried to wrestle with the problems of the transition economy, again without biting the bullet about closing down a lot of industries and making unemployment problems worse. Then what happened was the economy just got worse and worse and worse, they became discredited, they got voted out again, the Union of Democratic Forces party came back again. So what you had was a lot of stop, go, stop, go, stop, go. Who's the finance minister today? Is he the same guy who's going to be the finance minister six months from now; he's not the same one that we were dealing with six months before. And people wouldn't stick their neck out. There were problems that way, but it was more a frustration, but all you could was talk with them, encourage them to do the right thing, have a new government come in and invite them to come to Washington for a series of meetings to talk about how we could help you do this and this is what we have to offer. But when circumstances are not right, then things just tended to stagnate, and that's sort of the way Bulgaria was, and Romania was similar, very similar. It was like a revolving-door government, and you'd have different people come in. You had governments come and go, you'd have moments when you could work with these people for drawing up big projects for agriculture or land tenure reform or privatization of industry or whatever, and then three months down the road nobody wants to do anything and they can't do anything with nationwide strikes, there's no electricity. We're cold and in the dark here, it's January, and the coal miners are on strike and they're marching on Bucharest - it was that type of thing. There were also in Romania periodic problems that just never went away, a festering problem with the cultural rights and the political rights of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania. Different governments in Bucharest, some more nationalist on that issue wanted to squash the Hungarians, and others were a little bit more understanding. Sometimes we thought we could work with them and sometimes we couldn't.

Q: You're saying you the AID representative in Bucharest there was difficult to deal with?

CASWELL: Yes, he just was difficult. He was complaining, he was one of the unhappiest men I ever knew. He was just always complaining. He would call up and whine, is what it boiled down to. He just never felt, I think, that he got as much attention from Washington as he deserved or that his projects deserved. I think it was more a personality thing than anything else.

Q: I can't remember. Did you have Hungary or not?

CASWELL: No, personally I did not. In effect the way the office was structured, I was called the Officer in charge of the Southern Tier as opposed to the Balkans. There was a southern tier, there was a northern tier which was composed of Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, and then there was the Baltics office, and that was basically the way we were structured. There was the three of us and then there was a front office in charge of the overall regional mission for Europe, which included also all these project officers who ran their projects, whether it was privatization or democracy building or whatever, regionwide, so we would have to coordinate with them and talk about "How many resources do you have left in your bag of tricks here to do something worthwhile for Albania or whatever?"

Q: What about Albania?

CASWELL: Albania was rather like the situation I described in Macedonia, only it was even more extreme in a way because Secretary of State Jim Baker, I guess seeing a historic opportunity with the downfall of Alia, Ramiz Alia, who had been the deputy to Enver Hoxha. Alia had hung on for a while and then finally his communist regime became so discredited it was fell. There were, I don't want to call it riots in the streets, but everybody sort of went out into the streets and political power was lying there in the streets and it was a new day. Soon after that Jim Baker went off and made a trip to Tirana and visited the emerging authorities in Tirana, all of whom were very gracious to him and basically said, "This place is bankrupt. Nothing works. It had become totally degraded after the failed regimes for 40 years of Enver Hoxha and Ramiz Alia. We're bankrupt. We need help. We don't know what to do. We want to be democratic. We want to be Western. Please help us." Also, many Albanians have a kind of ingratiating feeling toward America. Woodrow Wilson specifically, was kind of like the godfather of the modern Albanian state, because at the Versailles Peace Conference after World War I, Wilson supported the creation of an independent Albanian state when some cynical European powers didn't want to see an independent Albania. They had other ideas of how they were going to divvy up the territory. But Wilson felt the Albanians as a distinct nationality deserved a nation state - they deserved national self-determination. And because Hoxha had been so anti-American, well, if you're anti-Hoxha then you're pro-American, and so they welcomed Jim Baker. He said, these people are wonderful. They sort of like kissed my ring. They sort of hailed me like Alexander the Great. We've got to go in there and help those boys. So the word came down very, very fast through first the Administrator's office and then the Assistant Administrator for Europe: "You've got to do something to help Albania now." The same situation: gather up a few people. They said to me, "What kind of country is Albania?" and I said, "Basically it's an agrarian place. It's not a heavily industrialized country. They historically had some mining industry. But it's tabula rasa (a blank slate) at this point because everything's decrepit and nothing works. Basically I think you could go in there and name your priorities and they will probably do what you want, what you think is best, but you ought to have an agricultural focus. They don't know anything about democracy. You're probably going to want to do some basic civic lessons about how the congress might be set up, how it might be organized, what parties do legitimately and what they don't do, and so forth. And I bet you they're going to have some real problems with things like the financial system, because they never raised taxes, they just financed the government from whatever the economy produced because the government owned everything. I'm sure they have no idea at all about running an open economy, trading with the outside and so forth. They probably need some advisors in basically just telling them how to set up and run the government, especially finances. And so they sent the team off there and, sure enough, they came back with a variety of projects they said that would need to be done, foremost agriculture, which began with the problem of establishing a land titling regime for private farms to replace the defunct old collective farms. The people who lived in the farms just went out and seized the assets and just sort of divvied up the lands themselves but there were no clear titles, so the whole idea of doing a land-tenures projects became a priority. It became clear right off that the first thing they needed to do, because the place was so bankrupt, was they really needed help to organize a finance ministry and organize governmental functions, and so we ended up recruiting an advisor from the Treasury Department who went over there and became kind of like the financial General MacArthur of Albania. He was a young guy, he was like 30-something-or-other, and basically, because nobody else knew what to do, he just told them what to do and set up a finance ministry. So there was a lot of that stuff, but those were the biggest things: agriculture and finance and democracy building.

Q: One of the things I notice a little bit later - I went to Kyrgyzstan - this is '94 - sort of as a consultant on setting up a consular service - but one of the things I've heard about particularly the Soviet Union, the place was just filled with universities, American universities, sending out teams. If they had a project in Wisconsin that dealt with clotted cream, they'd send out clotted cream experts. In other words, they had an awful lot of people who were really only dealing with sort of their projects from their universities and going out and getting American government money in order to do it. Were you running into any of that, or was that happening later on?

CASWELL: You're perfectly right on that. As a matter of fact, earlier on you were asking me about political pressures that we faced and I went on and talked some to that answer, but another thing that jumped into my mind when you asked this question was: Yes, what happened was - and it was an interesting thing again, but before I went to work in AID I never would have guessed that this was the way things operated - with the, if you will, opening up of Central and Eastern Europe and the knowledge that the United States government, Congress, had appropriated a pot of money to help the Eastern Europeans make the transition to democracy and make the transition to the market economy and to help with humanitarian problems, a lot of different organizations, some of them more professional and others less professional, would say, "Hey, there's some money there. We ought to get a piece of that action. We can do some of that." I don't mean to say that they didn't have good intentions in wanting to do this - I think in most cases, probably in nearly all cases, they did have good intentions - but they would come to you and say, "Hey, we can do this kind of assistance," and give you an unsolicited proposal to provide a certain kind of assistance. So I would get calls all of the time, and many times from ethnic American organizations that had some sort of link with the countries we were trying to help, who wanted to do something good back in the old homeland, but not always ethnic. It many times could be from universities. Many times you would get calls from state governments and so forth; governors and so forth would call the Assistant Administrator, that would want to try to encourage AID to offer a contract to "the Agriculture Department from the state university of my state" type of thing. So, yes, this was a form of pressure, if you want to call it that. It certainly in many cases was totally unsolicited. The way it would work would be we in AID would decide, okay, we think we want to do these kinds of projects, and then many times they would write up RFPs, requests for proposals, which would then get advertised in the Journal of Commerce and it would outline and in effect say, "We're looking for contractors that would be able to deliver certain kinds of services and do certain types of things in Central and Eastern Europe. Please submit your proposals by a certain date," and so forth and so on, and provide the address to send this. Well, a lot of what became eventual AID projects may have initiated or got started that way, in soliciting proposals and proposals would come in, and then you'd decide, the project officer overseeing the process, would decide which is the best of the proposals and then negotiate a contract with that particular organization. But sometimes projects would develop out of an unsolicited proposal and sometimes the decisions to accept these unsolicited proposals were purely because the project made so much sense and it was an overwhelming, "Yes, we've got to find money to do this and sign a contract for this proposal." I think in other cases there may have been political favoritism.

Q: Did you get something saying - particularly since you were doing it during an election time, the Clinton-Bush election - saying, "We've got to give the University of Pennsylvania this, because Pennsylvania's a key state"? Did that come up at all?

CASWELL: Not at my level, not anything that's identifiable where I could say, "Yes, I know that that was decided to be contracted with that particular university because they have support from the Republican governor in that state." I do not know any particular ones, but I think that sort of thing was directed more at the Assistant Administrator's office, and I don't doubt that it could happen. It might have been a light touch: "The state university here has really got some cracker-jack people and I think they could really help you out. They're sending their proposal in next week. I hope you give it all due, serious consideration," something like that. When I was working I was working for a Republican administration. For example, they had a big project - I was again not involved in it because they were particularly involved in the privatization activities in Hungary and Hungary was not one of my countries - that was administered by Harvard University. Now, one does not ever think of Harvard University as being a bastion of Republicanism, but Harvard got the contract. So I assume that Harvard had the best proposal.

Q: What about your time, just sort of at the working level. You were saying you had these kids who had been on campaigns. How did they work out? Did they measure up?

CASWELL: No. In some cases, okay; in some cases they were never good. There was one fellow who I specifically was thinking about when I talked about he used to work in the Bush campaign in Ohio. He was a nice kid personally, he had a kind of eager-beaver quality to him, but he just never really worked out. I never really developed a lot of trust in assigning him projects and knowing they would be done well. He could do certain things extremely well. For instance, So-and-So from Bulgaria is coming and we need to set up a program for him so that he can touch bases with these different project officers and have a worthwhile program; or the Assistant Administrator is going to be making a trip to Bulgaria, and you work together with the AID rep's office in Sofia and work up a program for her which we're going to put as part of her briefing memo. That kind of thing he was great at, but in terms of really doing a good briefing with talking points, never, never. He was kind of like - sometimes, if you ever read these stories, they talk about teachers in the public school system and how under the old system there was never really any good accountability. If a teacher didn't work out the teacher was never sacked for cause, and they never purged from the system. They found a way to get rid of her in one school because she wasn't any good, and she ended up the next year in a different school in the same system She'd work in that school for a few years, and then she'd turn up at yet another school, and that process is called the "dance of the lemons." Some of these kids ended up in their own kind of "dance of the lemons." They would work in a job for a few months and then you'd find a way to get rid of them. This one guy, he danced through my office twice. "I don't want him, you've got him, you've got to find some place for him." But then, in fairness, we had some other kids that worked out very well. The last young lady that I had on Albania was really bright, a graduate of Stanford, sharp; she was as good as any junior FSO I had seen. She took my advice in training, she picked things up very fast, she was great. Then there were some other kids that were sort of in between, that definitely made progress, improved over time. Then I also had a couple of older women officers who had been in AID for a number of years and had drifted into this. Like anybody else, they had strengths and they had weakness, and you had to sort of learn to adjust for those. But, except for this one gal that eventually we got on to Albania, I never really had the feeling like I had a really steady, competent person that I could trust his or her judgment and I knew they would get a first-rate product done. I ended up doing a lot of editing, a lot of rewriting, and a lot of more intensely hands-on stuff, doing desk officer work than I had hoped would be the case.

Q: By the time you left - you were watching AID, of course, really basically in dealing with unfamiliar territory, so it's not a fair judgment - but did you get any feel for the AID as an instrument? Was it doing good, do you think, or was it sort of throwing projects at things? This is sometimes the feeling one gets from AID all over.

CASWELL: I guess I'd say AID, in the time period I was there, did do some good. I think some projects did make some contributions, but it was a spotty thing. Their modus operandi essentially was one of sort of throwing projects at countries. We would like to think that it was a little bit more selective than just sort of throwing spitballs at the wall and some of them stick on the wall and some of them don't. Part of my task there was try to make sure there was some degree of fit between the projects and what the project brought to bear and the country and what the country really needed. But there was also a certain amount of inflexibility. The project was set up, the contract was written with NDI or whatever or whoever was the contractor, and that contractor could do certain things, and might hire a person that was good in one country and less good in another country. For instance, from what I could tell- (end of tape)

If we had been able to place some influential people [as policy advisors] in all of the governments in Central and Eastern Europe, we would have been much further ahead in the game, but the circumstances in each country are not the same. So it maybe was not realistic to expect that we could have as much impact through say a financial advisor in every country. That would be criticizing AID for trying, and it isn't to say that AID had a flawed approach; it's just that circumstances in the different countries were different, and some governments were more receptive. I guess what I'm giving is a long round-about answer to say that, yes, we developed a portfolio of projects that were really designed with no one single country in mind, contracts were let out, and then once you did that, there was maybe some flexibility, but there were also limits to the flexibility of how well you could tailor each project to deal with the circumstances in these different countries. So you would try to make an effort to match the resources that you had for the needs in the country and try to marry them up, and sometimes it clicked and sometimes it didn't. But in general, I think the other thing that AID was essentially doing was providing experts. The Eastern Europeans wanted bags of money; they would say, "Are you going to do help us? Give us billions of dollars and we'll spend the money the way we want to spend it. Don't give me some retired banker to tell me how to set up our banking system. We can do that. I'll listen to what he has to say. I'll do 25 percent of it and I'll ignore 75 percent of it." I think there was a real need for technical assistance, what AID calls technical assistance, telling people how to do things, but there was a limited degree - and it varied from country to country - of willingness on the part of the recipients to accept that, and kind of a wondering about, "Why do we have to do take your advice? Why don't you just give us money and we'll hire an advisor that we want to hire?" So AID assistance was tied to American sources, and it was tied to people telling the Eastern Europeans what to do as opposed to giving them money to finance it. Every government wanted to have balance-of-payments assistance, cash transfers, but frankly Congress didn't want to do much of that. Congress was hoping that we could get the most bang for a buck by providing this assistance in the form of people.

Q: Did you have a counterpart in the central tier or the northern tier?

CASWELL: Yes.

Q: Was there much time to sort of consult and share experiences, or were you pretty much on your own?

CASWELL: There were opportunities in the sense that we faced similar sorts of problems, our offices were just down the hall from each other. We would sometimes be sitting in similar meetings, like there might be a meeting to discuss privatization projects regionwide, and I would be there, the gal who headed up the northern tier also would be there, the gal who headed up the Baltics office would be there, along with all the people from the different privatization projects as well as representatives from the front office. So we would be in meetings and sometimes we would exchange observations or experiences, but basically it was a very frantic sort of existence. It was kind of like the Chinese fire drill of the day. You were so caught up with putting out fires in your own area that you didn't have a whole lot of time to do commiserate with your colleague three doors down, who had her own headaches, what was going on in Poland or Slovakia or whatever.

Q: So in '93 you left this. Whither?

CASWELL: Correct, my tour in AID was up after two years. It was a great learning experience, but I also felt professionally I needed to do get back into - while I got nice efficiency reports written on me by the AID people and the reviewing statements by people from the... Actually I didn't mention in this whole process that there was the Office of the Coordinator for Eastern European Assistance which was the sort of State Department equivalent office to the AID regional Mission for Europe. The whole East European assistance effort was under the political supervision oDeputy Secretary Eagleburger. The State Department action office was headed by Ambassador Robert Barry, who actually had been the second ambassador that I worked for in Bulgaria. He was part of the reason why I got into this job in the first place, because Barry was, if you will, kind of like the day-to-day political direction for this AID effort in Central and Eastern Europe, the Washington-side political direction for it. So Barry was the counterpart to the American ambassadors in these countries. When he heard that I was available and looking for a job because I had been curtailed in Portugal, he said, "Well, you know we're not coordinating as well with AID as I would like to do see, and I think somebody like you could help this process out a lot."So he talked me into taking the job. Anyway, I did the job for two years and I thought that was good enough and it was time to do get back into a regular State Department position, so I went off to become the Deputy Director in the Office of Brazilian Affairs in 1993, which in the time period I did the job it went on to become the Office of Brazilian and Southern Cone Affairs after they had an amalgamation of two different offices. But going back to do Brazilian Affairs was in effect kind of completing a circle because I had started out in Brazil back in the mid-'70s.

Q: You were there '93 to when?

CASWELL: '95 as the Deputy Director for Brazil and Southern Cone.

Q: Well, when you got to Brazil, what was the situation?

CASWELL: Brazil was emerging from a period that was known as the lost decade, which referred to essentially the 1980s when Brazil really got hammered very badly in the financial crisis that rocked Latin America. It started out initially in Mexico but then it spread. Brazil has developed itself over the years in a very inward-looking, autarchic sort of country and economy. In part I think it's because it's a country of continental proportions and they always felt that the internal market is the important thing: "We have virtually all the natural resources that we need, except for oil, in a big way, and we can pretty much develop the way we want to do develop. We don't have to do adjust ourselves to do international market realities or whatever." Their sense of isolation was also, I think, encouraged by the fact that they spoke Portuguese [rather than Spanish like the rest of South America]. They had a very strong sense of their own identity, their own uniqueness, and dating back in the 1950s they decided the way to develop economically was through import substitution. They decided early on, for instance, that a strategic industry to develop would be the motor industry, the automotive and trucking industry. As the country initially developed it would satisfy its transport needs by importing cars and trucks from the United States or from Europe, and then they said, "Well, if we're going to really get into the big leagues and fully develop and so forth, we need to have our own automotive and trucking industry. How do we build this industry when it's cheaper to import the cars and truck from overseas?" Well, the way you do it is you put up high tariff walls that will make it very expensive to import cars and trucks into Brazil, and at the same time you encourage the foreign manufacturers to build their own factories in Brazil to serve the Brazilian market. Thus Brazil would encourage foreign investment or, what came to do be even more typical of Brazil, they created state-owned companies in order to access the capital you need to build the factories or whatever, you create "a national champion", if you will, that can compete with the big foreign companies and can raise the capital to build a factory to do whatever, make steel. That was the way they developed the steel industry. They created a national steel company and that went and built the steel mills, but to allow that industry to develop and to reach its potential, you had to have very high tariff walls because initially these infant industries couldn't compete on a price basis with imported steel or imported cars or whatever. So then you create this industry. But then there's the classic problem of the infant industry which doesn't want to do grow up. It's very comfortable behind the high tariff walls, it never develops the efficiency required to compete internationally, so it can't export, and furthermore it produces sort of an inferior-quality product at a higher price because it's been protected from international competition. These industries become very politically influential. If the government ever thought about lowering the tariff, they would scream bloody murder and say, "You can't do that, you can't throw us out of business, you can't sacrifice the national interest." So they had a whole economic model that developed over the years that basically was a hothouse economy that couldn't really effectively compete and remained dependent upon new infusions of cash either in forms of investment or in the form of loans. Increasingly over the years the bulk of how capital came was in the form of loans and Brazil became more and more indebted, [but couldn't export enough to earn the foreign currency to pay back all the foreign loans].

Q: These would be loans from abroad.

CASWELL: Right, exactly, to finance the development of Brazil, but then once you got the development, it wasn't really world class, it wasn't really efficient, so it couldn't really pay for itself. Then when the financial crisis hit in 1980 in a big way, the so-called Brazilian economic miracle of the late '60s and '70s started looking very hollow indeed, and the Brazilian economy just really went into a stagflation spiral for over a decade. Well, they were just sort of emerging from this and beginning to engage in some soul searching about this economic model which they had been following and did it really work. As I said, they had a recession, prolonged recession, high unemployment; their government finances were in a terrible mess; they were amongst the world champions in inflation year in and year out; they got to do a point in about '93, I guess it was, when the inflation rate was just about 5000 percent per annum.

Q: How can a person survive under that? I'm thinking about I get a salary or a pension, and all of a sudden essentially you have no money.

CASWELL: What happened basically was that - how can I put it? - unsophisticated people who lived from paycheck to paycheck, the poor and the downtrodden - there are people in Brazil who are so poor they don't have paychecks - they continued to do scratch out some kind of existence outside the money economy either in the countryside or begging or thieving or selling small items in the streets of the cities or picking their way through garbage dumps and so forth; but the people who got hammered the worst by the inflation were the people who essentially did get some sort of money pay but who lacked the sophistication to take advantage of developments in the Brazilian financial industry which were set up to try to protect people from the scourge of inflation. Brazilians are rather sophisticated in many ways, and the financial and banking industry became adept at learning to live with high inflation rates by putting in - the phrase they used for it - 'monetary correction.' In effect they indexed the economy for inflation. They didn't try to end inflation. The government in effect said either, "Well, inflation can be benign," and/or "It's impossible for us to fully eradicate it, so what we need to do is develop a mechanism to make it possible to live with the beast." So they worked out an index for measuring how much the cost of living increased from month to do month, and as a matter of fact, in later days the monetary-correction index came down to day by day, but I think initially it was month by month. Then every price in the country, or virtually everything in the country, was allowed to do go up by that index. It would be adjusted monthly. So, say, you were paid 1000 cruzeiros a month when monetary correction was introduced, then once that happened your monthly salary at 1000 cruzeiros every month would be adjusted according to do the inflation rate of the previous month. So, say, the inflation rate the previous month was 10 percent, your 1000-cruzero salary the next month wouldn't be 1000 cruzeiros, it would 1100 cruzeiros. So if this happens and the adjustments were made frequently enough - your bank accounts also had monetary correction; it would pay interest plus monetary correction - if you had your salary and your bank account and enough things around had this index in place to protect you, like a full COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) in effect, you could be protected to a substantial extent from the inflation. Another thing that people who had money would do, obviously they wouldn't keep their money in cruzeiros sitting around, they would either go out and buy land or some other asset which they thought would appreciate as fast or faster than inflation, or they would get it out into dollars. I can't remember exactly when it happened, but it became allowable - it wasn't necessarily ever encouraged, but it certainly became legal - to do have dollar bank accounts with Brazilian banks in Brazil. You didn't even have to do move the money out of the country. So people in the middle classes and the upper classes, the monied classes, could protect themselves from this inflation. It was the working poor, if you will, who really bore the brunt. Since they are politically inarticulate and didn't really call the shots or could not bring to bear their voting power in a significant way in the way Brazil was governed, it was a fine system. The people who mattered, who had political power, could protect themselves from inflation, and the other people just got screwed. Well, they're just maids anyway - who cares? - or taxicab drivers or whatever. So the more you'd gotten into this inflationary situation, of course, obviously as soon as you get your pay, if you were a person of modest means, you went right to the grocery store, bought up a month's worth of groceries and necessities right then and there before the price could go up anymore. Then also sophisticated people would keep their money in interest-bearing checking accounts - this was another thing that they would do - and you would never hold cash. By the early '90s you would never walk around with cash in your pocket because it was losing value as you walked down the street. If you had a checking account, you kept all your money in the interest-bearing-plus-monetary-correction checking account. If you walk into a drugstore to buy some medicine, you write out a check. If you walk even into McDonald's and you buy a hamburger, you write out a check. Then what happened was, part of this Brazilian flair for creative financing, your salary doesn't go far enough, say you want to do buy a hamburger today, October 31st, write out your check but you date it November 10th so it won't be cashed till November 10th. So in effect Brazilians were floating loans by back-dating checks. So that's how people survived. Anyway, getting back to do your question of where we were with Brazil in this period of the '80s and the '90s, Brazil was very isolated in its thinking, very inward looking, and did not have a very good relationship with the United States ever since the period of Carter when he criticized Brazil so sharply on human rights and even sent his wife Rosalynn down to do lecture the Brazilian generals on human rights. This was kind of the ultimate insult to the Brazilian generals, to do be lectured by a woman about how to do govern their country and how to respect the human rights of the Brazilian people. President Carter's other major concern about Brazil was their burgeoning nuclear industry and what we felt were ill-conceived and ill-concealed attempts to do get the bomb, [the ability to do build nuclear weapons, as part of Brazil's drive for grandeur - a bigger international role]. U.S.-Brazilian relations had not been good for some time. As a matter of fact, they had been rather testy.

When they ran into their financial problems and were having to renegotiate the terms of their debt, who were they negotiating with? American banks, it was largely American banks in the go-go days of the 1970s that lent them an awful lot of money. So there were a series of irritants in our relationship with Brazil over nuclear issues, over human rights issues, over economics issues, and just a general sense of rivalry, and over technology issues. Brazilians always had a concept that technology should be a free good and, even though technology may be developed other places at considerable cost, Brazil felt it should be available to the developing countries free or at a preferential rate. "We shouldn't have to respect patents and licenses, because they are barriers to our development." Well, there were a lot of these irritants, and in 1993 we were seeing a beginning of a rethinking in Brazil, particularly about economics issues and whether it made sense to have such a state-run economy, have an economy that cuts itself off from the world. "Maybe we ought to open things up a little bit more. Maybe we ought to do try to encourage more foreign investment, encourage more trade," that this is the way to develop the country and benefit the Brazilian people. This sort of thinking in particular was centered around a man named Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who at the time came to be finance minister in the Brazilian government in the administration of a man named Itamar Franco, who had come to the presidency after the total disgrace of his predecessor, who was one of the most corrupt in a long history of corrupt Brazilian politicians - Fernando Collor de Mello. This guy was a thief of staggering proportions, even to the point that he was impeached, the only Brazilian president who was ever actually impeached for crimes and malfeasance. Actually at the last minute he resigned before they could bring the vote of impeachment, but in effect he was impeached. Itamar Franco, who was this sort of nonentity of a provincial politician, was his vice president, and thus became president. He was a not-very-impressive president, and he'd gone through about six or seven finance ministers in under two years, things were going so badly. The one decent thing that he did in his entire administration was he had the wit somehow to ask Cardoso, who had been his foreign minister and was doing a good job there and was also trying to get Brazil to open up and become less isolationist and be more attuned to the West. Franco had the wit to say, "You're doing a good job as foreign minister, but I think you could help me out more as my finance minister." Under Cardoso's finance minister they developed this thing called the Real Plan which was a currency reform together with changes in finance to do stop the inflation, which was wildly successful, stopped inflation dead. He pursued a whole bunch of programs that started in the Franco administration of lowering tariffs, improving conditions for foreign investment, and it provided a real opening. In effect the success of it led to Cardoso's election as president of Brazil. Cardoso was unusual among Brazilian politicians in that he was a very cosmopolitan, sophisticated guy who had read a lot, thought a lot, written a lot - he was originally a professor - and traveled a lot in the world, lived overseas when he in effect went into self exile during the Brazilian military regime. He had a vision for Brazil that was not a Brazil challenging the West or acting in an outrageous manner in effect or ignoring the West, but was trying to do get into the international affairs and playing like the big boys and being responsible and following policies that would open Brazil both economically and intellectually to the rest of the world. So it provided a real opportunity for us to begin to do work on some of these issues that had been festering in Brazil for 20 years.

Q: From your perspective you had, I think, an Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs who was a Brazilian type...

CASWELL: Alexander Watson, yes.

Q: ...whom I've interviewed. He had a real feel for Brazil.

CASWELL: Exactly, and the Brazilians were certainly aware of that, and I think it gave them a feeling that he was a friend in court and maybe Washington was going to understand Brazil a little bit better than maybe had been the case in the past. He certainly was a friend of Brazil. I don't think that's to do say that other Assistant Secretaries of State were hostile to Brazil. Basically it wasn't so much that Alex Watson came in or that I came in - I knew Brazil, too - but things were changing in Brazil and the old ways of doing things, doing business, and some of the old nationalist goals were becoming discredited within Brazil and were sort of falling of their own weight, and there was a new approach and a new openness in Brazil to working with the United States and other Western partners, to working with its neighbors. It used to be traditionally that Brazil and Argentina would be great rivals, rivals to control or provide leadership of South America. And their militaries - you'd go to their war colleges and they would have studies and plans and so forth. The hypothetical enemy [in Brazilian war plans would always be Argentina and vice versa]. The Argentines would think that the Brazilians would send tanks across and attack Argentina, and the Brazilians would think the Argentines were going to attack Brazil, and this is what their war plans were based on. That's part of the reason they wanted to have the bomb. The bomb was both to gain access to do something like the Security Council because the permanent members of the Security Council all had nuclear weapons, but it also was to do intimidate the Argentines, and of course we and the Brazilians know the Argentines had a program to do develop the bomb, too. It was mostly for prestige, the military rivalries and so forth. Well, anyway, one of the good things Collor de Mello did before he got run out of office was he quashed, he ended, the Brazilian military nuclear program, and he poured cement down the core that they had dug supposedly for underground nuclear tests someday, and Carlos Menem did the same thing in Argentina, and started to develop a rapprochement between Argentina and Brazil which finally culminated in something called the Common Market of the South - the Spanish acronym is Mercosur; in Brazil it's called Mercosul - but it was also emblematic of this opening up of the economies and working in tandem with...

Q: We were having the North American Trade Agreement - both under the Bush and then the Clinton administration - and Mexico was included in it.

CASWELL: Brazilian nationalists would say that long-term one of their goals with Mercosul is to challenge NAFTA and to make sure that NAFTA doesn't expand into a hemispheric-wide thing in which the rules are all rigged just to favor the United States. Acting individually Brazil would have no negotiating leverage whatsoever versus Washington. Much better in this view would be to develop a counter-weight in Mercosul or Mercosur and then negotiate rules with NAFTA which would then result in a free trade area of the Americas which is more mutually beneficial for us all. Certainly there was that current of thinking within Itamaraty, which is the Brazilian foreign ministry. I think that part of the reason was also Brazil sought to establish a meaningful partnership with Argentina. We're a major trading partner with Argentina, Argentina is a major training partner for us; together we can do better for our people than we can hiding behind our high tariff barriers just focusing on the national market. It's part of that same rethinking of the old discredited model that I was belaboring before.

Q: What role were we playing in this, '93 to do '95, as things were changing? Were we pushing for anything?

CASWELL: We were encouraging them all along to lower their tariffs, to open their economy more, to do trade and to do investment, but particular concerns we had that I was charged with overseeing fell more into I guess you'd say the national security area. Brazil had been a difficult country and in some ways - the term's overused - rogue country, a problem country, on things like non-proliferation issues and science and technology issues, arms transfer issues, political-military issues in general, and it affected things that we wanted to do, for instance, with Brazil in the science and technology area. By '93 through '95, because Collor de Mello had scotched the Brazilian nuclear weapons program, there weren't such terribly great concerns that Brazil itself was going to really develop the bomb, but we really wanted them to enter into a nexus of international agreements which would consolidate this non-proliferation progress and will make it more difficult if not impossible for Brazil in the future to backtrack from this sort of thing, because who knows what will happen in the future in Brazil. Maybe there'll be another military regime which will decide they want to do take up the process again. So we were after them to ratify a treaty called the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Tlatelolco is a suburb or district of Mexico City and there was a treaty signed there back in the late '60s that in effect made Latin American a nuclear-weapons-free zone. Brazil and Argentina had always refused to sign that treaty. We wanted them to do adopt full-scope nuclear safeguards with the International Atomic Energy Agency. This was something else they had rejected because they didn't want to have IAEA inspectors poking around Brazilian nuclear facilities with a free license in effect. They would allow some access, but very controlled, circumscribed access. And so there had always been concern about what was really going on at some of these facilities. As a matter of fact, in the period '93-'94 there was still some concern that, even though Collor de Mello had formally ended the nuclear weapons project, there was concern that there were certain officers within the Brazilian military doing their own thing, pursuing activities that might possibly be of proliferation concern. There might be some potential. But if Brazil would adopt full-scope nuclear safeguards, rogue activities would be much harder to carry on without being discovered. Brazil also had a ballistic missile development program which again dated back to the military period, and it was always supposed that they wanted to have a delivery vehicle to deliver a Brazilian nuclear weapon or deterrent. After the end of the weapons program, the missile program continued under the new heading; it was to do be a space launch vehicle. It got wrapped up in the Brazilian sense of grandeur, which is very strong in the Brazilian military but also in their science and technology communities. It was felt that Brazil can do some world-class, or significant science if not quite world class, and that Brazil has certain natural advantages because of its geographic location for getting into the satellite launch business, because if you launch your satellite from close to the equator, you benefit from the rotation of the earth. In effect the closer to the equator, the rotation is faster; the further away from the equator you go, the slower it is. So you can launch a bigger payload into earth orbit if you do so from near the equator than if you do it from further south or further north in latitude. And so they felt they would justify their space launch vehicle program by saying, "Well, we can get into this business, and we're close enough to do it we want to proceed." Well, our government and to some degree also the Europeans and Japanese shared some of our concern that the technology that could be used to launch a satellite could also be the same technology that could be used to launch a warhead on a ballistic missile, not that Brazil would necessarily get into the business of developing ballistic missiles and selling them to do other countries, but if Brazil had that capability, a future Brazilian government might choose to do that. Or another alternate scenario might be that the technology would not be licensed by the Brazilian government but surreptitiously it would leak out and get to do a rogue state like Iraq or North Korea or whatever, because of corruption. A military officer who had access to the blueprints or whatever, for personal benefit might sell those to somebody. So we were very keen on getting Brazil to adhere to a thing called the MTCR, the Missile Technology Control Regime, in which governments of countries who possess missile technology control its dissemination, control its export. The Brazilians had never wanted to accept the controls and restrictions that were associated with MTCR and at the same time they were always trying to evade MTCR controls in order to buy missile technology which Brazil lacked. So if they couldn't buy the missile technology from the United States that they would like to incorporate into their own space launch vehicle, they would try to buy similar missile technology from the Russians or from the Germans through cut-outs in third countries or whatever. So we were trying through all of these things to get Brazil to adopt non-proliferation controls and to say they will abide by the rules of the MTCR so that they won't get access to nuclear weapons technology or to ballistic missile technology and to set an example for other countries that had also yet to adopt those rules.

So non-proliferation was a big foreign policy issue in the United States, and Brazil had been in effect on the side of the devil for a number of years. Many countries would turn around say, "Well, the Brazilians haven't adopted the restrictions. Why should be adopt this type of thing?" Well, if we could get the Brazilians on the side of the angels, it would be a major foreign policy achievement. My office asked, "Why would the Brazilians do this? What have we got to offer to them as an inducement?" Our inducement was, "The U.S. would like to cooperate with you in a number of scientific and technological endeavors, and if we could find areas where we could work together, our nuclear community could work with the Brazilian nuclear community in terms of generation of nuclear power for peaceful uses. Our space community, NASA, had a strong interest in working with the Brazilians on certain scientific projects for two reasons: one, because the Brazilians had a pretty significant scientific community of their own; and two, because of where Brazil sits and because of the big chunk of the globe that Brazilian territory represents. A lot of the sort of science that NASA does nowadays is using space as a platform to do look back at earth, checking for things like global warming and so forth. Well, you have to have a satellite up there doing it but you also have to have ground stations to work with the satellite, and if you could have access to Brazilian territory, it was a good thing. Well, the Brazilian scientific community was very keen to work with NASA because that was like the seal of Good Housekeeping approval, that they were legitimate, they were worthwhile, they were world class, they were players, they were at the table. So we basically dangled NASA cooperation and to some degree nuclear cooperation and offered to reduce restrictions on things like sales of supercomputers and things like this to Brazil if they would play ball on a number of these nonproliferation issues. What happened was it was a great success story. During this period - and it began when I was Deputy Director in the office and continued the three years that I was in Brasilia - they basically did everything that we asked, right up through ratifying a nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) in 1998. This was something that they had refused to do for years. They would go on and on and on at the UN and international conferences. They were as rabidly opposed to the MCTR as India was and Pakistan. To turn Brazil around and get Brazil to sign these accords, to ratify them, to become an advocate of non-proliferation was a major change.

Q: Was this a new generation coming on the scene?

CASWELL: Absolutely. It would be a simplification to do say it was all Fernando Henrique Cardoso. He embodied it, but it was a generational change in terms of the people who ran Brazil and Brazilian institutions. The Brazilian Foreign Minister during this period, Luis Lampreia, was much more Western oriented and attuned than Brazilian foreign ministers...

Q: Prior to this the Brazilians have always been considered to do have one of the most professional foreign services, but at the same time, when one looks behind that, it's been essentially not structured as foreign service. It's all defensive, not very positive. They can be well versed in how to stop something from happening.

CASWELL: I think because it grew out of a tradition dating back to the Baron of Rio Branco and Rui Barboza, who were the great figures of Brazilian diplomacy at the turn of the century- (end of tape)

As I was saying, the Brazilian diplomatic tradition dates back to do the period when Brazil was, although territorially large, in international terms a small, weak country of the periphery which felt excluded from the circles of power and vulnerable, if you will. It was big in terms of territory, but it had a relatively small population base. Its economy was agrarian and depended on natural resources, and they felt as though they were not players in the international circles that counted and in that international system, in a world in which there were big powers, they could be in effect manipulated or victimized or controlled by greater powers from outside and what they needed to do was to use diplomacy as a way to blunt the superior political, military and economic powers of other countries. It was a kind of a diplomacy based upon a neurosis, I think, that other people were out to control and take advantage of them. We're sitting on a lot of wealth and natural resources and potential, but we can't control it all, and if we don't look out, other people are going to come in and control it for us and control us.

Q: Somewhat similar to the Canadians.

CASWELL: Exactly, and that sort of mentality persists to do this day. It's almost kind of comical, the neuralgia, but there's this school of thought in particularly the Brazilian army, the Brazilian armed forces but particularly the army, and there are some, I think, nationalists even outside the army who believe it. The thesis and is that there's an international conspiracy to take over the Amazon and to rob Brazil of its future and its major economic resources. There have been various guises under which this has operated, but the current guise is to claim concern for the world, the global environment, seeking to protect the rainforests, but the Brazilian conspiracy theorists see all these green movements and so forth as Trojan horses for the Western imperialists, particularly the United States and the Western Europeans to emasculate Brazil and to keep Brazil small and weak because the future of Brazil's power is in developing the Amazon [the way the U.S. developed its frontier]. So when Western interests claim, according to these Brazilian Xenophobes, they want to protect the Indians or protect the trees it is a way to keep Brazil in its place. So I think diplomacy was seen as a tool with which to blunt any attempts by greater powers to control them, and that became kind of the mother's milk that all junior diplomats drank as they were learning, and they learned about international law and diplomacy at the Foreign Ministry's training academy, the Rio Bronco Institute. That's why national sovereignty and things like this are so important not just to Brazil but to countries like Brazil.

Q: Again, this is still maybe in the early days, '93 to '95, the beginning of the - I don't know what you want to do call it - the cyber community or the young people beginning to connect beyond the borders, particularly the science community and all that?

CASWELL: Well, yes, I wouldn't necessarily just limit it to do the cyber community and computers, but yes, I think increasingly the younger generations are less insular, they have more opportunities to study abroad. There aren't that many young Brazilians that go to do undergraduate school outside of Brazil; the brightest and best tend to go to Brazilian universities as undergraduates. But there are very generous programs they've developed over the years to support graduate study and postdoctoral work by Brazilian scientists, technologists, university professors and so forth, and a lot of them go to the United States and, to maybe a little lesser degree now, Western Europe. These people, really the best and brightest of Brazil, are world class, and the same thing is increasingly true in the business community, too. I think in the period of military rule, the notion of bright young people going into government and public service in that way was not really seen to be so much of an option or was seen to be less attractive - government certainly, not going into politics, because politics was emasculated, controlled by the military during the dictatorship and so forth. But the brightest and best tended to go into careers in business or academia or science or whatever, and I think these people are not middle aged and younger, and they are much more of a world view, less insular, than earlier generations of Brazilians.

Q: How effective did you find the Brazilian embassy in Washington? Some embassies seem to know how to play the Washington game. In other words, you don't stick just to the State Department, you're on the Hill, you're in the media, you're in the powers of Georgetown, you're all over.

CASWELL: The fast answer is the Brazilian embassy is better than most. I wouldn't say the Brazilian embassy was better than the good European embassies or the Japanese embassy, but they definitely understood that you don't just go to the State Department and you don't just talk to the desk officer. Actually just about the time that I started as Deputy Director in the office, they were having a major change of personnel at the Brazilian embassy. The outgoing ambassador, Ambassador Ricupero was a very bright man, sort of patrician and a bit on the academic side but was very good, and he was effective. But the guy that he was replaced by was Fleixa de Lima, who had been a lion of Brazilian diplomacy for years and years and was more rough-and-tumble and had a more of a nationalist edge to him than Ricupero. He was extraordinarily effective. This guy was very activist. He talked to do Alec Watson, but he basically didn't want to be seen wasting his time with any below the level of the Under Secretary of State. That was what he felt was his appropriate entry point. He was all the time pushing the envelope to see people at the seventh floor in the State Department, with some success, and he would call a lot over at the NSC and managed to get in over there, and he worked the Hill and he worked the media. He came here after being the ambassador in London. He had a younger wife. Fleixa de Lima must have been easily up in his '60s. His wife was probably 20 years younger than he was, a nice, personable, good-looking woman, and they were always great about giving parties and spent a lot of money and had a lot of style. Brazilians were great for bringing in acts and they had various Brazilian samba singers and bossa nova singers, and they would be all the time doing things, and then they'd have a party surrounding that and so forth and so on. They cut a very wide swath in the social circuit when they were in London. Somehow - I don't really know the particulars of it - Mrs. Fleixa de Lima got to be close with Lady Diana...

Q: Princess Diana.

CASWELL: ...Princess Diana, pardon me, and Princess Diana - I'm not a great student of her, but with her death and so forth you read these different things - I guess she was sort of an insecure, unhappy woman in some ways, and for some reason Mrs. Fleixa de Lima struck up a personal relationship with Diana and it was kind of like she was Diana's mother or an aunt or something like this. They not only played that for an entree in London society but they continued to work it here in Washington with some success. I don't know whether when you were around you paid attention, you looked in the Style section of the papers, but about every three or four months Princess Diana was here in Washington and she was staying at the Fleixa de Lima's house, and they were using her for the publicity and having parties featuring her to get in to see people, to make contacts with people on the Hill and newspaper community and so forth and so on. So they were very good about that sort of thing.

Q: Well, I thought we'd save Argentina to talk about for the next session.

CASWELL: I could talk about Brazil until...

Q: Brazil is obviously a very important country and often neglected, I think, in our relationship. How did things go during this '93-to do-'95 period, by the time you finished there? Did you feel things were really moving on the fast track as far as coming up with things that were of mutual benefit to the two countries?

CASWELL: With Brazil, absolutely, because the major thing was that Cardoso got elected President. I ended up writing, if you will, a strategy or a think piece that the NSC asked us to do. It focused on where are we in our relationship with Brazil, which has been very problematic over history, and where can we go. We made the argument that the election of Cardoso as president - he took office on January 1, 1995 - offered a real opportunity to do build upon some recent progress that I was talking about, which was just starting with the nonproliferation stuff, the greater science and technology cooperation, that they were establishing a basis for more sustainable growth on the economic side, and therefore, the potential for economic partnership with them was growing and, with that, partnership in the political, broader political, way in tackling problems in the hemisphere and international peacekeeping issues because Brazil was coming into the Security Council in one of the rotating seats. So there were a lot of things that we could do with the Brazilians with Cardoso coming in as President. We saw setting the tone for the new administration and knowing about Cardoso's background, his openness to cooperating with the United States and seeing cooperating with the United States as precisely the way to get a seat at the big table, which had long been one of Brazil's traditional goals. But Cardoso saw a different way to get a seat at the table than the old confrontational way, as head of the Group of 77 leading the charge against the ramparts of the Western powers. So we argued, and we got an invitation for Cardoso to come and visit Washington in the first months of his administration to boost him to the extent that we could and cement a relationship at the presidential level that could be a resource for us in the State Department and people in the Defense Department, the Treasury Department and so forth, trying to do build a broader and deeper and more constructive relationship with the top political figure in a country that could be an asset not just in the region but globally. So there was a lot of hope there.

Argentina too, it was a very positive relationship compared to historically what it had been with Argentina. Menem also sort of turned things on their head. Argentina had made a career out of giving us diplomatic hotfoots over the years, and here was a guy who seemed bound and determined to become a preferred partner of the United States. Whenever we asked them to do something, he'd say not only, "Yes," but, "Yes, amen." It was a really remarkable change in that relationship. But we had limitations in what we could with Argentina, and a lot of that came out of the Falklands/Malvinas War.

Q: We'll talk a little more about Argentina the next time. Two questions: One, did the Brazilian-United States, going back to do the Pact of Rio or whatever it was in 1942 or something with the Ecuador-Peruvian border thing, did that flare up at all while you were on the desk.

CASWELL: Oh, yes, big time.

Q: Why don't we save that one, too. The next time around - I'll stop here - we'll finish up your '93-to-'95 period. You've talked extensively about Brazil. But we will talk about the Ecuador-Peruvian border dispute and the fact that both Brazil and the United States are cosigners to do that. And then we'll talk about relations with Argentina during this period, which we haven't talked about, and then just your feeling about the Clinton administration and Warren Christopher vis-ï¿½-vis Latin America and the interests that were shown or lack thereof and how that was.

CASWELL: Okay, plus we'll probably talk a little bit about Chile.

Q: Oh, absolutely, let's talk about Chile then, too, and then of course the fast track and all that sort of stuff.

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This is the 13th of November 2000. John, we're talking about what period in ARA now?

CASWELL: We're talking about 1993 to do 1995.

Q: Let's talk about the Peruvian-Chilean border.

CASWELL: You mean the...

Q: Ecuadorian.

CASWELL: The Peruvians aren't happy about their border with Chile, too.

Q: Wasn't that the war of the Pacific.

CASWELL: Exactly.

Q: We can let that one go.

CASWELL: For the time being, yes. Well, I guess the salient thing to say is that the Per-Ecuador border conflict was a recurring, festering sore that went way back. I honestly don't know the history well enough to do say precisely, but certainly well back into the 19th century this had been a bone of contention between Peru and Ecuador as to exactly where their common border should be. They certainly fought a war in 1940. They have also had skirmishes in the 19th century - I honestly don't know all the history - but the action, the really sort of dramatic fight, was in 1940, and what happened was Ecuador lost and a big chunk of disputed territory which extended into the Amazon to Peru. There was a settlement between the two countries which was called the Rio Protocol of 1941 which defines the boundaries. They sent surveying team out in the field to actually work out the ground markers, but because of the difficulties in the terrain and so forth, they never really completed the job, or they didn't complete it without some ambiguities due to differences between the geography and what had been argued on paper. Essentially the Peruvians felt that the issue was now resolved, but the Ecuadorians were never fully satisfied. But at that time they'd lost the war and that was it. The United States, Argentina, Brazil and Chile signed on as co-guarantors of this agreement. Brazil, because the agreement was signed in Rio de Janeiro at the Itamaraty Palace, the Brazilian Foreign Ministry, they were sort of first among equals, the chair amongst these co-guarantors. So the idea was, if there were every any questions, the co-guarantors were supposed to settle them. Well, the Ecuadorians periodically raised problems about the settlement. They felt that, because of some ambiguities in the description of where the line went - in other words, the description on paper said one thing; when you actually went out into the field, there were some things that didn't quite line up with what was described on the paper - the Ecuadorians seized upon this and tried to do say this made the whole agreement invalid and that Ecuador could reassert its claim to a chunk of the Amazon jungle. The Peruvians always said no, no way, and the Ecuadorians, on a couple of occasions at least resorted to force to try to assert their point. Most notably they did it in the 1980s, early '80s. About 1980 or '81 there was a brief skirmish or two. The Ecuadorians didn't really get anywhere; they were squashed by the Peruvians, who basically have larger, more potent armed forces. But in 1995, in the spring of 1995, they did it again, and this time, although Peruvian armed forces are bigger and more powerful in general, the Ecuadorian seized the advantage locally and in effect caught the Peruvians flatfooted, amassed more forces locally, and actually marched in and seized some territory and then held onto it. They eventually lost some of it back to do the Peruvians, but they still held onto some of the territory that Peru claimed was theirs under this Rio Protocol of 1941. There were a number of casualties on both sides, and the fighting went on for weeks. Of course, this was sort of a big fly in the ointment at the Summit of the Americas where everybody was supposed to be democratic, happy and best of friends. But here we had two countries in South America fighting a war over a territorial dispute going back to the 19th century. It seemed certainly out of step with the spirit of the Miami Summit, as it were.

Q: Oil had intruded into the scene. Wasn't there at least a feeling that there was oil?

CASWELL: I think there was the feeling who knows what's out there. Ecuador is an oil producer, as is Peru, and the oil that exists and natural gas that exists in both countries exists in the Amazonian areas. Yes, there was always the feeling there might be gold out there, there might be oil out there, who knows. Anyway, I think national honor had an awful lot to do with it too, and the Ecuadorians always sort of felt kind of like Rodney Dangerfield, that they didn't 'no respect'. Certainly the Peruvians had a great disdain for the Ecuadorians. When I served in Peru, they always referred to do the Ecuadorians as monos, which means monkeys. The Peruvians see Ecuador as sort of a two-bit country that was only surpassed in backwardness by Bolivia. The Ecuadorians always used to print right on their license plates, official documents, etc., "Pais Amazonia" as though they were reasserting the view that "we really are an Amazon country and we need to gain back this territory from Peru to have this outlet into the Amazon." They had grandiose notions that they were going to somehow build ports on these rivers and tributaries of the Amazon and be able to do send ships out through the Amazon into the Atlantic, so Ecuador would not be just a Pacific country, that it could also have outlets to the sea in the Atlantic. Anyway, the Rio Protocol guarantors, the United States, Argentina, Brazil and Chile, went into diplomatic overdrive when this fighting started in the spring of '95 to stop it. Of course, the two sides, depending on who happened to do be winning that day, were either for a cease-fire or against a cease-fire, and finally after what must have been at least a week, or maybe even more than that, of seemingly round-the-clock talks in Rio de Janeiro sponsored by the co-guarantors between Peru and Ecuador, they managed to establish a cease-fire in place. Then once they stopped the fighting, the notion was to set up an observer mission that would separate the two sides and try to do avoid new incidents from happening. That observer mission, which came to do be known as MOMEP, an acronym for Military Observer Mission Ecuador Peru, MOMEP, became very successful. It was set up with U.S. forces, Brazilian, Argentine and Chilean forces. The U.S., probably having the largest number, certainly had the major responsibility for logistics and supply, because nobody else really had the helicopter and airlift capacity...

Q: It's lousy terrain, too.

CASWELL: Very difficult terrain. This area was dominated by the Cordillera del Condor, the Condor Mountains. It was kind of like high jungle, not so high that you have snowy peaks but it's very rugged and covered with dense jungle - very difficult to move around in. Also, it was very subject to a lot of rain, a lot of fog, and it was just a difficult place, mud, just a difficult place. MOMEP actually turned out to be in a way too successful because it managed to separate the forces, so it reduced the pressure to settle the problem right away, because people weren't being killed. It reduced the flames, as it were, and so it ushered in a sustained period of on-again/off-again negotiations in which the Ecuadorians could never really bring themselves to do get off of their hobby horse. The Ecuadorian civilian government was afraid of the Ecuadorian military. Nobody in Quito wanted to reach any kind of settlement with Peru other than their maximalist position, because if they did so, they were afraid they were going to do be branded a traitor in terms of Ecuadorian politics. Ecuadorian democracy wasn't really all that strong. Ecuador had a lot of domestic political problems and economic problems, not to say that Peru didn't either, but Peru was maybe in a little bit better shape. But essentially it was hard to get the Ecuadorians to talk seriously and reach a settlement because they were really all the time looking over their shoulder at their own military.

The Peruvians just basically had a self-righteous position that said, "Our position is backed up by international law and treaty. We don't give up one inch of our territory." So their position was basically a maximalist position, and theirs was to uphold the treaty, the status quo; the Ecuadorian position was to open everything up to negotiation again. It was very difficult to try to bridge the differences between the two positions. Because people weren't getting killed, there was little real pressure negotiate seriously. So these talks sporadically went on from 1995 until it was ultimately resolved in, I guess, early 1999, as I recall, when they had the signing ceremonies.

Q: How did you get involved in this?

CASWELL: Initially when I was the Deputy Director in the Office of Brazilian and Southern Cone Affairs in Washington, we provided back-up support together with the consulate in Rio de Janeiro for the talks that were going on in Rio which first stopped the fighting and then set up this MOMEP mission and then ultimately led to these periodic talks that they had an awful lot of shuttling back and forth between Washington, the capitals of the other three co-guarantors, Lima and Quito. So my role was basically backstopping - I wouldn't go so far as to do call it logistical support -but making sure that messages got answered and that type of thing. Trying to broker a settlement became a kind of a full-time job for Ambassador Luigi Einaudi, who was at that time in the Policy Planning staff but was one of the most senior, most distinguished Latin American experts in the State Department. It was Alec Watson and people like that who had more line responsibilities in the Latin American Bureau that were involved in these initial negotiations to establish a cease-fire, but when the process shifted into trying to promote a lasting settlement, they realized it was going to do become a full-time job for somebody, and Luigi Einaudi was tapped for that. I got more involved in the coordination of our positions in the extended process when I went down to Brasilia from '95 to do '98, initially as the deputy political section chief and then ultimately the political counselor. There what we were really trying to do was keep the co-guarantors together and to move them in directions which we felt were effective in trying to resolve the issue, and all the time doing it without seeming to be pushy gringos who were telling everybody what to do. Brazil was the chairman of this group, and most of the time that I was involved in the process there was an under secretary for political affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a man named Ivan Canabrava who had ambassadorial rank. He had lead responsibility for coordinating the guarantors' positions and then trying to get the Peruvians and the Ecuadorians to move. But de facto, Luigi Einaudi worked very closely with Canabrava and the other guarantor representatives, and I think all of the parties respect Luigi an awful lot. We would get messages all the time when Luigi was in Washington or he was in one of the other capitals; we would be getting either telegraphic messages or phone calls to go in and talk with the Brazilian Foreign Ministry about Issue X or Issue Y, or "We just heard this. What are you hearing?" "Where do you think we should be going tactically next to try to get the Ecuadorians off the dime?" or "...to get the Peruvians to meet," or whatever. And it was an awful lot of that day-to-day diplomatic stuff that I was involved in with Canabrava's office and with Luigi Einaudi. Luigi Einaudi would come down to our embassy it seemed like at least monthly, and he camped out in our offices, so we provided a lot of logistical support for Lugji and his sidekick, his aide.

Q: What about getting the American military, the Pentagon, to provide troops? Often they could be very reluctant. How did this work?

CASWELL: Yes, that was exactly part of the problem. As I said before, when they set up MOMEP, the question of who could do it, who had the capacity to do it, well, really only the U.S. military had the capacity to do a lot of the things. The Argentines, the Brazilians and the Chileans ponied up some personnel and some equipment, some simpler equipment, but a lot of the key telecommunications gear and certainly the aircraft, the helicopters came out of South Com. And I think initially South Com, the Southern Command, out of Panama was happy to do this. They were certainly full players as part of Luigi's team. But as time went on there were greater and greater anxieties mounting that we don't want to be here doing this forever, we don't want this to do become like a Cyprus. While nobody got killed in MOMEP, we were afraid, particularly the Pentagon was afraid that, given the difficult flying conditions, one of these days even if, say, our personnel aren't shot by Peruvians or shot by Ecuadorians or step on a landmine, which is always possible, in a fog or something some helicopter could just plow into the side of a mountain. Then the fear was more of a political fear that, if American boys died in this process, all of a sudden people in the Congress particularly would say, "MOMEP, what's MOMEP? What are those guys down there doing? Who cares if the Peruvians and the Ecuadorians slaughter themselves over some worthless jungle real estate. Why should any American boys be down there dying over this." So there was a lot of anxiety that something could go wrong, and the longer they were involved, the greater the chance that somebody would end up getting killed. That was part of the reason why pressure was brought to bear to try to get the Peruvians and the Ecuadorians to actually talk about some of these issues and find a way to bridge the differences. And the other thing that we were doing internally amongst the coordinators was to try to get the other militaries, the Latin American militaries, to play a bigger role. It turned out that we had some success. The Brazilian military, Brazilian army, was anxious to in fact play a bigger role, and they saw this mission as a way to pry some money out of the Brazilian treasury to acquire the more up-to-date equipment that they needed, and what they wanted were Blackhawk helicopters. They had older French-model helicopters, but these didn't really have the performance characteristics or the lift capabilities to really do the job in this area. So it was kind of a happy marriage of convenience between our Pentagon and our government which wanted to do reduce our responsibility and were always looking for ways to help U.S. manufacturers sell equipment - of course, the Sikorsky helicopter folks were always looking for new potential customers for Blackhawks. The Brazilian military had been feeling for a long time that they didn't have the capabilities to do, really do, what was expected of them in their own part of the Amazon, and there really wasn't adequate military presence in the Brazilian territory up in the Amazon. They needed more and better helicopters, but the problem was always getting the money to buy them, so they saw this as a way to achieve that goal. Fortunately, in effect, it was kind of a little sidebar to resolving the Peru-Ecuador conflict, but we succeeded in fact in selling some Blackhawk helicopters to the Brazilian military. This in turn opened the door to attendant training and bringing people to the States and strengthening of military-to-military ties, which has been a longstanding political diplomatic objective of ours with Brazil ever since the military ties went very sour back in the Carter period over the nuclear issue and the human rights issue.

Q: Let's turn to do Argentina during this time, '93 to '95. What were our concerns, and what were we doing?

CASWELL: Well, I guess the way I would describe it, U.S. relations with Argentina in '93 to do '95 was very different from U.S. relations with Argentina in '53 to do '55.

Q: Any other time.

CASWELL: Yes, because Peron wasn't around. Back in the old days Argentina was one of the countries in Latin America that most resented the U.S. role in the region and felt they were challenging the United States for leadership of South America, and that translated generally into opposing very many, if not all, U.S. diplomatic objectives. Argentina was always either opposed or very skeptical. Against that historic background, Menem came into office in, I think, '89 and he wanted to change a number of things in Argentina, one of which was they had had a chaotic economic situation with sky-high inflation and he and his economic guru, Domingo Cavalo, engineered a currency reform, pegging the Argentina peso to the dollar one for one. This had the happy result of stopping Argentine inflation dead in its tracks. It also had the unhappy results of generating a large and persistent Argentine balance of payment and debt. And they also did a lot of privatizing. Argentina, like Brazil, had had a very state-controlled economy, and these state-controlled corporations had a lot of featherbedding, a lot of people hired for political reasons who really didn't do jobs or barely worked and collected salaries. So these companies were very inefficient, money-losing operations. For that reason the Argentine economy as a whole was very inefficient, it was one of the reasons why the economy was so stagnant and they had all these problems with inflation and the budget was out of control. Anyway, Menem's big number-one accomplishment was straightening out the economy, or appearing to do so, by pegging the currency to do the dollar and privatizing a lot of stuff, selling a lot of these companies, and wringing the inflation out of the country. But hand in hand with that, he also pursued a foreign policy of trying to do improve Argentina's national reputation, I guess you'd say. It had been badly sullied in the Falklands-Malvinas War, which ultimately led to Argentina's humiliation at the hands of the British. Menem wanted to try to project a much more positive image, and he felt that he could do this by cooperating with the United States and trying to play a much more active role in international peacekeeping operations, playing a constructive, positive role at the United Nations. In effect, under him his foreign policy became very, very closely aligned with the United States. Just about whatever we wanted to do, Argentina in effect said, "Amen." Menem and the politicians also felt that a good outlet for the Argentine military was to do get them involved in international peacekeeping operations so the wouldn't be thinking about doing politics at home or whatever. The Argentine military at that point had been badly discredited by the so-called dirty war in which they killed political opponents in the '70s and the '80s, and also discredited by their loss of the Falklands-Malvinas War. They, too, were happy to do have a new mission, so this all coincided very conveniently. But our big problem in a way was it was almost too much of a good thing. Whenever we had some type of an initiative either in the region, like trying to deal with the Haiti problem and coming up with peacekeepers besides American peacekeepers anywhere in the 1990s, who was there at the front of the line to volunteer to help us out? Argentina. As a matter of fact, just about anything that we were trying to do, it always seemed as though Argentina was right at the front of the line saying, "Yes, we agree with the United States. We support the United States wholeheartedly." It was almost kind of embarrassing.

Q: Kind of like the eager kid in the class who's always raising his hand.

CASWELL: For us the problem was how could we reciprocate? We were trying to come up with ways to improve our cooperation with Argentina. They were looking for concrete benefits that they could show to their domestic political critics that this foreign policy was getting Argentina somewhere, and there weren't very many tangible benefits that were coming out. So the diplomatic problem for us was to try to come up with something that we could do. One area that we tried to do was nuclear cooperation. Argentina, like Brazil, had ended its military nuclear program that had been a weapons research program aimed at ultimately coming up with a nuclear weapon. We were in the State Department convinced that they had ended this, that they had adequate civilian control, and there was no more nuclear problem in Argentina, and as a result they should be certified for cooperation programs. Under our legislation, they had to be certified, in effect to be declared before the Nuclear Regulatory Commission or other elements of the government could step in and expand cooperation in peaceful areas.

The CIA, however, kept on coming up with information which they felt was correct that raised questions about whether the Argentines weren't being duplicitous or, if not duplicitous, that there were rogue elements still working in the Argentine nuclear program that were continuing their dangerous activities and posed a threat of nuclear proliferation even though the political authorities opposed this. Well, it seemed like every time we tried to move the process toward certifying Argentina to do give them in effect the Good Housekeeping seal of approval, there would be another CIA report which said that nefarious Mr. X at this facility down in southern Argentina went to a meeting and sent a memo to somebody in which he said the following. And this just went on for several years. When I came to the desk - this was like 1994 or 1995 - as I said, we had been trying to do get Argentina certified, and the Argentines knew this and were expecting the desired certification to come any month now. This had been going on for two years or three years, and they were getting more and more exasperated and saying, "What's the problem?" Then we would march into the head of the equivalent of the Oceans, Environment and Science Bureau in the Argentine Foreign Ministry and say, "There's this problem. We have evidence that Mr. X is doing some bad things." They'd say, "Oh, really? We'll look right into that and we'll take care of that." Then a week later we'd come back and say, "Have you looked into it?" "There was nothing to do it. We took care of the problem." "Okay, fine, we'll report that back to Washington." Then we would try to move the bureaucratic process forward to having a meeting in which Argentina would be certified. Then the CIA would come up with another report saying, "No, the problem's not solved. We went to do another meeting," or "We just had another long telephone call." Well, this went on and on and on. Ultimately the problem was resolved and Argentina did get the certification. But it was emblematic of the sort of problems that we had. Even worse than that was the Argentines would come to us and say, "We're doing all of these wonderful things in the peacekeeping area. It's a happy situation. We've sent our military guys off to do peacekeeping the Balkans, in Cyprus, in Haiti like you wanted us to do, but we need more equipment. Our guys just can't go out there with no weapons. We need more training," and so forth and so on. Of course, the Pentagon viewed this as fully justified, and we felt that it was fully justified in the Latin American Bureau, but the situation that made it difficult was that it seemed as though the United Kingdom held a veto over any military sales to Argentina because of our special relationship with the United Kingdom.

Q: You're talking about because of the...

CASWELL: Because of the Malvinas-Falklands War, their concern was that anything that we sold to the Argentines could be, would be, ultimately used against British servicemen because the Argentines still had a claim on the Malvinas Islands, the Falklands islands. Until the British were satisfied that this problem had been fully resolved, they were going to veto just about the sale of anything beyond mess kits or the most minor items. The whole time that I was involved with Argentina, that issue was never resolved. Basically the Argentines felt some unhappiness that their efforts on our behalf were unrequited.

Q: How were your relations and how effective did you find Argentine embassies?

CASWELL: I don't think that they were quite as effective as the Brazilian embassies. They were more inclined to do come into State Departments and basically ask the State Department to do solve their problems for them. I'm not aware of them doing a lot of lobbying on the Hill or in the business community. They dealt with the Pentagon also. We didn't see evidence of a lot of different officers in the Argentine embassy out and around town doing things. Usually it was the Argentine ambassador coming in to complain to Alec Watson, who was the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemispheric Affairs, or one of Alec Watson's deputies. That usually was the extent of it.

Q: Then, turning over to Chile?

CASWELL: Chile was a somewhat similar situation. Chile was also one of the bright pupils, to use your image before of Argentina. After Mr. Pinochet decided to do retire from the presidency, Chile returned to democracy. Chilean democracy worked pretty well in this time period that we're talking about. President Alwyn had been elected and served out his term. He was supported by a coalition of Socialists and Christian Democrats. He was succeeded by Eduardo Frei, the son of the Eduardo Frei who had been president in the late '60s and '70s, who in turn was followed by Allende. Basically this coalition, which was called the Concetacion, of Socialists and Christian Democrats held together, and it provided a stable democratic political system that worked well. They also continued many of the same economic policies which had been instituted under Pinochet which had promoted stable economic growth and strengthened the private sector, and this had been going on for a number of years. So the Chilean economy and politics were models to be emulated in the hemisphere. We had some irritants, however, with the Chileans. There were some issues that just never seemed to do go away. There was one called the poisoned grapes.

Q: Oh, God, yes.

CASWELL: Chile is a major producer of fruits in particular - I guess they also produce vegetables - fruits for export, and there had been an incident in which some Chilean grapes were impounded at the ports in the United States. They were examined by agricultural inspectors and found to do have excessive amounts of pesticide on them or whatever, and they were confiscated and destroyed, and this led to do a prolonged dispute about whether or not this was just, whether or not there really was too much pesticide on them, whether it was acceptable or not. I don't really know the details. This case happened years before I came into...

Q: I had a long interview with Tony Gillespie, who was ambassador at the time, and he talks about it in great detail, because it was the thing.

CASWELL: Oh, yes. Even as late as 1995 this thing had not been put to rest. It just went on and on and on. Basically the Chileans would come in and announce that they just weren't satisfied and it was up to do the State Department to do something about it. But it was similar to Argentina in the sense that, as the Argentines felt that they were owed some sort of compensation or some sort of favor or whatever for being such good allies of the United States, the Chileans felt that they were such model citizens and that their economy was so worthy that this should be rewarded, and they were keen on coming into NAFTA or having some sort of free trade arrangement with the United States. But our goal basically was that we wanted to promote a free trade area of the Americas, and I think there was a lot of hand-wringing in the United States about whether we could hive off Chile and offer a special arrangement for the Chileans to become like partners of NAFTA or whether it wasn't better to do pursue the free trade area of the Americas in which everybody would come in, Chile and everybody else. But the short-term problem was that we couldn't get Congressional authorization to open negotiations with the Chileans about a free trade area.

Q: It was called fast track.

CASWELL: Exactly. You had to get this authority; otherwise the negotiations were sort of pointless. The fast-track authority essentially meant that whatever was negotiated between the two negotiating teams would then be submitted for an up or down vote by the Congress. The Congress couldn't open up what had been negotiated and say, "We'll support it if you change the first clause in that and the second clause in that and the third clause." This, I think, got all caught up in the politics within the Democratic Party and some lingering unhappiness about NAFTA and was it going to cost jobs for the American workers and all the rest of it. Well, the Chileans didn't want to hear any of that stuff. Somebody at some point - maybe it was President Clinton when he was on his trip down to Santiago - somebody had promised the Chileans, "You're next. You're such a model citizen, your economy is so privatized and so open. You really qualify more than anybody else, so we're going to do negotiate with you first." The word got out in Chile that Chile was about to enter NAFTA or Chile was going to negotiate a free trade arrangement with the United States. The Chileans believed an agreement would come quickly because of the way our economy's structured. Well, it didn't happen very quickly. As a matter of fact, the negotiations never started, never, and the Chilean government felt as though they really had egg on their face because they'd been led to do believe that this would happen very quickly and there just was no problem, they were such model citizens. Well, this really soured the Chileans on us. Then every time we had a problem, we would go to both Argentina and Chile and say, "Can you help us out?" like, for instance, with the Haiti mess in which we were trying to get other people to come in and also supplement our role in restoring democracy to that great bastion of democracy, Haiti. Basically the Argentines said, "Amen, brother, we'll do it. Here are the troops we're going to do send. What else can we do help you?" The Chileans would sort of say, "It may be difficult. We'll have to do think about it. We'll have to do talk to do our military. I don't know." The reason why they weren't very forthcoming, I think, was because of this free-trade-area fiasco.

Q: I always ask on these things about the Chilean embassy. Were you able, you and others, to sit down with their representatives at their embassy? Did they understand the politics? It was domestic politics, and that's what an embassy is supposed to explain back home.

CASWELL: Exactly. It's hard for me to believe that they didn't understand it or didn't have some inkling, but they just weren't satisfied with that answer and so they sort of let on that they didn't understand it or they said, "Oh, well, you always say that, but we know that you can do something about it. The President is a very persuasive man and he's a Democrat. The Republicans in the Congress are in favor of it, so why can't the chief Democrat, Bill Clinton, round up enough of his supporters in the Democratic Party that together with the Republicans, why can't they get this thing through?" They basically said they couldn't understand it. Of course, then the Democrats would say, "Well, maybe, but we would have to have side arrangements or side agreements about the environmental issues and labor issues. Maybe if there was an agreement with Chile that included special side agreements and understandings that were not in NAFTA - and we were angry when they weren't included in NAFTA - but if they could be included in an agreement with Chile, maybe we could support it." Chile, of course, rejected this out of hand.

Q: How about the residue of problems with the Pinochet government: one, Pinochet himself and, two, Letelier...

CASWELL: Ronnie Moffett, yes.

Q: Did they come up while you there?

CASWELL: Actually surprisingly not. As we sit now and Pinochet had all those problems when he went off to England and then there were the efforts to extradite him out of Britain to stand trial in Spain for human rights violations that were attributed to Pinochet and his regime perpetrated against Spanish citizens in Chile. And then that didn't happen and he'd been sent back to Chile, and now he's had this parliamentary immunity revolt by the Chilean Supreme Court. And all of these issues are being rehashed again. In the period we're talking about, '93 to '95, that really wasn't a particularly active issue. Things would happen in Chile. There was a General Contreras who had been head of the secret police at one point in the Pinochet regime and there were some efforts at arresting Contreras. It was a very sensitive issue within Chile and there were concerns in the Chilean government about how far and how fast to go by supporters of the government, because members of the coalition that supported the government were made up of Socialists, which was the party of Allende, and the Christian Democrats, which was a center or center-right party. Elements in the Socialist Party wanted to push for holding these military officers accountable for their acts, but government as a whole was anxious, because they didn't know how the military would react: "Okay, the army's in the barracks now, but we don't feel too comfortable about pushing too hard or too fast on this issue, and it's embarrassing." It was just a very prickly, sensitive issue. But as for the United States, U.S. government, pushing the Chileans on this, we really didn't.

Q: I was wondering whether you'd been getting delegations and sort of human rights groups and that sort of thing.

CASWELL: In this time period, not that I was aware of, certainly not. Now, I bet you that that's exactly what's going on now. I bet whoever is in my old job and the Chilean desk officer and so forth are fielding these types of issues, but in my time period it was not particularly an issue.

Q: There had been a dispute between Argentina and Chile over the Beagle Channel or something. Did that come up at all?

CASWELL: Not the Beagle Channel per se but there were four or five minor disputed areas along their border. There were different sort of glacial ice fields, I forget their names now, which were disputed, really obscure places way up in the mountains where there had been some historical differences. In fact, unlike the situation between Peru and Ecuador, the democratic governments of the two countries managed to satisfactorily negotiate out their differences, so they settled it amicably. So that was not particularly an issue that we got involved in at all. I think maybe the Vatican helped. These talks were somehow involved with the Vatican, not as a guarantor, but as offering its good offices to facilitate some type of a settlement, and they reached it.

Q: I guess it's time to move on. In '95 where'd you go?

CASWELL: I went back to do Brasilia.

Q: You were there from '95 to do...

CASWELL: '98. Initially I went down as the Deputy Chief of the Political Section but with the notion that I might possibly move up because the man who had been political counselor was expected to do retire during the three-year stint that I was going to do be there. In fact, that happened and I ended up the last two years being political counselor.

Q: Who was your ambassador?

CASWELL: Mel Levitsky

Q: And how did he operate?

CASWELL: Well, Ambassador Levitsky was a man who spent much of his career dealing with Soviet Union/Eastern Europe, but his first tour or so had been in Brazil way back in the mid-'60s. He had served a little bit in Brasilia and he had served up in Belï¿½m in a consulate we had up there at the mouth of the Amazon. So he brought some knowledge of Brazil with him and certainly a historical perspective and pretty good Portuguese. He was a very active ambassador, and he tried to do a lot of public diplomacy. He worked closely with USIS and he gave a lot of press interviews. He was very high profile, unlike some ambassadors who had preceded him who had been very much sort of back-room kind of guys that just went to the Foreign Ministry. Levitsky was a very public figure in Brazil, and he seemed to be respected for it. He was considered to do be a very effective representative of the United States. This was a period in U.S.-Brazilian affairs which was very, very positive. It was said repeatedly in the time period that I was there that U.S.-Brazilian relations were perhaps the best they had ever been in the history of the two countries. In large part this was because of President Cardoso and his internationalist views, who was trying very hard, kind of like Menem to have Brazil become a respected international player welcome at the table in the circles of the big powers, as it were, and to be taken seriously and to be a constructive player not just on issues in the region, in Latin America or South America, but internationally as well. So because of Cardoso' bent, his outlook, and the person he brought in to be Foreign Minister of Brazil, Luis Lampreia, who had spent a considerable amount of time in the United States and lived in Washington (he considered Washington almost like a second home), and also the Finance Minister, another man who had spent a lot of time in Washington, had worked at one time, I think, in the IMF, a lot of the people, senior people, in Brazilian government were attuned to the United States and U.S. news, and it made cooperation possible. They did a number of positive things in the nonproliferation area which we had been concerned about; they started doing the right things, and so this opened up the avenue for a lot of cooperation.

Q: I was asking the question about how the Argentine embassy and the Chilean embassy worked in the United States. Particularly as a political officer, how did you work in Brasilia? They've got a congress. Is it called a congress?

CASWELL: Right, exactly.

Q: Was it comparable? Could you sort of walk the halls of the congress and go to do committee and staff and all that, or was it a different matter?

CASWELL: Well, the Brazilian congress: it might be hard to believe it could be more disorganized that the American Congress, but in fact it is. There are many more parties in Brazil. We're talking at any time 15 to 20 parties might be represented in the Brazilian congress. The Brazilian parties themselves, there were about four or five of them that were major parties, but those parties were more parties in name, and they themselves were sort of incoherent and inconsistent. So it made the Brazilian congress this great amorphous mass that was really very preoccupied by domestic politics and domestic political issues. The Brazilian congress really didn't pay much attention to foreign affairs. There was the equivalent to do the House International Affairs Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but they didn't have anywhere near the influence or role in shaping Brazilian foreign policy that the U.S. Congress has. So we would go to talk to Brazilian congressmen and staffs, and they certainly were accessible, and I think they liked the attention, but they always wanted to talk to us about visas, visas for their constituents or visas for their relatives or people who had friends who were living in the States who wanted to bring a maid. It was always those sorts of things they wanted to talk about, and we were usually wanting to talk to them about domestic politics, say, "What's your estimate of President Cardoso? Is he going to get his constitutional reform program through, or isn't he going to? Is his hand weaker or stronger because this happened or that happened?" It was always those sorts of things. So we would go over to the congress to talk and to learn more, but it was always about that, it wasn't so much about foreign policy issues. Now, the only exception to that was one issue which was called SIVAM, which was an Amazon surveillance project. Again, it came out of what I've mentioned before, this neuralgia that the Brazilians have long harbored that they really didn't have adequate control over the Amazon, that the Amazon was this great prize out there that was not being exploited, that somehow maybe someone might even come along and take it away from them if they didn't exercise adequate sovereignty. A program to try to begin to address that problem was the so-called SIVAM. Basically it involved a number of things, but where the United States got involved was a radar-monitoring surveillance element to do it, both land-based radar and airborne radar. The Raytheon Corporation got involved in bidding on this contract. When the SIVAM people put out requests for proposals, Raytheon, along with several others - there was a French group, there was a German group, and there was another American group besides Raytheon, I think. Anyway, what happened was Raytheon ended up winning the contract ultimately, but it became a political football. Because it involved money and spending and domestic issues relating to the Amazon, the Brazilian congress became very, very involved in the issue of SIVAM and whether the contract was properly let or not. When the French lost the contract, they alleged through their local supporters, who had hoped to get pieces of the action if the French had won the contract, that there had been undue political influence used, that maybe there was bribery going on, and so forth and so on. There was a commission of parliamentary inquiry in the congress looking into supposed scullduggery involved in the SIVAM contract. That was a big issue that involved the bilateral relationship, because we were lobbying in support of Raytheon's bid like crazy, right up to do the level of President Clinton himself, calling up or sending letters to President Cardoso saying how wonderful Raytheon's technology was and if there was anything that we could do to do help out. The Secretary of Commerce, Ron Brown, made I don't know how many trips to do Brazil, and we were really promoting this thing like crazy. We managed to come up with a big EXIM (The Export-Imoprt Bank of the U.S.) funding, 1.3 billion dollars in credits to sell this stuff.

Q: What was this? I'm trying to figure it out. Was this to prevent Ecuadorian planes from overflying the place?

CASWELL: It had a number of angles to do it. National security was an element. It could have that element, but it was not fear of Ecuador or Peru more the issue of national security had nothing to do with the fear of Ecuador or Peru launching their air force into the Amazon. It had to do with the fact that the Brazilian authorities didn't have any idea who was flying over the Amazon or what was going on up there. There was no air traffic control, and so there were narcotraffickers. In effect what gave a big boost to getting full EX-IM funding for all aspects of the project was its counter-narcotics aspect, because parts of the project, as I mentioned before, involved airborne radars, and the systems would be put aboard C130 type aircraft. Apparently some of the equipment was considered to be "dual-use" equipment of a potential military nature and EX-IM, because it's a civilian agency, cannot use its credit to finance the purchase of military or "dual-use" equipment unless there's a certification that the equipment could be or is to be used primarily, or there's a justification to use it, for counter-narcotics purposes. So because of this angle and this concern in Brazil - and we as a government shared it - that parts of the Amazon airspace were being increasingly used by drug traffickers, and because the Brazilian air force didn't know what was going on, couldn't intercept these narcotrafficker aircraft, the Counter-Narcotics Bureau in the State Department, INM, certified that this project would be used, had a valid use, for this purpose, and with that certification EX-IM was able to certify those "dual use" elements, the key elements, of the project. Otherwise, the financing package would not have covered all of the equipment. The U.S. financing package would have been inferior to the French offer, and Raytheon probably would have lost the contract to Alcatel or Thompson or whoever it was that was on the French side - I forget now. So that was an important part of it.

Another part of the project which had its supporters in the United States as well as in Brazil was for environmental reasons. Apparently they could use some of this SIV AM equipment to survey what was going on in the Amazon, to pick up better forest fires, economic activity which was not licensed, not allowed, goldminers going into parts of the Amazon where they weren't supposed to be and digging everything up, or settlers going in and chopping down trees that they shouldn't have. The idea was that SIV AM could be the eyes and ears of different agencies of the Brazilian government. The Brazilian Government Agencies had responsibilities in the Amazon area but were unable to exercise those responsibilities because they didn't know what was going on. It wasn't a cheap fix, but it was a way of using technology to extend the reach of the Brazilian government into this big part of the country. That was an important project and, as I said, it went right up to the presidential level. It went on for an incredibly long time period. I remember the project coming out, being described, and getting calls from Raytheon, "Can you give me more information? We're going to do submit a bid," back in 1993 when I was in the Office of Brazilian Affairs, and Raytheon won the contract in 1995 just before I left Washington to go to Brasilia, and the reverberations, the parliamentary inquiries, the charges of corruption and influence peddling and so forth, and congressional investigations went on through '96 to '97. I don't think that the agreement was really basically finalized until just before I left in 1998, and then they were just going into the first implementation stages. I'm not quite sure. They probably have some elements of the project up and running now in the year 2000, but I bet it won't be fully completed till about 2005 or so. Other than that sort of thing, the Brazilian congress basically said, "Whatever Itamaraty," which was the name of the Brazilian Foreign Ministry, "they're the professional - whatever they want goes." Congress had a role of ratifying treaties, but it was not a big contentious thing basically. The whole problem was to get them to ever do anything. Itamaraty would submit agreements for ratification, but then they'd say, "It's in the hopper, but we have no idea when those guys are going to get around to actually ratifying it." They weren't actively deliberating; they just took a long time to get around to ratifying agreements. [Sometimes a Congressman or a small group might hold things up - either because they disagreed on substance or to get government support on another issue.]

Q: Had there developed a Brasilia life by this time? Before, everybody was trying to head back to Rio, but by this time was it a real city?

CASWELL: Oh, yes, it was a real city. It had shopping centers, it had parks, and it had movie theaters, and it had its equivalent to the Kennedy Center for the culturephiles, and it had developed a little bit more variety. When it was originally designed, it was designed by an urban planner, Lucio Costa, and an architect, Oscar Niemeyer, who were socialists if not communists and were great fans of places like East Berlin and Moscow in terms of architecture. They felt that Brasilia would be a kind of a reaction to or rejection of the opulence and ostentation of the wealthy in places like Rio de Janeiro. What they wanted to promote was getting everybody to live in big apartment blocks, that everything looks the same. They also had a sort of a 1950s notion of modernity, and they were in love with - I guess they got this from the United States - they were in love with the automobile and freeways. So they built the city around automobiles and large apartment blocks and large government buildings, and most of the government buildings looked like big dominoes. They have a mall like the mall in Washington, at least in name, and along this mall they had all the different ministries, and it looked like a series of dominoes that some giant might knock over. But Brasilia is set on this high semi-arid plain with a city that's spread out over a huge area with virtually no sidewalks, no street life. To get anyplace you basically had to do drive there. For a long time they prided themselves on the fact they didn't have any traffic lights, there were no traffic lights. When I was in Brasilia, they were saying they'd just gotten their first traffic light in 1994 or something like that, because the city had grown to the point where they could no longer not have traffic lights. I guess I'm rambling. But that's why it had that sort of sterile feel to it. It was the antithesis of Rio de Janeiro, the antithesis of Sao Paulo, and that's why it was so unpopular with Brazilians, because Brazilians are very urban people and they're flashy, stylish people. They don't all want to live in big apartment complexes that all look the same, and they want to do have street life, so that's why Brasilia was so unpopular for a long time. Well, there are aspects of the city that remain sterile and so forth to this day, but with Brazilian genius for having a good time and for style and joie de vive and all that sort of thing, they basically had made it into much more of a city, and they created another part that was not part of the original plan that gave the upper middle class and well-to-do a suburban living style. It was almost like suburban southern California, in the area south of the lake and that's where most of the diplomats, for example, lived, and a lot of the people from the Brazilian Foreign Ministry lived over there, too. There it was a very nice, sort of suburban lifestyle, large houses, large, airy houses, and pools in the back yard, small shopping centers, and it was quite pleasant. It was a good place to have a family. Its night life had not gotten to the point where it could be a match for Rio's or Sao Paulo's, but if you had a family, there was a lot more space for children and it was a better place to be than cramped and cooped up in an apartment in Rio.

Q: Any sort of political challenges to the United States within the body politic of Brazil at the time?

CASWELL: Political challenges? I can't say that there were. The major issues: Cardoso was trying to pursue a course of action that required constitutional reforms to do some of the things he wanted to do, to consolidate the process of opening up the Brazilian economy and privatizing the Brazilian economy and to get better control of the Brazilian budget, which was required if he was going to keep inflation under control. That was the major preoccupation of the Brazilian government, biting the bullet and making these reforms. The Brazilian Constitution is like the Manhattan phone book - it's very thick and specifies all kinds of things - to make significant changes in the Brazilian economy and regain control over the government budget, you had to change the Constitution, and so you had to get a two-third majority to make a lot of these changes. So this was politically a very difficult thing for the government to try to do and they were very much preoccupied with that. Those sorts of changes were very much in the interests of the American business community. Both people who had already invested in Brazil or people who wanted to think about future investments in Brazil or who wanted to sell in Brazil were very interested in the opening of the Brazilian economy and the stabilization of the currency and getting the fiscal reforms to get the budget under control so inflation wouldn't come back. All that was very positive.

On regional security issues the Brazilians, like we talked about before in the Peru-Ecuador process, they were very constructive. They were very helpful and supportive sharing our concerns about the threat to democracy, such as it was, in Paraguay. There was a rogue general named Lino Oviedo who was threatening a coup against the constitutionally elected president of Paraguay. There was a question of whether there'd be a coup in Paraguay. Paraguay's a funny country. The Brazilians used to joke that Paraguay was their Haiti, so they understood our problems with Haiti since they had similar sort of problems with political instability, crime, etc. in Paraguay affecting Brazil. Well, we would collaborate or we would coordinate closely with the Brazilians as well as the Argentines, who also had some influence in Paraguay, about problems there. As I said before, Brazilians were doing the right thing on a number of things relating to nuclear non-proliferation, missile technology nonproliferation, after years of basically challenging the U.S. position on these things. (End of tape)

The Brazilian government even agreed to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, the NPT, which was a major reversal. The Brazilians, along with the Indians and the Pakistanis, had been major remaining opponents. Brazi finally came on board with that and tried to cooperate and tried to bring pressure to do bear on people like the Indians to also come along.

Human rights, there was another question where for years and years we fought and tangled a lot with the Brazilians about human rights issues. Cardoso agreed and named in effect a kind of minister for human rights, as it were. Actually it wasn't a full-blown minister but a senior officer within the Justice Ministry. After years of criticizing our annual human rights report, the Brazilian government began to put out its own human rights report, which was critical of the situation in various parts of Brazil where you had real problems with police running amok or landowners taking the law into their own hands, a lot of problems like that. The Brazilian government said they agreed there were problems and they were trying to do the right thing to protect human rights.

They were also trying to do the right thing in terms of stopping or controlling the environmental degradation in the Amazon. Maybe it wasn't always as much as we would have liked to do see, but they were moving in the right direction.

We did have some problems, but they were relatively minor ones. There was an extradition case when I was there involving a man who was wanted for arson and murder in the Seattle area - he was named Martin Pan - and he fled to Brazil because we didn't have a really good up-to-date extradition treaty with Brazil. It was a very antiquated and difficult extradition treaty to work, and I guess he somehow got the idea that Brazil would be a good place to avoid the long reach of U.S. law enforcement agencies. He hired a clever lawyer and we had a prolonged problem, because literally any extradition out of Brazil had to be handled by the Brazilian Supreme Court. So it was a prolonged process, it was a difficult process, and differences between Brazilian law and U.S. law, particularly as they define the crimes of arson and murder and the death penalty, made it very difficult to get him extradited. We ended up having repeated calls from Janet Reno, both to the ambassador and Brazilian justice minister...

Q: Secretary of Justice.

CASWELL: ...yes, our Attorney General Janet Reno to the Brazilian minister of justice. Eventually we succeeded, but it was a soap opera. It went on for three years.

Q: We have all sorts of movies based on people from England and the United States heading off to do Brazil with their ill-gotten gains. This is where you go.

CASWELL: That's probably where Martin got the idea.

Q: Were we working on trying to get a better extradition treaty?

CASWELL: Indeed, we were interested in maybe at some point getting a better extradition treaty, but as a first step we proposed negotiating something called an MLAT, a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty, which would improve cooperation between law enforcement agencies. Indeed we were able to negotiate one, and when President Clinton came down to visit in 1997, we were able to sign it. That was one of about, I think, four agreements. One of them was this Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty which we signed. We were also in the process of opening up an FBI office in the embassy just as I was leaving. I think it has since opened. So I wouldn't doubt that at some point we would try to get a better extradition treaty with Brazil, because I think our current extradition treaty might even date to the 19th century.

Q: Anybody who sees movies or reads anything knows that, if you get in trouble, head for Brazil and take lots of money with you.

CASWELL: Yes, and Ronald Biggs, who was the notorious man from the great train robbery in Britain of the 1960s, even went one step further and got a Brazilian girlfriend and got her pregnant. There was one aspect of Brazilian law that said that anybody who had a Brazilian child couldn't be extradited.

Q: One of the more pleasurable ways of avoiding the law.

CASWELL: That's right. Ronald Biggs was enjoying himself on a Copacabana beach for a number of years. As I said, Brazil, like Argentina, had period of history where they did challenge us internationally, regularly, frequently, and they seemed to do it with relish. But in the time period I was there in the 1990s, for instance, Brazil came onto the Security Council. Brazil was ambitious to get a permanent seat in an expanded Security Council, but they're frequently elected to one of the two rotating seats that Latin Americans have, and their turn came up again while I was in Brasilia. They cooperated very well with us both in New York and down in Brasilia. It got to the point where I used to joke with my counterpart who was the head of the UN division at Itamaraty, I said, "I ought to have a coffee mug here with my name on it, because I'm here every day." Sometimes I would get four or five messages with immediate precedence, on issues relating to the Security Council: "Go in there and sound out the Brazilians on this or try to get the Brazilians to support us on this resolution or that." Brazil was very, very positive on the need for Iraqi compliance with UN resolutions and insisting on full access for the UN inspectors, and all this was from a country that previously had pretty much supported the Iraqis really up to the time of the Persian Gulf War in 1991.

Q: What about the media? How important did you find the media?

CASWELL: The Brazilian media, unlike in the time period when I was there as a junior officer in the mid-'70s when the Brazilian media was censored and muzzled, was very lively in the time period of the '90s. Obviously there was no more censorship, and it was very competitive. You had all kinds of media: private television. There was no government television. Although TV and radio were private, there were several large networks, the biggest of which was called Globo, which means globe, and they were very, very popular and they had a nationwide reach. Brazilians of all economic and social classes watched TV, paid attention to TV, and probably got most of their news, to the extent that they paid attention to news, through the television. But Brazil also had a pretty well developed newspaper industry. You had flagship newspapers like the Estado de Sao Paulo and the Journal do Brasil in Rio de Janeiro, and Globo had a newspaper also in Rio de Janeiro, which were in effect national newspapers, and they were very, very high quality, especially Estado de Sao Paulo. I would put it on a par with the New York Times. Estado de Sao Paulo was in the Brazilian political spectrum a fairly conservative paper. It was pro-Cardoso and what he was trying to do, and they were favorable to the business community. But there were other papers that were just as good that were, to do put it in American context, liberal, that were critics of the government, such as Folha de Sao Paulo was one of those that was very critical of the Cardoso government. Then there were a lot of what in Britain is called popular press, sort of trashy, sensationalist newspapers. [And every major provincial city had its own newspaper, sometimes several.] So you could get a wide range of opinion and quality of news coverage in newspapers in the country, and it was very competitive. These newspapers, I think were pretty much financially viable. It wasn't like there were a lot of them folding. I think if Brazilians cared to read the news, they could get just about anything that they wanted.

Q: I would think as political counselor you would have to spend a lot of your time sort of melding reports, because you have Sao Paulo, which is the business center, probably the greatest one in Latin American, and then you've got Rio, where a lot of the life is and all that, and you're up in Statist Brasilia. In other words, you really have three different places hundreds of miles apart and all of that, so people aren't trotting back and forth so much there. How did you work this?

CASWELL: I recall there were about five of us in Brasilia in the political section, and there was a political reporting officer in Rio, there was a political reporting officer, actually one full-time middle-grade officer, and a second junior officer who helped out in Sao Paulo, and then there was a consul up in Recife, which is one of the principal cities in the northeastern part of Brazil, who was also by trade a political officer and liked doing political reporting. So I would coordinate a lot with those officers in the field on reporting. I would suggest topic areas that I felt that they could contribute to our national reporting. Obviously if you're doing an election, national elections, they would contribute to that. They also had certain issues that were important issues within their consular district that could have an effect on the political climate in the country and the government's handling of them, particularly human rights issues, labor-related issues and strikes and crackdowns. There was also a labor reporting officer in Sao Paulo and we would coordinate his reporting. So, yes, a lot of the national political reporting we would do out of Brasilia, but I was always anxious to get the Consulates to provide some counterpart reporting or contributions to what we were reporting. I guess it was Haldeman or Erlichman in the Nixon administration who asked the question, "How's it playing in Peoria?" We were always looking for that sort of angle, how are the government's policies playing out in terms of popular reactions or impact in the major population centers of [Brazil, in our reporting because sitting in Brasilia youcould easily suffer from the myopia of just hearing the government's viewpoint.]

Q: At an earlier time I sort of understood that you had these governors who were sort of semi-autonomous, not warlords but more than just being a governor of a state. They were dukes, I guess.

CASWELL: They were, that's true and it is still true. Still the political system is rather decentralized. As I was saying before when I was talking about the national political parties, in effect they were national political parties in name, but the reality was there were these different regional barons within the parties, so, for example, the PFL, the Liberal Front Party, might have one sort of character in northeastern Brazil and a rather different sort of character down in Sao Paulo, and that reflected the personalities of the king - makers in those particular districts, and many times those people were the governors of the states.

Governors had a lot of power. It was curious, they would also not only have the power within their own states, but also overtheir state's congressional delegation in Brasilia, because there was revenue sharing. The way tax monies were divvied up, a lot of the federal money wouldn't necessarily stay with the federal government. It would get transferred to the states and even to the large cities. In the time period that I was in Brasilia, the big city mayors got a bigger cut of the federal resources. And since the governors could control a lot of the spending, how the money was spent, through patronage and through deciding who was going to get this contract to build the new courthouse or to build this or to build that, they had a lot of political clout, because controlling money controls political power.

But it was even worse than that, and this was one of the things that the Cardoso administration was trying to come to grips with. Historically in the United States we have a pattern where states generally are required in their own state constitutions to balance their budgets, and if somebody runs a deficit, it's the federal government, it's the federal budget, which might get out of control, if you want to say that. Brazil is just the opposite. The states didn't seem to feel any need at all to balance their budgets. Not only did they take the money that Brasilia gave them through these revenue sharing automatic transfers and spend that, but they'd spend even more. I don't know why - I guess it was even constitutional - there was a requirement that the central bank would have to lend money to the states to cover what they had spent beyond their means. So this was in effect encouragement for fiscal irresponsibility on the part of these governors. They would spend and they would spend and they would spend, especially in election years for political reasons, and Brasilia always ended up picking up the tab. The result was that over the years states built up these tremendous, tremendous debts to the central bank which they could never pay back. All they ever did was negotiate rollover agreements. Cardoso and his finance minister were trying to get this process under control, and this was one of the constitutional reforms they were trying to get through Congress to stop this abusive practice. But, of course, because the governors have a lot of political power, they had political power because of these spending patterns, they could dictate almost to their state delegations in the congress, "Don't you vote for that." As of the time I left Brasilia, they still had not gotten this under control. They were trying to negotiate using these rollover agreements on the debt coming due. They were saying, "We'll only agree to do roll over your state's debt if you agree to do these strict spending guidelines." They were trying to get it under control that way, but it was difficult.

Q: Was there any particular point in going around and pressing the flesh of the governors and all that?

CASWELL: Oh, certainly, and because usually from the ranks of the governors were the future presidents of Brazil recruited, yes, you would want to get to know these people because some of them were going to be powerful voices in national politics. Even if they didn't run for reelection, they might leave that job as governor but then become a senator, and then in a few years they would go back and run for governor again because the governorship was really much more powerful than being a Federal senator. They were always employed but they would come and go as governors. Cardoso was never governor of Sao Paulo, he was a senator from Sao Paulo. But his immediate predecessor, Itamar Franco had been governor of Minas Gerais. Here's an example for you - the man who was president of Brazil before Cardoso, after he left the presidency, he got angry at Cardoso because he felt that Cardoso was too big for his britches or whatever, so he decided to plan a comeback, so what did he do? He got himself elected in Minas Gerais again, and as governor of Minas Gerais he did give Cardoso a bad time on some issues relating to this deficit spending and basically trying to obstruct Cardoso's efforts to get Brazil's deficit under control, which then caused problems with Brazil's international credit ratings and caused Brazil's international borrowing costs to go up, all because of this one disgruntled guy who was the governor of Minas Gerais, and he's probably planning to try to make a comeback and someday become president of Brazil again. It's interesting to see that, after you've been president of Brazil, what's the next best job? to be governor of Minas Gerais. The President before him, Fernando Collor de Mello had been governor of his state, Alagoas. So, yes, even from a dinky little state like Alagoas - someday the president of Brazil may be the governor from that state.

Q: Did you have problems traveling around the country?

CASWELL: No, they have well developed airlines in Brazil. Because of Brazil's size, early on they developed airlines and they had several domestic airlines, so you can fly to any of the state capitals. You have your choice of flights just about anywhere.

Q: Was it hard to find money for this, for you all?

CASWELL: Well, the ambassador had obviously the biggest representational budget and travel budget, but they were pretty fair in terms of apportioning out monies for traveling. We would also try to take advantage of the defense attachï¿½'s office, which had access to an aircraft. They would use that aircraft to fly out to defense bases, military installations, around Brazil, and you could hop aboard those flights and go off to talk to local mayors or the governor or lieutenant governor or whatever.

Q: Were we keeping an eye on the military by that time? Obviously we keep an eye on them, but were we feeling pretty comfortable with the military being out of politics?

CASWELL: Totally. The situation with the Brazilian military in the 1990s was kind of like the situation with the Argentine military in that the prolonged time period in government in the 60s through the 80s had come to be seen as corrosive of the military institution by the military itself. The military lost popularity. At first when they took over and they threw out Joï¿½o Goulart in 1964, they were seen as saviors, the Brazilian military. People thought in 1964, oh well, they'll just be in, they'll sort of set things on an even keel, and then they'll get out and they'll turn it back to the politicians again. Well, that didn't happen. For a few years the military had their detractors, but then they had their supporters in the business community because military rule ended the inflation and the economy was going along pretty well for a few years. Then the economy turned sour and concerns about human rights abuses and so forth increased. By the 1980s or so, the economy got so bad, the military was very unpopular, so they basically decided it was time to go back to the barracks. What they found was that the longer they concentrated on doing their military job - and in Brazil that means a lot of it had to do with focusing on the Amazon because in many parts of the Amazon the only agency of the Brazilian government that makes any appearance or provides any services is the military. So the longer they did that, the more popular they became. So by the mid-'90s or so, the Brazilian military was totally professionally oriented. They were beginning to get themselves involved in international peacekeeping operations. They had been looking at what the Argentines had been doing and decided maybe that was a good mission, together with the Amazon. By that time the Brazilian armed forces were once again the institution in the country that was held in the highest popular esteem. The armed forces enjoyed popular confidence way above politicians and used car dealers.

Q: Well, they'd learned their lesson, too.

CASWELL: Yes, I think they had learned their lesson. There was a substantial difference in the generations, however. They had a military club, they called it. Particularly down iRio de Janeiro, this Military club still had disgruntled old retired officers who harkened back to the old days when they were in government or the military was running the show. They felt as though things maybe weren't being run all that well by civilians in Brazil - there's too much crime and there's too much lewdness on the TV and there's too much disorder, and the press can say anything. Those guys are still disgruntled, and maybe some still think the army should be running the government. The generation that now makes up the active duty general officers and the colonels and the lieutenant colonels and so forth, however, no, they don't want to take over and I don't think they have any inclinations towards trying to run Brazil.

Q: Then in '98 you left.

CASWELL: In '98 I left.

Q: What did you do?

CASWELL: I came back here and took the retirement seminar.

Q: What have you been doing since then?

CASWELL: The retirement seminar, I think, was useful in several ways. It goes over with you the process of how to prepare yourself for an interview and how to work on your resume and these sorts of things but, even more importantly, I think it helps you engage in a little bit of soul searching, assessing what you really want to do with the rest of your life and what maybe are your real interests or what's really important to you or what's less important to you. Do you really want to go out and try to make a lot of money or do you want to do something else important to you. Out of that process essentially I decided that, well, I had been thinking about teaching. One of the things when I was in college that I thought maybe I wanted to do before I got into the Foreign Service was education. It was kind of like Robert Frost's "the path not taken." So I resolved essentially that maybe teaching was what I wanted to do this time around. Then I did a little bit more investigating and said, "Well, education at what level" and essentially, through the process of elimination, I figured it probably wasn't very practical to get a Ph.D., which is probably what I needed to teach at the university level. Then I looked possibly at community colleges, but I settled on thinking I might prefer secondary. The question then is private school or public school. I haven't really decided, but I've decided to get certified to teach. So in the meantime I've been doing a little bit of substitute teaching in the public schools to get my feet wet and make sure that's what I want to do, and I think that's what I'm going to do end up doing. So I'm enrolled in a certification program at Johns Hopkins. I do that part time and I teach part time. I also do a little writing.

End of interview