The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project Information Series

WILLIAM P. KIEHL

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is the 15th of September, the ides of September, 2003. This is an interview with William P. Kiehl. This is being done on behalf of the Association of Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. You go by Bill, don't you?

KIEHL: I do.

Q: All right. Let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

KIEHL: I always say I go by Bill because if it was good enough for my mother, it's good enough for anybody. I was born in the little town of Columbia, Pennsylvania, in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, a little town or borough in the municipal terminology of Pennsylvania, of about twelve thousand people, on the banks of the Susquehanna River.

Q: What year?

KIEHL: 1945.

Q: All right.

KIEHL: And. if you want to know it was during a violent thunderstorm on the 1st of September, on a Saturday.

Q: Sounds like Owen Glendower.

KIEHL: Go ahead, I'll respond to the questions.

Q: OK. Well, in the first place, let's talk about the Kiehls on your father's side. Where do they come from?

KIEHL: The Kiehls originally came from Northern Germany, near the Dutch border, quite a long time ago, of course. Like most American families, I think, we didn't pay much attention to genealogy, I haven't done it, either. I can only really trace back as far as my great-grandfather, a fellow named Ludwig Kiehl, who was a farmer in what is now Hempfield Township, Lancaster County, and I understand that he had nine children. My grandfather was one of them, William, another William. He grew up on a farm and attended school and then he went off into business in the 1880s. He got himself a horse and wagon and he got into the transport of goods business, and eventually ended up quite a wealthy man, owned a coal, ice, lumber and cement company in Columbia, Pennsylvania, a pillar of the his church, his community, land developer, et cetera.

He did rather well for himself. He had three children, one of whom was my father, Paul, for whom he had ambitions to send off to college, and Paul went briefly to Franklin and Marshall College. I think his plan was to be a doctor, but my grandfather William, in the years after World War One developed rheumatoid arthritis, which plagued him the rest of his life. He spent a small fortune, I think, in the '20s and '30s trying to get cured. Went to Chicago and had an operation, which actually left him stiff-legged. He had to then walk with two canes, had an elevator installed in his house. It really debilitated him, but he continued to work, owned a company and continued to work until he was 83 years old, every day, in his office, then passed away at age 89. My father worked in the company and basically took over the duties while his father was recuperating from the operations and the several months of hospital stays. He left school came back and helped his father and ran the business while my grandfather was beinhis attempted cures of arthritis, in those days, which I guess were pretty brutal, actually, and proved to be not very successful.

And then he continued to work in this father and son business and retired the same time my grandfather did because they saw there was really no point in continuing a business which was centered on coal and ice, because those industries, after World War II, rapidly declined in interest. And I was not interested in business, as the only grandson, and son, so they both retired at the same time.

Q: Did your family, the Kiehls, consider themselves part of the Pennsylvania Dutch, in a way?

KIEHL: Well, they were Pennsylvania Dutch, because Pennsylvania Dutch really means Pennsylvania German. But the Kiehl family was Lutheran. They were, I guess you might call them "High Church Lutherans," because their services were very similar to Roman Catholic except that they were conducted in German. And later, services were in English. The Roman Catholic Church went in that direction later on. And if you walked into the church during a service, you probably couldn't distinguish it from Roman Catholic, except by the language, in those days. I don't know how it is today.

They were great supporters of the Church, some of the stained glass windows in old St. John's Church in Columbia are donated by the Kiehl family. There's a big window from my grandparents and another from my father and his two sisters, and so on. So they were great financial supporters of the church, and on that side of the family are pretty heavily Lutheran.

On my mother's side of the family ...

Q: What was her maiden name?

KIEHL: Her maiden name was Crom, C-R-O-M. One of those Cromwells, who dropped the "well" because they didn't agree with the dictatorship, I would imagine. Their family history in America goes back to pre-Revolutionary days in Connecticut. The family story is, at least, they were whalers and so on, and then became farmers, and moved into the Philadelphia area of Pennsylvania, some generations thereafter. But their roots are on the sea, in fact, my grandfather on my mother's side, had as one of his names, Esquillaro, because they intermingled with the Spanish in their sea-going days, I guess. And so there was a Spanish name carried down through the family line.

Q: Interesting. What was your mother's family like, where was she educated, and grew up?

KIEHL: She grew up in the same town. She was quite a bit younger than my father. Her family, on her father's side, were Episcopalians, and Methodists, and other variants of Protestantism. On her mother's side they were Roman Catholic. They were the Fleckenstein family. A very large and prodigious family, actually in Pennsylvania Dutch it's called a freundschaft, or an extended family. They immigrated to America in the 1860s. They were small business owners - of grocery stores and the like.

On her father's side, the Croms were fairly well-to-do people in the Philadelphia suburbs, at least today it's the suburbs of Philadelphia. He struck out for Lancaster County and had a farmstead in what's now Washington Borough, on the Susquehanna River, and eventually moved into business and became a retail beer purveyor, including during the Prohibition era. He was one of the major purveyors of beer to the thirsty people of Lancaster County during Prohibition times, and in fact, was raided by the Feds a couple of times. My mother has some wonderful stories about that era. In one, her sister was hoodwinked by a Federal agent. You see, most of the time they got away with the beer business because the local police were on the payroll, including the state police, I mean, everybody was part of the conspiracy to keep the Feds away. B but on occasion, the Feds would come to town and not tell anyone and go directly to the source. My mother tells the story of her older sister Anna, who was then just a tyke, and a man came to the door and wanted to come in and her little sister was up on the balcony and she said, "Well, my daddy said not to let anyone in."

He said, "It's all right, just tell him Mr. America is here." And so she didn't tell her father but she instead opened the door and they raided the place. It's probably an illegal search and seizure in today's terms, but in those daythey lost a lot of kegs of beer.

But that went on through the Prohibition era, and then after Prohibition they sold 3.2 beer legally, and then regular beer and then so on. My maternal grandfather died in 1948, but the business carried on for another generation through an uncle. But it's no longer in existence.

Q: How did your mother and father meet?

KIEHL: My father was in his youth, quite a handsome young bachelor about town. In fact, he didn't marry until he was about 40. And in those days he was pretty well off, I mean, he was buying and selling houses during the depression for 300, 400, or 500 dollars a house, wearing suits that cost at least that much. And he used to go to New York to see the fights, Joe Louis for example. He was a son of a wealthy man and knew how to spend money.

My mother remembers seeing him as a child, around town. But when she was older, I guess he decided he would like to settle down. He was about 16 years older than she. So when he was 40 that would have made her 24. And she was the youngest child in her family, and so she was left at home with her father, her mother having died back in the '20s. He wooed her and won her heart. It was kind of, in those days, rather dramatic, because he came from a prominent Lutheran family, and she came from on her mother's side, a Catholic family, and one was in the very legitimate coal-ice-lumber-cement business, and the other was in essence a bootlegger on that side. But the two families actually got along very well because her father, my mother's father, was such an absolutely charming man, he just won them all over. He was one of those people who could sit down with anyone and in five minutes they were old friends.

Q: Well like so many of their generation, I take it neither one of them finished college?

KIEHL: Oh, no. No. My father didn't finish college, he barely finished a semester at school before he had to come home and work. And my mother, in those days, most women didn't go to college. Although, about the same year, my father's sisteboth of his sisters did complete college. One went tit's now Millersville University, but in those days it was called the State Normal School at Millersville, for teachers. The other, the youngest of the three children, she went to Lebanon Valley College, where she met her husband.

Q: You were born in 194brothers, sisters?

KIEHL: No, only child. Family legend is I had a sister who died in childbirth.

Q: Did you sort of grow up in your early years in Columbia?

KIEHL: Yes. I grew up in Columbia, I went to the local Roman Catholic grammar school, Holy Trinity School. It was a wonderful place to grow up, this small town. Most of the town was laid out in the 1800s, so it was red brick houses, row upon rowell, not row upon row, but street upon street of red brick houses. Our own street boasted some well built brick houses, many of which were built by my grandfather between 1898 and 1902. He lived in one of the houses which also had a large brick barn at the rear of the property and he constructed his coal company office, silos and other structures near by. Eventually, after I was born, my parents bought the house next to my grandfather's house. After my grandmother died, my maiden aunt continued to live in the house with my grandfather and she taught school nearby. The town itself physically hadn't changed in probably 50 years. It was right on the Susquehanna River so a lot of people had cottages on the river, there was a lot of boating and fishing and that sort of thing.

And there were woods nearby, in fact, only two blocks from my home there were woods and creeks and so on, and we used to play cowboys and Indians and soldiers and all sorts of games like that in the woods. It was a great place to grow up as a child. The school was a nice schooof course, I was born one year before the baby boom. So in my class there were only 30 children in each classroom in the school, but in the next year's classroom there were 70. So we had more attention I suppose.

I was a pretty bright kid, I got all the medals and you know, top of my class.

Q: How did you find Catholic elementary school? Was it run by nuns?

KIEHL: It was, it was run by Franciscan nuns. They were very strict but very selfless women, of course. And there was no tuition. Even the Catholic high school had no tuition when I was going there. They were much better schools than the public schools in those days, certainly. I remember my aunt used to teach sixth grade at the Cherry Street School, which was only one block away from my Holy Trinity School, and I'd get out of school; I was in the third grade. I'd come to visit my aunt. I'd sit in on her class, and I taught the kids mathematics, because I had enough mathematics by third grade to teach them their sixth grade mathematics.

Q: Were the nuns our typical hold out your hand and get a swat with a ruler or something like that, to keep discipline?

KIEHL: Yes, although I was a pretty good kid. That only happened to me once or twice. But they believed in corporal punishment, if you deserved it, if they felt you deserved it. They weren't particularly cruel, though of course the personalities were different. There were some sweet nuns and there were some very sour nuns. I suppose in retrospect I have kinder feelings toward them than I did at the time, because they must have led a very strange life.

Q: What were your interests in grammar school?

KIEHL: Well, I was really interested in history and geography. That was, I mean, in terms of the academic subjects. Of course, otherwise I was interested in playing baseball, and other sports like that. I was never a very good swimmer, I was probably a little bit better baseball player, not bad at football, although when I was younger I was thin and couldn't stand up to the really heavy ones. I enjoyed sports. But I didn't ever have to study very hard, I suppose, and I did well in school. The things that interested me most were history and geography.

Q: Can you think of any books that particularly grabbed you as a young kid?

KIEHL: It's funny you should say that. I used to read encyclopedias. I mean, I'd read them from cover to cover. There were children's books and things like that, but I really didn't pay much attention to them. I wasn't really interested in fiction much. But I devoured facts. I suppose I would have been a great child trivia expert on Jeopardy!. I was that kind of kid. I just absorbel loved facts, and nothing would please me more other than Western movies. I used to get up at 6:00 every Saturday morning to watch Covered Wagon Theater before going out to play or whatever. It was on at 7:00 in the morning. And it was old Gabby Hayes and ...

Q: Hopalong Cassidy ...

KIEHL: Hopalong Cassidy, and Red Rider, and all these really, '30s and '40s Westerns.

Q: What about at home? Was it, sit around the table at the dinner time or something, and talk about the events of the day?

KIEHL: We did a lot of that. I would come home for lunch every day, because the grammar school was close enough, and my mother was a homemaker, she didn't have an outside job. So she would cook our main meal at lunchtime, and we would have lunch together. My father and grandfather's office was right around the block, and the town wasn't that big, so he could always get home. So we would literally have lunch together, as well as dinner together, and my grandfather and my maiden aunt, the second sister, the one who went to Millersville, the schoolteacher, lived next door. It was close family, that way.

The thing that I remember most is my father was a wonderful don't know whether he was a wonderful debater or just a very stubborn man, but we used to have debates about current issues at the dinner table, all the time. Whatever side I took, he took the opposite, and whatever side he took, I took the opposite. And we would just go at it, recall as many facts as we could to throw against the other and so on, and I think it really helped me in my life, because that's what I went into. I went into debating and extemporaneous speaking after that, because I was used to think on my feet. That was the way people operated at the dinner table, or the lunch tablwell, it was dinner, our main meal was called dinner and our evening meal was called supper in those days and that was true of most people in rural America at the time.

Q: Where did the family fit in the political spectrum?

KIEHL: My father actually waasked to run for mayor by both Democratic and Republican parties. He didn't want anything to do with politics because it was crooked, in that town, and always was. Both the Democrats and the Republicans were crooked. They were in it for the money or for the power or whatever. Maybe I shouldn't say that quite so boldly, but it was pretty much common knowledge. And he was asked by both parties to run as mayor on several occasions, but he always turned them down. I think he was a registered Democrat, and my grandfather was a registered Democrat. That was a very rare commodity in Lancaster County, because the County was at least three to one Republican. In fact, the county hadn't gone for a Democrat, when I was growing up, since Andrew Jackson in 1828. It had gone Whig after that, and then Republican, until Lyndon Johnson, in '64, carried it by 4000 votes. But Kennedy lost it by over one hundred thousand votes. It's not that big a county.

Q: Yes, I know. Did you get interested - as a kid, from reading the papeor was there a paper?

KIEHL: Yes, the local newspaper was called the Columbia News. It was originally founded as the Columbia Spy in 1808, and continued publishinit's no longer published, it was succeeded by one of these weeklies called the, I think it's called the Columbia Ledger, which has local news in it. It was a daily newspaper, an afternoon, daily newspaper, the Columbia News, and it was published throughout my entire childhood and probably up until the '70s.

We also got the Lancaster Intelligencer Journal, which is still being published, you know. That's the oldest newspaper in America, and it's still continuously published. 1792. And I actually worked for them, I covered the Democratic National Convention in '64 with them, got my press card and everything. We got the Columbia News and the Lancaster newspaper, and then on Sundays we got the Philadelphia Bulletin, and the Sunday News, which was the Lancaster Sunday paper.

Q: Were yothrough school and home and alaware of the outside world much?

KIEHL: Well, I must have been, because that's what really interested me about history and geography. It wasn't so much local history or local geography as it was world history and world geography. The easiest way to keep me quiet was to hand me an atlas. I guess I was interested in it from that point of view, and interested in world affairs, and a lot of the times, my father and I, when we debated, it was about world issues.

Q: At your school, or in the neighborhood, was there anybody you could turn to who was fairly knowledgeable about the world?

KIEHL: Well, I woulthere was no retired Foreign Service officer around the block. In fact, even my teachers in grammar school, they were intelligent people, and my aunt who lived next door was an intelligent person, and my father's younger sister was a French teacher, so she had an interest, at least in languages. And her husband got a master's at Columbia and was a county school superintendent, in the northern part of Pennsylvania. They actually went on vacation to Paris, so I mean, that was a big deal in those days. In those days if people took vacations, they took vacations to the Jersey shore, or they might have taken a trip to Florida. But traveling abroad was very rare. There was really no one in the town that had much foreign experience, except in the Second World War. Or perhaps the Korean War. And the World War II generation, they didn't really want to talk about it much.

Q: You went to high school where?

KIEHL: I went to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, the county seat with about 60,000 people about 12 miles away. Again, I went to a Roman Catholic high school.

Q: What was the name of that school?

KIEHL: Lancaster Catholic High School. It just celebrated its 75th anniversary this year. And I was one of the seven people they selected for an award for professional achievement, which was a great honor.

It was an interesting school in a lot of ways, because it was the first time I was brought together with people outside of my little town, you see. There were two Catholic schools in that little town, and we didn't even associate with each other very much. Now suddenly I'm thrown in at age, whatever it is, a freshma13 or so? and with a dozen different Roman Catholic parishes and their students, most of whom were from Lancaster city, and obviously were much more sophisticated than we country people in the small towns. And there were not only Franciscan nuns there, but there were six different orders of nuns teaching there, plus priests and male teachers as well, and civilians, people who weren't dressed in black. So it was a big leap in that sense.

It was also probably the first time that I was able to meet a group of people who were interested in things outside of Lancaster County, of the small world of Pennsylvania, because there were other students and faculty who were interested in foreign affairs, and history and geography as well. So I had somebody to bounce ideas off of, to listen to, and learn from. That was a big step, I think.

Q: What were the classes, how'd you find the classes? Were world events talked about there?

KIEHL: They were, not so much as freshman and sophomores. As you got to the junior and senior grades, they had more world history and the civics, politics and so on. The earliethe freshman and sophomore years they did things like Pennsylvania history and American history, which were of interest, but didn't have much of a world view. I think that's probably a good way. You really have to know your state and your country before you know the world. It kind of makes sense.

There were more opportunities as I got a little oldeyou know, beyond freshman and sophomore years. First of all, you don't have a car, you're sort of tied to the school bus schedule, basically. And in those days, parents didn't go all out for their children in the same sense that they do now. There weren't soccer moms. I mean, childrekidwere expected to do it on their own. Of course the world was probably a much safer place then, and so people weren't so overprotective as they are now. Young people were a lot more independent.

Q: You were probably about a junior or so during the election of 1960, which engaged a lot of young people ...

KIEHL: Yes, it engaged me too ...

Q: And this was the Kennedy-Nixon one and all. I mean, both sides, these are two quite young candidates compared ...

KIEHL: Well, Kennedy caught our imagination, at least most of the students there. Obviously, he was a Roman Catholic, so Catholic schooll suppose he had an "in" there. . A few of my friends and I were, I guess you might say activists, in that sense. We handed out literature in shopping centers and on street corners. I shouldn't say shopping centers. There weren't really shopping centers, stores were downtown.

Q: Main Street.

KIEHL: A main Street, right-King and Queen Streets in Lancaster or Locust Street in Columbia.. And so we'd hand out Kennedy literature and buttons and we'd go to the campaign headquarters and get armloads of posters and buttons and stickers. I remember one of the most thrilling events of my childhood is when John F. Kennedy came to the little town of Columbia, in a motorcade, to shake hands and drum up votes and it was just the biggest deal that I could imagine at the time. I can still visualize it.

Q: How about the Cold War? Did that intrude at all?

KIEHL: It did, very much, in the sense that, in 1962 the Cuban Missile Crisiby that time I was a suave, sophisticated, cool senior. . And we parked our cars about a block from the campus, within sight of the school. You weren't allowed to smoke on campus, and in those days, of course it was cool to smoke, especially since I'd been kicked off the football team. So I could smoke again.

And a dozen of us would hang out there in three or four cars and smoke and talk, and so on. That was the fall of the Cuban Missile Crisis and we were all scared to death, because we knew we were draft bait the moment we graduated or even before that, perhaps. We'd be drafted to fight the big war. It was really a time when people were so caught up with this, that really, it so dominated everything. I mean, they were even reading prayers on the PA system, this is the Catholic schools. They're very religious. And so, you'd even have prayers that the world situation would resolve itself and we wouldn't have to go to war. We felt like we were lambs there waiting for the slaughter, and it was inevitable. There was no thought of ever trying to evade it, but we were all really worried about it, what it would do to our lives.

Q: During high school and all, did you get involved with summer jobs and that sort of thing?

KIEHL: Yes, my father believed that I ought to work as much as I could. Not necessarily for the money but for the experience, and to get to know people who maybe weren't as lucky as I was. So I did a succession of summer jobs. I welded weights onto the blades of threshing machines for International Harvester. Of course, this was not in high school. I was already in college.

You know, in high schooit was mostly volunteer work. I didn't really work and get paid for anything in high school. It was only after I went to college, and I wanted to get a sports car, and my father said, "Well, you earn some of it and I'll put in the rest. But if you want a car you're going to have to earn it." So I did some pretty awful jobs. I was a weight-shifter in an iron foundry. I was a big boy. I'm pretty strong. They took one look at me and they said, "Oh, you're a weight-shifter."

Q: What does a weight-shifter do?

KIEHL: A weight-shiftel'd almost have to get up and show yol won't, but it was really one of the hellholes of the world. This was the Grinnell Corporation Iron Foundry, they made pipe fittings, a lot of which went to Vietnam. They made a lot of these pipe fittings and they used black sand molds for them. You walk into this gigantic, noisy, cavernous place, and it was about 130 degrees in there, and they had fans going full blast, which effectively cooled it by about a fraction of a degree, but blew black sand in all directions. I mean, I'd come out of there and I'd be all coverel would bl could do a minstrel show, it was that black. That black sand was everywhere.

And what I'd do, is there was a production line, and there were molders. These were the highly-skilled, highly-paid guys, who would take a little metal frame and put it down on the conveyor belt and then put black sand in there, and put these molds in, and then smooth it out, so that when the hot iron went in, it would make the molds. And then another guy would tip this gigantic thing with molten metal into these molds. And then it would come around to me, and I would have to take a hammer and smash the side of it to loosen it, take that off, throw it somewhere, into a stack, and then take a heavy weight off the top of it. That was the weight-shifter. Take the weight off, and put it in a conveyer belt to go back for the next mold to be made. Then this machine would shake all the sand off of it. The molds would be removed, and somebody else would pick the molds up and look at them, and if they were OK through them into one bin, and if they were no good throw them back to be melted again.

And you did this for eight hours straight, with about a ten minute break every so often. And you'd have to eat salt tablets because you'd just be pouring sweat. It was a really incredible job. It was earning me money for my MG. And I met all of these incredible peoplDewey, and Dum-Dum, and all these guys. They'd say, "Hey college boy!" They'd sort of test your metal to see if you were tough or anything. It was like being in prison. If you stood up to people they respected you, if you didn't they probably would grind you in the dirt. I told my father this, and he just laughed. He said, "That's great. That's what I want. I want you to know that not everybody's like you."

Eventually my mother was nagging him about this, this terrible job and so on, and there was a period where, for about two weeks, the whole foundry closed down, and we did clean-uwe summer hires did the clean-up work. And I got picked to clean out the sewers underneath this thing, not the sewers, but it was where all the black sand and oil and everything would filter down into these gigantic drains. They would lower me down there on a rope, and I had this gigantic sucking hose, and I would just move that around and suck all that stuff up. I thought, "This has got to be the worst job in the world." Until I realized that the guy standing right next to mwhen I was told to do this, he was told to go paint transformers, and that poor guthe paint hit a live wire and exploded and he died, a young college student.

After that happened, my mother prevailed on my father to get me out of that, and get the car anyhow.

Q: You graduated from high school in ...

KIEHL: '63.

Q: Where did you go to college?

KIEHL: Well, a whole group of us went to the same college-not planned but it just happened. There were recruiters from various schools that came to hour school and one recruiter must have been darn good, because 13 of us from that class signed up to go to the University of Scranton. I was a National Merit Semifinalist, and I turned down free tuition a couple places to go there. Most of us were pretty close friends, but there were a couple who weren't particularly part of our gang, you might say. We all went there, and I, the first year, roomed with a friend from high school. But we soon parted our ways because we weren't really compatible. The University of Scranton is a Jesuit school. Again, that 1/16th Roman Catholic comes through.

It was a remarkable institution. It was quite a party school, but it also had very good academics, and some brilliant Jesuits. Many of whom were sent there because they were problems at Georgetown, or at Fordham, and they didn't want them in the big city posing notorious problems. So they would ship them off to Scranton, but they kept their brains intact, if you know what I mean. So it was an interesting school.

Q: You were there, what, four years?

KIEHL: Four years there.

Q: Graduated in '67?

KIEHL: '67.

Q: What sort of courses were you taking?

KIEHL: My original thought was that I was going to be a small town lawyer and a big time politician. That was my ambition. I had seen politics in my little town, I had seen politics in Lancaster County, and I worked in the Democratic campaign and I covered the Democratic Convention in '64, while a college student, for the local paper. I thought, "Well, I'll be the first local boy to carry Lancaster County as a Democrat," basically. And Scranton, of course, was in the middle of the coal regions in a town, in a county, controlled by a Democratic machine. So a lot of Democratic politicianCasey, who became governor, his son, who tried to become governor, were all from that area, were all Scranton Democrats. The Scranton family, of course, were all Republican.

So most of my courses were pre-law and politics, that's what I was really focused on, until about, I guess it was my junior year. There was a recruiter there from the State Department at one of these job fairs, and I just thought, "Boy, this would be an interesting thing to do!" I talked to him about it and he said, "Well, you're really better off if you get a master's degree and come into the Foreign Service after that." So I thought about that a little bit.

And then that same fall there was a course given by Imre Nagy, the last freely elected Prime Minister of Hungary. He did a three-week symposium at the university there, and I signed up for it, just out of curiosity. The Seminar was on central and eastern Europe. It changed my life. I immediately, after that, all the geography and interest in world affairs sort of kicked in. I wanted to go into foreign affairs in some way.

I got out of pre-law and domestic political science and into as many world history and foreign affairs courses I could. When it was time to decide what to do after college I didn't go to law school, I went to graduate school.

Q: You mentioned that you went to cover the '64 Convention. How did that come about?

KIEHL: Well, I wanted to go there, and I wanted to see it.

Q: This was in New Jersey, wasn't it?

KIEHL: Yes, Atlantic City. Actually, the Republican Convention was in, I think, Chicago at that time. I wanted to do both, I wanted to cover both, so I went to the local newspaper and I saiactually, a friend of mine and I, he was going to Villanova University then. He graduated a year ahead of me from high school, and he was interested in politics and that sort of thing, too. We both went into the local newspaper office in Lancaster and we also went to the Columbia newspaper and we said, "I don't know how much you're covering these conventions, but this is really interesting and we're political science majors in college, and this is great for us, and we can write, and why don't you give us a chance?" And they said, "Well, we couldn't pay you." And we said, "Oh, we don't care!" We just wanted the press card, you see. So they did give us press cards. So we got accredited. We got into the press area of the conventions and we got to talk to people, and we wrote up a piecactually I wrote most of it, the other guy sort of goofed off and didn't complete it, but we wrote a nice column about the convention in Atlantic City, and they printed it, and that was great.

We didn't get any money for it, but it was a great experience.

Q: What was your impression of the '64 convention?

KIEHL: Well, of course it was a walk for Johnson, I mean it wasn't really a contested convention, but it was just, for somebody of that age, interested in politicthis was just ambrosia, everything. We went around to the hotels and talked to all the delegates, and then to actually be in the hall during the nomination procesand the press gallery was very nicely set up for the visuals of it, I mean, you could see everything happening, and talk to the other reporters. It was just an adrenaline high. For a political junkie, there's nothing better than a political convention.

Q: Did you get any feel for the civil rights overtones to this thing? I'm sure Columbia doesn't sound like a hotbed of concern about civil rights in the South.

KIEHL: It wasn't so much a concern, about civil rights in the South, but it was a stop on the Underground Railroad during the pre-Civil War days, and it had a large African American population from those days on, and actually one of the richest people in Lancaster County, back in the 1830s and '40s, was a freed Afro-American living in Columbia. So there were well-to-do blacks in Columbia, as well as people who weren't very well off.

There wasn't much intermarriage, there wasn't much intermingling of housing, but the schools were not segregated or anything like that. Many of the great athletes were black kids who were local heroes. So I mean it wasn't any kind of obvious discrimination. There were some more subtle forms of discrimination, because the housing was somewhat segregated, and there wasn't much intermarriage.

I remember my uncles talking about going, when he was in the Army Air Corps, training in the South, how appalled he and others from the North were, and how sick it made them feel when African Americans had to walk in the street rather than pass a white persoor these "colored" water fountains and so on, or the buses and so on. It just infuriated them. It made them sick, actually, to think about it. So, I mean there was that feeling. It was a fairly positive feeling about anti-discrimination, but I don't think it was very overt. There were very few people in that town who I think would have gone on freedom marches and that sort of thing. They didn't go out beyond their world unless they had to.

Q: How about at University of Scranton?

KIEHL: Again, it was largely Catholic, white, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania school. Mostly, I would say, probably half the student body was Irish-American. There were a few black students, but they were mainly from Africa. There were maybe a handful of Jews. It was all-male at that time.

Q: Let me just stop here.

[End Side]

KIEHL: ...With an incredibly homogeneous population. Now it's changed, obviously, in the years since. It's now coed, there are lots of Hispanic and Asian and black students. I suppose it's still majority Roman Catholic, I would guess, but it like most of society has changed dramatically since the '60s.

Obviously the students there, even though they were so homogenous and so on, were involved in the civil rights movement, because college students were. They were involved in the civil rights movement, they were involved in anti-Vietnam, but not too much then. It was only in '68, '69 that things really started happening. I was in graduate school at that time. I didn't get my tear gas until graduate school.

Q: What about dating and all that? Where would one find young ladies to ...

KIEHL: Well, in high school, of course, the young ladies were in high school with you, and they were good young ladies. But in college there was a huge Catholic girls school right across the town, Marywood College, and they old saying at Scranton in those days was, "At Marywood, Mary could." There were also a lot of junior colleges and nursing schools which had largely female student bodies. So there was never any shortage of women, even though the Jesuits kept the lid on the all-male college of those days.

When we went there as freshmen, the rules were actually Draconian. First of all you had to wear a jacket and tie to class. You also, unless you signed out to go to the library or some other noble calling, you were supposed to be in your room studying, during the week, at 7:00 p.m. . Even if you were out at the library, you had to be back in your room by 11:00, and lights were out at midnight. Period. And by God, if you didn't do it, the Jesuits would let you have it. Of course, I figured out a way out of that. All you had to do was make the Dean's List and those rules didn't apply. Fortunately, for me it was simple to make the Dean's List.

Q: So you graduated in '67. Where'd you go?

KIEHL: I went to the University of Virginia after that.

Q: Why the University of Virginia?

KIEHL: It wasn't a Jesuit school, and it wasn't a Catholic school. I'm really joking, but it was different. I looked at a number of schools, graduate schools, and first of all, they were willing to give me some money. Secondly, it had a very good reputation. It wasn't too far away and yet it was out of state, and it had the Woodrow Wilson Department of Government and Foreign Affairs, and the foreign affairs was what I was interested in.

I would have been interested in African studies, but in those days the University of Virginia did not offer African studies. Again, we're talking about an era that was quite different. UVA, then, as an undergraduate school, was an all-male institution. The graduate school was coed, however, and the graduate school was probably ï¿½ out of state, whereas the undergraduate college was 50 percent Virginia and 50 percent out of state.

It had all those criteria. It was great. It had a good reputation, it was close enough, it was affordable in that they could give me some of the money and so on, and the Woodrow Wilson Department of Government and Foreign Affairs sounded just about the right thing. They also had a Russian and Communist Studies Center, which I was already interested in Eastern and Central Europe because of this, even back to the Imre Nagy days. So I thought, "Well, that would be something I should get involved in."

Q: You were there for what?

KIEHL: I was in the PhD program, so I was there for three years, but I didn't complete a PhD, I didn't do the dissertation. I think I had all the comps done and all the coursework, but I exited with a master's degree, I didn't do the PhD dissertation.

Q: In this period, from '67 to '7in the first place, what courses really stuck out for you?

KIEHL: There were a couple that actually were very interesting. There was a guy named Vladamir Rysky de Dubnitz who was a Czech diplomat who got out in '48, who taught a course on ideologies. One semester was Western ideologies, and the other was Communist ideologies. So I remember that course, because that was one that was really interesting to me.

I think maybe my favorite courswell, there were two. Paul Shoup was thehe's now retirehe was probably their best known expert at University of Virginia. His specialty was east central Europe, a Balkans specialist. His book was Yugoslavia and the National Question. He became my advisor. So I took courses from him on government and politics of Eastern Europe.

And then on the Russian side there was a young professor named David Powell, who's now at Harvard, working with Adam Ulam at the Russian Center, but then he was a young professor, probably first or second job after his doctorate. He did Russian studies. He also hired me as a research assistant. He was doing a book on Baptists in the old Soviet Union, so I had endless hours of combing through material and writing out index cards about obscure Baptists and Pentecostals and so on, as part of his research for his book. Those, I think, are the ones I remember, and there's also a woman who became one of my readers for my master's thesis who worked for Adlai Stevenson when he was UN ambassador and was also a Peace Corps director, Carolyn Dinneger was her name. In fact, the only reason I ever got my master's thesis done, because I was really focusing on the doctorate, was the fact that she was leaving. I don't know what happened, but she was leaving. She only had one more year to go and if I didn't finish that I'd have to find a new second reader for my master's thesis and I didn't want to go through all that trouble, so that was the factor that really helped me complete it.

She was a remarkable person because, unlike all the other professors there, it seemeother than Rysky de Dubnitz, whose diplomatic experience was in the Mazaryk governmenshe had actually worked as a professional in foreign affairs for the U.S. government, not only an ivory tower academic. So she had a more practical view of reality, which I really ...

Q: It's interesting, did you find at this time, I mean, you were coming out of the academic side, but could you see the split between the theory and the practice in foreign affairs?

KIEHL: To a large measure, it was the difference between Carolyn Dinniger on one side, and the academics, the other members of the department, on the other. And her view of the situation seemed much more current, much more down-to-earth, and much more real than the kind of theoretical, academic fluff, that the other people were talking about. So I really did admire her a lot for that.

Q: Were you getting from your advisor at all a feel for the complexity of Yugoslavia and the Balkans?

KIEHL: Well, from Shoup certainly. He was really the expert on the Serbian, Croatian, Slovakian, Macedonian tensions within Yugoslavia. He was married to a Serb, his wife actually taught Serbian at the University of Virginia.

Q: Had he been in Yugoslavia?

KIEHL: Oh, yes.

Q: Was he therwhen did he ...

KIEHL: He was there a number of times. I think he would go every summer, actually. He knew a lot of these people, obviously, and he was probably one of the two or three leading experts on Yugoslavia in the U.S. academic world.

Q: Somehow, I think I knew him. I was in Yugoslavia from '62 to '67. I'm quite sure, yes, I did know him.

KIEHL: Sure. He still went back, until he retired. In fact, I ran into him at some symposium in Washington when I was Deputy Assistant Secretary of the ECA Bureau, and we got to talking, and he had just come back from a trip there. Even though he was retired, he still goes back, and I think he probably still, he probably doesn't produce much now, he's got to be oh mprobably at least 80 or 85, I would think.

Q: As we talk, it comes much more to mind. Well now ...

KIEHL: He had rather sharp features and thin brown hair, almost a triangular face.

Q: I remember, I think he was a particular friend of two guys I was with at the time, David Anderson and Larry Eagleburger. Did Vietnam intrude much? Graduate school seemed to be a little bit removed from ...

KIEHL: It was a little removed, and University of Virginia was not exactly Berkeley. But there was an SDS chapter a very active one...

Q: That's Students for a Democratic Society?

KIEHL: Students for a Democratic Society. I would say, the large preponderance of students were against the war. There was a small minority, I think, that was pro-Vietnam War.

But everybody was worried about the draft. While I was in graduate school I got a 1A, a reclassification, and it's only thanks to the draft lottery, which came in shortly thereafter, that I wasn't drafted. Because I didn't, frankly, know what else to do. I was thinking, "Well, let's see I've got all this Russian background so I guess I could try to go in to do radio intercepts or something." That's the only thing I could think of. Fortunately for the military, I would say, I was not drafted, because I wouldn't have been a very good soldier, probably. I mean, I would have been, shall we say, less than enthusiastic, but I wasn't contemplating skipping up to Canada, either.

There were a number of demonstrations on the campus, but fairly mild. As I say, they did use tear gas a couple of times, but that's, when you compare the University of Virginia to most other large colleges in America at that time, it was pretty tame. Of course, my department, and the Russian and Communist Studies Center in particular, was a great source of recruitment for the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) and the government in general. So people didn't want to blot their copybooks with the government.

Q: What about Virginia, by this time, civil rights and all that? From the Virginia perspective, from your perspective at the University of Virginia?

KIEHL: We felt it was really pathetic. We were appalled at how few black students there were, we Northerners, you see, because most of the graduate school were from the North, or at least the preponderance were from the North. And we just thought Virginia was so antiquated and so reactionary, and we were right, I mean, we were a little arrogant about it, but we were right because in the graduate program, in government and foreign affairs there were count thetwo black students out of 245 graduate students in government and foreign affairs. Two! This is in a state that's got to be 30 percent black. The one guy, he quit halfway through the first year, and the reason he said he quit is he couldn't stand to be so isolated. There were no other black people around. That was certainly true of the undergraduate population, too. It was a very white school, for a state college in a state that's 30 percent blacthey couldn't have had more than one or two percent Afro-American.

Again, that's all changed. Largely thanks to the movements of the '60s, but those movements did not come out of UVA, I can tell you. They were still sons of peanut planters running UVA, the Raven Society and all that.

Q: Did you get any feel for disquiet in the faculty of the Woodrow Wilson ...

KIEHL: Well, most of the facultl knew were foreign affairs people, not domestic politics. The domestic politics people were much more involved in civil rights, much more involved in local politics, et cetera, although we did get recruited to campaign for various Democrats running for governor and the like. I shouldn't say "recruited," but I mean, it was available to us to do that. Most of the foreign affairs people were really, they were looking across the water. They may have had some personal interests in, and they did have personal interests in local politics and that sort of thing, but they really were not very active in either local politics or civil rights or social justice or any of that . They were really focused on Eastern Europe or Russia or China or India or Japan or whatever they had given their lives to. It's kind of funny, you have this department of government and foreign affairs, but they were totally two different strands. They should have been two different departments.

Q: Were you running across Foreign Service types? Were there any around?

KIEHL: I should say that when I was in college I had a retired Foreign Service officer who taught in the political science department. He taught some of the foreign affairs courses. His name was Professor Robert Earl. He retired from the Foreign Service, or was selected out, I don't know. He did not seem that old. He was professor-age to we college students, certainly in his late 40s or 50s. He had a PhD from, I think, Penn State, and he taught some of the foreign affairs courses at the University of Scranton, so he was foreign affairs. Again, the recruiter there was something that made an impression on me, sort of edging me in the direction of foreign affairs.

At UVA there were a lot of foreign affairs connections, State Department connections, and CIA connections, and DOD (Department of Defense) connections, because it's still believe it still ia major recruitment ground for all of those agencies. Most of the professors in the foreign affairs side of government and foreign affairs were either on contract to INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research) or they had some connections with the State Department and they had people coming to visit, we had foreign diplomats quite often, we had foreign professors of political science from Poland and places like that cominyou know we'd have these little cocktails on Thursday afternoons in one of those lovely buildings at UVA for the foreign affairs types. The graduate students had cocktails but not the undergrads, because they weren't old enough to drink, at least in public. So we'd have a cocktail or a wine and cheese party with them and it was a great way of getting to know some interesting people, foreign professors, people from the State Department and Defense Department and the intelligence agencies and so on would also come to these things.

In fact, one of my fellow students, the year before I left, joined the Foreign Service. I said, "Whoa, what's that like? Tell me all about it because I'm interested in that, too." I was interested in joining the State Department as a political officer, and she had joined the U.S. Information Agency. She was telling me about the U.S. Information Agency, which I hadn't given one thought about, at all. When I saw that you could combine political attributes with media and culture and that just sounded more interesting. So when the time came when I took the Foreign Service exam I checked the box for USIA (United States Information Agency) rather than State, mainly thanks to her efforts. Now, she's still in the Foreign Service. I don't know when she's going to retire, but she should be retiring soon. You could get her viewpoint on that same issue.

Q: What was your master's paper on?

KIEHL: It was "The Soviet Union and the 3rd Arab-Israeli War." The thesis was that a large cause of the 3rd Arab-Israeli War was the encouragement that the Soviet propaganda apparatus gave to the Arab states.

Q: The October war of'73 war, or the '67 war. I mean, there are so many wars ...

KIEHL: Well, the 3rd war was the '67, because '73 hadn't occurred yet when I wrote it. It was the '67 war, and if you looked at what the Soviets were telling the Arabs, both overtly and covertly, they were basically stoking them up to either attack Israel preemptively or to attack them and put them to rest once and for all.

Q: And they had sort of a willing person in Nasser?

KIEHL: Oh, they had a number of willing dupes, who didn't need much encouragement. But I wanted to focus on the Soviet propaganda aspect of it, and that was, again, long before I ever thought of USIA.

Q: I'm interested, one doesn't hear much about this. What were they doing? I know they had, you know, you'd go to Syria and you could buy a newspaper for a relatively small amount, and elsewhere in that arewhat sort of things were they ...

KIEHL: It was all pretty much the typical thing. I did look at that but wasn't the focus of my interest was not Pravda anIzvestiia obviously, because there were relatively few people in the Arab world who read Russian. It's what they would release to the Arab media. In other words, what Radio Moscow would say in Arabic beamed at Syria, or beamed at Egypt, or beamed at Jordan or so on. Most of the inflammatory propaganda was really radio broadcasts or releases from TASS (Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union) in Arabic, for placement in the Arab press, or for the gatekeepers of information in that part of the world, so that they would understand that the Soviet Union was backing them 1000 percent. Kind of like Tom Eagleton, you know, behind him 1000 percent, because the Russians weren't prepared to back them in the war, but they were prepared to incite it.

Q: When did you take the Foreign Service exam the first time?

KIEHL: Well, I only took it once. I took it in December 1969, and then I took the oral in April, and I took the oath in October.

Q: How did you find the oral exam? Do you recall any of the questions or how it went or...

KIEHL: I do. It was, I think, in the OPM (Office of Personnel Management) building that's just on the other side of the State Department, and there's a little park out in front. I was working in the governor's office in Harrisburg then, and I drove down from Harrisburg, I took a day off work. I drove down and found a place to park; luckily I didn't get a ticket. I was there early, so I just sat in the park in front of this building for about an hour, until it was time to go in.

Q: Logan Park, I think it is.

KIEHL: Very possibly. It was an attractive park, it was a sunny day, it was in April. It was beautiful. I just sort of tried to relax, didn't know what else to do. I came in, and they sat me down and there were, I think, three examiners, maybe four. I'm not quite sure now. I remember there were a table and a pad of paper and a couple of pencils on the table. I was at one table and they were at another table with a little bit of a distance between us.

I believe in those days they must have known something about you. They either read your essay or some bio thing, because it wasn't one of these politically correct exercises that we drifted into later. I really enjoyed it. It was great fun. I was just talking just the way I am now, perhaps maybe more articulately then, because I was a full of adrenaline. The only question I can actually recall is them saying to me, "Suppose you were to design an exhibit on contemporary America to tour the Soviet Union. What would you put in it, how would you do it, and whom would you invite to collaborate in it? What would you do? Tell us."

It was a pretty awe-inspiring question, there, for somebody who hadn't given that sort of thing any thought. So I said, "Well, can I just take a moment to think about it?" and they said, "Sure. But not too long."

I put the pad of paper there and I made a couple of notes, I can't remember what I wrote, and then I started to talk, and I made it up as I went along. I remember talking about folk music as part of it, and Bob Dylan, and all sorts of American societal and cultural icons. I don't even remember what I said. They really loved it, the exhibit, I guess.

At the end of it, I left the room for a few minutes while they deliberated, and then I was called back it. That's how they did it in those days. They may be doing that again. I came in and they said, "You did an extraordinarily good job, and your test scores are very high and we gave you the highest score we could have given here, so you'll be in the next possible class to come into the Foreign Service." I said, "Oh, thank you. That's great." They said, "You'll hear from us soon."

Sure enough, I did hear from them relatively soon. Then I had to decide, do I give up my job in the state government and go to the Foreign Service, or do I continue in the state government, because I was one of 22 people who were career people in the governor's office, out of 160-some people.

Q: Let's talk about this. How did you get into this? We had you at graduate school, and all of a sudden you're in the state government, the Pennsylvania state government. How did this come about?

KIEHL: I was in graduate school, and I had finished all my course work and my comprehensives. I think I was the only one in the East European, Soviet area to actually pass all my comps, out of the five of us who took them. I was set, and I was starting to map out my master's thesis, which would eventually become a doctoral dissertation, in maybe a little bit more narrow sense.

My father had had a stroke, and then had another one, and was not very well, so I moved back home. I was still enrolled in the government and foreign affairs department. I moved back to Pennsylvania to be there, because it was a family emergency, you might say. I had to decide whether I would go back and actually live on campus at UVA then or stay in Pennsylvania for the fall semester, and I decided to stay in Pennsylvania. And in October, my father died, which of course was a blow to me, but it was really a blow to my mother, so I stayed there. I thought, "I've got to help her through this, I can't just do nothing." I decided to see what I could do about getting a job in Pennsylvania.

I was still working on my master's degree I mean, my thesil was still writing it. I was going up to New York to interview people at the UN, and I was going to Library of Congress and doing that. I took a test, might have been in November or early December, about the same time as the Foreign Service exam, somewhere in that area, for the state of Pennsylvania. You would sit an exam there and then they would offer you a job depending on what you did. Well, I immediately got a job offer to work in the governor's office, so I took it, and started there, I think, right after New Year's.

Q: This would be 1970?

KIEHL: 1970. I was then working there from January of '7and I took the oral in Apriso I was doing the two simultaneously.

Q: What sort of work were you doing in the governor's office?

KIEHL: I was in the Bureau of Personnel, which is like the OPM equivalent. What I was asked to do, though, what the 22 of us were asked to do, is to look at state government and reorganize it, in terms of classification pay and jobs and organizational structure, to make it fairer and better for the commonwealth. So we would do all kind of weird stuff. I traveled all over the state, to mental hospitals, prisons and homes for disadvantaged children and so on to interview people who were stoking furnaces. Stationary engineers, they were called. These are guys who got their training in the Navy, on ship boilers, and naval ships, and then they would do the same job to heat the prison and so on. To determine what kind of salary they should get, and what kind of grades of stationary engineer there should be, and what size boiler would graduate them from one grade to the next and so on. And more importantly, what their salary would be.

Then on the other hand, I also did a study of all the lawyers who worked for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, of which there was one hell of a lot, including 22 or 23 lawyers who worked for the Milk Board. The Milk Board only had seven people. There were 23 lawyers on contract for the Milk Board. You know what I mean?

Q: This sort of a thing, turning a bunch of bright young kids loose in ...

KIEHL: Right. It'll make you cynical real fast.

Q: ...into a government where politics ...

KIEHL: Right. It was a great revelation to all of us, shall we say, but it was an interesting turn into domestic politics, because I had determined that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was paying about 30 percent more to lawyers than they should have received, based upon the average payment for lawyers throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, many of whom, by the way, weren't even making, in those days, $10,000 or $7,000 a year, small town lawyers and so on. There were people on these various boards who were working six hours a month and earning many times that, so when I had my preliminary report together, I had a little meeting with the Attorney General of Pennsylvania, who screamed at me like I was an insect or something. He was not going let that happen, and a lot of other people weren't going to let that happen. You could see that this was definitely going to be a big battle.

Q: Who was the governor at the time?

KIEHL: Schafer. Raymond Schafer. He was a Republican. We're 22 career people out of 160. My secretary had to pay, in those days.I think it was $5 a week to the Republican Party to keep her job. So anything I wrote would go immediately to the Republican Central Committee. If it were a Democrat, the same thing would have happened with the Democrats. It was completely nonpartisan in that sense. Whoever was in charge was in charge.

Q: Why were they doing this? I mean, having ...

KIEHL: Well, it was fine when it was Stationary engineers. When it got to be lawyers, it got to be a little much because then it invaded the political class. There aren't too many stationary engineers in mental hospitals and prisons who are very influential in the legislative process, you might say.

Q: I can just see you go into that minefield and dance around a little bit.

KIEHL: Right, it was really something. But however I did, my boss's secretary was really a good typist, and she typed mfor a small femy master's thesis, so it all worked out in the end. In those days you had to have two pristine copies of your thesis typed on an IBM (International Business Machines Corporation) Select.

Q: No computer, no word processor.

KIEHL: No. Computers in those days took up whole rooms and were fed by 100 or 120 keypunch operators. We used to do reportI had a little Dictaphone type thing that, when I was on travel, I would dictate the report into it, and it would record on a little paper disk, and I would mail the disk back, and then my secretary would transcribe it, so that when I came back from the trip the report was ready for me to edit. That was about as sophisticated as we got.

Q: Well then fall of 1970?

KIEHL: October 11th, 1970, I took the oath of office. Henry Loomis, who was then the deputy director of USIA, administered the oath. There were 13 of us.

Q: How did it work, the USIA contingent and the State Department contingent sometimes are together and sometimes separate. How did they work together in your time?

KIEHL: It was sometimes together, sometimes separate. We came on board, I believe, two weeks before the State contingent, so we had two weeks to bond, you might say, and also learn about USIA, and then suddenly we were transferred over to the A100 course and we did the six weeks of the A100 course with our State Department colleagues. There were 13 of us, 30 of them.

Q: How did you find your colleagues, I mean first in USIA, and then in the A100?

KIEHL: I think the year that we came in was the first year that they decided to take iperhaps it was the first yeathey decided to take in contemporary people. In other words, until our class, and I looked at the pictures, they all had short hair. We, the guys, all had hair down to here.

Q: To your shoulders.

KIEHL: Yes. We looked like somebody in 1969 or '70, and of course our attitudes were '69 or '70 attitudes, I think, and our lifestyle was as well. Even the people that we saw who were a year or two ahead of us, they all had, GI haircuts, or flat tops or whatever. They didn't look like contemporary people or contemporary young people. I think maybe it was something of an experiment, to say, "Oh, well, we probably ought to find out what these people are actually thinking. Maybe the hair doesn't make them stupid."

So that was somewhat different, but most of our State colleagues had short hair, and were much more buttoned-up. I mean, they all had suits and vests. We were wearing sport coats. It was a little different, not universally so, I don't mean to say everybody in State was pompous and everybody in USIA was cool. There were exceptions, and there were a lot of exceptions, but there was a difference. There was definitely a difference in the selection process. Several of the State people had PhDs, for example, which none of us did. I think we had maybe half had master's degree and half bachelor's. Otherwise, we seemed to get along OK.

The first couple of days was kind of weird, because apparently the State contingent had all gotten together and were told to study the State Department phone book, and we hadn't gotten that word, because the first day they came in and they put "A" or "D" and all these initials on the board, and people were supposed to know what "D" meant and "A" meant and EUR meant, and so on. Well, we hadn't a clue what any of this gobblygook was. I must say, it was very off-putting to the State Department, from our perspective. Who cares about this alphabet soup?

We did go through it, and we got to know each other, and I think, we bonded with our State colleagues and they bonded with us. Maybe not 100 percent, but we bonded pretty well. Part of the six week course was a couple of days of USIA, and we, as the USIA people, were given the responsibility of planning it, as to exactly what our State colleagues would know about USIA. This was, in a sense, part of our training, towe had to recruit people to speak. We had to set up the auditorium. We had to decide everything from the lighting to the backdrop to what films they would see, as examples of USIA products to what people they would meet and what they would talk to them about, which was actually a very sensible idea. So we did do that, and I thought it came off really quite well, except for one small thing, which I know affected our State colleagues, because many of them mentioned it to me, and it also affected us, in an embarrassing situation. I believe it was the same Henry Loomis, who was a very sharp guy, I might add, and very articulate, and probably a very good deputy director of the USIA. I can't even remember who the director was. Frank Shakespeare, I think, but he wouldn't deign to talk to junior officers, but we did get the deputy.

He was very smooth, sophisticated. He had everyone in the palm of his hand during his talk, and then either in response to a question or an off-hand remark about, I think it was the Dominican Republic, he said "The Dominican Republic and other stupid little countries like that," or something like that. You could just feel the hair on the back of the neck of all of these young officers bristle, because they had been confronted with someone who didn't think politically correctly, I guess, and it just deflated the whole event. I heard many of my State colleagues say that. We were all, frankly, taken aback and a little embarrassed by it, as well. It's interesting, how one little thing like that can color the ...

Q: In your USIA contingent, for years, early on, because USIA was created - sort of Edward R. Murrow configuration - you were getting a lot of people who came in with newspaper and radio experience. What about your group?

KIEHL: I think most of them didn't have it. Most of them were probably indistinguishable in background from political officers. There were a couple of people who had backgrounds as reporters, or had had jobs as reporters, but they were more or less the same backgrounds as the political officers were. I think I can only recall two people who actually worked in journalism for money. One woman was a UPI (United Press International) reporter, and another guy worked on a newspaper, a medium-sized newspaper.

Q: This is 1970, this is Kent State and the height of an awful lot of opposition, and the junior officers were in a certain amount of rebellion and Nixon was very unhappy. Petitions had gone out and all that. How did your group face up to this sort of thing?

KIEHL: I would say most of them, to be kind, were just grateful to have a safe and secure job. I don't think there were many people who were particularly rabble-rousers, at that point. They had done some of that in graduate school, but their attitudes were very conventional, I think.

Q: USIA was throwing an awful lot of young people into Vietnam at the time, in various jobs and cards and other things. How was this playing with your group?

KIEHL: I think everybody assumed that if things went the way they were going then, everybody would have a tour in Vietnam, but we knew, fairly soon that not everybody would go to Vietnam, in fact, almost nobody went to Vietnam of that group. They were willing, I think, and they wanted to send junior officers off to other posts first. You'd be rather foolish to pick Vietnam as your first assignment in the Foreign Service, I think, in those days. For one thing, it would have probably increased attrition a good bit.

. Once people had made up their minds to join the Foreign Service they were pretty much agreed that they would work within the system. They weren't going to fight the system per se. I can recall only one of the 13 of us who actually quit over a foreign policy dispute in the first couple of years, and that was the UPI reporter I mentioned. She went to Abidjan, and I think was an assistant information officer there and could not bring herself to defend the war to the people of the Ivory Coast, although I don't think there was a whole lot of interest, in the Ivory Coast, in the Vietnam War. Nevertheless, , I'm sure, there were occasions when you had to put out official statements and so on, and so at some point before the end of that tour she said, "I don't need this. I can't work for a government like this." and left. Now she's off in academia teaching journalism, in fact I communicated with her only about a year or two ago. (end of tape)

So anyway, I think she was the only one in our group of the USIA people who left for, you might say, ideological reasons or political reasons, at least in the early years.

Q: With the State contingent, were there currents within the A100 course about the war, or about what was happening?

KIEHL: Actually, I think in retrospect we might think of them as greater currents than they were, because most of the contingent there, both State and USIA were not happy with the war, but they weren't sufficiently unhappy to lay it on the line.

Q: Well, of course, it was at a time when, if you really weren't happy, you wouldn't have joined up.

KIEHL: You wouldn't have joined, that's right.

Q: Were you married at the time?

KIEHL: No, I was single, but I had found my future wife by that time, and in fact, we were married while I was studying Serbo-Croatian before our first assignment, so when I left for Belgrade, we left as a couple.

Q: Tell me a little about her and what her background was.

KIEHL: Oh, yes, sure. She's now in the Foreign Service also. Her father was a professor of education law at the University of Pittsburgh, and her mother was a school psychologist, and she has a sister, who's now a lawyer. Pam went to Wilson College, which is a small Presbyterian school in central Pennsylvania. I didn't know her then. When we married she was getting a master's degree in counseling at the University of Pittsburgh, but between those two degrees she worked on Wall Street for the New York Stock Exchange. Before that she worked for the National Security Agency, as, I suppose, some sort of code-breaker. We never really discussed that in any detail.

We met on vacation in7, and we saw each other a few times over the next couple of years and really didn't get serious until about 1969. This is after she had left Washington and was living in New York. She was working at the stock exchange, living on the Upper West Side, and we would commute, you might say, from Charlottesville and New York to see each other, and then I moved to Harrisburg and she moved to Pittsburgh to get her master's degrel was working in the governor's office. And then I moved to Washington and she was still in Pittsburgh, and we kept up our relationship throughout that time and I believe I asked her to marry me shortly after I got the appointment to the Foreign Service, because I realized I'd be going overseas and we couldn't keep this up otherwise. She was foolish enough to agree.

So we got married. They actually gave me one day off Serbo-Croatian class, which was unprecedented, so that I could go to Pittsburgh and get married at Heinz Memorial Chapel, at the University of Pittsburgh.

Q: It was about the end of November, December, your A100 course or traininand then what?

KIEHL: That ended and then I didn't have Serbo-Croatian start until February, because for JOTs, junior officers, they didn't want to expend an 11 month course on somebody who was untested. So they gave us a six month course, which was fine, I got my 3-3 in six months so I was happy. But that didn't start until February, so the period between the end of November and February, I was assigned to the training office of USIA, which was located in room 1100 of 1776 Pennsylvania Ave. USIA redesigned the 11th floor of this old building.. They had multimedia slide presentations, and all this glitzy stuff that had been brought into USIA. It was cutting edge in those days, of how to get peoples' attention. They said, "Well, you're assigned here, because you're not in class until February, so what would you like to learn?" I said, "I'd like to learn everything." One of the guys there was a very skilled photographer, and I said, "Well, maybe you could help me be a better photographer." They said, "Oh yes, you can do that."

So in addition to developing slideshows, and multimedia presentations, I'm learning how to run a 16 millimeter projector and set lights and vaguely theatrical and media techniques. They also gave me two Nikons and unlimited film and unlimited developing, and all I had to do was go around and shoot pictures. Then Bernie Udell, who was a great photographer and was also a motion picture producer, would review my photos and critique them. It was wonderful. Any claim to fame as a photographer I have today is thanks to Bernie Udell..

There was a great group of people in the training office, there. They were just super people. Some of whom are still friends, I mean, they retired a long time ago, but we still keep in touch. I worked there until February, and then came over to the vertical slum in Rosslyn a.k.a. FSI to do Serbo-Croatian with Janko Jankovic who speaks the purest Serbian, from Sabac.

Q: You spoke pure Sabacian. Was Popovic there, or was it Jankovic?

KIEHL: This was Jankovic, and Milosevic.

Q: Milosevic. I took it with Jankovic and Popovic, who is his brother-in-law, who introduced me to a hard line Serb. Anyway ...

KIEHL: "Don't tolk like bouk!" (Don't talk like a book.) That was Janko Jankovic's favorite phrase.

Q: Where were you going to go?

KIEHL: Belgrade.

Q: As what?

KIEHL: Junior officer trainee. JOT, or PAT, public affairs trainee, I guess. Eastern Europe was the most sought-after area for officers in USIA, of course, so in order to get an assignment in Eastern Europe you had to have an interview with the director of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. He had to personally OK you.

Q: Who was that?

KIEHL: A Senior FSO named Jock Shirley. Everyone associated with Eastern Europe in those days knew Jock Shirley. So I had my interview and passed muster. I got one of the two East European jobs, and the other East European job was really in the Regional Projects Office (RPO), Vienna, and Pete Beshkahazy got that one.

Interestingly, the same woman who influenced me to join USIA versus State was turned down for Belgrade a year earlier, or maybe two years earlier, because she was a single female. That was an earlier time, you see.

Q: Oh, very much so.

KIEHL: It was a non-fraternization post, of course, and I had to be a married male. Well, I was single at the time I was assigned. I don't know whether they knew I was going to be married or not, but in any event she was turned down. I don't believe they said that it was because she was female and single but it was clear. I don't whether she ever pursued that or not, but for a single female, there was a policy. Single females, at least in USIA and I think State, as well, were not assigned to Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union.

Q: Well, actually we did have. I remember we had Hannah Woods, who came to Belgrade when I was there, and this would have been '67, '68.

KIEHL: You might be right, because when I was in Yugoslavia there was at least one single female, not a secretary, an officer, who was there, but she was actually undercover.

Q: We did have a couple of officers who were CIA who were there who were female, but not many.

KIEHL: I guess it was the policy of USIA at least. Anyway, it didn't hurt our friendship in anyway. Q: Sometimes with these language training you pick up quite a bit about the culture just from the teachers.

KIEHL: Oh, yes, certainly.

Q: Were you picking up any of the, again, the currents that run throughout? Particularly the Serbian experience?

KIEHL: I kind of felt sorry for the students who were going to Croatia, for example, because they got Serbian too! As I found out when I moved from Belgrade to Zagreb, that was not exactly an advantageous position to be in. Both Jankovic and Milosevic, of course, were Serbs, and they were very, I would say, nationalistic Serbs. Serbia was the center of the universe as far as they were concerned.

They never displayed any outright animosity to Croatia or Croats, or for that matter, any of the other people of Yugoslavia, at least in the class that I was in, but it was clear that Serbia was it, and of course, there were a couple of people in the classes who were going to Zagreb, and they just dismissed Zagreb as nothing. These poor people, they learned Serbian from Sabac, and then they arrived in Zagreb. I'm sure, as I used to tell people, when I moved from Belgrade to Zagreb speaking my Sabac dialect of Serbian, every time I asked for hleb [bread]or [soup] they would spit in my soup and drop the bread on the floor before they'd give it to me.

Now, my wife, who didn't have an hour of Serbian, they refused to pay for any until we were married, and of course we were only married a couple weeks before leaving so it wasn't worth it, she was trying to learn Serbian on her own, in Belgrade. When we went to Zagreb she went to the university and took a course in Croatian for foreigners. She was the saving grace there, because even though I had converted as much of my ?orba [Serbian for soup] to juha [Croatian for soup] as possible, she really spoke Croatian with a Croatian accent. So that helped a lot.

Q: All right, for the uninitiated, Sabac is a very small town on the south, isn't it?

KIEHL: Yes, it's actually about midway between Belgrade and Zagreb, off the main road.

Q: It's sort of a farminSabac, I mean the two I had were Jankovic and Popovic ...

KIEHL: They were both from there.

Q: They'd say, "We're related," and they felt this is the purest language, but people in Belgrade used to wonder, I mean, all these Americans came out with this small town, sort of hick dialect.

KIEHL: A hick dialect, and a somewhat archaic Serbian as well. In fact, about the only people who really appreciated it were some of the workmen who were in the maintenance department, because it was their language, too.

Sabac is a weird place. I remember driving through there, I had a little Fiat sports car, and we drove through Sabac and the only thing I remember was thousand and thousands of geese and ducks, all hissing at the car. And I thought, "There is the purest form of Serbian, right there."

Q: I think this is a good place to stop, because I have somebody coming soon. Why don't we pick this up, I'll put this at the end here, the next time? We'll pick this up. You are arriving in Belgrade in 1971, I guess.

KIEHL: That's right, June of '71.

Q: '71. We'll talk about your impressions. I'll ask you about your impression of Yugoslavia at the time, and what were the relations and all that.

KIEHL: Great.

Q: Today is the 22nd of September 2003. Bill, let's start with 1971. So, in the first place, what were relations like between the United States and Yugoslavia?

KIEHL: Well, actually they were quite good. After '48 when there was the split between Tito and Stalin, and then Yugoslavia went its own way under League of Communists of Yugoslavia, they needed to turn to somebody for help and the U.S. was more than happy to provide arms and support to the Yugoslavs in order to block the Soviets from gaining access to the Adriatic. As they used to say, the great fear was Soviet sub bases in the Adriatic. It's not ideal for submarines, but nevertheless, that obviously would have changed, particularly with regard to Greece and Turkey, who would be outflanked as that part of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) if there were a strong Soviet presence in Yugoslavia and the Adriatic.

Relations were quite good. The U.S, didn't turn a blind eye to what was essentially, a one-party state, but Yugoslavia was evolving pretty quickly. A lot of the worker self-management councils were a sham, but a lot of them were actually functioning, kind of quasi-democracies. The dreaded UDBA (Unutrasnja Dravna Bezbednost, or International State Security), or the secret police of the Tito regime, the UDBA chiefs name was Rankovic, was a big wheel there but back in about 1966, the power of the UDBA was broken. While UDBA, or the secret police, were still a presence in Yugoslavia, they weren't the kind of presence that the STB (Statni bespecnost, or State Security Service) was in Czechoslovakia or the KGB (Komitet Gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti, or Committee of State Security) was in Russia. They did, as I remember, follow me around quite a lot, in my little Fiat sports car, but they were basically a benign presence as far as the diplomatic corps was concerned, although there was a non-fraternization policy in Yugoslavia at the time. I think the local secret police took advantage of that to try to suborn people using sex and blackmail mainly Marines and other vulnerable staff.

Q: The non-fraternizatiohow did this play out?

KIEHL: Well, essentially, it restricted single officers and staff support from having anything other than an office or professional relationship with Yugoslav citizens, certainly. For that matter, it applied to married people, as well, obviously. There were kinds of personal relationships permitted, nothing of the intimate variety. Obviously you could have friendships with people, but you couldn't have anything that would be an intimate relationship or that sort of thing. I think that policy probably did trip up a number of people. Basically, I am the last person to know gossip at any mission I've been to, so I only found out about most of the scandals after I left Yugoslavia, and I'd just as soon not repeat any of it.

But obviously there were a lot of occasions over the years in which the non-fraternization policy made some people, perhaps, susceptible to blackmail where they wouldn't have been otherwise. I think in many cases that's just a foolish policy, because it enables people have been blackmailed where they wouldn't have to be blackmailed otherwise. It's like in a later era, not to digress too much, but in a later era when we pulled all the FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals) out of Moscow, for example, it was one of the stupidest ideas in history, and then we supplied the PA&E people and other contract people, many of whom, of course, were involved in intimate relationships, who wanted to go to Russia for their own agendas, but some of whom had never been outside Tulsa, Oklahoma before, and because these people were Americans they were not subject to as close a scrutiny as Russians would be. Under the FSN system we knew the spies, we knew all the Russian employees were spies, or were reporting to the secret police, and so you just acted accordingly, and restricted their access to information. But with the Americans replacing FSNs it made it much easier for the KGB to blackmail or to suborn in some way or another, either with sex or money or ideology or whatever, and then these compromised Americans were easier to slip through the net of security, in terms, I don't mean in terms of physical security, but obviously operational security, and I think it made for a much more dangerous situation, than having a couple of hundred Russians on the compound.

Q: Sure, you knew what you were dealing with.

KIEHL: Exactly.

Q: Do you recall, was this a period of time when Tito was clamping down on Nationalists, and Croatian nationalism.

KIEHL: Exactly, very much.

Q: What there an impact on what you were seeing at all?

KIEHL: Not so much. It was interesting, because the clampdown, the real clampdown on the Croatian party, and it was really a clampdown on nationalists within the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, and the Croatian party, which was a very, as it turned out, very nationalistic group of people who are good loyal Communists but nationalist Communists. Most of the pressure on them took place when I was in Belgrade in the 1971-72 period. Interestingly, by the time I moved up to Zagreb, the wheel had turned and Tito was purging the nationalists of the Serbian League of Communists, in the '73-'74 period. So I could observe it from the other city in each case.

In terms of Croatia, I did have a good bit of contact with Croatia, even though I was in Belgrade. The consular district, obviously, for Zagreb included the Dalmatian Coast, but for cultural purposes, and when I was a junior officer I was rotated through various sections, when I was in the cultural section, I handled the cultural aspects of the Dubrovnik festival, the U.S. contributions to that. So I was making a lot of trips back and forth to the Dalmatian Coast. Dubrovnik was an interesting city in that there's a very high percentage of Serbs living there, but nevertheless it was in a Croatian province, and you could quite easily see the level of nationalist fervor there, even in those days. For example, there was a very popular folk song of the era, called Mariana. [sings] Mariana, Moja Slatka Mariana.

I can't sing, but that's basically how the tune went. Well, there were alternate lyrics to that, which were highly nationalistic of Croatian independence and sovereignty and so on, and that was sung more often than the standard version, in the tavernas and wine bars of the area. Since my Serbo-Croatian was pretty good in those days, it was pretty evident.I mean you could understand the lyrics quite easily, that they were nationalistic lyrics rather than the original ones. People didn't hide that at all, even though there were a lot of Serbs in that part of Dalmatia, because of Dubrovnik. I think many of the leading families in Dubrovnik were actually Serbs. If it were so evident there, you can imagine in the smaller villages of Croatia and Dalmatia there were ever fewer restraints on that kind of activity.

Tito was very effective in stripping the party of its leadership, and essentially demoralizing it, and essentially put that nationalism on the back burner in Croatia, until of course, later events in the '90s.

Q: Let's talk a little about the embassy. Talk the about the ambassador, DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission), and how you served in relationships within the embassy.

KIEHL: Oh, sure. Again, I was the lowest of the low, I was, I think at the time, the only third secretary at the embassy, so at the very tail end of the diplomatic list. There were one or two other junior officers there, but by and large, it was a very experienced embassy in that sense. A fair number of senior officers, it was a big embassy, there were a fair number of senior officers and mid-level officers. To us junior officers they seemed like ancient human beings of a quite a different type. In that sense we could objectively observe events, because we were more or less still outsiders as junior officers.

Of course the ambassador when I got there was Ambassador Leonhart, who, at least to the junior officers, was a very distant person. He wasn't much in our lives, in fact. There were no meetings with the ambassador, as is commonly the case now, ambassadors and DCMs, for their own career interests are basically told, "You better take care of your junior officers." That wasn't the case then. The junior officers were not, I mean, they were just part of the furniture, in essence. So we didn't see much of the ambassador. In fact, we were invited to a cocktail party at the public affairs officer's house, and the senior officer for USIS there, or USIA ...

Q: Who was ...

KIEHL: That was Wallace W. Littell, "Pic" Littell. A legendary character and person, I might say, in USIA. Still very much with us and living in Florida, I believe. He was the fellow who opened up the first USIA post in Moscow in 1956. Of course, there and in most of Eastern Europe, there was no USIS or USIA.We had to transfer to the State Department, in theory, because USIA was considered an unfriendly agency by the Communist governments. USIS were not called USIS but the press and cultural section of the embassy, or P and C. Pic Littell hosted a cocktail party at his house, and there were a lot of Yugoslav intellectuals and so on there, and it must have been a pretty big party for the junior officers to also be invited. We were there chatting with people and getting to know some peoplit was probably one of the first of these cocktail parties we went tand my wife remembers meeting this older, short fellow, and she said, "What do you do here?" And he said, "Well, miss, I'm the ambassador," which sort of took her aback, because she had never seen the guy before. That tells you how distant the ambassador was from the low-ranking troops.

Q: The DCM?

KIEHL: The DCM, when we first got there, was Tom Enders, and it was kind of a Mutt and Jeff act, in a way. Ambassador Leonhart was fairly short and Enders, as you know, was I think about 6'10" or so, he was really tall. When the two of them stood next to each other it was almost, without trying, a humorous looking situation.

Of course he left ...

Q: Could you talk about what you were getting frobecause that was quite well known, the sort of explosion that happened.

KIEHL: Yes, but you know, we were so far down on the totem pole, that we really didn't get any kind owe got basically third- or fourth-hand stories, and as far as we could figure it was just a personality clash. This was somewhat exacerbated by the differences in size, and so owell, without trying to psychoanalyze it, we just sort of chalked it up as a personality clash and the winner in the clash, of course, in the short run was the ambassador, but probably in the long run was the DCM, as is usually the case with those kinds of clashes.

The new DCM who came in we got to know a little bit. Robert Johnson, and his wife, whose name escapes me at the moment, but I'm sure I can crib it in there later on. If my wife were here I'm sure she'd know her name.

Q: I want to say Donna but it wasn't Donna.

KIEHL: No, but it's something like that.

Q: Because we took Serbian together.

KIEHL: Oh, you did?

Q: I used to look at her across the table and fell in love with her.

KIEHL: She was an attractive woman of her age.

Q: A very nice lady.

KIEHL: They were both very nice people, and I think they were more interested in the junior officers in general than most of the other officers in the embassy, including even mid-level officers. I mean, nobody really gave a damn about anybody else in that sense. There was no such thing as mentoring going on. Although, there was something not dissimilar to mentoring in my rotations, and in those days, USIS officers only rotated in the USIS section. I did get to know people really well because we were working together, and that was nice. It was a little harder for my wife because she wasn't working in the embassy, and so she was out and about, looking at raw meat hanging on the hooks and learning Serbo-Croatian with a book, and looking at the street signs and trying to figure out what they were. A couple of the wives did sort of take her under their wing a little bit and show her the ropes about local shopping, and embassy life, et cetera.

When I think back this must have been terribly difficult for her. This is a woman with a master's degree who has essentially turned into a shopper. That's about it.

It was very much in the old style, the embassy and the Foreign Service then. It was still the age when you had the secret part of the OER (Officer Evaluation Rating) that you didn't see, and it also had a report on your family. So it was really an earlier age. Junior officers today coming into the Foreign Service I'm sure could not even imagine such a feudalistic system as existed in those days, when the ambassador or the DCM's wife said, "Cookies!" and the ladies would start baking. Unbelievable! We found it absolutely astounding, my wife and I, I must say that. The other junior officers did, too, because, as I pointed out, we were of that '60s generation with hair down to here and it was such a culture clash. I walked into the embassy and everybody looked like a Marine, including all the foreign service officers. In that sense they weren't particularly representing America, circa 1970. They were maybe representing America 1955.

As I rotated around, I got to know people a little bit better, they got to know me a little bit better, so some of these barriers and these sorts of culture clashes did break down. The one office that I could not, and I'm not sure I even tried, to break down the culture clash, was with the defense attachï¿½'s office. The DATT (defense attachï¿½) at that time took one look at me and said, "This guy's a Commie," or "He's an anti-war protester," or "He's Jane Fonda in disguise," or something. Basically, he had it in for me the whole time. In fact, I know that he tried to get me removed from the embassy. I think he tried it with another of the junior officers, too, who had longer hair and looked more like a hippy to him. That was unfortunate, but I didn't, frankly, make any effort to win him over, either, so I can't say that it was totally his fault.

Q: Tell me, Yugoslav youth kept a pretty close eye to what was happening in the West.

KIEHL: Yes. I was the perfect guy, in fact, I was the de facto student affairs officer for the embassy.

Q: What were you seeing and what were they picking up from us? What were you seeing with the youth movement there?

KIEHL: Well, there were two organizations with which I worked pretty closely . One was the Studenski kulturni centar. The other was the Dom Omladije, the House of Youth. House of Youth was a little more square and a little more party-faithfuthe Young Communists, essentially. They were aware of all of these trends in the world, and they were trying to adopt the dress, the look, the lingo, the music, the culture, to the point where with a lot of the Yugoslav kids, you couldn't tell the difference between Americans, western Europeans or Yugoslav young people.. And if they spoke English, you couldn't tell they were from the Eastern bloc, as you might say, or the Eastern part of Europe. They were ravenous for Western culture. The Studenski kulturni centar was even more, I would say, avant garde in that way. They were much more interested in forming a relationship with the embassy and getting things from the embassy.

I remember, there was a guy there, Zeka (Rabbit) Zecavic was his name. Last I heard he's passed away now. He was about my age but he drank and smoked very heavily, even for a Yugoslav. As time went on, he became a professor of political science at the University of Belgrade, but then, I think, just drank himself to death, or smoked himself to death, or both, as so many Yugoslavs did in those days. But in 1970 he was the head of the Studenski kulturni centar, and a pretty close friend and colleague. Even in those days we had Zeka, and Dunya Blasovic, who was a pretty, young Croatian woman who was the daughter of a senior Croat party official, who was later purged in the nationalism crack down. She was the program manager at the Studenski kulturni centar.

These young Yugoslavs we would have over to out apartment and we would have them over for fondue or something really "exotic" like that, and we would go out to restaurants and night clubs with them, and had a great time with them. They were, of course, all young Communists, or members of the League of Youth but frankly there wasn't an ideological thought in their heads. They were just like any other young people of the time, but they were ravenous to soak up American culture, because I think they recognized it was a cultural desert otherwise. Yugoslavia had basically destroyed its own culture in the process of the civil war and Titoism and they were looking for something.

Q: American culture was the youth culture, "Don't trust anybody over thirty," you know all that. If anything, Yugoslavia was run by people well over thirty. Were they doing anything about this, demonstrating, being restive, or anything?

KIEHL: No, they weren't demonstrating. You remember, these are people who are part of the establishment, children of the establishment. They did their demonstrating by the values they adopted and what they did with their lives, rather than protest marches and so on. I mean, obviously, this is post-1968, when the real disillusion with Communism was really deep among young people of Eastern Europe ...

Q: Especially Czechoslovakia ...

KIEHL: Czechoslovakia, the Prague Spring. Just as the older generation, there was no great love for Russia, or the Russian form of Communism. They didn't protest the government. They were too close to it, I think, because their parents were party members and so on. They had no reason to protest the government, they thought they could change it from within, I'm sure of that.

They were really wrapped up in American culture, and I have to say, USIS at the time was well-endowed financially in Yugoslavia, because we had access to dinars, the excess currency fund, and so we would spend in those days, probably three or four million dollars a year, which is an enormous amount of money in 1970 dollars, in a place like Yugoslavia, on educational exchanges, and cultural presentations and that sort of thing. Basically, anything you wanted to do you could do, in terms of culture. We had the Belgrade Newport jazz festival. We'd bring the likes of Duke Ellington and Ella Fitzgerald and do Newport jazz with local co-sponsorship with the House of Youth and the, I think it was, the Belgrade radio station, Studio 202. And we'd subsidize the ticket sales so that they were affordable for people. Huge eventwe'd have the Alwin Ailey Dance Company come to the Dubrovnik festival, major philharmonic orchestras came to the country to perform.

We did very specifically youth-type things as well. We had a program with the Studenski kulturni centar which basically solidified my relationship with these folks, as much as anything did. At that time, there were a couple of young people, the Whitney brothers, I think it was John Whitney and his brother, I can't remember the brother's name, were young filmmakers out in California, and they did psychedelic films. They used two or three projectors on the same screen and they'd have repeating patterns of color and form. It was very '70-ish, drug-related kind of stuff, I was able to get John Whitney to come to the student center, and actually tour a little bit around the country to visit youth groups, and show the films, and talk about California, and the film industry. That was my ticket with the young people who led these student organizations. They just thought, "Wow, if he can get Whitney here, he can do anything. He's wonderful."

That's the kind of programs we could do. It was all using excess dinars, but every other department of government was also using excess dinars. There was an enormous amount to spend. The excess dinars came from sales to Yugoslavia of PL-480 wheat flour, and foodstuffs, but also there were a lot of arms sales to Yugoslavia, an enormous amount of money built up, much like India. Everybody in the world in those days, with the U.S. government, traveled the world on air tickets bought on JAT (Jugoslovenski Aerotransport) or Air India or whatever the Tunisian airline was. Everything was paid for in Moroccan or Tunisian money, or Yugoslav dinars, or Indian rupees, or Pakistani rupees, because of these huge excess currency funds which were mounting up in the local banks faster than the government could spend them. You remember the famous case where, I think it was Moynihan, gave four, five billion dollars to the Indian government, and said, "Here, take this. Get it out of our accounts, it's driving us crazy." It was accumulating so fast that we would have had fifty percent of all the Indian currency in another couple of years.

Q: Were we looking at, particularly, Skopje, Sarajevo, Ljubljana, and obviously Zagrelooking at the nationality problem and trying to do anything about it by making sure that we cover these places?

KIEHL: When I first went to Yugoslavia there was only the embassy in Belgrade, and consulate general in Zagreb. By the time I left there were branch offices in Ljubljana, Skopje, and Sarajevo. So in a matter of three or four years, the U.S. government had extended itself out into most of the now capital cities of the successor states of Yugoslavia. And in fact we then opened Podgorica, and eventually we had a place in Kosovo. We had a place in Novi Sad even when I was there, a reading room, it was run by a couple of FSNs, no American presence, and that was a legacy of World War II, opened in 1945 as the Amerikanska Iloba, the American exhibition, a little library, a reading room, even as the place was being liberated. And it just stuck. It was kind of historic and it was kept up for a number of years until they finally said, "Hey, we can't afford to keep this and Skopje going. Pick one."

I'm not so sure it was a conscious effort on the part of the U.S. government, to move out into these provincial cities, as much as it was a conscious effort of the provincial citizens, particularly the leadership in those provinces, to lure American presence into those cities. I'm pretty sure that's the case with Ljubljana and with Skopje. The local authorities there were lobbying pretty hard for that. There was an interest in Ljubljana on the part of the government because Zagreb had to handle Ljubljana as well, and it was really putting a strain on the P & C offices in Zagreb, especially the cultural section. The embassy itself didn't want, or didn't feel that it needed to have any kind of presence other than a P&C office in those places.

Q: P&C is ...

KIEHL: Press and culture. There was no thought of putting consulates there. There was a consulate in Sarajevo, some years ago. In fact, I remember a meeting in Zagreb where George Kennan actually came in and talked to us a little bit about his time in Yugoslavia, and at that time we were opening the American Center in Sarajevo, and he was saying, he was telling us, this is a first person account of the stones being hurled at the building and the vituperation, the xenophobia, on the part of the Bosnians. It was one of the reasons we closed down the consulate some years before.

Q: It was about '6no, it would have been '63, I think, because I remember he called me in. I was chief of the consulate section in Belgrade, and said, "Do we need a consulate there?" I said, "Consular-wise, no." I said, "Oh, hell." We had two people there and ...

KIEHL: They were hounded and harassed and it was really quite ugly.

Q: Yes.

KIEHL: The embassy had no interest in reopening any, certainly Sarajevo, or opening Ljubljana or Skopje, for that matter. There was an interest in the press and cultural service. The USIA thought this was, it was important to have a presence in these provinces. They had different language, they had different cultures, they were, granted, not as independent as they proved to be later, obviously, but there was a feeling that we should be there, we should have eyes and ears there, we should make sure that we know the people from there because they could become important in the future. I must say, that was very smart, whether that was Pic Littell's idea or not...I don't know- (end of tape)

So whether it was his idea, or whose idea it was I don't know, but it was a very smart idea. We wanted to open a USIS presence in Ljubljana, and in order to do that, we had to open Skopje. Was it Jankovic? No, it was Jovanovic. He was the Minister of Information, I believe, in the Yugoslav government. He was a Macedonian, by the way, and he insisted that we open an office in Skopje as the price for opening in Ljubljana. There was no interest in Skopje at the time, we just couldn't afford it. So the deal was we'd open in Ljubljana, and then a year or two later, open in Skopje, and then eventually, in Sarajevo. In fact, I was offered the job of opening the place in Sarajevo, but at that time, I was already entering my fourth year in Yugoslavia, and that would have meant spending the first six years of my Foreign Service career in Yugoslavia, and I thought that might be a mistake, and my career counselor thought it would be a big mistake. So I didn't, and that's OK.

The USIS officer who did eventually go to Sarajevo did have a miserable time. He was harassed and followed. It was a tough place to go as a young married couple. This guy was a single guy, and he ended up living in a rooming house.

Q: Who was that?

KIEHL: Vic Jackovich. But in the end he married the chief of police's daughter, which was an interesting twist. Anyway, you'll have to interview him sometime. I'm sure he'll have some quite interesting tales to tell.

Q: Where is he now?

KIEHL: His last tour was in Bagram, and he is now retirel think he took the Bagram job as a last tour to put his kid through college.

Q: How were we treating, particularly, race relations at that time?

KIEHL: Well, that's a good point. We had a very active program. There wasn't much interest on the part of most Yugoslavs, I have to say s, except among some intellectuals at the universities, in race relations, American race relations, but it was an important part of the country plan and the overall direction coming out of the USIA headquarters in Washington. We had a lot of programs that pushed that idea, that America was trying to make amends for its past injustices, and equal opportunity, and so on, very much the post-Civil Rights Act America. Frankly, there wasn't much interest among the Yugoslavs because they thought what we were trying to do was change the way they thought of each other. So they weren't too keen on that.

A lot of the jazz artists, of course, were African-American, and I remember when I was in Zagreb, we brought Sam Gilliam there to do his art and do a workshop at the art school, but he was not seen as an example of black America so much as artistic America, and the jazz artists sort of transcended race. There were probably people who were racists who loved the music of Duke Ellington and the great Preservation Hall Jazz Band. Unfortunately, in Serbo-Croatian, "negro," when they say the word "negro," it comes out as that other n-word, very close in sound, and some of the black artists who performed in Yugoslavia heard this and were highly offended. In fact, I remember it was one of the most amazing things, I was escorting Freddie Hubbard, the great trumpeter, he was performing in Zagreb, and one of the organizers of the local jazz society was talking and used this word. He was not using the offensive word, he was trying to say "negro" and it came out quite wrong, and this so incensed Freddie Hubbard that he refused to go on for the second half of the show. When I heard this I had to sit down with him and I basically had to explain the language to him.

Q: Like Montenegro.

KIEHL: Yes.

Q: "Negra."

KIEHL: "Negra," right. It calmed him down. It took a long time, I mean, there was the longest half-time in the history of that hall, I think, but after about a half an hour he went back on stage.

He also said something at the beginning about, "If any of you people out here are racists," that kind of thing, something quite nasty, actually, before he performed. Of course, the language works both ways, they thought he was saying something really nice about them and they all applauded, which sort of took him aback, it sort of deflated the whole thing and he performed.

I guess what I'm saying is that there was a certain naivetï¿½ about race, American black-white relations, in Yugoslavia, but it was so outside their normal stream of consciousness. Their race relations had to do with ethnic relations, not black and white, and there was no animosity, as far as I could tell mean, certainly the jazz people were treated like kings and queens, they got nothing but great respects from the jazz societies and so on, who mobbed them for autographs. You couldn't really say that, although, it's interesting, there were a group of black Yugoslavs. Maybe you've heard about this when you were there, African-American sailors who settled in the southern part of the Yugoslav coast. Did you ever hear of that story?

Q: Yes, situated around Budva, or something?

KIEHL: Yes, exactly, and the Yugoslavs are very proud of that, so that would indicate to me that they didn't have any hang-ups about race, black-white kinds of race.

We put all this effort into America as making amends for past injustices and all these themes, and it basically didn't have much resonance in Yugoslavia because they weren't hung up on it like Americans were.

Q: They had their own problems.

KIEHL: In fact, they were right, in a sense, because the subtle message of those pluralistic society messages of America were also to resonate among the Yugoslavs as a pluralistic society there, but they saw through it pretty quickly.

Q: What about Vietnam protests. Was Vietnam much of an issue?

KIEHL: No, it really wasn't. The local press had lots of editorials about it. A guy like Nixon was admired much more in Yugoslavia than obviously he was in the United States, to the point where I remember being in Zagreb when Watergate happened and Nixon resigned, and people simply could not understand this. They were really floored, but what they assumed was, it was a coup d'etat, it was a plot to unseat Nixon. As that they accepted it, because that's the way it would be done there. It didn't come across, despite our best efforts at spin-control of Watergate and the Nixon resignation, as proof of the rule of law-that no man is above the law, et cetera. Again, it was that our value set was going this way and they looked at it from a totally different perspective and they said, "Ah, you're not much different that we are, anyway. That's exactly how we would do it. We would discredit the guy and then push him out of office, force him to resign."

Q: What about the Soviet cultural presence. Was this your adversary or, in a way, was it a no contest?

KIEHL: In a way, it was a no contest. They had certain advantages, obviously. They had, first of all, even more funds than we had, I think, just then. They had a huge cultural center in Belgrade, and they had lots of people. The only foreign diplomats you'd find outside the normal diplomatic circuit were Russians and Americans. Everybody else just played the inside game. That's probably true today in many places, as well, but there especially.

They were, of course, our great rivals, in an ideological sense, and so on, and there were, obviously, pro-Soviet Yugoslavs, but we didn't have much contact with them, and the Soviets didn't have much contact with the pro-American Yugoslavs, and there were far more of them. When we'd have cultural events and so on, they'd be much better-attended. The Russians had a lot of people. I think they must have spent a lot of money on people in the media, because the press was much more pro-Russian than pro-American, in every respect. I was hounded quite a lot as being a CIA agent, of course, in all of the press, which had its pluses and minuses. For some Yugoslavs, they liked that idea, but it always made me a little nervous. If you were branded a CIA agent in the local press, who'd want to have any contact with you? In a way it could be damaging, but it didn't really prove to be.

So the Russians, while we they were the great ideological enemy on the world's stagit wasn't a great tussling match in Belgrade or Zagreb. We had the advantages that we were the country that most Yugoslavs admired. They didn't admire the Russians, they were afraid of them.

Q: We had an awful lot of Yugoslavs who had cousins in the United States, or had been to the United States.

KIEHL: And there were a lot of Russians in Yugoslavia who had fled to Yugoslavia. In fact, we had one working for us in our library in Zagreb. She was a real "white Russian," you know?

Q: Yeah, I know. We had one in Calcis, a Madame Jukoff. Well, then. You went after two years to ...

KIEHL: Yes, it was about two years in Belgrade, and I had gone through all the offices there. I was probably the longest-running JOT in history, because there wasn't a job available as a follow-on job in Belgrade for me. Normally it's supposed to a year and it sort of stretched and stretched, and I was saying, "Can I continue to be a JOT forever, a rotational officer forever?" I worked in the press office and I worked on the magazine, Pregleand that was a big magazine. We had an American officer whose full-time job was just the magazine, and it was like 20,000 copies a month. It was a big deal. That was great fun, I really enjoyed that.

Exhibits, we had an exhibits office and I did exhibits for a while. In fact, recently, I was remindethere was an article in the Times by Milton Glaser, the graphic artist, and it touched me a little bit, some of the things he said. I wrote to him and I said, "You probably may not remember, I handled your art exhibit for you in Belgrade, back 30 years ago, and I was struck by some of the comments you made." We exchanged correspondence a little bit. That was, again, cutting edge stuff. We had the Pushpin Studios in New York, Seymour ChwasI don't know if you know these names or not, but they were really great innovators in graphic arts in that period, kind of Peter Max-type stuff. That was really a very fulfilling thing. I decided, "This is really the right career move," when we had this kind of thing, because it connected us with the young people I was trying to reach, and when you connect with people like that, then you can get other points across, so it was really very fulfilling.

I even had a tour as the executive officer, which was administrative experience, which you rarely get in USIS until you become a PAO (Public Affairs Officer), and then say, "Well, how do I manage this money?" So that was really good. I was doing interesting things but it was getting into two years without a job, a real job. Fortunately, one opened up in Zagreb, because the guy who was the deputy up there, I guess either wasn't quite cut out for the Foreign Service or his personality grated people the wrong way or something, it was a mid-level officer up there. They wanted to get rid of him, basically. I didn't know this at the time, of course, innocent young diplomat that I was..

I was sent up to Zagreb to be the branch cultural officer. It was a two-officer post, they suddenly made it a three-officer post, with a PAO, an IO (Information Officer), and CAO (Cultural Affairs Officer). The former deputy became the IO and I became the CAO. They gave me an apartment in a building next to the consulate, and after I was there for a whiland I was enjoying this, the branch cultural officer in Zagreb, what a great deal, it was terrific, and I was applying some of the things I had learned there, and there was a wonderful fellow, a real Virginia gentleman named R. Dabney Chapman. I don't know whether you know Dabney, but he was a real wordsmith, and a colorful character, the kind of person that we had in the Foreign Service that you don't quite see so many of anymore. He was a great mentor.

A little while into the time I was there, perhaps four or five months, it was revealed to ml don't know whether it was by Dabney or by somebody in Belgradthat the real reason I was there was to replace this other fellow, whose name I won't mention, because he was going to get fired. Then I went back up to Zagreb, and of course I couldn't say anything to anybody about this, and a couple more months went by and I'm thinking, "God, this is awful." Anyway, it was really kind of a tortuous situation. You could tell he was in real difficulties. He was kind of a highly-strung person anyway, and he was blowing up at the staff, and you could just see a kind of momentum happening there. Finally he was peremptorily yanked out of there. P&C Zagreb went back to a two-officer post again.

Just about that time is when the focus on a political light moved from Zagreb to Belgrade, and they started purging the party down there. So I didn't get a chance to be in any city where the purges were going on at the time, which has its pluses and minuses, I guess.

Q: The Croatianthis is from the Belgrade point of view, which I hathe Croatians have always supposedly held themselves up to be culturally more astute. They were part of the Austrian empire ...

KIEHL: The Hungarian, actually.

Q: The Hungarian empire, as opposed to being, for 500 years, under the Turks. Did you find it different, cultural-wise, in Zagreb?

KIEHL: Oh, yes, there's no question there is a difference between Serbs and Croats. It's not just religion and some differences in the language. I hate to use these kinds of generalizations, but from my experience, of a couple of years in each place, the Serbs were much more initially friendly and more outgoing and accepting of an American or a stranger, but they were harder to get to know beyond that. Whereas the Croats were quite standoffish, but once you got through the shell, they really opened up to you, and they were much easier to get to know, probably, in some sense, because they had experienced the Reformation and the Renaissance, whereas the Serbs hadn't. In other words, they had a lot of the cultural values that we do, or the rest of Western Europe has.

Even though the Croats always thought of themselves as part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, they were really Hungarians. The Hungarian part of the empire was really the low end, you might say, the low rent district of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and the Hungarians didn't treat the Croats particularly well. The Slovenes were under the Austrian part of the dual monarchy, and they were considerably more enlightened, in a sense, by that, just as the Czechs were, versus the Slovaks. The Slovaks were under the Hungarian end of the monarchy as well. There was a great disparity. I don't know whether it was their philosophy, it's been said it was a conscious effort that the Austrians would integrate the native peoples under their dominion - naturally, they would be speaking German anywabut would integrate them more into the day-to-day workings of the bureaucracy. So they would bring them in to the universities and to the bureaucracy to a much greater degree than the Hungarians did, who would prefer to treat the subject peoples as serfs, essentially, in a more feudalistic way. You can tell that there is a real, distinct difference between those peoples who were under the Hungarian part of the monarchy, and those under the Austrian end of the monarchy. You can tell, even today, in terms of the educational achievements and the quality of the educational systems, and the universities and the bureaucracies. Those who were under the Austrians are still more dramatically efficient, you might say, than the other end of the empire.

Q: What were the particularly strong points that you found as a cultural officer in the Croatian...

KIEHL: We had a much closer relationship with people at the university in Zagreb than we could have with the university in Belgrade. In Belgrade we had a lot of relationships with the university, in their political science department, the sociological department, the English department, et cetera, but they were more formalized and more regularized. In part, I think it's because it was in the capital city and people were under closer scrutiny and they didn't want to mess up by getting too close to the Americans or being seen as being too friendly. In Zagreb, because they were a little bit further away from the center, and the Croatian government had been demoralized and sort of atomized by the purges just before that, they weren't particularly strong. So the university seemed to have a lot more latitude, and we had a closer relationship with both individual members of the university faculty but also the departments. That was very important in the cultural dimension.

Also, there was a very good, high-quality theater and performing arts in Zagreb, both the formal type of symphony orchestra, opera, classic theater, but also experimental theater and the kind of things that young people would gravitate to, and again, they were ravenous for American input. Anything that we did was not only welcomed, it was devoured. It was quite easy, cultural work there was quite easy. The press side was much harder, because the press was still very suspicious of America, loved to run articles talking about plots by Americans internally, and American domination of the world, et cetera. They were really, in that sense, very much in the model of the Soviet press. About the only successful press placement we had in Zagreb was for the USA Pavilion at the annual Zagreb Fall (Commercial) Fair.

Q: Were you getting any reverberations from the Croatians outside of Yugoslavia, in the United States, I'm thinking sort of in the mid-Atlantic area, Chicago, Cleveland area, and all that? Also, up in Sweden and Germany were trying to overthrol mean, essentially, were connected with the old Artukovic, who ...

KIEHL: Actually, there was a little bit of that. You'd hear about it, and so on, but there really wasn't much evidence of it in Croatia. I think there was more talk out in the ï¿½migrï¿½ community than there was action inside the country.

Q: Did you get involved, while you were in either Belgrade or in Zagreb, in trying to explain our stand on Artukovic?

KIEHL: No, not really. It wasn't necessary, quite frankly.

Q: Artukovic being a major war-criminal in Yugoslavia, who was able, for decades, to stay in California because his brother had a lot of money, and they wouldn't extradite him. They finally did, but by the time he was well-past the age ...

KIEHL: Well past the age of mental competency. Frankly, it wasn't an issue when I was there, among the people we were working with. It was really, I think, more of an ï¿½migrï¿½ issue than it was an issue in-country.

Q: How about exchange programs? How did you find the exchange program, both operating, but also the results, people coming back and all that? What was your impression?

KIEHL: In terms of exchanges, in those days, it was largely the International Visitor Program and the Fulbright Program. There wasn't a multiplicity of exchanges the way we have today, and the private exchange programs weren't too visible in Yugoslavia yet. Of course, the IV program, people at my level would be lucky to get one nomination a year across, but again it was a program that was run in a very traditional sense, the IV program there, in the sense that they didn't want to take any chances. They only had so many slots and they wanted to bet on sure things. So you had very conventional people being nominated for the IV program, and they'd go, and they'd have their 30 days in the States, and they'd come back, and then they'd be a permanent contact of the embassy.

Fulbright was a little more interesting, but then again, you're really only limited to the universities, again. Of course, all of the people in the English faculty and anybody who wanted a Fulbright grant in one of those key faculties like political science or sociology were going to get a Fulbright grant. They would go and have their Fulbright year or two or three and come back and again would be good contacts. It was a great contact-building program, both IV and Fulbright, but it wasn't as big a program as it could have been. When you think about, in retrospect, now, spending $3 million dollars a year in dinars on Yugoslavia, we spent an awful lot of money on cultural programs, mass audience kinds of things, and not nearly as much money as we would today, for example, on exchange programs.

Q: But you admit, you'd get much more bang for your bucks, for long-term, with an exchange program.

KIEHL: That's right, exactly. It may have been the nature of it, because remember, these excess dinars have to be spent in country, so the dollar budget for press and cultural affairs in Yugoslavia was something on the order of ï¿½ of a million dollars, which is not a whole lot of money, but then you had the $3 million plus in dinars. So you could spend a lot of money in country, and the money in country was much easier to spend on big cultural presentations, bringing somebody to the Dubrovnik festival every year, bringing the Newport Jazz festival every year to Belgrade. That spent a lot of money but it was all in-country, and it was money that could be spent in-country. It couldn't be spent by sending someone to the University of Southern California, because USC doesn't take dinars. They were ham-strung, in a way, everyone looked at the budget there and said, "Oh, well they have plenty of money," but we had the wrong kind of money, in a some ways. It actually became, I think, a more successful program. About the year I left was the transition between a dinar budget and a dollar budget, and suddenly it was a few thousand dollars in dinars, and all the rest was dollars. It was a much smaller budget in total, but obviously a much more flexible budget because you could use it for exchange programs more. Probably it was a much more effective use of money than these dinars that could only be spent in Yugoslavia.

Q: In Zagreb, were we looking at nationalism and how divisive a force it would be, sort of after Tito, or were we just sort of hoping things would work out?

KIEHL: Of course we were always asking the question. It was the proverbial American question. "What will you do after Tito?" What is Yugoslavia going to be like after Tito? What about post-Tito? Of course the smart Yugoslavs would say, "We're already in the post-Tito era. He's just a figurehead, we're running it." "We" meaning "we mid-level bureaucrats" or "senior-level bureaucrats," are actually running Yugoslavia. "Don't worry about it, it's already after Tito."

I think it was a considerable worry, because Tito was the glue that held the country together. Well, Tito and the League of Communists, and the strength of that organization imposing its will on all of these disparate parts of the country, but I think it would have held together if it hadn't been for the collapse of the Soviet Union, because the external threat of Russia was enough to keep the Yugoslavs together. It didn't need Tito. It needed a USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and without a USSR, of course, there was no need for the United States to support an independent entity that was composed of six constituent republics, et cetera. In theory, there's no reason why these people couldn't come to a peaceful splitting of the ways, quite frankly. They were forced together by an autocratic government of Tito and the League of Communists, and it maintained itself because of fear of domination by an outside power.

Once the League of Communists proved to be nothing more than a social organization, and the outside power didn't exist anymore, there was nothing to hold it together. Even though, as a country, we maintained the policy long into the breakup of Yugoslavia, that essentially was a policy that we followed, and quite correctly, throughout the period prior to that, it didn't fit the new circumstances.

Q: Did you ever run across Milosevic or Tudjman?

KIEHL: I was trying to think about that. I think Milosevic I might have met at one time or another, but Tudjman I can't recall ever meeting.

Q: We're really talking about two decades later.

KIEHL: Exactly. If I met them they were members of the League of Young Communists or something, having a coffee at Dom Mladih. It would not have made an impression on me.

Q: You left Yugoslavia in '74?

KIEHL: '75, actually. April of '75. Or was it April? Yes, I think it was April of '75.

Q: One further question: was there a great emphasis on trying to explain the whole Watergate thing? You were saying how the Yugoslavs thought it was a coup.

KIEHL: Yes. They couldn't figure out why this had happened, except in their frame of reference. In their frame of reference, this is a perfectly normal thing to do to get rid of, discredit, a leader and take over, and install a new leader. Sure, this makes sense. Why were we explaining it in terms of rule of law, they didn't really think we were serious. It was really incomprehensible to most Yugoslavs.

It was also a bit of a shock, because they actually liked Nixon. He was very popular overseas.

Q: Very popular overseas, absolutely. Well, then, OK, '75. Whither?

KIEHL: Well, I should say that when it came time to start looking for a new job, the job I was thinking of getting was the PAO, a one-officer post, in Sofia, Bulgaria. It was about the right grade and everything, and I think I had it lined up through the, in those days, not quite open assignment system. Only to find out that USIA Personnel had suddenly made the job two grades higher, and had given it to a guy from VOA (Voice of America) instead. So he must have had much better mojo than I did, in terms of the personnel system.

I was trying to figure out what to do, and of course I had turned down this third tour, for a fifth and sixth year, in Yugoslavia, to go to Sarajevo. I was back in Washington, so I went back to, I guess you might say, my first mentor, if there was a mentor in the system, Jock Shirley, who was still the area director for Eastern Europe. At least I think he was still the area director for Eastern Europe, in those days people lasted in jobs a lot longer. I went to see him and he said, "Well, what you need to do is take a tour and get out of Eastern Europe for a bit." He had been press attachï¿½ in New Delhi. He said the place he went for R&R from New Delhi was Colombo, Sri Lanka. He knew that the information officer job Colombo was open, and I should go over and see personnel about that, and if I got that job, I would be there for two years, and then I could come back and study Russian and go to Moscow. You see how they plotted you out ahead of time. I said, "Oh, good, because that's what I'd really like to do, I want to go to Russia," and that's what I'd been studying in graduate school and all that, and it was the big apple, of course, the big potato. So he said, "Go over there, and see the South Asia personnel officer," and he might be able to work this out.

So I went over to personnel and I sat down with the South Asia guy and told him everything, and probably Jock Shirley had called him. That's the only thing I can think of now, in retrospect, because as soon as I said what I was up to, and my background and so on, he said, "Wow, you'd be perfect for the IO in Sri Lanka! Why don't we put that in, and if you want the job it's yours," kind of thing. So I said, OK, because Jock Shirley had said it would be a good deal, and so I did it, and I must say I never regretted it, it was wonderful.

Q: You went Colombo iwas it Sri Lanka at the time?

KIEHL: Yes, it was Sri Lanka then. Ceylon had changed from Ceylon to Sri Lanka officially i1956. It was Sri Lanka, although everyone called it Ceylon still.

Q: You were there from when to when?

KIEHL: From June 1975 through June of '77. I had one year with the esteemed Richard Ross ...

Q: Whom I am interviewing. I'm interviewing him this afternoon, again.

KIEHL: You can get two versions of the same events, perhaps. That would be interesting.

Q: Talk a little about the embassy there at the time.

KIEHL: In Sri Lanka? Sure. Well, the embassand you know, I ought to go back at some point, and talk to you a little bit more about the embassy in Belgrade, because in fact, right now, I guess they're going to probably bulldoze that whole complex down and build a new embassy on the outskirts of town, so that embassy itself was kind of a rat trap even then, back in the early '70s.

In Sri Lanka, to go back into the right time frame here, it was a charming building that was a little bit past its prime, even then, right on the ocean, and of course the monsoonal winds and the salt spray could really play havoc with a building like that. It was an old building, even when the U.S. government acquired it, I think. In fact, there was a storand I actually saw it happethe place was infested with rats, as well. I remember the occasion, the ambassador had a staff meeting in his office, and we all lined up our chairs in his office, and he was sitting at his desk, and there was a flagpole on either side, but you know, in the middle of the meeting, a rat pops up out of the floorboard, runs up the flagpole, looks around, runs back down again, and back in the hole. That pretty well shot that meeting. Apparently the rat would do that regularly. It was almost like a trained rat.

The ambassador when I first arrived and the first year I was there, was Chris Van Hollen, and his wife, Eliza Van Hollen. Their son is the guy who is ...

Q: Congressman now, in Maryland.

KIEHL: Right. Of course Chris Van Hollen was a classic career officer from South Asia, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and so on, steeped in the area. His DCM, I think at that time and also later, for the next ambassador, was a fellow named Ray Perkins, who later became consul general in Bombay, before he retired. He's down in Richmond, Virginia. His wife was from Wyoming and she was really quite a character, really gregarious, almost a cowgirl.

It was a pretty good embassy. Jim McGonagall was the administrative counselor. My first PAO was David Briggs, who was a remarkable guy. Again, tons of experience, et cetera, and I think he was in Who's Who not because of his diplomatic career but because of his coin collection. He was world class in numismatics, published widely in the field, and had I suppose, most of his weight allowance was taken up with cabinets sort of like that, filled with coins, of great vintage and rarity, all quite carefully labeled in plastic sleeves, which he carted around from place to place. He went to Pakistan after Sri Lanka and then retired to Vermont from the Foreign Service.

So he was the PAO, and then Dick Ross was the cultural officer, and I was the press attachï¿½. It was a great operation, because we had an office apart from the embassy, just down the road, with a nice beach view. I could walk out on my verandah from my office on the ground floor, and there's the waves crashing against the beach. You can't ask for a more ideal situation. You could see the monsoon coming, and each day it would come a little bit earlier and so on.

Dick and the PAO were upstairs. What I was responsible for was a press section where we'd be doing press releases in English, Sinhala, and Tamil, and also doing media reaction reporting, and a print shop for a lot of publications. We did a magazine there, printed on site, in the basement, called Darshana, which was one of those worldwide magazines translated into Sinhala, but we had a 24-page insert, which was done all local news, that kind of thing. That was all done in Sinhalese, and sent out to our mailing list. Then a radio and film section, of course there was no TV, which was kind of nice, actually. We had radio, with these gigantic editing tables for radio placement, and of course the film section was very important because we produced films, 35 millimeter films, shorts, we would dub some stock USIA films, American propaganda films, essentially, into Sinhalese and Tamil, as well as English, and place them in theatres around the country, attach them to the right film, you see, and they would get all over the country. We also produced a couple of films, one was a co-production with India called The Dance of Shiva, and another one was the film on Henry Steele Olcott, Searcher After Truth, which Dick Ross actually has a bit part in, wearing a white linen suit, as Henry Steele Olcott, sort of a side view or back view, but nevertheless a film credit.

The films were extremely successful, I mean, they were placed in the theaters and everybody knew these films, because it was a great moving-going public. There was a film there, an Indian film called Geet, which played for 18 months in the local theater, and there were people who'd seen it 300 times. It was a "round and round the bush, round and round the tree" song-and-dance, Indian love story type movie, and if you attached your film to that, everybody in Sri Lanka would see it. After seeing Geet 300 times, they'd also see The Dance of Shiva 300 times.

Q: What was The Dance of Shiva about?

KIEHL: You know, you've got me. I'm trying to think. You know, I can't really remember. I believe it has to do with the role of Indian culture in America but it has been too long ago.

Q: I think Shiva's fertility or something?

KIEHL: Well, you know the dance of Shiva actually has to do with a destructive power, the dance of Shiva. Let me think, I'd have to think about that a little bit, because I mean, I remember the opening credits of the film, I can see it, and the Shiva statue that is in it. I think it was basically done by the post in India. They paid for most of the cost. It was largely about U.S. relations with South Asia, and principally India, with a little Sri Lanka thrown in. That's why we dubbed it in Sinhala and used it also.

Q: When you were the information officer, what was your impression of the Sri Lankan press, where did they stand, what did we do with them?

KIEHL: Oh, listen, after four years of the Yugoslav press, which was so predictable and so much in the kind of East European mold. You could make a good guess about tomorrow's headlines nearly any day. And, of course, there was always a bit of paranoid fixation with the CIA- (end of tape)

Aside from situations like that it was dull as you could imagine, but the Sri Lankan press was lively, it was entertaining, it was outrageous, and it was highly professional, all at the same time. It was in English, it was in Sinhalese, and it was in Tamil. There were newspapers that had a 300,000 daily circulation, and a million on Sunday, and there were circulations that had 5,000 circulation, and the 5,000 circulation sheet might have been more important than the million circulation because of who read it. There were several big newspaper enterprises, Lake House being the classic one, which had papers in all three languages, and the great old British-trained journalists, and so on. Then there was the Sun Group, which was much more outrageous and more of a tabloid, kind of a Murdoch-type operation, and many, many others. There were little independent presses, the Tribune, a fellow named Amasingham, a Tamil who must have weighed 450 pounds if he weighed an ounce, gigantic man, who ran this enterprise out of his back pocket, and was either in the pay of the Americans or the Russians, depending upon who you talked to.

There was a whole panoply of characters, as well. The de Silvas- Melvin de Silva, Neville de Silva, Manik de Silva, all three were journalists. There was the Tamil press, the editor of the leading Tamil newspaper was someone I got to know pretty well, and his family, we went to his daughter's wedding and we were pretty close friends with theAnd all of these people interacted with each other and were quite friendly with each other, and in some cases, intermarried with each other, and that was true of all the professions and all the society back in those days. It was before the resurgence of this kind of ethnic hatred that became the monster that devoured Sri Lanka.

It was in a way an ideal time. People say, "When were you there?" and I usually reply, "Well, I was there between the insurrection and the civil war." We arrived about a month or two after the bomb blew up, killing a policeman in front of our embassy, which was the insurrection part of it, and the civil war, which began to appear after the election right after I left, in which the UNP (United National Party) party dominated so much that the only minority was the Tamil front. When they were frustrated by a 400 to 20 imbalance in the parliament, it emboldened the Tamil Tigers and the radical faction of the Tamils to seek redress in violent ways. Sometimes a democratic election can set off terrible and unintended consequences. The democrats, small d, of Sri Lanka, were destroyed by their own success.

Anyway, where was I? Oh, the press there. I inherited the house of the former station-chief, who was named in Blitz and other publications in South Asia, he was sort of "outed", you might say, and he had to disappear for a while. He did disappear for a while and then reemerged in another house, a smaller, less conspicuous house. About the same time I arrived, and was looking for housing, and the embassy had this house, so I moved into it, unbeknownst to me, that it was the house of the guy who had been "outed" in Blitz earlier, a beautiful house, second biggest garden in the embassy, after the ambassador's, a lovely old house, right across the street from Peter Kennemen, who was the leader of the Ceylon Communist Party. So I moved in there and I remember the first time I had some journalists over for lunch, there were several of them who looked under the plate for the envelope. It was kind of funny. I had to explain to them that they weren't ever going to find an envelope under their plate here, but, if they played their cards right, I'd give them a nice book at Christmastime.

As I said, it was all of those adjectives, it was an outrageous press, it was a yellow press in that sense, of blowing everything out of proportion, and yet it was highly professional, it's the spectrum from extreme left wing, Maoist, pro-Soviet, Social Democratic, centrist, to an almost Republican, right wing press, all coming out, every day, every week, and wonderful stories. The kind of stories you just have to cut out and paste in a scrapbook and go back to and just laugh over.

Q: What kind of stories?

KIEHL: Oh, like the "Trousered Johnny" who basically went around town showing his Johnson to people. Terrible stories of people committing suicide by drinking insecticide, or throwing themselves in front of railway trains and stuff. This stuff was going all the time in the press, front page, and then of course, thinly veiled scandals about the Bandaranaike family, the Senanaike family, the Wickramasingas, and all these other notoriously famous families of the ruling aristocracy of Sri Lanka, because in large measure, the same half dozen families still dominate politics today as they did in my day and as they did in the '50s, and as they did under the British.

Q: In Sri Lanka, looking at the information side, was there the equivalent to in France they would be the intellectuals, or in Britain the chattering class, a group of who were important, rather than just sounding off?

KIEHL: Of course, in any society as complex as Sri Lanka you're going to have the chattering classes, and in fact, so much of it is modeled on the Brits that some of the same categories of chattering classes evolved there. The Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation was modeled on the BBC (British Broadcasting Company). Just as the BBC provides fodder for the chattering classes in the UK, especially Channel 4, SLBC would do the same for the intellectuals of Sri Lanka.

And there were quite a few intellectuals. Not only were they Oxford- and Cambridge-educated, but they were Harvard- and Stanford-educated, and they were also educated locally at the University of Colombo, Peradeniya campus, outside of Kandy. You could get a University of London degree by attending and graduating from that school, the quality was sufficiently high.

So you did have the intellectual elite and you did have the chattering classes, most of whom were, as they are in the UK. left of center, a bit skeptical of American intentions, et cetera, and they were a great challenge and great intellectual fun to engage. The civil service there was a very important force, just again, modeled on the British civil service. The permanent secretaries (Perm Secs) were very key players. The provincial governors were all senior civil service. They were the people who actually made the place run, and they were the most important people, far more important, other than the top politicos, than your run-of-the-mill members of parliament, because they were just faces on a placard. They could be changed tomorrow. It was the permanent secretaries in the ministries that were really the people who ran the government, just as it is in the case of the UK.

It's thanks to people like, there was one Perm Sethe Non-Aligned Conference occurred in 1976 there, and I had made up my mind that, well, we wanted to engaged in this. This was a major event and we wanted to make sure that American values and American policy were presented to the people who are attending the non-aligned conference, and make sure that they understand U.S. positions on the issues. Also it was important that I could contribute, or our office could contribute, to the reporting on it. The first step would be to get inside the gate, so I went to Ridgeway Tillkalratne, who was permanent secretary in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and as a personal favor he gave me accreditation to the conference. I end up being the only Western diplomat with accreditation to the Non-Aligned Conference, which gets me inside the gate so I can, whenever there's an issue that comes up, I can put out the word, in other words, I can provide our material to the central information office within the Non-Aligned Conference, so they can then disseminate that information to all the delegates. That's great. I can also attend the sessions and write reporting cables and phone them in to the political section, and they can send out a cable to do the reporting.

Now, in some measure, obviously, this is a kind of parallelism, because the U.S. mission would presumably, though other (i.e. Intel) sources, have the same information I was reporting, but because it may have been a foreign source, they couldn't very well report it in the same way. So by me doing it, it gave it some legitimacy as an embassy officer reporting it. In other words, the intelligence traffic would be one thing but the embassy reporting traffic, which might parallel it, was a source that could be named. That was quite a dramatic Non-Aligned Conference, because ...

Q: What was the thrust of it?

KIEHL: It was a period of great tension. If you recall, right in the middle of the conference, the North Koreans came across and chopped up an American soldier with axes. It was pretty nasty business, which ...

Q: I know, I was in Seoul at the time.

KIEHL: It had a huge effect on the Non-Aligned Conference there, because the North Koreans were very active in the Non-Aligned movement at the time, and were trying to throw their weight around to the extent where a North Korean spy ship was also in the harbor in Colombo, spying on communications of the various delegations and so on, and the Sri Lankan government raided the ship and sealed the radio room on the ship and posted guards on the ship while it was there. Interesting, eh? I don't know how they found out about it that.

Qadhafi made a triumphal entrance into Colombo in a motorcade, handing out full-color pictures, kind of almost calendar prints of himself, with a retinue of 150 heavily-armed bodyguards. If you recall, at the time, the Libyans and the Egyptians were practically on shooting terms, and the Egyptian delegation was in one wing of the Lanka Oberoi Hotel, and the Libyans were in another, and there was a very good possibility of a firefight between the two wings of the hotel. It was really an extraordinarily volatile situation, and that all made for very interesting reporting and reading, I can tell you.

Q: Did we view this Non-Aligned Movement as essentially an anti-American ...

KIEHL: Oh, yes, very much so. Very much so, and of course a lot of the tone was very anti-American. It's not to say that many of the countries there had any great love for the Soviet Union. It was, supposedly, a third path. However, when you had countries like North Korea as a major player, and folks like Qadhafi as a major leader there, who were on record as being essentially biased against the United States, it was not being paranoid to think that the U.S. was enemy number one of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Q: Did you find yourself shunned when you were there?

KIEHL: When I operated in the press area, I wasn't, because journalists are journalists in whatever country. They were just grateful for information that they could feed into their stories, the U.S. viewpoint. They were happy to engage with me. There were a lot of U.S. and Western reporters there as well, who weren't at all hostile. When I would move over into the main hall for the plenary meetings and so on, I was able to get into plenary meetings which were supposedly closed to the press and so on. It was a great source of information, a way of duplicating information we might have obtained from other sources.

Whenever there was a formal session I would sit behind the Yugoslav delegation because the people doing the TV feed for the world was Zagreb television, and I knew all those guys, so I had an in with them. Also, their interpreter was from the English department of the university, and he was an old contact, as well. In fact I had them all over for a Croatian meal before the conference actually got underway. I had used my Croatian contacts and my local contacts to get the accreditation, so I was in pretty good shape there, however one time I remember sitting in on the meeting, and I was there taking notes and sort of chuckling to myself that boy, this would make interesting reading, and I looked up and I was surrounded by North Koreans. They were like ten rows away from me, it was a nearly empty section of the hall, in the balcony, but they were all around me. I continued to work, and a little bit later I looked up and they had moved closer. I thought to myself, "Would these idiots be crazy enough to throw me off the balcony?" because they had been doing things like that.

Q: Oh, yes, they'd set a bomb off in Burma, in Rangoon.

KIEHL: So I decided to get up, I walked along, and walked over to another section of the hall, in the balcony, and sat down, and lo and behold, every damn one of them followed me over there. So I'm thinking, "OK. They made their point," so I got out of there. That's the kind of weird stuff that would happen.

In the hall, of course, I didn't have a delegates badge, so there were parts of the hall that I couldn't get into, or I couldn't talk my way past the guard by joking about something, or talking to somebody and then walking through. So there were parts of the hall I couldn't enter, and then, of course, some of the delegates would see that I had a press accreditation rather than a delegate accreditation around my neck, and obviously if they didn't want to talk to the press, they didn't want to talk to the press.

I wasn't being shunned by anybody in particular, except maybe shadowed by the North Koreans.

Q: Where did the Sri Lankans fit into this Non-Aligned Movement?

KIEHL: They had been an early supporter of the Non-Aligned Movement, from the Bandung conference on. Bandaranaike was a great adherent to that.

Q: This is Mister...

KIEHL: Mr. Bandaranaike, right. SWRD (Sirimavi Ratwatte Dias [Bandranaike]). Mrs., was, of course, a head of government during '76.

So Sri Lankans considered themselves a founding member, which they were, of the Non-Aligned Movement, and it was very important to their prestige in the world, and to their philosophy of not choosing sides in the superpower rivalry, et cetera. In Sri Lanka, of course, the American embassy was pretty big, as compared to other embassies. The Russian embassy was a little bigger, but the gigantic embassy was the Chinese embassy. They had over 500 people in their embassy.

Q: Good God.

KIEHL: They were all over the Island with their little red books. So we thought it was a little disingenuous of the Sri Lankans to worry so much about the Russians and Americans when the Chinese were basically taking over. A lot of the journalists were very, especially in the Sinhala language press, there were a lot of journalists who were, as my press assistant would say, "Maoist liners." They really, if they didn't truly believe it, at least the case of scotch that they got every Christmas ensured that they would print a lot of story lines that would favor the Chinese. They had a real presence there.

Sri Lanka relations with the U.S. were not unfriendly, but they weren't particularly warm.

Q: What about India? Was India the colossus to the north, so to speak?

KIEHL: It was, but it didn't really play the crucial factor until the civil war began. India obviously had a lot of interest there, there were a lot of Indian citizens there, the Indian Tamils, for example, and of course there was India's Tamil Nadu and the Tamil areas in the northern part of Sri Lanka. Again, the Tamils didn't make up Illam, the greater Tamil entity, just at the time of the civil war. It was there, beneath the surface, for a long time.

India, again, was a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, again, a major player in the Non-Aligned Movement, and relations between India and Sri Lanka were actually quite good at that time.

Q: While you were there were there any incidents or anything that really sticks in your mind?

KIEHL: During the Non-Aligned Conference?

Q: No, I mean during the whole time you were there.

KIEHL: The things that I remember, aside from the beauties of Sri Lanka and all the great events we had, there were a couple things that might be of some historical interest other than the Non-Aligned Conference. One was the conflict between the theater owners in Sri Lanka and the Motion Picture Association of America. The Motion Picture Exporters Association of America wanted to dictate to the theater owners there a package of films, so that when they got the top-rated films they'd also get some losers along the way, as motion picture distributors do. They give you a package when you own a theater and you either take it or leave it.

Remember, at this time, the Sirimao Bandaranaike government was composed of a coalition of Social Democrats, the Bandaranaike party, essentially, which is really a family party, and the Communist Party of Ceylon, and also the Sama Samajist party which was a Trotskyite party, adhering to the Fourth International in London. The housing minister, for example, was a big Communist, which is a very important thing, the housing ministry in Sri Lanka, and the finance ministry was in the hands of a fellow named N.N. Perreira, who was a Trotskyite. So you've got a pretty schizophrenic government there. Things, shall we say, for the chattering classes, were not particularly great, because if you wanted a bottle of Johnny Walker it was $40 down at the local liquor store because of all the taxes on it. They had a wealth tax, which meant you had to pay 100 and sometimes 110 or 120 percent of your income in taxes. They wouldn't tax your income, they would tax your wealth, you see. So you had to end up paying more in taxes than you earned.

Of course there was a program nationalizing the tea plantations that was ongoing. So it was a pretty left of center government and it caused a lot of imbalances, you might say, among people who were used to an almost British colonial lifestyle, the upper class of Sri Lanka, you might say. They lived a very British colonial lifestyle, and these were rather abrupt changes for them.

So there were a lot of internal conflicts there. Anyway, with the Trotskyite as finance minister, the government was in a really shaky state, I mean, they weren't getting the revenues, they were piling up deficits, it was becoming a real crisis. As a way of choking off the expenditure of foreign reserves, the government sort of put pressure on the theater owners to take a very hard line with the Motion Picture Exporters Association of America, and when push came to shove, Hollywood doesn't give a damn about movies in Sri Lanka, and they said, "OK. You're cut off. No more American films" and this was a tragedy of great proportion for most people in Sri Lanka, because they loved American films. This went on for a couple of years. They finally came to an agreement, I think, with the emergence of the new government, right after I departed. When the UNP government came in they were friendlier to the U.S. and this was all settled, but until then it was a real irritant. It was an irritant even to the supporters of the government. They liked American movies, too.

One of the things I remember, which is really a great thing, I was able to get films out of the embassy in New Delhi on a courier run, but not too many, maybe one every couple of months. One I got was All the President's Men. I showed that film on the lawn of our house, stretched a big bed sheet between two palm trees, and put that movie on, and I had basically invited all of the major players in the newspaper world, because this was essentially a newspaper story, and the power of the press against government. I think that film, it made such an impression on the press there actually had an effect on the way they dealt with the government from that point on. It really had a profound effect on them.

Q: It sort of inspired investigative reporting.

KIEHL: Exactly, and reporting that didn't tow the government line, because the government could restrict newsprint, in other words, you had to get your allocation of paper to print your newspaper from the government there, and your inlt really took a lot of courage to rebuff the government, and I think that film actually inspired them to get some of that courage. Q: Yes, that's lovely.

KIEHL: Another thing that was of some interest-1976 was the bicentennial year, and we did something that I thought was really a great thing, which very few embassies could have done. We decided to investigate the roots of our relationship with Sri Lanka over those 200 years and we did it in a couple ways. One was with a book, and the book is called Images of Sri Lanka through American Eyes. It's a compilation of the writings about Sri Lanka by American visitors to Sri Lanka, or Ceylon, from the very first American who saw the shores of the island in the 18th century and noted his impressions in a ship's log, to 1975 or '76 with Thomas Merton's visit, when he wrote some poetry before dying tragically only a couple of weeks later. It had everybody, Mark Twain, Andrew Carnegie, every famous American, it seemed, at one point or another touched down and wrote something about Sri Lanka, either published work or a memoir, or letters, or something. The librarian of the University of Ceylon in Peradeniya campus, that prestigious university with the London accreditation, was in the States on a JDR III (John D. Rockefeller, III) grant a few years before and wanted to do something for the bicentennial, so we got him to be the editor of this, and he put the whole thing together, obviously we had to buy the publication rights for those works not in the public domain, we had it printed in our regional office in the Philippines. We had photographs done by a Fulbright photographer who had been on a Fulbright to Sri Lanka and taken pictures of various aspects of life in Sri Lanka described in the book, and put these in the book as well.

The book was just an enormous hit. We gave it away to 5,000 of our closest friends, but it was so popular that people wanted to buy it, and so another printing was made and another printing, and I think it must be in its fourth, or fifth, or sixth printing now. For the last 30 years this book has been published, and now I think they're doing an updated version. So it was something that really caught the imagination.

The other part of it was an exhibition of American interest in that island country from the earliest days, and for that, of course, we had to go back to some of the early American missionaries, back in the early 1800s, who were able to work only in the north of the island because the British wouldn't allow them in the south. Then, of course, the exports during the age of the clipper ships and so on, and we actually had a lot of the objects there. Everything from the bell of a mission from 1806 up in Tamil, to some Seth Thomas clocks that were imported from the United States back in the 1880s, and then photographs as well. It was this huge exhibition which we mounted on the whole first floor and garden area of the ambassador's residence for the Fourth of July party, and again, that took the imagination of people so much that it then toured the country. It was unbelievable that they could do this. The exhibit toured the country, a publication was made of it, and the publication has been reprinted for years after that. All these display items were borrowed from various people and institutions; they had to be given back after the tour of the exhibit, but they became part of this spectacular exhibit.

I think it reinforced the idea that America has had a long term interest and connection with Sri Lanka, and that was the whole point of the bicentennial celebration that we did there. It was, really, I have to say, one of the more successful things that was done, and all done locally, nothing was imported from the States, no prepackaged thing was done by some outfit in the U.S. and plunked down there.

Q: Who did your research?

KIEHL: A lot of us did research, a lot of it was the staff, our Sri Lanka staff. I took several research trips, which was a lot of fun for me, and in those days you could drive from Colombo to Jaffna in about eight or nine hours, fourteen hours and you'd get anywhere on the island. This is before the civil war and the boundary lines and so on. We would go up to Jaffna, and Trincomalee and all these places, and meet with people, and everybody we met would tell us about something else, and we'd start plotting this out.

It took about six months of research and identifying things and then saying, "Oh yes, can we have that bell? Great, we'll pick it up a week before the Fourth of July, and we'll take it back to you when the exhibit's over," and "Sure, you can have the church bell," people were delighted to be involved in this. So we had all of these artifacts, all these photographpeople would open up desk drawers and get these photographs out, just unbelievable stuff, because everybody had some ownership of this exhibition. They all felt that this was a contribution they could make. After about six months we had all this material, and we sat down and storyboarded the thing out, and put up the exhibit. Again, this was all done with carpentry. For about three weekwho was the ambassador then? I think it was still Chris Van Hollen, he must have been leaving that summer. We took over the downstairs of his house for three or four weeks, building all these panels out of wood and plywood and so on, and painting it all, all over the downstairs of his house and his garden, to do this exhibit. It showed an extraordinary amount of patience on his part to give up his house for that long, but it was really a remarkable thing. People were just blown away by it, and they jusagain, it made an impression that no amount of canned spin out of Washington could ever do.

Q: This exhibit was our bicentennial, '76. Did the election of the Carter administration make any impact on your work at all?

KIEHL: I think it made it a little easier, in that Carter was respected in the developing world. His policies were very much looked upon with favor. Remember, this is a left-of-center government in a developing country that's part of the Non-Aligned Movement, and they saw in Carter maybe a kindred soul, in many ways. They were happier with the Carter administration than they had been with the Ford administration. There wasn't any particular love for Nixon in Sri Lanka as there was in Eastern Europe, so there wasn't any remorse about his departure and so on. Yes, I think Carter made our work a little easier, but not tremendously so.

Q: The change in title?

KIEHL: Of course the other weird thing that happened in the Carter administration, as you know, is the U.S. Information Agency became the International Communications Agency, or USICA, and that became a bit of a joke overseas, a lot of people switching the initials around [USICA to USCIA] and that sort of thing. It was kind of ridiculous, because they wouldn't let us use any of the old stationery or anything until it ran out, so a lot of paper was wasted. It was probably more of a big deal inside the Beltway than it was overseas, because frankly, everybody knew us there as USIS and we were USIS, period. It didn't make any difference what the home agency was called. Nobody ever used the terms.

Q: It came and went.

KIEHL: It was a little bit of a different feeling, too. This is nothing against the integration of USIA and State, but USIS was seen as quite a separate thing from the embassy. For example, all the people in the embassy wore suits and ties. Now, they didn't wear those jackets most of the time, but they dressed like that. We in USIS wore safari suits or batik shirts and slacks, and we were in a separate building, and our library was in yet another separate building. Our press releases and so on, people knew that was the embassy, but it wasn't really the embassy, it was the USIS office. We were somehow seen as less political and more trustworthy by people because we were out there and we weren't seen as in a diplomatic enclave. In developing countries, I think that really goes a long way. It probably wouldn't make any difference in the UK or in Belgium or in Italy, but in Sri Lanka, and India and Africa and Latin America, it does mean something, because embassies are considered somehow more formal entities and, shall we say, less friendly to the average people. They're somehow separate from the society, whereas the USIS office or the AID (Agency for International Development) mission, if it has a separate compound, and people are dressed more casually and they are working more with people in the society, and less with the foreign ministry and the government, are seen as less political.

There are some real advantages to that. Obviously, there are some disadvantages, but there are a great many advantages.

Q: You left in '77, is that right?

KIEHL: Yes, I did.

Q: So I think this is a good place to stop. Where did you go in '77?

KIEHL: Where did I go in '77? If you remember, Jock Shirley always promised me Moscow. So I went back for a year of Russian language training.

Q: All right, we'll pick that up at that point then.

Q: Today is the fifteenth of December, 2003. Bill, where'd you take Russian language training?

KIEHL: I returned to Washington and started at the Foreign Service Institute, which was then over in Rosslyn, at what we used to call the "high-rise slum." I think it was 12 to 15 stories, but it was a pretty run-down building, one of the legacies of the Pomponio brothers, who developed that whole area. Of course, FSI (Foreign Service Institute) at that time, I don't think it was even contemplating a move, so people were quite content to be there.

Q: You did this from when to when?

KIEHL: Let's see. I came back in June of '77, so I started in August. I must have had home leave, although it's one of those home leaves I don't recall, but in 1977, in August, we started language class. We were in temporary lodging in Washington because we came back with the intention of buying a place to live, since it had been quite some time (six years) since we had been here.

I remember splitting my first couple of weeks between trying to comprehend, re-comprehend, Cyrillic, slightly different Cyrillic from the Serbian, of course, and trying to absorb Russian, and chasing around with real estate agents and looking at houses, most of which were not in our price range, all over the District of Columbia. Why DC? At that time it was an advantage to stay in DC as a Foreign Service officer because as such you weren't subject to DC income tax. Unfortunately, Jesse Helms put an end to that little perk for the Foreign Service-congressional staff and the military still retain it as far as I know.-, I think back in 1986 or so, or sometime thereafter. We were determined to live in DC. We looked at everything from Logan Circle, north and west basically from there, and ended up getting a place on Connecticut Avenue, a condominium, in the old Harry Truman building at Chesapeak and Connecticut, where Harry Truman lived when he was vice president.

Q: Oh, yeah? Now, you took Serbian, so you would have gotten out in '78, I guess, is that it?

KIEHL: Russian.

Q: I mean Russian.

KIEHL: Sure, it was a 10 month course, with the eclectic Russian teacher, Nina Delacruz, who probably taught more people Russian than everyone else combined.

Q: How did you find the transfer between Russian and Serbian?

KIEHL: Well, Russian is a far more complicated language. Serbian is kind of the country cousin, you might say, to Russian. Russian is much more sophisticated, much richer vocabulary, I suppose because of the influence of literature, and just the large numbers of people, makes for a more complicated language. Serbian was easy. Of course, I was younger when I learned Serbian, although I had studied Russian in college, but it didn't make much of an impact. It was that kind of language study which was in one ear, out the other. So I'd say it was difficult for the first couple of months, to make the transference. One of the problems, particularly in the first couple of months, was the fact that three of us, who all had some Slavic language background, were in class with an officer's wife who had another language background, but it was Chinese. She was native Chinese, so she spoke, or tried to speak, Russian with a Chinese accent, which actually drove us all absolutely crazy, because we didn't know what was what, what was accurate and what wasn't.

One fellow's Polish interfered with his Russian, and for two of us, the Serbian interfered a bit with the Russian, but nothing compared to the Chinese. With some guilt on our part, we got together and went to the linguist and said, "Look, you've got to get that lady out of our class, because we can't handle this. We hear it wrong, pretty consistently, more than we hear it right, so we'll never learn the language." They did jiggle around a bit, and then they jiggled it around to the point where they did something that I don't think they should ever do, and that is to put two married couples together in the same language class. There were four of us, my wife and I and another married couple, were in the class together. Now, we all had some Slavic language background, so there was some rationale for it, but putting two husbands and wives together in the same language class is not a good idea.

Q: You got out of there in when?

KIEHL: I got out in June of '78, and went right out to the Soviet Union, and I was originally going to go out as the Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer to run the speakers program in Russia, but an opportunity came up to do the exhibits, which was an Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer just for exhibits, which meant that you would travel around the country for a year which was a unique opportunity. I was young enough and crazy enough to think it was a good deal. The only thing I said was, "Well, you've got to make some position for my wife, because she can work in Moscow but what's she going to do in the middle of Kazakhstan? So there was a provision figured out for that, she was going to run the library for the exhibit. It was a $4,000 or $5,000 library, with three specialists attached to it, and another guide, Russian-speaking American guide, that would be available to specialists who'd come to the exhibit, could be steered in that direction.

Of course the theme of the exhibit was not particularly my favorite, I would have liked it to have been on photography in the USA or even technology for the American home, the themes of the previous two exhibits but that was not to be. It was Selska Hosaistva v SSha-"Agriculture USA."[End Side]

KIEHL: As I said, I grew up in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, but my experience with farms mainly was speeding by them on the highway. "Agriculture USA" was a learning experience. I got to learn an awful lot about agriculture in the United States, just by osmosis, if nothing else. Of course, the specialists who came out, there were three agricultural specialists who came out to each city that we traveled were very useful. They were interesting people, they were professors of agriculture and viniculture or animal husbandry or you name it, at various universities around the United States. They were all knowledgeable people and they all had a wealth of information about some aspect of agriculture which you couldn't help but pick up from them.

The exhibit was a real experience, I'm glad that I made that decision to go that route rather than just going to Moscow. So we went out, we had a few days in Moscow to settle all the rigmarole about this and to discover that they hadn't really made a provision for my wife's employment, so I had go into a rather tough negotiation with the public affairs officer at the time, Ray Benson. I remember we were sort of chin to chin, almost, about this, because I felt it was pretty important for my wife to have something meaningful to do for a year and not just sit around in the middle of central Asia. Fortunately, reason prevailed and she was hired and off we went.

We just missed Kiev, the first stop on the exhibit because of the language schedule, and it probably was a good idea we missed it, because two of the exhibit guides were expelled from the country for activities incompatible with their status. In fact, they very well might have done things that were incompatible with their status. I wasn't there at the time so I have no first hand knowledge.

Q: What did you gather? What were they doing that would have been incompatible?

KIEHL: The one fellow was Ukrainian by birth, and he worked for the Voice of America, at one time. He was a very nice guy. I think he was put in a position where his latent nationalism rose to the surface because of what he saw and tales that he heard from people, and the fact that he, as a native speaker of Ukrainian, was a focus for the Ukrainian-speaking nationalists who would come to the exhibit. As a consequence, the intelligence authorities, the KGB, was on his tail all the time, and probably, I would imagine, was trying to get him to do or say something that would require them to expel him. Whether he did or not is, frankly, immaterial. They were bound to get him eventually.

The other guy, I think, was just psychologically unfit to be an exhibit guide. He did some strange things and I think he was just a person who wasn't screened carefully enough for such a high pressure situation.

Q: This period, while you were on this tour, '78 to '79, how would you describe the relations between the Soviet Union and the United States?

KIEHL: At that time, of course, relations were warming. If you recall, there was the Carter-Brezhnev embrace in Vienna, in fact, a kiss on both cheeks, which, however distasteful it was to some people, nevertheless indicated that the Russians and Americans were trying to come to some terms on things.All in all, the overall relationship was on the upswing throughout that entire period, although it wasn't particularly reflected by our work on the exhibit. You have to understand that those exhibits were negotiated with a lot of blood, sweat, and toil over many years. They first of them was the famous Kitchen Debate in'59, the Nixon-Khrushchev Kitchen Debate, and so on. That exhibit had 70 American guides with it. It was only in one city, but it was there, I think, for three or four months.

Then eventually they became traveling exhibits, usually six cities over the course of a year, with about 25 to 30 Russian-speaking American guides and staff, usually one American embassy officer attached to the exhibit as the protocol officer for the exhibit, that was the job I had. There were a couple of exhibit specialists, who actually ran the exhibit, there was an exhibit director, a deputy director, who was usually a pretty good Russian-speaker, who had had previous exhibit experience, a couple of technicians to help, getting the sound system and the lights and the video and all that to work. It was a pretty complicated undertaking, and in fact, in smaller places, where there wasn't a large exhibition hall, the guides, under instruction from these technicians, would build a geodesic dome, a Bucky Fuller geodesic dome, with Mylar fabric over it, and the exhibit would be put into that. It was a pretty complicated technological, or technical, undertaking. These technicians were usually out of the regional exhibits office in Vienna. They traveled on all the exhibits.

Q: Agriculture, of course, is ...

KIEHL: Culture.

Q: Yes, but it's almost goes to the guts of a country, particularly a country such as the Soviet Union, and they had, apparently, at that time anyway, by all accounts, they had an abysmal delivery system.

KIEHL: Oh, they did. It was a failed system.

Q: It was a system that wasn't working. Did you feel that we were showing people a system that could work, or were we just showing sort of bits of equipment and all that?

KIEHL: Well, that was the whole object, to point out that in a free society and a market economy, a smaller number of people can feed many more people and have a decent standard of living in the process, and everybody benefits by that, as opposed to, of course, the system the Soviet Union had, where everything was a wreck. I think the focus of the exhibit was very much in the vein of the family farm. There were a lot of photographs of family farms, there was a lot of anecdotal information there about family farms, et cetera, when the real success of American agriculture today, of course, are corporate farms, these gigantic things that resemble nothing more than state farms of the old Soviet Union, except that they are privately held rather than state held, and they have a profit motive, and they have an efficiency that the Soviet Union never had.

Anyway, it was the family farm. There were a series of black and white photographs that the exhibit designers loved, but which we felt, and we knew from the Russians who were there, were boring propaganda pictures that were kind of insulting in them. What they were interested in was the tractor and the combine and the color pictures of county fairs and all that sort of thing, because that's something that they didn't have. They had lots of black and white pictures, artsy pictures, I mean, they could produce those themselves, but exhibit designers were rather detached from the reality, they were artists and they wanted their artistic license. We ended up removing a lot of that and changing it to get some more pizzazz in the exhibit, in fact.

These exhibits were monumental undertakings. Even in those days the exhibit cost about $6 million. It was seen by about a million people over the course of the year, so it's about $6 a person, to have an experience like that, which was usually a day long experience, from the time they got in line to the time they got home again, and an opportunity to talk to Russian-speaking Americans. For most Russians, outside of large cities, and tourist areas, they never would have such an opportunity. So it was money well spent. It was a way to get into these isolated parts of the former Soviet Union.

Q: What were you getting from the guides and all, the reactions to what we were doing there?

KIEHL: It was fascinating. It was a little bit of everything. You had professional provocateurs sent in by the KGB, obviously, to either create tension in the crowd and to try to make one of the guides lose their cool so that they could be complained about. You also had all manner of honey-traps and that sort of thing lying in wait in most places ...

Q: You ought to explain what honey trap is.

KIEHL: These are seemingly innocent, beautiful young women, or men, in the case of the girls there, who would essentially give you a come-on, try to ensnare you in some kind of sexual liaison, and then, of course, that would be useful for blackmail purposes, allegedly. So we had to constantly remind the guys, particularly, "Be alert for this kind of thing. Not every innocent-looking Russian who bats her eyes at you is innocent, in fact."

We had no security people with us on the exhibit. That's another interesting aspect of it. There was no regional security officer attached to the exhibit. So we had to basically keep an eye on each other, in a sense, and keep people out of trouble, and of course, all our files were probably gone through every night. So there was no way you could keep even a cryptic note about somebody who, say, wanted to defect, or who wanted to provide some information that would be anything but innocent and put that in a file, or a folder or anything, because you could assume that it would be in the hands of the KGB before morning. If you ever had anything like that, you had to really keep it on your person at all times.

I remember many times I was carrying around notes on my person for a couple of weeks before I could get it out to Moscow, either myself, or to give it to a courier to take back to Moscow for reporting purposes. I did a lot of reporting while I was there, for INR, basically, on everything from the conditions in the marketplace and the prices of goods to acquiring phone books for provincial cities, which were as good as gold because there was no way to get them otherwise, except to physically get one from the kiosk when the five or six copies that were available a month would come out, or to borrow them from somebody, photocopy the entire book, which perhaps wasn't in print for five or 10 years, and then send it back to Moscow and on to INR. Very crude HUMINT (human intelligence), you might say, but it was the only way, because we were the only people who ever traveled to these places.

The first place we went on the exhibit was Tselinograd, in northern Kazakhstan, which of course now, under the new name Astana, is the new capital of Kazakhstan, but in those days it was the Virgin Lands, and it was populated by displaced Ukrainians, a few Russians, lots of Volga Germans, and the indigenous Kazakhs, none of whom liked each other, by the way, or got along very well. They all had their own newspapers and they all went their own ways when the factory whistle blew, but it was a vast steppe of Russia, and there was absolutely nothing to do, but we were plunked down there in this little town, because, for one thing, they had an exhibit hall, and it was the first time we could have an exhibit there, and it was the Virgin Lands, so agriculture was a logical choice. After much negotiation, we managed to get in there. We were the first Americans to spend the night in Tselinograd since, I supposactually, for any amount of time, because it only began to be populated about 1954, 1955.

Q: WitKhrushchev's Virgin Lands program and alby that time had it pretty well run its course, I mean as far as not working or not, or ...

KIEHL: It never really worked, it was always marginal, it was always to give a little bit of a cushion to the big wheat deals and grain deals that Ukraine and the more agriculturally rich parts of Russia can produce. They were always the breadbasket of Russia, of the Soviet Union.

This area was marginal. It was relatively arid, it was a lot like the Great Plains, the western Great Plains, which tend to be drier, the soil is poorer. It's great for growing grasses, native grasses, and we actually took a bus trip to go to see some Virgin Land. It was the only little plot left. It was perhaps a couple of hundred meters by a couple of hundred meters of vegetation that was the originally steppe, untouched by human hands. The rest of it was stunted wheathat's what it was, stunted wheat. Yields were perhaps a third of what they were in a place that was more suited to agriculture.

Q: The day is over in these little townthe guys were all young, weren't they, practically?

KIEHL: You'd be surprised. A lot of these people were kicked out there during the war, because they couldn't trust them in Ukraine, or they were Volga Germans and other displaced types. They would put them on a rail car and send them out and then said, "OK, you're out here," and drop them off at the rail head like so many cattle, and they had to survive out there. So, some of the people were relativelwell, I shouldn't say really old, there weren't very many really old people because the life was so hard that people didn't live that long, but there were certainly a lot of middle-aged people, as well as young kids.

Q: I was wondering, I mean, your crew were mostly young people?

KIEHL: Oh, yes, they were all mostly graduate students.

Q: The exhibit's over in the evening. Did they go to the equivalent of the local taverna and get together or ...

KIEHL: Well, in Tselinograd they didn't have tavernas, unfortunately. They had one or two pevo [beer] bars. Pevni bars, or beer bars, were pretty rough places. There were constant fights, people getting cut with broken bottles, people were just drunk out of their minds in there. They would drink shots of vodka and beer chasers and you could go by these places in mid-afternoon and people would be drunk out of their minds. They were very violent places, so that wasn't really a good option.

What most people in Tselinograd did, they would get blind drunk every night on vodka, and beer, or beer and vodka together, but mainly vodka. That's basically what they did. That was the only real entertainment there. I think there was one movie houswe're talking about a city of probably 30,000 to 40,000 people. One movie house, two or three pevni bars, no theatre, real theatre at all, almost no cultural life. People would hang beef cows in theiwe were there in the summer, or I guess you might say beginning of summer. This is a place where it's 40 and 40, 40 degrees Celsius in the summer, and -40 Celsius in the winter. There's not much difference. It goes from summer to winter to summer again. There's almost no spring or fall.

People would get a cow, in the summertime, and slaughter it, and hang it in their balcony at the beginning of the fall, and it would pretty well freeze over the winter, and they would hack pieces of that cow off during the winter and bring it inside and cook it. This is the level of sophistication you had in Tselinograd.

We experienced some incredible things. Of course, we ate pretty well. They shipped in special food when we were there. People would come up to us and say, "Thank God you Americans came, we've seen butter for the first time in three years because you're here!" They brought in, one afternoon, a truckload of frozen chickens, all sort of frozen together like a modern sculpture, and they took this and threw it onto the floor where it would sort of break apart. They kept throwing them down until the pieces would start breaking off. Before long, there was a riot, women punching and kicking each other to get the pieces of chicken, because this was a once a year treat. The Soviets pu200 cases of Bulgarian cabernet red wine in the little grocery store across the square from our hotel. We were the only people who bought it, because even though it was the equivalent of a dollar a bottle it was too expensive for Russians to waste their hard-earned rubles on this when they could get vodka or spirit, (190-proof alcohol) and drink that and become oblivious in a matter of minutes. The wine would take forever to get to that stage, I'm sure, so we were the only customers of that wine, as far as I know, and in two months we made a pretty good run on it, I have to say.

Tselinograd was a city where very rarely were we actually invited to someone's home, unlike many other parts of the former Soviet Union. I think, in Kishinev, for example, in the two months we were in Kishinev I must have been in 50 different Soviet citizen's apartments for dinner, or for drinks, or just to see it and to talk, because there was a tremendous curiosity about America, but also almost a compulsion to tell someone what their life was like, just so that somebody else would know. Why, I'm not quite sure, the psychology of that is somewhat complex. I think there are a lot of reasons why people do that. It wasn't necessarily that these people were dissidents, or were people who are dissatisfied with the regime. They were just ordinary people. They felt a need to express themselves to someone because they couldn't really talk to other people without possibly being reported as being anti-Soviet, or a troublemaker or something. I got the feeling that outside the very close friends and family, people didn't really communicate about anything important, but they could communicate to us because we were a kind of magic slate. Once we went away, that slate was lifted and, you know, it was all right.

Q: I assume that, of the countryside, this is nothis was pretty primitive, wasn't it?

KIEHL: It was pretty primitive. We were in an unusual situation. They took a hotel right on the square there, and they cut it in half, or roughly in half, and they put, literally, cement-block walls halfway down the corridors so that you couldn't go from one wing of the hotel to the other. The one part of the hotel remained pretty much decrepit as it was, the other wing of the hotel was spruced up and painted and some sort of surface that I swear had diamonds in it, it glittered, and if you touched it would cut your hand, it was sharp. They had this all over the walls, some kind of really crude stucco. This hotel was all fixed up, as best as they could fix it up. One could even get a small refrigerator in the room. It was really elaborate, the kind of thing that most Russians would never be able to see.

That's where we were housed. There were, in all, perhaps with a few spouses and the technicians who came in and out and so on, perhaps anywhere between 35 and 50 people at any given time, Americans, a couple of Austrians, a German or two, the technicians, housed in this wing of the hotel. We were kept, particularly in Tselinograd, very isolated. One time we invited a couple of young Russians that we met to join us for dinner in the hotel, and we managed to sneak them into the hotel. We were having drinks and when they left, an amazing scene ensued, because we could watch out one of the windows. They had an instant meeting of all the watchers at the end of the square, which they didn't think we could see but we could see, and there were people there of all descriptions, babushkas, teenagers, or at least people who looked like teenagers, war veterans, you name it, they were all congregated, and they were given instructions, because they lost these two or three Russians that had come in to see us. They didn't apprehend them when they left the hotel, so they had to get all these people together and go for a search to try to find these people. There must have been 50 people out there, surrounding the hotel in various guises to keep an eye on the hotel and to apprehend the young Russians who were leaving our company. That gives you an idea of the kind of oppressive situation we were under.

Q: How long were you in this first place?

KIEHL: Two months.

Q: Where did the people come from? You've got 30,000 living in the city.

KIEHL: The collective farms in the countryside.

Q: Did we bus them in?

KIEHL: They bused them in, and they bused themselves in, because the exhibit was advertised on Voice of America, and Radio Liberty, and so word did get around that this exhibit was there. We had Germans who came to the exhibit, dressed in a rather old-fashioned way, whose only book was the Bible, in German, lived on collective farms, 100 to 150 miles away from Tselinograd, who the last leader of the Soviet Union that they knew was Stalin. They really didn't have any connection with anybody, they were really in the middle of nowhere, and yet some of them found their way to our exhibit.

We had a couple German speakers with us as well, and so we talked with the Germans quite a lot as well, whenever they would come in, because they were close to being the majority population in northern Kazakhstan, all of whom were displaced from the Ukraine and the Volga, and about a year after that exhibit was there, reports reached Moscow of riots in northern Kazakhstan. The Germans wanted an independent, autonomous area in northern Kazakhstan, and some of the people that we met there were people who were mentioned in this movement. There was a newspaper, kind of a volksstimme, a "Voice of the People", a German-language newspaper, and that became more nationalistic after we left. I don't say we had any direct influence on it, but it was part of the simmering undercurrent, even in northern Kazakhstan there was this undercurrent that finally broke to the surface about a year later.

Q: Where did you go after that?

KIEHL: Well, let's see. From Kazakhstan we went tlet me thinDushanbe.

Q: Dushanbe being...

KIEHL: Tajikistan.

Q: Tajikistan.

KIEHL: We got therof course we did August and September, or September and October, in that area. It was 40 degrees, 45 degrees Celsius some days. I think it got up to 48 or 50 on occasion. I remember that was one of the places where we had to put down a kind of parking lot surfacthe Russians actually did that for us on a contract, and then the geodesic dome was built over this parking lot, and stretched with Mylar and the exhibit was housed inside there. There were a couple of out-buildings, as well, where the library was,.

That was memorable for a couple of reasons. For one thing, it was so bloody hot that we had to run hoses over the top of the dome all the time to cool it down and all the guides were given smelling salts in case anyone fainted, because if they fainted, the crowds were such a crush of humanity, they could be trampled quite easily. Anyone who fell to the floor could be trampled quite easily. It was essential for the guides to have smelling salts with them at all times in order to revive people who fainted because of the heat the closeness of the crowds. The exhibit was closing in a couple days, and it was the last day before all the students had to leave school and go help with the cotton harvest, and so there was such a crush of humanity that day. I don't think we ever got an accurate count of how many people came in. I mean, they literally stampeded into the building, and so at one point we all had to link arms and make a human chain in front of the building to keep them back and threaten to close the exhibit if they didn't stay back and come in in orderly groups of 100 or 150. What we had to do was funnel them through, as soon as a 150 people left another 150 were allowed in. We stayed open late just to get the crowd through.

That was a really scary moment. You really wonder, I mean you're standing there linking arms, and there's a crowd of God knows, 100,000 people, pushing in, wanting to get in to that exhibit.

Q: What interest did they have? Was it just that you were foreigners?

KIEHL: Well, Americans. Not all foreigners are of interest to these people. We were Americans, we were the country that was so on their minds, for good or ill. America was the only country that Russia wanted to compare itself to. A continental power, diverse nationalities of a couple hundred million people, who else are they going to compare themselves to? Certainly the Russians and Ukrainians in central Asia were almost obsessed with the idea of an invasion by China, the "yellow peril," another Genghis Khan, and that sort of thing, and they were almost pathetic in their appeal to us as fellow Christians, Caucasians, as a bulwark against the "yellow peril." It was so, evidentially, racist, but it wal don't think that they even rose to that level, it was almost kind of a gut reaction of their history, that they lived in constant fear that the Chinese would come back, or the Asians would take them over again.

This was evident among the Russians and Ukrainians in central Asia, but obviously the indigenous people there had no interest in this kind of philosophy at all. They felt themselves subjugated by the Russians and Ukrainians.

Q: When they would come in, you had to respond of course, to them. Were they interested in the farm equipment?

KIEHL: They were, they loved it, and they couldn't believe that a tractor would have air-conditioning and a radio. They said, "Ah, pakazuya, this is just for show." But in fact, most tractors in the Midwest have to have radios and air-conditioning. Nobody would go out in a tractor all day without it.

A lot of the video and film presentations about a glass of orange juice in the morning, in New York City, how it came there in 24 hours from Florida, the processing and all that sort of thing, the trans-shipping and suddenly the guy walks down to the grocery store and get a jug of orange juice and has it for breakfast, this was a revelation. This was magic to most of these people.

Q: Was there a problem of trying to be concerned about the pride of the people and all that. We were saying, "God, we can do this a lot better than you can."

KIEHL: In fact, it was the other way around. The Russian expression is U nas luche. "We have it better." That was the immediate response to anything that they saw. U nas luche, we have it better. Of course it was just a way of trying to save face.

We tried to go out of our way not to rub this in the faces of the people visiting the exhibit, that the societies were so unequal in terms of wealth and quality of life, particularly in these backwaters in central Asia. We tried to do that, but the whole exhibit was designed to make America look good, let's face it, and to make our system look good, particularly, and as I say, in the one area that I think it was probably to excess, the focus on the family farm, because in America today, the family farm is not doing all that well, and wasn't doing all that well then, either. Of course, that fit into the ideology of a free society and free market.

Q: Where else did you hit?

KIEHL: After Dushanband by the way, Dushanbe was an interesting place, too, in that we really got to know a lot of the Tajiks. We were able to interact with people a lot more. Now, a lot of these young Tajiks were Komsomol members ...

Q: That's the ...

KIEHL: Young Communist League. So they were establishment, young establishment people, but they, still, their attitudes were so obviously anti-Russian. When they could get away from the Russians and talk with us they were entirely different people. They became really quite different people, and maybe the best example of thaone of the things I used to do is, because I was the embassy protocol officer, was try to call on local officials and talk to them and see what their concerns were, and what their life was like and get a little biographic information on all these people, of course, and then report it back to INR. So I was constantly pecking away at our Russian keyboard typewriter to make little notes of requests for meetings, and calling people, getting a hold of a phone book so I could call officials and say, "Hello, I'm so-and-so, from the American embassy, I'm here with the exhibit, which I hope you will attend, and we'll be happy to give you a special tour, et cetera, and I'd like to call on you, and blah blah blah." Sometimes I was successful, sometimes I wasn't, it was really hard slogging, and of course it was all at the whim of the local KGB guy, my opposite member was always the local KGB guy,

The exhibit directors' opposite member was KGB also who traveled with the exhibit as a "fixer" for the exhibit. He was the opposite number, a Belarusian, Ilya Nosev was his name, and he was with us the whole year, and then there were some transportation people for the Russian railway system, because all of this stuff had to be shipped by rail. You think about this, how this evolved, could we ever do this again, anywhere?

My local guy was always the local KGB guy, Moldavia was the little Moldovan guy with a little pencil thin moustache, and in Tajikistan it was this Ukrainian guy who was my opposite member, he was the local KGB guy, et cetera.

We got pretty close to the Tajiks there, even the KGB local was a Tajik, although the young people from the Komsomol wouldn't talk with him around. They told us how resentful they were of the Russians and Ukrainians running everything. I managed to call on the first secretary of the city and the second secretary of the city Communist party, in Dushanbe, but both Tajiks. I walk in, the two Tajiks are there, and a Russian minder. So, we're talking, and it's very stilted, truly stilted, and they pretended not to speak Russian so everything had to go through the Russian as a"interpreter," and for some reason or another he got up to get tea for us. The moment his back was turned, these guys started talking a mile a minute in Russian to me, kind of trying to be friendly and nice instead of officious idiots, which is what they were when the Russian was there. Since he was coming back they pulled back again. That was the clearesreally, you rarely get such a clear indication of how things really work.

In most of the cases in central Asia, the first secretary was always a local person, and the second secretary usually was a Russian or a Ukrainian. The real power was the second secretary of the party. You could sense at even at that high level, they were big shots in the local communist party, they too were resentful of these Ukrainians and Russians running things, so it was even more evident among the Komsomol, and then something that even the casual observer would immediately notice, at 3:30 or 4:00, when everything let out, people would come pouring out of the buildings, a mix of Russians, Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Tajiks, et cetera, all come streaming out of these government buildings, they would all form up separately.

All the Tajiks would be in one place, all the Russians and Ukrainians in another, it would be almost like the South in the days of segregation, but it was segregation by choice for these people. First of all, they would live in different parts of town, most of the center-city area was Russian-Ukrainian, most of the Tajiks lived on the periphery of the city, so they had different bus lines and trolley lines to go to. They'd never talk to each other. You'd almost never see a Tajik and a Russian together, a husband and wife or friends, male friends, or female friends, except in the business place. As soon as they left the building they'd split, and it just seemed seven from a very casual observer, you could see that there was something wrong here in this society. Then, of course, that proved to be the case later, there were a number of riots between the Tajiks and the Slavs in later years, and of course, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union there are precious few Slavs left in Tajikistan, I'm sure.

Q: You went to Moldavia, and where else?

KIEHL: After Dushanbe we went to Moldavia, then up to Moscow, for the showing of the exhibit in Moscow, where we actually moved into our apartment, which was waiting for us up there, one of those Soviet-style apartments, and then the last was Rostov na Donu Don, Rostov on the Don [River], in southern Russia, which was probably most notable for"RosSelMach", the Rostov agricultural machine kombinat, which made the sort of caterpillar-tractor type agricultural machine, and they even had their big theatre there, was even in the shape of caterpillar tractor, it was amazing piece of constructivist style architecture.

Q: Well, actually, caterpillar was sent over during the '20s and '30s, they built factories for the ...

KIEHL: So each of the agricultural areas had a point to it, obviously there was grain, wheat in Tselinograwell, in Ukraine it was really fruits and vegetablebut in Tselinograd it was wheat, Dushanbe it was cotton, in Kishinev it was all viniculture, so we drank a lot of wine and a lot of brandy there. In Moscow, it was kind of general, obviously, and then Rostov was mechanized agriculture.

Q: Were you picking it uyou know, one goes back to the '20s and '30s and those Soviet films where boy meets girl, boy sees tractor, boy meet girl and falls in love with tractor-type things. Has that romance sort of gonl mean, were you picking up the spirit of the collective farm at this point?

KIEHL: Oh, yeah, but the spirit of the collective farm was dispirited, to say the least. Most collective farms were really in pathetic condition. Young people left them, so most of the people were, if not middle-aged, older than middle-aged, very ineffective and inefficient agriculture, essentially. People just were very poor, they spent all their money on vodka to forget about it all, I mean, it was really the worst kind of grinding, rural poverty.

Some of the state farms were in better shape because they were basically factories, and the people were wage-earners, and they got wages for their work, but in the collective farm you didn't get wages for your work, you shared the profit of the collective farm, and the collective farms rarely made anything close to a profit. So people essentially ate what they grew and bartered for other things like vodka.

Q: By the time you finished this whole thing, did you find that you were coming back with a perspective on the core of the Soviet Union that your colleagues in the embassy just didn't have?

KIEHL: I would say I had a more realistic view of the Soviet Union than my colleagues who stayed in Moscow. Now, I went from the exhibit to Moscow, to pick up my tour as a press officer thereafter, but most of my colleagues at the embassy, except for relatively few who were able to work with the dissident movement and so on, or the Jewish community, or the religious dissidents, Pentecostals and so on- (end of tape)

They didn't have the opportunities to meet ordinary Russians very much. They led a pretty prescribed life in that embassy, and in the foreign residential compounds that were there. Those of us who were with the exhibit, even though there was a lot of watchfulness over us, and a number of provocations and that sort of thing, we were able to get out and about. The Russians had figured it out, that if they met you in a public place, at a restaurant or on the floor of the exhibit, and they spontaneously invited you home for dinner, and you went, and you talked, and you had a good time or whatever, and you never saw each other again, it was OK, because when they got called in by the secret police, and said, "What were you doing with that guy?" they could say, "Well, I spontaneously invited him, out of hospitality, to join us, and we had an inconsequential conversation," and they could relate the conversation or whatever, and that was it. There was no follow-up; nothing would have to happen to them.

In fact, that's really, literally what occurred with a lot of the people with whom we met. Unless they habitually met with a foreigner-then they could get themselves in big trouble, where they would have to become a provocateur, or become an agent of the secret police in order to survive, but if they just did this once, one evening, kind of a fling, somehow the Russians understood that, that the spontaneity of human beings is such that how could you help but, just out of curiosity, want to talk with this foreigner? And then, of course, never see them again.

Q: Did you have our agricultural attachï¿½s pay visits to you, to find out what you had, and sample what you were seeing?

KIEHL: There were three agricultural attachï¿½s, three Americans in the agricultural attachï¿½ office in Moscow. One would come out for the opening of the exhibit in each city, but they really couldn't cover a whole country like that, three people in Moscow, and they were essentially, like the science attachï¿½'s office, travel agents for visiting firemen of all descriptions. I mean, the science office was actually a joke. They were five officers who were the science attachï¿½s; there was one real science attachï¿½, who actually had a degree in something scientific. All the others were Foreign Service officers who didn't have a clue about science, but they were essentially a tourist office for the enormous numbers of American scientists who would come on exchange programs with Russian scientific organizations.

The science attaches would set it up the visits and they would dutifully attend the meetings and take notes and do reporting. That's all they could do. There really wasn't enough time or manpower to do anything else. The agricultural attaches, to some extent, were trapped by that, too, because there were exchange visits and programs with which they also had to deal.

The agricultural attaches would, of course, go on drives out to look at the crops, and they actually could understand whether a crop was stunted or not, unlike us. We'd have to say, "Well, it was that high, that's stunted," or "What color was it?" "Well, it was kind of a grayish-brown," we'd have to describe these things, and they would understand what that meant. They were on top of that.

The agriculture office was quite interested in the market-basket reports that we would do. Every city we went to, and between the various cities where we were for two months, the time it took to ship the exhibit to the next city, we were free to travel, and so it would cost the government just as much to keep me in a hotel in Moscow as to pay me to travel around the former Soviet Union. So we would travel all the time, for a couple of weeks or even a month, it took about a month for the exhibit to be transported from Dushanbe to Kishinev by rail. Every city we went to, I would do the same thing. I would see if I could get a phone book, do a market-basket report, and write up my impressions of the city and the people I talked to, and again, we'd be in hotels and people would figure out we were foreigners and Americans. As soon as they knew that, they say "Oh, come home and I will give you uzbeski plov [Uzbek pilaf] like you have never eaten." OK, sure, we were up for anything, why not? Off we'd go and take endless trolleys to the periphery of town and go up into the tenement, and there the husband and I would cook plov together, on a stove about the size of a modern microwave- all cooked with lard, spices and all kinds of junk. My wife and the Soviet wife would talk about the children and schools and things like that, and we would talk about more manly things in the kitchen, while chugging down some brandy and then we'd all get together for dinner and they would show us their wedding pictures and that was the end of the evening.

I remember one time in Tashkent, the husband was showing me his wedding pictures and then out comes a photo of the Soviet Union's equivalent of a 747 and then I learned that he's a foreman in the factory that makes these, this is the new Russian plane which nobody had seen yet, the jumbo, the Russian jumbo jet. I thought to myself, "Well, the door is going to fly open right now and they're going to have camera's flashing for proof of my "doing something incompatible with my diplomatic status." But it didn't happen. So I could, say that I was probably one of the first Americans ever to see the Russian jumbo jet, because the foreman in the factory had shown me a copy of the picture.

This kind of thing would happen fairly consistently throughout the whole year, in some cities more often than others. I mean, central Asia was kind of fun. Kazakhstan was probably the worst experience. It was the first city we'd been to, we'd gone througthe people on the exhibit were traumatized by the Kiev experience, which was really quite nasty. It was very confining there, the way they had set it up, we were really prisoners in that hotel, but in the other cities, by and large, we could go where we wanted and we were constantly meeting people and going to peoples' flats and having a meal or eating some pickles or drinking vodka. So we'd have a chance to talk with a large variety of people, something which most of our colleagues in Moscow couldn't hope to achieve. And I also saw what was out there in the countryside. So I think I had a more realistic impression of the Soviet Union, how poor it really was. I mean, it wasn't Moscow. Moscow was the best of everything, and St. Petersburg was the second best of everything. Well, we were at the ninth best, terrible conditions, and most of the country was like that. It wasn't a rich country; it wasn't a very efficient country. We saw the trucks breaking down, military vehicles breaking down on the roads, all the time. The ones in Moscow didn't break down, because they were the show pieces.

I think in that sense I had a lower estimation of the power of the Soviet Union than I would have had, had I spent the entire tour in Moscow. I'm not so sure that anybody would have been any different.

Q: What about provocations while you were there? You had these young guides and all, Americans, did people fall in love ...

KIEHL: Yes. We had to send a couple of people back over the course of the exhibit, but the first, the city of Kiev was really the worst, and after thathe guides were pretty intelligent, they weren't nineteen years old, they were graduate students. They had seen what could happen in Kiev. They were, I think, mostly very well-disposed toward Russia. They loved the Russian language and culture. They only lasted six months, we had two groups of guides, one would switch out and the new one would come in, the second half. The staff would remain the same, however.

By the time the guides were in their third city, they were pretty cynical, and awfully antisocial. So what it did is it took eastern establishment liberals and turned them into right-wing fanatics, after three cities of the KGB trying their best to mess up your mind and get you in trouble. But by and large it was a wonderful training ground. Not only for the foreign service, because a lot of these guides are in the foreign service now, but also the intelligence agencies and the academic world. I'm thinking offhand, with our group, the guy was the GSO (General Services Officer) for the exhibit is now the DCM in Moscow. One of the other staff members is in Senior Assignments in the Department right now. Another is married to the DCM in Moscow and is a Foreign Service officer also. I can just sort of go through the list, and if they're not in the Foreign Service or the intelligence community, they're in something to do with Russia in business or in commerce or something. Another guide is the head of the Russian desk at the Department of Agriculture. He was actually a Russian speaker who was also a farm kid, so he was the perfect guy for that. Two or three of the guides went their way into the foreign agricultural service.

So the exhibits were wonderful training grounds for young, potential recruits for the Foreign Service.

Q: How did your wife find this whole experience?

KIEHL: Oh, she loved it. She's, I suppose, more interested in Russia than I am today, if that's possible. She did her Russian at FSI alsshe wasn't a Foreign Service officer then, although she joined later, and she did her exhibit duty in the exhibit's library. She and one of the guides ran the exhibit library, where the three agricultural specialists hung out, and so she actually met a better class of person, in other words, the people who would get a pass to go to the library were people who the guideeach guide had a limited number of these passes and so they were told, "Give these passes to legitimate researches and people who are interested in agriculture on an academic level, or people that we needed to talk to for other reasons." If that were the case, then we would kind of talk to thein other words, if they had some story to tell or something really important to convey. If the guide could get a flavor of that on the floor of the exhibit, he would give them a pass to the government library where there weren't any Russians overhearing the conversation.

Q: Speaking of that, how did you find the hand of our station, the CIA group in Moscow, I mean, for what you were doing?

KIEHL: There was no connection that I could discern between the station and the exhibit. For one thing, it was a USIA exhibit, and USIA was almost paranoid about cozying up with the other agency, as you know, I mean, it was an agreement that was brokered at the White House in the mid 1960s, to keep the two agencies apart, because it would destroy our credibility if any connection were ever shown there. Of course, in the early days of USIA that was less of a concern. The intel people could brief us on what the Russians were doing with us. In fact, in our exhibit, they had a list of us and what our alleged intelligence connections were, according to the Russians. The KGB had put together a little lisl was CIA, of course, but other people were ascribed to military intelligence, or the National Security Agency, or whatever. So that was noted after each of our names, and they also told us, in fact, that they had gotten information that they were now using fiber optics in our hotel rooms so they could have video, as well as audio, of everything that went on in our hotel rooms. Other than that kind of debriefing there was never a request from the station, or from Washington, on behalf of the intelligence community to collect anything, or to do anything. Now, it isn't beyond the realm of possibility that one or two of the guides were undercover which I didn't know about. That's perfectly conceivable and frankly would make a lot of sense if that were the case, but because I didn't know about it, I can't tell you.

Q: Your guides, were they all men?

KIEHL: No. Men and women, both. Probably, my guess is probably something like 65-35, two to one male to female, maybe.

Q: Then you went back ...

KIEHL: My wife accompanied me, and the director of the exhibit, who was an exhibit professional, and his wife accompanied the exhibit as well. I don't think there were any others.

Q: You finished this when, '79?

KIEHL: Yes, '79. Summer of, let's see, it would have been in the beginning of June of '79, in Rostov.

Q: And then you did what?

KIEHL: Then we took a month's vacation on the Adriatic coast because I had not had a day off for an entire year. The exhibit worked six days a week and we were off on Tuesdays, but on Tuesdays I programmed the agricultural specialist to lecture at various universities, and I would go with them to the universities. So I was working seven days a week for a solid year, and while in retrospect I can't believe I was so stupid, it didn't bother me at all. It was an interesting life and what would I do differently on a day off in Rostov?

But at the end of that time I had nothing to do for a month and we just went to the Yugoslav coast and vegged out and ate a lot of fish and relaxed for a month and then went back to Moscow and picked up right where we left off in our apartment, got into the embassy routine. I was a press officer there.

Q: So you were press officer from '79 to '80?

KIEHL: Yes, I stayed through the non-Olympics.

Q: I was going to say, this was a really critical time.

KIEHL: Well, exactly. You see, very shortly after I returned to Moscow, all that upward momentum in U.S.-Soviet relations came to a crashing fall with the Soviet invasion.

Q: Prior to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December of '79, were events in Iran resonating at all, or was this just another country far away?

KIEHL: No, they were resonating a lot. If you remember that was the period when there wal mean, it was kind of an early warning of what could happen in that part of the world. You had events in Iran, you had the attack in Mecca, if you recall, you had the burning of the American embassy in Pakistan, you had the assassination of Spike Dubs, all this was at about that same time. I'll never forget the room just outside my office is where all the wire tickers would come into the embassy, and I remember one day in particular, it was that coincidence of three of these things happening at the same time, I never heard the bells ringing on those tickers like that ever before or since. Of course, they don't have those kind of tickers anymore, so I guess I couldn't, but in the days when they had wire tickers, I never experienced hearing those bells ...

Q: The bells would ring if it was important, breaking news.

KIEHL: Yes, that's right, breaking news. Right. And the more rapid the bells would ring the more urgenwell, it was almost constant. In a sense, being in Moscow, which we all considered the center of the universe, of course, the most important embassy in the world, et cetera, we immediately looked at this at how it would related to U.S.-Soviet relations. Everything was centered around U.S.-Soviet relations.

To some extent, that was a little foolhardy, because obviously the Dubs assassination had a U.S.-Soviet connection.

Q: It was a really strong Soviet connection ...

KIEHL: Because it was the Russians who precipitated Spike Dobbs's death by attacking that hotel room. But in the case of Pakistan and the burning of the embassy there, I'm not so sure that you could really say there was any kind of Soviet connection to that, and the attack on Meccthese were indigenous elements. It was early terrorism, basically.

Q: When you got bacthis is prior to the Afghanistan busineswhen you got back, in the first place, who was the ambassador and how did you find the embassy as such, and how USIA fit into it?

KIEHL: USIA was not USIA in Moscow. As in most of Eastern Europe, it was the press and cultural section of the American embassy, because the U.S. Information Service was expelled from all these countries in the early '50s as a subversive organization. So while technically we no longer had to do a paper transfer to the State Department, and our paychecks were really USIA paychecks, to the world, we were the press and cultural section of the American embassy, whether it was in Prague or Warsaw or Moscow.

In Moscow, we had a pretty big operation there, because from '56 on, when we had officers there, it was the beginning of things like the exhibits, exchange programs, the magazine, America magazine, and of course the radios, which were the most expensive part of the USIA operation to that part of the world. So those operations got to be fairly large. In Moscow, we were called P&C up and P&C down. P&C up was largely on the 7th floor of the main building, of the embassy building, which was beyond the vault door, essentially, and that's where the press operation and the public affairs operation was. P&C down was essentially the cultural office in the North wing, near the consular section, if you remember the layout. That North wing was the consular section and the cultural section, P&C down, as they called it. And P&C up and P&C down rarely talked to each other, by the way.

P&C down was cultural exchanges, speakers programs, that kind of thing. When I went to Moscow, I was in P&C up, of course, as the press officer. My job was the Russian press anAmerica magazine. That was basically my daily duty. There was another officer who was the embassy spokesman and dealt with the foreign press. There was another officer who dealt with radio and TV. The cultural section was summarily split up. My wife actually then got a job in the cultural section, working with the Fulbright program as a local hire.

Of course at that time, if you remember, that was the time a consular officer made, I should say, a big mistake, and allowed someone to come into the consular section with a bomb. That was in that same building. It didn't affect the cultural section too much. That was before we got there.

Anyway, the two section were ostensibly under the same boss, the Public Affairs officer, but because they were in two separate wings of the embassy, and one was essentially closed to any visitors and the other was open to visitors, particularly American exchange students and grantees and Fulbrighters and journalists picked up their mail there, so you had 50 American correspondents permanently stationed in Moscow coming in for their mail all the time. And occasionally Russians would be able to get into the building and talk to people, and that's where they would go, either there or the consular section. My wife and I often said we were the link between P&C up and P&C down because we talked to each other. So she would tell me what was going on there, and I would tell her what was going on up here.

The other thing that was kind of interesting is that my office was one of the few that had a balcony right over Ulitsa Chaikovskaya. It was on that balcony that the microwave measuring device was installed, because I was the embassy officer that the media would call

the Associated Press, routine as anything, every month, would call and say, "What can you tell me about the microwaves?" And I would say, "The level is constant," or "There's increased activity." I was authorized to give that kind of vague information, and it was based on the little device outside my office.

Q: What was the feeling about these microwaves?

KIEHL: Nobody really took it that seriously. They had these aluminum, well, screens, essentially, for our windows which allegedly kept the microwaves out. Everybody had heard all kind of stories. They knew where site A was, they knew where site B was. I mean, I could look across the street at site A. That's where they were beaming the microwaves from. Of course, that went up in flames just before I left Moscow, you know. An accident, of course, and site B was over near the commercial section, which was in another building down the street a little bit.

People didn't take it that seriously. Some people probably were worried for their health, but frankly, most people didn't consider it really a serious matter.

Q: Who was ambassador at the time?

KIEHL: When I first arrived, Mack Toon was the ambassador. In fact, when I got there, the first week, before shipping off to Tselinograd, I just sat in the back of his press conference. He had, occasionally, press conferences in an old auditorium down at the commercial sectiohe was ambassador when I was in Belgrade, alsso he looked out, and you have an idea of what a friendly fellow he was, he said, "Kiehl! What the hell are you doing here?" And I said, "Well, Mr. Ambassador, I'm assigned here." He said, "Nobody ever tells me anything." That was the greeting I got from him. But anyway, I didn't see much of him thereafter. By the time I got back to Moscow they were about to change, and in fact, Mack Toon, who was Mr. Hard as Nails, chew you up and spit you out for breakfast, was probably the wrong ambassador to have at a time of increasingly close relations between the two countries, because he made no bones about his distaste for the Soviets.

Tom Watson replaced him. Avuncular Tom Watson of IBM, whose memories of the Soviet Union stemmed from World War II, when he flew B-17s into Mirmansk. Of course, he arrived just before the invasion, when relations went to hell, and of course he was just the wrong person to be in that situation, too.

Q: Prior to the invasion what were you doing?

KIEHL: Prior to the invasion, what was I doing? Well, I was distributing America magazines, I was working with Soyuz Pechat' actually, Soyuz Pechat' was the outfit that ran all the kiosks, a lot of kioskto get our magazines distributed. That was a beautiful correlation between the state of U.S.-Soviet relations and the number of America magazines that were sold. In fact, I tried to prove this point by plotting out a chart of our circulation and indicating pluses and minuses in U.S.-Soviet relations, and they tracked beautifully. All you had to do to figure out what our rating was, as a country, with the leadership of the Soviet Union, was to find out how many newsstand returns we got of America magazine. A lot of people just didn't understand that, no matter how many times you could prove it. And so, in those days, for example, when our relations were good, we were averaging about 1200 or fewer newsstand returns out of 60,000 copies. Post-Afghanistan, of course, there were over 10,000 returns. Of course the Soyuz Pechat' people with their dead pan humor would tell me that people just simply wouldn't buy this rag.

I spent a lot of time working on that, but my main job was the Russian press. So I was cultivating people in the Russian press, going out to lunch with Izvestya and Pravda commentators and getting to know them. Of course, they were important conduits of information passed to the embassy through them, to us. That was the whole point of these lunches. I wasn't going to convince them of anything, and they weren't going to convince me of anything, but it was a way of getting messages across, and it worked pretty nicely. I had a lot of good lunches with interesting people.

Q: Did you find thal mean, there's the one side of the Communist press, which was just all this gobbledygook, political talk ...

KIEHL: Right. It made it easy to read, because they're all formulas.

Q: Yes, I mean, the whole idea was to rate the code, which I guess was really quite easy to break, basically. You come up to whatever paragraph the guts of the thing was in, but how about for the rest? What was your impression? Was there a fairly good news system within the Soviet Union?

KIEHL: There was a very good news system, it just wasn't available to the general public. There was, just as in Yugoslavia there was a thing called Black Tanjug, which was the external wire, and Red Tanjug had the internal wire of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, which had all the news that they couldn't put in the papers in Borba and Politika. So, too, they adopted that from the TASS wire, internal TASS, which was full of important news. Occasionally, I would get copies of this, through just dumb luck, maybe, or perhaps to show me that something was in that issue. But in any evenl mean, it was a substantial document, and full of the major news of the world, from American media, from French, German, and so on, all in translation, so that the leadership of the Communist party and the government would be up to the minute on world news and world happenings and commentaries. So they were very well-served in terms of news. It was the general public that got a much more restricted diet, of course.

Q: When, at just about Christmastime of '79, the Soviets moved into Afghanistan, what was the reaction within the embassy?

KIEHL: Outrage, of course. Not that there was any shock and disbelief, because most people in the embassy had the feeling that the Russians were capable of doing anything, but I think the timing was kind of surprising for a lot of people. There really was a feeling that relations could get a lot better, but they didn't, obviously, and this was the central issue of why they didn't. Most people were surprised by it, and I wouldn't think disappointed so much as outraged. A lot of people sort of gave in to the underlying anti-Soviet feeling that they had, because unlike almost any other place in the world, the "clientitis" that people used to talk about in Foreign Service posts abroad, which there is some credence to, didn't ever exist in Russia. Everybody who came to Russia was essentially anti-Soviet, and the people who taught Russian studies in America were anti-Soviet. So they had a lot of hard work to do to try to convince people that they weren't the devil.

Q: Were people trying to speculatl had never really had a

KIEHL: You mean why did the Russians do this?

Q: Why they did it, I mean, even today I talk to people, and it doesn't seem to parse very well.

KIEHL: Of course the ostensible reason, a lot of people speculated, was that the Russians were using Afghanistan as a stepping stone to Pakistan and India and warm-water ports in the Indian Ocean. Well, of course they already had an alliance in everything but the formal sense with India. So they could use Indian ports for their navy anyway, and they didn't have a big enough navy to handle a third ocean.

Q: And they could use Cameron Bay, too.

KIEHL: That's right. They eventually did for a while. But they didn't have enough navy, actually, to make it worthwhile, and anybody who knows the geography of the area knows that Afghanistan is a place you're going to get bogged down in. Why use that as a stepping stone to Pakistan? It didn't make any sense. I think it was a miscalculation. I think that they got themselves in a situation where they had supported indigenous local Communists and they were ready to take power and they took power and they couldn't handle it and the Russians just started helping them out and helping them out, and the slippery slope. I think they just didn't realize what they were getting themselves into, and they trapped themselves in Afghanistan. Not the first people to do it and probably not the last.

Q: What were you doing after this, up througl mean, all of a sudden we started putting the squeeze on Carter and what were you doing and so was the rest of the embassy? What changed?

KIEHL: Of course, there was again, a big propaganda offensive, worldwide, about the Russians in Afghanistan. Obviously there was a limited amount of that you could do in Russia. We found that, very quickly, most of our contacts dried up, as relations went south. Everybody sensed that this was not the time to be chummy with Americans and so, very quickly, all the marginal people that you'd want to have contact with went away. I was stuck with the Pravda and Izvestiya correspondents, the guys who were supposed to feed me information and get the line from me, to report back. It worked fine for both of us because we both had a good lunch on the government, whichever government had to pay for it. But essentially, that's what it restricted itself to. And, very soon, the numbers of newsstand returns from our America magazine escalated.

It became pretty grim. I remember one time, it was winter, it was freezing cold, and a spontaneous march on the embassy was about to happen. 10,000 Arab students, and Muslims of various stripes, were going to march on the American embassy and present a petition and perhaps stone the embassy. At least this was the word we got. So a couple of us, who actually could speak Russian at the time, were positioned to liaise with the police. We were put outside the gates. The gates were closed behind us, and we were there with local cops and we had a signal to get back in if we needed to, but we were out there liaising with the local cops out on the street, Ulitsa Chaikovskaya, in the freezing cold, for a couple of hours. I'm thinking to myself, "How did I end up doing this?" I'm a press officer, what am I doing here, standing with this cop?

Anyway, again, it was a language problem. As much money as we spend on training people in languages, people who are stuck in the embassy in Moscow weren't able to speak. They could read the papers beautifully, but they couldn't speak with a cop coherently and quickly. Whereas those of us who were bouncing around with exhibits, around central Asia, we picked up that facility. So those of us who could do that were out there with the cops. I'm thinking to myself, "Here I am, it's beginning to snow, I'm here on the wrong side of the gate with this cop, and he's not going to protect me and 10,000 Arab students are coming to stone the building. This is beautiful." I'm thinking, "Well, maybe it's about time I hit the doorbell and get inside," when one of the cop's associates comes running over and says, "Oh, you Americans always luck out- it's starting to snow so heavily they all ran home." They were afraid of the snow. The crowd was melted away by the snow! That was nice.

Basically, it was a very tense time. Nobody was willing to extend any friendship to the U.S. among the Russians, and our contacts shriveled back to the core, the kind of Cold War core, where I had a couple of people that I would be exchanging signals with, and the same would be true of other people in the embassy, and the people who were associated or close to people in the embassy, who were Jewish dissidents or Pentecostalists and so on, they really got the pressure put on them. Essentially it drove the embassy in upon itself.

Q: Did the KGB pick on Americans at that time more than they usually did?

KIEHL: It depended. In Leningrad, in particular, they were very nasty. A colleague I went to language school with, who was in a branch office up there at the consulate ...

Q: Who was that?

KIEHL: Chris Arcos. He later became a political appointee and Ambassador to Honduras. He's over at Homeland Defense now. He's Tex-Mex but his wife's Cuban-American, and so he got very friendly with the Cubans in Leningrad, St. Petersburg, so he came to the attention of the KGB and they assumed that he was CIA. They almost ran him off the road a couple of times, with his wife and kids in the car. It was pretty nasty. One of the people that I was in language class with, that quartet that I was talking about, was punched in the face in a hotel in Kiev, and her bag was taken from her, because they thought she might have something in it of use that had been passed to her. A dead-drop type thing.

So they did occasionally push the buttons. I didn't have any great things happen to me. I had probably 30 flat tires on my car, all four at a time. They just let the air out, they wouldn't slash the tires, so it was just a matter of pumping it up again. That's how they let you know that they didn't like what you were doing. One of the things that was interesting, when we were in Moscow, is that we had made friends with people out in these various central Asian places and so on, but when they came to Moscow, we were perhaps the only people they knew in Moscow, so they called me up, and I'd have them over. I'd have to pick them up at a subway stop or something, and then drive past the mili-man [Militiaman] who was glaring at them. We'd go into the apartment and we'd have dinner and drinks and they would be wowed by our apartment which I can tell you was really a dump, and they'd be fascinated by the bright lights of Moscow. Actually, after about six months out in the boonies, when you came to Moscow, you were looking around at the lights because you didn't have of that out there. That was their big trip, coming to Moscow. I would take them out again, and fingers crossed, we'd pull up to a subway and then they got out and into the subway and I'd hope that they wouldn't face any repercussions about it, but you never knew.

It was nice to catch up with people like that, but then again, they were taking a great chance, particularly in those days, when things were ratcheting down, and probably your average Soviet citizen really wouldn't be aware that things were much more dangerous for them to see an American now as opposed to six months before. They weren't, I don't think they were as sensitive to that as we were, because we worried about it more than they did, most of the time.

Q: As things wenparticularly the Olympics, and the fact that we were ...

KIEHL: Oh, yes, the non-Olympics.

Q: That must have really seared the soul of the Soviets.

KIEHL: That really upset them about America, the average Russian. They were really hurt about that. They didn't really understand this Afghanistan stuff, but that's something that they really felt, that the U.S. was gratuitously hurting them. We did a lot of stupid things, I say we, the U.S. government. One of the things we did is that we had a cover and a whole issue of America Magazine devoted to the Olympics, and American athletes of the Olympics, when the Olympics was on. Of course, nobody stopped it. It was moving along and it was being printed, and then shipped to us, and then it went on Soyuz Pechat' automatically. And then we got our copies and we saw that, "Oh, the Olympics, I wonder..." No sooner had we gotten these copies than a rocket came in from Washington, saying, "Do not distribute that magazine! Get all the copies back from the Russians!" We looked at each other and we said, "What a stupid idea that is. All we're going to do is make a big deal of it, and we'll never get all the issues back. Are you kidding? It's already out, and what difference does it make, it just tells the Russians about all these great athletes who aren't going to be coming to the Olympics."

So we went back and we said, "This is a bad idea, for the following reasons." And they said, "We don't care. Do it." So we did it. We went to Soyuz Pechat' and we said, "You know those 60,000 magazines that were delivered, except for the dozen or so that we have, we'd like those back, please." And they said, "What?" "Oh, yes, there's a printing error, we'd like to pulp those." Arrangements were being made to ship these to Belgium, so they could be pulped in Belgium, because they wouldn't trust anybody there to do it. We had to send these to Belgium to pulp 60,000 copies of the magazine. They said, "Well, we'll let you know." Of course the next day a commentator for Novosti was on Russian televisioNovosti [APN] being the most obvious KGB outlet-with a copy of the magazine, saying, "Look what the Americans are trying to do now. Idiots! We have obtained a copy of this magazine, here's the pictures," et cetera. So the cat is out of the bag, right? We then said, "Since the cat's out of the bag, what's the point of getting 60,000 copies of the magazine back, going through all these conniptions, then putting them on rail cars and shipping them to Belgium and having them pulped?"

[End Side]

Q: You were saying is, that what's the point?

KIEHL: Yes. Actually, this would serve our interests. It would show to the Russians that we have all these great, talented athletes that we're telling can't compete for higher national interest, right? We're not about to lose the Olympics. It's not because we're too inept to play the sports, it's because of political reasons we're doing it. Well, it didn't work.

I spent a thoroughly miserable couple of days at Soyuz Pechat', sipping tea with a couple of barnacled old Soyuz Pechat' bureaucrats as the conveyer belt went by with boxes of magazines, up and onto the truck. 60,000 magazines, and I had to count every box to make sure these boxes, I think, each contained 25 copies, I had to make sure that every single magazine was returned. We were not worried about newsstands returns, you see. I spent a couple of days doing that, then they were on the truck, then they went to a railcar which was to be sealed, then we sealed the railcar and the railcar went off to Belgium where the magazine were, presumably, pulped.

Then, of course, the next issue coming had the wrong number and date on it. So they had to ship them all to Belgium agail don't know what the deal was with Belgium, that they were very good with glue, or what, but all the stuff was shipped to Belgium, where someone with some team of ladies, I suppose, laboriously pasted on a new date and number on the next issue of the magazine, so that we wouldn't lose an issue, you see. Then that was shipped out to us. Of course by that time we were getting 10,000 or 12,000 returns because, according to Soyuz Pechat', the "Soviet citizens could not stomach this magazine any longer", even though a copy of American Magazine would bring 25 to 30 rubles, the equivalent of $40 on the black market. That's the way it was.

Things were pretty grim, so we then figured, "OK, now we have to figure out what we're going to do with the Olympics." When the Olympics was going to be the Olympics, a couple of us were assigned the Olympic coordination team, when there was going to be an Olympics. So the front office immediately said, "OK, now you're the Olympic dis-coordination team, and what you need to do is see what's going on with the Olympics, in other words, talk to the other embassies, find out from the sports committee and under committee who was participating, at what levels and why, and all this kind of thing, and then you guys need to monitor the Olympics. Talk to people who are coming to the Olympics and find out why they're coming there and what their feelings are, et cetera, et cetera." All this ancillary reporting, which I'm sure is lost in a vault somewhere, and that's what we had to do, and that's why, instead of leaving, as I normally would have, in July, or staying around to watch the Olympics and getting a pass for it, we didn't go into the sports events, of course, because that would be construed as supporting the Olympics, we had to hang around outside the events and talk to Polish tourists about what they saw inside. That's what we did, througl guess that was the middle of September it was over. Then I went back to Washington.

Q: When you went back to Washington what did you do?

KIEHL: I went back as the Soviet Union desk officer for USIA, in charge of the Soviet desk, which I rapidly had changed to the Soviet and Baltic Affairs desk, because nobody was handling the Baltic states in USIA. They were handling them pretty well at VOA, because they were broadcasting to them all the time, but USIA's headquarters didn't have anybody specifically with a Baltic portfolio. Having just come from there and realizing how important that would be, I petitioned to include that as part of the Soviet desk, so we did. So it was Soviet and Baltic affairs, which got me two nice national days, the addition to the Soviet national day. The State Department, I think, traditionally has the Balts with the Hungarians. The Hungarian desk, in EUR, also handled the Baltic states, but in USIA, nobody handled the Baltic states, which really didn't make sense, especially since we were investing a lot of money in the radio broadcasts, and there were a lot of Balts on exchange programs with the Soviet Union, and we did still recognize them as independent. I made the case, and it was a pretty easy case. No one had ever thought of it, I guess, or hadn't thought of it in many years.

So, yes, I came back to do that.

Q: You did this for how long? From '79 to ...

KIEHL: No, September of '80 to September of '82.

Q: Well, one of the things that I've noted on interviewing people who worked for USIA is that overseas is seen to as very active and very much involved in policy matters. When you get to Washington, you're kind of a personnel guy, there isn't much policy. How did you find that?

KIEHL: It was a little different, I think because of the Soviet Union. I came back, you remember, just as the Reagan administration came on board, so obviously I wasn't seen as the Soviet desk officer, Charlie Wick was the Soviet desk officer, and a guy named Ron Trowbridge, who was the head of the education exchange bureau was the deputy Soviet desk officer because he was probably the most right-wing person in the administration, and then eventually, it trickled down to the Soviet desk. So there was a lot of focus on the USSR Desk and because there was a lot of focus on it, it probably did have a lot of policy issues. Because of the U.S.-Soviet relationship having been soured by Afghanistan, we had very strict instructions as to who could visit the Soviet Union and who coulwhat kind of programs could be mounted there, et cetera, which came down, unfortunately, to me, having to clear every cable that wenevery USIA cable that went to Moscow or Leningrad, literally. That's a lot of cables, so that was a very time-consuming thing.

Now, I wasn't the only Soviet desk officer, I was the Soviet desk officer, but I had a deputy. I also had a Russian ï¿½migrï¿½ named Juri Jelagin, who was a Russian musician, who used to play violin for the Houston Symphony, who was then the editor of the Russian dialogue magazine (Dialog). He was also part of the Soviet desk. I also had an intern, who was in Russian studies, who ran the distribution and records system for Moscow, the computerized list of contacts, out of Washington. So we had a little coterie of four of us to handle this portfolio, whereas most other desk officers, one person handled Poland and Hungary, for example, handled two or more countries. We had some luxury of backup, but there was a lot of cable traffic to clear. And anybody who had to go there, we had to interview them, to see if they would pass muster to go.

That was a very time-consuming deal. The other thing was that once martial law was declared in Poland, for example, the, shall we say, the real right of center folks in the government wanted to shut down all the exchange programs with Russia, which we saw as about the only lifeline open in order to have access and understand what the Russians were up to. So it came down to a point where I was called by the director's office to say that associate director Trowbridge, who was the head of the e-bureau, was acting USIA Director that day, and he had determined that the Russians activities were so incompatible that we would immediately end the Fulbright program with Russia, and all exchange programs would cease with the Soviet Union. I put down the phone, and I said, "This is really stupid." I talked to my boss, and he said, "Yes, you're right. It's really stupid." He was the director of the bureau, and I said, "Well, look, maybe there's a chance we can stop this, if I get the State Department to say that it's a bad idea."

I called the Soviet desk, I was pretty close to the people over there, I was the only non-State person who was allowed to go to their meetings, so I was adopted, I suppose, in that sense. I called them and I said, "Look, this is the situation. What I need from you is something which would say that this is not in the national interest, and so it shouldn't be done." They said, "Good idea. Why don't we do that? Why don't we say that?" I hung up with them, and I went down to Trowbridge's office and I said, "Well, I can understand your feelings, sir, but I've just been on the phone with the State Department, and they say that it would not be in the national interest to do this, and so we should not do it." He said, "Oh. All right, well, I'll wait until Charlie [Charles Z. Wick, USIA Director] gets back, back from California." I said, "OK."

Well, of course, Charlie Wick was smarter than this guy and he knew that this would have been a disastehe actually was a pretty intelligent guy. He understood that this would have been really counter-productive. So that little initiative died, but if that guy hadn't been told not to do it, he would have sent out a press release ending the exchange programs, and then, of course, he couldn't have reversed it. It would have been very difficult. This is what you had to put up with if you were a Soviet desk officer in those days.

Q: Of course the exchange programs were probably one of our most effective tools all around the world.

KIEHL: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. I think that's still true, that it's the single most important thing. Now, in the case of the Soviet Union, the exchange programs were relatively small. The Soviets wouldn't allow too much, compared to the size they became after 1991, 1992. They became enormous. So I would say probably the exchange programs, and the radios, and the things like America Magazine and the exhibits were all very important in a place like Russia, which was a closed society. But certainly, the value of exchange programs has certainly become obvious since the collapse of the Soviet Union, with those enormous numbers of young Russians who have been able to travel here and back again, and the networks that they've formed throughout the former Soviet Union. It's the one thing that's made a return to Communism almoscertainly, in my view, an impossibility, because there's now a network of people who would actively fight against that.

Q: Is there anything else we should discuss before movinwhile you were doing this Soviet job?

KIEHL: Oh, you mean in the Soviet Union?

Q: No, in the desk back in Washington.

KIEHL: It was probably the ideal time to be in that position, because there was a lot happening, and it was very interesting to experience it. I think probably one of the key things, aside from this incident with the exchanges, and martial law in Poland, was the program that Charlie Wick had dreamt up, "Let Poland Be Poland," have you ever heard of that?

Q: Yes, I'm trying to thinyes.

KIEHL: There was a worldwide television special transmitted via satellite around the world, with components from all over the world on the theme, "Let Poland Be Poland." In other words, release your iron grip over poor Poland, Russia. This was the brainchild othe brainstorm of Charlie Wick. I think, at the time, those of us who were professionals in public diplomacy or whatever you wanted to call it in those days, probably thought this was absolutely ludicrous, but Charlie Wick was convinced of it, and I think, actually, it was probably valuable for the Poles, because they got the feeling that the world was behind them. In the long run, it probably was positive. So the conventional wisdom was wrong, and the upstart from California, Three Stooges movies, actually proved to be a genius at this.

Q: There is a problem of the Washington conventional wisdom, which feeds on itself, and sometimes it takes an amateur or a maverick to break through. Normally conventional wisdom is more or less on track.

KIEHL: It's more wisdom than convention. In this case, it was more convention than wisdom. Anyway, of course, one of the things that was a little ridiculous is that people had to call the various posts and say, "Well, how many people would you say saw the program?" and that kind of thing, and then come these wild estimates of millions and millions of people, 30 million people in Italy saw the program, and all this data was packaged and sent over to the White House.

All that aside, which was so much internal brouhaha, the fact that it was done and the fact that all these people put something together and it was broadcast around the world, probably did a lot for the Poles. It didn't do much for the rest of the world, I don't think. In other words, people who thought the Soviets were beasts before thought they were beasts after. People who didn't, didn't, but the Poles got a charge from that, that in fact, the world was paying attention. The world was listening. So it really probably was worthwhile. That was one of, I think, the sidelights of that time in Washington.

Two years goes pretty quickly. I remember when martial law was declared I was down in North Carolina, and they tried to reach me down there and couldn't, I was staying at my sister-in-law's, but in the morning I opened the door and the New York Times had the headline, "Martial Law Declared in Poland." So I called our operations center and they said, "Oh, yes, we've been trying to reach you. Get up here, right away." I said, "You realize I'm in North Carolina?" "Well, yes, but..." So I barreled up 95, collected my wife and we hurriedly said our goodbyes and barreled up 95 at a record speed, no doubt, and got there, and pulled up, and got out and went up to the operations center USIA, up on the 8th floor of the old USIA headquarters. I said, "OK, I'm here!" and they said, "Oh, it's OK now." I said, "Well, thank you." This was before cell phones, they couldn't have called back. They said, "It's OK, we've got everything under control right now, but you need to come back first thing tomorrow morning, we have a meeting scheduled."

It seemed like an awful lot of dashing about for nothing, but as it turned out they were really kind of shorthanded because the Soviet desk officer was away and the Polish desk officer was away, and they were the two principal countries involved in martial law in Poland. They had no expertise on hand for USIA, but I guess the world survived it, as it would.

Q: Then what? Did you move on to Prague next?

KIEHL: Oh, yes, sure. In fact, I was all set to go to my dream post where twice before I had gotten word that I could be assigned. My dream post was Sofia, Bulgaria, of course, and I was all set, and I was ready to start Bulgarian language training, and the same guy who called me up and said, "Hey, go to Colombo," remember? Jock Shirley, he was still around. He called up and said, "Bill, the fellow that we were going to send out to Prague has just been declared persona non grata by the Czech government, and we noticed that you were going to Bulgaria, but wouldn't you rather actually go to Prague? I talked to the director and he'd be keen to send you there." I said, "Oh. Well, I don't know. I'd have to talk this over with my wife. I can't make this decision right now. Can I call you in the morning?" He said, "Oh, sure, that'd be fine." So I talked to my wife about it, and I said, "Well, here are the pros and cons," and of course, the pro set for Bulgaria actually seemed to add up more, because our relationship with Prague was really bad. They had PNG'd [declared persona non grata ] every USIA person there in the last couple of years. Nobody ever finished a tour. They got there and then they got bounced. In once case somebody was set up with fake drug charges. I already spoke Serbian, which is nothing more thawell Serbs would say-Bulgarian is ungrammatical Serbian.

Q: I used to speak it.

KIEHL: Right. I thought, "This would be perfect, to do this." So we agreed, "Oh yeah, we'll stay with Bulgaria." The next morning I called up Jock Shirley, and I said, "My wife and I talked it over, and we think we'll stick with Bulgaria," and he said, "It's too late, Bill, the director's already agreed to send you to Prague. I hope that isn't a problem." I said, "No, of course not." What could I say?

I ended up taking Czech for three months, and got my 3/3 in Czech, which was remarkable. I had the best teacher I've ever had. It wasn't at FSI, of course, it was at a contract language school. She had, I think, taught Czech for the intel people, before she was on contract, at 16th and K streets. She would come in and work with me for four hours, converting my Russian to Czech. She was a Russian teacher in Prague at one time. So she converted my Russian to Czech, and then, my deputy, John Brown, who just, if you remember, bailed out of the Foreign Service with an article in the newspaper, came in, and the two of us would be together for an hour, and then I'd leave, and she would have four hours with him, converting his Russian to Czech, also. I got my 3/3 in two and a half months, and he got a 3/3 in three months, and we got out to Prague and we actually spoke Czech, unlike the other people at the embassy, none of whom, unless they were of Czech background, actually spoke street Czech. In other words, they would speak literary Czech, but we actually spoke the Czech that people spoke on the street, and in the universities, everyday speech, which was a huge advantage. Two of the three best Czech speakers at the embassy were the two of us.

She was the most remarkable teacher and the one thing she said is, "Promise you will never tell anyone what my name was," or anything, because she feared for her life and her family back home, and so I said, "Yes, I would," and I meant that so sincerely I have forgotten her name. I couldn't remember her name now if my life depended on it. She was a really remarkable teacher, just full tilt for four hours, then an hour with the two of us, then another four hours with him.

Q: Good God.

KIEHL: He said by the end of the day he was exhausted and she was still going full tilt. It was terrific, I mean, I still can't believe that after two and a half months I went over to FSI and passed the FSI test, having gone to another language school, but obviously she did the job. It was terrific.

Q: We'll pick this up next time. We've already covered your Czech training, but you arrived in Prague when?

KIEHL: I arrived in Prague in January of 1983.

Q: And you were there until when?

KIEHL: Until July 1986.

Q: OK, well, we'll pick it up then.

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Today is the sixth of January 2004. Bill, Prague, 1982 to 1986, right?

KIEHL: Well, actually, January of '83. It was the New Year by the time I got there. We decided to spend the holidays at home.

Q: What was the situation in Czechoslovakia in '83.

KIEHL: I1983 the Czech regime was still very much under the rule of the Communist party, and Gustav Husï¿½k and company. It was actually a pretty bad period for U.S.-Czech relations. The reason I actually ended up there is because the public affairs officer, my predecessor, had to leave early, and his deputy was more or less forced out because of a trumped up drug charge at the border, which the embassy resisted rather vehemently, and in the end she was allowed to remain another couple of months, but because of that, the post was seriously understaffed. Fortunately, there was an administrative secretary who carried on as much as anyone could have expected. I think someone from the consular section filled in when there was a need for an FSO to do something, for a couple of months. The person who was originally assigned there was rejected by the Czech government because he had been there before. So there was a bit of a tit for tat, I think we threatened to close the Czech airline office in Chicago, which of course was a nice little listening post for them, in the Czech community out that way, and so on. Finally they did agree to accept new staff for USIS, which of course was called the press and cultural service of the American embassy.

I took the job, I was originally going to be assigned to Sofia, but changed to Prague instead, and took that quick course in Czech with the marvelous teacher I talked about last time, and my deputy, the same, we converted from Russian to Czech, both of us, and so I was going out in January, and I think he was to arrive in February. Got out there in January, my wife was delayed a little bit, she was packing up our stuff, and ran into a snowstorm back in Washington, I think it was Washington's Birthday, there was a big snowstorm then. In any event, she was delayed.

I got out there, got into my apartment, which had been vacant for a number of months and was used as a transient apartment, and it was really a dump, it was all mismatched furniture and that sort of thing. It was a typical transient apartment. I'm sure the bugs that were placed in it, when it was the Israeli chargï¿½ d'affairs' apartment back in the late '60s, were still in it, and probably upgraded each time there was a vacancy. It was, I'm sure, thoroughly bugged, and we also found out there was a watchtower in the cathedral across the street, in the square. Nï¿½mï¿½stï¿½ Mï¿½ru, or "Peace Square." Actually Vinohrady Square in the old days it's now Vinohrady Square again. There's an old Catholic church there, neo-Gothic, and in the clock tower was a group of STB folks with long-range camera lenses ...

So where was I? Oh, yes. The Statni Tanji Bespecnostmy Czech's getting a little rusty therthe state secret police, they had a little facility over in the clock tower itself, and they had long range cameras, lenses, and binoculars, and they would hang out in there most of the time. They probably also had eavesdropping equipment in the base there, and they woulin fact, whenever we had guests, they would film the front of the apartment building to clock each guest going in and out, and when we had a big event, they'd even pull up a truck across the street with an ostentatious motion picture camera in the back, filming everyone, and my Czech dissident friends would turn and wave to the cameras. It wasn't terribly intimidating, but you knew you were constantly watched, and followed.

In any event, I got in there, and determined that the ambassador at the time was Jack Matlock, whom I had worked fol worked for him twice, a very solid guy. Brilliant Russian linguist and so on, which, of course, was something of a detriment in Czechoslovakia, because his Czech had a distinct Russian accent, which was a little off-putting to some people, but they understood it's very difficult to switch those. I, on the other hand, maybe because my Russian wasn't as good as his, adapted to the Czech pretty well. People told me that, because of this teacher who was so damn good, my deputy and I both spoke really vernacular Czech, of the Prague variant. That was very useful and very handy.

The first thing I did, of course, was try to resuscitate the post. The FSNs had more or less been left to their own devices and so we had to shape them up a little bit. They were, one assumed, secret police agents or informers, at least, but having worked in that part of the world before, it just didn't bother me at all. I made use of them as best I could, and if they had divided loyalties, so much the better for me, because the dividing part would be at least something I could use, that aspect of it. A couple of them were extremely good workers- and they were probably the most efficient police spies as well. It was a small staff, and until John arrived I had a little time to get around and didn't have my car coming at that time and there was an office car to use, but I determined that the best way to see Prague would be by public transport, and that's what I usually do. So I took trams and buses all over the city every time I had any business to do, but also in my free time, since my wife was arriving only a couple weeks later I really had a relatively lax schedule, you might say, in the evenings.

So we hired the same maid that had worked for my predecessor, even after that several months' gap, oddly enough, she was free. She was also a police spy, of course. She ended up marrying an Italian businessman, I think, and emigrating from the Czech Republic. She was alsalthough, I didn't really realize it for some time, because I rarely saw her, she always left dumplings and fried potatoes with garlic-brombori on the radiator to keep warm for me when I got home, I would be working late trying to get the place organized, getting the office organized because it had been vacant for so long, but once I had a more normal schedule, I realized that the Marines looked forward very much to her arrival at the embassy to pick up her TUZEX korunas. [TUZEX was a special currency that could be used only at a TUZEX store which handled imported and luxury goods.] We paid partially in Czech korunas, partially in TUZEX korunas and sometimes in "units"[One unit was one bottle of Johnny Walker Red label whiskey and one carton of Marlboro cigarettes] for evening events. Whenever our maid came by the embassy, the Marines were really spiffed up about it because she was a knockout, a total knockout, and always wore the tightest jeans and the most form-fitting clothes you could imagine, and was just beaming at them. Whether that was her role, or not, she certainly probably went through all of our papers or anything that was left in the house but she was fairly efficient, and not a bad cook for everyday and she kept the place clean between the other duties.

It was a large apartment, it was a whole floor of an apartment building, and as I said, it used to belong to the Israeli chargï¿½ d'affairs ...

Q: The Israeli chargï¿½?

KIEHL: The Israeli chargï¿½, and when the Czechs broke relations with Israel after thactually, it was after the invasion of '68. It wasn't the '67 war that did it, it was in '68 they broke relations and kicked him out, and the PAO at the time was clever enough to grab this apartment, which was a real jewel of an apartment, in a great neighborhood, close to the metro, the underground, so people could get to it easily. A tradition had started of New Year's parties, and I followed that tradition and sort of expanded it. I think the first year, obviously, I was late for New Year's, but the next year was the first one of these and I think we had over 350 guests in the apartment, ranging from government ministers to leading dissidents like the Havel brothers, and Jiri Diensbear, and all those people, all mixed in the same cocktail party, or New Year's party. Really quite an event, when the new ambassador, Bill Luers, who came on board only a couple of months before that. It t was the first big event that that the ambassador and his wife attended and he shared the receiving line with me. I remember he was just absolutely awestruck that I introduced every single person by name. Actually, when I think back, to know 350 Czechs across the whole political spectrum within a year is pretty darn good, in those circumstances.

Q: How did you get to know them?

KIEHL: In part I was determined that no matter how good or how bad the relations were, I was going to do everything possible to raise the visibility of the U.S. in Czechoslovakia and to raise the visibility of the press and cultural section. So we decided that even though there was a measly little library in the library complex, and maybe 10 or 12 people would sneak past the guards to get in, had the courage to get in and come in to borrow a book, there was a way around that. So what we did is we staged events. We had exhibits in the library, innocuous things, a space exhibit, where we had a genuine space suit and part of a capsule and all that, put that in there. We had thousands of visitors. You couldn't keep people away from it. Because there were so many people, they couldn't do a security check on everybody, they couldn't threaten everybody, they couldn't harass everybody who walked in and out. Everything from schoolchildren to grizzled old retirees would come in there. It became a place where people felt they could go and not be harassethe fear factor lifted. That was one way of doing that.

My deputy also ran English classes in there. He just informally got groups of people together who were interested in learning English, and conducted English classes in there. We showed films. I went to Germany and bought a couple of hundred paperback books, which we put on a paperback book stand, with the idea that if you wanted to read it, great, if you realized you could only come there once, and would get in trouble if you came too often, you could just steal the book. We had lots of magazines donated, we had all those there. People would come in and stuff magazines in their pockets and get out. It was a way of injecting a little bit of the West into the Czech Socialist country, and also, to show that we were still interested in them. That was the really important thing, I think. People are emboldened when they know that somebody is watching; that somebody gives a damn. So we tried to indicate that as often as we could.

There was an IV (International Visitors) program, but it was totally stuck in dead water, because the only people the Czechs would ever permit to travel were police agents who they wanted to send to the United States. So the IV program had basically been moribund for years. There were, I think, 13 or 14 slots available every year but nobody went, because we didn't want to send their people, and they wouldn't accept anybody we nominated. I came up with the idea of using intermediaries for that. So I transferred the IV money to grants to American organizations and let them do the inviting of the Czechs so that it didn't appear that they were being invited by the U.S. government. I got Random House to invite editors and writers. I got the University of Iowa to do the same. There were half a dozen different organizations; the American Association of Museums was another. We would give the money to them, they would send an airline ticket, a round-trip airline ticket, the whole works would be as though it were a private invitation, and it worked. We got about a dozen people a year out to the U.S. for these kinds of programs. Sometimes the private organizations liked it so much they'd extend the stay, so they got more than a 30 day visit. Whether the Czechs ever cottoned onto this or not I don't know, but they allowed it, because it wasn't a government invitation.

It made a big difference. The new ambassador, Bill Luers, was the kind of person who was very interested in culture and the arts and public diplomacy and that sort of thing and his wife was very similarly inclined. So I worked with them, and they knew a lot of people in the New York arts scene.

Q: He later went to ...

KIEHL: The Met [The Metropolitan Museum of Art]. So through him, we managed to get people invited, because they would stay at the residence and then I would pick up the tab, basically under the U.S. speakers program, for Updike, and Albee, and Styron, and Vonnegut, people like that, and people in other fields, too, everybody from Madeleine Albright to Bernie Kalb. Well, that example doesn't give us such a wide spectrum, but you get the idea. We brought them in, we had events at the residence, we had events outside, at the universities and various institutes. It became a really fast-paced program. It broadened the world of all these Czechs, both dissidents and people who weren't really dissidents but really didn't like the regime but they were afraid to be outspoken dissidents. They had not joined Charter 77.

I wasn't so interested in the Charter 77 people because the political section was really handling them.

Q: Charter 77 was the ...

KIEHL: A manifesto written against the Communist imposition in Czechoslovakia. There were generally three spokesmen named, and these three people became lightning rods for police attention. But all the members, all the people who joined Charteand I think there were maybe about 1,500 people who had signed the Charter by the time I got therall of them were harassed, and all of them were subject to all the penalties that can be imposed in a totalitarian state, but there were many, many thousands of people who chose to be more like the good soldier Schweik, the classic, Czech nonconformist.

Q: World War I ...

KIEHL: Who would nod and do what he wanted anyway. That's what most Czechs did, and most Czech intellectuals did that as well. They didn't sell out. Some did, obviously, the Karl Gottyou know, the rock star Karl Gott who was the classic sell-out, I guess, to the regimbut a lot of them didn't. They were maybe best symbolized by a group that, very cleverly, became part of the composers' union. They were the jazz section of the composers' union, which was part of the Union of Musicians and Composers. They formulated their own group, and they were essentially a dissident organization. They were very much opposed to Communism in the regime, and they wanted more contacts with the West. They were basically what one might call Social Democrats, for the most part, and they were extremely active. They had, by the time I left Czechoslovakia, about 38,000 members. They produced books. They produced CDs. They produced a magazine. They held symposiums. They did all sorts of things that any kind of cultural organization would do, and all of it was, just beneath the surface, anti-regime, every single bit of it, because they wanted Czechoslovakia to rejoin the Western world, Western civilization. For that, the leader of the organization, Karol Srp, was arrested and thrown in jail for, I think it ended up to be, about a year and a half. I know, either because of brutality or bad living conditions, he lost all his teeth in the process, and was pretty well demoralized by the time he got out of prison. In fact, he was still in prison when I left Czechoslovakia.

But the organization continued and survived and prospered, even though they were beginning to be persecuted. We brought people in and we held clandestine lectures with them, where we would tell people to meet at a certain place and we'd bring a lecturer in to talk about popular culture, generally, of the Western variety. They would have a lecture discussion program and sit around and drink some wine and eat some potato chips, and it became a regular lecture program with that group. We gave them a lot of encouragement and a lot of support. We brought Kurt Vonnegut over to their clubhouse to plant a tree, we brought Bill and Rose Styron over to plant to a tree, it was part of theithey had their own little park that they managed to resuscitate some brown zone. They were very active environmentalists and very much in the Western European mainstream. They were a constant source of irritation to the regime. For that alone it was worth supporting them, aside from the fact that they were great people and we really enjoyed meeting with them and so on.

They were, oh, I guess age 18 to about mid-30s.

Q: Were they able to keep up with what was happening in the world?

KIEHL: Pretty much. We helped them to do that, hopefully. The other thing that was a major accomplishment over that timthe Czechs were, as a government, were trying to get a better relationship with the U.S., after the first year we were there, and so they gave some indication that they wanted not to be quite so nasty. Of course they were still following us and bugging our apartments and all that sort of thing, but it was a little easier to see people in the government, a little easier to do business, you might say, because what they really wanted, and what they had been wanting for years, was a cultural agreement. They saw a cultural agreement with the United States as a way of limiting U.S. influence. Of course, we saw a cultural agreement, in large measure, the same way, but I think I convinced people that what we ought to do is take advantage of the cultural agreement as a way of expanding influence in Czechoslovakia. Don't look at it the way they look at it, look at it the way we should look at it, which is a way of getting the door open. It took a little convincing back to Washington about it, but eventually we did start negotiating this cultural agreement. Whether it was because the Czechs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cultural department were not too bright or whether they really did want, themselves, personally, to open up the windows a little bit, I'm not sure, but in any event, it was kind of a funny negotiation.

They really didn't negotiate very well. When we did come up with the agreement, it basically said, "OK, we agree to do these things and anything else that's on the same theme." So that meant, OK, we can have at least a dozen IV grantees, but we can do many more, if we want. Or we can have speaker programs at this level, but if we want more, we can do it. It was sort of an open-ended thing. In other words, instead of a maximum, which is what the Czech regime started out wanting, it became a minimum. Now, that minimum was great, because that was basically the budget we had. If we wanted to do more it meant more money, and of course there were financial pressure, but, in a place like Czechoslovakia, if you can do more, the money will come. At least in USIA, it always came for something like that.

So I was pretty confident that our program would continue to expand. (end of tape)

Q: You were saying you eventually got the agreement?

KIEHL: Yes, we finalland it wasn't really such a long and drawn out process, once we actually sat down and began to negotiate, as I thought. Basically, most of the negotiation took place over several months, myself dealing with a fellow named Don Dvorak, who was the U.S. desk officer in the foreign ministry for cultural affairs, and presumably, secret police, and his boss, who was certainly secret policeman named Ilya Koda, and this guy, I later learned, was in charge of forced collectivization in northern Moravia back in the early '50s. I'm not quite sure what experience he had in cultural affairs, but he certainly had experience in forced collectivization of agriculture. In any event, he was a real thug, by the way, and I didn't underestimate him, but he was so oblivious to what he was agreeing to, it seemed. I'm convinced that Dvorak, who I got to know a little bit and took out drinking a little bit and got to know him pretty well, he was a guy who loved the Beatles and he was about my generation, and he loved Western culture. So I think that maybe, Don Dvorak, whatever his party affiliations or credentials were, was really a kind of Westernizer, and may well have put a few past Ilya Koda. That's perhaps one of the reasons the negotiations went so well, in our direction, with these guys.

Of course, then we also had a deal with two ministries of culture and two ministries of education, because it was Czechoslovakia, the two republicthey maintained this fiction that there were theses two independent countries that had come together through a love of Socialism, and while so many of the ministries were federal, but culture and education were two ministries that were local. So there was a ministry of culture and a ministry of education, in Prague and another one in Bratislava. The one in Bratislava was a fraction of the size of the one in Prague but it had at least the legal fiction of being an independent ministry, so we had to negotiate with those four ministries, as well as the foreign ministry, to get this all accomplished.

But it was only a matter of months, and then a team came out from Washington, which I, of course, joined, and we sat down around the table and in a week's time we had it signed, sealed and delivered, including the signing ceremony, which was terrific. I then determined that people have to know about this, and the Czech media, under the control of the Communist party, was not going to tell anybody about this, or if they did it was going to be a one paragraph in Rude Prï¿½vo [The organ of the Czech communist party] So I determined that we had to have a facsimile copy made of the English and Czech of this document, including the ribbon and the whole works, and I had them printed in Vienna in about 10,000 copies, and we handed them out to every organization, to everybody who walked in the library, to everybody we could vaguely say hello to in that country, so that everybody saw what this obligated the Czech government to do. People came out of the woodwork in every direction around the country and said, "Oh, it's OK, we can do this!" and suddenly, the whole climate changed, the whole temperature of the country warmed up about 100 degrees.

Q: Were the police still harassing and all?

KIEHL: They were, but it's funny about a system like that, that when 10 people do something, they can effectively harass them. When 1,000 people do something, they can't. They give up. They can't cope with it. It's like the numbers of people coming to the library. When there were 10 or 12 people a day coming into that library to borrow a book, they were easy pickings for the police, and they felt like easy pickings, and so most people were intimidated. After one visit they would not come back, or some very clever ones would get someone in their organization to fill out a letter saying that their work required them to come there or something, and then they had to show that to the cops. They were literally outside the door of our library, and I actually had to move them physically off our property a couple of times. They would encroach, and I would say, "Gentlemen, you have to move there. Give the people room to get in."

When these exhibits would happen, and we'd have 1,000 people a day coming to the library, they couldn't do it. When we had a book signing by Kurt Vonnegut, or a book signing by John Updike, in the library, thousands of peoplwe have pictures, in fact, I remember a great shot of people lined the whole length of the street, five abreast, to come into that library to get an autograph by John Updike.

Q: How did they know John Updike or Kurt Vonnegut?

KIEHL: >From a little thing called the Voice of America. Everything we did we broadcast. I would send a story back to the Voice of America, saying what was happening and where, what time, and the details and VOA Czechoslovak Service would faithfully broadcast that, and Voice of America was known athere was Prague One and Prague Two. Everybody knew VOA as Prague Three. It was as clear on medium wave on a car radio in downtown Prague as any of the local stations, and it had an enormous listener ship. You knew it, because the only announcemenwe couldn't get anything in the newspaper about it, the local press, so it was word of mouth and Voice of America, were the only ways we could advertise that Kurt Vonnegut or John Updike was signing books in the American library on Tuesday, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m..

Q: Had they read these authors?

KIEHL: Yes. You have to understand, Vonnegut was not particularly sympathetic to America in a lot of his writings. Slaughterhouse 5 the firebombing of Dresden.

Q: Slaughterhouse 5?

KIEHL: Yes. Updike was widely translated because of hithe Czech ideologues said, a portrayal of the "decadence" of America., in for example Run, Rabbit Run.

Q: The social, Eastern ...

KIEHL: Actually, people were pining to have car dealerships like Rabbit. So it was all in the eyes of the beholder. The Communists saw what they wanted to see in these books. Other people saw what they wanted to see. The translators of American fiction were close friends of ours. The translator who did Vonnegut's works was Josef Koran, who was a both playwright and a translator. Translators were very important people in that part of the world, because they were the conduit to get Western ideas into the country. We were very close with the translators, let me tell you, and I'm sure it was true in Poland and other Eastern European countries. Koran later became mayor of Prague after the Velvet Revolution, but I think he got involved in some corruption and didn't last. Last I heard he was the editor of the Czech Playboy magazine, actually. But he was a marvelous guy, interesting guy, great photographer as well. We even did a guide to the pubs of Prague. He did the photos and I did the text. It was never published but it's in a cardboard box somewhere. These pubs have changed a lot since.

Updike's translator was named Antonin Pridal, who lived in Brno. We went down to visit him, in fact, as part of when Updike came, and Pridal was a junior lecturer at the university, but he mainly was a translator. After the Velvet Revolution he became a television personality, and actually has been, several times, talked about as a possible presidential candidate. So these people really had a lot of influence in the society, even then, and of course in a free society they were able to move up.

It was word of mouth, but mainly the Voice of America that enabled us to have these large public programs. We did an exhibit at the Brno fair on computers. We had press previews and that sort of thing, but the thing that really drew people out was word spread thanks to the Voice of America Czechoslovak Service.

Q: There wasn't any jamming of it?

KIEHL: They couldn't jam the medium wave without overlaying the station and of course these were German frequencies. The Czechs didn't want to run afoul of that. They made it very hard in other ways for VOA, however. It took me almost two years before I could get the VOA correspondent a visa, the Eastern European correspondent of VOA. He was a marvelous Czech speaker, too. He was a Brit but spoke very good Czech. We finally got him into the country and of course he was harassed the whole time and so on, but eventually I got him accreditation to Czechoslovakia as a correspondent, which meant he had a multiple entry visa. Going from 1983 to 1986 is a sea change, in attitudes and in the way the country developed.

By the time I left I was very optimistic that this would just continue and expand. The other thing we did, which was really a kind of unique thing, was the whole wreath laying business. I don't know whether you had anybody else from Prague here to talk about that, but it was really an amazing thing. Western Bohemia was liberated by Patton's army in World War II. Of course the mythology in Communist Czechoslovakia was that "the Soviet Union are our liberators. " They did liberate Prague because the city authorities told Patton not to come in- they were Communist party people anyway and wanted the Red Army to get the credit. They said, "No, no, it's being handled by the Red Army." So Patton's army got as far as Plzen, or actually a little town called Rokycany, just east of Plzen, but southern and western Bohemia remembered very much the American troops there, and they stayed for some months after the war because the U.S refused to leave until the Red Army withdrew. This was a little early Cold War bluffmanship. The people there actually got to know the GIs and so on, so they had really warm feelings about that.

In most of those little towns after the war monuments were put up to the brave liberators, the American army, to General Patton and all the GIs and they would have regular ceremonies to honor them. Of course after '48 that all stopped, and by the time of the Vietnam war most of the memorials had been ripped up by the roots and carted off to a junkyard. In Ambassador Matlock's time, the defense attachï¿½'s office began, in a very tentative way, to revisit some of these places and gather information as to where there were still monuments and where the old monuments were, It was determined, I think maybe it was the year before we got there, to make a few trips out there and see if people were still there during that early May period, laying flowers there or anything like that. So it began in a very tentative, small way, a few dozen people who, in fact, were there. There were some contacts, people came up and said, "Oh, yes, I remember the GIs. They stayed at our house," and that sort of thing.

In Slovakia there were a few American flyers who were shot down, some of whom died and were buried there originally, and others of whom hid out with Slovak families to escape the Germans and eventually made their way back to the West. In a couple of places where the planes crashed or people died, there were monuments as well. The defense attachï¿½'s office did a pretty good job of tracking all that down. They did this for a couple of reason. First of all, they did it because it was interesting to do and it was a good historical thing and GIthe military likes to remember the military who have fallen, but also it was a great intelligence gathering exercise and nobody would be fooling anybody if they didn't think that that was the main reason, because riding all over Slovakia was a great opportunity to see where military arms factories were, where air fields were located, et cetera, and where troops were deployed. All that was very useful and it wasn't an accident that Slovakia was where the military armaments trade was largely concentrated and the air force and the western Bohemia border was right on the border with Germany. It's not totally accidental that these are the areas where the U.S. military attaches were doing their "research."

I can't claim it was my idea, I don't know whose idea it was, but we decided, in the embassy, that if we could expand the wreath-laying this could be a really irritating thing to do, and it would drive the Czechs crazy, the Czech government crazy, and it would show American interest in real Czechs. So we determined that we'd start stoking this up a little bit. I got the VOA on board, VOA was beginning to announce now that the American ambassador and embassy staff would be visiting some of the sites in western Bohemia to lay wreaths and commemorate the liberation by U.S. forces. That was in May, and in the fall we did one in Slovakia, to commemorate the fallen Americans who fought on the side of Czechoslovakia to liberate the country from the Nazis.

The Slovakian one went pretty well. We got pretty sizeable crowds out there. It was a more difficult terrain, it was also a rainy part of the season and so on, but it more than held its own. The events in Bohemia however, went beyond anybody's expectations. In a matter owell, we did this for two or three years by the time I lefby the last year, we had crowds of thousands of people. I had printed an old photograph in postcard form to hand out to people, of the GIs on a jeep, liberating and getting a bouquet of flowers from a Czech woman in Plzen. I had 25,000 of those printed up. We got rid of all of those in no time. We had crossed U.S. Czech flags that were donated to us from the Czechoslovakian-American society. We gave away 5,000 of those. We had a convoy, of about 20 cars in this convoy, going from town to town with people on the route throwing flowers and waving American flags. This is in a Communist country, right? It had just built and built and built. We used the Voice of America to do it. The speeches were gooLuers spoke a little bit better, his Czech was a little better than Matlock's, but both of them did very credible jobs doing the speeches in Czech.

It was just fantastic. People would take pictures with us, arms around each other, and we would take pictures of them, and of course, surrounding us all were security people, clandestine security people, taking pictures of everybody, going crazy trying to follow us and trying to block roads and, in one case, turning on loudspeakers with martial music to try to drown out the ambassador's speech. The only place we couldn't get to give a speech was in the city of Plzen itself, but the next year after the Velvet Revolution the American ambassador went there to lay a wreath at the place where the monument was, which had been restored, and 150,000 people came out to the square for that one. This was all there beneath the surface, and we brought it to the surface, and there were so many people that they couldn't harass everybody.

Q: What about the English language, were a lot of Czechs learning English?

KIEHL: There were a fair number of Czechs learning English. German is really the second language. Prague, before the war, was one-third Czech, one-third Jewish, one-third German. It was a trilingual city of Yiddish, German and Czech. Of course the Jews were all but eliminated because of the Holocaust. There was a small Jewish community, by the way, which we, again, tried to cultivate and keep in touch with, and there was a good contact, he wasn't a rabbi, but he was president of the Jewish community who was a remarkable man. He died later in an automobile crash, and I still believe he was killed, but you never know. It seemed too coincidental.

He was a remarkable guy. We worked very closely with him. Dr. Galsky was his name, and we worked with him to get something accomplished that had been languishing for probably 15 or 20 years. The Smithsonian wanted to mount an exhibit of Judaica from Prague, because the Nazis, during the second World War, had decided that they would build a museum to an exterminated race, in Prague, a gigantic museum designed by Albert Spier. So they brought to Prague, and they kept in Prague, in emptied synagogues and warehouses, hundreds of thousands of objects. They had warehouses full of the clothing that they had taken, but they had hundreds and thousands of religious objects. Torahs, Torah scrolls, hundreds and hundreds and thousands of them, and very precious objects to very ordinary, everyday objects as well. All these were still in Prague. They were the property of the Jewish community, but within the Czech Communist government these were never exhibited. There were a couple of synagogues that were turned into "museums" in the Jewish Quarter, which you could actually go and see and look at, just a few objects, but the vast majority of these things were simply forgotten, because the government in Prague wasn't particularly sympathetic to Jews.

It took a long time. It took a lot of negotiation. It was largely between the Smithsonian and the Czech government, but even in Ambassador Matlock's time and then later on in Ambassador Luers' time, the embassy supported this very strongly, and did a lot of running interference with the Czech ministry of culture to get things moving along. They finally did move. In fact, late in the time I was there the exhibit came to the United States and went to six cities and so on. You may have heard about it or seen it, it was a fantastic exhibit, and I think, in large measure, the Holocaust Museum stems from the interest in Judaica among the larger public, and here in Washington it was an enormous success. There's some reason to believe that the Holocaust Museum today may not have existed if it hadn't been for this exhibit of Judaica from Czechoslovakia. The time was right, things were running in the right direction and the cultural agreement, again, could be used as the wedge to pry this out of the country. So a lot of things were happening.

Q: Was there any reflection of the Gorbachev change in the Soviet Union in Czechoslovakia?

KIEHL: Too early. It was too early, then, you see. We're talking '83 to '86. We're still talking Brezhnevian Soviet Union. I don't think the Russians were happy at what was happening, but I think they felt that the regime in charge there had proven itself to be ruthless enough to stay in power. I don't think they thought for a moment that things would evolve the way they did. Obviously, Gorbachev didn't think things would evolve the way they did. I don't want to talk about Czechoslovakia after my time there.

Q: No, no.

KIEHL: But it was cleahindsight is always 20/20, and if you look at the Velvet Revolution of 1989, and you look back to the mid-'80s, and what was happening there, you could see that this was a growing phenomenon. This didn't happen overnight, it happened over time.

Another thing that happened then, which we had nothing really to do about, which was, again, a spontaneous kind of thing among the Czech youth, John Lennothe real Lennon, you knowas something of a secular saint among Czech young people, as he was, perhaps to some extent, among American young people, too, after he was killed. There was a Lennon wall, a John Lennon wall, not too far from the embassy, where young people would paint graffiti about freedom and all that sort of thing. The authorities would constantly paint over it and so on, and on Lennon's birthday ...

Q: By the way, this is L-E-N-N-O-N.

KIEHL: Right, not Vladimir. In fact, there's something ironic about that. The real Marxist, Groucho, not Karl. The last year I was therevery year a few hundred Czech young people could gather and do a march of sorts up to the castle, basically, for freedom of expression, and in the context of John Lennon's music and so on. Again, the composers' union, the jazz section of the composers' union, was behind a lot of this. The last year I was there, I think there were 5,000 young people in that march. That's a lot of young people. What they were doing is they were risking their futures, but they were willing to do it. Again, because there were 5,000 of them, nothing happened to anybody. I think when people realized that they had the numbers behind them and the government did not act, even the anniversary of the Soviet invasion, at Wenceslas Square, there was always some sort of demonstration there.

Q: This is the '68 invasion?

KIEHL: The'68 invasion. It was put down rather crudely and nastily each time. Eventually, they didn't have the show of force. They weren't as tenacious, they weren't as mean, as they were earlier. The regime was beginning to loosen its grip, it was getting old and tired and just couldn't handle it anymore, to some extent, and a lot of people within the government and the party were fed up with this kind of life as well. I think there was a malaise that, actually, also happened in Russia with the Gorbachev movement of younger people, who had been exposed to the corruption of Communism and to Western ideas, and just weren't believers anymore. They didn't have the stomach for this. They didn't have the stomach to rule other people by force. That's really what happened in Czechoslovakia. I can't speak to the other countries, but that's certainly what happened there.

Q: Did you find, in the time you were there, '83 to '86, that you were in competition with Soviet cultural presentations or, I mean, how were the Russians, Soviets, received by the Czechs?

KIEHL: It was no competition. The Soviets were received officially by the Czech government with great love and affection, but people, the average person in the street, detested the Russians. They hated the Russians because of the invasion of '68. They hadn't warmed at all to them in the years after. Russian culture was Russian culture. It was Russian, and they didn't like that. Intellectuals in Prague and artistic people could recognize the qualities of Russian opera, certainly, and the ballet. They admired the artistic merits of it, but because it was Russian, it was just not acceptable. In contrast, everything that was American or Western was abhorred by the government but loved by everybody else. It was one of these classic "I don't care if the government hates me as long as the people love me."

When Reagan was re-elected in '84 it was unbelievable. We had a straw ballot in our library, and Reagan got 91% of the vote. It was a joke. The day after the election, when the results were broadcast on local television and radio, and of course VOA, when people saw an American car, they'd all shout like this, "Reagan! Reagan!" Reagan probably could have been president easier in Czechoslovakia than in the United States. They saw in Reagan somebody anti-Communist. That's really what was important to them. It could have been anybody who espoused that kind of philosophy would have been loved by the people in Eastern Europe.

It gave you a great feeling to know that the people were on your side, even if the government hounded you and harassed you and followed you everywhere and bugged your phone and made life miserable for people who associated with you, you knew that you were on the winning side because the people were for you.

Q: Did you get any reflection of the rather large Czech community in the United States?

KIEHL: As I mentioned, the Czechoslovakian-American society donated the 5,000 American flag lapel pins. That probably cost them a dollar apiece to have them produced and sent to us, when they heard about what we were doing there. Of course the people from the Czechoslovakian-American society couldn't easily get to Czechoslovakia and announce the fact that they were part of this organization, because it was seen by the Czech government as subversive or unfriendly.

The Czech community in the United States was very supportive of the efforts that we were doing there. A number of wealthy Czechs in the U.S. helped to bring artists and writers and so on to the U.S. by donating money to various organization that would invite them, but people had to be very careful not to be associated with a foreign ï¿½migrï¿½ organization, otherwise they could be on trial for espionage. So they were sympathetic, but they couldn't be very direct about it.

Q: How did your wife and family react to all this?

KIEHL: My wife was actually employed at the embassy as the community liaison officer or CLO, and she later joined the Foreign Service as an FSO. So she was very much a part of it. We did a tremendous amount of entertaining in our flat. We'd have groups of people over, showed films all the time, I had a regular motion picture theater in my house just for that purpose, and a projection video. It was an alternate cultural center. She was as involved as I was in hosting all these events. She was delighted to see it happen, too.

We were very close to a lot of Czechs, and a lot of them were couples, as well, so we socialized with a lot of these people. Ivan and Helena Klima, he was a writer, she was a psychiatrist. People like that, who really had Western values and were sort of trapped there. They could have escaped, they could have left, but they chose to remain in Czechoslovakia and work from the inside, knowing that, I suppose as a writer, Ivan was kind of torn, because if he left his miliehe writes in Czech, so I think it would have been very difficult for him. There were ï¿½migrï¿½s that were very helpful. Joseph Skvoretsky in Toronto, Toronto '68 publishers, published all of Klima's works in English and in translation, in Canada and the U.S. and UK. So they were being published abroad in Czech and in English. They got known that way, as international writers of some note.

It was at that same time that a Czech poet, Jaroslav Siefert, was given the Nobel Prize for Literature, and that was symbolically very important for Czech culture. He wasn't a dissident, per se, but he was not a Communist during that period. He was an elderly man in his 80s when the Nobel was awarded. I gave him a copy of a book that had been published of his work, in the West. I remember that. He was quite old, and his daughter and son-in-law lived with him and helped him around. Not to take anything away from his poetry but his award was a symbol, obviously, of all Czech literature surviving under Communism.

It was a very vibrant, intellectual life there. The theater was incredible. There were 38 legitimate theaters in Prague, ostensibly under the domination of the Ministry of Culture, but it was amazing what they could get away with. They couldn't put on play by Havel but they could put on an apolitical play, and, in such a way, through the translation and also the way it was staged, make it a very political play. There was a fair amount of avant-garde theater going on. A lot of these people were also associated with the jazz section of the composers' union, and close to the Chartists and so on. This was all bubbling under the ...

Q: How about the cinema, because we would get some pretty nice Czech films. The one about Closely Watched Trains?

KIEHL: Yes, Jiri Menzel's.

Q: My Beautiful Village, and all that.

KIEHL: There was a period of real quality Czech films in the late '60s, but after the Soviet invasion and the re-imposition of hard line Communism by about 1970 or so, that had pretty well dried up. Obviously you had people like Milos Foreman, who left the country and became successful abroad. Of course he came back to film Amadeus when we were in Prague. He was basically hung out in my outer office when he wasn't filming, that was his office, I let him use the couch, basically, as an office, and he could read my Herald-Tribunes when he wasn't filming. The crew there was integrated into the embassy in a lot of ways. They used the embassy snack bar and there was a club there that they could join and so on. They brought their own fireworks for the Fourth of July. They shot them off at the top of the Glorietta at the very top of the embassy gardens-high above the city of Prague, without permission of course. .The Embassy got a nasty note from the Prague fire authorities but we figured it was worth it because everybody all over Prague saw that symbol of the American flag flying, with fireworks. It was great. These little symbols meant a lot in a place like that.

The Barrandov studios continued to produce quality films, but they were of an apolitical nature. They were very closely watched, not the trains but the filmmakers. Kratky Films, which was an animation studio, did much more interesting work because they weren't as closely watched. We knew people there pretty well, and some of them had party credentials but they were not particularly faithful party members. They were sort of fallen-away Communists, and other people were more obviously not interested in the regime. They did these dark, adult kind of animated films about alienation and so on, and they were brilliant.

Jiri Menzel was probably the best known film director, Closely Watched Trains ...

Q: The Fireman's Ball ...

KIEHL: The Fireman's Ball was Milos Foreman. That was one of the funniest films I've ever seen. I still remember doubling ul was on the floor of the theater I was laughing so much. But Jiri Menzel stayed in Prague, unlike Foreman, who became successful in the West. Menzel stayed there, and had a pretty restricted life. We would talk occasionally. I would go to a pay phone and talk to him on the phone, sometimes. We would meet rarely. He didn't want to get too close to Americans. Fortunately he was directing a play in Dubrovnik one summer, when we were on the coast, the Yugoslav coast, so we spent a lot of time together, a couple of week, actually, off and on. He was just too fearful for they could have stopped him from filming totally, or they could have exiled him, and for him that would have been the same as cutting off his sight. His career was cut short. There are many people who think he was the better film maker that he was better than Foreman, and he would have had a bigger career in the West than Foreman, but you never know.

Milos Foreman certainly did a lot. He also had twin sons living in Prague, from his first marriage. When he was in exile the Czech authorities would not let him back until he filmed Amadeus. He was never allowed to go back to Czechoslovakia. He'd been exiled from there and stripped of his citizenship. When he was back there, obviously he was under very strict controls and completely apolitical. He knew better that to meet with any dissidents because of his children, and the commercial aspects of the film, which had to be made. One of the things he did do, however, is give us certain video screening rights, and Saul Zaentz, who was the produceMichael Houseman was the executive producer and Saul Zaentz was the owner of the filgave us the rights to show the film in our library continuously, for as long as we wanted, and we did. We played it there for almost a year to a packed house every single time. We also got a 35 millimeter version of it, showed it at the French cultural center, which had a 400 seat auditorium, to invited guests. The invitation was rather loosely conveyed, but we had a half a dozen showings there, a 400 people a throw. So people saw the film.

It was banned from Czechoslovakia, of course, because Foreman's name was associated with it. It was not permitted to be shown, even though it was filmed there and it was about the ...

Q: Why did they let it be filmed there? Money?

KIEHL: The used the Tyl Theater in the film as the Vienna Opera House, and some of the money that they got from that was used to renovate the theater. That was the theatre that the original Don Giovanni was produced in, so they did a Don Giovanni in the Tyl Theater. Prague is a perfect movie set for a period piece like Amadeus because it hadn't changed much.

Anyway, again, everything cultural is intensely political in a place like that. We got a little off the track on ...

Q: No, no, this is ...

KIEHL: Kratky Film was an interesting institution, too, because one of the people, an American, who'd been living in Prague, still lives there he moved there in the '50s. I think he might have been sympathetic to Socialism at the time. He was a filmmaker and won a couple of Oscars, a guy named Gene Deitch. Interesting guy, he went there to make a short cartoon with Kratky Film, fell in love with the production assistant, got married and stayed in Prague all those years. He was actually quite apolitical, but willing to tolerate living in Prague when he could have left anytime and probably taken his wife with him. So he wasn't a Stalinist, but I think he was on the left end of liberal America. So for him it wasn't a place too intolerable. He and his wife had met a lot of cartoonists and a lot of the animators at Kratky Film, and they were an interesting group of people, a whole subset of people who could create films with political content which totally went over the heads of clucks who were censors, or maybe not so over their heads.

In other words, there was an official at the ministry of culturand I hesitate to even use his name who was a senior official at the Czech ministry of culture, and he was responsible for, essentially, keeping everybody down, in that sense, to kick people out of the writer's union. And yet, I would see him at avant-garde plays, given in small theaters on the fringe of Prague, with a largely dissident audience, and he'd be among them, and was always sympathetic to that. He was another one of these conflicted Communist officials, who had to put on, perhaps, the public face of being the model Communist bureaucrat, but his inner self was sympathetic to his government's enemies.

Q: Did you get any feel for university studies, the academics, the students? For one thing, were they teaching orthodox Communist economics and all that, Marxist economics?

KIEHL: They were. Economics was, and political science, were the very restricted departments. There were also the higher party schools where they really relied upon getting the ideology across. The universities were dominated by the Communists. In order to be a department chairman you had to be a member of the Communist party, absolutely, and from department chairman on up. So you had a lot of unqualified people in higher levels who did it purely for ambition and for prestige and power. Some of the best people were not even employed in universities, but more and more, as I lived there, I understood how most of the university faculty got by.

For example, I had a really good session with, actually, almost the entire English department of the University of Brno one time. We sat around, and I asked them how it was, how did they deal with this? They all loved America, they all loved American culture, British literature, they were the English department. How did they reconcile this? They said well, what they did when the bad days came, is they got together and decided that somebody would have to be a member of the Communist party so that they could be the department chairman, and the short straw lost. That person, then, became the party man and ran the department, but in name only. They still taught the way they wanted to, they still did the things they wanted to do. They weren't allowed to leave the country very frequently, of course, and all those other restrictions that go beyond the university, but within the university department they were able to survive, because they had made an accommodation. They had short-strawed somebody to be the bad guy, to be the chairman of the department, to be the Communist party member. That was in name only. It was purely a device to survive.

That didn't happen in every department in every university but it happened in enough of them that you could see that the party's hold over the university was only up here, at the administrative level. At the teaching level, people basically could get away with an awful lot. Of course the students- (end of tape)

-were growing up in a society where everybody was doing the Good Soldier Schweik. Everybody, or almost everybody, except for the

Q: You better explain what the Good Soldier Schweik is.

KIEHL: Well, it's a character in a Czech novel about WWI and the soldier basically plays dumb and does what he wants. That's the wathat's very much in the Czech character. They would rather switch than fight, you might say, but they keep their own integrity by saying, "Well, I know what I believe, but if he wants to hear something else I'll tell him what he wants to hear." That's essentially what most people did. Other than the 1,500 or so outright dissidents, Charter 77 signers and so on, and a few thousand people who were true, believing Communists, if there were even that many. Almost everybody else, whether they were a member of the Communist party, whether they were policemen, secret policemen, or university faculty, or people who worked in the government bureaucracy or the party bureaucracy, almost nobodactually, I don't think I met more than I could count on one hand people I thought were true believers in Communism. The people did one of two things. They either accommodated and became zealous in the sense that they could move up in the party and therefore enrich themselves and their lives, or they would go along with the prevailing Communists to the minimum extent in order to survive, but work against it privately. Almost everybody fell into one of those two categories. The vast majority, I would say, showed a public face of indifference or loyalty to the regime but hated it.

Even those people who were gung ho, on the surface, Communistl'm thinking of particularly some of the journalists who wrote really ridiculous articles in the newspapers every day and laughed about it and said, "Of course this is nonsense, but I have to do it in order to survive." They hated it. They also hated themselves, I think, for having to do it. The whole system was a house of cards, when you really think about it. It was a hollow government, a hollow ideology. It's surprising it lasted as long as it did, actually.

Q: You left there in ...

KIEHL: 1986. Summer of '86.

Q: This is a good place to stop. Where did you go?

KIEHL: Where did I go? Oh, I went back to Washington to study Finnish.

Q: So we'll pick this up back in '86.

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Today is the 8th of January 2004. Bill, how did you find Finnish?

KIEHL: Well, it was the hardest language I ever tried to learn.

Q: It has a reputation for being. What was the problem?

KIEHL: For one thing, the Finns, like some other obscure European languages, invented their language in the 18th and 19th century.

Q: Sort of cock you ear type thing or something?

KIEHL: The idea was to make it as difficulfirst of all, to codify what was a spoken language, essentially, but also to make it as difficult for foreigners to learn as possible. Foreigners meaning Russians, because they always had a fear that the Russians would take them over.

Q: They were taken over until 1917.

KIEHL: '17, that's right. They were taken over by the Swedes before that, of course, they were part of the Swedish kingdom before that. They tried to come up with a language that was just too damn difficult for anybody to want to learn, and of course the Finns were very good at learning other peoples' languages. The rulers, foreign rulers, of Finland were quite happy to deal in their own language with the Finns, and the Finns could then talk about anything they wanted without fear of being overhead. There's a certain element of that to it. But of course it's a Fenno-Uralic language. It doesn't follow the rules of European languages at all, it's got 14 cases, it has not only a nominative stem but a genitive stem from which cases are formed, it is just mind-boggling. As a language itI don't know of a single person, who was not a native speaker of Finnish as a child, who can speak the language fluently. I'm sure there are some..

Q: In teaching it, though, how did you find, for an Americahow old were you when you took this?

KIEHL: Let's see, I was 42.

Q: So you were somewhat past the age of puberty, when your languages abilities peter out.

KIEHL: Exactly, the channels are formed already. Really, you'd have to be a little crazy to try to learn a language like Finnish after age 40. Fortunately, I didn't have to get a 3/3. The language requirement was a 2/2. I'm not sure why, but it was.

Q: I would think it would have to deal with what you've got. If you're going to be dealing essentially in English or German or something ...

KIEHL: Almost every contact with the embassy in Finland spoke English. There were a couple Parliamentarians from mid-Finland and north whose English was so rudimentary that it really didn't make sense to talk to them in English. There was no one in the Helsinki region or in the wide swath of the populated area of Finland along the coasts who didn't know English, and many of them probably knew English better than most Americans do. It wasn't really a problem.

I was lucky, in a sense, because I didn't have to go to FSI to learn this. Of course, USIA in those days was charged the same fee that any other agency would be at FSI which was, I think in those days, about $20,000 or $25,000 for the ten-month course. They could get it cheaper in various language schools around town, and they were much more flexible. You still had to pass the FSI test, but these language schools were in competition and therefore had lower rates. So I had signed up with a language school up on 16th Street in downtown Washington, but there were three teachers. I had three different teachers, one on one, for about 5 or 6 months, and passed the FSI test, same as if I had taken the full course at FSI. So I think it paid off.

The three different teachers were rather interesting, too, because one was from Karelia, so she spoke with a kind of Karelian accent and had lots of these Karelianisms.

Q: Karelia being the part that was taken over by the Soviets after World War II.

KIEHL: That's right, the lost territory. Another was from Jyvï¿½skylï¿½, and that's supposedly the center of the purest Finnish, the most book Finnish. She was a rather a bit of a task-master, too. Third was a young woman who was, I think, the daughter of one of the embassy employees here, who was a Swedo-Finn and spoke Helsinki Finnish. The Karelian would say, "This is the most sacred Finnish from the lost territory." The other one would say, "I'm from Jyvï¿½skylï¿½ and you'll learn the real Finnish, the book Finnish, the exact Finnish that everyone is learning in school and university." And the little, young Swedo-Finn said, "I know what they told you, but I'm speaking the language you're going to hear on the street everyday." She was pretty much right, but it was a nice combination of the three teachers.

I had worked it out so that when the weather got a little warmer they would come over and we'd sit in my garden and they'd do the course for three or four hours straight. It was very pleasant. I think if I had been maybe 20 years younger I probably would have gotten the Finnish down pretty well. As it was I knew enough Finnish to get around fine, and ask directions and order meals and drinks and the like, and I could also deliver speeches in Finnish, which I thought was very important, because I could mimic the accent. I could read it perfectly well, so I could write a little opening speech for some art exhibit or something like that in the provinces and my staff would translate it into Finnish and I would practice it a couple times and it would come out perfectly fine. It was a big hit, of course, because Finns look upon foreigners who speak Finnish as one would look upon a dancing bear. It's just an amazing thing. You wouldn't want to take it into your house but it's fun to watch at the fairground.

Q: What were you picking up about Finland even prior to your going? I mean, before you went to Finland, often you, from Finnish teachers and from your reading and from people who served there and all, your sort of individual briefinhow did you see Finland and what were our interests there and that sort of thing?

KIEHL: Of course I had visited Finland before, when I was Prague, the year before I was assigned therthe summer that I left Prague I went there to see my predecessor and stayed with him for a couple of days to look the place over. And, of course, I visited Finland from Russia a number of times. It was our escape hatch; it was the Prozac for people living in Moscow. As a way of decompressing you take this courier run on the train up to Helsinki on the non-pro courier run. You'd deliver the diplomatic bag and pick up the bag and you had three days at the hotel InterContinental. You could have a pizza, you could get a hamburger; you could go to movies and see things that were a part of the Western world again. It was great. Everybody who was in Moscow had this kind of idealistic world view of Finland as being a perfect place because, in contrast to the privations of the Socialist world, it was the perfect place. I remember when the train would pull into the first border station and not only I but everyone else who ever took this run did exactly the same thing. One person stayed with the bag and the other would leap off the train, because it was a very short stop, run into the little cafï¿½, get a couple of coffees and some Danishes to go and run back to the compartment and you would feast on this all the way into Helsinki. It was like heaven. When you think about it, it was really kind of pathetic.

Q: People used to say that about getting to Belgrade from when they left Sofia.

KIEHL: Even Nis. From Nis it was a big deal.

Q: This was a big deal. They'd say, "Oh, my God."

KIEHL: Right. There was a great restaurant in Nis called Kod Americanac [At the American's} that had decent food. Do you recall that one?

Q: I'm not sure it was there in my time.

KIEHL: The owner of the restaurant actually wasn't American, he was a Serb who emigrated to the States and worked there and then came back home to spend his retirement, and with his savings opened a restaurant. I think he had died by the time I first ate there, but his family kept running it and it was always full of happy Americans.

Q: Well, anyway, when you went ouin the first place, you were in Finland from when to when?

KIEHL: Oh, yes, good question. June of '87 through '91, I think July of '91, but there were a couple of occasionand I'll have to verify the dates a little bibut a couple of occasions during that that I was out of Finland. In other words, I did some advance work for a presidential visit to Ukraine and I was out for a couple of months thesix weeks or so, I guesand then right after Finland I did two things, I did the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) conference on the human dimension in Moscow and then also did a little shopping trip for the government to try and rent spaces for American centers in Central Asia.

Q: We'll talk about that a little later.

KIEHL: Later. I'm pretty surit was four years, definitely.

Q: In '87, when you went out there, what was the status of our relations with Finland and what did Finland mean to the United States at that time?

KIEHL: Finland had some pluses and really no real minuses. Of course, most Americans remember Finland as the country that paid its debts.

Q: After World War I, yes.

KIEHL: Yes.

Q: The Winter War, too.

KIEHL: The Winter War and they really put up a fight, tough people, et cetera. I think the American opinion of Finland was, well, it was "Finlandized", a term which the Finns didn't like much, because what it meant was a kind of forced neutrality. The Finns never saw it that way, of course.

The other thing that the Americans thought of Finns was that they were shy, reticent people, not very demonstrative, who drank a lot. The Russians shared that view of the drinking because the worst thing a Russian could say to another Russian was, "You were as drunk as a Finn last night." How's that for a Russian to say? Terrible!

Q: Was there any reflection of the Finnish community in the United States on Finland?

KIEHL: The Finnish community in the U.S. actually was rather close to Finland and there was a lot of exchange back and forth, especially in Michigan and Minnesota, in that area, where there's a large Finnish-American community.

Q: Woodsmen, mainly, weren't they, or miners?

KIEHL: Yes, miners and woodsmen. Of course they've spread around in all the various professions, with some farmers, as welkind of Lake Wobegon-type positions.

Q: A bachelor Finnish farmer ...

KIEHL: As opposed to a Norwegian farmer, pretty much the same.

Q: We're referring to a radio program put on by Garrison Keillor. Very popular.

KIEHL: Right, on National Public Radio. There was Finlandia Universita number of the universities in that area have a good relationship with Finland. The Finnish-American society in Finland was an organization that was an extremely powerful organization with 70,000 members. In a country of 5 million that's pretty impressive.

Of course the Finns loved these blankety-blank dash Finnish societies or Finnish blankety-blank societies, I guess. There was a Finnish-Soviet friendship society as well, of course, which probably had about 300,000 members because the labor unions all signed up for it and so on, but it was a moribund organization, it was just a faï¿½ade to keep the Russians happy, one of those many faï¿½ades that the Finns put up.

Q: Well, then, what did you see as your mission to do in Finland?

KIEHL: The mission there was to make sure the Finns understood that America was a good and faithful friend of Finland and that we appreciated the Finnish path in foreign policy and important conduit they could be for U.S.-Soviet relations, because Finland was seen really in the U.S.-Soviet context, there wasn't really a U.S. interest per se in Finland that could be separated from the U.S.-Soviet issue.

Q: You have the Helsinki Accords, I mean, this will sort of ring down through history as being very important.

KIEHL: Oh, yes. Of course, that's an accident of location, but it is important. The Helsinki Accords, exactly. Finland did play an important role as a meeting place, for the U.S. and the Soviet Union for a long time. It struck me that when I was studying Finnish, I learned about the fact that 1988 was going to be the 350th anniversary of the first Finns in America. Now, these were Finns who were under the Swedish crown that started out these little settlements on the Delaware River in what is now Delaware and southern Pennsylvania. There was a move afoot to have a postage stamp to commemorate this, and that was about it. But the Finns thought it was a wonderful thing. There was not much interest outside the Finnish-American community in the U.S. but of course I was in touch with the Finnish-American community so I learned about it. It occurred to me that this would be a tremendous vehicle to piggyback onto, and so I decided that this was the vehicle we were going to use to further these interests, and it was a once in 350-year occasion - actually, 1989 was another one, because that was the 70th anniversary of the treaty of friendship between the U.S. and Finland, so I had that in the back of my mind.

These were both symbolic dates but they were, shall we say, unexploited symbolic dates, and I figured this is the perfect way to exploit them. So what I did is, when I went out there, I put together a little plan to get the approval of Ambassador to Finland Rockwell Schnabel, and he immediately saw the value in it.

Q: Schnabel had been chief of protocol at one point, hadn't he?

KIEHL: No, that was Ambassador Weinmann. You're thinking of John Weinmann, who was the next ambassador.

Q: Schnabel hawhat was his background?

KIEHL: An interesting backgrounhe was born in the Netherlands and his family was in the printing business there, but he immigrated to the United States as a young man and settled in California, became a surfer, the Southern California lifestyle, He was a smart guy and got into investment banking and was actually a partner with Michael Milken. At one time he owned, I think, 7-Up and Dr. Pepper and Berringer Wines and all sorts of things. So he amassed a large fortune in the investment banking business in Southern California and was an early and ardent supporter of a fellow named Ronald Reagan, thus the connection there.

He married a womahis wife, Marna, was, in her own right, a rather shrewd businesswoman. I think she was president or vice-president of a pharmaceutical company in California and her family dates back to the land-grant days, of the Spanish land-grants in California. So both were pretty well-connected and quite wealthin fact, after they left Finland they got Frank Garry to design a house for them. They bought a house that was worth a couple million dollars and tore it down and had him put a $10 million house on this piece of property. So, I mean, obviously they had a lot of money.

He was a very intelligent guy in a lot of ways. A great, wonderful personalithe was great with business people and so on, of course, but what he recognized was that he didn't know much about foreign policy and he left a lot of that to the embassy.

Q: Who was the DCM?

KIEHL: Well, initially Mike Durkee was the DCM, and he was a pro, of course, a Navy veteran who served in a couple oabout, by that time, at least 15 or so years in the Foreign Service.

Q: Durkee, how do you ...

KIEHL: D-U-R-K-E-E. And he just retirehe was the political advisor over at Shape until this past summer. I lost track of him after that because he was wondering what he was going to do after that. He had the job as a retiree. He retired from the Foreign Service perhaps five years ago, after being consul general in Toronto and then he went to London as the political advisoat CINCUSNAVEUR [US Navy Headquarters in Europe]. Then he segued over to Belgium and worked for NATO Commander General Rallston and retired. Rallston liked him so much that he hired him on as a contractor.

Q: Anyway, in the first place, how did you find the embassy? Was it a cohesive unit, split, problems ...

KIEHL: Yes, it was an interesting embassy. Let me just finish up this Year of Friendship, I can get that off the plate. So, I came up with this plan which would, essentially, have a logo for the Year of Friendship, and everything we did, starting January 1, 1988, would have this logo on it. Everything would refer to the Year of Friendship. Everything that we would do anyway would do that. We'd also try to involvget a presidential message, maybe a presidential visit, high-level visits during that period, marking the event, a publication of some books and journals on that subject, speakers talking about the friendship between the two countries, et cetera, the history and all that.

So I think there were maybe 35 or more different programs that were part of the package, I'd say, that would take place in 1988. Of course, I had about 6 months to line all this up so there was enough time to do that. That actually all worked, including Reagan's speech on nationwide television for about five or ten minutes. We had Finlandia Hall filled for the event. Reagan came on the big screen with this speech about U.S.-Finnish friendship. The hall was filled with people thanks to the Finnish-American society energizing them, so there were 2,000 or 3,000 people in the audience. It was an entire program about U.S.-Finnish friendship, covered by nationwide television and radio, so the speech was seen throughout the country. It kicked off a $5 million fundraising campaign for scholarships for Finns to study in America through a Fulbright program. That was all part of the plan. So it worked out. It was fantastic.

Q: Were you able to play the former governor of New Hampshire in there?

KIEHL: No, I wasn't able to do that, actually.

Q: It Sununu, wasn't it?

KIEHL: Yes.

Q: He didn't go down well?

KIEHL: No. You have to understand the Finns. The most conservative Finn, is probably a Dean Democrat.

Q: Aha. So Sununu, being the far right ...

KIEHL: Reagan they liked, I think probably because he bated the Russian bear a little bit. In any event, back to the embassy, I'm sorry.

It was a very comfortable place to live, Finland. The embassy was in a lovely location, but by today's standards, of course, it was a sitting duck for terrorism. The ambassador's office window was literally three feet off the street. You could reach across the little iron fence and tap on his window from outside and he would look. Can you imagine this today? That was also the ambassador's residence, because the two connected through a little passage, right into his living room. Of course, obviously, they've made some security improvements since then but, well, not to digress too much, but back in Prague, when you arrived at the embassy in Prague, they'd give you two keys, the two keys to the front door of the embassy. Most people who had apartments in the complex gave a copy of the keys to their maid, as well. So you could probably find a key to the U.S. embassy down on Charles Bridge in those days. It was, by today's standards, ludicrous.

In any event, it was a pretty good embassy. Without getting into too many details it was probably one of the major intelligence-gathering, listening posts in the world. So a good many of the staff had duties in that end of the work. The State Department had some very good people there. There were a fair number of Finnish-Americans who spoke quite good Finnish who were on the staff at the embassy on the reporting side, I should say, and in the defense attachï¿½'s office. Other than that there were political and econ officers who spoke Finnish fairly well, about my level, I guess, and a couple who spoke quite good Swedish. So embassy officers in the community were very well integrated into Finnish society. This is, of course, in full contrast to my previous post in Prague where only a few of us were actually involved in the society and most people were, shall we say, alienated from it.

Q: What was, from your perspective, the political element in Finland. Where was it going, how interested were we in it and in reporting on it and all that?

KIEHL: Well, obviously the State Department reporting on Finnish domestic politics didn't have a huge audience back in the United States. The embassy continued to do it very well because we had extraordinarily good contacts in the political parties all the way across, except possibly for the extreme left. But even there our political section could have pretty good conversations with people and report it. You have to understand that almost everything in Finland revolved around the U.S.-Soviet relationship. There really wasn't much interest in Washington, in Finland for itself. It was Finland as a listening post, it was Finland as an intermediary, it was Finland as a kind of conduit of information, but it wasn't Finland for Finland's sake.

Q: Were we under new instructions or did it behoove us not to press our antagonistiof course, this was an interesting timbut had it been our policy not to overplay our anti-Soviet side in Finland because that might upset the Finns? Were they having this balance between this or not or could we do whatever the hell we wanted?

KIEHL: We could do pretty much whatever the hell we wanted, but realistically there wasn't much we could do in terms of expressing anti-Soviet views. You have to understand, also, that in that period, by '87 or so, the fallout from Afghanistan had pretty well settled, and U.S.-Soviet relations were warming again. In fact, they warmed so much that Reagan and Gorbachev had a meeting there and Bush and Gorbachev had a meeting in Helsinki. So the summits were back on track and Schultz was running through Helsinki about five times a year on his way to Moscow, because he always liked to take a little bit of a ...

Q: This is more a break place.

KIEHL: It was a break place for him, but it was also a way for him to sit down with then-president, Koivisto, and discuss these things with the Finns, because the Finns were always seen to have insights on Russia that would be interesting and unique.

Q: I would think that the Finnish insight into Russia would be somewhat similar to going to a country that has been abused by another country for decades and you know, I'm not sure what it was like, talking to an estranged wife or something like that. I would think their insight would be warped somewhat.

KIEHL: I think everybody's insight is warped by the circumstances.

Q: But there particularly.

KIEHL: Actually, I think the Finns were pretty objective. I mean, there were some Finns who said, "A Russian is a Russian whether you fry him in butter or not." That's a good Finnish expression. And certainly the people who were displaced from Karelia and who lost property, who lost family, all those thingthere was a large contingent of people, perhaps 10% of the population, who were unreconciled regarding World War II, but the Finns were, if anything, very realistic about what they could do there. Russia was their big market and they did what they needed to do, first of all, to keep the Russians on the other side of the border, from crossing the border, and secondly, to make money out of the Russians. So they were very good at that, and I think that tempered what might have been more the estranged wife complex that you talked about.

In any event, the perception on the U.S. side was that the Finns had something, some insights, on Russia that would be useful to us. The Finns, for their part, were convinced that they did, also. So Schultz always hal mean, it wasn't just a rest stop. He always had some serious meetingnot just banter over lunch, but some serious discussions.

Q: How about the Finnish press? You dealt with the Finnish press?

KIEHL: Yes

Q: Where did they fall, did they have, sort of, the yellow journalism that you think of as the Brits having or was it more derring-do (ph) or ...

KIEHL: Very much unlike the Brits, actually, although, some of the more serious papers would say "We're like the Times," whenever the Times was really the Times. The big paper there was the Helsingin Sanomat, which had about a million in circulation in a country of 5 million people. It was everybody's newspaper. It was run by the Sanomat Corporation which was run by a formidable fellow named Aatos Erkko, and Aatos Erkkowas the son of a former foreign minister of Finland who broadcast from Sweden resistance to the Russians back in World War II and was quite a hero of Finnish history. Aatos Erkko was a very intelligent guy, more business-oriented than his father, I think, and more journalistically oriented, although the family had had this paper for three generations.

He really built up the paper and acquireand also, there's an evening paper called Ilta-Sanomat and a whole panoply of magazines and other media enterprises. They also had a cable TV franchise and other things. Today it's one of the powerhouse media organizations in Northern Europe. Aatos Erkkowas a recipient, back in the late '40s, of one of the first ASLA grants. The ASLA grant program was essentially and IV type program but it was paid for out of the Finnish war debt, which then merged with the Fulbright program. So it was really known as an ASLA Fulbright, because even the Fulbright program in Finland today is known as ASLA Fulbright because the money is now Fulbright commission money. In those days there was a lot of money for Finland and the U.S. government supplemented that money mainly because in the 1940s Finland was in danger of being swallowed up by Russia and so the U.S., (much as they did in the Baltics right after independence), flushed money in there and sent people to the U.S. to be exposed to Western ideals, and then back home, hopefully as a bulwark against the "Sovietization" rather than "Finlandization" of the country.

Aatos Erkko was a young man who went to Columbia University and got a degree in journalism and then he had a 10 month or 11 month long ASLA Fulbright program where he traveled around the United States, met with people, saw people, was exposed to every facet of America and went back home. In part because of that and in part because of his family tradition, he was an extremely pro-American individual. He saw real value in Finland's relationship with the U.S. He was a Board Member of the Scandinavian-American Association in New York. He owns a lot of real estate in New York, as well. So, I mean, the family is well-connected. His wife is American, an ice-skater, actually.

So the familhe had no children, so he and his wife and his sister were the controlling family members of the corporation.

Q: Was there any reflection, from one side or the other, of the preoccupation in Sweden of showing the dark side of America?

KIEHL: Interestingly, there wasn't. The Finns had a morl think the Swedes had the luxury of having Finland between themselves and Russia whereas Finland had no luxury like that. The Finns knew the Russians and I would say were probably more committed to the Western alliance than some NATO members would be. We were under no illusions that the Finns would not fight if the Russians crossed the border, because they had 55 times and lost 55 times throughout their history and they would do it again in a minute. That was, I'm sure, certainly a factor. The Finns would fighthey'd lose, but they would fight.

Q: It seeml mean, I'm talking about areas where I've never served and all, but this is what I picked up. Sweden seems to have picked up, at least during the Vietnam war and beyond, this sort of anti-American virus in its intelligentsia.

KIEHL: Yes. There was a large number of Swedes like that. That's not to say there weren't some Finns like that, too, in the Swedo-Finnish community there were some, and there were some intellectuals who were a little disdainful of the United States. You know, "a pox on both your houses, Russia and America!" There was a vocal Communist party there, in Finland, and I'm sure it made up the bulk of the membership of the Soviet-Finnish society. Also, most of the leading politicians in Finland were on the rolls of the Soviet-Finnish friendship society, and only a small number of those, who really wanted to join, were members of the Finnish-American society, but it was sort of considered necessary to be a member of the Soviet-Finnish Society. So there was that tacit understanding that you had to play the game with the Russians, but beyond that there were some intellectuals who, certainlsome of the labor unions were very heavily pro-Soviet, pro-Russian, anti-American.

There was a kind of anarchist group there that was anti-American and there were some intellectuals who were very hard to convince of anything good coming from American post-Vietnam. But that's a small minority, all of them combined.

Q: On the unions, your observatiol mean, I take it Finns had a pretty good working relationship. In other words, I would assume they would be like the other Scandinavian countries where unions were powerful, they got good deals for their people and all that. All I do is look across the border and see that essentially there were no unions in the Soviet Union. Workers were exploited.

KIEHL: The union rank and file who went to Russia realized that. Union leaders there certainly knew it but, for a couple of reasons, continued their support. They tended to support, for the most part, the Social Democrats rather than the Communist party but there were Communist unions. It is inexplicable as it might seem to a Finn to join the Communist party and belong to a Communist union when all they have to do is go over the Gulf of Finland and see what a miserable existence that is. Inexplicable as that is, it still occurred. There were at leaswell, when the Communists trot out, you know, on May Day, it was a perfect example of the two societies of Finland. You had the union-led May-Day parade on May 1st, usually over on the east side of Helsinki, which was the proletarian part of town. There were maybe 30,000 people participating. The Communist party was well-represented. The Social Democrats were well-represented, and also, even, Trotskyites and anarchists were represented, with black and red flags and so on. They did their bit, they made their march and so on.

In the center of town and over toward the university complex was Vappu (Labor Day). Vappu is May 1st, also, and Vappu is when all of the graduates who have the baccalaureate and have their little white caps, come back to the university and get stinking drunk, as does everyone in the town. There were probably a half a million people doing that, doing all kinds of crazyou know, the kinds of things in a society where everything is sort of preordained. It's very straight-laced. You're borand then you die, and this is how the path leads. Well, one day a year everybody goes bananas and that's Vappu.

The first time I went to Helsinki, I think, was on a May Day holiday. I wanted to get out of Moscow one May Day and just get away. We went there, and we happened to arrive on Vappu and I thought the world had gone mad. What the hell was going on here? Don't ever go to Finland on Vappunless you want to partake of ibecause everyone is completely stinking drunk and throwing up and they're all wearing these caps, some of which are 50 years old now. The baccalaureate is really high school, it's a high school graduation. There are people fornicating in doorways, no social conventions are not flouted, it seems. Helicopters go over distributing condoms to the crowds. It's something that you have to see to believe. And this is going on at the same time the 30,000 dull as all-get-out Commies are over there marching for Socialism.

Q: I'd think that they would, at a certain point, down their banners and head for the center of town.

KIEHL: Well, except they didn't have baccalaureates. They were all blue collar people, they didn't have the ...

Q: Oh, the intellectual divide.

KIEHL: The intellectual divide, as well.

Q: Let's go sort of to the period. In the first place, we were talking about the prescould you get stuff you wanted in, I mean, did you feel that the United States' position was fairly presented?

KIEHL: Yes, I think so. Yes, we could get things in. It wasn't like my time in Sri Lanka where I could get anything into the newspaper. I mean, they needed the material to fill it. They couldn't afford Reuters anymore so we were the conduit for that. But in Finland you had to be careful what you put in. You wanted to go sparingly because you didn't want to cheapen the currency. So we were mainly after important pieces, bylines by the secretary of state or other senior officials that would spell out U.S. policy unambiguously. We also relied upon a whole lot of background material to Finnish writers who wrote editorials and foreign policy pieces. There were a number of senior former diplomats and senior officials who were now at think tanks and so on. We provided them with a lot of material and a lot of research material through our library so that they would be writing articles, and we knew, while we had no guarantees that they would echo the American position, we were pretty confident because of their background and their experience and the their track record, that they would be writing things that would be favorable to the U.S. position. So we helped them out a lot and, in fact, our suppositions were correct. So we did pretty well with the press there, both directly placing things and also fostering a climate that was favorable to the U.S.

There were a couple of newspapers and a couple, obviously, in the left spectrum that were largely critical of the U.S., but the major newspaperand again, the Helsingan Sanomat was everybody's newspaper, so I spent, probably, three quarters of my time dealing with the media, dealing with the Sanomat Corporation, the Helsingan Sanomat, the Ilta-Sanomat Sanoma also ran the photo service (Letikuva) for all the newspapers in Finland. It was all but a monopoly, it was so enormous compared to all the others, that it was certainly worth three-quarters of my time with the media to deal only with them. I had a very close, good relationship with not only Aatos Erkko who was the publisher, but also with the editor-in-chief, the head of the editorial board, the head of foreign news, et cetera. We were good friends as well as contacts and so we would lunch together and have drinks and discuss foreign policy issues and so on, and they had some formal events where I would talk to the editorial board about an issue or the ambassador would be brought in to talk to the editorial board about an issue. So that relationship was extremely important. It was probably the key relationship that I would have in Finland was with the Helsingan Sanomat.

Q: Did your Soviet counterpart have an equal relationship?

KIEHL: No.

Q: Was it just the normal Soviet inability to make the jump or that the state of relations between the two countries wasn't ...

KIEHL: Well, the state of relations between Finland and Russia were officially quite close but the Sanoma Corporation was not well-disposed to the Soviet Union, although Aatos Erkko and many of his journalists were very expert on developments in Russia. They had their own sources of intelligence in Russia that were quite good. They had developed a lot of contacts in Soviet society over many years and so they knew probably as much about Russia as U.S. intelligence did, I would say.

Q: Well, we're talking about '87 to '91 which is, essentially, as critical a time as 1917 to 1920 was, dealing with this massive thing called the Soviet Union/Russia.

KIEHL: Well, there's also a subdivision of that which is very important which were the Baltics, of course. Estonia in particular was a focus of Finnish foreign policy to a great extent, more and more as we approached 1991.

Q: How did thiin the first place, when you got there, how were the Finns, in your reflectionof course no one had the pull (ph) to get internehad the CNN (Cable News Network) phenomenon hit Finland? Was it beginning tl mean, this is the worldwide television broadcasting company coming out of Atlanta, I guess, reporting all over. Had that hit and engaged the Finns?

KIEHL: The Finns were actually so far ahead of the U.S. by and large on things. Yes, CNN was there. I mean, it was a presence, and the Finnish cable system had it. Now that's only 300,000 people in the greater Helsinki area, but people had cable, a lot of people had cable, even provincial people had cable. The Finnish TV also used a relationship with CNN. We also had, when I first got therI should say the U.S. Information Service in Helsinki had its own identity, separate from the embassy. It was called the America Center and it was in a building in downtown Helsinki directly across from the main railway state which was the train to St. Petersburg and Moscow.

Q: Helsinki station.

KIEHL: The Helsinki station was on the other end of the line, of course. The Helsinki Rautatieassema {railway station)t had two gigantic statues holding globes which were lights and it was just a fantastic buildinit still is a fantastic building designed by Ariel Sarinen's father Eero Sarinen and it was the center of the universe in Helsinki, I mean, it was the central point. The main post office was to its side and the main shopping district was here and the main department store was here and the Sanoma Corporation built its new headquarters here. Right across the street in a ten story building we had the entire fourth floor of that building for the America Center.

Q: Was it inside?

KIEHL: Well, I remember when I visited my predecessor that summer before I served there, one of the things that struck me was I when was downtown and he said, "Come on over to the office and meet some of the staff." It took me a half and hour and two phone calls before I could find the place because it was on the fourth floor of the building. There was no exterior sign; there was only a brass plaque inside the hallway of the building and an elevator going up. I was across from the train station and finally he said, "Well, look. Go to the phone booth right there at the end of the station and look straight across the street, walk across the street. When you come to this building with kind of an aluminum-plaid first floor there go into it." Finally he talked me into it. It was unbelievable, and it really ticked me off. I said, "What the hell is going on here? We have a public access library and it's impossible to find? I'm not an idiot, if I can't find it, nobody else can find it." So I was determined that if we were going to have a public access library it was going to be public. One of the first things I did was install 6 foot high neon lights on that building which said America Center. I deliberately put them two floors above where we were located in case some terrorist lobbed a grenade it would take out some publishing house two floors above us.

It was amazing, because then, for example, all the Russians who would come to Helsinkand there were thousands who would comwould come out of the railway station and the first thing they'd see when they walked out of the front of the railway station was America Center, right across the street. The psychological value of that alone, was worth $6,000-which is what the damned sign cost.

In that same building we had a huge dish antenna that was owned by the PTT (Post, Telegraph and Telephone) we could get cable television that way but we also got WorldNet that way. It cost us $35,000 a year for that stupid dish antenna. I got rid of that and we got our own dish antenna, cut the contract with the PTT and we could pull in all the same stations and get the WorldNet that way. Then we put another smaller dish over at the embassy so we could have a WorldNet studio there because this way we could get the embassy involved.

Q: You might explain what WorldNet is.

KIEHL: Oh, WorldNet was something that actually was created about 1985 by USIA. Actually, Charlie Wick was the guy who pushed it. I mean, he didn't invent it but he did push it. It was a worldwide, 24-hour satellite broadcast from studios at USIA over on H Street was the main switch for thaand it used documentary footage for most of the broadcast but the thing that was unique about is that it had two-way audio, one-way video links between a foreign audience and an American interlocutor. So you might havin those days it was quite common to have the secretary of state answering questions from a panel of people from four different countries, connected by satellite. They would usually be journalists but sometimes political people as well or Parliamentarians. They would ask the questions, it was a Q&A format, it wasn't a dialogue, the secretary of state or another high official or a university professor or an artist or a writer on the U.S. side would deal with either one country or several countries, their questions and comments on this performance. This was, generally, then used by local television and it could be done live or more commonly videotaped, and one of the television reporters would ask the questions with the secretary of state and then they would put in a picture of the television reporter and it would appear to be an exclusive interview.

It was extraordinarily successful, at least in the Reagan administration, when the secretary of state and other Cabinet-level people would do it, because Charlie was so powerful in the Reagan administration. After that it really became almost impossible to get any high-level people to do this, and there was a lot more competition for this kind of program. CNN, in essence, took the audience away from WorldNet. It was probably something that was inevitable and the private sector probably should do itIt evolved, of course, later on, into videoconferencing, where there was two-way video, two-way audio. I could talk about that a little bit later because I was involved in the creation of that program from USIA.

Q: This is after Finland?

KIEHL: After Finland.

Q: OK, so let'well now, let's talk about the events owe're talking about these crucial events up through the dissolution of the Soviet empire. How was thawhat were you doing about it? How were you reacting to it, and what was the situation in Finland on this?

KIEHL: The situation in Finland was the Finns had their Soviet plan. They dealt with the Soviet Union just as they always had, but at the same time there was a strong pull on the part of the Finns, both officially and unofficially, to help out their fellow linguistic brethren across the Gulf of Finland, particularly the Estonians, and the other Baltic states, too, because the Finnwhile the others didn't fight the Finns did fight and the relationship was ...

Q: Now is this looking aEstonia is what I thought it would be at the time, the topmost of the Baltic states.

KIEHL: Right. Estonian and Finnish are very kindred languages. The Estonians would watch the Finnish television. They could get Finnish television from across the Gulf of Finland. Finns had a lot of business interests there. Finns would also travel to Estonia on the ferry boat going across because of the cheap drinks. In Finland, Alko runs the state liquor monopoly, has very high prices, tries to put its money into educating the Finns not to drink themselves senseless, but in Estonia you can buy a bottle of vodka for the equivalent of a dollar which had a top that you couldn't even put back on because they knew they would not be needed. So Finns would go over there, they would drink a lot on the boat because it was duty-free, and then they'd get to EstoniTallinand go into a hotel and party until it was time to be poured back onto the boat back to Finland. In part I think the "drunk as a Finn" expression came out of those kinds of Finnish drinking vacations. It was the only place I've ever been, the Intourist hotel in Tallinn, where you heard a little tinkle of a bell in the hallway and you'd open your door and there would be a cart with a keg of beer on it and glasses and the guy was going down the hall dispensing beer to people, right into their room. They encouraged this, obviously, because it was a lot of hard currency coming in, but it was actuallagain, it was sort of like Vappu, it was someplace you might want to see once but you wouldn't want to repeat.

Q: OK, let's go back to ...

KIEHL: Yes, the Finnish attitude was to help the Estonians and there was an organization in Estonia called the Esti Instituti, founded by a couple of people, one of whom was a guy named Lennart Meri who was a filmmaker and a writer who spent many years in Siberia, in exile, just for being an Estonian nationalist. He was allowed to return to Estonia and take up his writing career a little bit and filmmaking career, and he had worked out some relationships with Finland so that the Finns would bring him over to Finland to work with the TV on documentary filmmaking and so. He was also kind of an anthropologishe did some very important film on the indigenous peoples of Siberia. He was an intellectual, and he had good contacts in Finnish television and so on.

Finnish television, of course, was where I spent the other one-quarter of my media time. There were two stations at the time, twYLE or Yleisradio, which was the name of the TV-radio combination there. I was pretty close to the directors of TV as well, it was a very important conduit to the Finnish public as well. But Lennart Meri was very close to these folks and did a lot of work for them and I honestly don't recall how we were introduced. I think it might have been through one of the TV people. We had some conversations and he kind of described for me what he hoped the Esti Instituti would turn into. I saw immediately that this was an area, that, if we chose to be helpful we could be very helpful to the Estonians. It would be an important way of preparing them, perhaps, for eventual independence.

I talked with our embassy about that and I also talked with the consul general in Leningrad, Dick Miles, an old friend, and Dick had no problems with it. In fact, he said, "Yes, this is a great thing. We are trying our best to do the same thing with these Baltic states from Leningrad. But it's easier for you, in a way, because they're coming to you." So this evolved a bit, over time, to the point where Lennart Meri and his young colleagueit was interesting, the Estonians were either all people over 70, or late 60s anyway, or in their 20s. There was no middle generation that I ever met. They were all either old or very young. The old people remembered the Estonia before and the young people wanted it. The other generation, I think, was probably too cowed and too bullied and eliminated.

In any event, one of the young fellows was a guy named Yuri Luik, who later became a foreign minister of Estonia as well. He was 23 when this whole thing started. Anyway, it evolved a little bit into we would send our wireless file by fax to Lennart Meri at the Esti Instituti and they would distribute it throughout the Baltics. So the USIA Wireless Files were distributed to many people in the Baltics. For example to the president ol think it was Latvia. The CG from Leningrad was visiting Riga. They were making some points and then the president of Latvia said to him, "Well, Mr. Miles, your own secretary of state yesterday said such-and-such," and Dick Miles was one of the few people who could carry this off, but the consulate in Leningrad had had communications problems and hadn't been able to get the wireless file for weeks. So he didn't have the benefit of this, and the Latvian pulls out a copy of one of the Helsinki press releases with the secretary of state's comment and brandishes it. Dick said, "Well, I hadn't seen that yet," because I've been traveling, bu. And sure enough it was our press release from Helsinki, a kind of faded photocopied photocopy or fax transmission of the item we had sent to Lennart Meri the day before. So that gives you an idea of how this material would get around.

We also sent an entire truckload of books from our library that we had weeded from our collection. They brought a truck over from the Esti Instituti on the ferry boat, brought it over, and we loaded all the books we had weeded onto it and they took it over and put it in their library in Tallinn. We sent speakers over there, and in most cases, what we'd do is we'd arrange for a consular officer from Leningrad to escort that person because we didn't feel comfortable in sending our own people over there.

Q: We're talking about, essentially, two periods. There's the pre-independence and there's the independence, or at least in the fall ...

KIEHL: This is still pre-independence.

Q: I mean, it's all pre-independence. So, I mean, were ...

KIEHL: It was a little touchy ground. That's why I had to touch base with our embassy and the consulate in St. Petersburg, because I didn't want to have a rogue program here. Eventuallwell, not even eventually, fairly soon thereafteMari asked me to senhe brought me a letter for Baker, so I had to fax it. He wanted me to fax it from Helsinki because he couldn't do that from Tallinn to the State Department. So I would fax the messages from him through the Op-center to Baker. None of which ever came back, by the way. Nothing ever came in the other direction, but that didn't seem to worry him too much. He would call me from his cell phone on the ferry boat, saying, "I'm about ten miles offshore now. Can I come by and see you at your office?" He'd have a message. He came by and he asked me if I could send the letter.

Obviously I kept in pretty close touch with our embassthe front office of the embassy on all thiand introduced him to the ambassador and the DCM as well so that there would be a State Department connection into this. Because, remember, USIA is an independent agency there. I was quite aware of the fact that it would be a bit of a mess if it were seen that USIA was conducting its own foreign policy in the Baltics. In fact, I went over to visit Dick Miles a couple of times, both as a friend but also to discuss with him what we were doing and what we could do. He, in turn, I presume, discussed it with the Soviet desk and the embassy in Moscow. This was really quite unusual.

Q: How were we treating thin the first place, in Finland, was it Gorby-mania or whatever was going on? Was Gorbachev seen as really a breath of fresh air or were the Finns more cautious about this?

KIEHL: I don't think there was the kind of demonstration that Gorby got in the U.S., for example, but the Finns saw this as a very positive development. In their way, in their analysis, there were many more Gorbachev's in Russia than what the United States would have guessed. .There was a whole element within the Communist party of Russia that realized their system was bankrupt. There were those, who, like Gorbachev, wanted the Communist party to maintain control but to change with the time and become an adapted Communist party that would increase Russia's economic well-being and so on. There were other people, of course, that saw the bankruptcy of the whole system but they weren't in power. The Finns were in touch with all these kinds of people and told us about this. They told me about it and they certainly told other people about it as part of their analysis of what was happening in Russia because for them Russia was the whole world. That was the real focus. As sympathetic and as positively inclined as they were to the United States, there interests were really in Russia, not America. They wanted to be like Americin fact, the most common phrase that I heard in Finland, almost the most common phrase was, "Finland is the most Americanized country in the world, or the most Americanized country in Europe." They were proud of that facAmericanized, not Finlandized.

I would ask them what they meant by that, initially, and they said, "Well, you know, we think like Americans do. The way we go about our business and the way our towns are organized and so on." There were things called America Days in various towns where people would run about in old American cars and reminisce about the time they spent in America. So there's the enormous kind of nostalgia about America and very positive influences. In fact, the University of Helsinki did a statistical breakdownot only the University of Helsinki but all the Finnish universitie90% of the entering class at all Finnish universities in 1990, I think it was, 90% of those entering freshman had spent a year in the United States under an exchange program.

Q: Was there a good course in the history of the United States anI mean, universitiemy experience in Western Europe is thamine goes way back so I don't know about it today, but a well-educated American knows a hell of a lot about Europe, the politics and...

KIEHL: Well, you can have European studies programs of various kinds.

Q: But a well-educated European, at least a long time ago, knew about the United States through war and movies and all that but really there weren't very good American studies programs around.

KIEHL: Well, I think that in terms of American studies programs in Europe in general, Finland was probably one of the better ones, but it always disappointed me a bit. There was an annual conference called "The Eagle and the Maple Leaf" conference. It was North American studies, because the Finns were wise enough not to label something American studies or USA studies. It was North American studies, so they lumped Canada into it, too, although 99% of everything was American. Nevertheless, there was a Canadian element always introduced.

That was an annual conference and that brought in a lot of professors and it was a first-rate academic conference. We supported it, in fact. We had Fulbrighterwe had a senior Fulbrighter, with a special stipend, who got to live in Matti Atasari's (future Finnish President) apartment. He rented his apartment to the Fulbright commission for that professor at the University of Helsinki. As far as American studieit's really the benchmark job, the top Fulbrighter in the country. There was an active American studieNorth American studieprogram at the University of Helsinki. There were some incipient ones in other places, notably in Turku, the Swedish university there. It was interesting that onlwhen I was there, there was a professor named Tom Wendell from San Jose, California, who was the thesis advisor for an academic named Marku Hendriksson, and he was the first one to have gotten a PhD in American studies and that was in my time. Until you have somebody with an indigenous PhD in American studies, you don't really have an American studies program. So he was the first one, in 1990.

It needed infusions of money and it needed interest and so on, but it obviously was there. There was an American studies program. That's more than you can say for much of Western Europe.

Q: Well, was therwhat happened during the events in East Germany and all this? Did we do much on that or was this being covered sort of European wise anyway so we didn't have twe were just sort of observers?

KIEHL: Finnish or ...

Q: Europe respectively.

KIEHL: I think it was a European issue. The U.S. didn't have to tell people what was happening, they had their own reporting going on. They had their own reporting on the changes in Russia, too. This is after my time in Finland but, as things escalated to Russia versus Soviet Union and literally, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Finns were certainly as aware of it as anybody in the United States was.

There were, I guess, two majolet's see. There were two organizations which played an incredibly important part in Finnish-U.S. relations. One was, as I mentioned, the Fulbright commission, ASAA Fulbright. I was chairman of that for a couple of years but it alternated between Americans and Finns. It was an enormously prestigious organization, a very important organization within Finland, not only in terms of the scholarships and so on, but also the student advising. The other was the Finnish-American society, which, as I mentioned, had 70,000 members who paid dues every year to be members. There was a large travel component to it, of course. They made their money, the association made a lot of money, as a travel agency. They had a monthly magazine which, of course, we could put a lot of material into. They did an annual event called America Days, which was an event that was organized by the Finnish American society. They would pick a different city in Finland each time and that chapter would host and people would come from all over Finland, the Finnish-Americans, and people from the embassy would come up and play an active part in this. It was full of social events and games and fun and all that sort of thing and usually some big name celebrity from the U.S. which we would help them get. Cliff Robertson one year, you know, P.T. 109.

Q: Talking about a movie actor who portrayed John F. Kennedy during the war.

KIEHL: Another time it was Roz Ridgeway, who was the former ambassador there but had gone on to be assistant secretary of state. She came back for one of these as well. It was a different personality each time. These were very important because they could result in a lot of positive publicity and energize a large number of people in different parts of Finland and it was a way of getting outreach in places outside Helsinki.

Q: Who paid for the 90% of the young people who went the United States to study for a year before going to university?

KIEHL: Believe it or not, the young peoples' parents, mainly, because most of it was under the AFS program.

Q: American Field Service ...

KIEHL: But it's now called AFS and it isn't specifically American anymore because they also have programs between European countries but it's still largely an American creation. Several of the other, smaller, lesser-known organizationit was on almost any of the high school exchange lists, it was either in the top three or four for every organizations. The Finnish parents essentially picked up the tab. It worked very well in Finland for a couple of reasons. First of all, the kids knew English because they'd learn English from first grade on, or even preschool. So certainly the middle class kids could afford it, their parents could afford it. It wasn't that expensive. They were home-stays.

Q: They'd stay with American families.

KIEHL: Yes. And they would call them "Mom" and "Dad," and their sister was their sister, their brother was their brother and it realll met so many people who even many years after still thought in those terms. They weren't just fresh out of America. It's an extraordinary relationship that has been built through these programs. It is absolutely the best way to do it.

A lot of the Americans who would come to Finlanfirst of all, they couldn't speak Finnish, most of the timcertainly almost all the time. So they would come for a summer program. They had a good experience and they lived with a Finnish family for the summer which is the best time to be in Finland, after all, and that worked. The Finns would go to the United States when the graduated from their high school. They were already probably second year college students in terms of knowledge base and so on. What they did is they would take a year and they would do their senior year in an American high school, and they would have fun because they didn't really have to study much because they already knew this stuff. Then they'd graduate with the class, they'd have a senior prom, they'd do all the kind of extracurricular activities that don't exist in a Finnish high school. The relationships that they had with the Americans were just, almost universally, a very positive thing.

Then they would come back and they would finish their Finnish high school and go on to university and it was very important for Finns to be in the university because that determined the rest of their lives. So they would graduate from university, and if they wanted to go back to America they'd go back for a graduate degree but not for university. So you'd see all these kids going out there for high school, nobody going for college and then people going back, a significant number, going back for a masters or a PhD.

Q: I was wondering, in Finnish society, did it reflecl've talked to people in Denmark and in Sweden and found them really these nicthey looked like friendly people, always smiling, but it was a pretty closed society. How about the Finns?

KIEHL: In perhaps small-town Finland it would be really closed, but then it's closed in American societies, too, in small towns. I'll tell you one thing that made a real impression on me. The first night we were in our house in Helsinki a neighbor came in and invited us across the street for a barbecue to meet all the other neighbors. They all arranged to have a barbecue in their place, right across the street from us, almost across the street, and brought in all the neighbors in the neighborhood. We all had drinks and barbecue and beautiful sunshine right on the Gulf of Finland and got to know all these people on the first night. How many neighborhoods in America do you move into where somebody does that for you?

Q: Absolutely. No, I mean, it's a different society ...

KIEHL: These were not typical Finns, I have to say. These were upper-middle class or relatively well-off Finns. We were in a very fancy neighborhood.

Q: I've talked to people who've been in Denmark who say that they never really talked to the people in the same apartment house as them.

KIEHL: That's apartment house living, perhaps. In this suburban neighborhood, I can tell yowe were right on the Gulf of Finland, of course, it was an ideal place to be.

Q: How did the Gulf War I plathis is when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990. How did that play in Finland?

KIEHL: Well, for part of the time I was the acting DCM. I think I was DCM for about eight months and sFinland was very important in the Gulf Wain Gulf War I particularly in the UN, because they were, for part of that time, president of the Security Council. So I think probably I had to make a demarche at least once a day about the entire damn thing, to the point where I'd come up and I'd say, "OK, well, here's the deal." We didn't want to waste anymore time here. This became so hum-drum, you might say.

Q: What were they concerned with?

KIEHL: No, they were very supportive.

Q: I mean, what were our demarches, what were we saying?

KIEHL: There's so many of them. We wanted their assistance in talking to some other people in Europe, in order to reallmost of it was coalition building. The coalition building was meticulously done, from the perspective I had anyway. Q: Thatcher and Bush made a wonderful coalition team.

KIEHL: Yes. That coalition team was assisted by lots of, shall we say, lower level people talking to Foreign ministries, particularly in Europe and the Middle East. That's what, basically, we were doing. We were encouraging the Finns, because the Finns had, early on, agreed to be helpful, and so, having made that commitment, we kept after them to do more, to do more, to do more. To talk to more people and to convince them of this or that. That's why I say I think I must have made a daily trip to the foreign ministry, although, as things got more set in concrete, the political section did most of it. It was only at the very beginning that it was at the front office level.

This was between Schnabel and Winemann, the two ambassadorMike Durkee became the chargï¿½ and I became the DCM, and obviously he wasn't going to be running back and forth except on the most important things, so I got stuck with that. The Finns were extremely supportive from the very beginning. They saw their interests coinciding with U.S. interests, and they also saw that this was an opportunity for them to build a reputation with the American administration of being a good ally. They saw this as, obviously, in their best interests and did a very good job of it. This was about the time my wife joined the Foreign Service, went back for training in Washington, and then was assigned to London. So during the actual Gulf War, I was flying between Helsinki and London. By that time the new ambassador had come on board and Mike Durkee went back to being DCM and I was grateful to go back downtown again to my headquarters. I had a very good relationship with both ambassadors.

Ambassador Schnabel did something thal shouldn't have been surprised, perhaps, because I knew him, but I was a little surprised. We were at a dinner hosted by the president of Finland, the Foreign minister and a whole gaggle of senior officials, to conclude the Year of Friendship. The foreign minister made a long and rather elaborate speech about Rock Schnabel and what a wonderful thing he had done with the National Year of Friendship with Finland. I was very supportive of that and I thought that was great. Then Schnabel did something that was very uncharacteristic. He said, "You know I really do appreciate your words and I'm very grateful, but the guy you should direct those words to is sitting right here. Bill Kiehl is the one who came up with this idea, he's the guy who put that whole program together for us. So please give him a round of applause." I was floorel have to say, because I've never seen an ambassador do that. That was pretty amazing.

Ambassador Winemann was a different kind of personality and interesting in his own right and also very likeable. He was avuncular. He seemed much oldel mean, I'm about his age, I think, when he was ambassador, but he seemed a lot older. He was like an uncle or father figure to most of the officers there. He also didn't know too much about foreign policy and more or less followed the Schnabel model and said, "OK, you guys deal with this, just keep me in the loop." He was more socially oriented and he entertained well, he and his wife entertained well, and they were close friends of the Bushes. He was appointed to this job after being the big fundraiser in Louisiana. He was Commissioner of the international fair there and had some interest in international affairs. He's the one who later became chief of protocol when Ambassador Reil think his comedown was the "talking hat" for the queen if you remember. That was the final straw or something. Ambassador Winemann took over that job in 1991.

Q: You might explain the talking hat.

KIEHL: The talking hat. The queen came to visit the president and they set the podium for the president, meaning it was a high podium without a little step underneath, for the queen, so the queen began to talk and the only thing you could see was a hat. That didn't sit too well with the Brits and it didn't sit too well with the president and the then chief of protocol took the hit for that one. There were a couple of instances prior to that which put him in a little hot water and so this was the tipping point, you might say. Ambassador Winemann went back to Washington to take that job and I think that's a job he really loved because he loved to entertain people, he loved to meet people, and show them things and be a good host and his wife was a wonderful hostess. So he was probably completely in his element at the Blair House.

Q: Were the Finns sort of stopped in their tracks by the war as portrayed on CNN, because I've talked to people in African countriel mean, you know, everybody watched the war.

KIEHL: It was the major thing on TV. It was the show of the century, at least up until that time, certainly the most covered war in history and people in Finland were just as interested as anywhere else, and, of course, they also felt a part of it, because they were "an important country" in this whole thing. That's something that the Finns really relished.

Q: Did the Finns contribute at all to, I mean, not just this, but were they part of some internal peacekeeping and things like this, was thior did they stay out of that sort of thing?

KIEHL: No, they were involved in that. The Finns are one of the countries that one always thinks of in terms of peacekeeping operations. They are extremely well-trained as a military. They're very good war fighters, probably, although they haven't fought any wars recently, but they're very highly trained. They're very tough. They train them with a rigor that matches the best in the world. Their real specialty has been peacekeeping, particularly in the developing world for the UN. They tend to see their role as peacekeepers within a UN context, blue helmet kind of peacekeepers, rather than freelance peacekeepers, you might say, much as the U.S. has become.

They were supportive not only diplomatically but in material ways to the war in the Gulf, the first war. One of the things that struck me I as I was making these trips back to London. About once I had this deal worked out with Ambassador Winemann, I had a lot of leave. Use it or lose it leave I had tons of it because I hadn't been able to take that time at all when I was DCM. He thought pretty highly of me, I'm pretty sure he did, and so he was also a very family-oriented guy. As I had mentioned, he was avuncular, but family, to him, was the most important thing and he brought that sense of family to the embassy community and did a lot of family get-togethers at the residence and so on. So he was very much inclined for me to see my wife occasionally. So the deal was I could take a week a month off during that period and go to London, no problem. This was great for my IO, she became acting PAO once a month, so it helped her career.. I would get on Finn Air and I think we got a discounted rate. I planned ahead. I'd get on the plane and there were four people on the whole flight. That's the thing that really was amazing about the period up to the war and through the war, the lack of travel. Not only Americans going to Europe, which was, of course, a tremendous blow to the American airline industry, but inter-European flights were empty. So much so that after about the third flight it was, "Oh, Mr. Kiehl, would you like your usual seat?" I'd get off at Heathrow and there was no line. When you get off at Heathrow and there's no line you can't believe it.

I'd get on the train into town from the Heathrow station and there were almost no people on the cars. There were, of course, sniffer-dogs going around for bombs. So the climate of fear in Europe was enormous, to the point where travel, inter-European travel, almost didn't exist. Which I thought was amazing. Of course, I'd get to London and I had the perfecbut I'll tell you about that when we get into that section. Maybe I should tell you about this part, because this is part of Helsinki.

The great thing about this waand I had no reason to believe that I was going to be assigned to the embassy in London after thabut I was there for a week, my wife was working in the consular section at the time. While she worked during the week, I set off on foot all over London, all day, eating in little pubs and talking to people and taking buses and the tube and so on, but walking a lot. I had guidebooks, so I'd follow various walking tours, and in the evening I would meet her at the embassy and we'd go off and see a play and have dinner, meet some people and go out to dinner or something, and had a normal evening. They next day I'd continue this again, for a week, and then I'd go back to Helsinki. It was absolutely the best prep for serving in London because there were people who'd been in the embassy three years, the day I arrived and I knew more about London than they did. It was enormously helpful to my work and our lives to have that opportunity. It's a wonderful opportunity, and I had no idea that it would work out that way.

So back to Helsinki- The Finns, in many ways, are like Americans, and one thing that they differ from most Europeanthey're very supportive of the military, whether it's their military or military operations that they consider in their interest. They're very supportive. You don't find that so much with Western Europeans. The military is something outside of life. Whereas, for the Finns, it is still, because so many Finnthey had a conscription system, and the Finns arl think they may still have it. It's not something that most people knew about outside of Finland. That is, that they would have training sessions for people in the media, for people in government, for people in key industry positions and commercial positions, almost like military training, in case of emergency. So it was always in the back of their mind that they would be invaded and everybody would know exactly what to do. They kept up this training for people. I mean, there were people who'd been doing this for 30 or 40-some years. It was a country that was always in a state of readiness.

Q: Switzerland comes to mind.

KIEHL: Switzerland is another place that has that citizen military. Of course, the Finns have a regular military and that is a prestigious job in Finland, but everybody knows their role, which is something that's quite unlike most of Europe.

Q: You were there when Germany united. How did the Finns react to this? This is a big neighbor to the soutl mean, all of a sudden you've got a whole Germany. Did that make much of an impression?

KIEHL: It did. It made a big impression all over Europe. I think they were a little wary at first. Small countries don't like changes that they don't anticipate and I don't think anybody really anticipated this. Certainly the Finns didn't seem to. They were pretty wary at first but then, in general, they were positive about it. They were really concerned about how Russia would react. Germany is a little too far away to worry about it too much although there was a lot of sympathy for Germany in Finland. You recall that the Finns were on Germany's side in World War II. There are a significant number of Germans who have become Finns. There was an immigration, particularly in commercial areas, of business people from Germany, who immigrated to Finland to set up businesses and so on back in the 19th century and Finlandized or Swedofied their names and fit in. They were no longer German but their ancestry is German and they probably had some tug that way. A lot of them are fairly influential people. So there's a lot of interest in Germany.

It's also a big market for Finland. It's not as big as Russia but it was a big market. So they were concerned about that, but basically they were positive, and yet they were wary of, first of all, the change, but most importantly, the way the Russians would react. Would the Russians tolerate this? How would Russia cope with it? I don't thinthere was nobody in Finland that I can recall either hearing or reading, who was a soothsayer about what happened to Russia. I think they saw Russior the Soviet Unioevolving slowly in kind of a Gorbachevian way, not the complete breakdown of the Soviet states.

Q: Was there a certain amount of contempt for the Russians or not?

KIEHL: There was contempt, particularly the Karelians, who were displaced and so on. There's no question that there were people who hated Russia, but they weren't very vocal about it. It wasn't considered proper to do that. There was a certain amount of pity for the Russians because the state of their state, the economy was so bad and so on. Most Finns really, I think, would have been quite happy to have the Soviet Union continuing to weaken in a non-belligerent way, and continue to provide the market for all the Finnish goods, because when it did happen, when the Soviet Union did implode, Finland's economy was ruined. It was an enormous economic blow to Finland. They could no longer sell shoes to Russia. They couldn't sell shoes on the open market, because what they did was they worked out an elaborate system with the Soviet Union of barter, to keep unprofitable Finnish industries continuing to produce clothing, or tuxedothey were the largest producers of tuxedos, all of which went to Russia, or the Soviet Union, in exchange for oil or some other good. It was all a barter arrangement. Raw material from Russia would come to Finlansome of which would be resold at a profifor goods that couldn't be sold on the open market because they wouldn't be competitively priced. So the Finns really had a great deal going there. Economically, they were taking the Russians over, but it served Russia's purposes and it also, definitely, served Finland's purpose.

When that chain was broken, Finland suddenly discovered that it was producing 50,000 tuxedos a month that nobody wanted to buy at those prices, or shoes, or widgets, or whatever. There was a real economic downturn in Finland and huge unemployment. The Finmark fell like a rock. It took them several years to turn the corner, it was probably the perfect time to buy Nokia stock but I didn't do it.

Q: Did you find, in your work, that thl mean, you say Finland is a great listening post. How did you, USIA, interface with CIA? Was this a problem or not?

KIEHL: >From my perspective we should not interface except in the country team, as being a colleague. USIA has always tried to keep the intelligence end of government as far away from us as possiblagain, the credibility factor being so important. I had an extremely good relationship with the first station chief up there. He understood exactly what we were all about and we understood that he didn't need us and we didn't need him, but we had a good, cordial relationship, and with several of his officers, who were very bright, Finnish-speakers, and so on, who are still friends. The second guy came out of Africa and had no European experience, not East European experience, and, I think, didn't understand things as well. He may have been brilliant at what he did but I don't know. He got a very ostentatious apartment, gigantic placit was just over-the-top. I noticed that some of the newer people that he had brought on board were problems. There were a couple of occasions. One guy tried to pass himself off as a cultural affairs officer on several trips in northern Finland, and I warned them not to use that cover story ever. Of course he was allegedly in the Econ Section. It was too transparent and stupid. I said to the new station chief, "Not only is he blowing his own cover he's damaging us. If it happens again I'm going to the ambassador about it. Just be forewarned."

This same guy did a couple of things like that. I learnethere was an Estonian guy who came to me and said, "Oh, I guess So-and-so works for you." I said, "Who? Why do you say that?" He said, "Well, he gave me the impression he worked for you at the America Center." I said, "No, but he's a new officer and he probably rotates around a lot," and then I went back and I said, "For God's sake, I'm telling you, this is going to be a real problem if this guy isn't reined in." He then showed up at our annual Christmas party, even though he wasn't invited. So I took him aside and I said, "You get your ass out of here right now. I don't want to see you near our contacts again." He did, and then his boss got all huffy about it and I had a face-to-face with him and that was the end of it. I don't know what they were up to. I knew they were behind the curve. Te CIA were really behind the curve on the whole Estonian thing and they were trying to make up for lost time and they knew we had close contacts with them. Therefore, they were just trying to catch up - clumsily.

Q: Well, at a timl don't know how it works now, buit was more or less like insurance salesman. You had to go out and make so many contacts and you got paid per contact, or credit per contact.

KIEHL: That's fine, and the Young CIA officer could be an econ officer doing environmental reporting. It was just an innocuous and he could have done it, and especially after having been warned by me once not to use us for cover, because that was jusit's so deeply ingrained in the USIA people, not to get to chummy with intelligence people, that I was just absolutely off the wall.

Q: It's bad show.

KIEHL: Very bad show. I expected, and I think I was proven correct in my discussion with the station chief, that the station chief encouraged this kind of activity. Maybe he could get away with that kind of sloppy work in Africa but he wasn't going to get away with it in Europe, especially in Eastern Europe.

Q: During this period, were you seeing the rise of communications technology?

KIEHL: Oh, yes.

Q: How did that have an impact on you? We're talking about phones, computers, faxethe whole thing, but much more ...

KIEHL: The first cell phone I ever used, or ever had as my own, was in my car in Finland. When I arrived in Helsinki, every car in the embassy motor pooand the USIS motor pool of two carwas equipped with a cell phone. Before the Reagan visit we all got cell phones that were the size and shape of a bricNokia phonewith an antennae about a foot long. And they were a little clumsy and heavy but they were cell phones, and we were the envy of the White House advance people because we could call anybody from wherever we were, and they had to go through their stupid radioYou didn't have this in the states. Everybody who came out said, "What's that? Oh, what? A cell phone?"

We had plain-paper fax before anybody ever heard of it in the states. Finland was a societand it still ithe most wired society in Europe. That was certainly the case in 1987. People had cell phones- a lot of people had cell phones. Plain paper faxes, the PC, which we had. We had personal computers.

Q: I'm really thinking about our communications. Had the communications revolution hit your contacts with USIA headquarters, or were yol mean, was there much direction, suggestion, consultation, or did you kind of do your own thing?

KIEHL: We pretty much did our own thing. There wasn't mucWorldNet, of course, was started out of Washington, but, by and large, posts like Helsinki were way ahead of what Washington was even thinking. For example, we did video conferences between Helsinki and Stockholm using the PTTs [Post, Telephone & Telegraph]. They would let us do it for free because they were experimenting with this technology. It was black and white, but it was pretty good. It was about the same as it is today, otherwise. For example, I would get Jack Matlock, who was ambassador in Moscow, he would come out to Helsinki like everybody else would, get the pressure off a little bit, and I would prevail upon him to do a video conference from Helsinki with Swedish journalists sitting in Stockholm. Even Charlie Wick, when he visited Stockholm, he wasn't able to visit us that time, which was a mixed blessing to be sure. He was in Stockholm, so my American staff and I sat in PTT in Helsinki to chat with him, and for whatever reason, I just had this little devil pop in my head, because we had experimented with this so much, and I said to the PTT guy, "Can you make my picture twice the size of his on the screen." "Oh, yes, sure." I said, "Do that." So we're on the conference, we're doing this dialogue, and I'm big head here and Charlie Wick's little head there. As we closed ofwe say goodbye and so owe could still hear the audio on the other end, and there's Charlie Wick saying, "Why the hell was his head so goddamn much bigger than mine?" We all just choked. It was just so damn funny, because this was a guy who had an ego the size of Texas. Just for devilment I did that, because it was a little joke for us. We didn't actually think anything would come of it and it didn't, but he did blow his stack.

This kind of technology was going on between two posts in Europe when Washington wasn't even thinking in terms of videoconferencing. They were still doing "WorldNet dialogues", quote unquote, interview-type things.

Q: OK. Well, Bill, I think this is a good place to stop, and we can pick uwe're basically finished off nicely, I have something else to think about later on about Finland, but you can talk about a couple trips you made, if you want ...

KIEHL: Sure. I was in Estonia ...

Q: To Estonia, but really talking aboudid you go to the 'Stans?

KIEHL: Yes. I went out to Uzbekistan and to Ukraine and I was going on to Vladivastok but I got another job in the meantime and I would have had to go Vladivastok in December, which would have been a bummer. Also the administration changed.

Q: OK, so we'll pick that up.

KIEHL: OK, great.

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Q: Today is the 9th of January 2004. Bill, let's talk a bit about these trips. You've already talked about the Baltic things, but how were yanked off to go to Uzbekistan and the Ukraine?

KIEHL: Well, let me do a little side issue before we do that. Two of the big things that happened in the time I was in Helsinki were two big visits, one with Reagan and one with Bush I and Gorbachev. The first one was done by the Reagan advance team and we worked for about two months on getting that together, putting all the journalists out on a boat in the Baltic, a cruise boat, for hotel space. It was a monumental undertaking.

The second couldn't have been more different. There was about a week's notice for that one. That was in about September ol would say probably '89. I was back home on leave for my birthday, September 1st, was having dinner with some relatives there, and after dinner we turned on the TV set for the news and there's George Bush standing up there, George Bush the first, standing up there in Maine with a seascape in the background, saying, "And I'm announcing that one week from today we will meet in Helsinki, Finland." And I said, "Holy hell. You watch, I'm going to get a phone call in a matter of minutes." Sure enough, I did. I got a phone call from White House advance, they had tracked me down after calling Helsinki and I had to drive down to Washington the next morning, got on a plane about two hours later, after some meetings with the White House press advance, and flew off to Helsinki. I came off the plane there, was greeted by the ambassador, and began work on this summit meeting.

What we did is we took a loowe, the Finns, and the Russians took a look at a recent Gorbachev visit. We looked at the Reagan visit. There was a Gorbachev visit the previous spring or thereabouts, and we took the two visits and we kind of merged them, and then flipped the deck a little bit to provide for a summit context and planned the whole thing, literally, in a week's time, which was in the world of U.S.-Soviet summit meetings, some kind of miracle.

Q: Probably it's the best way to do it.

KIEHL: It was absolutely the best way.

Q: There's too much time spent on these things.

KIEHL: There was no time to reverse decisions. No time to go back to Washington to micromanage the whole thing. It was a dream, it was the best visit I'd ever been involved in and I've done eight presidential visits in various countries and this was absolutely the best.

Q: Why the sudden visit? What was going on?

KIEHL: Well, in part, again, it was all U.S.-Soviet relations, arms control based. But a window opened up on both leaders' schedules, because they could have done this all two months later, but they felt that it would give impetus to the furtherance of the negotiations. Both sides thought this would be the time to do it, and so it was kind of a lucky circumstance. Originally on the schedulthe next summit was going to be held in Moscow, with Bush going to Moscow, and I think Gorbachev had some internal political reasons why he didn't want a U.S. president coming to town. He was stilhe was on pretty shaky ground at that time, with the hard-line elements within the Communist party who thought he was a lunatic or a traitor. So they looked around and they thought, "Well, where can we do this quickly?" and they both recognized that Finland was the ideal place, because it had happened before. The Finns were so damned efficient, and everything was laid out. They had had a recent visit there. The Reagan visit went stunningly well in the previous administration, Bush knew that. Bush himself had visited there as vice president, and Schultz had been back and forth so many times it was almost like you pressed the button and everything worked. So they figured it was one of the few places they coulother than one of the two capitalwhere they could, first of all, control everything. The Finns were very good about not interfering in the process the way, perhaps, some other, larger, European countries would want to insert themselves into the puzzle, and secondly, they were so efficient knew it so well that it could be done in a week's time. It was one of the very few places that could actually pull that off. So they did it.

Q: How did you find, at that point, working with these two foreign powers, and I speak to them as being that kind of thinour Secret Service and the Soviet counterpart?

KIEHL: Well, the KGB. I really had no problems with the Secret Service. Presidential visits are all wrapped up into two things. The two things that really are the essence of Presidential visits are security and media. That's what it's really all about. You want to have security, obviously, and you also want to geyou want to put the spin on it.

So Secret Service, while they almost always had the final call on everything, because nothing is more important than the president's security, generally speaking didn't interfere in the media end of things very much at all. The Soviets did it a little differently throughout the entire Soviet period, I'm talking about. Now, the Russians have actually had a lot of the same elements today, but there were two parts. We had, of course, Advance and Press Advance, and then there was a security advance, too. But the twthe top person was the head of the office of advance and the number two person was always the press advance person. So within press advance there was justhey were just campaign people, basically. They knew how to run rah-rah rallies and things like that and they were generally pretty good at it.

Overall, the quality of people doing this work steadily declined. The Reagan people were absolutely top-notch pros. Then the Bush people came in and they were not quite as good, and the Clinton people were absolutely terrible, for whatever reason. We had one person on thwell, I'll tell you later about that one, about the Clinton visit to Thailand. The press advance person was bouncing checks all over the country. It was just embarrassing.

Anyway, the Russians, they had their press advance, but they also had their press security, which is quite interesting. So there was a counterpart to the press advance person, who was the press security person, who was the KGB. They were responsible for press security, meaning, keeping an eye on the journalists, as opposed to protecting them. So it was really almost humorous, the way the press security guy was always inserting himself into the mix, and the press advance person was more like our press advance, saying, "OK, we want to maximize the exposure, we want to get this and this and this," and the press security person was always trying to minimize things. He was more like the Secret Service than the Secret Service was. That's an interesting aside.

Q: How did you find the press and all? I mean, did it work well?

KIEHL: Yes, it worked very smoothly in that one week. It was betteit was better in every way. When the Reagan visit happened, there was a lot of negative publicity. First of all, Reagan, much like Bush II, was seen in Europe as a cowboy, as irresponsible, quick-triggered, a unilateralist, et cetera. All of the things that you hear about Bush II now, you used to hear about Reagan twenty years ago. One of the things that the local anti-Reagan people in Finland had struck upon, as a great media gimmick, was they had all of their protestors dress up in Santa Claus outfits, which would guarantee media coverage, because you have protestors in front of any building or the motorcade or whatever. Journalists, being journalists, were drawn like moths to a flame with some guy dressed in a Santa Claus outfit, with a big sign, "Reagan is no Santa Claus," or "Reagan is the Grinch that stole Christmas," or whatever it happened to be. Of course they got tremendous amounts of publicity for that. It was a clever move on their part.

So the media for the Reagan visit was kind of mixed. The Gorbachev visit wathe Russians were not particularly adept at spin control, then or now, but Gorbachev was such a charismatic figure and the Gorbo-mania in the United States was not as pronounced as in Finland but there were an awful lot of people who saw in Gorbachev a Western-style leader for that monolith across the border. They were very positively inclined and the media painted him as saintly, almost.

Q: For these conferences, did the Finns turn out in good numbers? It always looked like the had a lot of people, that sort of thing.

KIEHL: Yes, but there weren't so many public events, per se. The events werl mean, obviously negotiation-type meetings, but there were also then some public events like in Finlandia Hall, a very much controlled situation with a VIP audience and television coverage and so on, but a VIP audience of carefully screened people, for security reasons, and only 2,000 or 3,000 people in the hall. When motorcades went to the various sites and of course there were cheering crowds with flags and that sort of thing.

Q: Who gave them the flags?

KIEHL: Well, the Finns, actually, provided the American and Russian and Finnish flags. There were always three flags there. The Finns were very good about this sort of thing. They were great marketing people, and sl still have, I believe, in fact, I'm sure I have, two umbrellas, one of which is for the Gorbachev visit, with "Gorbachev visit to Finland," and then the dates and so on, and another one was the Reagan visit, and I think may have a summit umbrella as well. They'd give these umbrellas out to everybody , but anybody involved in the visit would get an umbrella.

They also were very good with the press. They had, basically, unlimited vodka at the press hotels and little chocolates filled with Finlandia vodka and they tried to get these journalists as stewed as possible, I guess, because they saw it as a great opportunity to insert a little of Finland into the stories, for tourist purposes and national image-building and so on. They really pulled out all the stops. The journalists were uniformly pleased by their treatment in Finland on these visits. Even the Schultz visits, at a much lower level, with only 100 journalists therin those days, of course, the secretary would travel with about 100 press, instead of the 30 or so that usually go now. When Reagan traveled, it was 300 or 400 traveling press, which steadily declined as the costs of these things have escalated and the fact that they don't really need to travel in the plane, they can make commercial arrangements and use local correspondents and stringers. News organizations are much more strapped today and so they've really cut back on that.

These things were real juggernauts, and the Fins did it probably as well as anybody. The Brits did a pretty good job, too. I was custodian of the Russians at the G-7 plus Russia plus one, in London, in'89. I went on TDY (Temporary Duty) from Helsinki and, of course, everybody got gold cufflinks and pen and pencil sets and little briefcases and all that sort of thing, and an enormous amount of food and drink for free at the press center. It was almosit was really ostentatious. They must have spent a fortune on this stuff. And of course there were lots of touristy materials and so on, trying to influence the journalists to insert some nice words about the UK into their stories. They saw it as most countries do that, they see it as a great opportunity. I don't know what the plans are for the G-8 down in Charleston, or wherever that is, or Sea Island, Georgia, this year, but you can bet that the press will be wined and dined and probably given all sorts of little souvenirs, depending on the quality of the souvenirs, it could be anything from gold cufflinks to the pen and pencils, you know.

Q: Did you finl mean, did you deal with American press?

KIEHL: On these trips, American, a third country, and Finnish, in Finland, or local, I should say, sure.

Q: How did you find them? Were they knowledgeable or were they feeding off each other, or ...

KIEHL: Well, there's a lot of that in any group. We'd always set up a press center for the White House press corps. They paid for it, they were charged the actual cost for the rental of the hotel ballroom and all the equipment that was put into it and that sort of thing. I don't think our salaries were charged to them, but we would set this whole thing up in consultation with the White House but of course, they didn't know, actually, especially the newer people, didn't know how to do it, so they said, "Well, how did you do it last time?" I said, "Don't worry- we'll take care of it." So we got all the tables and chairs and, of course, there were certain news organizations that always got their reserved seats and they had their own special phones and that sort of thing. They all paid for this.

Of that group of, say, anywhere from 100 to 300 people sitting in that room, there were probably maybe 20 or 25 journalists that were the real powerhouses. Other people were there because their paper or their news station or their network or their magazine felt the need to have a byline, but they weren't really the top flight people. There were 20 or 25 really top flight people, and they were the ones that really got the access to the White House in addition to the from-the-podium kinds of things. They were the ones who always got called on for questioning, because they were the powerful media.

So there really were probably three classes of journalists. There were those powerhouses, there was everybody else, and then there were a few oddballs, who, for one reason or another, had managed to get in to the White House press accreditation process and stick there, and these were, sometimes, relics of the past, old journalists who just wouldn't fade away, who were working for small news services or their own news service. They were tolerated by the press, but, on occasion, the press really could be pretty mean when one or another of these older folks, who were on the margins of journalism, would be a little late for the bus, the journalists would say, "Just leave her behind, the hell with her," kind of thing. They could be quite cruel about it because they wanted to make it back to the hotel and file their story and somebody was delaying them. There was not much sympathy for someone who couldn't keep up with the crowd.

Q: Going back to your trips, say, to Uzbekistan. What were you doing?

KIEHL: Well, I was asked tthis was the time between my tour in the UK and back to a U.S. assignment. I was asked to delay the assignment in Washington in order to go out to the former Soviet Uniothis is after the breakup, of coursand try to locate space and negotiate long-term leases on property that would be used for America houses. The concept of America house, from the German days, was thought to be a way of exerting ourselves outside of Moscow and Leningrad and Kiev, which were the only diplomatic posts at the time, to try to spread a little of American culture and influence in the former Soviet Union. Well, of course, as you knoand I'm sure there are others who can talk about this in far greater detail than Secretary Baker had made the deal that he would open up all these embassies in the former republics, without going back to Congress to get anymore money, so that was all coming out of the hide of the State Department. Whatever the political reasons behind it, it was a very damaging thing for the Department and it slowed the process enormously. I think they got Nick Salgo the former ambassador to Hungary.

Q: Oh, yes.

KIEHL: They asked him to do this. He was kind of an entrepreneurial type, anyway, you might say, and they sent him out. He went out, of course, with his own plane and a whole support staff, to go out and glad hand the little dictators who rose to power in these "Stans", and get embassies. Well, USIA wasn't in the same league as that so they sent me by Turkish Air and Ukrainian Air with the support of a floppy diskette of a standard lease arrangement in English and Russian because we didn't have anybody who could do Uzbek. They said, "Well, you know, adapt it to whatever you can come up with, and good luck to you!" and that was about it. I had no more refined marching orders than that as to how much I should pay, how long the lease should be, et cetera. So I was pretty much on my own to do that. Obviously I consulted with the embassies, the nascent embassies in these places.

Kiev was the first stop and that was, essentially, the easiest, because we had a diplomatic mission there.Ambassador Roman Popadiuk was there. He had worked in the Reagan White House as a deputy press secretary and that's how he got that ambassadorship. He was a career Foreign Service officer, I think an OC at that time, but he was of Ukrainian background. I had it figured he had some other agenda because when he was in the press office for the Bush visithe famous chicken Kiev speech of Bush's, when he went to Ukraine and said, "We really think highly of Gorbachev and you should be part of this Soviet Union." The Ukrainians were beating their fists on their table saying, "Get out of here! We want to be independent!" That speech, which was, can we say, a little ill-timed, probably came six months too late in the process. It might have gone down six months before, possibly, but by that point it was already clear that Ukraine was not going to be part of any Soviet Union.

Popadiuk was the deputy press secretary and actually, I don't think the press secretary was along on that trip for some reason. He told me to arrange some interviews with the Ukrainian press for him. My jaw dropped, because no White House press secretary ever gives interviews to the local press. Are you kidding? You give interviews to the New York Times and the Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal and the AP (Associated Press), maybe, but you don't give it to the Ukrainian Daily Blatt. (end of tape)

Q: You were saying he was ...

KIEHL: Well, he was introducing himself to the Ukrainian public, clearly, and so I figured, "Oh, OK. He's trying to get back here as ambassador." Sure enough, he did.

He was ambassador in Ukraine when I went out there. There was a very small USIS office, I think two officers and four or five FSNs. They were lodged in a room down on the ground floor of the embassy building, which was, in itself, an inadequate building for the mission. Everyone was crowded in, and all these people were jammed in one room here. USIS was the only place that had a fax machine that worked, or email, of course, and so they were driven crazy. Everyone in the embassy wanted to use their fax and their email and so there was this constant jam of people. I don't know how they ever got any work done and I don't think they ever did during that period because they were basically the communications center for the mission. I very deliberately didn't work out of there.

I hired an interpreter that they recommended. I spoke Russian, but I thought it would be good to have a Ukrainian speaker, since nationalism was coming to light, although I found out that almost none of the people I spoke to actually spoke Ukrainian. They were all learning Ukrainian. I did, in fact, run across a fellow who had worked with me on the Chicken Kiev visit. He was in the foreign ministry of Ukraine at that time, and we got along pretty well. He was one of my counterparts for the Bush visit. He was now a big wheel in the city government, and so he was happy to show me all kinds of properties that the city owned.

Q: This is Kiev?

KIEHL: In Kiev. And I think, he probably would have gotten a kickback from whoever rented this property to us, but I settled upon another optioof the various options, and there weren't that many because it was kind of a seller's market. Kiev had opened up, it was now a country, and every Europeaand some Americabusinesses wanted to have representation there and there were a limited number of facilities, office space, apartments, all sorts of things, that were really available, by any kind of Western standards, that you'd want to either live in or work in. So there was a bidding war going on. Xerox, Coke, BPs (British Petroleum) Siemans and IBMs and other multinationals were snapping property up at high prices and getting apartments and flats and renovating them for their employees. We were driving along the back end of this convoy because we were government people and could not bear the thought of spending any real money on real estate.

I finally found a place that was a publishing house, children's publishing, and these people were floundering because they no longer had a state subsidy and they didn't know what the hell to do with their books, and they had not a clue how to operate in a free market society. So the publishing house was there, and then they had such an over-supply of books. Every space in the building was stacked, floor to ceiling, with little children's books, millions of them. I think they got their subsidy by how many they produced, not how many they sold, so they had enormous numbers of these things. They were a little desperate, because they had no market, and therefore they had no way of getting money to pay their employeeand pay themselves, for that matter. So they were eager to strike some kind of deal. I sat down with them and we began our negotiations and, of course, I tried to lowball it as much as I could. What I did is I based it on what the U.S. and other Western Embassies was able to pay for space. Their prices were a fraction of what commercial organizations were paying. Believe it or not, we managed to get this, and it involved lots of to-ing and fro-ing, because Washington decided to micromanage the whole thing, and say, "Well, $7.50 a square meter for ten years! Can't you get them down to $6.00?" I said, "We're long past $6.00 a square meter."

Finally I had to go to Roman Popadiuk and say, "Look, can you just call this guy?" This was a State Department bureaucrat who was giving me a hard time on costs. The USIA people can't be paying so much more than we are on this. I think maybe that Ivan Selin was back in the Department at that time. Anyway, Roman was on the phone for about an hour with this guy and convinced him that really, I actually knew what I was doing, and to leave us alone and we'll get a deal here.

We had office space, a multi-purpose room. I had to literally crawl on top of these bookit was like that guy who was buried by his books. I literally had to go over the books to see the space because, I mean who knows what was behind the wall of books? So I crawled all through this stuff, and I said, "OK, the deal is, before we sign this I want all these books moved out of here so I can see the room and make sure there isn't some leak in there or some catastrophe." By God, they did it. Every employee in the place was piling books, they were stuffing them in the other parts of the building, because they would have about half the space in this building, now, and we were going to have the other half. We had offices above and then we had a multi-purpose room, and a reception area and a gallery on the ground floor. We did sign the lease. The main reason I wanted that place, aside from the fact that they were willing to deal at a reasonable pricit was actually incredibly cheap, for that amount of spacthey were just about to open a new metro station about 150 yards away, so everybody in Kiev could get to the America House, and it was very close to the TV station, so we figured that would be a good market for our library and if we have conferences and so on. The TV people would either attend or cover it.

That one worked out successfully, so much so that they said, "Great, Bill. Now, can you delay your assignment a little longer? We'll fix it, we'll argue with ththis is the European officwith the Orwellian-sounding Bureau of Programs in USIA," which is a lovely term, isn't it? Bureau of Programs? What are they doing? I was going back to run the U.S. speakers program in that bureau. They managed to convince the political establishment there to just delay it again so that I could go out to Tashkent, because we wanted to open up our first America House in Central Asia as soon as possible.

That was just as much of a disaster as Kiev was a success. I flew out through Istanbul and Turkish Airlines and let me tell you, Turkish Airlines is probably a heck of a lot better than Air Uzbekistan but if my hair wasn't white by the time I got off the flight it was a miracle. As we were going over the steppe of Central Asia, I noticed that the pilotand there were a number of other people standing in the front of the plane, in the cabin, drinking. There were children running around in therthey were showing them the instruments. We are flying at 30,000 feet over Central Asia and there are people slugging down booze and kids running around hitting buttons inside the cabin. I knew I had to fly back out with these people, too. So it wasn't auspicious, in that sense. I did have a day or two in Istanbul, but then I was really more concerned with my leases and less concerned with a rug buying experience, and, of course, the flight left at 2:00 in the morning. I got out to Uzbekistan, and instead of putting me in a hotethe PAO, Jerry (Jaroslav) Verner was out there on a TDY and close to retirement for USIA. I don't know if you know Jerry and Lois, but Jerry's been around for years and USIA said, "Oh, well, Jerry, if you want a last tour take this. You can be the first PAO in Tashkent." Jerry, who knew Russian and was interested in adventure, took Lois and went out to Tashkent. They did get a pretty decent house. The Uzbek government had a little compound of houses that used to belong to the party and they gave the ambassador one of those and they gave Jerry one and a couple of other houses went to other western diplomats. They were in isolation out there with a guard on the gate to make sure nobody got in to see them. The house was a typical upper-middle class Russiaa Russian official's housgaudy and yet decrepit. Lois had no help, she had to do all of the cooking and cleaning and I was imposed upon her also. Jerry said, "No, no, no need to stay in a hotel! Come here, stay with us!" That's nice, but any guest after three dayand I was there for about two weeks. I felt sorry for Lois because she had this extra cooking and cleaning to do because I stayed there rather than in a hotel. But it was a kind thought and I enjoyed spending some time with the Verners.

The embassy there was much better organized than the one in Kiev. They had a little more room. The USIS officJerry was a very experienced guy, he had 30-some years of experience in the Foreign Service so he knew how to organize an office. The folks in Kiev were sort of new to the job, so they were really flailing and they were kind of afraid of the ambassador and didn't want to make any waves. Whereas Jerry was afraid of no one and enjoyed making waves, I think. So he had a pretty well set-up domain there, he even had a WorldNet dish up and was receiving WorldNet television programs and wireless files by satellitSo he was really ahead of the curve.

Unfortunately, Uzbekistan was even more Soviet-like than the Ukraine, in that basically the party had remained intact and simply switched labels. So I was dealing with the old Communist party hierarchy. One of the places they showed me that I finally settled on as the most reasonable was their institute for international relations. It was their training school for their foreign ministrit was to be their training school for their foreign ministrand also their intelligence service recently trained there. It was the international affairs institute. They also trained people from other parts of Central Asia there, because the Uzbeks were like the little brother to the Russians, with the other Slavs sort of keeping an eye on the other Central Asians.

Q: That's where their school of Arabic was, wasn't it?

KIEHL: Well, they did have Arabic language classes there, but it wasn't an Arabic school. It wasn't a pan-Arabic thing like that. The facilities were not bavery spacious. They didn't use a lot of these buildings very much, and the foreign commercial service was also interested in locating a commercial library in the same complex. It was very close to the university, it was close to this foreign affairs training school and foreign ministry training school, which was an advantage. It was on a main street, good public transportation, everything seemed fine. I started to negotiate and things were going along quite well, and at a reasonable rate. A little bit less than Kiev and I figured Kiev is really more a high-rent district than Uzbekistan because, quite frankly, there weren't a whole lot of foreign businesses coming in to Uzbekistan. There wasn't much competition for this space.

I had dealt with all of the, shall we say, lower-level people, all the way up to the rector of the university, who, it was made clear to me, was the person who could make the decision. Well, as it turned out, he wasn't the person who could make the decision. The person who made the decision, like all decisions in Uzbekistan, was made by the former head of the Communist party of Uzbekistan, who was now the head of the new party that was in charge. Just to cut to the chase a little bit, we had pretty welwe're talking about something on the order of $30 per square meter or something. They came back with $300 per square meter. I said, "Well, you know, this is not the bazaar. You're not trying to sell me the rug, are you? Let's be realistic here. You can't come back after we've pretty well settled on a figure, come back and say you want ten times as much. It's absurd. Give me a reasonable offer and we can see what we can negotiate."

I said, "I'll be here for the next four days. If you want to do it I'm ready to do it, but I'm not going to start talking in the neighborhood of ten times what we were already more or less agreed on." Four days came and went and I said, "Well, OK. Screw you, I'm off." It was the only thing we could do. I got out of there two weeks later with a terrible case of dysentery and I don't blame Lois for that, I blame probably some hotel meal for it, or one of the repasts that I got from my interlocutors there. I always regretted that we could arrive at a deal in Tashkent, but the Embassy tried for many, many months thereafter to get a place and it was clearly a couple of agendas there. The Uzbeks didn't want it. They wanted to negotiate but they didn't want it. They wanted to appear to want it, but they didn't really want it. I mean what they didn't want was an American presence there. There is no separate America House there.. The public affairs section is in the embassy in Tashkent to this day.

Well, I came bacl think it was election day, 1992, then. I've totally skipped London here, I'm sorry.

Q: We're going to go back to that.

KIEHL: But we'll go back to that. I arrived to change planes in Istanbul, literally no more than a minute and a half from the WC at any given moment because of the dysentery, to catch NBC news, which was on cable there. There was a change of party with the new elections, and I thought, "Hmm. I wonder if this will bode will or ill for me continuing this, and not taking over that job, given the fact that probably the political leadership will have to resign and leave." Sure enough, when I got back, they said, "Well, there's sort of a glitch here. We wanted you to go on in December to Vladivostok and do that but apparently so many of the Republicans are leaving that they just have to have you in the bureau to have some leadership there." So that's what I did. I don't regret not going to Vladivostok in December.

Q: OK, let's talk about London. You were in London from when to when?

KIEHL: I went there a number of times on TDY out of Helsinki to run high-level visits, because, for one reason or another, I had developed some expertise at this, at least, allegedly.

Q: What do you mean by high-level visits?

KIEHL: Presidential, vice presidential visits, basically. And even some Secretary of State type visits. For one reason or another they kept calling me to do this, either to handle the Russians at a multilateral event or to run the press center at the hotel, or to run the whole press operation. The more I did that, the more people thought, "Oh, well, he's the expert on this." So the more times I was asked to do it. I didn't mind doing it. It gave me a chance to travel around a good bit and have some interesting experiences, but I actually was assigned to Londolet me go back a little bit.

In Helsinkmy last year in Helsinkmy wife, I had finally convinced her to join the Foreign Service. So she was accepted in the Foreign Service class of May 1990. She started her training then, and was in Washington, and I was in Helsinki, and then she was assigned to the embassy in London. So she was then in London the last year I was in Helsinki. So that's when I was doing the traveling back and forth which I talked about earlier. At that point, because of another situatioand this is kind of a loop within a loop herback before my wife joined the Foreign Service, she was accepted but actually gone to training yet, I got an email from a friend of mine, Dick Miles, who was in the consulate general in Leningrad. He said, "Bill, would you consider the idea of succeeding me as consul general here in Leningrad. I think it would be a great idea. You'd be the perfect guy for it. Would you be interested?" So I went back and I said, "Oh, yes, sure I would be interested." It's a rare thing when somebody in USIA gets an opportunity to do that and since I know Leningrad pretty well and I've worked in the Baltics, it makes a lot of sense. Miles said, "OK, I'll throw the idea back to Washington and see what develops." Well, he got, I think, Sandy Vershbow to agree to it, who was head of the Soviet desk then, and so the European bureau decided that Bill Kiehl would be the next person in that job. Of course, I was a USIA officer, so they went to USIA and they said, "We'd like Bill Kiehl to be consul general in Leningrad after he leaves Helsinki. Give him to us."

In those dayl suppose it was in part because there was a lot of post-Wick, unfriendly feelings between State and USIbut in any event, Bruce Gelb, the director of USIA, and Jim Dobbins, who was then assistant secretary for Europe, could not agree on the deal. So that sort of fell through, after dangling me around for a long time, to the point wherl mean, in the USIA context, I was well past the bidding stage. So there weren't any jobs on the offering coming up, when that finally fell through. What it fell through oit was an incredible thinState wanted USIA to pay half my salary even though I was assigned to the State Department and USIA came back and said, "Well, why don't we do this? Why don't you give us a State officer and we'll give you Bill Kiehl. We could use a State officer." The embassy in Prague at the time had a half of a tandem couple there and no job for the other half of the tandem, who was a State officer and the embassy wanted that State officer there to make the tandem happy, and there was a CAO slot open. So USIA said, "Well, this guy can take the CAO slot and we'll take him and you can take Kiehl." For some reason or another Dobbins refused to do that. He wanted half of my salary paid by USIA and half by State. So the whole thing broke down, and Bruce Gelb, who was the director of USIA at the time, was not a very imaginative guy and probably couldn't think of a reason why it would be good for USIA to have an officer in that job. It just collapsed.

Later on, I have to say, Dobbins came to me and apologized for his decisiofor his methodology on that, and said he had made a big mistake and regretted it ever since. Of course, that's small change after the fact. So I was a little in a funk at that time about the whole personnel system, and my wife was in London. I was in Helsinki, and I had no particular job offer out there since Leningrad had evaporated, so I said, "OK, I want a year of leave without pay. I'm going to go to England, I'll be a spouse for my wife for a year and enjoy the UK and maybe do something academic." I talked to a friend of mine at the University of Helsinki, who was a Sovietologist there, and he arranged for me to be appointed as an honorary visiting fellow at the University of London School of Slavonic and East European Studies. St. Anthony's College of Oxford, also was interested in having me do a lecture series up there. I said, "Well, there. That settles it. I'm not going to make any money out of this but I have some interesting things to do. I have my housing paid because my wife's an officer at the embassy, and that's it. I want a year of leave without pay," and it was approved by USIA.

Then USIA thought better about it. They said, "Really, maybe we do owe Bill some consideration." So USIA personnel said, "Look, why don't you be the counselor for public affairs at the embassy in London? We were going to abolish this joit's the number two job." There was a minister for public affairs and then there was a counselor for public affairs, which is like the deputy PAO. "We were going to eliminate this job, because we were running out of money, but we'll keep it open for you. If you want that job, it's yours." I thought about it for about a minute and a half and I said, "Well, on the one side, there's my salary. On the other side, there's no salary." So I decided to take it, but I said, "On the provision, I'll take it, if I can continue to lecture at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, because I can't let these people down. They held this slot for me, these are very prestigious slots and I don't want to just pull the plug on a couple months' notice." They agreed to that, and the post agreed to it, no problem, that I would spend some time over there as well as in the office in London, at the embassy. So that's what I did, and it was a great experience. It opened up a whole part of the UK which I would not have really seen as an embassy officer, because I was a member of the faculty at the University of London.

Q: What area were you talking aboul mean, what were you working on?

KIEHL: Well, believe it or not, I was doing a seminar on public diplomacy in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and among my studentaround me were students of the school of Slavonic and East European Studiewere a number of people from the British foreign ministry, including a couple of former ambassadors to East European countries. They were not on pension, but they were on a kind of sabbatical, Also, Yuri Luik, whom I mentioned before as Lennart Meri's young protï¿½gï¿½, who became foreign minister. He was also in my seminar.

Q: How did you findid you find a different cast in the way the Brits that you were working with looked at things than we did?

KIEHL: Oh, of course. The Brits always think of themselves as worldly-wise, and we are kind of bushy-haired, "gee whiz" types and that really does overlay their perception of things. The last thing I think a British scholar would ever admit to was being surprised by anything, but one thing that really struck me was how poohow good their scholarship ibut how poor their resources are. I was actually appalled by the library at the University of London, the School of Slavonic and East European Studies library. There wasn't a book in the place, practically, that was dated after 1966. They had no money for books or other library resources.

Q: I noticed this at Oxford. I mean, they had, of coursI don't want to say booted (ph) libraries, but each university had its own library, of which they were very proud, but to me, it reminded me of library of my prep school back in the '40s.

KIEHL: Well, they're very much like that. The thing iI mean, Oxford and Cambridge and LSE (London School of Economics and Political Science) are the places that actually get money, but they don't get money from the British government. They don't get British philanthropy, they get American philanthropy. Almost all the money that's raised for Oxford comes out of the U.S., and unfortunately, the School of Slavonic and East European Studies didn't have much of an American constituency. They did, in me, however, because I arranged to give them the FBIS reports.

Q: You might explain what the FBIS reports are.

KIEHL: FBIS is the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, an overt, unclassified branch of the CIA. These were printed copies of translations of radio, television, some press and publication in various countries. They have a series for every region of the world and the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have their own series. They come in booklet form on a daily basis and they always have special reports that you can get on subscription, and I think the subscription, in those days, was somewhere on the order of $390 or $420 a year. A lot of journalists subscribe to it, a lot of organizations, a lot of libraries subscribe to it. Government people can get it for free. What I did was we got them in our office for free, so what I said was, "OK, I'll set up a system so that every month when we are ready to throw these away, instead of throwing them away we'll box them up and send them over to your library, so you'll have this forever." As far as I know it's still going on. We sent that FBIS over there and they were just so thrilled, I mean, it was almost sad to think that this is the premier school at the University of London for former Soviet and East European studies, Baltic studies, and Balkan studies and all this sort of thing were centered right there. It was founded at the same time as LSE, and it didn't quite prosper the way LSE did.

LSE had 25,000 students, and the School of Slavonic and East European Studies had about 300 students. It was in a building near Russell Square close to SOAS, the School of Oriental and Asian Studies, and SOAS, of course, had 5,000 or 6,000 students. So it was really a starved institution, and in many ways, St. Anthony's College, in Oxford, which has a lot of connections with the British foreign and intelligence services, has taken a lot of the prestige away from SEES (School of Slavonic and East European Studies), as they call it, but it was still a great place to be, and the scholars there were top notch. The students were really quite good. It was a very enjoyable time whenever I went over there. I would occasionally go in for a beer in the senior commons room of SEES, which was pretty pathetic. It was really a dusty little bar on Russell Square. Of course, then SOAS would have its senior commons room, and it was like a ballroom, practically, in comparison. They were really a very under funded organization. I tried to do what I could. I gave them those FBIS reports and I think I gave them a lot of books that I had that didn't seem to be on their shelves that I thought would be useful. Beyond that, there's not much I could do.

Q: What about on the embassy side? What were you doing?

KIEHL: I was the deputy PAO. In essence, the minister for public affairs there communed with Buckingham Palace and the great movers and shakers of British society. I did everything else. The deputy PAO ran the office, including the rather intricate and elaborate relationship between the Voice of America and the BBC world service, a big Fulbright program, but the main occupation of the USIS office in London was media. It was essentially a press office with a few other responsibilities, because we had, at that time, about 15,000 official visitors a year, over a thousand CODELs (Congressional Delegations). We had, I think we said, something on the order of 50 Cabinet-level visits a year. At least one presidential visit a year, if not more. So we were constantly gearing up for VIP visitors, which meant everything from renting hotel ballrooms and putting in press filing centers to arranging interviews with the BBC. The sound truck would come over to their hotel and interview them at 7:00 in the morning for a major talk radio program, if it was just a secretary of treasury some minor visit. This was endless, and it was the all-consuming aspect of it. I would say 90% of all the human resources that we put into USIS there was directed to high-level visits, because they never stopped. The Fulbright commission had its own board so it more or less did its thing, and the cultural affairs officer was charged with keeping an eye on that, and the VOA and the BBC world servicVOA being a part of USIA then, of course, rather than an independent organizatiothey did a lot of things directly but we, very wisely, I think, always sat in on all of these meetings so that there would be a different perspective, and also unity of purpose in dealing with the BBC.

Q: Who was the ambassador while you were there?

KIEHL: Well, there were a couple of Ambassadors. When I was going there on TDY and just, I think, just at the beginning of the time I was there, Henry Catto was the ambassador, and he, being a media person, was really very supportive of USIS. He later came back to be the director of USIA for a brief period in the Bush I administration. And then Ray Seitz became ambassador, the first and only career person ever to hold that Court of St. James position. He probably more than anyone else, knew the UK inside and out, having been there five times, from junior political officer or consular officer to political section director to DCM and chargï¿½ and ambassador. So there was not much about the UK he didn't know. I think he had lived out in Windsor at one time and so he had a real perspective on British society, at least in southern England, and the Tory country, I would saa very, very exhaustive knowledge of that.

One of the things he didn't like to do was go to the north of England. I don't think he liked all those left-wing Laborites.

Q: Why?

KIEHL: He didn't like the mangled speech of the north, perhaps? I'm not quite sure, but every time there was an invitation for him to go to Scotland or Liverpool and that area, he bucked it down to USIS and, actually, to me, because the minister didn't like to travel to those places, either. So I got a lot of great opportunities subbing for the ambassador at various and sundry events, speaking about everything from Christopher Columbus to U.S. foreign policy. I remember the tall ships coming in to Liverpool- that was a big deal. I was on board along with Prince Philip and the King of Spain and we were the three representatives for our respective countries.

Q: When you went up nortl mean, this is after the Thatcher revolution, wasn't it?

KIEHL: Yes.

Q: Did you finhow did you find, sort of, the British Labour party, particularly at this point? How was it interfacing, or whatever you want to call it, with American foreign policy?

KIEHL: Well, the British Labour party, in those days, was far more left than it is today.

Q: Futt, was it? I don't remember ...

KIEHL: No, it wawell, the Livingstone wing of the Social Democratic party really held sway in those days. They were, basically, I don't want to say anti-American, but they weren't very pro-American.

Q: Was it still mean, the Blair revolution has brought it before into the center bul always think of the certain part of the Labour partyou think of making a circle and singing, "The Red Flag Forever," and all that sort of stuff.

KIEHL: Oh, yes, that was still very much the case. We lived in Highgate, which was north London, although it wasn't the proletarian part of north London. We often shopped and visited around in north London, and the whole north London scene is very left-wing, Social Democrat or Socialist, basicallor even Trotskyite,. There was clearly a very large element in the UK thethe Labour party in particulabut all these fringe groups as well, who were well-beyond the Labour party's level of left-wing feeling. They were really vehemently anti-U.S. policies, in general. You have to remember, too, that this was a period during the Gulf wathere was an incident in particular that was a very souring one, a friendly fire incident where the U.S. strafed some British armor. I inherited that portfolio, you might say, because it was a major media storm. It was my job, as I saw it, and I think the ambassador saw it, to try to set the record straight, that the U.S. was doing whatever it could to be transparent and open about what was, essentially, a mistake of war. What actually helped us was the fact that the British MOD was so secretive and so manipulative.

Q: Ministry of Defence.

KIEHL: The British Ministry of Defense was so secretive and so manipulative, and essentially lied to people about it. The U.S. was pretty open about it, and, I think, in the long run, we actually came out OK on this, although there was an awful lot of bad feeling in the U.K. and some terrible press reports about the U.S. as, you know, blundering cowboys again. This is a theme that people love to latch onto about us. We do our best to reinforce it every so often.

There was the inquest at Oxford. Whenever there's a death of a British citizen there's an inquest, and this was the inquest over the deaths of these British soldiers. Despite our urgent suggestion that they not do so, the Pentagon sent observers to the inquest, who were immediately seized upon by the press and, as DOD representatives, tried to influence the proceedings or were up to no good. We said, "Look, just stay away from it. We'll have observers there from the embassy. You don't need to send lawyers from the Pentagon to go to this inquest. All you're going to do is create a higher profile than we need to have." Of course they ignored us and they paid the price for it.

The real blunders were largely made by the British government itself. It just wasn't as open with its own people as we were with their own people. One of the things we did want to keep quiet abouwe certainly wouldn't lie about it but we would certainly not want it to be knowis that the very squadron and the very pilots who did this were based in England. They were still in England during that inquest. That's why it was a particularly sensitive point, because if they were in England then they could be called forward and that would really complicate the U.S. and British bilateral and it might complicate their lives quite a bit, too. Because it waafter thorough investigation by everybodit was proven to be one of those real accidents of war. There was no bad intent here. It was just an unfortunate event, but it was a big deal, a very big deal during the entire time I was there.

Q: Did you get involved witl mean, what was your impression of the British press and the chattering class and all that?

KIEHL: Well, the chattering class is even more so there than it is here. More so, in the sense that it has more influence there than our chattering class does, which is considerable. It's also much smaller. The members of the chattering class in America don't all know each other. The members of the chattering class in the UK all know each other. They've all slept with each othel mean it's like that. It's a very tight group of people. That doesn't mean, necessarily, politically tight, but they all know each other, they've all gone to school with each other, they've all had some kind of ties in one way or another. So it's a very powerful collection of people. If you get the chattering class against you, you're in big trouble, because they can topple a government. They can change policy, no question about it.

The media, of course, is unlike the American media. It doesn't really pretend to be unbiased. I think that's a major difference which a lot of Americans don't seem to understand, particularly when they first come to England or they begin to live in England or read the British press. The British press has no pretensions that they are unbiased. They're human beings, and therefore, they will be biased. They will have a point of view in their editorials and they will have a point of view in their news stories, which is quite different from what American journalists attempt to do, which is to have a point of view in editorials but not to have a point of view in news stories. Once you understand that they're a lot easier to deal with because there are people who you can find whose point of view matches yours. And there are people whose point of view will never match yours no matter what you do.

Q: So in a way, certain moderates will write-off...

KIEHL: Yes.

Q: What about the chattering class? Did you get involved with them at all as far as trying to win some over or do something?

KIEHL: Well, the chattering class doesn't necessarily mean that they're not win-overable, and a lot of our contacts in the UK would be considered members of the chattering class. A lot of the journalists and the TV people and the public relations people and the marketing people in the UK are part of that chattering class, and, of course, there are cultural people who are part of it as well. We didn't have as deep a contact in the cultural world as we would have in a normal country because of the preoccupation with media that we had.

Q: I was thinking, with the medithe British media seems so much more sensationalist...

KIEHL: Well, an element of it is, certainly.

Q: Than ours is, but maybe that's because I live in Washington and you don't get hit with the New York ...

KIEHL: Well, the New York Post ...

Q: The Post and things like that.

KIEHL: But you get hit at the supermarket counter with the National Enquirer.

Q: Oh, yeah, but there, that's ...

[End Side]

Q: Yes, you were saying the British tabloids ...

KIEHL: The British tabloid press is something we really don't understand here because even the Post, the New York Post, which is considered a tabloior the Daily News and that kind of tabloid press in the U.S. are mild in comparison. It's actually a closer match to the National Enquirer or the supermarket tabloids. The Brits don't really take that seriously, at least according to the polling that I've seen and the marketing people. I might say, one thing the Brits have on an exceptional scale is manipulation. They are really the marketing people and the political spin folks, and the polling and so on is of a very, very high order. They, earlier than the United States, managed to bring advertising and marketing into the core of politics, which, of course, is now in the United States. They've been at it longer, and because they've been at it longer, the Thatcher-Major folks in the Conservative party in the UK actually were almost mentors to a lot of the Republicans in the U.S., and the Social Democrats and the Labour party and the lefand to some extent, even the Liberal party in the Uwere kind of mentors to the Democrats in the United States. A lot of the techniques that our political parties use are real stem from the British use of them.

Q: But the Centrists and the British talk about American-style political campaigns creeping into their thing.

KIEHL: Oh, yes.

Q: So this is sort of feedback ...

KIEHL: It goes both ways, I mean, the mass audience, the focus on a single individual as the symbol of the party, is more American than British, obviously. But the spin control and, quite frankly, the dirty tricks that the Brits usthey're of a higher and more sophisticated order than most American politicians heretofore have used, anyway. They're learning a lot from the Brits in that regard.

Q: Your wife was working, what, as a consular officer?

KIEHL: Yes, in London she was a consular officer, and then went over tbecause she's in what they call management cone todashe went over to the administrative office and was the post housing officer. She's had an interesting career. She's done consular and admin in London and then she did assistance programs to the former Soviet Union which is an Econ job in what they called ISCA then, in the European bureau, and then in Bangkok she did consular, but it was extraditions and that sort of thing. We extradited a lot of people including a Member of Parliamenon drug charges. .She would ride out to the airport with all these armed guards, and the prisoner, to turn him over to the U.S. Marshals. And then she was a GSO, so she was running a motor-pool an interesting combination of jobs.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover in the UK period?

KIEHL: Welno, I don't think so. All these visits blur after a while. There's not that much juicy stuff there to really talk about.

Q: There used to be a lady there, at the embassy, I mean, this was way back ...

KIEHL: Oh, Jane Auden, of course.

Q: Yes. She was a name to be reckoned with.

KIEHL: She was great, because I made friends with her a long time ago, and anything I needed in UK, before I was assigned there, I'd give her a call and I could get the tickets or I could get the discount or whatever. If she liked you, she had every string to pull in the UK and that office still exists, which she had, that little kind of protocol office, but I don't thinwell, maybe they're as powerful as they once were but I doubt it. Certainly by the time I got there, on a regular tour, I never needed them. I had my own contacts to get things or to make a travel arrangement.

KIEHL: Do you want to stop there for today? And then ...

Q: Yes, I think it's probably a good place to stop.

KIEHL: It is, actually, a good place to stop becausof course, I didn't even get into the CSCE delegation in Moscow, did I? Did I talk about that?

Q: No.

KIEHL: That was before the fall of the Soviet Union, because we dealt with the Yeltsin government in Russia and the Gorbachev government for the Soviet Union, so that would have been in 1991. Q: Would you like to pick that up next time, maybe?

KIEHL: I think that was between Helsinki and London. The Central Asian carpet-bagging, that was between London and Washington.

Q: What were you doing? What did this involve?

KIEHL: CSCE? I was the public affairs advisor to Max Kampelman for the CSE conference on the human dimension in Moscow.

Q: I just finished, this summer, interviewing Max Kampelman. How did you find him as a person to work for?

KIEHL: Oh, fantastic. He was reallwell, of course, he's aged a lot since then, and probably his health is not as good as it was. The last time I saw him, he was pretty frail.

Q: He swims every day.

KIEHL: He was in pretty good shape there. He was very smart, very sympathetic to the notion that you have to put a public face on things. I think an excellent negotiator, it seemed to me. It seemed effortless, which is the mark, I think, of a good negotiator. It seemed effortless. I just thought it was a privilege to sit at the same table with him and watch him work. This guy was a legend already. I remember running into him the first time, in 1985 at the Geneva summit. I forgot to tell you about that. I was the Secretary of State advance for that. Pat Kennedy was the overall advance and I was the press advance for, Schultz's visit as part of the summit meeting in Geneva. I was introduced to him by Bernie Kalb who was the spokesman, and facetiously said I was Bernie's beeper, because Kalb would never answer his page, and so they paged me in order to get to him. I remember, Bernie introduced me to Kampelman and Paul Nitze and a lot of those guys. What was his name? The American who thought he was a Russian expert, a general. Q: Well, Romney was one of the negotiators.

KIEHL: Maybe it was Romney. Anyway, I didn't think too much of him. I thought he wahe thought he was a lot more important than he was. He fancied himself a Russian expert and a Russian speaker and so on. His Russian was lousy, his expertise was fuzzy, to say the least, whereas Nitze was very impressive, Kampelman really impressive. There was just a day and night difference between them.

Yes, maybe I could talk a little bit about that the CSCE Moscow Conference, because that was an interesting experience, both because it was a changing Russia at that time, and because it was a seminal conference, because it admitted the Baltic states into the world again, as independent countries. I'll never forget that when that was announced I got a hold of Ambassador Kampelman and said, "You should be the first person to congratulate the foreign minister of Estonia, Lennart Meri, on his independence, because, let's face it, he wouldn't be if it weren't for us." So we went over and did that and then the other two Baltic foreign ministers as well. The other two foreign ministers I only knew in passing.

It put me in a difficult spot because I was a Russian speaker, and the fellow who was going to be the deputy U.S. representative there, Max Kampelman's deputy, which was the position between Kampelman and me and other advisors, had an illness in the family and couldn't go. He was the only other Russian speaker who was a U.S. government official. We had lots of Russian speakers and Ukrainian speakers who were from the Congressional side, from the CSCE committee, and from NGOs, so it really put a burden on me. I had to do some interpreting which I realll mean, it had been years since I had been in Russia.

Q: It's also a skill.

KIEHL: It's a skill that I once had on a very modest level. I was able to do it when I was in Russia for CODELs, because they didn't talk about anything really substantive and it was in Central Asia, where the Russian interlocutorit was often a second language for them, too. But to do that on something as sensitive as thal just basically begged off. I said, "Look, I can do this on a social plane, but don't ask me to be an interpreter for negotiations. I can't. I'm not capable of doing that anymore, if I ever was. I don't think I ever was, really."

Q: You're either wired for that or you're not wired for that.

KIEHL: And it astounded me that something as important as thathat we would not have sent a couple of professional interpreters along with the group rather than relying upon embassy employees or contractors on the scene. I don't understand that.

Q: I think this is probably a good place to stop.

KIEHL: Well, that's not on tape anyway, is it?

Q: Yes, it is.

KIEHL: Oh. Maybe I'll have to revise and extend my remarks on a couple of those things.

Q: Yes, we'll do. Think about it and if you want to talk about this CSCE conference again ...

KIEHL: Well, I'd have to think about it a little bit, but there were somthe conference itself is pretty well-covered by newspapers and so on, but the feeling of coming back to a changing Russia, at the time, and so on, and the way things evolved, at least in my perception, from my days at the embassy, might be interesting.

Q: We'll pick this up when you left London and went back to the States.

KIEHL: I went back to the States in NovembeNovember 4th, 1992, the election of Clinton and the defeat of Bush I.

Q: We'll pick it up then.

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Today is the 16th of January 2004. Bill, what job did you come back to Washington?

KIEHL: The job I came back to was the senior career job in the U.S. speakers program. Of course, it was not called the U.S. speakers program, it was called the office of program coordination and development in the again, Orwellian bureau of programs in USIA.

Q: How long were you doing that, from when to when, just so I get that?

KIEHL: Let's sel returned November the 4th of 1992 and I did that until I left to go on to language training for Thailand, and that would have been in July or August of 1994.

Q: Let's talk about the time you were with the speakers program. What were we doing, what were you doing?

KIEHL: This is the first time I'd been back to Washington in 10 years. I left the Soviet desk in '82, and went into, as you remember, language training for Prague, then, and after Prague to Finland and then to the UK and a couple of side trips in between with the CSCE conference and the real estate deals in Central Asia. So I'd been away for 10 years. And in that time, of course, enormous changes had taken place in the world, of which I had some small part overseathe fall of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Warsaw Pact being the principal ones. And that had profound effects also in Washington, because in 1982, of course, the Cold War was still very much in evidence and sitting at the Soviet desk it seemed like the center of the universe. Everything revolved around the USSR. It was a time when USIA, under Charlie Wick, had, I would say, some considerable weight in Washington. In 1992, the Cold War was over. You had a new administration in the Clinton administration coming to Washington. You had a director of the US Information Agency, then, who was not such a close confidant of the president.

Q: Who was that?

KIEHL: Well, the new director of USIA, to come in after January, was Joe Duffy, but before I get to Duffy, when I got back, of course, it was immediately after the election and so all the Republican political appointees were figuring out how quickly to get out of town or get out of their jobs. Not that they particularly wanted to go, maybe, but they knew that the cycle was changing. Even so, USIA was quite marginal in Washington then. The budget had considerably declined staff morale was not particularly good. There was a certain sense of aimlessness. The last director under the Republican party was Henry Catto who was pretty savvy and had some interesting plans and, in fact, had agreed with the then-President Bush that USIA would move out of its Donahue buildings down there at the Federal Center southwest and move into a new Federal building that was going to be built at the site of the Circle Theater on Pennsylvania Avenue at 21st and Pennsylvania, close by the State Department and not a far walk from the White House, either. That was agreed to between the president, apparently, and the then-director of USIA, Henry Catto, who had been our ambassador to London at one time and a former assistant secretary of defense for public affairs. He and his wife were owners of many television stations in Texas.

He had only a matter of months in office before Bush lost the election, and so Catto was heading back to Texas, and with him, those dreams of a building at 21st and Pennsylvania, I can tell you. His predecessor, Bruce Gelb, was not an expert in foreign affairs or in public diplomacy. He had come out of the pharmaceutical business. He was a vice president of one of the drug companies, Bristol Myers which later merged with SquibHis brother was the driving force of that company, was president of the company, and his brother was the vice president. They were both big fundraisers and so they were entitled to jobs. So Bruce Gelb was USIA Director for most of the Bush I administration and then he left to be ambassador to Brussels, which was more in keeping with his talents and expertise and interests in life. Running a Washington bureaucracy in the heat of the interagency process and something in the foreign policy arena versus being the ambassador at a small embassy but a prestigious one in a well-to-do Western European capital seemed to suit him much better. From all accounts he did well at that job.

He didn't particularly do well at USIA because USIA was buffeted by the post Charlie Wick syndrome. Everybody was so ticked off at Charlie Wick because of his closeness of Reagan that when Wick left, USIA was in for some retaliatory blows by the other agencies, particularly the State Department, apparently. At least, that is what I had been told and I could see it pretty much in everyday life. No longer was USIA able to get anybody of any importance to appear on WorldNet. We couldn't get policy statements quickly from other government departments. More and more, USIA was looked upon as a relic of the Cold War, and really irrelevant in the new world order, et cetera. To an extent that was true in the Bush administration. I think it accelerated in the Clinton administration.

So I came back, and the person who was running the speakers program was a political appointee who had come into that job from the White House personnel office. She ran the internship program at the White House and her husband was head of White House personnel.

Q: What was her name?

KIEHL: Anita B. McBride. Her husband's name was McBride. She married while they were both working at the White House, and he went on to be a vice president of Scott paper and they moved to Philadelphia shortly after the election. The time I met with her, she impressed me as one of those political appointees who really took an interest in the job and worked very well, and would have been a good boss in any administration. But they were under orders to leave as soon as possible. She went over to the White House to be part of the transition team and then segued out of Washington, with her husband, to Philadelphia.

So I was in charge of, as well, in the absence of a political appointee in that job, I was always to be the de facto person who ran the operation, but without a political appointee in place for many months, it was a little easier to run it, actually, when one didn't have to check with them on anything they might have considered politically sensitive issues. The speakers program itself had been one of the highlights of USIA, one of the great success stories, and I might digress a little bit to talk about how that all came about. Back in the days before 1978 when CU, the cultural office for education and cultural affairs was part of the State Department in Washington and only administered overseas by USIA officers, there was a program called the STAG program, or short-term American grantee program. You might remember hearing the term. And these were speakers who went abroad and they were from academia or government or the media or intellectual life. They were also arts people who were choreographers or painters or composers and writers and so on. They made trips around the world, speaking on behalf, or acting, or conducting workshops on behalf of the embassies. It was a great, successful program and the embassies were delighted with it. But there were only about 70 or 75 of these STAGs a year that would be sent out by CU.

It was a pretty stultified program. Everything had to be just so and it was elaborately planned and carried out, but on a very, very small scale for a worldwide program. The people overseas, the embassies overseaparticularly the USIS offices overseaclamored for more and more of these STAGs. Well, because State Department, in its wisdom, restricted the STAGs to these 75 people a year, because they said, "No, we must fund only the most prestigious people and the most blah blah blah," could be considered to be cultural ambassadors of America. There was enough pressure put on USIA's headquarters to somewhat illegally do the same thing. In those days it was called ICS, or Information Center Service, an office in USIA. They began rather slowly, but rather quickly it built up and they had a program called the Ampart program, the American participant program. The grants were a little less remunerative than the STAG program, because USIA was basically a shoestring operation even then, but the posts were excited about this and were willing to help fund it and so on. So that program began in a very small way and accelerated.

So by 1978, when the bureau of education and cultural affairs was merged over into USIA, as its own bureau, known in USIA as the E Bureau, the STAG program was swallowed up by the Ampart program. But the Ampart program, because it had started in ICS migrated into this new bureau of programs, known in USIA as the P Bureau. So the bureau of programs had an office called the office of program coordination and development. It didn't so much coordinate or develop but it did run the speakers program, and so that's what happened.

A little bit of that program remained in the E bureau, and the reason I mention this is because this comes up in a year or two, later down the narrative. That program was called the American specialists program, or Amspec program. These were people who did things in the arts as opposed to social science and politics and so on, the more information side. The soft sell, the cultural kinds of specialists, was still retained in the E-bureau as American specialists or Amspecs. There were also English teaching specialists who would come out, and at the behest of the English teaching office, which was then part of the education and cultural exchange bureau as well, hold teacher-training workshops. So that small part of the speakers program was still in the E bureau, the vast majority of it was in the P bureau, and there were, perhaps, 300 or 400 of these speakers by that time, but the speakers program, the regular speakers program, at one time had close to 1500 speakers a year going out to the various embassies. And that was in the bureau of programs.

Over time, and because of the Cold War and because of declining budgets in USIA throughout the '90well, throughout the period from '89 or '90 on, there were sharp cuts in those programs, to the point where there were, perhaps, 1100 speakers when I was in charge of the program. We could see the handwriting on the wall. There was a great deal of talk about cutting the speakers program radically, because it was so expensive. Now, it was considered expensive even though our honorarium to a speaker was $100 a day no matter how much they worked. If they worked 12 hours a day, they still got $100. Sure, they got their airfare, and their hotel and their per diem, certainly, but the honorarium was $100 a day. The one complaint that every speaker had was that they were worked to death, and the embassies, who wanted these people so much, realized that they could get a lot of bang for the buck out of them. So the speaker would get into town on a Sunday night from the States or from another post. After having been traveling for a weebecause the average time was about two weeks on the roaand they'd get to Bangkok on a Sunday night and Monday morning there would be a breakfast for journalists with the Ampart. At noon there would be a lunch, and then there would be a talk at the university. Then there would be a cocktail party, followed by a dinner that evening, and the next morning it would start all over again. Maybe he'd go out to Khon Kaen the next day, and maybe up to Chiang Mai the next day, escorted by an American officer almost always, or at least a senior FSN, and internal transportation was all covered, of course.

These people came back from these two week journeys really exhausted, but they loved it.

Q: I was going to asit was a positive experience?

KIEHL: It was absolutely a positive experience, and the list of people who had been Amparts was a Who's Who of American intellectual and political life.

Q: Can you give a feel for some of the types of people that you had? What was the rationalrecruiting them and all ...

KIEHL: The recruiting was the key thing, because we had, in my officwe had 38 or 40 program officers, and these were the people who would recruit the speakers and put together a tour with the embassies. We had certain guidelines that they had to follow, but they were basically almost like entrepreneurs of their own entrepreneurship.

Program Officers tended to specialize. We had three divisions within that office, and each division was different. One focused on international affairs and political process. Another focused on economics and areas aligned with that. Another was involved more with the arts. The program officers within that field were aboufor most of the timabout 50/50 Foreign Service officers and civil. They developed an expertise; certainly the civil service did since they remain in one job for much of their careers. They developed a real expertise and knowledge of the field, and the Foreign Service officers knew exactly what was wanted out in the field by the Foreign Service officers. So the combination worked very well. They worked together in the three offices and did the recruiting, which sometimes involved a cold call to somebody, a name request that somebody wanted. "Oh, we'd like to get Professor Smith from Bryn Mawr, because we've heard that she's the real expert in this area." So we'd go search around and find her and recruit her.

Many times, however, we went back to trusted known quantitiepeople in the university system around Washington DC, of course, and the think tanks around Washington, and people in political life in Washingtoeven in the media. We would recruit them again and again and again. Many of these people accepted a two week tour to someplace every other year or every third year. Rarely every yeal don't think there were too many that could stand that. It was remarkable. We had people who'd probably make a dozen trips over the course of 15 to 20 years, and the reason they did iof course, there's a certain amount of patriotism involved here. They were serving their country,. They were an ambassador for their profession, in a sense. We never told them what to say, we never pre-cleared what they were going to say in their talks. We would examine what they wrote, to make sure that it was a high level of scholarship or whatever and wasn't totally off-the-wall, but the belief was that since they were representing American society, they should represent all aspects of American society, all the responsible opinion, at least. So there was never, among the staff, ever any notion of censorship.

That brings me back to history again. In the Wick era there was a deputy director of USIA who was fired by Wick in his time, and a director of programs, who was a political appointee, who was also fired, eventually, because they had come up with something called "the blacklist." On the blacklist were 225 names of people who were not to be recruited. This list was incredibly and naively circulated to the program staff, many of whom did not agree with the ideology and the politics of the people who circulated it. It made its way to the Washington Post within a nanosecond of having been distributed, at which point the fellow who was later fired called these employees "mindless gnomes" for having done this. It was not even 24 hours before employees all over the building were wearing little buttons that said, "Mindless Gnome." You don't pull this kind of thing on USIA people. It's just so contrary to our way of doing things.

Charlie Wick, was not much of an ideologue. He was a real pragmatist anyway, and he thought this whole thing was nonsensical. The fact that it came to light made it absolutely nonsensical and he had no compunction whatsoever about firing these appointees. Off they went, and the blacklist was incinerated.

The blacklist had people everywheroh, let's sel can't remember all the names on it by a long shot. I can remember a handful, but I do remember Madeleine Albright was on it and Walter Cronkite was on it, if that gives you an idea of the breadth of this idiocy. That was the only attempt that I can recall, in my time to censor or to politically direct the speakers program.

Q: Well, from your sampling, was there an effort to go across the political spectrum? In other wordparticularly at the fringes? I'm thinking of what's his name at the University of California, San DiegMark Hughes? And somebody on the extreme right wing or somethinto get some of these beliefs across? Or were you ...

KIEHL: In other words was it vanilla or strawberry, but nothing exotic like butter pecan.

Q: Yes.

KIEHL: It was largelwhat would you samainstream. Democrat, Republican, Independent, from the left to the right and vice versa, but only rarely or occasionally on the real fringe. When I say the "real fringe," I mean both politically and aesthetically.

Q: Yes.

KIEHL: For example, we did have a woman whpart of her performance art involved taking her top off and smearing her breasts with chocolate.

Q: Oh, yes!

KIEHL: You recall that?

Q: I recall that. She got a grant of some kind from the National Endowment of the Arts, I think. This is something that caused a certain amount of ...

KIEHL: Right. But we sent her overseas.

Q: Who paid for her chocolate?

KIEHL: I think it was BYOC (Bring Your Own Chocolate). She didn't do that particular show for me in Finland, although we programmed her in Finland. She did do some pretty, shall we say, cutting-edge stuff, but unlike the American ambassador to Greece, who absolutely went off into outer space after having witnessed the performance and attempted to fire the entire USIS staff, I got the American ambassador out of town when the performance was scheduled-just in case.. But seriously, her performance, while it was a little cutting edge, the press controversy of it was just what we wanted. It essentially said, "Here is the American government, which so many people criticize for being ideological and rigid and against the freedom of arts and expression, and yet they had the courage to have this particular performance artist perform under embassy sponsorship. This proves the worth of the American system, essentially." That's what we intended with that kind of performance. It was a legitimate art performance in any major city of America, and it would have been held and reviewed and applauded by the intellectual people of that city. It probably might have been condemned by the local pastor of a fundamentalist church, perhaps, but that's the way it is. Sometimes the opposite is true, too. The intellectuals abhor something and thwould you sathe salt of the earth folks applaud it. That's part of the American system, too.

So that's exactly what we tried to demonstrate through the use of this kind of cutting edge performance art, and it worked there. And it would have worked in Greece, and in fact, it did work in Greece, among the intellectuals in Greece, but for the American ambassador's intemperate and absolutely off-the-wall remarks.

Q: If I recall, he was a Greek immigrant.

KIEHL: He was a Greek immigranpolitical appointee, of courswho thought he knew Greece better than the Greeks did.

Q: Yes, and thiso often this doesn't work at all.

KIEHL: Sometimes it just doesn't work. Yes, there were also people with political beliefs that were completely antithetical to the administration in power, whether it was democrat or republican. As far as I know we didn't go out and recruit members of the CPUSA (Communist Party of the United States of America). We didn't go out and recruit the KKK (Ku Klux Klan) or the American Nazi Party. But responsible political opinioand you can judge whether the KKK is responsible. I would consider it irresponsible. But the responsible political opinion is a very wide swath in America. Not only political opinion but artistic expression et cetera. So it was pretty broad.

Q: I would imagine the fights were probably less political than over artistic things. Art is usually taking these things much more seriously.

KIEHL: Generally speaking. And of course, that wasn't the only occasion like that, but that was the one that received probably the most publicity. Anyway, so other than the so-called blacklist ol think the name was LenkowskLes or Len Lenkowski blackliswhich, of course, brought forth hearings on Capitol Hill, toother than that there was never really an attempt by any administration to try to dictate who would be recruited for the speakers' program. So we hahe people who worked there had a pretty high regard for the integrity of the program.

Q: Well, did you have a problem, during the time you were there, of your recruiters, some of them having particular hobby horses that might have been overwritten or something like this? In other words, they were particularly susceptible to a particular niche within, say, the artistic community or the political mean, did you have to kind of watch that?

KIEHL: Yes, of course, certainly. All of them, actually, but particularly some of the civil service folks who were in the job for such a long time. They developed very close friendships with some of the speakers, so you had to be cautious and careful that there weren't conflicts of interest here in the program.

We had a rather elaborate system, a statistically-based system,. Reports would come to me on a weekly basis, on each program officer. I would get a score sheet about how many people they were recruiting, how many different people they were recruiting, how often they'd been recruiting the same people, their success rate, et cetera. It was really a quite elaborate system. We had a whole subdivision within our office that was just doing these kinds of statistical reports, first of all, so that management could have an overview of what was actually going on in the recruitment and completion process of these speaker programs. With 40 people out recruiting for 200 different posts, 1100 different speakerand we had to make it cost effective as well. It was very expensive to recruit one speaker and send him or her to one country and back again, so we tried to link up several countries. We did this through the country plan process, which was an antecedent to the MPP (Mission Performance Plan). USIA had developed a country plan process from, oh, maybe thirty years ago, where each post would put down their desires and what they wanted and it was all sort of coded and computerized so that I could get a printout of all the posts in Asia that wanted a speaker to talk about intellectual property rights, and which time of the year they wanted that to happen, if they had a specific time. (end of tape)

It seemed like a very complicated program but one had to do that because of the complexities of 200 different posts out there, all requesting speakers on various subjects, and no human being could keep that kind of thing in their head. It had to be computerized, it had to be systematized and put up in a statistical way so that all of our recruiterwell, for example, if you were a recruiter for economics for East Asia, one of the program people would be the program development officer for economics for East Asia. That's all they did. They would recruit speakers on economics to go to East Asia. They had a list of all of the posts in East Asia and the economic speakers they needed and when and that was their portfolio. They recruited against that. They put together the tours. They went back and forth with the embassies to try to adjust the dates so that it would be a two-week lonwhat we tried to dwe had determined, again, statistically, that it was most cost-effective to do three different countries in the same sub-region, not region but sub-region, for a period of two weeks. 10 to 15 days, that was the most cost effective. So we tried to get that stuffed into the puzzle as well. That's one of the reasons I got the statistical report. I wanted to find ouand I wasn't alone in wanting to find out, I'm sure my predecessors wanted to find out as welwhich of our program development offices were the most effective, because we wanted to make sure that their ratings reflected that. We gave them certain marching orders. We wanted quality, we wanted cost effectiveness, and some people were very good at quality but lousy at cost effectiveness. Some people were very cost effective, but they got second-rate speakers. So we had to look at all aspects of their work.

The statistical program was very useful in figuring out what exactly they were doing. So we had a statistical sheet on every program development officer that I would see every week, to see what their track record was.

Q: Jusalways to give a feecan you think of any particular speakers or something, whmaybe, through no fault of their own, ran into great disasters or real problems or other ones who were particularly noteworthy?

KIEHL: Well, I'm sure there are many noteworthy ones. Every speaker cable came back with something like, "So-and-so in the program was highly successful." You rarely saw anything but "highly-successful." But there was a certain code there, because under the Freedom of Information Act, they could have access to their ratings from the posts, and each post, for every speakenot each event, but every speaker in their countrthey would write up a cable and report back to us, rating that person, so that we could put that in their file so that we knew who was good and who wasn't, and what their foibles were, if they had any. This worked pretty well until the Freedom of Information Act came out and people got a hold of these, and then raised holy hell because someone thought that they were mumbling and inept at the podium, obecause people were quite frank. They didn't want this guy to darken our door again. He was a disaster, he was unfriendly, cold to the audience, wasn't sociable. Well, that soon changed, because the word got out, and so we had a certain code in those, and perhaps they are still using it today, so perhaps but one, for example, which I don't think is too hard to figure out is, if they didn't say "We would welcome this speaker back anytime," that meant they wouldn't. So if that wasn't in the cable ...

Q: You can't object to that.

KIEHL: That's right. So that one was placed in pile B. Sand yes, of course, there were terrible disasters. There were peopll'm sure there are some humorous ones, too, and I'd have to really think about that and go back. In my own experience, I had some people who would just, when they got there, they were the speaker from hell. We'd get a warning email from the previous post saying, "Watch out for so-and-so, you've really got trouble, a lot of trouble!" And sure enough, I remember this woman entrepreneur of East Asian ancestry, who was, shall we say, ideologically inclined to the nth degree. Everything revolved around her particular political philosophy, and she loved to lecture people and sort of talk down to them, even if they were head of the central bank, and she ran some small business in California. That's a real disaster. That sets you back many, many months, if not years, with people, when that happens.

Q: How was somebody like that treated, once you realized the problem? Did you yank them, or ...

KIEHL: You could yank them. Once you'd realized the problem, you might sit them down and, in as gentle a way as possible, suggest to them other approaches. That didn't work with this particular individual, because she was of the same ethnicity, generally, as the people she was talking to. So, again, like that Greek ambassador, who thought he knew Greece better than the Greeks, she knew Asia better than the Asians did, or people who had served in Asia for many years, and our FSNs, who lived there, and were real experts in Asia. Usually that wouldn't work, so what you would do is you would alter the program as much as possible to sort of minimize her or his exposure to your contacts, so that they wouldn't spoil too many barrels, and get them the hell out of there and warn the next post what was coming down the road. Of course there were cases like that. Perhaps five percent of all the speakers were failures in one sense or another.

Q: Were there counterpart programs going around other countriesponsoring people coming to the United States?

KIEHL: You mean to speak in the United States through the foreign embassies? Generally speaking there were not, no. First of all, this is a highly-organized effort. It has to be a major country in order to do this. It's a big deal. Some other countries did have programs that were modeled on the Ampart program. The German institutes did something very similar. Yes, and they also sent people to the U.S., but they also sent people to other countries. Principally, they send more to other countries than the U.S., because, for one thing, America would invite their own people in. American organizations were so rich, in comparison to the rest of the world, that if an organization in the United States, or a university, wanted a German, to talk about German foreign policy, they would simply issue an invitation and send them the ticket. They wouldn't have to go through the German embassy.

Q: How about during the summer, when, particularly, academics are taking off, and other people taking vacations. Could you latch onto somebody, saying, "Well, you know, you're going to be in France in July. We'll pay you while you're here," or something like that.

KIEHL: Although we wouldn't pay them in August because there would be nobody to talk to. Yes, that's right, and that was what was known as a target of opportunity speaker. In fact, we had a whole system for that, and we had an offickind of sub-officin London, called the regional resources unit, or RRU London. RRU London was headed by an American officer and two British employees that were loosely attached to the front office of USIS London, but were, in fact, employees of the European area office and the speakers program. They did a European-based American speakers program, because we had so many Americans teaching and lecturing and living in the UK, and a couple of other large cities in Europe that they could run a program of about 400 speakers a year, just within Europe, of American speakers of some note. Flora Lewis, from the Herald Tribune, would do programs there. American studies specialists, who were at Bath, or Oxford and Cambridge and so othey would travel from there to other countries to speak.

We had an office in Paris, ARS Paris, the African Resource Service in Paris, that did the same thing for French speaking Americans for Africa, West Africa. They would recruit people in Paris and the rest of Europe, who were American speakers, but who spoke fluent French, and would be willing to travel to West Africa to speak on behalf of the embassies. They had several hundred speakers out of there, as well. That was kind of an offshoot of our office. At one time, we had a smaller office in Tokyo, to do that for Asia. It didn't last too long.

Q: Bill, did you get any feel for, sort of, two communitieone, the artistic community, as I would put it. Well, artistic community, and other would be the chattering class community in the United States. I have the feeling, whereas these are quite tight in basically London, Paris, and maybe some other places, in the United States they are so diffused that they really don't talk to each other or know each other. Did you get any feel for these?

KIEHL: That's kind of interesting, because that's definitely true in Paris, London, Tokyo, or Bangkok or Jakarta or wherever you happen to be. People of the chattering classes do know each other. They've gone to school together, they intermarry, they're close with each other, in one sense or another, or they hate each other. But they know each other. In the United States, it is really different, and I think the speakers program was a window on that, of course. The U.S. is still so large and so diverse that it has many chattering classes, and many circles of intellectuals that may have heard of each other, but don't know each other. So you do have a New York crowd and a Washington crowd with some overlap. There are intellectuals in Philadelphia that aren't known to people here. There's a chattering class in Philadelphia that's not known to New Yorkers, and in Boston the same, and in Chicago and San Francisco and even Los Angeles, although they don't chatter so much as show each other pictures. So yes, there are these circles.

Even in a place like New York, of coursit's so big. There are so many people. People can't know each other. They know each other by reputation, maybe.

Q: They don't go to the Algonquin Hotel anymore and sit around a round table.

KIEHL: That's right. It's long ago that maybe you could get all the intellectuals in one room. You can't anymore, and you can't get the chattering classes on one party line any longer, either.

The U.S. iand I wouldn't say it's necessarily unique, I'm sure the chattering classes of India, another large country with a huge population and very diverse and varied intellectual and ethnic groups and so on, probably experiences much the same. At least, that's the feeling I come away with when talking to Indian intellectuals, members of the chattering class.

Q: What about the artistic thing? To me, it seems like, I mean, when I look at thI'm speaking as probably considered a barbarian, but I look at so many of the artistic things that have come out. You see the more modern ones at the Hirshhorn, and other places. I mean, what I would consider very dubious merit.

KIEHL: Well, the Hirshhorn actually is a pretty conservative modern art museum, in comparison to some of the stuff you see at the Brooklyn museum of art or in the galleries of Soho in New York, which are actuallsome things that are just truly disgusting.

Q: From what I hear, it's the reflections of what wins prizes in England. It seems like this is almost dominated by the shock people. In other words, everybody's trying to get as far out as possible to be considered avant garde, and leap-frogging over each other to get farther out. Did you run across this sort of problem?

KIEHL: Well, you mean with the lady smearing the chocolate on herself?

Q: Well, that, but also, you know, I mean ...

KIEHL: There's a certain shock value there.

Q: Yes, a certaiand then there's the use of excrement and on and on. Or just an empty room with a single tin can in the middle of it, and lots of pros explain why this is fancof value.

KIEHL: I think the avant garde in art has always had an element of shock value. The difference is, people are harder and harder to shock. My generation was much more easily shocked than the Generation Xers of today, and the kids growing up today will be almost impossible to shock. I mean they've seen their two pop heroes kissing on stage, Britney Spears and was it Madonna? And this was shown on live television. That probably didn't shock them, but it would shock even the Generation Xers of today. Of course, in my day, that was just unbelievable. That was the sort of thinthat was pornography in our day.

So because it's so much harder to shock people, in order to attempt to shock people, artists are going well beyond the boundcertainly beyond the boundof good taste, but that's not unique to this generation. I think that's part of being avant garde. It is to go beyond the conventions and to shock people, but it's just so much more extreme today.

Q: Did you have problems dealing with this? In the first place, was the United Statespeaking of artistic thingin advance, or behind, or in the mainstream? The people who you were sendinl mean, were you going out to real shockers or ...

KIEHL: No, we weren't goinl don't think we werat leasmaybe in the early days of USIA. Maybe, you know, in the '50s, when shock was of a relatively minor level, or the '60s, but by the '80s and '90s, certainly, we weren't, with a few rare exceptions, like the woman, plying herself with chocolate, with a few exceptions like that, most of the people we sent, in the arts, were not particularly extreme or avant garde. They were modestly well-known people, but other than those few that really caused a controversy in the media and so on, most of them were essentially mid-stream artists. I'm thinking of, in the '80or was it the '70s and '80s, perhapa guy like Sam Gilliam, a Washington D.C. artiswe sent him out quite a lot to various countries, both for his exhibits and also to work with young artists in workshops, that sort of thing. He was considered, in those days, a pretty avant garde artist. He had hanging canvases on the ceiling. That was considered very avant garde stuff, very modern, but it didn't have that kind of shock value that you have today with excrement.

Speaking of shock value, I have tsince we were interrupted by the phone call from John Gunther Deaafter it, I was thinking back treally, there are two occasions I remember meeting him. The first was in 1982, when our Bugs and Gas crel think I talked about that, the chemical and biological weapons truth squad when out to Bangkok to talk to people. We had a meeting, of course, before we saw the foreign ministry and the Thai national security council which is, essentially, a military organization, and their intelligence people and so on. Before we met with them, we obviously met with the country team, the relevant country team people, and, as part of that, we went into the ambassador's office, which was, if you remember, in the old embassy in Bangkok, the ambassador's office was a room about oh, maybe twenty by fifty feepretty good-sized office. John Gunther Dean was in his short-sleeved shirt, I think, with a tia white shirt, short-sleeved shirt, with a tisitting behind the desk, an immense desk, with, behind him, maps of the countrhighly-detailed, blown-up, geopolitical maps of Southeast Asia, actually, because this was the nerve center, back in the '70s, of much of that political, military planning for the war in Southeast Asia, and, of course, the war against the insurgents in Thailand, as well. So they were these very detailed military maps on the walkind of sliding map board, with a triptych arrangement you could move around. And, of course, a conference table, where we sat, at rigid attention. John Gunther Dean was one of those ambassadors that everyone was scared to death of. He absolutely, totally commanded everybody. His entire staff was petrified, lest they run afoul of him, I think.

I don't know him, and I didn't have much to do with him there, other than sitting in on the briefing. We had a couple of intel people and a DOD person and a CIA person and an INR person to do the briefing, and I was the only FSO on this team, because Dobbins I don't think wanted to go to Asia. You know, the French restaurants ran out about the Balkans and that was the end of that. So he turned that over to his military assistant and PM (Political-Military officer) to go along. So that's why I say I was sort of the tour guide for the group, because all of these people, while they were very experienced in their work, really didn't know how to function in the foreign environment. So the logistics of the trip was endless folly.

That meetinthat was the impression I got. Dean was the viceroy, the American viceroy, in Thailand. There was no question about it. This was like the center of the universe, in Thailand, right there in that office. It is interesting, because in 1996, we moved the USIS office from Sathorn Roathe USIS compounbecause the American government wanted to sell it and get about $80 or $90 million for it and build a new embassy in China with the money. So we were forced out of there. As it turned out, of course, their timing was particularly bad, and of course, they couldn't sell it. It's still rotting away there. We moved into the old U.S. Embassy. Foreign Building Operations (FBO) had built a new embassy, in the meantime, across the street. So John Gunther Dean's old office became ouwell, I took the DCM's office. I did not have the hubris to take John Gunther Dean's office and make it the PAO's office, because it would have been bigger than the DCM's office, and I knew that would have been a big mistake. As it was, the DCM's office was rather grand. It had its own bathroom and so on. But that former Ambassador's office we turned into a videoconferencing and conferencing center, with a big table, which we brought from the old office, and had the chairs recovered, you know.

We wonderein the refurbishing process, we worked with an American architect who worked for USIA and the FBO (Foreign Buildings Operations) people as well. We were wondering, "What would we do with this elaborate set of maps?" And I said, "These are historic objects. We must preserve these objects, because this goes back to a whole era, here, and it's very important to keep it, but I don't want to have our conference room filled with maps of villages and hamlets, in minute detail, with grease pencil marks about where military positions are. So what we'll do is we'll have them there, but we'll cover up this whole thing with other panels, which will have beautiful colored Thai silk on them, and a white board and a screen so that we can do that." So that's what we did. Those maps are still there, behind all the USIS art work there are POL-MIL war planning maps. That's what I wanted to get across. I forgot to mention that, when John Gunther Dean's phone call just now put it in context.

The only other time I saw him was out in Thailand in about 1997 or so. He still was something of even as an elder statesman, you might sahe still had some connection with Thailand, because he was retained on the board of the AIT, the Asian Institute of Technology, which was originally founded as a university for SEATO, by AID, back in the early '50s, and it evolved into the Asian Institute of Technology which is now paid for by the Thai, and most of the money comes from Europe and Asia and the U.S. had really no financial stake in it any longer, but we still did found it. So John Gunther Deaalong with whoever the present U.S. ambassador to Thailand was at the time, were two of the Americans on the board, and Dean would come out for that, and, generally, speaking, the American community really didn't ever know of John Gunther Dean by that time, and nobody had anything to say to John Gunther Dean, nor did they have any particular reason to listen to him, but because I was involved with AIT, I was trying to get the system working, so that instead of sendinthis is a complicated story, but there were a number of Burmese living in Thai refugee camps at the time, and there was this ill-conceived and somewhat costly program that Congress funded, to take these Burmese students and send them to American universities and give them a college education, with the idea that they would be the new Burma, to overthrow the military, the SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Council), and so on. Of course, they never came back. They'd come to the United States, they'd get their college degree, and they would never go back. So it did nothing. I mean, it did something for those kids, obviously, but it didn't do anything for any other reason.

I was trying to convince Washington, and also AIT, that we could do it better. We could give them scholarships to attend AIT, so they'd be in Thailand, and at the end of their time, the Thai wouldn't want to keep them. They would send them bacthey would want to get them back to Burma. So there would be an incentive to have educated people going back into Burma, rather than staying in Indianapolis. This was just burning up hundreds of thousands of dollars a year in scholarship money to no point. Anyway, so that's what I was dealing with the AIT about. It didn't work out unfortunately. But I remember John Gunther Dean coming to Thailand a couple of times.

He was very friendly with Thanat Kolman, who was a former foreign minister of Thailand and who was probably, the biggest thorn in the side of the United States in my era there. He was always cooking up some way of getting people to hate America. I think it just goes back to the '60s, when he felt betrayed by the U.S. well, rather than go back into all that detail now, maybe I'll try to get it back into the story in a written form later on. I don't want to get too sidetracked.

Q: I wonder if you could talwell, go back to the time you were in USIUSItalk about Joe Duffy and your impression of him and his operation.

KIEHL: When Joe Duffy was named director of USII actually remember saying this. This is not just self-serving memory. I remember turning to a colleague and saying, "Well, there goes USIA," because we all remembered Joe Duffin 1978, he was the assistant secretary for education and cultural affairs in the State Department, and he turned over CU to USIA, to John Reinhardt, who was then the director of USIA. John Reinhardt was able to wrest ECA (Educational and Cultural Affairs) away from Joe Duffy. John Reinhardt was, of course, a former ambassador and a very well-respected Foreign Service Officer. He was one of the first Afro-American people to rise to the senior ranks in USIA. He was PAO in Nigeria at one time, and then went back as ambassador to Nigeria, and then was named director of USIA in the Carter administration, but he had no political base. He was well-respected as a Foreign Service officer and as ambassador and so on. I'm sure there was a large symbolic value, too, to having an African-American as director of USIA, as Carl Rowan had been, earlier. But he had no political base, and this is what we realizethat if he was able to wrest CU away from the State Department, with no political basfrom Joe Duffthen Joe Duffy, now coming to head up USIA, was going to be in all likelihood a very weak leader.

He was named USIA Director I assumed in part because of his wife, Ann Wexler, who was a major figure in the Democratic partWexler Associates, of course, the lobbying firbut also because, I think, of the nostalgia value, because Joe Duffy ran for Senate in Connecticut, and two young people met while working on his losing campaign, and they were Bill Clinton and Hillary Rodham. They met then, and I think it was over the Duffy campaign, one presumes, they fell in lovin the aura of working for Joe Duffy. So there was some nostalgia there, too.

Whatever the reason, Joe Duffy, who went on to be president of the University of Massachusetts, and then also AU.

Q: AU being American University.

KIEHL: American University. He succeedescandal-ridden administration at the time there. He never particularly distinguished himself in either of those jobs as far as I know but nevertheless, he became the Director of USIA, and I and a lot of other people, were filled with real misgivings about this. But nevertheless, he was a very nice man. He was one of those people who you could tell wanted to communicate, and he would use these sort of hand gestures of all-inclusiveness and communication and that sort of thing. So initially he was given pretty much the benefit of the doubt.

By the end of his first terthe first Clinton terit seemed clear to people that his real object was to dismantle USIA. He was on record as saying that he detested the information aspect of USIA, and the only part that was worth anything was the cultural exchange program. So this didn't sit too well with the USIA rank and file, and we were increasingly worried, because our budgets just kept getting cut and cut, and he'd go up to Capitol Hill and members of Congress and various committees, and Democrats and Republicans both would say, "Wouldn't you like to have some more money for this? Here, wouldn't you like to have more money?" And he would resolutely, of course, as a good soldier, say no, but, in fact, one wonderedid he even make the case within the administration for more money if he felt the agency was redundant?" So, I guess, by '97 or so, some of us were actually, when he came to address us as senior staff and so on, were actually argumentative with him, which would be a rare thing, but people were so fed up and felt that he was betraying the organization and the people who worked for it. There was a lot of anger, and whether he sensed that or not, he continued down that path and of course, it ended up with the dissolution of the agency. So I think most USIA people would probably fault him as much as anyone for the demise of the agency, and also for weakening the agency to such an extent that it really didn't make any difference whether it disappeared or not. Throughout the '90s, USIA was basically bereft of its talent, and when I say that, I mean with every passing year there was a reduction in force. Not a rift, in the classic sense, but there were jobs eliminated, and every time there was a job eliminated, it was a Foreign Service job eliminateevery single time. Not a single civil servant lost their job, but hundreds and hundreds of Foreign Service slots were eliminated through the selection out process. We felt that this was part of the deliberate destruction of USIA.

For example, that speakers' program that I talked about a little while ago, which, when I headed it, had about 40 people, about half were Foreign Service and half civil service. By the time Joe Duffy had gotten finished, there were perhaps three or four Foreign Service slots left in that whole office. In other words, every job that was eliminated was a Foreign Service job.

Q: What would be the rational of getting rid of the Foreign Service jobs as opposed to the civil service ones?

KIEHL: Well, there were a couple of things. First of all, it was much easier to do. You simply eliminated the job when the Foreign Service officer got transferred. He was off to another job, there wasn't a job there to be filled, and so it was just eliminated. Whereas with the civil service, there was always somebody in the job looked at. They would have to find another job for that person and then you had the ripple effect. Or, if the job were vacant, it could be eliminated, but they rarely became vacant.

The second thing was that the Foreign Service were those people most in opposition to what Duffy was trying to do. They were the most vocal opponents of cutting the budgets and cutting programs overseas. That's the other thinhe kept cutting programs overseas and not cutting programs in Washington. So the bureaucracy in Washingtowhich was tooth-to-tail, you might say, "small tail, large tooth," overseabecame "large tail, small tooth" overseas. And, of course, again, this affected the Foreign Service component of USIA.

Q: Was thifrom your perspectivI'm speaking of you and others in managemenwas this Duffy or was this a policy on the part of Clinton?

KIEHL: Well, I think Joe Duffy was chosen because he was willing to carry out a policy to eliminate USIA.

Q: What would be the rationale for that?

KIEHL: There was a feeling that USIA no longer needed to exist, that it was an anti-Communist effort created by RepublicanEisenhowesupported mainly by Republicans on the Hill, and Republican administrations, and the times when USIA's budget increased were during those periods. The times it went down were during Democratic administrations, generally.

Even though most of the USIA staff, I think, were probably, like most government workers and most Foreign Service officers, probably left of center rather than right of center. That was immaterial. The organization was seen as a throwback to Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles and days gone by of the Cold War and there was no reason to keep it in existence. And eventually, that proved to be true. This was the perception. I can't say that this was, in fact, what the feeling was, or even that Joe Duffy was determined to destroy USIA. It was the net result of what he did. To be fair, I have talked at some length with Joe Duffy recently and he steadfastly maintains that he tried to save USIA and that recollections from the troops aside, he has proof in the form of memoranda that he fought tooth and nail with Madeleine Albright and others to reserve USIA in some form. You really need to do an interview with Duffy to get his side of the story.

Q: I'm told people say that sometimes he would sit in his chair and look up at the ceiling and say, "I'm not quite sure what we're supposed to be doing." Which is not a very ...

KIEHL: No, not a terribly encouraging or motivating thing. But you have to remember, Joe Duffy was only one in a l line of relatively weak directors of USIA. I think, before Duffy, of course, there was a relatively long transition period where nothing was done. Then you had Henry Catto, who was there a very short time, who showed some promise, but wasn't there long enough to do anything. Before him, you had almoswell, you had Bruce Gelb, who was not a strong USIA Director like his predecessor Charlie Wick.

Q: Sounds like almost a remittance man ...

KIEHL: Before Bruce Gelb, of course, you had Charlie Wick, and Wicas good as he was for USIA's budget, and as much as he would, perhaps, irritate the professionals in USIA through some of his antics, and I guess antics is the right word therobviously, he had a lot of positive attributes in terms of increasing the influence in the budget of USIA. But the downside was that he pissed off so many people around Washington that they all came in to retaliate when he left. And that happened on Bruce Gelb's watch.

Q: In view of where we are today, 2004, and our great problem with the Muslim worll mean, right now we have an occupying army in Iraq and sort of an occupying force in Afghanistan, and real problemduring your time, from your perspective, was there any attention paid to the Islamic world?

KIEHL: Oh, yes. At one time, there was a great deal, and it was one of the areas of the world that suffered because of budget cuts and lack of strong leadership in USIA. There was a magazinthey're now coming up with this Hi! magazine. Well, for years we had a magazine called Al-Jamaal. It was the most prestigious magazine in the Arab world. I think every intellectual throughout the Middle East read that magazine, and I'm sure they were influenced by it. There were American centers, American reading rooms, American libraries all over the region. I think we must have had five of them in Pakistan alone. Not just in Karachi and Islamabad, but in Lahore and Peshawaan American library, with American USIA officers working there.

Well, by the time USIA stopped I think we maybe had three or four, or maybe five, at the most, officers in Pakistan, and no libraries. You're not going to influence people with five people in a country of 60 or 70 million people and you don't have any public face and you're behind a ten-foot wall. That's not going to have any influence on anything. Did USIA do enough in the Islamic world? Probably not.... You have to remember that USIA was spending most of its money during the Cold War countering the Soviet Union, to the extent that the Soviet Union was influencing places, that is where USIS got the money to counter it. So we did have some pretty large operations in South Asia. I think, at one time, we had over 500 employees in India, which is pretty sizeable presence. I don't think we have 500 employees left in Asia, in every post in Asiand real resources. Book publishing programs, in English and in vernacular languagewe were printing books by the million. We had 30 or 40 different magazines, in different languages. We had a dozen worldwide English language, or world language, magazines. There was a lot going on, and a lot of it was in the Islamic world. But I don't think USIA was doing enough. But, you know, USIA never had enough money to do enough.

About the only place where we actually had enough money throughout the entire time was directed to the Soviet Union, and most of that went into radio broadcasting, and big things like traveling exhibitions, because those were things we could do in a police state, in an authoritarian state. We could broadcast into it, we could, through clever negotiations and cultural agreements, get America Illustrated magazines in the kiosks, and get an exhibit to bounce around the Soviet Union for six cities or so, every so often. But that cost an enormous amount of money. A big hunk of USIA's money was going there, even after the fall of the Cold War. Most of the money that was spent for exchanges through the SEED (Support for East European Democracy) and Freedom Support Act monies that USIA administereover $100 milliowent to the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, because there were special funds made available. No special funds were made available for any other place else in the world, so those programs were basically frozen or shrinking, and because of inflation they were shrinking even faster. So there weren't any funds. I mean, in places like Latin America, where we had bi-national centers, they could help fund programs because they make money teaching English. And we used to have bi-national centers and English language programs in the Middle East, too, and some of those still were in existence, but they were a fraction of the size they could have been, or should have been.

Q: Well, then, you lefis there anything else we should cover on this great event (ph)?

KIEHL: Oh, well, I think the main thinand we can't go into it today because I've got to duck out for a lunch, but I think maybe before we close off on the Washington tour there, I should talk a little about restructuring of USIA- (end of tape)

The creation of a new team-based, non-hierarchical bureau involved a kind of negotiation and working groups within the Bureau of Programs, but also using outside people and other parts of USIA that would impinge upon it, and also, as facilitators, in a rathenot quite new age, but modernistic approach to organizational change. You recall, then, that "change" was a big buzzword, and downsizing was going on all over the private sector as well as the public sector, and experimentation and that sort of thing was rife, and so USIA management was so desperate to save money that they agreed to try anything, because it was determined that USIA could no longer afford magazines, or exhibitperhaps not even a speakers program. In other words, what would we be doing? Joe Duffy was wondering aloud, "What should we be doing? What could we do if we didn't have any of these programs?" Sif you haven't talked to Barry Fulton yet, he's somebody that it would be worth talking about, because he waand I can mention this to him if you'd like.

Q: Yes.

KIEHL: Barry had my job as the number two in the E Bureau then....

Q: I don't think I've talked to him but I'll have to check.

KIEHL: Barry, at the time, was the number two, the senior career person in the bureau of education and cultural affairs, the same job that I had later on, and he was given the task, by Joe Duffy, to change the bureau of programs and come up with a new way of doing business that would save millions and millions of dollars because those dollars wouldn't be there anymore. So, being a very bright guy, he set about the task and looked into how other people brought about radical change in their organizations, and got a group of us together to form a kind of team to reinvent this bureau. I won't go into all that now, but it essentially involved everyone in the bureau, reinventing itself. What it came out with was something quite uniquin USIA's history, anywaand maybe I could go into some detail on that.

Q: OK.

KIEHL: A lot of the cross-threads that I was talking about in the last hour or so have come home to roost, then, you might say.

Q: All right, well, we'll talk about that, then, the next time. OK?

KIEHL: Oh, yes. Great.

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Q: Today is the 21st of January, 2004. Bill? Talk!

KIEHL: Well, yes, I guess I've sort of boxed myself in to what I'm going to talk about today, which is that reinvention of the bureau of programs into the bureau of information in USIA. Well, perhaps you've already interviewed Barry Fultol'm sure he could give his perspective on this.

Q: I have.

KIEHL: From my perspectivl was running one of the offices in the bureau of programs at the time. There was a political appointee in charge of the office. He was a protï¿½gï¿½ of Ron Brown's, actually, and mainly got hired because of his work at the Democratic convention.

Q: Ron Brown being the ...

KIEHL: Secretary of Commerce in the first Clinton administration, who died tragically in an airplane crash in Dubrovnik. Anyway, Tony Jackson was his name. Good fellow, very nice, very personable person, but not particularly interested in the work of USIA or the speakers program and so on. He and one of his special assistants were assigned to that office and he was also a schedule I think maybe at the GS-13 level. They were always off somewhere, doing political business, quite frankly. I don't know what they did, but they didn't do much in the office, so it was left to the deputy, as is normally the case in that kind of situation, to run the office. Tony also had a very serious bout of pneumonia he almost died. So he was not in good physical shape to undertake the reinvention of a bureau about which he knew very little. So it came to me to do that, from the bureau of programs' point of view.

There were four committees set up, as I recall. One of them had to do with the speakers programs, and that meant the speakers programs of the bureau of programs, but also other parts of USIA. So, on that committeit was a co-chair situation. I was one of the co-chairs. The other co-chair was a woman from the education and cultural affairs bureau, who was in charge of the American specialists program and center of American studies and things like that, that that bureau handled, named Judy Seigel. She had joined USIA originally as a political appointee, anwhat do they call it? "ramspecked" her way into a civil service position. She was at that time, maybe a GS-15 in charge of a good portion of that bureathe speakers and specialists program end of it.

So the two of us co-chaired this committee of about 20 people to design what would happen with the speakers program. There were other people doing press and publications and other people doing other parts of what was then the bureau of programs, mainly exhibits. It was a big exhibit servicthe kind of thing I used to travel around the Soviet Union doing. At that time, of course, there were something like 22 magazines that were produced by the bureau of programs. Well, there were more than thathere were one country magazines as well, produced at various embassies around the world, taking material from USIA's central repository, and then translating it locally and putting local stories into the magazine and producing a local magazine. I remember doing Pregled in Yugoslavia that way and also Darshana in Sri Lanka, and there were other magazines, as well. Eventually, Dialogue magazine, more or less, became a uniform magazine because the costs were just too high to produce specialized magazines for more than one or two countries. Our post in India, had a magazine of its own, thanks to excess currency and the fact that it's a huge countrcalled SPAN, which was really quite a good magazine, and may even exist today.. It survived the collapse of USIA in the 1990s.

Our committee met every Tuesday, lunchtime, and sometimes, another time during the week, to thrash out these vital questions. Now, as you can imagine, there are a lot of rice bowls involved in trying to reorganize a bureau. The overriding impetus was not reinvention, at least in the view of Joe Duffy and the senior management of USIA. The overriding emphasis was how to do something relevant in public diplomacy with a much smaller budget and a continuingly smaller and smaller budget. The salami approach to cutting budgets hadn't really worked very well. By that, I mean, every year USIA's budget was less than the previous year, and so everyone had to justify what they were doing, and whoever justified it the best got to keep their budget, and those who did a less good job of it got their budget cut. But no one ever eliminated a program, and that's what caused part of the problem near the end of the 1990s - the fact that USIA had, for years, postponed the tough decisions and did not eliminate some programs in order to keep others robust. What happened is you had a whole chandelier of dim bulbs rather than one or two spotlights.

Well, we were given the task to reorganize. We weren't given the task to cut, but we knew that there would be a lot less money out there, and the decision had already been made on high, that the magazine programs would be finished and the exhibit programs would be finished, by the time this all spun out. So we were arguing, as almost in an academic setting, over nickels and dimes. The speakers program was not a terribly expensive program. I mean, we were paying people $100 a day, which is almost ludicrous. Even in those days it was ludicrous. I think it's now up to $200. At the same time we were paying $100 a day for a speaker, AID was paying $500 for the same person to do very similar work. So it was ridiculous. People did continue to do it, however. They enjoyed it, because they got introductions to people in other countries. They got to understand what was going on in another country, which helped them in their own research or own work, and they also made valuable contacts. Networking is very important to everybody, and the networking that you would get by going off on a USIA program for a couple of weeks, to a particular region of the world that interested you, was invaluable. You would never get that kind of introduction if you just stepped off the plane and had a couple of letters from friends to friends in country.

So the programs continued to go along. We were, as I said when I started with that U.S. speakers program, we were at about 1100 speakers a year.. Obviously, we did do one-country speakers occasionally, but they were very expensive, so we tried to do two or three countries. So you got a lot of multiplication out of those 1100 speakers. We also did something called TPCs, tele-press conferencebasically, phone hookups with journalists or with other interlocutors in a particular country. These were pretty rudimentarthey were basically a phone call. You at the overseas post ordered those up the same way you would a speaker, except it didn't cost you a nickel, because we paid for the phone call. So all you had to do was maybe get a few journalists together for lunch and have the call come in, and we would connect it with a speaker. Now, the advantage to this is we could pick up a speaker anywhere in the country, or frankly, anywhere in the world, and connect it, thanks to f AT&T. We just called the operatolet's seat Union Pacific Corporation. It was interesting, which companies do thithat did that, I should sal don't think there are so many doing it now. But teleconferencing was its own little business, and you would book it through a booking agent for a specific time and give them the numbers and they would put it all together and then they'd ring you up and say, "Here's your call," and everyone would be connected.

We had provided to posts overseas, and relatively cheaply, speaker phones. Or not really speaker phones in the traditional sense, but tabletop microphone devices that were in a cross-pattern. They're good quality microphones and they pick up anything in the room and you just attach it to your telephone and you've got teleconferencing. I think we conducted maybe three or four hundred of those teleconferences a year. It was a small office of three or four people who did all that.

As I mentioned, the E bureau had its own programs, not to repeat myself too much, but they did have AculspecAmerican cultural specialists. They also had academic specialists, or Acspecs. These programs were very, very similar to the speakers program. Of course, the Aculspecs were people in the arts. They were choreographers, or dancers, or theater people, or theater directors, or actors, and they could be, also, writers. Anyone in the cultural fieland they would go, and they would basically conduct workshops for foreign audiences, at the behest of the embassies. The Acspecs, or the academic specialists, really were almost indistinguishable from our program, except that they went from for four to six weeks, and very often they were in things like educational curriculum consulting, and things like that, where they would help education administration design a curriculum for American studies, or an American history textbook or something like that. So they were really a little bit more on the long-range side of things, whereas we might send a speaker with a degree in education, to talk about the American educational system. And they would meet people and hold a seminar at a university, and maybe they'd give a press interview but it would be more keyed to something of the moment, rather than ten years down the road. It was the classic information versus cultural perspective.

But they were very similar programs, and they paid, I think, if I'm not mistaken, about the same rate of moneit was $100 or maybe $150 for those, but it was not real compensation, it was just sort of an honorariua real honorarium. These programs were on the order of, perhaps, 300 or so Acspecs, anfewer than 100, probably more like 50, Aculspecs, the cultural specialists. So it was a much smaller program. It was run by a smaller stafa woman named Bernice Avant was the person who ran the program. And our folks and she and her staff did work together. They traded names of good contacts, of people that might be invited, might fulfill a need overseas, or if a post came back and wasn't sure whether they wanted someone for two weeks or a week or maybe longer, there would be a discussion as to what they really wanted, and the two offices would get together and say, "Well, that's really more your thing, Bernice. It's really an Acspec, is what they want." Or they would say, "Oh, no, Jane, this is really more your line. They really only need three or four days, and there are a couple of other posts who want this also." The Aculspec/Acspec program only did one country programs. So the two programs did help each other out a little bit. There was a bit of a duplication however, and where there's even a hint of duplication, when you're cutting budgets sharply, they become a big target.

Even before this started, I had heard rumors that it had been decided that the U.S. speakers program would be taken out of our bureau and given to the education and cultural affairs bureau. This was almost a done deal, according to the rumor I heard, and so I wrote a paper to the then-director of our bureau, suggesting another wathat actually the speakers program would make more sense being combined in our office, since it was the larger program, and we had a larger staff, and we could absorb these other programs, and then you'd have a single point of "one-stop shopping," for overseas posts, for any kind of speaker program. At the same time, I was trying to interest the bureau in videoconferencing, because, if you recall, this experiment we had between Finland and Sweden, back in my Helsinki days, with Charlie Wick on the video, and Jack Matlock and other people. I thought that was really a way that we could get high-quality people again for these programs, because as time went by, the speakers programs, both the ones in the education and cultural affairs bureau, and in the bureau of programl felt those had declined in the quality of the speakers. We no longer got people who were household names. They may have been famous in their fields in European history, or in arms controbut they weren't known much beyond their narrower specialty, but even more importantly, we weren't getting the top people in those fields. We were getting people, largely from the academic community, who wanted a notch on their belt as having spoken abroad for the U.S. government.

Q: Rï¿½sumï¿½ building.

KIEHL: Rï¿½sumï¿½ building, exactly. And we were getting very high quality audiences for our speakers, in generathe top people in the country, the top journalists, the top academic people, the top government peopland we wanted to maintain as high a quality of speaker as we could. And we couldn't get those top people to travel for two weeks. Certainly we couldn't get them to travel for six weeks under the academic specialists prograeven two weeks was a hard sell. So I thought, "This might be the solution to our problems." We might be able to get those high-level people to engage in a videoconference, either out of Washington or wherever they happened to be located, and have them do a two-way video with a group in that country. It wouldn't be as good, but it would be better than a disembodied voice on speaker-phone. You'd also be able to maintain eye contact with people, and it would be a two-way dialoguit wouldn't be a WorldNet, where it's a press conference format, where you have the all-knowing American, whose face is on the screen, and four or five chaps from the third world asking questions of this all-knowing American, and only their voices came through. It would be more a dialogue of equals, which is the only way you can really do this work. There was some interest in it, but it was expensive, so that had to be put off until the reorganization of the bureau was a little bit further along.

Actually, I might as well finish that. As it turned out, I did manage to put together a proposal for about a million dollars, to get this started. We set it up with six sitesix overseas posts, plus Washington, DC. They were mainly European posts, but we also had Tokyo in the original six, and then we expanded thereafter to some of the other major cities that had ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network) connections.

Q: What iwould you explain ...

KIEHL: These are, basically, high-bandwidth linethe minimum for really good-quality two-way video is a bandwidth of 240 kilobyteor 360 kilobytes. 240 kilobytes would be the ideal at that time and that technology. Now, of course, we have T1 and T3 lines, which are, essentially, broadcast-quality video links, but in those days, there was still a little bit of hesitation, if you moved your head quickly. But the advantage of it was that it was pretty close to real lifonly the slightest hesitation and only if you moved quickly. So we told people, "Don't move. Don't have extraneous movement, because you're taking up too many bytes when you move your hands all the time onscreen. Or if you move your head back and forth, there's going to be a little bit of a stutter effect."

Well, in any event, those six first posts were quite successful, and we dil think before I left there, we were up to abouat least money committeto about 15 different sites overseas, plus New York as well as Washington. So the thing was quite well underway, and of course, now, it's a common practice, and practically every embassy in the world now has video linkunclassified. Obviously, there were classified videoconference facilities, too, but we couldn't bring in third countrour host country nationalinto those, and use them in an unclassified format, and you couldn't connect in with the local Kinko's copy center, which we found was quite doable. We could usa lot of different universities around the country had videoconferencing facilities. Government buildings around the countrthe FAA (Federal Aviation Administration), for example, all of its regional offices had a daily video link, even in those days, so that they could communicate with each other better. So there were many federal bureaus and offices around the United States that had these, and most major universities had them, and even many minor universities had them. And we didn't discover by the timl think by the time I left that bureathat even the Kinko copy centerl think they had something like 1700 of their copy centers equipped with rather rudimentary but quite workable videoconferencing equipment. So you could just go into a booth, pay your money, and have a video link. This revolutionized the speakers program. Initially, it wasn't, of course, a lot cheaper. They became, really, the mainstay, and now they do about 1200 videoconferences a year, and probably about 400 speakers a year now.

Q: Was there going back, you were saying you were finding you weren't getting the top-notch people. Was it a lack of interest in doing something for the country, oyes, I'm putting it in bald terms, but, I mean, was there something about it that you weren'lack of interest in foreign connections or what?

KIEHL: No, I don't think it was that, because we went back to people who had participated in the past. It wasn't as though they had suddenly lost interest in things foreign. It was really symptomatic of what's happened to the whole society, and that is people are so much busier than they used to be, or they feel the need to be busier than they used to be. There was a time when most people, whether they were journalists, or government people, or academics, or in the arts, could take two weeks and have an adventure like that. Today, they don't feel they can take the two weeks.

The same thing happened to the international visitor program. At one time, we used to bring people over for 30-day programs. We found we couldn't get the high-risers, the future prime ministers, et cetera, to take 30 days out of their lifetime, their career, leave their family for 30 days, leave their job for 30 days, and go off to America and bounce around the country and meet peoplno matter how good the program was. They couldn't afford to be away for 30 days. So now your average IV (International Visit) is 21 days, and even that is really a stretch. I maintain that, probably, we don't have quite the quality of IVbecause we could get anybody in a country, 20 or 30 years ago, to visit the United States on an IV program. It was like winning the lottery. Today, an awful lot of people can afford to come to the United States frequently, on business, or pleasure. The difference in standard of living and lifestyle is not so dramatic. Even 30 years ago, Europeans were not frequent visitors to the United States. There were many people, who we considered prime IV candidates, who had never, in their lives, been to the United Statehad never been outside Europe. Well, that's all change. Air travel is much easier, and people are richer, and prices are lower, and all those factors are in play. So the IV program really has a hard time attracting the very best people to take that month if they can get a month away.

The same thing is true with the speakers program in the United States. It's very hard to get very busy people, who are very much in demand, and feel that they're very important, in their own right, to just drop everything for two weeks and go to Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Burma, and Indonesia, and back to the United States. So the videoconference really is the wave of the future but it's not as good as a live in person speaker because it doesn't provide the non-show time.

Q: It's the cocktail party afterwards ...

KIEHL: Right.

Q: Where, essentially, people are seen mingling ...

KIEHL: It's the corridor chatter, the cocktail party after.

Q: And exchanging cards, and ...

KIEHL: That's right.

Q: Well, is there anything else you should cover, or should we move on?

KIEHL: There is another program that we started at about the same time. Because we had this influx of money for one area of the worlthe former Soviet Unioand there was a need for it, we developed a program called professionals in residence, or PIR. We decided that the professionals in residence program would be the other end of the spectrum. Anything from two months up to a year, and these professionals in residence would be sent out to the former Soviet Union or Eastern Europe to work, usually with a government ministry or a media organization, to develop democratic programsmall for that country. They would work either in a ministry, as I said, or in a media organization, or some other university.

For example, a typical professional in residence would be an assistant U.S. attorney, a federal government employee, therefore, no honorarium necessary, only a per diem or living accommodations plus meals, would be necessary to pay. They would be getting their salary, so there's no honorarium. They would go out to work for three months at the ministry of justice in Bulgaria, or in Azerbaijan to work on making the legal system more transparent, or fairer. There was so much to do, frankly, almost anything would help. We sent them over with a mini law library, part of which we got on donation, part of which we paid for, and an allowance for photocopying and other educational materials, and very often with a laptop.

Q: As in computer.

KIEHL: A laptop computer, and printer - so that they would be self-contained. When they moved into the ministry of justice in Bulgaria, they could immediately sit down and begin to worwork on the legal system, working with a team of Bulgarians, to develop, for example, land-use records. How to transfer propertbecause you have to remember, everything belonged to the state before, and so the records were, in most cases, lost, but even more so, the law was gone. So there was an awful lobusiness law, of all types, was very important. We worked with the American Bar Association's project for Central and Eastern Europe on a lot of these programs.

It was mainly rule of law, but as the program expanded, it was in several different areas, including media training and so on. And that was a great booit was also paid for through the SEED act and the Freedom Support Acthe Support for East European Democracy Acfor the former Soviet states, and, therefore, we could afforthe posts, overseacould afford to have this program. It was not used in the rest of the world, and I was determined that there must be a way to figure this out, because these programs were so good. One of the ways that I figured out, when I was in Thailand, after this, was to use anti-drug money. There was a lot of money around for anti-drug efforts, and what better use of that money than to have an assistant U.S. attorney work at the ministry of justice in Thailand to work on laws concerning extradition of drug-trafficking criminals and so on? Or the PIR could work on anti-money laundering statutes? And that program became a huge part of our program there. We also did videoconferences on that, so that we could prep the audience. The ministry of justice was probably involved in a dozen of these videoconferences a year in Thailand alone, and other countries did similar things. The problem was it cost real money. USIA had no money for it, and so anytime we could find a way of funding iwhether through, essentially, foreign assistance funds, or anti-narcotics funds, which were flush, both of these programs had more money than they could actually figure out what to do witwe supplied what to do. So that was another program which, I think, was a good way to conclude those, because that was a long-term program.

So you had the American participant program, or the Ampart program, which was up to two weeks or susually several countries, and that was in the bureau of programs. Then you had a progratwo programin the bureau of education and cultural affairs, the academic specialists and the American cultural specialists program, and they were generally from two weeks up to about six weeks in duration, really more workshop oriented, long-range oriented. And then the next part of the spectrum, two months up to a year, usually three months to six months, but up to a year, was the professionals in residence program, which was, again, done by our bureau. So it's quite a spectrum of speaker programs.

Well, to get back, then, to the reorganization, now, with that background. So the 20 of us would meet and we had a facilitator, a fellow who wabecause, let's face it.- you had half the people on the table from the bureau of programthey wanted all the speaker programs in the bureau of programs. Half the people were from the bureau of education and cultural affairthey wanted all the programs in the bureau of education and cultural affairs. You had two co-chairs, who felt rather strongly about that, obviously, but you also had to figure out how these things would be set up. Would they be set up on a regional basis? Would they be set up on a thematic basis? Would they be set up in some combination, because the bureau of programs did things really not so much on a regional basis, but on a thematic basis first? There was the overall division within the office broke down into political and economic themes, principally, and under the political, then, you had people who specialized in certain areas of the world, but the education and cultural affairs folks had it specialized by region. So they had East Asia, and then within East Asia, they had people who were more on the arts side of the house and other people who are more on the educational side of the house, and so they would program speakers that way.

Well, this doesn't sound like rocket science, but you can imagine peoplthe large percentage of the people in both of these offices had evolved to be civil service, and so they were working in those same jobs for a long time, many of them. So they got pretty well wedded to the idea that what they were doing was the right way to do it, and there was no other way to do it. I think, in my office, it was probably about 80% civil service, 20% Foreign Service, and in the other bureau, in ECA, or the E bureau, I should say, it was probably 90% civil service, or 95% civil service, with maybe one or two Foreign Service officers. So people were used to doing things a certain way, and the hardest job there was the facilitator's. He was an engineer, from the Voice of America, a technician, and he had taken a course in facilitation, and so we hired him as our facilitatowell, he was on detail to us as a facilitator. He was a very good facilitator, and he calmed things down. I mean, these discussions were fraught with emotion. Everybody is guarding their rice bowl and throwing rocks at the other guy's bowl, and so on. It got so emotional, I remember one time turning the facilitator and saying something likand I'll say his name is Bo"Bob, you're getting too emotionally involved in this. You have to maintain your objectivity."

As it turned out, we did come up with a conclusiothat the speakers programs would be lodged in the bureau of programs, or that new bureau of information, and they would be organized on both a thematic and a regional basis. That's why, in the bureau of information, today, you have an office of geographic affairs and an office of thematic programs. So they have two desk equivalents, rather than one. In any event, when this was all done, we wrote up our reporother teams wrote up their reportand then, two others and I,-John Dwyer and Rick Marshall and I- sat down and wrote it all up as a report to the director. We put this whole thing together in written form, and had it burned onto a CD-ROM, which was a new thing, then, and it was very cutting edge for 1997. It was a cause for great celebration, of course, and a little bit of hand-wringing. There was an awful lot of hand-wringing, because the civil service folks, in particular, were very worried about rifts, and so on. When this was announced, it was announced kind of simultaneously with the end of a lot of the programs that the old bureau of programs had done, and lots of job changes and downsizing.

Fortunately, all the civil service employees were able to be placed and so there were no real riskno one was out on the street, but long-cherished programs, the exhibit programs, were gone. The magazines, essentially, were gone. A lot of the ways that the press and publication service functioned, with its reporters around town and so oall that was changed dramatically. So the offices, then, suddenlpeople found themselves in different offices. People from the education and cultural affairs bureau were transferred to the new bureau of information, and a lot of these other people found themselves doing jobs that were quite different from what they normally did. You had people who were, writers suddenly in an office where you were in a team concept, and your writing skills were used to recruit people, rather than to write stories, and you were encouraged to learn how to get a hold of people and plot out a program so some speaker could travel around the world for two weeks and talk to people, and you'd have to put together supporting materials for that person. There was also a librarian service in USIA which was folded into this, as well, and they became reference people for the teams. All of these were construed as teams, very horizontally, and I'm sure Barry Fulton addressed this.

Q: Yes, all I can recall is, at this point he talked aboualmost like a circle. I mean, it'everybody was working off everybody else and so on.

KIEHL: In theory, this was a wonderful idea, and there were team leaders, and it was not supposed to be hierarchical, and everybody was supposed to have "group think ", in a sense. Well, this all began to happen just as I was leaving for language training, and I'm really glad I was in language training that year, because according to our posts overseas, it was a total disaster. Nothing ever got done. I don't thinl think it was months before they sent the first speaker out, because people weren't used to this and it was just too much change at one time. It took at least a year for people to get this reorganization straightened out. Anyway, that's what change of organization can do to you. It sets you back a good bit, until you start moving forward again. And as it turns out, the organization isn't so particularly team oriented. The team leaders became office directors, and so on, and, of course, this was only accelerated by moving into an intensely hierarchical situation, by moving into the State Department. It became even more hierarchical.

Q: Well, anyway, Bill, we're moving you on. You went twhat? Thai training, was it?

KIEHL: Yes, I wanted a change. I was in this office in Washington. I wanted to go back overseas, but I didn'having spent most of my career in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, I was not in a hurry to go back there. Things had changed. It was not quite as interesting as it once was. There wasn't the combative aspect of the Cold War any longer. It was mostly being almost like a subcontractor to AID, in many ways, and I wanted a change. I wanted something different. I was also approaching 50, and I was thinking seriously of retiring then, at 50, and cashing in and going off and doing something entirely different, but I decided to compromise a little bit and do something entirely different within the Foreign Service. So I lobbied rather aggressively, for me, or for a USIA officebecause in USIA, the worst thing you can do is lobby for a job.

Q: But how do yobut there has to be some sort of sub-zero (ph) form of lobbying, I mean ...

KIEHL: Oh, yebut very subtle. You let it be known that you were interested in a particular job, and you got people to lobby on your behalf, but you never expressed a direct interest in a job by going to someone and saying, "Oh, please give me this job!" or any of that stuff. You would then, in the good pace of time, be given that job, if you were good at the subtle form of lobbying.

Well, of course, that's all changed now that USIA is in State. It's a different world, and people who could adjust to that did pretty well, I think, and those who couldn't maybe didn't do so well, but learned. So, for me, this was fairly aggressive. I went to see the director for East Asia and Pacific and enlisted her help, and I went to see Barry Fulton, who I figured owed me a little bit for having put up with this reorganization. He was, by that timhe had moved over, I believe, as head of the new information bureau. So it was an assistant secretary level, or whatever, in USIA. I enlisted his help, and his help to talk to the East Asia folks about it.

Well, I was not an old East Asia hand. I had never served there. There were probably ten former Thai hands who, their whole lives, had dreamt of going back as PAO to Thailand, from their days as assistant information office there, or branch PAO or whatever, and many of them were at grade (ph), really, about the same backgrounnumber of years of service, probably just as many friends in the agency and so on. So I knew this would be an uphill fight, but one thing came into play, which was very convenient. Two PAOs ago, the PAO was, rightly or wrongly, found to have spent $30,000 of program money in fixing up her house, and so that was a big scandal, and so the inspector general's corps (IG)(decided that a new broom was in order. (end of tape)

Nothing notoriouno selling of IV grants, or any of that, but they thought that the place was very inbred, that all the senior officers there had served in Thailand before, that more or lesit was on automatic pilot. Well, they couldn't do much about it, because the PAO who had just come out there was one of those who had served in Thailand, I think twice before. He was on his third tour at USIS Thailand. He was the PAO. But this feeling was reflected in the files, and so the East Asia-Pacific office said, "Who's going to shake that place up? We've got to find somebody who's not an old Thai hand, and somebody who has new ideas, and besides, it's about time we cut the hell out of that post. It's much too big. And we need somebody who doesn't have any emotional attachments to it to get in the way of that." So I was the perfect candidate, and so I was sent out there with a mandate to shake things up, come up with some new and better ways to do things, and, oh, by the way, you have to eliminate 38 positions and a little over half a million dollars in budget.And I said, "Well, why can't the PAO who's leaving do that, rather than the PAO who's just about to arrive?" and they said, "Well, he won't do it. He's just too emotionally involved in the poshe won't do it, and he's retiring, and there's nothing we can do about it." So I managed to get it postponed for about three months before I did this, so that at least people would get to know me before I came in and handed out pink slips.

Well, maybe I should go back tam I still in Thai language training? I sort of blended the two together. The Thai language traininI was studying Thai at age 49, which I don't recommend to anyone. Having tried to learn Finnish at age 42, which is probably the hardest language in Europe, along with Hungarian or Estoniait just really doesn't work. I got a 3/3 after a lot of struggle and really hard work, to the point where I was having not dreams, but nightmares, in Thai. But unless you had a tonal language when you're youngel think it's very haror you're a professional singer or musician. I think it's very hard to learn a tonal language in your late 40s. All that said, I was able to do it adequately enough to pass the FSI test, and to amuse people in Thailand endlessly by getting the tones wrong and saying absolutely atrocious, filthy things in the middle of a speech of congratulations or something like that. The way I looked at iwell, you know, the Thai have a great attitude about such things, and so I figured I would just laugh it off, too. I decided not to take anything seriousllike that.

Q: And it shows an effort.

KIEHL: That's righthat's what I figured. There was alsI was pretty much a type A personality, throughout, I think, most of my career, and I was, of course, now hitting age 50, and I was thinking to myself, "You know, in addition to this change of workplace in the world, and this new adventure, I ought to start becoming a little more type B and a little less type A."

Q: Type A and B you might explain to somebody who ...

KIEHL: Well, it actually has to dthe people who are type A tend to have heart attacks. They are more competitive and more stoked up with energy, and type B are more laid back, lotus land, Californian-esque, et cetera. Or Thai, as the case may be, because the worst thing in Thailand you could do is show your emotions in public, become aggressive in public, and as part of that cultural thing, I decided, "I am going to learn to be type B." One of the best trainings for that was the ride between Sathorn Road and Wireless Road. Between the USIS compound and the embassy, which I had to traverse at least once a day, round triusually twice or even three times a day, in my air-conditioned Toyota. It was a matter of about three miles, I suppose, if you walked it, but, of course, if you walked it, you'd have to immediately take a shower, and so you would drive.

Now, the drive in Thailand, in those days, was probably the closest thing to hell on wheels, because it took 45 minutes one way to get those three miles. Endless stop and stop traffinot stop and go, but just stop and stop traffic, and if you even tried to open your door to see what was going on, the door would be hit by a guy on a motorcycle going down between the cars at about 90 miles and hour. I got a lot of work done in the car. Fortunately, I had a cell phone in the car, and I brought along a laptop, and I'd get a lot of work done in the car, back and forth. But, of course, in addition to the morning meeting every morning first thing in the morning, with the country team, we had a daily country team meetinin part, I suppose, because it was one of the more complex embassies in the world. There were 34 government agencies represented, 680 Americans assigned to Bangkok and 1700 FSNs on the staff. It was impossible to manage, as every DCM and ambassador soon found out, and even with the daily country team meeting you couldn't manage it.

But that 45 minutes taught me one thinthe 45 minutes to the embassy, and then a 15 or 20 minute meeting, and then 45 minutes back to the USIS compound, whereupon I'd get a phone call from the ambassador's secretary, asking if I could see the ambassador at 11:00 that morning about something really urgent and so back in the car agaithat was the jai jenn, or cool heart. Jai jeit was my favorite thought. Because, if you didn't maintain a cool heart, you'd go absolutely bonkers, and, of course, you'd lose respect of you Thai employees and your Thai contacts, because the worst thing in the world is to have someone who is emotionally overwrought. The Thai just find that frightening. Although, of course, they get emotionally overwrought and kill each other and all that sort of thing, too, but if you wanted to maintain their respect as an official, you would never let your guard down that way. So that was a good thing, and I maintained that jai jen, I think, ever since. In other jobs, believe me, I've needed it.

Q: You were in Thailand from when to when?

KIEHL: That would have been from the summer of 1995 to the summer of 199three years.

Q: What was your wife up to?

KIEHL: She was a Foreign Service officer, of course, and she was also in Thai language class, and she went out, initially, to the consular section as a consular officer, but with a special responsibility for extraditions of criminals and so on. In fact, that was kind of her sideline. She did the first extradition of a Thai Member of Parliament to the United States to be brought up on drug charges, and road to the airport in the military bus with all these guards with submachine guns to guard him, to turn him over to the U.S. marshals. So she had developed a good relationship, over that initial part of her tour, with the U.S. Marshal's Service, who would come in, and pick them up, and take them out.

Q: I didn't think there would be that much, between Thaextraditions between Thailand and the United States.

KIEHL: Well, you'd be surprised. Part of her consular work, also, was American citizen services. She wasn't so much in the Visa business as the American citizen services and extraditions, and there were 70 Americans in Thai prisons, thealmost all on drug chargeand we also, probably, lost about another 70 citizens a year in Thailand, through either drug overdoses or traffic accidents, or even more unpleasant things, like murders and so on. So that was her initial time, and then in the second part of her tour, she was the GSO in charge of the motor pool, which was a rather large motor pool, you can imagine, for an embassy of that size, and some other ancillary stuff, which I can never quite remember what shyou'd have to ask her what she did. But I remember that the main thing was the motor pool was very important, because she ran the motor pool for the Clinton presidential visit as well, and had 240 cars under her domain, at that point. So that was pretty much a full time job.

She enjoyed both of those tours, both of those jobconsular and management. She was an admin or management cone officer, so it made sense to take a management job after that consular work.

Q: Well, on your thinfirst place, how did you find, sort of, relations between the United States and Thailand?

KIEHL: Well, the U.S.-Thai relations had been generally rather good throughout their history, and I can recommend a book to you on that, called The Eagle and the Elephant, which we produced, on U.S.-Thai relations over the years from Andrew Jackson to Bill Clinton. But the Thai-U.S. relationshior the U.S.-Thai relationshiwould be, as the Thai would say, a pi-non relationship. That is, an "elder brother, younger brother," or "senior-junior" kind of relationship, and that's very common in Thailand, as well, that kind of relationship. But among countries, what it meant was, Thailand listened to the guidance of the United States on matters, and, for that, the United States was supposed to take care of Thailanto be a protector of Thailand, as an elder brother would a younger brother, you might say. That was the way the Thais saw their relationship with the United States.

Now, it wasn't always idyllic. During the Vietnam War, and immediately after the Vietnam War, the Thai felt as though that relationship was breaking down. There was also a foreign minister of Thailand, named Thanat Kolman, who sort of dined out on beinhow would you sacritical of the United States, at that time, and thereafter. For the entire time thereaftein fact, even up to my day he was often in the press talking about the nefarious dealings of the Americans, on whatever subject happened to come up. So it wasn't unanimous. I mean, not everybody saw that relationship as advantageous. Some of them saw it as insulting or just simply wrong. But most Thai had a positive view of the United States, and a very friendly attitude, and we could do things in Thailand that we couldn't do in many countries in Asia. We had, of course, a treaty relationship with Thailand. It's one of the five treaty relationships in Asia, the others being Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea. So Thailand was thif you consider South Korea mainland Asia, okabut Thailand is certainly mainland Asia. So it was one of those five key treaty relationships.

For the most part, the Thai evethey would change governments with some regularity and there was a period, of course, of military dictatorship in Thailand, but throughout that period U.S.-Thai relations remained pretty close. When I got there in '95, relations were really very good. Of course, that didn't mean I wasn't surprised every day by something in the newspaper. The Thai media were, if anythinthey would put the British tabloid press to shame. Particularly concerning anything having to do with the United States. If they could misconstrue it, they'd do it.

Q: Is this done out ojust for selling, or out of bias, or ...

KIEHL: I think mostly for amusement value and for selling newspapers. Most of the journalists that I met, even the ones who were sharply critical of the United States, in terms of our policies, were basically friendly to the United States as a country. You didn't have very many professional anti-Americans there. Thanat Kolman was, perhaps, the most famous voice that was critical of the United States, and there were a couple of columnists who were regularly finding some fault in the U.S. But by and large, the media were friendly, but they did like to pull our chains a little bit. If they could find someone who could make the U.S. look foolisparticularly the U.S. embassy look foolisthat would be their greatest gain. So the press office in Thailand had a couple of tasks. The press section, for one, was to get U.S. policy into the Thai media, and influence the Thai to write in a positive light about the U.S., and U.S. policies and so on, but another part of the agenda was to make sure that we kept anything really stupid out of the newspapers, having to do with the embassy, and with 680 Americans running around, you can bet there was always some potential for that.

Q: Well, I would think that running an office in Thailanwhat little I've observemy experience goes back to a consular convention there back in '77, I think. But particularly Thailand being such a freewheeling place for the sex trade and also the drug trade and tourism, that this would cause uncounted problems for somebody like yourself. I mean, running a business.

KIEHL: Well, oddly enough, it didn't. I mean, obviously, Thailand is still very much known as a place where anything goes, you might say. It has a huge criminal element. The sex trade is a part of everyday life there, to the point where the Thai don't actually consider it anything unusual. Drugs are very readily available. Thailand itself has a big drug problem with, basically, amphetamines, but all manner of drugs are easily available there, and, of course, at one time, it was a major trafficking route. So a big part of the U.S.-Thai relationship has been to stop that drug trade, and to a large extent, Thailand is a success story, if you look at the world, in general, because it's no longer a major transit route, and because it's not a major transit route, all the countries around it have become transit routes. So it hasn't solved the problem, but it has pushed it out of Thailand. And the growing of opium poppies has been pretty much eradicated in Thailand, and the manufacture of drugs in Thailand has been sharply cut back. The king has a real program among the hill tribes, getting them off opium poppies and on to growing asparagus and things like that. So you can walk into Marks and Spencers, in London, and find beautifully, exquisitely-packed asparagus, tiny asparagus spears, made in Thailand, produced in Thailand, and packed in Thailand and flown in. And quite the products are reasonably priced, as well.

So those things have all happened, and, of course, all sorts of handicraft projects and development projects for the hill tribes have done a lot to change their way of life, probably for the better. But what it's done is it's pushed a lot of this into Burma and southern China, and Laos and so on, and so you have lots of drug factories over there in the area inhabited by the Wa and other tribes in Burma. So it hasn't eliminated the problem but simply moved it, but it wasn't a big problem within our office. As far as I could tell, we didn't have any hookers on the staff, and we didn't have any drug-pushers on the staff, and the American officers, in my knowledge of my office, were unaffected by this, and most of the people in the embassy, I think, were unaffected by it. Obviously, there were some people in the embassy probably, who were touched by these blights on the otherwise charming Thai landscape but when I was referring to embassy peccadilloes, it wasn't so much that. It was the innate stupidity of American officials to say or do things that would be taken the wrong way in a Thai context.

Q: Well, I would have thoughI don't know, were you there during the time when the peccadilloes of one William Jefferson Clinton were all over the place, with Monica Lewinsky and all that?

KIEHL: I was there during the period when Bill Clinton paid an official visit to Thailand, so he came off, in Thailand, of course, as one of the great American presidents of all time, because he was the first president to visit there in 28 years. Previous presidents had basically buzzed in there to hold talks about the Vietnam War and buzzed out again, and didn't indicate much show of interest in Thailand. So the Clinton visit was a real high point for U.S.-Thai relations, and that was ithat was actuallthat was right after his reelection. So, if you remember, the scenario of the Lewinsky scandal built after that.

Q: So let's talk a bihow did you find the Clinton visit? I mean, onthe preparations before. Was it the usual very, very difficult problem of dealing with the advance party and all that or did it go fairly well?

KIEHL: Well, I think I've mentioned before that I've been involved with presidential visits from Reagan and Bush, as well, and the Clinton team and I noticed, with each succeeding administration, it seemed to be less professionally done. More of a reliance on volunteers and loyalty to the campaign than people who actually knew what they were doing, in part, because in the Clinton administration by that time had gotten rid of the Billy Dales and all these professional White House staffers who ran visits and dealt with the media, you recall. I forget what that scandal was callethat was ...

Q: That was Travelgate.

KIEHL: Travelgate, yes. The whole Travelgate thing, and, of course, with them gone, you had really more of an amateurish operation in place. People really didn't know this as well, but, like all Foreign Service officers, we'd grin and bear it, and it worked out OK. Fortunately I had enough experience, and the people who came in knew that I had a lot of experience in handling presidential visits and press arrangements, so I didn't get any of these lectures like, "Here's how you suck an egyou put a pin in this end," you know, any of that. So the relationship worked OK.

There were two people in the press advance group, one of whom, her main object was to learn how to be a Foreign Service officer, because she wanted to become a Foreign Service officer, having seen how we did things overseas a couple of times. So she was always trying to get tips on how to pass the Foreign Service exam, et cetera. The other was not interested in such things, and she was a little less friendly, but not one of those advance people from hell or anything like that. Her main claim to fame, however, which we didn't learn until after the visit, was that she was bouncing checks all over Thailand, both to the commissary, and to the embassy and to other places, as well. These were just basically bounced checks, and it took months for the embassy to track her down and get the money repaid, which didn't, shall we say, leave a very pleasant taste in the mouth about the Clinton visit. That people like that would be hired to do advance is absolutely insane. I mean, it showed either total lack of judgment, or lack of any background check.

The visit went quite well, I mean, everything worked fine. We did a few thingbecause it had been years, nobody on my staff had presidential visit experience, unfortunately, We had, actually, I think, maybe one or two people on the staff had been there during a previous visit but hadn't played much of a role in inone of the Americans on my staff had had any previous VIP , no presidential or vice presidential experience. So I basically gave a training course in how to do it before we got the first advance team out there, and also did up a pretty elaborate scenario, and with thathe staff, of course, were very good people. Some of the best FSNs that I've ever had the privilege of supervising were in Bangkok. They put together the visinothing is flawless, but close to being flawless, and it was very complicated, because we had journalists in two hotels down on the river, the Oriental and the Shangri-La hoteland they had docks and we used boats to ferry the press, because of the insane traffic in Bangkok. We used boats to ferry the press up to a dock near the Royal Palace, so that they could change out press pools. So we have trains, planes, and automobiles. We had boats, too, moving the journalists around town, and all these had to be escorted. So it was a logistical feat, and it wouldn't have happened without some very good FSNs, who, while they hadn't had a lot of experience in these kinds of things, had a lot of experience in Bangkok, and knew where everything was, and knew how to get everything done, and they did.

Q: Who was ambassador when you got there?

KIEHL: When I got there, there was actually no ambassador. Skip Boyce was the DCM, and he was chargï¿½.

Q: Who was that?

KIEHL: Skip BoycRalph L. Boyce, B-O-Y-C-E. He's now in Jakarta as ambassador. Anyway, Skiotherwise known as Skiand of course, this was when the old embassy was still functioning as the embassy, and USIS was down Sathorn Road. So we had out meetings in that same office that I alluded to with John Gunther Dean. I think Skip Boyce stayed in the DCM office, he didn't move into the big office, per se, but we always had our staff meetings around the big table, there, and these meetings were five days a weewell, four days a week were country team meetings, and on Wednesdays, you had the expanded country team meeting, and in a town where it's very hard to get back and forth any place, for those of us who were outside that building, it was agony, of course, to do this. I soon learned that the PAthe first job of the PAwas, before anything, to tell everybody what occurred, what happened, what was in the press that day, and to put it in some context, and with that scene-setter, then the country team meeting revolved around reaction to it, which, I suppose, in one sense, was not a bad thing, but, again, what it did is ithat everything was in reaction to what was in the media, which is not, perhaps, the best way of doing it. Having mentioned this a few times and gotten strange looks from people, I decided to just continue this as it was, and one thing it did do is it brought the public affairs of the USIS operation into the stream, because everything started with me.

The expanded country teams didn't have that format. It was a yakety-yakety-yak and around the room.

Q: You weren't moving around each person, say.

KIEHL: Right, and the expanded country team was a really expanded country team. There must have been 60 people in the room. That one I always went to and I brought the press attachï¿½, usually, although if there was something cultural, the cultural attachï¿½ would come, and usually, if we had a new officer or something like that, they would come, at least to be introduced, because they'd need to get their face known, because in that embassy, you could be there for three years and not know everybody, easily. In fact, my last week there, I ran into a couple who said hand I said hand they seemed to know who I was, but I had never seen them before, and they said that they were just leaving, after three years there, and it didn't shock me as much as it would have anywhere else, because, after all, there wer690 Americans and people moving in and the TDYers that we had, and so on, and the fact that there werthat AFRIMS had its own headquarters, the Armed Forces Research Institute for Tropical Medicine, they had their own research headquarters there, as part of Walter Reed, actually, and the AID, and when I was there at first, until they packed up, they had their own compound, and then even when they had moved out, their auditors were there, and nobody ever saw them. We don't know wherI still don't remember where they were located. Of course, JUSMAGTHAI (Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group, Thailand), the military support mission, had its own compound, and Commerce had its own office in an office building near the embassy, and the foreign agricultural office had its own, and the Library of Congress had its own place, and so it was quite spread out, as well.

Even after the new embassy was built, by the time it was built, they realized it was far too small to hold all the people, of course, and that's why, in addition to USIS taking over the old embassy, we also had the first and second floors of that building, and the third floor we had the RAMC (Regional Administrative Management Center) office, and FBIS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service), up on the third floor of the old embassy building. So we had the first and second floors, and they had the rest, and then Marines had some space in the building, and so did the University of Maryland, the overseas university classes were held in there. And that was just in that building, the old embassy. So it was ...

Q: Well, what were the issues that particularly involved you, particularly dealing with the Thais?

KIEHL: Yes. In '95, of coursI got there in the summer of '95. Actually I got therbecause after language training, I was hospitalized for a ruptured disk, which I'm sure was brought on, in part, by the stresses of learning Thai. So it delayed my arrival for almost two months. I didn't have surgery, but I did have therapy at Georgetown University, and finally I got over there the day before my birthday, which was September 1st, in case you ever wanted to send me a card. My first day was quite unusual, in a couple of senses.

Three things happened that day. First of all, there was an impressive Buddhist ceremony at the USIS headquarters, to welcome me, and to bless the building, with Buddhist monks chanting, and all that sort of thing, and this is something that was quite unusual for me, in the Foreign Service, where we generally kept church and state rather distant. But in Thailand, not only did each of the embassand the new embassy buildinhave a brand new spirit house, for the Thai spirits, but there was all sorts of puja ceremonies and religious blessings associated with all sorts of events having to do with the U.S. embassy and the U.S. Information Service and other parts of the outfit. And I always thought, "Well, this is, of course, a nod to the culture of the country and so on," but it also struck me as a little condescending. Would we have done this in a Christian, or a Muslim, or a Jewisdo we do this in Israel? Do we do this in Spain, or Italy? Do we do this in Amman? I don't think we have Islamic ceremonies in association with that embassy, so why are we doing it in this Buddhist country, except in this kind of, maybe, overprotectivagain, the pi-non relationship. It went back to that, in my mind. However, I didn't want to rock the boat, and I thought it really did seem to generate real loyalty on the part of the Thai staff. They felt very strongly about this, and after years of doing this, I thought it would be a really big mistake to try to withdraw from it. So we never did that. I mean, we always participated ...

Q: Well, I can recall a couple things. One, when I was an enlisted man in Japan, up in Misawa, in 1952 or '53 or so, we were building a new barracks or something, and we had a Shinto ceremony there, and I know when we dedicated a new consulate general, or consular post, or opened a consulate in Da Nang, in Vietnam, in the '60s, we had a Buddhist ceremony. I think it's morl mean, this has been part of almosthe Foreign Service, in other peoples' cultures, in East Asia ...

KIEHL: In Asia, particularly ...

Q: Somehow, it hasn't been done as much, I don't know why, but I think it's more there. I mean, we've been doing it for a long time.

KIEHL: Yes. There was a little element of this in Sri Lanka when I was there. In the sense that, for exhibit openings, we would have an oil lamp, and flowers festooned and everyone would get a flower or lei, and occasionally we'd have obviously we'd have close relationships with the Buddhist monks. In fact, when I used to go out in the jungles to show motion pictures, in the jeep, with the generator, and the screen, we'd basically meet with the monk and the monk would gather the crowd for the film, the Apollo capsule film, or whatever it happened to be. So we were more connected to religion, I think, in Asia, than we were in other parts of the world, at least that I've been in. Certainly this is the case much more so than in Europe. If anyone had tried to get the local friar to bless the embassy of a new building in Madrid, I think there would probably be howls of protest.

Q: Well, maybe because you can get away with it. I mean, in the United States, people would get upset if you had something too close to being church and statwell, anyway...

KIEHL: I think it goes back to the pi-non relationship, the elder brother-younger brother. We would take care of you if you follow our guidance, and so we adapted to those ceremonies and so on. So we had this religious ceremony in the embassy, and then we also had a nice birthday cake for me, for my 50th birthday, whicthey had learned that was my birthday, and so a cake was produced. And, in fact, interestingly, my chief press assistant and my secretary's birthdays were, coincidentally, the same day, so the three of us had a triple birthday, which was considered quite auspicious.

The inauspicious part was that one of our library staff had committed suicide at the same time, and we learned of this on the same day as my arrival. Not terribly auspicious. I had never met her, obviously, so it's not my fault, and actually she was estranged from her family, and I guess had some emotional problems, and killed herself, and they found out about it because she was supposed to bring some element of food for the party, and she and the food never showed up, so they went in search of her and they found her. So that waa down side of that initial day.

However, interestingly, because I was the head of USIS and her family was estranged from her, we handled her funeral, to the point where there was the washing of the body, and again, numerous ceremonies in connection with that, and the lighting of the funeral pyre, which, as the elder persol mean, the senior person in the office, the father figurl had to light her funeral pyre. This was, I think, two days after I arrived. So I got a quick course in Thai cultural matters right then. It was not the last funeral I went to. In fact, other than the ambassador and maybe the DCM, I probably went to as many funerals in Thailand as anybody in the embassy, because these were not only funerals, these were important political and social events, and so I went to many, many funerals and prayer ceremonies and it got to be quite ordinary. I mean, you know, I never gave it a second thought. By the time I left there it was, "Oh, yes, I've got to go to the funeral." Maybe do one or two a day sometimes, but an awful lot, of course, came out of this.

We had an employee of USIS who was one of those very important employees that USIS was lucky enough to get sometime, years ago, and that's not the only place that happenein Sri Lanka, we had a woman named Diana Captain, who is still alive and in retirement there. She was a close friend and confident of the Bandaranaike family, and was invited every week to lunch with the prime minister, and so she was a conduit of information for the embassy. She ostensibly was the cultural assistant working fosorry, I was the lthe CAO at the time, when I was there, but in fact, she was the conduit between the embassy and the government of Sri Lanka, on an informal basis, and was an extremely important part of the relationship.

Well, we had an employee similar, in that she was raised in the Royal Palace. She was of noble rank, and was extremely well-connected in Thailand, to say the least. She was not so much a political conduit as in the Sri Lanka context, but if we needed something from the Royal Palace, or from the monarchy, we could use her as the means to get this conveyed and get it done. So she was actually very much in charge of these religious ceremonies that we had. We had a yearly blessing of our headquarters. We also, when we moved, from Sathorn Road to the new embassy, we rededicated the spirit house, of course, at the old embassy, and had a blessing of buildings, et cetera, which was very important. We also made sure that we were able to get a visit to the new USIS offices by the princess, and the embassy sort of piggybacked on that, in a sense. The princess came to congratulate us on our new building, and then we took her across to the new embassy, where she saw the new embassy and then had lunch with the ambassador and a few of us.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

KIEHL: By that time it was Will Itoh, and you may have talked with him, or you should.

Q: No, but I'm planning to.

KIEHL: Yes, he retired earlier this year. I'll let him tell it as he thinks it happened. But I believe the story iand I don't know whether it's true or not but it was the story as many of us heard itthe State Department had decided that Stapleton Roy was going to be ambassador to Bangkok, and Will Itoh was then on the staff of the NSC as the executive secretary, and was going to be assigned to Paris as DCM. That was his reward for all the heavy lifting of working on the NSC staff for a couple of years.. And Bill Clinton asked him, "Where would you like to go? Would you like to be an ambassador? Where do you want to go?" and, as the story goes, he blurted out, "Thailand." And Bill Clinton said, "Make it so," and he got to be the ambassador to Thailand and Stape Roy had to abandon his retirement post to Thailand to go to Jakarta instead. That's the story that has circulated, and it doesn't strike me as being particularly inaccurate, but you could ask him about that.

Of course, because that happened, probably there were some resentments within the Department about it. In a way, it parallels some of the resentments when I got the Bangkok PAO job, and all these Thai hands got passed over. Several people, I suppose, in their well-meaning way, told me what some of these people said about me when they heard that I was going to get the job that they had dreamt about, and I said, "Well, you know, what can I say? If I were in their position, I'd be pretty pissed off, too."

Q: Were there any particular issues that our embassparticularly from your point of viewas dealing with during these three years?

KIEHL: Yes. I keep sidetracking you on this. Ninety-five, of course, was my year to effect these changes, and also to move our office from Sathorn Road into the old embassy. That's what my goals were. Ninety-six was the Clinton visit. The early part of '97, of course, we were basking in the afterglow of the Clinton visit, where we had even closer relationships with all the government officials, and the palace and everybody was glad to see the last of all those advance people, but the relationshiThailand felt it got a lot out of the visit and so on. So the relationship between Thailand and the U.S. was on a really high planuntil July, when the baht imploded.

Now, we knew that Thailand was doing a lot of things in their economy that was somewhat shortsighted, but I don't think there was any accurate prediction on the part of the embassy as to what would happen with the run on the baht.

Q: Which is B-A-H-T.

KIEHL: B-A-H-T, the Thai baht, the Thai currency, which was then pegged at 24 or 25 to the dollar. The run began on the baht, but then it soon escalated to other currencies. That alone would not have caused the Asian financial crisis, but the system, the banking system, and the crony capitalism of Thailand and Indonesia and South Korea and Japan and Taiwaall were shaken because of this, and a cascading series of effects ensued. But it all began with the Thai baht. The Thai-tanic, as they used to call it, or baht-ulisany of those puns.

Q: As you were sitting therand this wouldn't have been your fieland country team meetings, up to them. What were you getting from the economic side prior to that, I mean, all along? Were warning signals coming out?

KIEHL: In a sense they were coming out, but nobody in the economic section suspected that things were going to come out the way they did. Oh, sure, they would say, "You know, the banking system is over-extended on loans herthis bank seems shaky," et cetera, but they didn't put it together in the big picture, and of course they had no wawell, they could have, I suppose, looked at the other countries, as well, but they were really so focused on Thailand. They didn't look at it in an Asian context, they were looking at it in a Thai context, and it didn't appear to be earth-shattering, the way it was.

It soon did become my problem, however, because almost immediately after the crash all the blame on this came onto George Soros and the U.S. government, and the United States as global economic power. Somehow, in the view of the Thai media, the United States had allowed this kind of thing to happen. You see the pi-non relationship again. Immediately, the younger brother said, "Look, we accepted your guidance, now you have to protect us! And protecting us doesn't mean just keeping the Commies out of Southeast Asia, it means protecting our economprotecting us." So the U.S. came in for quite a lot of criticism, some of it reasonably valid and some of it, of course, extreme ...

Q: You mentioned George Soros. He was ...

KIEHL: In currency speculation. Well, he did a run on the British pound, as well. He made fortunes in currency speculation, arbitrage, and made, I take it, a formidable amount of money on the fall of the baht. Well, that's his business, you know. Is he responsible for the economic collapse of Asia? I don't think so, but one could debate that, and they surely did in a rather one-sided way in the Thai press.

Things were not great, but they really got worse when the implosion also hit Indonesia, and then the United States announced it would give a bail out to Indonesia. It didn't give a bail-out to Thailand, it gave a bail-out to Indonesia, and the Thais said, "Hewe have this security agreement with the United States, we're a treaty ally. We have the pi-non relationship. We've done everything America wants. We're a democracwe're a functioning democracy with a free press, all the things that America loves. Indonesia is a dictatorshino free prescorrupt government, more corrupt than we are, eveno security relationship with the United States. These people rarely listen to America. After all, they are Muslims. And the United States bails them out, and doesn't bail us out? Betrayal! Betrayal!" And the pi-non relationship shatters. And I'll pick that up at that next time because it's already time. So it became very much a public relations and public diplomacy issue, as well as an economic issue.

Q: All right, we'll pick it up then. Great.

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Today is the 3rd of February 2003. Bill, here you're faced with this public relationreally, it's a two-sided thing. One, how to present it nicely, or to get over it, and the other one is really more of the political side, to see what you can do to show certain even-handednesI mean you, I mean the government between Indonesia and Thailand. So in the first place, how did you sit down and figure oul mean, what was, sort of, the planning? I mean, was there a meeting, saying, "Hey, we've got a problem?" or how did you about this?

KIEHL: Well, there was a tremendous amount of hand-wringing in the embassy, I can tell you, because everyone was immediately aware of the bad press we were getting. Not only the bad presand it was very bad press. The news articles were somewhat slanted to show the U.S. in a bad light, but the editorial comments were really quite vicious, as though the U.S. was really just spitting in Thailand's face. Not only thabecause that, of course, came through every morning at the country team meetinas I mentioned, I would give this litany of what was going on in the media, and there was many a sad face around the table, the ambassador included, and people were getting quite anxious about it, as I was. Not only that, but they were hearing, from all of their contactthe political section was hearing from their friends at the foreign ministry, "We feel terrible about this. Why are you doing this to us? What have we done to deserve this kind of treatment? Why are you treating the Indonesians and the South Koreans better than you are us?" The economic folks were hearing it from the bankers and from the finance ministry and from the business interests. The Amcham, the American chamber of commerce members, were saying, "This is going to hurt business. People are eventually going to stop buying American goods and we notice our relationship with our Thai business partners is deteriorating. They're really angry about this." And the military guys were saying, "There's a lot of discontent, here."

All this was building up ...

Q: You were saying sort of that the country team meeting would get together ...

KIEHL: Not only were there the faces around the country team meeting when I was telling them what was actually being printed in the newspapers, about America, but they were also hearing it from their friends and colleagues and contacts in the various segments of Thai society. So there was quite a lot of hand wringing, a kind of a Leninist, "What is to be done?" How do we solve this problem? This is a problewhat do we do about it. I talked to a number of my Thai staff and some of the American staff, who were there long enough to understand what Thailand was about, and following a couple of these conversations, I sat down and I wrote a memo to the ambassador, proposing a public affairs plan on how to deal with this. It was rather a long memorandum. It was mildly classified, maybe limited official use in those days. It wasn't terribly secret because it was to be a public campaign.

I wish I had a copy of the memo at hand because we followed it almost exactly for the next year, with very little deviation, but there were two points I made in it. First of all, that this was important, that we had to address these issues directly and answer the charges that were being made about the United States, because in Thailand, if you are accused of something, and you remain silent, you are guilty. You have to answer charges. The presumption among most diplomats is, "Oh, we won't dignify that charge with a reply." That's the worst thing you can do in Thailand. You have to reply. You have to kick them back in the teeth just as hard as you were kicked otherwise it appears that you're guilty. This strikes a lot of people as unusual, but, in fact, there it's quite the correct thing to do.

The second thing was I don't remember if I used the exact phrase in the memo, but I think I write something like, "If you don't have the steak, then you can't have the sizzle." In other words, you can't put a good face on policy if you don't have one, and we didn't have one. Quite clearly, we didn't have a policy. There was no American economic policy to deal with this. It was purely ad hoc.

Q: Did you have any feel for what went on in Washington, and why Indonesia got the largesse and Thailand didn't?

KIEHL: , I can't answer that question, but I can say that yes, we did have a feel for what was going on in Washington, but the feeling we got was that, quite frankly, Washington wasn't paying any attention. Again, that is not something that is completely new to the Foreign Service. The U.S. Treasury Department communicated with the Thai ministry of finance almost exclusively by telephone and fax without even going through the embassy, so that the embassy only found out what the U.S. Treasury Department was saying from the Thai ministry of finance. The Thai would be kind enough to share this information with the financial attachï¿½ of the econ section. He was a State officer, he wasn't a treasury officer. He called himself the financial attachhe was the number two in the econ section. His beat was the banks, and so they would clue him in, and that's how we knew what Treasury was up to, or what they were saying to the Thai. It was really quite a very unsatisfactory circumstance, and it was unsatisfactory from my perspective because I knew I couldn't pin a public diplomacy campaign on nothing, but it was really disturbing to my colleagues in the econ section who felt that they were just being run over, and weren't in the loop at all, and the ambassador was miffevery miffein fact, because he felt that he, as the president's representative, ought to be in on what was going on with the Thai, and, of course, he should have been.

So we took a two-track policy here. On the first side, the ambassador and the econ section and the political section, principally, tried to convince Washington that this was important from a policy perspective, that they needed to have a policy, and they needed to get people out therhigh-level officialto talk directly with the Thai and have the ambassador and his team be part of the discussions, and not do everything by telephone and fax. And they embarked on that, in a big way. Now, that also served my interest, because I said, "OK, once we get a policy then we can promote that policy, but we have to initially start and just talk to people and say that it's not the way you portray it, really. We're not the bad people" to get that out there and get the conversation going with people, and then, hopefully, fill in the blanks." I thought it was very important to get high-level visitors there, because that would provide us the publicity and the platform in order to get the word out to people.

The second part of the public affairs program-aside from the visitthe high-level visitwere regular contacts, as I said, and that meant the ambassador. It also meant the DCM and I and our media section and the econ folks, and we were very lucky, in a sense, because we had a DCM at the time who spoke really fluent Thai.

Q: Who was that?

KIEHL: That was Skip Boyce, the guy who's Ambassador to Indonesia noRalph Boyce. He had a real gift for languages, and he studied out in the provincelived with a familconvinced FSI to allow him to do that, when he was going out there as a political officer. So he'd been there as a political officer, and then came back as DCM. So his Thai was really quite good and quite colloquial, and not "like book," the way some people speak Thai when they come out of the language class. So his Thai was excellent, and then I had an assistant information officer the IO was about my age, and when you learn Thai in your 40s or 50s, you don't speak Thai that well. You try, and you make the effort, but you amuse people, the same way, perhaps, people would be amused by a dancing bear. The amazing thing is not how well the bear dances, but that it dances at all. So I was a dancing bear, and my press attachï¿½ was a dancing bear, but one of his assistants was a true wunderkind with languages, and she spoke extraordinarily good Thai coming out of FSI, and improved it tremendously while she was there.

So I said, "We've got to use these people, because a lot of the most vitriolic stuff is coming out of the Thai language press, not the English language press." The English language press is very influential, because all the government peoplalmost all the government people, other than the politicians from the provinces, who may not actually speak English but were mainly there for corrupt payoff purposebut the bureaucrats, the senior bureaucrats, the civil service that actually runs Thailand, they all know English, and they all read the English-language press as well as the Thai press, so that influences them, but it also influences the foreign public because that's all they can read. So all the embassies there, with very few exceptions, had not a clue what was going on in the Thai press. They only read the Bangkok Post, and The Nation, the two, leading English-language papers, and there were a couple of other minor ones that would rise and fall with the economy. And the Post and The Nation were much more westernized and more professional, you might say, in the Western sense of journalism, with how they did their stories. The Thai press just let it all hang out there. They were just unbelievable. You'd read these things and you'd say, "Holy mackerel, how'd they get that so screwed up?" or, "This isn't news, this is vitriol!" But there were really angry commentaries and the stories were completely bent out of shape, too. It was a different style of journalism, not something that's in the Western tradition. Thai TV was multiple channel and cable, as well, so people were very plugged into TV, but radio was very influential, still, particularly outside Bangkok, and in Bangkok, people had the radio on all the time, and the radio had taken a leaf from the American book, in a sense, by call-in radio was very popular, so you had people vocalizing their opinions, and in order to keep an audience, it had to be as controversial and as much Sturm und Drang (Storm and Stress) as possible. So these talk-radio programs were really vitriolic as well. So, Skip Boyce and the AIO were the two people I wanted to use in the Thai vernacular. We often had lunch with the Thai media, the Thai language media, and meetings with the editorial staff, and they were kind of a business lunch.. You'd have a nice lunch, but then you'd talk about the economic problems, and it would be off the record, but then you could have an on-the-record session thereafter, with the Americans there, and the two excellent Thai speakers, of course, were very good at this, because they had gotten their points down, they knew the party line that we were putting out, and they did it in Thai very well. The rest of us were doing a kind of social conversation in Thai, but I didn't trust my language or the Thai of most of the American staff well enough for us to do a radio interview in one of these high-pressure talk show type formats, because first of all you might come off badly it's so easy, in Thai, to utter an obscenity when you're saying something perfectly normal, just with the tone. It's a tonal language, so if your tone is off, you can say something really vile instead of something quite ordinary. That would, of course, amuse people, but it would blow the message. Nobody's giving you any credibility. So you had to have somebody who's really got their tones down.

On the English-language press, the ambassador and I were the main interlocutors, but also, we always brought in people from the economic section, because they understood this in a way that made it seem as though they were high priests of finance, and so they had authority because they understood the terminology better than, frankly, the ambassador, the DCM, myself or the assistant information officer.

So we did a whole series of lunches. I mean, not a week went by when at least one of these lunches didn't take place. Now, in addition to those lunches, I was cultivating, and the press attachï¿½, and the assistant information officer, and our senior Thai FSNs, were cultivating the media, as well. We were having drinks with them, and chatting with them, and having one-on-one lunches with them, to get the point across that, first of all, George Soros did not cause this. He took advantage of a weak situation in Thailand and in Indonesia and in other countries, and we tried to explain to them how this kind of thing can happen, and it could happen, in fact, and did happen to the British pound, and George Soros made a bundle on that. He made over a billion dollars by manipulating the British pound just a year or two prior to that. So it wasn't an American financier taking advantage of the poor, Asian, struggling democracies. It was businescold-hearted business, and they took advantage of weakness, a perceived weakness.

In the meantime, the ambassador and his policy team were finally making some headway. We were reporting all this back to Washingtoall this vitriol, all these damning statements, and I delighted in making sure that the language of the Thai press was inserted in all of these cables, because it was just unbelievable. I mean, "Oh, our friends the Thai, good guys. They're our little brothers, you might say." It was that kind of relationshiit was a very paternalistic view of the Thai, because we had helped them out in times past and they were good, loyal allies and they were fun peoplthe sinu"fun" is something in Thailand that is very important. People always smile in "The Land of Smiles." All these kinds of thingthis is part of the mythology that Americans perceive of Thailand and the Thai, that they are kind of uni-dimensional, grinning and friendly, and so on. Well, they saw another side of that, and it was shocking to people in Washington.

That coincided with the fact that this was becoming a serious financial problem, which could, heaven forefend, affect the Japanese, and the Japanese were the ones who had the really big bucks, and they also were very heavily invested in U.S. Treasuries, and if the Japanese had to bail out their banks, they would have to pull all this money out of U.S. Treasuries, and that would hurt the U.S. economy very much, and already it was hurting the U.S. economy because our exports were drying up in East Asia, because they didn't have the scratch to pay for them. So all these things were coming together, and I don't say, in any sense, it was the U.S. embassy in Bangkok that twisted the tail of the monkey in Washington and made policy happen, but it was, obviously, another factor. Finally there came to be interest in Thailand, and we had a succession of assistant secretaries of the Treasury and under-secretaries of the Treasury and assistant secretaries of Commerce and under-secretaries of Commerce and finally, the Treasury secretary and the Commerce secretary visited. We also, by the way, because of the military relationship we had with Thailand, trotted out the secretary of Defense, et cetera, et cetera, and numerous assistant secretaries of Defense, and they were there, they were confronted by the Thai officials, they had meetings with them, they heard how disappointed the Thai were in us,. I always arranged to have some meetings with the press where they were asked some wonderfully vitriolic questions, and they responded pretty well in most cases. This, of course, was good publicity for us because it had statements by officials saying how supportive they were of Thailand and how "your pain is our pain," blah blah blah.

And that all worked in our interests, and it also worked in the Thai interests, because they got to talk directly with policymakers, because they were out there, and they were on their turf, and they had a chance to present their case to them. Finally, we were asked by Washington, "Well, OK, if we did something for the Thai, what exactly would this include? What are you talking about here? What have you been talking about all these months?" So we had a couple of meetings, and we said, "OK, now, let's see, what can we do here?" and recognizing that there isn't an unlimited amount of money back there and they've already coughed up, I think it was $8 billion and $4 billion for Indonesia. Well, we've got to get at least $4 billion into the pipeline for Thailand, because they'll compare themselves, maybe not with South Korea, because that's an enormous economy in comparison to the Thai economy, but they certainly will compare themselves to Indonesia, because they were the ones that precipitated a lot of this.

Ad it turned out, we did come up with about a $4 billion program, and we used a device, which I talked about earlier- videoconferencing. We were getting pretty close to the prime minister's people, and the foreign ministry people, because they saw that we were on their side and they were quite eager to help us, and we were happy to help them.

So when the prime minister's visit happeneand he brought a number of his folks along with him to Washington, because this was the time the U.S. aid package announcement was going to be made, and this is kind of a little ahead of the story, but when we did this, we decided to really maximize it to the Thai public, We set up a videoconferencing between Washington and Bangkok, but instead of having an American in Washington talking to Thai journalists in Bangkok, we had the Thai spokesman and the Thai prime minister in Washington, talking to Thai journalists in Bangkok, and it was all thanks to the American technology .

We did two of these. We did one the day before, immediately after the talks, with the spokesman for the prime minister, who did a very professional kind of press conference, and then the next day, we had the prime minister, and for that one, we not only did the same sort of thing that we had done before for Thai journalists, but we also hooked it in to the Thai television networks, live out of our offices on Wireless Road. So we had the Thai prime minister in Washington, through a videoconference, with a couple of his aids on either side, essentially doing a press conference with the Thai press sitting in our office. We had the people doing the conversations in a room about three times this size. It was the old ambassador's office, with a big table and a TV screen and all that, and a dozen top Thai journalists could ask questions and comments.

Then we had another 120 or so Thai journalists, and TV cameras in our auditorium, focusing on the big screen, and we had Thai TV correspondents doing stand-ups in front of the screen. So we had, I think there were, at that time, seven terrestrial television networks in Thailanwe had all seven. We had the cable folks there. We had all the radio people. We had lots of print journalists as well, and so this thing was probably the most-covered event in U.S.-Thai relations, in history, and probably still is. We obtained the Thai equivalent of thNielsens on this, and, of urban Thai, 90% of the television audience watched this, which is phenomenal.

Q: Yes, when you consider an economic conference is not usually the sexiest thing going...

KIEHL: Right, becauswell, you see, this had been built up as the moment when America would come to Thailand's aid, and, in fact, it did. The $4 billion was a mixed bag. We did some things that were relatively cost-free to the U.S. but were very helpful for the Thai. For example, they had bought a squadron of F-16s from the U.S. They owed a fortune for these F-16s. Well, a fortune for Thailana little over a billion dollars. We said, "OK, we can cancel the deal. You don't have to buy those F-16s. So that's a billion dollars back in your bank that isn't going outside. We did some vaccination programs and health programs and AID-type stuff, economic support funds, and so on, and we should have a scholarship program, because one of the consequences of the crash of the currencies in all these countries was that all of the upper-middle class or near-rich Thai, South Koreans, Indonesians, Taiwanese, Malaysians, et cetera, who were spending money to send their kids to college in the U.S., or graduate school in the U.S., could no longer afford it. Suddenly it cost twice as much to send that kid to Ohio Wesleyan. The Thai students were in desperate straits, because the university systems were not set up to do those kinds of fill-in-the-gap type programs for foreign students, and if they couldn't be in school, then they would get expelled from the U.S. because they were in violation of their visa if they couldn't pay their tuition. This is before 9/11, so there weren't terrorist questions here, and we were trying to get as many students to the United States as possible, because at that time it was $7 billion a year influx of money to the United States economy, from people overseas paying tuitions for their kids.

Q: It's a mainstay of our educational system.

KIEHL: It's a mainstay. Half the mathematics departments and probably two-thirds of the engineering departments in the United States universities would close down without foreign students. They just don't have the students, whether they're not smart enough to get in, AmericanI don't know. But I can tell you this, a lot of the math classes, now, at the graduate level, are all taught in Chinese, because no one else there speaks anything but Chinese. We worked with a number of the universities and the alliance for educational exchange, which is f an umbrella lobbying group in Washington. The institute for international education had a website specifically for this, how the universities could provide Thai and other Asian students with jobs or short-term bridge loans. However, it was seen as this would be a wonderful thing if we could do that. I came up with a symbol of our interest in Thailand to anchor the program. It was 156 years of U.S.-Thai relations that year, so I said, "Well, why don't we pick 156 scholarships per year for 3 years? And that would give us x amount of money which is how much we could figure we could get out of the government for this purpose." We thought, "Ah, that would have great symbolic value, one scholar per every year of the wonderful, magical U.S.-Thai relationship."

We had just produced a book entitled The Eagle and the Elephant, which was a new edition of a book about U.S.-Thai relations, so 156 years was known by everybody in Thailand, because we pushed that book big time. It was just after the presidential visit in '96, so that concluded with the Clinton visit with the king at the end of the book, and it was sold all over Thailand, so it was a common thing, that people knew it was 156 years, 156 scholarships. For three years, because we had that much money and we had that much money thanks to AID funds, because I turned to USIA and USIA turned us down flat. USIA said, "We can't do anything, we don't have any money, because our budget is shrinking so much that if we took it out of there we'd have to take it out of another country in Asia and they're all in bad shape." The most they could do is increase the Fulbright program slightly, but we ballyhooed that as well. So, the White House fact sheet was issued at the time of the prime ministers visit and we maximized the publicity. We had signing ceremonies, handshakes and grinning people signing documents, for severawell, six months thereafter, I believe, at least six months of ballyhoo about this visit and the largesse and so on. We had gradually turned the corner before that, but that really turned the corner.

It was like day and night. After that prime minister's visit and the money was on the table, you might say, although it wasn't really back on the table yet, it was promised, suddenly the Thai media, with very, very few exceptions, just said, "Oh, well, I guess America is our friend after all. They came through when we really needed them," and the picture turned around, but they still needed to find some scapegoat, and the scapegoat, they decided, was Japan, and so Japan got battered by the Thai. Not as badly as we did in the very beginning, but if there's any party guilty here it'"Well, it's the Japanese! They haven't fixed their banking system for 10, 15 years they've known this was going to happen! We just followed the Japanese model, and the Japanese model is a disaster." We didn't do much to counter that argument, but the Japanese didn't seem to be able to. I mean, they had a very able ambassador there, who made wonderful speeches and was very smooth, and so on, but they just didn't have the public relations juggernaut that we had.

Q: Well, I mean, this brings up something. In your experience, do you find that the fact that we come from a country where public relations has always been a key factor in business and all, that we have a fairly sensitive and relatively fast-moving machinery, or we did, anyway?

KIEHL: I'd say we did. I actually don't know whether this would work today, because of the different structure. USIwe were essentially an independent force there, and so we could experiment in ways that, I think, as a component of the State Department is very hard to do. Also, of course, we don't have the staff that we had then, and we don't have the resources that we had then. So it's hard to say. I don't think it would be as successful, and also, you have to understand another thing. That is, particularly in a place like Thailanand it's true in many parts of the world. It's not necessarily true in all parts of the world, but in Thailand it was quite obvious that USIS was seen as something separate from the American embassy. It was seen as a U.S.-Thai organization. It was seen almost as a bi-national organization, in a sense. It was not seen as the U.S. embassy.

First of all, we were in a separate building with separate headquarters. We accentuated that difference as much as we could. We were much closer to the Thai; we worked in tandem with our Thai employees, so that a Thai journalists or an academic would have just as equal a relationship with us as they'd have with our Thai employees. In other words, there weren't Americans and FSNs on two different planes of life. We worked together in the same offices. We didn't work on separate floors. We kept our classified information to an absolute minimum so that there was free movement of people and paperwork and so on. And, of course, there's a long history of this, where there were 18 USIS, branch offices out in the provinces at one time, showing movies and talking to students and all this sort of thing.

Q: Sort of like the America House pattern that we had during ...

KIEHL: Very much, very muceven more so, actually, than the America House, but the America House was seen as a German-American institution, because, in fact, it was. The buildings were donated by the German cities, generally, and the libraries, of course, were staffed with Americans and Germans . I think that really made a huge difference in how the Thai perceived us and how our message could get across. When we sat down talking with them, they looked at us as "USIT." That's how they would say USI"USIT," because the final "s" is a "t" sound, in Thai.

We were not looked upon as embassy officials. We were looked upon as USIS officials, and USIS had its own mythology therpeople understood what USIS was, and it wasn't the embassy, it was something else. In a sense, it might have been more similar to AID when AID was big in Thailand, because the AID officials were out in the provinces working and they weren't considered embassy officials, and they had a counterpart organization which AID had created in order to funnel the money into Thailand, which still exists there and is still a very important office. We did something similar. We created, in a sense, an office in Thailand, because we needed to work with a Thai counterpart, particularly on counter insurgency , during the Vietnam War era. So the public relations department, which is under the prime minister, was set up, so that we could interface with somebody in Thailand, and the public relations department is still a component of the Thai prime minister's office, and it runs radio stationI think they have 56 radio stations throughout the country. And they are the counterpart organization that we dealt with on VOA broadcasts, because we have a VOA relay station. I should say "we" the U.S. government has. In those days, it was the U.S. Information Agency had. VOA was part of USIA, so our relay statiowe had two relay stations. We had a small, medium-wave relay station outside of Bangkok which broadcast in the region in Lao and Burmese and Vietnamese and so on, and then we had a big relay station, which is probably five times the size of this facility [NFATC] with eight gigantic towers broadcasting short-wave, mainly to Central Asia and Russia, but also to China and to other parts of the world, and that would all come in from satellite links and be rebroadcast.

It was a very complex relationship and a very productive one for many years and it still is, as far as I know. The PRD (Public Relations Department), of course, was the counterpart to that, as well. So the Public Relations Department was their overseas USIS, but it also had a huge domestic component. It's as though all of the public affairs offices of the various government ministries or departments in the United States all got together under a single head and that would be the PRD, and it was under the prime minister in Thailand. It would be under the president or the National Security Council in the U.S. context. Of course, this doesn't exist, but it did in Thailand, because we needed it to, and it evolved that way, essentially during the Vietnam War era, mainly because of the counterinsurgency program. We had FSNs ambushed and killed on the road because they were considered the enemy by the Thai insurgents during that era, and they were the enemy, because we were trying to counter their efforts throughout rural Thailanto turn Thailand into another Vietnam or Laos, essentially. That was the domino that didn't fall.

Q: In the first place, were you able to recruit? I mean, up until recently, sort of from the educated upper class for USIS operations? And two, were alumni from our operations seated throughout the media world, including the government?

KIEHL: Oh, yes, very much so. During my time in Thailand, we still could recruit some of the top people in the country to be FSNs for us, but in years previously, we were really extraordinarily plugged in. We could recruit people. We had an FSN in our cultural section, Khun Poonsang -actually she was an ML (Muang Luang) that's a noble rank. She grew up in the palacshe was raised in the royal palace, and so she was extraordinarily plugged in to the royal family and to the royal palace bureaucracy and so on, in a way that you couldn't be. You couldn't acquire that. You had to grow up there, and you had to know these people, and you had to go to school with them in the royal school, the elementary school in the palace grounds. So that was the kind of person we would have there.

In other countries, we had FSNs of similar close connection. I remember in Sri Lanka we had Diana Captain, who worked in our cultural section, but, in fact, did almost no cultural work. She was the conduit with the prime minister, because she would have lunch every Tuesday with the prime minister in Temple Trees (the official residence of the PM), just a one on one lunch. She was the conduit for American policy. If you wanted to get something across to the prime minister of Sri Lanka, I can tell you, that's how you did it, and vice versa. That conduit was two ways. It was an invaluable kind of contact for the embassy from a political aspect, but also, because of the USIS connection in a public diplomacy context.

Of course, we could hire really top-flight journalists in our press section, and some top-flight journalists would work there, and then they would move out and they would leave and they would go to be an editor of some newspaper or radio station, or so on. We had an extraordinarily close relations with a lot of these people, because once a USIS alumni, always a USIS alumni. They were still friends and colleagues. A very close friend, and a very good friend of America, was the guy who was in charge, not of the PRD, but a similar organization in the government, (MCOT or the Mass Communications Organization of Thailand) which also ran the licensing of radio stations. It was like the FCC of Thailand, you might say. Not only was he a close and good friends of the U.S. he had been sent on a scholarship there, had studied in America, had gone back on an IV grant. He actually had worked for us for a time. Even from his job, there, he would write a column in a major Thai newspaper on the good side of America. So he was really a close, close friend, and, unfortunately, while I was there, he was assassinated. A very tragic situatioit had nothing to do with his U.S. sympathies. He actually was going out to dinneit was his wedding anniversary, and he and his wife were driving to the restaurant in their Mercedes, and- (end of tape)

Q: You were saying with a motorcycle ...

KIEHL: Oh, yes, this is a common assassination technique in Thailand. You can have somebody killed for $50 there. At least you could in my day. Probably it's more like $150 today. But in any event, one assassin is driving, the other is sitting in the back with a good quality pistol, and they pull up to you and you pop the guy ofyou shoot through the window and kill. Well, it's not too hard. And it can be done in traffic, it can be done almost anywhere, The assassins are on a motor scooter and once they've fired the shot, then they take off, and that's exactly what happened. He was shot right behind the ear and killed instantly. As it turned out, it had nothing to do with his U.S. sympathies. What had happened is, they finally caught these guys, and they rolled on the person who hired them, who was a Member of Parliamenwho, was a son-in-law of a woman who owned a chain of radio stations, whose license was rejected for renewal. So she decided to get her son-in-law to hire some assassins to kill the guy who was in charge of the organization that supervised it.

Justice didn't do him any good, of course. He was dead. His wife, was totally wiped-out by that, and his son, who was studying in the States at the time, flew back for the funeral, and vowed to carry on his father's fight for a free press and democracy and all that sort of thing. I have since lost track of him, but I expect he's in Thailand, doing something like that himself, today. But it could happen quite easily, that kind of thing. It was not an unusual thing. Even though this is a Buddhist society and one things of Buddhist as being completely peace-loving and calm and all those wonderful attributes of the Buddhist way of lifI was going to say "faith" but it's really a way of life. People are people, and some of the most disgusting crimes I've ever heard of were committed in Thailand. And, there is some terrible exploitation of people there, whether it's the sex trade or the drug trade or corruption in general. It was common knowledge that to be a police captain, you had to pay a bribe of $50,000, and then you got to be a police captain, which would give you authority over a precinct, and you could make that $50,000 back in no time, just on the gambling, skinning off the gambling receipts and so on. So there was a lot of corruption there, of that sort, too, but this happens everywhere in the world.

Q: After, sort of, the currency crisiwell, you were there until when?

KIEHL: I left in '98. Actually, all was settled, and it was time for me to leave. Incidentally, speaking of contacts in USIS, there was a young man who used to come into our library, for many years, when we were down on Sathorn Roathe old librarand he would use our facilities, and he still continued to use the library even during my time, but he wouldn't come in anymore, he would have materials delivered to him by a driver or he'd send a driver to pick it up. But a lot of research for him was done through our library. His namhe was the son of a well-known family in the silk trade, the Shinawatras. He later became a police captain and through that police captaincy, he used to buy used IBM computers, and he managed to get the contract for computerizing the Bangkok police department, and amassed a certain amount of money that way and got into the communications business, and owned a cable TV system there. Well, his first name, his most common name, is Thaksin, Thaksin Shinawatra. He's currently the prime minister of Thailand. That's not an unusual situation, but that's, perhaps, the most famous one at the moment.

Q: There was a school of technology, wasn't there? It was an off-shoot of MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology).

KIEHL: Well, I'm not so sure it was related to MIT, but it was the Asian institute of technology or AIT, and it's still there, of course.

Q: Were you working with that?

KIEHL: To some extent, I was. AIT, of course, was originally set up by AID as the university for SEATO, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, when SEATO's headquarters were in Bangkok. This was SEATO university, and it was for Asian students, from all over Asia, to come there and get American-style technical training with American and other professors from around the world in the region, and it was one of the smartest things that AID did, in Southeast Asia.

The money eventually dried up. AID went away. In fact, the U.S. government doesn't put any money into AIT, and hadn't even in my day, but there was always an affinity for the U.S. because of the Asian Institute of Technology's history, and many of the buildings were built by AID, and so there's a little plaque there that says thaa handshake kind of thing. A number of the members of the board are Americans, including a former ambassador. John Gunther Dean is a member of that board of directors, and the current U.S. ambassador is often named to that board, as well. And there's also a former foreign minister of Thailand, who was one of the most extreme critics of the U.S. during the time I was there, and I think, still, recalls with less than happy circumstances, the feeling that he was taken advantage of by the Americans in the 1960s and early '70s, having to do with the Vietnam War. In any event, his name was Thanat Kolman. He may be dead by now. I haven't seen an obituary for him, but if he still alive, I'm sure he's quite an elderly person.

There were all these connections there between the U.S. and AIT was, I thought, an interesting and fascinating place. They were always asking me to come up there and play golf on their golf course. We had a Fulbrighter up there, and I wanted to continue that relationshil was on the board of the Fulbright foundation there, as part of my job, and I'd try to keep that linkage going with AIT, because I thought it was very valuable for a couple reasons. First of all, it had evolved, AIT. Now, Europeans were giving most of the money, but the Thai government was also contributing a lot of money to it. It was becoming a largely Thai university, because, as the money from AID shrank, people from outside the region had other options. They could go to the U.S. to study technology, as well. I was interested in using the Albecause they are in Thailand, and they are also a Western-style technology institutwould be an obvious and very good way for the U.S. to have Burmese trained, so when the day came when the SLORC government in Burma fell, you'd have a cadre of people who were trained to Western science and methods, and also have had an exposure to democratic systems.

There was a scholarship program funded by the Congress at the time, and it's still going on, which takes 30 or 40 Burmese out of the refugee camps in Thailand, and sends them to an American university, the University of Indiana where they have a four-year undergraduate program, and then, as many of them as possible go on to graduate school, and not a single one has ever left the United States. It's essentially a free ticket to the U.S.

Q: There's nowhere to go.

KIEHL: There's nowhere to go, exactly, and no one's going to force them to go. If they went to AIT, those 30 or 40 Burmese, who got their undergraduate education and graduate engineering degrees, et cetera, the Thai would send them back to Burma, which is really where they belong. I mean, why is the taxpayer paying for scholarships for 30 Burmese to stay in Indiana every year? We wanted them back in Burma, and so I tried to convince in vain, to convince Washington that this would be the ideal way to do it, and I was working on the AIT people in that same vein, to try to get them to sign on to this idea. They were quite sympathetic to it.

It would have also meant that because they were in Thailand, the Thai would say, "Back you go." They couldn't get a free ticket to the U.S. from there because they would be going back, and they would get good quality education, exposure to democratic systems, Western ways of doing things, et cetera. They'd still have their degrees and everybody would be happy and the U.S. taxpayer would get more benefit for it. But it didn't work out. Those scholarshipl can't condemn them, totally, but I think they were basically done to say, "Ah, we're training Burmese in America," rather than to have it actually work. Nobody really cared if it worked or not, it was just the idea of doing it, which is politics as usual.

Q: Also, Indiana's the home of Senator Lugar, who was a powerhouse when he was the head of the Foreign Relations committee.

KIEHL: Yes, but I don't think Lugar was actually instrumental in this; this was more out of the House. But nevertheless, it wathere was politics, as there is in everything. But AIT is really a premier university there in technology.

We worked with them somewhat, but our main focus was Chulalongkorn University. Chulalongkorn University is named after Chulalongkorn, the head of the current dynasty, of the Chakri dynasty, currently, and it is the premieit's like the Harvard-Yale-Columbia-Princeton of Thailand, all rolled into one. There is another university, Thammasat Universitits pedigree is not quite as good, but it is also a very good and very solid university, and it's kind of the Berkeley of Thailand. And in fact, in a political sense, it is. An east coast establishment, you might say, for Chulalongkorn and kind of Berkeley and all its attributes for Thammasat.

Thammasat University produced a lot of the journalists in Thailand, and for that reason, we were very involved with them. Chulalongkorn provided the country's leadership, and so, therefore, we were involved with them, as well. And there were other universitiel mean, we spent a lot of time with the universities, because Thailand, like many other countries, has a huge and growing university population. It's not just the same small elites that were running the country 30 or 40 years ago. It's spreading out, and we needed to be in touch with these people and to get ideas across to them. So we did a lot of things. Through cooperation with Voice of America, we donated all sorts of radio equipment to Thammasat University for its radio station. We trained a lot of people there. We jointly trained students in journalism. At Chulalongkorn, we were in constant work with their American studies department and their history department their international relations folks and their think tank, et cetera, and, of course, we arranged for the president to go there and speak at Chulalongkorn University and get an honorary degree from the university and do a rope line with the students, which was a really huge hit back in '96.

And then, of course, there were provincial universities. Chiang Mai University was another important one. We had Hillary Clinton up there on the same visit. She arrived in Chiang Mai and did her speech up there and got an honorary degree before joining her husband in Bangkok. So we covered the north, as well, with Chiang Mai University. There are a couple of others. Khon Kaen University is very important, as well, out in the Issan region, and there are a number of other universities. I'm not going to slight any of thethere are a lot of good universities like business schools in Bangkok, too, and we worked with them all. The Fulbright program was good and fairly large. My main effort there was to trand it worked pretty much up through the Asian financial crisito get the Thai to put more money into it. When it was set up, originally, the Fulbright program was seen almost as an extension of AID. It was a State Department program administered by USIA people in the field. It was that same kind of notion, that here is America with the center of learning and power and intellectual powerhouse, and here are the Thai, who must be taught how to do things. That was a kind of 1950s, '60s, approach to Thailand, which had a lot of validity then, but time moves on and countries change and grow and so you had a situation where the Americans were all going to Thailand to be professors, to teach, and the Thai were all students, going to the United States, when, in fact, it should be a mix of both to the other country. There's a lot Americans could learn about Thailand from Thai professors, and a lot of American students would benefit from going to Thailand to study and research, et cetera.

So we were changing that mix, slowly and painfully, because the Thai didn't want it, either. They wanted to stay at status quo, because they got all these free professors to teach at their universities, and all their students were going out there, getting knowledge in America, and bringing it back. So they liked that, but we thought that was too much of the old paternalistic role for a modern country, and so we were gradually evolving and changing that, and we were also trying to change their financial mix, because the U.S. traditionally had paid more than 80% of all the costs for both sides, for the Fulbright program, and we wanted it to be closer to 50/50. Obviously, it wasn't going to be 50/50 the next week or the next year, or even in the same decade, perhaps, but we wanted to see some progress in that direction, and we were, actually, beginning to whittle that away and change the mix just slightly.

We also wanted to include business people on the board. They way the board was set up, originally, the ambassador was the honorary chairman, that meant, "Stay away from the meetings. Don't get involved here. Your name is on the letterheathat's enough," and there was a senior official, usually a former ambassador to Washington, who was named by the foreign ministry as the chairman, and then there were four Americans and four Thai, and the Thathey were dominated by government. DTEC was on the boarthat's the AID counterpart organization, and the foreign ministry was on the board, and ministry of higher education had a person on the board, and there was another government person. It didn't matter where from, but there was another government person. So there were four government officials on the Thai side. On the U.S. side, there was a public affairs officer, of course, and a cultural affairs officer, who worked for mthat's two of us from the embassy. Then there were two private sector people, an American academic resident in Thailand and we usually got someonfor example, a representative from 3M was there, or, a Ford Motors executive, something like that, from the business community. We thought that was a very healthy way to do it. Usually one of those business people was also the treasurer, since he could have his accountant in the local office keep the books. And then there was a Thai executive director and the Thai staff.

We were pressing the Thai the whole time, saying, "OK, you have all government people here, and we have a mix of government and business people,". We said, "Can't you be more like us?" In other words, instead of all these government people, can't you have a business person and somebody from the academic community there? The Thai yielded on the academic community, they had an academic as part of their board, as well, from Chulalongkorn University or someplacactually, it was Thammasat Universitbut they never did get around to putting a business person on Board and, of course, I understood why that was, even though it was our policy to keep trying to edge them toward that. It's because, who are you going to get who's honest in the business community to put on that board, who isn't going to be under intense pressure from the whole society in order to get scholarships for people? It would be an impossible situation for a single Thai businessperson to be on that board, but we continued to try that because that was our policy, to do that.

We did make some progress, in the sense that we did move from an all-U.S. teaching and all-Thai students to more of a mistill dominated that way, but more of a mix. We actually got some more money from the foreign ministry, from the Thai foreign ministry, to kick into the Fulbright program. So much so, in fact, that we were able to buy a condominium office for the Fulbright commission down on Sathorn Road in the Thai Wah Towers. The Commission, for the first time, had a permanent home that they owned, that the foundation owned, and that makes a big difference, of course, and that was through the good offices of the foreign ministry. They gave a grant, a one-time grant, which we matched, I think, to get them into that.

Then there was another organization which I can't leave Thailand without talking about, and that's the American University Alumni Association, or the AUAA, and its language center and library-the AUA. There are two components to that. One was the fact that this is an organization that was put together by alumni of American universities, including a crown prince of Thailand back in the 1920s, and it was a private organization, and then, after World War II, when USIS came in there, we formed, with them, a more perfect union. We and the AUAA created the AUA, which was, essentially, a bi-national center that specialized in teaching English to the Thai and had a library and cultural presentationall the kinds of things that are associated with a bi-national center. They charge tuition for the language classes and the AUA was given a plot of royal land in order to erect their headquarters, and USIS put a lot of money into that in the early days, helping to construct the building and staff it and so on. At one time, I think there were three USIA officers permanently attached to the AUA in Bangkok. And there were branch AUAs around the country as well, not coincidentally near the USIS branch posts around the country.

This was an organization that really flourished for a long time, until USIA started being cut in budgets, and the threat of Communism in Southeast Asia was less, and so therefore, USIA kept peeling away the branch posts and so, at a certain point, it was my happy duty, as the new PAO in Bangkok, to tell the AUA that this year's $30,000 grant was the last money they were getting from us, period, and that we wouldn't be giving them any more money in the future. That was the end of our grant relationship with the organization. Well, this was not a catastrophe, it was more of a symbolic loss for them than it was a real loss. In my position, I was also a member of the AUA board, so I was in on those meetings. And there was also the AUAA board, and that board, whose meetings and minutes, were all in Thai, usually had the DCM installed as the member of the board. In the case of Skip Boyce, it was, and when the DCM wasn't a Thai speaker, or couldn't handle that, then usually the PAO was a good Thai speaker and could do that, or somebody else from the embassy who was fluent in Thai was appointed to that position.

So we always had a member on the board of the AUAA, which was a Thai organization, but had a close organization with the U.S. They had a social gala every year, with several hundred dollars of couple tickets and the king and the queen and the crown prince and the crown princess and all these people were plugged into that. So it was very important, from a social and symbolic value that we were involved in, and the AUA language and librarlanguage school and library, the BNC boarl made sure I was on that. And that, again, had a couple of American business people, and an American academic and myself and a couple of Thai academics and so on, and then it had a, for the first time, because we were no longer giving money and we cut the slot, it was no longer an American director, who was actually a USIS cultural affairs officer, we got our first Thai director, who was a former board member, a former Thai air force officer who was appointed to that position. The director of courses which used to be a USIS teaching officethat slot was gone, too, so they hired a retired English teaching officer from USIA who wanted to do it. So it had ratcheted down but it was still very important, and, in fact, the AUA had eight offices in addition to Bangkok, the main one in Bangkok around the country. It taught thousands of Thai students English, from a very simple level, for children, small children, and to English for special purposes. So they would teach legalese English to lawyers, or medical English to doctors. So it was an across the boarEnglish language program.

We had given away, those librarians that we could shed, to the AUA when the library closed down for USIagain, because of budget reasons. We transferred those people to the AUA, and the old American library collection of books some 25,000 bookwere still there in the AUA building complex. We helped to support that by advising them what books to buy every year. So our senior library staff became the information resource center staff which ran our internet programs and our website and our electronic research capabilitieadvised this library, which was still shelving books and magazines how to keep that up. And that was really perfect for the students, because they needed that in addition to internet.

The AUA was making real money they didn't need our $30,000, because they were making about a million dollars a year, which went intpart of it went into a building fund, part of it went to charitable concerns, and part of it went into new books and materials. But a lot of it did go into the building program because they were under the gun, and when I joined the board, already, eight years previously, they had been notified that they had to vacate the AUA building, and they had been stalling for eight years. This is royal property and the royal purse had plans for that. They wanted to develop that property, which is right next to the Rajdamri compound that was owned by the U.S. embassy, I mean, literally, it was right next. They wanted to build a 50-story skyscraper there. The whole city was full of skyscrapers they were building. Fortunately, for us, the Thai financial crisis basically put that back another 20 years, because they've got skyscrapers that are empty all over town. But that was the deal. The AUA would have to move out into another building, which had already been identified, move all the classroom space, and the library and all this stuff, and there was an auditorium there which was used a lot, I mean, it was a 1200-seat auditorium. This is not small potatoes. They had to move all their facilities to another building for a minimum of three years and then move it back into the skyscraper, and they would get, according to the deal with the royal purse the equivalent in square footage that they were giving up, because all their buildings would be torn down, and they would be getting like four floors of the 50-story building, and it was right up by a sky train stop.

Q: I want to move on

Q: . In '98, what happened?

KIEHL: Oh, I transferred.

Q: Where'd you go?

KIEHL: Back to Washington.

Q: To do what?

KIEHL: Well, I was going to go back to a job in USIA, to be defined later, because they had some plans for me. But USIA was then being hit with the possibility that we would be amalgamated into the State Department. So I was asked if I would do a kind of completely new job. When I got back to Washington, it had already been decided that the Western European area of USIA would be moved over to the State Department, to be lodged within the bureau of European affairs, as a prototype, to see if public diplomacy could fit in the State Department in that format. So the Western European area office physically moved over to the State Department. This is before the legislation which changed the world for public diplomacy as we know it.

That was fine, except for one thing. The then-bureau of European affairs, which did not have Eurasia did have Eastern Europe. It had Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the Balkans, as well as Western Europe. Well, the Western European office didn't have anything to match that, because there was an East European and Russia-Soviet Union office still over in USIA. So, they tried to figure out, "Well, what can we do? We're only dealing with Western Europe here." So what they did is they said, "OK, we need some senior person who understands Eastern Europe, and that person can be the person who can advise the Western European bureau on public diplomacy for Eastern and Central Europe." So, naturally, I was the person they picked for that. So I was physically over in the Western European office, which was within EUR at the time on the third floor of Main State. This is exactly where that PPD (Office of Public Diplomacy) office for EUR is today. I actually located my old office space there the other day. So that was my new job.

I would work with both the Western European public diplomacy office in EUR, but I'd also have the resources of the Eastern European and USSR office over in USIA to backstop, because they were the desk officers for those countries, over there, physically removed, however. They called it the senior policy officer for Eastern and Central Europe. Well, as it soon turned out, I arrived, and, as we know now, it had already been pretty much decided that we were going to go to war against Serbia over Kosovo, and no matter what anybody did, that was going to happen. It's very similar and kind of an eerie echo to Iraq.I knew, sitting up in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, that we were going to go to war with Iraq in October of 2001. I knew, when I took the job that we were going to go to war with Serbia over Kosovo no matter what happened. It was foreordained.

I don't say that lightly. Really, it was pretty clear to me that that's what was going to happen. So, as it turned out, in spite the grand-sounding title, I was really the person who dealt with the Balkans, public diplomacy as it was related to the Balkans. But it was not only public diplomacy, it was also public affairs in the U.S., because EUR had a public affairs office as well, and so it was a kind of bifurcation there. As you know, in the old USIA, we were prevented from dealing with the American media and the American public, because of the Smith-Mundt Act, but in the EUR context, I could deal with the American media, so we got placement in the Washington Post in addition to the European press. The point of all this was to make the U.S. case on Kosovo, and to isolate Serbia in the international community, so that Serbia would have no friends in Europe, and that was the object of my attentions for the next x number of months, working pretty closely with the National Security Council, a staffer named Jamie Metzel there, who was international information subcommittee chair for the NSC.

It was not a thing I particularly relished, because I really couldn't see where U.S. national interests would be served by going to war with Serbia, and what would we do with Kosovo, because Kosovo is not a viable state? It would only be viable if it were attached to Albania, which is right next door anyway, and I think that's probably what the Albanians wanted and many of the Kosovars wanted the same thing. The question was, well, is this in U.S. national interests? And I had a hard time with that concept, and so I resolved I would get the hell out of there at the first possible opportunity, because I didn't agree with what had become our policy, nor did I particularly like the way the policy was being run. This little committee over at the NSC was fixated on clandestine stabilization of Serbia, and every time an idea came uthere were two AID representatives there, and they said, "Oh, yes, we'll support that," and they had the checkbook out, ready to write the check for it, for posters or for leaflets or whatever it happened to be. I just thought that this was wrong-headed, so I wanted to step out of it. I wasn't so committed to this that I would resign in protest or anything like that, but I didn't want to be a part of it.

Fortunately, I had learned that an old friend who had an interesting job over in the old USIA building, now SA-44, was thinking of retiring and he wasn't sure when he was going to retire, but he thought maybe it would be in November or December. I went over and talked to him about his job and what the deal was, and it was a fascinating job. You reported to the then-associate director of USIA for educational and cultural affairs, but you actually reported to six different government departments, you were a director of the staff of an interagency group that was formed under executive order at the time. But there were rumors that Congress wanted to put it under law, which would strengthen it enormously. The then-associate director of educational and cultural affairs, was not very popular in the Bureau. For many of the staff there was something they just didn't right about him. Maybe he was under-qualified for the job, or maybe he had some problems. No one could quite figure out what it was but there was something there.I didn't want to work for this guy, but then I learned he was going off to academia. So those two things came in concert, and so I immediately, in the time-honored way of USIA, did not lobby for the job, but I let it be known that I was interested in it, and I got my friend to mention that fact to a number of peoplthat he thought I'd be an ideal successor, et cetera.

So, in the way things worked in USIA, I got the job. My friend retired, the associate director for the educational and cultural affairs bureau left and a new one was appointed, who I heard was a nice guy, and I'd be happy to work under him. So I did get the job, and I was able to get out of that job in EUR and I was replaced by about four people, and then, of course, things spun the way they did. But I was out of it, and I could sleep better at night.

Q: All right, so we'll pick this up in '98. What was the job called?

KIEHL: I was staff director of the interagency working group on U.S. government international exchanges and training. We called it IAWG.

Q: Working group, or something like that?

KIEHL: Working group, and it was under executive order at the time, and the other coincidence, happy coincidence was, just as I took over, Congress added an amendment to the Fulbright-Hayes Act which created this as a legal entity and set up its structure and required it to do certain reporting to Congress and the president every year.

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

KIEHL: Great.

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Q: Today is the 13th of February, 2004. Bill, you want to continue?

KIEHL: Yes, I think I was talking about the IAWG last time. The IAWG, of course, is the interagency working group on U.S. government international exchanges and training, which, again, was started with an executive order. Actually, it was started as an informal thing in the early 90s, when USIA was supposed to do this. It was an office in USIA that was supposed to coordinate all the exchanges of the government. Of course, everyonincluding, well, actually many parts of USIA just simply ignored it. So that office did annual reports but no one paid much attention and no one outside the USIA ever contributed much to it.

Then it was firmed up a bit with an executive order, back in the Clinton administration, and it got a little traction, because people in the office of management and budget wanted to get a fix on international exchanges. There was a feeling, and no one could prove it, that there was a lot of duplication in this area, and a lot of money could be saved, if they found the duplication and then could eliminate it. There were some people on the Hill who felt similarly, and so, that was the real motivation behind it, and they did get through this strengthened executive order, and some parts of the government did contribute, although some just simply stonewalled and said they didn't have this kind of information and they weren't about to set up a whole bureaucracy in order to get it.

Then, finally, through the efforts of, again, people in OMB[Office of Management and Budget) and on the Hill, this became a law as an amendment to the Fulbright-Hayes Act, and once it became a law, it was mandatory for government executive departments to participate, and by and large, they did. I had relatively little trouble going after the information that people had. What was really the problem was the information they didn't know they had. There were some departments of the government, like the Energy Department, that were so disorganized. Nobody knew what the office down the hall did. It was a huge bureaucracy, and it was one of those things where people would be happy to help you if they only knew what you wanted. AID, for its own reasons, was a little wary of giving too much information, because they thought it might be used against them, to try to cut their budget and so we had to work very diplomatically with them. The nominal head of this groul was the executive director or staff directowas the assistant secretary for education and cultural affairs, who started out as associate director for the education and cultural affairs in USIA, and he transitioned over with the consolidation of the foreign affairs community. The other people were all at about the same leveassistant secretary levewell, in AID it was an assistant administrator, and the others were assistant secretaries. So it was State and AID, Defensthat was manpower and training, of course, over in Defense, for some strange reason, because the way Defense is set up, there is no exchanges office.

In AID it was their center for human capacity development, or some-such bureaucratic term. I don't think it even exists any longer, but that's what it was called at that time, and then the Department of Education of course - the people who actually ran a small Fulbright Program for education and the post-docs. They were the ones who were the logical people, and so there was an assistant secretary for higher education who was the nominal head there, but the working stiffs were the people who ran the Education Department's Fulbright program. And, of course, OMB was represented by a budget analyst, senior grade, who was really a fireball about thireally was pushing the idea, and OPM (Office of Personnel Management) could have had someone there, but nobody showed any interest in it. National Security Council was also a member of the six agencies and their attendance, was, if anything spotty, if almost nonexistent. They had bigger fish to fry, they thought.

So those six were really the ones that were the people I reported to on a regular basis, but there were 42 other government agencies and bureaucracies, everything frowell, cabinet departments like Treasury and Commerce, the ones you'd expect. Agriculture, and so oto people you wouldn't suspect, like the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Marine Mammal Commission.

The big players were the defense department, AID, education, and USIA/State, which became the big player then. Most of those exchanges were in those four departments, but there were significant numbers among Agriculture, Treasury, Energy, the Justice Department, with its ICITAP (International Criminal Investigative Assistance Training Program) programs, and so on.

Q: Were you seeing, as you were looking ayou were looking at this when? What's the date?

KIEHL: The years for this werwell, November, December 1998 actually all the way through the summer of 2000.

Q: Were you seeing any particular focus, geographic, particularly, or country-wise, where people were coming from ...

KIEHL: Oh, yes, of course. The big influx was the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, thanks to the Freedom Support Act, and the Support for Eastern European Democracies Act. This provided huge amounts of money in those years, and still does, to some extent, for exchange programwell, for all sorts of programs, but exchange programs were a big part of that. Not only the exchange programs that were run by USIA and then State, but programs that, through AID, went to Justice and Commerce and Treasury and Agriculture and HHS (United States Department of Health and Human Services) and all sorts of other government agencies. Most of these department, for examplthe classic example of this is Justice, which had no money whatsoever for international exchanges, zero. And yet, they were probably the fifth or sixth biggest exchange organization in the government. Energy was way up there, too, I should say.

Q: Where did we get the money?

KIEHL: Justice got its money from AID foreign assistance funds, and AID, of course, didn't know how to run a judicial program, or police-training program. They had nobody left by that time who had any expertise, except in contracting. People who actually worked on the ground years ago, for AID, doing real things, mainly road-building and engineering projects and water and healtthey had all disappeared off the labor force as regular employees and come bacif they came back at alas contractors, because they kept wanting to shrink the number of personnel for AID. AID kept shrinking, and the only people left were contractors, or people who dealt with contractorthe people who were in grants management. So AID, essentially, was the prime contractor for U.S. government development, and they had all these subcontractors, which are, of course, clustered around the Washington Beltway, and further a field, as well. So in addition to those contractors, they realizethat government had a lot of expertise, so the Justice Department got involved in this in a pretty big way in Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union. They did police training, they did judicial training, they did training of justice departments and ministries of justice in these countries huge programs, and all paid for with foreign assistance funds.

Q: What about China?

KIEHL: China was also a large contributor to exchange programs, in terms of sending people to the U.S., but it's interesting that China had a much larger program of privately paid students. I remember back ...

Q: Who was paying for it?

KIEHL: Well, their families. The Chinesthere are thousands and thousands of Chinese students in the United States and in other Western European countries, who are getting their graduate degrees and so on, paid for by their families. Their families either are wealthy enough to do it, or they take out huge loans, which are paid back over many years, so that that chilit's usually one child per family in China, isn't it? Maybe twso that that sousually son, but sometimes daughtewill get a graduate degree, and, therefore, have a ticket to financial independence. They're willing to make those sacrifices, and they do, and it's a huge income for the U.S. People think of rich Arabs as the ones who send their kids to American universities and pay for it, but there are actually far more Chinese doing that.

Q: Were you, I mean, were you looking at this as just sort of administering this, or we looking at this from a policy point of view? In other words, "Gee, we're neglecting sub-Saharan Africa, or we should do more for Indonesia," or something like that?

KIEHL: That was the underlying purpose. I mean, bean-counting is only bean-counting, otherwise. This was an important part of it, though. We tried to get all the information in one place, in a uniform way, so that you could have some basis for judgment, to develop policies, or to reinforce policy assumptions. So by getting the input from 4well, actually, there were 60 different organizations that inputted information. We had a rather elaborate system that went from the abacus to the computer in the two or three years I was there. It was pretty rudimentary in the beginning, but by the time I left we had an interactive website that all of the agencies offices had pass wordein other words, it was a secure site, a secure-socket site, which anybody could access from the various government departments by putting in their ID and password, so that they could, then, input information into the system centrally, from 60 different government bureaucracies. We loaded the software on, we had training courses for all these people and so on, and it was fantastic, because in a matter of minutes you could get the data in, and the advantage for them was that they could also get the data out. In other words, their own informatioin most of these government bureaucracies, first of all, they didn't have it stored in one place. They couldn't work with it, they couldn't use it as a policy instrument, because they didn't know what they had or what they were doing. This way, they could actually look at their own data in a uniform way and run reports based on igraphical reports, analytical reports, et cetera, based on their own information and comparing them with the rest of the bureaucracy. So this was great for all those offices. I'm sure they got lots of brownie points with their front offices by their wonderful analysis of the data that they produced, all of which was fed to them by our system.

Q: So we've sort of talked about the techniqunow let's look at the mega-picture. In the first place, what was sort of the zeitgeist ol mean, were you sensing the powers to be understood the importance of the exchange program? I mean, to my mind, I'l won't say a converl'm right from the beginning. I mean, this has been an extremely importanour universities, particularly, have been a great source of goodwill towards the United States that seems to be dissipatinbut people understand the United States...

KIEHL: To the extent that we are understood at all, it's because of those programs, I guarantee it.

Q: Did you feel, sort of, the policymakers really understood this?

KIEHL: The short answer is no. This never went beyond the level of assistant secretaries. It had no traction in the stratosphere, because there was no grounding in exchanges beyond that level. In a sensl don't say that they were appreciatively converted because many of these government bureaucracies that were doing exchange programs weren't doing them in the sense of exchange programs. They weren't doing it for the reasons that, say, the State Department does exchange programs, or even that DOD does exchange programs. They were doing it in order to give opportunities for their people or for American scientists to gain some knowledge about something. Pure self-interest, which is finbut they never did have the concept that this was an exchange program.

They didn't even think of it in those terms, in many cases. They looked at a lot of it as training. The AID component, for example, was essentially a training program, and a lot of the other government bureaucracies looked upon it as training programs, either for their own staff, or more likely to train people in the American methodology of doing something, so that they could communicate with them in the same terms in the future, or because they had an opportunity to use some of their people, and give them something interesting and exciting to do, to travel to Botswana to train judges, because they were getting bored just being assistant U.S. attorneys somewhere. It was an opportunity to enhance their backgrounds.

And so these are legitimate reasons, too, but they weren't the classic exchange program ideals. But the people who put the concept of the IAWG together and got it put in executive order in that law, saw this in two ways. First of all, as a way to make the government more efficient, by eliminating waste and mismanagement in these exchange programs, which they assumed existed on a large scale, because we're talking about a great deal of monewell, not a great deal of money in DOD terms, but a great deal of money in State Department terms, and, of course, it had a foreign policy componenthe furtherance of American interests were also very important. So those two things were the overriding bases from the people who were already convinced of this, but it didn't ripple too much beyond them.

Q: Well, now, as you're looking at the folks in these thingI mean, you were the outfit that was putting the picture together, where the world (ph) was coming.

KIEHL: Right. It was not only numbers, but analysis. For example, we did specific analyses for particular types of programs. For example, business development training and education, which brought interest from a certain slice of the 60-odd government bureaucracies. AID was involved in that, but so was Commerce, so was Treasury, so was the SEC, so was the OPall of these people had their own programs falling into that, and we did an analysis of that, for example, in Eastern Europe, as a way of figuring out if there was some duplication of effort, or how these things could reinforce one another. That was what was known as an analytical study. Another one would be country studies. We diwell, in the time I was there, we did six different countries. We sent interagency teams ouin addition to collecting the data internally, we sent interagency teams out to talk to the country team people and to talk to officials in the country, to get a feel for the effectiveness of these various programs, and how much knowledge was shared. This was another thing that was an agenda of the IAWG. In order to let government bureaucracies see the successful programs, and then, perhaps, emulate them, or to at least see what worked and what didn't work. And those one country studies were quite interesting, too.

There were some places where, clearly, these exchange programs reinforced each other and built upon each other, and that contributed to a much more successful outcome, and there were others were nobody knew what anyone else was doing, and they were all going off in their own directions, and, of course, that was terribly inefficient. And so by publicizing these, Congress, of course, has an interest in that, but also the administratiowhatever administration it is, and the various bureaucracies themselves do also. They wanted to look good, and so when they found that by sharing information and coordinating efforts they looked bettethat was the carrot. The stick, of course, would be if they failed in their mission. Then Congress would cut their budgets, and there were a lot of people in Congress who were mainly out to cut money out of exchange programs because they were looking for money for other things.

Q: As you looked at thiwere there any areas where we were, you felt, that as far as government programs are concerned, there was a shortfall in having exchange programs, particularly geographic areas.

KIEHL: Well, geographically, they were the Middle East and Africthey really got the short end of the stick. Europe and Eurasia got an enormous amount of the resources.

Q: Why? I particularly think, I mean, we have so many problems in the Middle East. I think this would be a place we would be putting an awful lot of ...

KIEHL: Not in those days.

Q: Even then, when you consider whathe problems we've had, but I guess a couple of major countries were out of the question, and that's Iran and Iraq, weren't they?

KIEHL: Yes, they were, and AID still had a robust scholarship program in North Africa and the Middle East, in those days. I've read in the press that they've gone from 20,000 to 900 scholarships in the Islamic world. Well, that's stupid and almost criminal, of course. Those 20,000 probably were certainly the lion's share of that kind. Of course, a lot of these "scholarships," were not scholarships for people to come to the United States. One thing that AID did a lot of which was inexpensive on a per capita basis but wasn't a true exchange program, was the regional training program. So AID would bring people from all over, say, Africa, to Nigeria, or all over Asia to Bangkok, for a training program, and that would count that as training and the numbers would be reflected in the amount of money and on a per capital basis that would look like a very efficient program. But the participants' exposure to American life and institutions were minimal in that training, it was a training program on how to turn the screw this way and not that way. The FAA did a lot of that. They'd send people out for training programs at airports. Well, that training consisted of how to make the radar work, and while they had some exposure to an American in the process, it was hardly anything that I would call an exchange program.

Q: I think we ought to move on. When did you leave and what did you do?

KIEHL: . The deputy associate director of USIA at the time was a career civil servant. It was normally a Foreign Service job, and Joe Duffy, for one reason or another, had promised this person, who had some political connections in the Democratic party, that position, and so this went from a career Foreign Service officer position to a career civil service officer. The AFSA (American Foreign Service Association) union and others were incensed by this, because it was just another example in USIA, of the Foreign Service being decimated, and senior jobs disappearing. And so, they went to Duffy and raised hell, I suppose, and so he said, "OK, this job will be a one-year job, and then that person will move on." Of course, this was after his time, so he didn't really have to worry about what happened at that point.

Well, that year was up in June of 1999, and so, I had built up a pretty good relationship with the associate director of USIA at the time, and he asked me if I'd be interested in the deputy position. I'd have to bid on it and go through the process, but he thought I'd be a strong candidate. So I thought, "Well, you know, this is getting me into a more political arena, but it's a great job, so why not?" So I did that, and he went through and interviewed all the people and so on, and he picked mHowever, even though I became the deputy associate director, and then later on segued into the State Department, he wanted me to retain the job of executivor stafdirector of the IAWG. So I did continue that. I had a very good staff, and I would meet with them every week to make sure that things were on track, but we knew we were going to be consolidated into State by that time. We knew there were going to be all kinds of changes, so there was really no point in filling a job that might not exist in three months, or four months. So that's why I did that initially.

The other thing about IAWG, before we get off that, is that this organization was, really, something that was quite unique and innovative. Because of that, the IAWG got one of those Hammer awards from Vice President Gore, for government reinvention, doing things in a new and different way. So once that happened, and the fact that it was a Congressional statute, we knew that this thing was going to be enshrined. Nobody was going to take it away again. And so, I felt that I didn't have to really fill that slot right away with somebody, because we had pretty well bipartisan support for the organization. So, to that extent, I maintained touch with that all the way through the summer of 2000, and technically I was still the staff director when I left Washington.

Q: Where did you go?

KIEHL: Well, from the IAWG, obviously, I went to what is the 7th floor equivalent of USIA, the eighth floor of SA-44, to be the deputy associate director of USIA.

Q: You did that for how long?

KIEHL: Well, I did that for a total of three months, until we became a bureau of the State Department. Then the associate director became the assistant secretary, and then I became the principal DAS (Deputy Assistant Secretary) and two of the other office directors, who were political appointees, also became DASes.

Q: How long did that last?

KIEHL: That lasted until the summer of 2000, when I got out of town and went to Carlisle to be a diplomat in residence up there.

Q: What was your feeling, and how did the conversion of USIA to State go?

KIEHL: Well, there were a lot of good intentions. I have to preface it with that. But it was, I would say, close to being an unmitigated disaster. It was really I mean, this is a unique thing. You don't "disappear" a government agency very often. And the morale factor in doing that tells the employees that what they've been doing is worthless, first of all. So that's what your starting point is. So you have to go out of your way to make sure that they realize that they're not worthless, and that what they've been doing is important. That is, if you want to have any kind of morale at all in your organization. It seemed as though, with the reorganization, many people in the department went out of their way to prove that USIA didn't need to exist in the first place. Most people weren't petty or small-minded, but there were enough people like that and when there's always an incident someplace, it got magnified by word of mouth.

A simple example is the destruction of the term U.S. Information Service. This is something that existed when there wasn't a USIA. It was part of the State Department. It was called the U.S. Information Service when there was no USIA. It was the information and cultural offices of the State Department after World War II. When USIA came along they adopted the USIS name and continued it. Obviously the word "agency" overseas doesn't sound gooservice sounds much better. And in some countries it didn't have a whole lot of branded identification, but in most of the world, it did. There was a real brand identification. You asked any educated person overseas if they'd ever heard of USIthey did. They had some acquaintanceship with USIS, even if they didn't with the U.S. embassy. And the first thing, one of the first edicts that came down after the consolidation was, that hereafter the word "USIS" would be stricken from the book. There would be no USIS. It would only be public affairs section (PAS) of the American embassy. Well, that's just downright stupid, and it was taken as much by most of the American and FSN former employees of USIA, as a gratuitous slap in the face. That's just one example.

Aside from the morale issuewhich, of course, would be the same in any small organization being taken up by a large organizatioin the corporate world it happens all the time, so this in itself is not a unique situation, where a small entity is swallowed up by a large entity, and the large entity would like to get the resources of the smaller entity but wishes to retain control over that, and that's essentially what the State Department did with USIA. It absorbed the resources of USIA without giving up any of the control.

Q: There's a duplication. I studied this rather closely the Rogers Act of 1924, when the diplomatic and consular officers merged. Consular officers represented a much larger portion and were much more professional because they hadn't been plagued with political ambassadors, political staffs and all that, but the diplomatic side swallowed ul mean, it took all the positions, practically, and left the consular officerand it still shows. There's substantive work and they don't say non-substantive work, but somehow, political and economic officers do substantive work, and USIS consular officers and administrators do non-substantive work. It is part of the ...

KIEHL: Right. I think the term that's liked to be used by some people is "technical." It's really a technical thinit's something you have to go to trade school to learn.

Q: Yebunch of counter-jumpers.

KIEHL: That's right. Well, so there was a morale issue, and I don't mean to minimize that at all, because that's what I, as the senior career person in that bureau, had to deal with every day, the fact that anyone who could retire thought seriously about retiring immediately. And I think we lost, overall, about 200 of our most experienced officers. Banlike that. They said, "This is not what I signed up for. If I wanted to be a State Department officer I would have joined the State Department. I'm out of here."

That left a bit of a gap. It left a gap not only in experience in dealing with public diplomacy overseas and in Washington, but it also left a gap in the gravitas category. We didn't have as many senior officers to go up and fight for what we thought we needed in the everyday battles of Washington. And they werl mean, the State Department, much more than USIA, is used to the rough-and-tumble of U.S. bureaucracy. It's an everyday occurrence in the State Department. USII don't know whether it was because it was a small agency, but I think a large bit of it had to do with the fact that it was a small agencbut people were much more civil. Confrontation was minimal, whereas in State, it's maximal, especially when one is talking about money. So we didn't have as many people to do battle in the bureaucracy, who had some background and experience and a community of interest with people over 30 years, for example, as we would have had if these people hadn't bailed out. I couldn't blame them for thathey were due their retirement and they didn't want to make the transition, so they left.

In large measure, the reorganization was looked upon athe real problems here would be, essentially, administrative problems. And therefore, the people who needed to do most of the negotiating needed to be administrative and management people. This was just a matter of moving some people into the organization, and therefore, we just want to make sure that all the procedures are the samthat there aren't different procedures to do things, because that would be confusing. So they tried tI would say most of the negotiation in the last three to six months before the integration of the foreign affairs bureaucracies, was between the A bureau, in State, and the M bureau, in USIA.

Q: That's Administrative and Management, yes.

KIEHL: Righwhich more or less cut out the Foreign Service, because most of the management people in USIA were civil service, not Foreign Service. It also cut out the people who were interested in overseas programs, and less in grants management and logistical movement of people and equipment and that kind of thing. So when the integration occurred, all the computer equipment was duly registered. This is the level at which they were thinking. All the office spacall the leasewere now in the name of the State Department and not USIA, et cetera. The personnel systeeverybody got converted over with DS-50 on the 1st of October. It said: Termination notice September 30trehired October 1st.

So all that was done, but because USIA had worked in a different way than the State Department grants system, that grants system was actually organized in the ECA bureau, not in the M bureau, because the grants that USIA gave were out of the E bureau in USIA ECA, not M, OK? Well, things weren't tied up, which meant that the State Department routinely pays its bill six or eight months after they get the bilroutinely. It's not a big deal, you know? They're dealing with large vendors, et cetera. USIA is often dealing with Mom and Pop operations, for youth exchange programs. If they don't get a check three weeks after they've put the invoice in, they're out of money. Well, we were faced with that. We had 300, 400, 500 different grantee organizations desperate for money, because they weren't being paid, because the State system is so slow. There were people who were taking out mortgages on their homes to pay the bills, and this went on for months. We did everything we could, within the bureau, to get the system to work faster in the State Department, and finally, what they did, is they did adopt some of the USIA methodology in paying grants and it went faster. And people also got to realize that they couldn't get their money as quickly as they had in the USIA days, so they made accommodations for that. That was another serious problem.

Of course, the other serious problem occurred even before consolidation, because the deal was that all of USIA would be put into a single bureau in the State Department. Now, the original plan, I believe, was for one bureau for USIA, and there were going to be three bureaus pluPM for ACDA (U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency). Now, on the face of it, this looks a little strangat least it did to us USIA people, who weren't part of the negotiations here, because ACDA had 280 employees and they were going to get three bureaus, and then PM would join with that in this T configuration, and USIA had about 8,000 employees. Well, now you have to take 4,000 away because of broadcasting, and you have to take all but, say, another 2,000 away for FSNs, but there were almost 2,000 Americans, and they were all going to be put in a single bureau with one assistant secretary. Even more unnerving to the USIA people, particularly, the education and cultural people, was the concept of putting information and culture all in the same bureau, which would have, first of all, violated the Fulbright-Hayes Act, because the purposes of the two bureaus were quite different, and it would raise all those horrors that go all the way back to 1978 with the merger of the CU of State into the USIthe fear on the part of the academic community that this would be turned into a propaganda vehicle.

There was a lot of concern in the academic community. There was an organization called the Alliance for International Cultural and Education Exchange, an umbrella organization of about 50 exchange organizations, that went on record saying that this was a very bad idea. But the leadership of the department and the administration didn't seem to feel this way. They did, however, get to the Hill, and so both Bidden and Helms sent a letter to the White House, saying that the two bureaus should be separated, and that was, of course, a lot of pressure. But I have to say, the guy who was assistant secretary, or, I guess, associate director, then, took a big change. He went to see a friend of his in the White House and made the case for the separate bureaus on his own, and that case was made sufficiently well, and it appealed to Clinton, who was, after all, a protï¿½gï¿½ of Bill Fulbright. Clinton overruled Madeleine Albright and told her:, "There will be a separate bureau for education and cultural affairs."

This did not make a lot of friends in the upper reaches of the State Department, either, and so that came back to haunt that bureau and that assistant secretary, and to some extent, because of my association with him, me, later on.

Q: Who was the assistant secretary?

KIEHL: Bill BadeWilliam B. Baewho was a Washington hand for well over 40 years. He was the president of the Eurasia Foundation at one time, and chief of staff for the Senate foreign relations committee. So he was not a barefoot boy from the back of a turnip truck. I think that was probably his proudest momenhe saved, the educational function as a separate entity, and it has a separate appropriation in State, of course.

Q: Did you get any feel, during this thing, about the role of Madeleine Albright and her interest in this?

KIEHL: Well, I would say I gave her the benefit of the doubt. I think she's the only Secretary of State that I've actually ever known relatively well, in that I showed her around Prague when she went back to Czechoslovakia for the first time, and introduced her to the dissident community there. She did remember me, because when she went to the U.N., she asked for me by name as her press person, and USIA told her), "Oh, I'm sorry, he's already got a job." Don't you love it? Wouldn't you think that they would make the calculation that it would be good to have a friend as her rep at the U.N., and say, "Well, whatever that job is ..." It was a USIA bureaucratic job. I found out that Madeleine Albright wanted me, for the first time, through the Czech ambassador here, who came up to mMike Zanatowsky, who was an old friend and he said, "Bill, I understand Madeleine wants you for her press post up there?" And I said, "I hadn't heard a thing about it." I actually went to see personnel and they said, "Oh, yes, she had asked for you, but we told her ..." Don't you love that? I mean they were either unconscious or diabolical, I'm not sure which, to this day.

Q: I think it's just the bureaucratic mind. There's no thought about the importance of getting the right person in the right place.

KIEHL: The same thing happened with Leningrad. State asked for me for consular general there, and USIA said, "Nope, we have other plans for him." So that was one of USIA's drawbacks. They didn't have the big picture, or maybl wouldn't say they didn't have the big picture, but they didn't know how to play the bureaucratic game, and to make alliances.

Q: One of the things in my interviews, over the last 19 years or so, is that you do have a feeling that USIA jobs in Washington are kind of uninspiring ...

KIEHL: It's time-serving.

Q: Mostly it's time-serving, but having been on country teams and all, abroad, this is absolutely, the top, extremely important, very exciting jobs, and you have this dichotomy between the two. Whereas, with State, you can often do more in Washington than you can abroawith exceptions, of course.

KIEHL: Not only can you do more, but that's how you get promoted.

Q: Yes. So, I mean, it doesn't surprise me to see that nobody thinks of the big picture. Well, Bill, I want to keep moving on. I keep pushing that.

KIEHL: Please do, yes. So anyway, he did get this through, and finally, as it turned out, there is a bureau of education and cultural affairs and a bureau of international information programs, which is the old information bureau of USIA, and then, of course, PA (Bureau of Public Affairs) was included, just to make up the three bureaus there. Probably when somebody does an historical analysis of all this, that's probably the most important thing that anybody did to preserve public diplomacy, because if the two organizations had been in the same bureau, I think it would have been a real disaster.

Q: You finished with the end of the Clinton administration, did you?

KIEHL: Just before the end of the Clinton administration. Let's sel guess it must have been June or July of 2000. Let me go back, actually, as a little preface to this. This is kind of an unpleasant situation, but it is all part of life. Because my boss, Bill Bader, had done this, Madeleine Albright, who heretofore had actually known him for a long time, he told me, refused to speak to him, and when he entered a room, she would turn away from him. This was easily translated down to the undersecretary, Evelyn Lieberman, who was like most undersecretaries, trying to get close to the secretary, and Lieberman, as you know, was bounced out of the White House because she was supposed to keep the interns away from Bill Clinton, and literally, Hillary banished her to VOA, as director of VOA, because she failed.

Q: We're talking about Monica Lewinsky and all that.

KIEHL: Or genericallnot just Monica, but generically, I think. So Evelyn Lieberman ended up with VOA, and we heard stories of her at VOA as being an absolute maniac, just a frightening person, a terrible person to work for. Kevin Klose is a friend - he was a Washington Post correspondent in Moscow when I was there, and later become head of Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and ended up as the head of VOA, the kind of working-level head of VOA, and that whole structure, under Evelyn Lieberman, and he quit, he couldn't stand it, and left and went to head up NPR (National Public Radio). So he actually ended up pretty well.

Well, with the reorganization, guess who we got as undersecretary? Evelyn Lieberman! And aside from her reputation at VOA, nobody knew very much about her, but in any event, she tool guess she was sensitive enough to know about this, and also, probably knew that Bater was the guilty party who enabled the ECA bureau to be independent. That concerned the undersecretary, too.. It is a problem for all PD/PA undersecretaries, because the undersecretary for public affairs and public diplomacy has a staff of 15 people and a budget of $8 million. The assistant secretary for education and cultural affairs has a staff of 320 in the bureau and about $350 million. So do you think that assistant secretaries for education and cultural affairs pay a whole lot of attention to the undersecretary? It's very hard to get them to do that. So she was determined, in one sense or another, to punish Bader. (end of tape)

So, if I may caveat this, this is my perception. I can't speak as if this is the Holy Grail, the absolute fact, but it's the perception, and I think it was Bill Bader's perception, too, because we chatted quite a lot. We were pretty close. Anyway, the first thing she did was take away all his authorities. She worked with L (Legal Affairs) because she was the inheritor, in other words, she represented the secretary of state in public diplomacy. The authority stemmed through the secretary, through the undersecretary to the assistant secretary. She could stop that at the undersecretary level, so that's the first thing she did. She withheld all the authority of the assistant secretary for grant making, et cetera, and this didn't come to light for some time, because Bader, who had been confirmed by the Senate as the associate director of USIA for educational and cultural affairs essentially was doing the same job in the State Department. The bureau, according to Fulbright-Hayes, may be lodged in any bureau of the executive branch.

They required that he go through a confirmation again. Okay, well, here's Bill Bader, who's the former staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and he would have a problem with this? However, they deliberately tried to block it. They took as long as possible to send the nomination over to the White House. They tried in every way possible to block his nomination, I mean, Lieberman and the secretary and the State Department. It's only because Bader had friends at the White House who had a direct line to Clinton, and had friends on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee from his days as staff director that he was able to finally get that nomination, after about five and a half months.

So he was really hamstrung. They tried to do him in, and they didn't succeed, but they did withhold the authorities to the point where every grant had to go over for Lieberman's signature, from SA-44, it had to be couriered over the seventh floor, and then some assistant would have to read it and tell her whether she should sign it or not, which of course was 99.9 percent of the time, because we already approved it to send it over.

She had also determined that there weren't enough women in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at a senior level, and quite frankly, I agree with that, because the assistant secretary was a man and the three DASes were men. The only other political office director there wasn't given a job. She was let go when the reorganization happened, but not by Bader, but by the political establishment, because he didn't have any authority to hire these other people either.

Now, the other two DASes and I, the three male DASes who were put up to be DASes, I was segueing from the deputy to the principal DAS. The head of the Office of Academic Exchange was moving to DAS for academic affairs and the office director for professional exchanges was a DAS for professional exchanges. Normally, this was a rather routine piece of business. However, they insisted that one of these positions would have to go to a female: quota. It had to be a female in one of those three jobs. We thought, I thought, that frankly at least one of the others ought to be nonpolitical. There shouldn't be two political DASes and one nonpolitical DAS. AFSA felt the same way there.

The one political DAS was a former president of the National Education Association. Now, there was something in his background which made it impossible for him to get confirmation in the Senate. They would never let him go forward for a confirmation because this something would come out that he couldn't be confirmed. So he had to be satisfied with a DAS job which didn't require a Senate confirmation, and he was a very powerful guy as the former president of the NEA. The Democratic Party will do anything for the NEA, right?

The other DAS was former chief of personnel at the White House. So these guys aren't going to get replaced by a woman. If they want to be DASes, they will be DASes, right? So they said, okay, get rid of Kiehl and put a woman in that job, and Bader said, "No, I'm not going to just get rid of Kiehl and put a woman in that job. If you want me to re-look at the job now that we're in State, have people apply for the job and I'll look at them and I'll choose the best candidate, and by all means, send me female candidates," so they did, and he still chose me. That also infuriated Lieberman, who was a woman's rights person in an extreme way, and she felt that this was an offense against her personally.

She came over one time to our offices and I thought, "Oh, great, this is a chance to sort of clear the air with this person and see what she's like, and I'm pretty good at charming people." I was looking forward to this opportunity, because she had never deigned to see us before. This was in the very early days. So she came over and she went in to see Bader first, and I could hear through his closed door, which was also a bulletproof door. (Charlie Wick had had bulletproof doors installed on all of the senior political jobs' doors, because he was afraid of assassination by the troops) Anyway, even through that thick door, I could hear screaming inside, muffled screams. I thought, "Jeez, should I go in there? What's going on?"

I went back in my office, which was right across the foyer from the assistant secretary's office. She walked into my office. I started to get up, she said, "No, sit down." She slams the door shut behind her and screams at me, saying that she's been told that I'm a terrible person, that I'm a criminal, and blah, blah, blah. I'm flabbergasted. This is the kind of screaming act that you only see in films.

Q: This doesn't happen in the real world.

KIEHL: No, this doesn't happen.

Q: She was saying she personally was told that, or that you were being told you were a criminal or something like that?

KIEHL: No, she had been told that I'm a terrible person, a criminal and all this sort of thing. I said, "What are you talking about? Who are these people? Why don't you ask people who know me?" I could barely get a word out because she says, "Quiet, I'm doing the talking here!" kind of thing. It was unbelievable. I'm sure my jaw hit my desk. Still, it's the most amazing thing I've ever experienced in government, the only time anything like that's every happened, I think, even close to it. She said, "But in the end, I've decided you'll stay."

I don't know whether I said, "Thanks for the vote of confidence," or "You won't be disappointed," or something like that, and then she snarled again and stalked out of the room. I followed, trying to say something to her, and she went stalking off with a couple of her aides outside. They met up with her and off she went like a witch on a broom, and there were several people in the outer office in shock, because they had heard everything. I didn't have a bulletproof door. This was reverberating throughout the entire top floor of the building.

So I went over to Bader. I opened the door and he came out and we looked at each other and burst out laughing. It was the only thing we could do. It was the most absurd thing we had ever experienced. We had really a laugh. We almost doubled up with laughter, because it was sort of a pressure gauge-type thing, too, but he told me what she said to him, and I told him what she said to me. We got a huge laugh out of it, but at the same time, it was scary. It was scary in a couple of ways. First of all, it meant that the relationship with the undersecretary's office was in big trouble, and secondly, that this woman was crazy. I mean, out of her mind.

Q: What was her background?

KIEHL: She was a schoolteacher and she worked for Edelman's outfit. What's her name? Mary Edelman? It's a political action group for women's rights and education and something like that.

Q: Not NOW (National Organization for Women) or something?

KIEHL: No, it wasn't NOW. It's not a women's rights thing per se, it's kind of a liberal women and children's issues. I'm thinking it was the Children's Defense Fund. That was where she got her start in politics, I think. But really, she was out of her mind, if not permanently, at least temporarily insane, in both of our opinions. We were just floored by it, absolutely floored by it. The poor people in the outer offices were in shock. I won't mention their names because they might get in trouble some day, but a couple of these folks, who are civil service grants people and so on, they were very conscientious, good-natured folks and all that, and they wanted to consult me about something so they were waiting in the outer office. They were shaking.

Of course, it probably took a nanosecond for this word to get around the building, throughout the whole bureaucracy. Well, anyway, Bader said, "Well, no matter what all this was about, at least she has given up on trying to fire you and replace you because of your gender." So that was great. This goes on. Little by little, she gives up some of the authorities because it's just too much work, and a few authorities are given back every now and then.

Then, a some weeks later, Bader comes to me and he says, "She's back at it again. You have to leave or I'll never get the authorities. She's told me I'll never get the authorities over grants unless I get rid of you somehow. And she's basically blocking the formal naming of you as a DAS. You're acting principal DAS, but she won't allow that to go through the D committee because of this." So I go home and I say to my wife, "How did I ever get into this? I thought I'd do the guy a favor and be his deputy and now all this crap is coming out. What is going on here? This is insane." And my wife says, "Well, you can retire anytime you want. You could have retired in '95. Do whatever you want, but you don't have to live with this." And I said, "No, I'm not going to give them a victory."

So I went back to Bader, and I said, "I'll leave, but I'm going to leave on my terms and not on her terms. I'm going to leave in the summer of 2000 when it's time for a rotation. I'm not leaving before then, and if she doesn't like it, let her try it and I'll bring a lawsuit that will make her head spin." And I went over to see the director general and I told him the same thing. This was Skip Gnehm. He said, "Well, don't worry. This is a terribly unfair thing, blah, blah, blah, and we'll see that you come out of it all right." I said, "Okay," looking in everyone's eyes to see if they were lying or not.

So I go back and I finish out my time there, until the summer of 2000 and I don't get any more screaming fits from Lieberman. We actually even have occasionally a civil conversation, because I would almost always represent Bader at the secretary's morning meeting, because he didn't want to be in the room with Madeleine Albright, so I would sit in the 8:30 meeting on those things. So after the 8:30 meeting, I had to do two things. I had to brief the undersecretary's chief of staff, who wasn't in the meeting. Lieberman was maybe in the meeting, but she would never tell anybody what went on, so I went over and I briefed him on what went on in the meeting. Then I'd go back and brief Bader and the senior staff of our bureau, the way you normally do.

Then, occasionally, there would be an undersecretaries meeting. Bader would usually go to those to spare me Lieberman, but sometimes I'd have to go. At those meetings, she was civil, if cold and formal. I didn't get anymore screaming matches and so I was just counting the days until I could get away from this woman and this whole horrible situation. So I went to personnel and I said, "I'm going to be leaving here in the summer. I want to get as far away from Lieberman as possible, but I can't go overseas now, because my mother's just had a heart problem and she's going to have to be moving to a retirement village.". A friend in personnel, I won't say who this was either, said, "Bill, you're a minister counselor in the Senior Foreign Service. If you don't want to get promoted to career minister, you can do any damn thing you want to do until your time runs out." And I said, "Really?" And he said, "Really. Go find something and the State Department will do it."

So I looked into the Council on Foreign Relations, but that would have meant living in New York, and they wouldn't pay for that, and I looked into the Wilson Center downtown, the Woodrow Wilson Center, Keenan Institute. But they were having Moynihan in, and he was bringing a coterie of a dozen people with him, and they were afraid that the best I could get would be a seat on the couch and not a proper office or anything. I went over to see the detail people and see what was available. I wanted to do something where I could be closer in Pennsylvania, because my mother was going through a bad period. Had I thought about it, I probably could have been diplomat in residence at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, which would have been a little closer. But there was a position replacing Grant Smith at the Army War College in Carlisle at the Peacekeeping Institute. It's an MC (Minister Counselor) level job. Nobody quite knew what you did.

So, I said, "I'll take that," and bing, bang, no problem. A phone call with Grant Smith convinced me it was definitely worth doing, and he was relieved to know that he had a successor.

Q: Yes, I've interviewed Grant.

KIEHL: I'm not quite sure what he did. I think he was working on a book on Tajikistan when he was there.

Q: Well, you were there in Carlisle, which is part of the Army War College.

KIEHL: Right, it's called the Center for Strategic Leadership, and the Center for Strategic Leadership also administers the U.S. Army Peacekeeping Institute (PKI), which was a separate entity, but it's administered by the Center for Strategic Leadership to save costs, or admin. It's physically located in the Center for Strategic Leadership, which is a gigantic war gaming center on the campus of the War College, a half a mile away from where the classes are. It was designed and built during the Cold War as the headquarters for the Army after nuclear war. They were going to be up there in Carlisle in this bomb-proof bunker of a building to run the remnants of the U.S. Army after a nuclear war.

Of course, the Cold War ended before the building was completed, so they did punch in a few windows in the front of the building, but otherwise, it's a bunker, but it's a lovely building. It's a beautiful building, and it's got four floors, but it's as big as an eight-story building, because between each floor there's so much wiring and fiber optics. It's all super-computerized, fiber optic everything, so you can do all kinds of sophisticated war gaming. Well, we had one annual war game with more than 700 participants.

Q: You were there from when to when?

KIEHL: Summer of 2000. I got there in August of 2000 until August of 2003. I was planning on spending the year there and maybe coming back, depending on my mother's health, and maybe go overseas again for a last tour before retiring, but as it turns out, my mother's health wasn't much better, but she did move into an apartment in this retirement community and I got her house sold, all those things that you have to do for an aging parent. That was really worthwhile, because we had, back in '98, bought a house outside of Lancaster, a house I probably couldn't afford in the Washington area, all glass and cedar, very contemporary, 35-foot ceiling, Jacuzzi and big deck areas. It was really a lovely place, and we used to use it on weekends, particularly in the stressful environment of ECA in those days to relax. Pam was still in Washington with EUR, or maybe then she was with the A bureau. But she was working in Washington, I was in Carlisle.

The deal was that PKI would send me to Washington for consultations for a few days every two weeks, and of course every weekend Pamela would come up there, so we got to spend about half of our time together, which worked out pretty well. After the first year, they asked for me to stay again if I could for another year, because they thought I wafor whatever reason, they thought I was just the greatest thing since sliced bread, because I had actually published in academic journals and gave lectures on public diplomacy and information operations and peacekeeping, which of course they were in desperate need of expertise in. So I did "re-enlist". It did give me a second thought. I thought, "Well, I don't want to go back to Washington. Even though Lieberman's gone, this Charlotte Beers is in."

Q: She was the one who said she was going to sell the United States ...

KIEHL: Like Uncle Ben's Rice, and I didn't agree with the philosophy there, and it just seemed not the right time to go back to Washington, and I didn't want to go overseas again for my mother's health reasons. So I decided in the end we would do this a second year, and it worked out even better, because we did more things. I did a big conference up there, on information operations and public diplomacy. We brought in people from the PSYOPS community and people from the State Department and the White House and the broadcasting people all together. A lot of these people didn't even know each other and yet they're all in the same field. It was useful. And I wrote some more stuff and got some more things published, and the war games were fun. I enjoyed it. I have good relationships with some of the faculty up there still and probably have some lifelong friends because of it, so it was really all very good.

Then they came to me and asked me if I'd stay for a third year. I said, "Well, I've been told that they're not allowing people to be on detail for more than two years." So they said, "Well, what do you have to lose by asking," so the commandant wrote a letter. Oddly enough, one other person, and I both got a third year. Robin Raphel got a third year and I got a third year on detail, which was quite unheard of,. I thought, "Well, now I'll do this third year here and then I'll come back and retire, because I'm totally spoiled now. Three years of this could never be matched by anything in Washington, and I'm getting a little long in the tooth for overseas now."

I told my career counselor, "Well, now I have the third year, I'll probably go back and retire." The guy who was subbing for my career counselor, who was out for some medical, called me back and said, "Well, why do you really want to retire? You've got three more years on your TIC or something." I said, "Oh, no, you're wrong, my TIC date is 2004, March of 2004, so there's no way."

Q: TIC is time in class. That means you have to retire after you've been in rank a certain period of time.

KIEHL: Exactly. I've been in the minister counselor the required number of years and so on. And he got back to me the next day and he said, "Well, you know, I've checked into this, and actually, you would have TIC'd (Time and Class) out in 2004 if there were still a USIA, because USIA only allowed five years for a minister counselor, but in the State Department it's seven years. So now you can only TIC out in 2006, and, generally speaking, we'll let you go until summer of 2007. So you have another five years if you want them." And I said, "Well, it would have been nice to have known that before I signed up for the third year up here." I said, "Well, I'll get back to you." I thought about it a little bit and I said, "2007, I'll be 62 years old. At that point, if I retire, I'll retire. I'm not even going to do anything else, and what can I possibly do now?"

Oh, by the way, there was a parting shot from Evelyn Lieberman. The European Bureau, Jim Dobbins was assistant secretary then, and I guess Dobbins felt guilty for having screwed me out of the consul generalship in Leningrad, so the European Bureau put me up as ambassador to Estonia, I guess in spring of 2000, summer of 2000, to the point where we got all of the bio in and all that. I was the bureau's candidate, and guess who blackballed me in the D committee? Evelyn Lieberman, one of her last acts in government. So she's a charmer. She's over at the Smithsonian now. If you hold grudges, you only hurt yourself.

Q: Well, one final question on this, because it's such an important element, but I understand that the Peacekeeping Institute of the military, which would be teaching it what it's probably going to be doing for the next 50 years or something, how did that stand? What was it doing, and what was your impression of it?

KIEHL: I'll try to talk about the Peacekeeping Institute in about 10 minutes, because it was only around for 10 years. It was founded in '91. The godfather of that organization was the then-chief of staff of the army, General Sullivan, who recognized the need for training in peacekeeping operations as as well as war-fighting operations, and particularly the civil affairs component and the information side of it.

So he set up an institute and they put it up in Carlisle because it was basically an Army function. The Marines do some peacekeeping. Navy, Air Force, really don't have any role in it. So it was based up at the Army War College in Carlisle, and it was actually located in the old mill on route 11. It was a beautiful old stone building outside the perimeter of the War College, and the Peacekeeping Institute was installed in there. Unfortunately, though, when the Collins Center was opened, the Center for Strategic Leadership, they needed to have tenants, because this again was a building that was going to be reserved for the Army after Armageddon, so they needed tenants for this huge building so they more or less forced the Peacekeeping Institute into the Collins Center. Nice space and all that, and probably better office space than the old mill.

They were very much involved in getting doctrine together. The Army is very concerned with doctrine. In the old days in order to be a general, you had to write doctrine. Guys like Marshall and Eisenhower wrote doctrine. That's how they got noticed.

Q: Doctrine meaning the procedure for doing something.

KIEHL: Right, the holy writ and how to do it, not how to secure a checkpoint, et cetera, but more than that, a strategic level. Not so much in how to move your forces around, but what is behind it, the rationale for doing things in a certain way and the grand strategy of how to do battle plans and so forth. Doctrine is very important still in the Army. As a matter of fact, the training in doctrine command at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, is now in charge of all education for the Army, including the War College.

So they wrote doctrine, they held conferences. They were the outreach of the Army to international organizations, to the UDepartment of Peacekeeping operations, to various militaries around the world who had programs and training and institutes in peacekeeping. They were interfaced with things like NGOs who were on the ground in a peacekeeping situation, so they were an outreach organization outside the military, but also a training and doctrine source for peacekeeping inside the military.

Back in '97 they had something of a budget cut when all of the military got kind of a budget cut. They lost a few positions, but they still had a dozen people there. Then in 2000, there were so many remarks about peacekeeping in a negative sense out of DOD and the secretary of defense that I think when the budget cuts came along to the Army, they thought, "Oh, we have to cut back at education in Carlisle, and what do we do? Do we cut back on the number of students at Carlisle for the Army, even though the Army is only a third the size it once was? Will we have just as many students? Or do we cut out something like peacekeeping, which Rumsfeld doesn't like?" I think the presumption was that maybe they would please Rumsfeld. This is now Secretary White for the Army and the chief of staff was General Shinseki. He was in high dungeoRumsfeld hated him.

Q: Very, very obvious.

KIEHL: So Shinseki was falling through the floorboards. White had his own problems because of Enron. I think they threw this bone out, thinking it would give them some brownie points to close down the Army Peacekeeping Institute. Well, there was quite a hue and cry in Congress. Forty-two members of Congress wrote a letter. The only problem was, all 42 were Democrats. There wasn't a whole lot of traction, and it was announced that it was going to close at the end of the fiscal year, that is, September 30th, 2003. Well, I said to myself, "Well, again, the bullet passes me. I'm out of here in August of 2003, so I'll be one of the last men standing," and they were peeling people away one by one. They weren't getting replaced, when the military rotated people.

So, by the time I left, there was a Booz Allen contractor, there was a locally hired contractor, there was a Title 10 professor and three military officers, plus the secretary and myself. That's all that was left. We were closing down the files. Literally, we were going through, cleaning our computers and printing out paper files and electronic files to be sent over to the Center for Military History, which happens to be on the campus also, box loads and box loads. A couple of interns were hired to pack the boxes and print. I was a little sad to be the last-ever State Department officer associated with that. I think a couple of the guys were going to get rehired by the Center for Strategic Leadership. The military guys of course all had jobs someplace, the tooth to tail ratio being more tooth these days. I think maybe the Booz Allen contractor would have lost his job, but Booz Allen has lots of contracts.

State didn't re-bid my job. They took it off the bid list, sadly. Then, a miracle happened: a new secretary of the army, a new chief of staff of the army, and General Sullivan weighs in. They reconstitute the Army Peacekeeping Institute three days before I leave, so I left on a happy note. But they reconstituted it as the U.S. Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI)so nobody loses face. It now has more staff than it had before, including two slots for Marines. The only thing it doesn't have is a State Department officer, but there's a slot for a State officer, there's a slot for an AID officer. There's a slot for an NGO, all on detail.

Q: To me, it just sounds incredible.

KIEHL: Well, exactly.

Q: At that time we're coming out of really a very successful operation in the Balkans.

KIEHL: And guess what? Circulated in the Pentagon, there's a Time or Newsweek article about the PKI saying, "At a time when they need it most, Army closes Peacekeeping Institute." This is cut out and on a note from Rumsfeld gets sent down to the Army saying, "What the hell is this about?" So they did it for no reason anyway. What he doesn't want is bad press. He doesn't give a damn whether there's a Peacekeeping Institute or not. So it was resurrected, so that's good, and I hope the State Department will cough up somebody next year.

Q: The Bush administration came in making great noises about "none of this nation-building nonsense" and of course now we're in the biggest nation-building effort ever.

KIEHL: That's all over. That's totally reversed.

Q: As I say, these things get very political. Well, then, Bill ...

KIEHL: Having said that, I said to myself, "Well, I think I'll retire, but what I want to do is just go back to Washington and see if something falls into my lap first, because I don't have to retire and I can't retire until the retirement seminar, because I'd be crazy not to take that seminar," and that was scheduled for October. So I asked my career counselor to reserve a slot in that for me because those things tend to fill up quickly. Then I came back to Washington and I said to personnel, "Okay, I checked on the one job that I'd like to have, but it isn't available." This was the job succeeding Bill Taylor as coordinator for East European and Soviet assistance, and they gave it to the Carlos Pasqual who was ambassador in Ukraine. I was the second choice. However nice it is to come in second you don't get any money for placing.

I said, "Well, that was the one job I would have been interested in doing in Washington, because it's something I know about, but I'm quite happy to retire. What do I do in the meantime?" It's like personnel hadn't thought of this. So I said, "Well, okay, you let me know. I'll go around and talk to people and see people." They said, "Well, you have to find a job here." I said, "I have to find a job here. How about a little help here? But I'll go around and I'll talk to some people and see what?" They said, "Yes, what you need to do is do a Y tour until you're ready to retire." I said, "Oh, okay, a Y tour."

So I called up a few people, and I'm in the process of doing that when I get a message back saying, "Oh, until you find a job, you're on annual leave." And I said, "Excuse me. I'm not on annual leave. I'm here working. I'm in the building. I have a suit on. I'm not on annual leave. If I were on annual leave, I'd know it. I'd be fishing in Florida." So I got that straightened out. I had to go to AFSA to get that straightened out. Apparently, they had been under some pressure not to give Y tours out of HR (Human Resources).

Q: A Y tour is?

KIEHL: A Y tour is like a bridge assignment, a temporary thing, a year or less, and apparently personnel had tons of senior officers. Apparently, there are more senior officers than they know what to do with. They had all these senior officers, 30-some of them, sitting on Y tours, and somebody on the Hill found out about it and raised hell about it, so they weren't going to do that anymore, you see, so they were going to put me on annual leave. I guess there were other people, as well, but anyway, that got solved. So what they did was they made me a senior adviser in the A bureau for the two months I had to wait until I could take my course, to study marketing concepts for the new Thomas Jefferson Center, this new information resource center for the State Department. So I advised them about that and talked to a few people about it, and otherwise made myself as useful as I could in the six weeks that I had.. Then I took the retirement course, and now my life is complete.

Q: Great. Well, you've now recorded it and we'll be recruiting you to do oral histories.

End of interview