Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

JOHN J. "JAY" TAYLOR

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PART I1931-1952

Q: Jay, let's start with your family background.

TAYLOR: My father, along with a twin brother, was born on a farm close by the Strawberry River in the then entirely rural state of Arkansas. Having produced Wallmart and Bill Clinton the territory has now advanced beyond its previous Ozark image, or maybe not. The year was 1891. His mother, Fannie McCarroll, was a fine young woman of Scott descent, much younger than her husband, John Wesley Taylor. Diligent members of her clan have traced Fannie's ancestors back to pre-revolutionary times, which is better than the Taylors have done. Her great grandfather, Nathaniel McCarroll's birth year was 1765; the place: the British colony of North Carolina.

Nathaniel's father was John McCarroll, who in turn was son of Nathaniel and Elizabeth McCarroll - Fannie's great, great, great grandparents, also of North Carolina. The eldest Nathanial's will shows that he left his "negroes, Nan and Jacob," his "plantation, one third of money and livestock, and one half of the household furniture" to Elizabeth, all of which was to pass to son John on her death. Another son, Thomas, received "2,000 lbs." of what is not clear. Thomas also got a wagon, a whiskey still, and one half of the personal estate "except for the negroes and household furniture." A daughter, Mary, was left "my negroes, Bet and Lilly," one half the household furniture, and 1/3 of the livestock. Despite the reference to a "plantation" and four slaves, the family probably owned a farm that was moderate for the times.

John seems not to have done as well as his father. When he in turn passed on, he divided his land between his sons Thomas and John Nathaniel. Only one cow went to "my son John Holoby" and one horse to Ruth. Possibly John Holoby was a stepson. Daughter Genrot, received "all that has been claimed by her," probably a modest request. The origin of this daughter's name remains a mystery. Perhaps she was born after 1776 and received an appellation in honor of the French ally. Judging by the will it seems her father had no slaves. We would like to think he was an abolitionist, but probably not. He had also lost the whiskey still. This, before the Whiskey rebellion.

The first McCarrolls probably "came over" from Scotland a generation or so before the original Nathaniel and Elizabeth, or perhaps they were the first generation. No McCarrolls that I know of have searched Scotland in search of the roots. Back in the old country, they were probably simple but perhaps literate folk. Anyway, they had the gumption to make the dangerous journey to a new land and a revolutionary life.

In 1781, the young John Nate McCarroll, then 16, volunteered for service as a private in a horse company in the Revolutionary War. He was a military scout on the frontier in Indian country and took part in several skirmishes, "none of any note," he modestly reported. Andrew Pickens was his commanding General. Some years after the war, John Nate and his young wife Martha (surname unknown) moved their family to Kentucky. After a few more years, they hitched up the wagon again and trekked to the Missouri territory. They settled on Cooper's Creek in what came to be Lawrence County in northeast Arkansas. "Strawberry River Country" they called it, near but not quite in the Ozarks. I imagine even today it looks like the lowlands of Scotland with the highlands sleeping in the distant fog.

The McCarrolls owned one farm of 160 acres and another of 80 acres. The family residence was about three miles south of what came to be the locally famed "Old Taylor Mill" on the Strawberry River. In 1833, Nathaniel received a Revolutionary War pension. He reputedly was a "prominent member of the Strawberry River community." In 1835 both John Nathaniel and Martha died. Their property was divided between two sons, James and Thomas, a married daughter Elizabeth Steadman, and a grandson John Rhea McCarroll Jr. "in right of his father." John Rhea McCarroll Senior presumably had passed away before his father, leaving only one son. John Rhea McCarroll Jr. was the 5th "John" in these American McCarrolls and possibly the umpteenth "John" since the heathen Scots accepted Christianity. John and his wife Elizabeth Davis made up for his father's absence of many progeny. They had 15 children! After 32 years of marriage, brave Elizabeth died. John remarried and his new wife produced four more babies. The man was a population bomb.

At the beginning of the Civil War, while married to Elizabeth, John enlisted in the Confederate Army for a year's service. Six months after returning home, he signed up again. This was about ten years after their marriage and the couple probably had five or six children by this time. How Elizabeth managed is uncertain - slaves probably made it possible. John served with the 38th Arkansas under General Sterling Price. One account reports that he took part in "the raid on Pilot Knob," Missouri - a skirmish we should apparently know about - and then in 1865 he surrendered with his unit. But another probably more accurate version reports that Federal troops captured him in July 1963 and while on a forced march to a POW camp he escaped by swimming a river. According to this account, he did not return to his unit but went home to Elizabeth a la "Cold Mountain." He is shown in the records as having deserted. After the war, he became a successful farmer and cattleman. He and Elizabeth lie together in the McCarroll Family Cemetery near Anniesville, Arkansas, a name I've always liked.

John and Elizabeth's 11th child, Fannie, was born in 1868. When she was 18, she married John Wesley Taylor, who was 27 years older. John Wesley was born at Jessup, Arkansas in 1851, son of Joseph and Martha Finley Taylor, who had migrated from the Clinch River area of East Tennessee. My wife Betsy's home is in this area of Tennessee - a small settlement called Lone Mountain not too far from Cumberland Gap of Daniel Boone fame. With a two story home and cars, Betsy's family was the upper class oLone Mountain. But until she was seven or eight they had no electricity or indoor plumbing. After eighth grade she moved to Kansas City to live with an Aunt and Uncle in the well-to-do section of the city.

According to family legend, when Joseph and his sister Martha were coming of age in the Clinch River Valley they became estranged from a new stepmother. Joseph trekked west and after a few years ended up working on John and Elizabeth McCarroll's farm in Arkansas. He sent for his sister, who soon after arrival married a McCarroll son. Joseph married a local girl and they had three children, John Wesley, Margaret Amanda, and one other, before the young mother died. The casualty rate for women in those days was probably higher than that of the average Confederate platoon leader. Margaret Amanda married Fannie's brother, James P. McCarroll - the second McCarrol-Taylor union. Margaret soon took in her brother John's three Taylor children who were without a mother. When Fannie's mother, Elizabeth, passed away, Fannie moved in with her brother and Margaret to help with all the children in the household, including the three Taylors. There she met John Wesley, who came very day to visit his children. May and December they were - John and Fannie. They fell madly in love, we suppose, and married.

So the McCarrolls and the Taylors developed multiple connections - but none apparently incestuous. These ties were no doubt remembered in reunions for a couple of generations. The multipliers before "cousin" (1st, 2nd, etc.) continued up the scale and, like fallen leaves in a widening river, new generations drifted out of sight and out of touch. I have never met a McCarroll.

John Wesley and Fannie had seven children of their own. My father, Alfred Wesley, was number three, his twin brother, James Leslie, by a few minutes came in number four. Their mother was probably then in her early or mid-twenties. One spring day when A.W. and J.L. were ten, they heard at the store that an automobile had passed by on a country road 20 miles away - of course, almost all roads were country roads in those days. Fanny packed them a lunch and they walked half a day until they came to the road in question. The tracks left by the wheels of an automobile were still there. The same two brothers lived to see man-made tracks on the moon.

Like Honest Abe's mother, Fanny insisted her children get as much schooling as they could. All of her boys in fact went to college. An amazing but not an uncommon phenomenon of those days. One son became a state judge, another a Methodist minister. My father went to law school (Vanderbilt). His twin brother, J.L., earned a PhD in education, and in his sixties came to Washington to work in the Department of Education. Other siblings went into business. It was a typical story of that generation: given wings of education, the children flew up and out - and away from farming.

In World War I, my father and his twin brother wanted to enlist. Fanny agreed on condition they join the same service. They volunteered for the Navy and the next day were sent off to different boot camps. My father was assigned to a minesweeper. He saw no combat but was nearly lost in the great influenza epidemic. He remembers truckloads of dead sailors being carted out of the hospital in Philadelphia where he was a patient. After his discharge he went to a small college in Arkansas, Hendricks, and then entered Vanderbilt law school in Nashville. He supported himself by selling bibles in the summer. The Nashville publishing company he worked for was called Southwestern Publishing. I remember the name because I too would become a traveling salesman of the Good Word for old Southwestern.

My mother, Annie Laurie Cain was from Nashville. She attended a small but then prestigious women's two-year "finishing school" in Nashville called Ward Belmont. She was from a family that was at that point much higher on the social scale than my father's. Her stepfather was a law professor at Vanderbilt. But her maternal grandfather (whose family name was Jackson) had been an ironworker. Her own father, Andrew Cain, a silversmith, died young in Clarksville with TB. Except for her stepfather, they were craftsmen, probably going back a long way. My father's family came from what was probably a thousand years or more of farmers. When my mother's father died, her mother met and married the Vanderbilt professor and thus the family was elevated into the upper middle, professional class.

Q: Did your mother meet your father at Vanderbilt?

TAYLOR: No, they actually met on a trolley car. He found some pretext to introduce himself. It turned out that they both had a connection with Vanderbilt. Her father was his professor. After he finished law school they married and went to Arkansas where my father became an assistant district attorney. After a year or two, he went into private practice.

We have a story about the family in the Depression. My father had just won his biggest civil law case. He was paid $30,000, which he deposited in his bank account. In those days that was no small change; in fact it was a small fortune. Rumors floated around town that the banks were about to collapse. My mother finally badgered my father into withdrawing the deposit. Just as he reached the bank door, the shades were drawn and he heard the gallows sound of a hammerlock snapping shut. He never got his money back and we were never sort-of-rich again!!

I went to grammar school mostly in Little Rock and the 8th grade and high school in Nashville, where the family returned in 1944. I have few but only fond memories of grammar school, teachers, and classmates. Unlike some, including my wife, I can not recall the names of any of my teachers from kindergarten through college! Maybe I wasn't paying attention. When we return to Lone Mountain, Betsy still calls on the principal of her grammar school more than 50 years ago, Mrs. Ann Cabbage, one of many great names in Lone Mountain.

But some things I do remember. For example, my grammar school in Little Rock was near the Arkansas River. Taking a short cut, I usually walked through a forest along the River and I could see the School for the Deaf on the opposite bank. This daily reminder of children who lived their lives without sound left a mark. At my school we had a range of kids from different economic classes. One day, one of my classmates was wearing an old jacket and hat that I recognized as mine. Mother had recently given cast off clothing to a charitable organization. It was a small thing, but for some reason it also left an impression. Maybe that's why I've always been in favor of raising the minimum wage.

Q: Where did you rank in age among the children?

TAYLOR: I had one brother, who was two years older.

Q: When you went to high school, was your father still practicing law?

TAYLOR: No, he had entered business back in Little Rock. During the depression it was hard to make a living practicing law in Searcy, Arkansas. Just before the War started, he became southwest distributor and installer of a commercial and industrial acoustic tile. Its basic material, however, was severely rationed as soon as the War started, and business plummeted. He returned to Nashville, and ran a large dry cleaning business owned by my step-grandfather, the Professor. The Professor had gotten his money out before the collapse and became fairly well-to-do buying up properties and businesses on the cheap. He was brilliant but a self-centered man, taciturn and greedy. Dad, a gentle, kind soul, couldn't stand working for him and left after a few years. He became an insurance adjuster and finally a public defender. He was happiest doing this last job - back to the law. He also liked helping people.

Q: Where did you go to high school?

TAYLOR: Hillsboro High in Davidson County. This was before Nashville annexed all of surrounding Davidson County. That move produced an unusually large metropolitan area; the Nashville school district encompassed all of Davidson County. But at the time I went to high school, it was a county school. The students were middle to upper-middle class, all white of course. I graduated when I was sixteen.

Q: What sorts of things were you doing in high school?

TAYLOR: I was young for my class. My mother pushed me to finish school as soon as I could. She was a dynamic lady, full of nervous energy, "elbow grease," "gray matter," etc., a command personality but a romantic, full of good humor but also in possession of a fiery temper. She loved to sing. She would have been a great opera diva, revolutionary, or football coach. One evening as she was walking in the dinning room with an arm full of plates, my father said something rather curt. My mother threw the dishes on the floor! In high school I developed an interest in southern history. I think I was the only person in school who had read Douglas S. Freeman's volumes on Robert E. Lee. That was unusual for a sixteen year old, even in the South. At the same age, I also read Sandberg's famous two-volume biography of Abraham Lincoln. No, I didn't read each volume word for word, but it was fascinating.

Recently, I told a friend that one might have thought that people in those days who were fascinated with the "Old South" and the Confederacy must have been racists. Believe it or not, that was not always or even usually the case. When I went to Vanderbilt, I joined the Kappa Alpha fraternity, a fraternal society that only existed in the south. We flew the Confederate flag and a large portrait of Robert E. Lee dominated the living room of the frat house on 21st Avenue. But the brothers never thought that these attachments were at all related to race, specifically to the situation of African-Americans in the late 1940s and the early 1950s. Jim Crow of course was pervasive and whites were separated from blacks in most aspects of life. But civil rights was not then an issue, or at least not much of one in Nashville, Tennessee. Therefore pride and interest in the Confederacy, at least by my peers and myself, was not seen as having anything to do with "colored people," their rights or lack of them.

We considered our attraction to the Old South to be entirely about chivalry, bravery, loyalty, and maybe states' rights. One brother's real name was States Rights Finley. Another was, General Forrest Greene. Essentially, however, the KA band of brothers was non-political. If asked, I would have said at the time that I was glad the Union won the war. I'm not sure about the brothers, but most of the ones I know today are liberals. The question of race never arose in the frat house. Mostly it was just having fun. On weekends, we pillaged a lot of beer and took no prisoners. But by the time of my sophomore year, if not earlier, my understanding of the world began to change. I was in the library reading a book for a philosophy class when a moment of epiphany darted in.

I have forgotten what it was I was reading, but suddenly the treatment of "colored" Americans appeared strikingly unjust and undemocratic. I could not see how good and kind, democratic, American churchgoers, like my parents for example, could rationalize discrimination on the basis of skin color. I lost interest in organized religion, but continued to think of myself as a spiritual person - a seeker looking for the divine, thinking it unknowable - but not knowing even that for sure. I guess I have remained pretty much of that persuasion, but today moved even more than in my halcyon days by gospel hymns like Precious Lord Take My Hand, written, I was surprised to find out recently, by Tommy Dorsey.

Before this epiphany, just after leaving high school, I sold Bibles door to door in the Bible belt - a coal mining county of eastern Kentucky. The town was called "Bloody Harlan," famous for its labor strife. After a while, the Bible selling business turned me off, not the Bibles. I finished out the summer in Harlan, but my skeptical worldview and future sophomore conversion to mystical rationalism perhaps began then. Southwest sent us to a training school in Nashville to be Bible salesmen. We learned all the pitches. Out in the field, I went door to door in coal mining camps, where miners and their families lived in clapboard company houses and bought their provisions in company stores, usually on credit. Hank Williams had a good song about "The Company Store." For lunch, I often purchased two slices of Wonder Bread, a couple pieces of baloney (they would sell both by the slice) and a pint of milk in a little glass jar. It was old Appalachia.

I gave my sales pitch mostly to women who were at home while their men worked in the mines. They were simple, good people. The trick was to shame them into buying a Bible. We sold all sorts of Bibles and related books, but our main stock was the "Family Bible." It weighed about seven pounds, maybe more. It could be embossed with the family name, and it had special pages for a family tree and other records. I lived in Harlan and hitched a ride each morning out to the highway where I had stopped the previous day. I was surprised at the number of pick-up truck drivers who would make homosexual passes. Well, maybe this happened only five or six times. Good ole southern boys. I would ask to get out at the next cross road and never had a problem. I always assumed homosexuals were by a quirk of nature twisted in that way. Otherwise, why on Earth would they do that? I was already a raging but inexperienced heterosexual.

It was a maturing summer for a sixteen year old: living usually alone in a rented room, hitch hiking everyday, pounding dirt paths, knocking on every door, talking with the miners' wives and sometimes their husbands, and sometimes being invited into their musty homes for supper. My brother was with me for a while but he got fed up and left, but not before we had a fight over some idiot long-forgotten argument. He knocked me down and I got up and knocked out one of his front teeth. We stopped the fight to look for the tooth. I still have the scar on my right thumb. I remember one morning driving a rented jeep to deliver the bibles I had sold. (We took orders and a deposit and then delivered them all at the end of the Summer.) I was an inexperience driver, and it was raining and the mountain roads were full of curves. On one of these, I spun out, making two 360 degree circles down the middle of the road and ended up heading the way I was going. Just then a large coal truck came barreling around the curve. Life was a shining star kept in place by chance and the unknown. My time in Harlan cemented my youthful political liberalism but also a desire to live a life of travel, adventure, and romance. By chance I had plunged from the orbit of non-being into an inherited culture of education. For me it was a soft landing in a blue lagoon. The miners of Harlan and their families landed in a swamp. A few would make it out, but most could not. Because of that, a coarsening was not uncommon, but their humanity shone no less bright. Considering how lucky I was, the chances I had received, I had to be an optimist. In Harlan I had my first beer-a Miller - and a cigar. The cigar was terrible and I switched to Camels. For years I drank Miller High Life.

Q: At the time, I think the South felt as a separate entity.

TAYLOR: That's true. Among most educated southerners, however, at least the ones I knew, that separate identity had nothing consciously to do with the race issue. We saw our history as distinct, and our customs and even our language as different enough to matter and to inspire the Fugitive Poets, William Faulkner, Tennessee Williams, and other literary luminaries. At the Kappa Alpha house, we san"Dixie" and flew the Rebel flag. We gave a big annual ball where we dressed up in Confederate uniforms and our dates wore anti-bellum gowns with hoops. When a brother and a co-ed were "pinned," we gathered at night under her dorm or sorority house window and sang "Kappa Alpha Rose." For most young, white, upper middle class students at Vanderbilt in 1950, the lives of black Americans just wasn't an issue. Every white person I personally knew thought they were kind and tolerant with black people. My Mother would never allow the "N" word in her house. But she and her peers really had no idea how Negroes felt or lived. They did not view segregation as malicious or malevolent. After all, coloreds themselves did not seem to make a fuss about it, at least "our coloreds." Of course, racist "rednecks" abounded, but the educated southern elite made fun of them. Not many Vanderbilt students ever went to the Grand Ole Opry, except on a lark.

Q: You were at Vanderbilt from when to when?

TAYLOR: 1948 to 1952. It was during the Korean War.

Q: Had you been old enough to follow WWII?

TAYLOR: Yes, I was an adolescent during the war, but quite old enough to follow it closely. I was ten years old when the damn thing started. We were still living in Little Rock. My mother took in a series of young military couplethe men newly minted second lieutenants straight out of OCS, "90-day wonders" who were taking advanced infantry training at a nearby Army fort. That pattern lasted the duration of the war. In succession, five or six young Army couples stayed with us for short periods. I thought their wives were all incredibly beautiful, some probably only eighteen or nineteen. It was an incredible experience. I fell in love with each of them. I knew then I would marry a nineteen-year old. Three of those lieutenants - they were all trained as platoon leaders - died in the war. A ghastly fatality rate. We knew because we exchanged letters and cards for a while with the couples after they left Little Rock and then a little longer with the young widows. So, I was touched by the war, moved by the heroism and the sadness. But I was seized by the image of the U.S. Marines. My friends and I formed a platoon we called th"Junior Marines." We played war games constantly. I always wanted to be a Marine and later became one.

Q: It is said that people who lived through WWII learned a lot of history and geography. Did you pick that up?

TAYLOR: Probably. My first memory o"China" was when my mother was reading Life magazine and looking at photos from the war in China. One full-page picture showed a throng of bedraggled Chinese soldiers slogging through the mud. As I stared over her shoulder, she said, "Well, I suppose their mothers can tell them apart." That stuck in my mind. It was not an ill- intentioned observation, but reflected a quaint ignorance. That was my introduction to the Far East. I wanted to go to China and see these people who all looked alike. I always liked the adjective "Far" and thought it silly years later when a politically-correct Assistant Secretary of State, thinking the name a pejorative changed the Bureau's title to "East Asia and the Pacific." (The Middle in "Middle East" apparently was thought less judgmental.)

In our house, we followed the war daily. Maps, usually with lots of arrows, always accompanied stories in the newspapers. It was a time of great idealism. Tens of thousands of Americans - and around the world, millions - were dying. We assumed everyone on our side knew what they were fighting and dying for. It was an ideal seldom referred to beyond the words "freedom" and " liberty." We raised vegetables in a "victory garden"; and collected tin cans, old newspapers, and string - all as if the boys at Salerno or Guadalcanal were desperately waiting for these items. We also bought war stamps - that sort of patriotic thing.

And we built a hen house, my brother and I. We loved it when we bought the box with a dozen little yellow Chicks inside, all girls. We were amazed to learn that there was such an occupation as a chicken sexer. When the chicks grew up, we loved collecting their warm eggs so full of potential life or as it turned out in most cases nourishment. We hated it when they stopped laying and our father rung their necks and they flopped about the yard. But we loved them fried with gravy. That was a memory we would not have had except for the war.

And the enemy, the Japanese and the Germans. Of course we thought they were fanatics. But it turned out there were exceptions . German POWs were assigned menial jobs at a sprawling veterans hospital that was walking distance from our house in Nashville. We had moved there during my 8th grade year - in 1945. I frequently went to the hospital grounds to hit tennis balls against a practice wall (sometimes skipping school to do so). I got to know two of the German POWs who were doing yard work around the buildings. They knew a little English. It was the closest I got to being more or less engaged with the enemy. But they were nice guys, which kind of spoiled it.

Children of those years formed a special generation. "Quiet" and "Beat" they were later to tell us. Gorbachev is one of us. But I think mostly we were idealists who nevertheless knew or sensed how great ideals relentlessly pursued lead to great crimes. Of course, in America our generation did not hear bombs busting or see blood flowing. Instead, we had the safe but still profound experience of being told that the lieutenants' wives we loved had lost their men - lucky men when we knew them, men with beautiful uniforms and beautiful women. What more could a man want? Suddenly, a letter arrives and they are mysteriously lost for good in distant but haunting deaths. We never cried. They were heroes. And we were, after all, future Marines.

Betsy spent the war years in a Lone Mountain house full of women and one very young boy (her brother, David) in the hills of Lone Mountain Tennessee. Somehow the men of her family all came back. One was shot down and captured, but lived. One was a paratroop and glider-tow transport pilot on D-Day. Another a submarine officer. Two were Navy Seabees on Guadalcanal. And so on. It was a war with a solid, common purpose, but an endeavor in which fate dealt a capricious and lethal hand.

Q: It was a period with a lot of shortages. I assume that that did not bother you.

TAYLOR: It wasn't anything that I noticed. We did not suffer at all, really. Gas and whatnot were rationed, but the inconvenience was so minor it was in retrospect ridiculous. But as I said, we nevertheless had the feeling of participation in the noble effort. Maybe that was the real purpose of rationing. The family had a keen interest in the world and current events. My mother was a real newshound and remained one all her life. She died in 1991 the year the Soviet Union disappeared from history. She told us she had followed the Russian Revolution from the beginning when she was fifteen - the storming of the summer palace; the mutual slaughter of Reds and Whites; the starving of millions, the Great Purge; the Nazi invasion; Stalingrad; the fall of Berlin; V-E Day; the rise of the Iron Curtain, the Sino-Soviet Bloc; the Korean War, the Cuban Missile crisis; Mutual Assured Destruction; the Hungarian Revolution; the Indochina Wars; the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. And then at last, in 1991, her ninetieth year - the astounding collapse of the Soviet Union and world communism. Just before she passed away she said she'd been blessed to live so long...otherwise, she said, she would never have known how IT turned out. "IT" was the century long struggle for the direction of world culture.After World War II, it seemed certain the world would be a better, more decent place. I think those in my generation assumed we had an obligation to help as best we could to build that world. We were optimists.

Q: Were there a lot of veterans at Vanderbilt when you were there?

TAYLOR: There were two groups in the student body: veterans attending college on the GI bill, and those just out of high school like myself who had been too young to be drafted. At 16, I was especially young. People would see me on the campus and think I was a child progeny. Unfortunately, I was not.

Q: What did you concentrate on, besides the history of the South?

TAYLOR: I was interested in literature. Even as a freshman, I had a strong desire to be a writer. I wanted to be another Ernest Hemingway. He was my ideal, not Faulkner. That, I suppose, was my ambition: to be another Hemingway. So I read everything he wrote. I wanted to move people with the distilled grains of their time.

Q: Was Tennessee very "southern" at the time?

TAYLOR: It was very southern, even though it was a border state. Still, we enjoyed that distinction - being a "border" state. We looked down at the "Deep South," Georgia and Alabama, for example; we viewed ourselves as more sophisticated - they were "hicks." But generally we liked being southern; we had country music - couldn't escape it but didn't have to like it. Later, I came to enjoy it occasionally. But we considered ourselves upper-class southerners compared to Georgians and Alabamians.

Q: At Vanderbilt, did you have a goal in mind for a future career?

TAYLOR: I took liberal arts courses and as a freshman I thought I would major in business administration and economics. But political science became a greater interest. I knew a life in business was not what I wanted. For one thing, looking back, I never thought it important to make a lot of money. I preferred to be paid in experience.

PART II1952-1959

Q: You graduated in 1952. What happened next?

TAYLOR: Sometime early in my junior year, a fraternity brother, Zookie Harrison, talked about the Foreign Service. He was preparing to come to Washington after his graduation in 51' to attend a special cram course for the Foreign Service exam that George Washington University then offered. That was the first I heard of the Foreign Service. It wasn't a missionary outfit or a French fighting unit; it had to do with "diplomacy." I liked the courses I had taken on international affairs. I thought the Foreign Service was exactly the right thing for me. Having never seen an ocean or even a really big lake (we did cross the Mississippi a few times), I wanted to travel the world, to know exotic lands and to speak strange languages, but also to do what I could to help America lead the democratic camp in the unfolding struggle over the course of world culture. So, I decided to become an FSO. I couldn't afford the GW cram course, but I applied to take the test anyway. It was to be in September of 1952.

I decided to move to Washington immediately after graduation in 1952 because I thought it would be a better place to study for the exam. Someone - I think from B/EX in the State Department - suggested that I might be able to find a tutor who could help, perhaps a retired Foreign Service officer. I applied for a job at the National Security Agency because I saw a notice on the Vanderbilt jobs bulletin board. I planned to work for NSA while studying for the exam and then hopefully while waiting to be admitted to the Foreign Service. I received a pile of NSA forms to fill out and eventually a notice that pending a security clearance the Agency had accepted me. It was all rather strange. The Agency was vague about what the job would actually be - something to do with intelligence and communications. It was intriguing. Real FBI agents questioned my friends and my parent's neighbors. This alone elevated my status, particularly in the eyes of my then girl friend.

Soon, I was on an American Airlines DC-3 headed for the capital. This was my first flight in an airliner. The women wore hats and gloves, and, along with the other men aboard, I was dressed in a nice suit, mine came from Cain Sloan, a local department store. We landed at the new grand terminal with huge windows at National Airport smack on the Potomac. As the plane curled around the river to land I could see the memorials for Lincoln and Washington, the White House, and in the distance, the shining white Capitol. I felt a flush of excitement, an emotion I still feel fifty-plus years later. I lived in a boarding house on "P" Street, about a block from Dupont Circle, and attended a NSA training school a few blocks away on R Street. The boarding house is still there although no longer for boarders.

After a week, one day really, I realized cryptography was not for me. I wasn't good at breaking codes. Math was not my strong point. My real goal was to prepare for the Foreign Service exam. When I called, someone in the State Department recommended a man named Manix "Buffles" Walker. He was a jowly, fifty-something character, somewhat like Robert Morley - the British actor - in a movie by Graham Green. He had a wonderful English accent. Buffles lived with his mother, Regina, in Georgetown in an old, once beautiful house. They were one of those eastern establishment families of diminishing means and no further progeny or prospects. I think Buffles had an alcohol problem, which had probably expedited his retirement. He was almost certainly gay, perhaps a repressed one. In those days, the gays that one knew seemed, like Buffles, to be lovable eccentrics. In our social setting, the ethos was: yes, "don't ask, don't tell." Gays of the 1950s were not actually that much in the closet. They were, however, very discreet. Gay FSOs did exist. The four of us - Buffles' students - never thought to raise the subject of his orientation even among ourselves. We simply went to his house every day after work and spent two hours in his garden as he drummed thousands of facts into our heads - and we practiced writing essays.

September came and I took the three-day, mostly all written Foreign Service exam; I was twenty years old. I failed miserably. I was not about to remain in NSA. Although it provided a valuable perk for those interested. Twenty years later, Dick Cheney would apply for and receive five draft exemptions. I automatically received one from NSA that could have been permanent but quickly gave it up. They were different wars and different times - and also different generations. The Korean War was still on and as a casual commitment since my "Junior Marine" days in Little Rock, I had always wanted to be a Marine pilot. When I was about eleven, after constant nagging, my mother had agreed that I could take an airplane ride. She said the whole family would go up and if necessary die together. We went up and came down safely. I knew I liked flying. So, I resigned from NSA and joined the Navy as a Naval Aviation Cadet. I should have first joined a Navy OCS program and from there gone on to flight training. But I was anxious to get on with the flying, and so I went as a low-paid cadet. As I said, I did not think much about money.

I was called to flight school on January 2, 1953. I was in the Navy until I received my wings and then I became a pilot in the Marine Corps. A highlight was carrier training. After a couple of months practicing on land, six of us took off one morning and in tight formation flew out over the Gulf. Amazingly, our navigation training worked and we found the USS Monterey. We made six landing each. The Monterey was an old WW II type carrier, without an angled deck. Thus there was no touch and go. At every landing, a hundred or so feel down the deck, a steel barrier loomed. Once you cut power and hit the deck you were committed. Either you caught a wire or rammed into the barrier. While in Pensacola, one weekend in New Orleans, I met a beautiful, young nineteen year-old girl who was a student at Touro Nursing School and also studying for a degree at Tulane University. We saw each other at the Cafï¿½ Du Monde one morning in the French Market in New Orleans. She was slightly olive skinned and beautiful with dark chocolate eyes. Somewhere, I thought, from long ago, she must have come from the shores of the Mediterranean, a Phoenician maybe. But most stunning was her natural wholesomeness. We fell in love over beignets and chicory coffee.

Three fellow-Marine cadets were with me when we met. Betsy likewise was at a table with three friends. The opening line was to suggest that we have our picture taken together. Within a year of our meeting at the Cafï¿½ Du Monde, one of the three cadets with me, was killed in a midair crash in Japan. Shortly after, another, flying on instruments, drove a twin-engine into one of the lush volcanic mountains of Hawaii. They were still Second Lieutenants. A third, survived four tours in Indochina, two in helicopters and two in jets, and when he retired as a bird colonel with nary a scratch, he was one of the most decorated Marine aviators since World War II. When they joined up, none of them asked the price. I was the fourth, the one who did his four years and got out. The black and white photo of the young faces at the Cafe Du Monde was lost a few years later in Africa. A thief crept into our room one night and stole Betsy's purse away.

But that is getting ahead of the story. A few months after our meeting at the Cafï¿½, we were married at the Marine Air Base, Cherry Point, North Carolina. Soon after, I was assigned to Japan. The Marines do not send families overseas. But we had a plan. Back in Kansas City, Betsy worked long enough to make a down payment on her expensive air ticket to Japan (it was a "fly now pay later" deal). In Japan, we lived, as they say in the military, on the "economy," first in Kamakura and then in Zushi. The houses and neighborhoods were both Japanese. Thus, we got to know the Japanese better than most American military personnel. I was then flying in a helicopter squadron. The Korean War was over. I was a squadron pilot and also the Group supply officer. While in Japan, I again took the Foreign Service exam, this time at the embassy in Tokyo. I failed again! I was reassigned to California to an observation squadron, flying fixed wing aircraft (old prop jobs) and helicopters. There I took the FSO exam for the third time. Finally, the Exam Gods smiled and I passed.

Q: This was still a three and half day exam?

TAYLOR: The first time I took the exam it was a three and a half day affair - mostly writing. Grading those tests must have been a challenge. By the third time around it had - thank God - become a one-day exam with maybe two or three essay questions. The foreign language test also could then be put off for a probationary period if one passed the other parts.

Q: Did life in Japan heighten your interest in the Foreign Service?

TAYLOR: Very much. We loved living in Japan. I was determined to join the Foreign Service. Our tour there convinced me that if I ever got into the Club, I wanted to specialize in Asia.

Q: Did you have any opportunities to do much reading on diplomacy or biographies of people involved in foreign affairs?

TAYLOR: No, I don't remember reading biographies or autobiographies. I did read a lot of history and international relations. While waiting in the squadron ready room, I was usually with book in hand. I was known as "Reader." The other pilots usually played backgammon or cards. Okay, I did play a lot of backgammon myself. But I spent most of my time boning up for the next round of exams. For example, I quickly went through Will Durant's many volumes.

Q: While in Japan, did you get a chance to meet anyone in the Foreign Service?

TAYLOR: Not really. I visualized it as a glamorous life full of bright people. I admired anyone who could pass that infernal exam. When I went to the embassy in Tokyo for the test, a young woman officer who was proctoring the exam met me. I was quite envious of her being in the Service. By this time it had been my goal for several years - in other words, seemingly for a lifetime.

Q: You joined the Service in 1957.

TAYLOR: Right. I started as all new officers did in the basic training class - known as the "A 100"course. The course as well as my classmates impressed me. I was delighted. It was a completely male class. The whole experience thrilled me. We found a small apartment in Arlington, but it was the same as living in Washington once again. By this time we had an 18-month old son and an infant daughter.

Those were the days before the New State building had been finished. So the A-100 class met in an old apartment building on 23rd Avenue. It was a non-descript edifice. I remember the guest lecturers who talked to us. Included were well-known journalists as well as diplomatic practitioners - ambassadors and other senior State officials.

Q: Do you recall who the chairman of the course was?

TAYLOR: I don't remember his name, but he had a South American wife. We went to their home for dinner.

Q: Did you request an assignment to the Far East?

TAYLOR: In those days, as I recall, we were not permitted even to request a specific post or area. You were just assigned. Also the jobs were handed out seemingly at random. When talking to my classmates, I mentioned that I hoped to be assigned to Asieither Japan or a Chinese- language area. I wanted language training in either Japanese or Chinese. But we were not asked; we just waited. Then the list was posted on the bulletin board. I was assigned to Ghana as the budget and fiscal/disbursing officer. I was going to be the only financial officer in the new embassy. Finance was neither my hope nor my strong suite. I joked that my only experience in finance was once robbing a bank. But that did not deter personnel.

So, off we went to Ghana. Before leaving, I was given 60 days of training in fiscal and disbursement processes, payroll, etc. That was the last type of job I wanted. But, anyway, I was finally in the Foreign Service. My Marine training stood me in good stead: you go where you are told.

Q: Was there any excitement about going to new embassies in Africa?

TAYLOR: My wife and I were very excited by the prospect of living in Ghana, a land which had been known before independence as the "Gold Coast." We rushed out to find all the history and background information on the country that we could. It seemed an exciting place, a newly independent state with a charismatic man named Kwame Nkrumah as its first president.

Q: You were in Ghana from 1957 to 1959. Tell us a little about your first impressions of Ghana? I think you had two children with you at the time.

TAYLOR: Right. Our son was about two by then and our daughter was one-year old. We didn't find anything shocking or unexpected upon arrival. What we found especially rewarding were the contacts and the friendships we quickly established with Ghanaians. They were wonderful, friendly people. Betsy and I were southerners - as I mentioned at some length. In the Marine squadrons in which I served, no African-Americans pilots were on the rolls. I remember meeting one African-American lieutenant at the officers' club at Cherry Point; he was the only black officer/pilot I had ever saw in the Marine Corps. So, before Ghana, Betsy and I had no black friends.

Two African-American FSOs served in the embassy. Early on, I told the Embassy political officer, one of the African-American officers, that, if possible, I would like to do political reporting under his direction whenever I could spare the time. He was happy to become my mentor. He assigned me to work with the opposition, which turned out to be a great assignment. I began establishing contacts with leading members of the opposition parties; I had lunches with them and Betsy and I invited them and their wives for dinner. We met a wide range of Ghanaians that way and became good friends with several of them. They loved to dance the "highlife," and so did we. In those days, Ghana was a delight; probably still is. It was an memorable experience. Professionally, it was also a good assignment. My reporting as a part-time, volunteer political officer attracted some attention.

Q: Who was our ambassador?

TAYLOR: It was Wilson Flake. His career had been mostly in the commercial service. I believe he had been the head of the commercial section at our embassy in Rome when Clare Booth Luce was the ambassador. She liked him and especially his wife, and helped arrange his ambassadorship.

During our tour we experienced the bureaucratic and personal interplay that takes part in any office, squadron, temple, or what have you. Embassy Accra, however, was not the average post in this regard. Office politics there were especially potent when we arrived. The DCM and the ambassador didn't get along. The DCM was Peter Rutter, a rather typical member of the old guard Foreign Service - Eastern establishment, Andover, Yale - the whole smear. But he was a lot of fun; we liked him and his wife. He had been in Ghana as Charge for about six months before Flake's arrival. Since he was a very affable man, Rutter got along very well with the Ghanaians. In fact, all the senior Ghanaians from Nkrumah down really liked him.

Wilson Flake did not have the same personality. He was a dedicated, sincere man, but he was tense about his first ambassadorship, particularly since as an old Commercial Service officer he was not a member of the real Foreign Service "club." Soon after his arrival it was clear he and Peter were not to get along. The rivalries spilled over to the wives, or perhaps began there. In short, for us, it was an intriguing introduction to life in the Foreign Service.

Q: Did you have to keep out of the line of fire?

TAYLOR: Yes, mostly. But at one point I did get caught up in the turmoil. After I had been in Ghana for about a year, it was discovered that the general services officer had been selling commissary whiskey to support some of his habits, like betting at the horse track. This presented a crisis. The Ambassador called a meeting of the all the embassy officers during which he announced that because of the serious breakdown in management and supervision. He intended to make major changes in embassy staffing. He seemed to blame Peter Rutter for the GSO's failings. He in effect abolished the DCM's role. He appointed me to be his, the Ambassador's, part-time, special assistant - he hadn't had one until then. He felt that he needed someone in the front office who could do a variety of small tasks for him and thus give him more time for closer hands-on supervision of the embassy. Consequently, in addition to being the budget and fiscal/ disbursing officer, and a part time political officer (which I said I wanted to continue to be), I was given a little, closet-like, office next to the Ambassador's. I liked the idea. His reorganization plan, however, went beyond this. A number of officers were to be shifted around, in effect, exchanging jobs.

After announcing his plan at a second staff meeting, the Ambassador asked the assembled staff what they thought of it. When he came to me, I suggested that the changes seemed somewhat drastic. The malfeasance of the GSO, I said, could have happened in any business or embassy and I wondered if it warranted a major shake-up of the office. Truly, no one else in the room objected. The experience reinforced my understanding that the politics of survival in a career system easily stifle integrity. Integrity and careerism are the Jekyll and Hyde of any bureaucracy, in government or out. I promised myself I would try to call things as I saw them. The worst could happen is, if you were unlucky, you wouldn't get promoted. If you were lucky your boss would be someone like Flake, who did not object at all to my differing with him. In fact, two days later he cancelled the personnel shakeup, except for my appointment as a part time aide.

Q: What impressions did you form about Nkrumah?

TAYLOR: I didn't really know too much about him before we arrived. The local press was of course laudatory but superficial. After a while, it became apparent that he was a transitional figure half in the colonial period and half in modern times - a well educated leader taking Ghana into independence, but in many ways still with a foot in the past.

It seemed to me - and it was a view that was supported by confirmed stories - that Nkrumah had some considerable weaknesses. It was well known, for example, that he consulted frequently with witch doctors - "juju" men or women. A soothsayer had predicted that he was destined to lead all of Africa and since part of the continent was populated by whites, it would augur well for him to marry a white African woman. Consequently, he contacted the Egyptian President and arranged a marriage with an Egyptian woman. Other events indicated that he maintained a skewed view of the world, in part like that of a traditional tribal leader. This was all well and good, but it restricted his ability to control scourges like corruption.

Q: Since you became well acquainted with the opposition, did you consider the Ghanaian political system to be open?

TAYLOR: The system was in a period of transition. You could watch it happening. When I first arrived, the country had just achieved its independence. Several opposition parties existed, including outspoken critics of the regime. The opposition leaders were in general more educated than Nkrumah's senior followers. During the two years of my tour, Nkrumah began to squeeze the opposition. Some of my contacts were arrested under one pretext or another. By the time I left, it was clear that Ghana was not going to survive long as a democracy and was in fact well on its way to authoritarian rule. That transition took only two years.

Q: Ghana was viewed as a model because it was one of the first colonies to gain independence. It was seen as a model for others. Did you have a lot of visitors - media and others - to view this model?

TAYLOR: Yes. As I left for Ghana, I also shared this optimistic view despite the backsliding on democracy and other problems. We saw Ghana as being in the forefront of a bright new day for Africa - free at last. Many academics and intellectuals visited Ghana at that time. A good number of African-Americans came looking to serve or for business opportunities. They came from all walks of life - teachers, dentists, missionaries, businessmen, some after a quick buck, others a chance to serve. Betsy and I, for example, became friends with a dentist couple from the U.S. who had moved their whole family to Ghana. They still live there so far as I know.

Q: When the political system became more and more authoritarian, was there a feeling in the embassy of disillusionment and cynicism?

TAYLOR: It wasn't overwhelming since the erosion of democracy was gradual. But eventually more and more people began to accept the changing political realities, even if reluctantly. Some viewed the process as one of trial and error; Nkrumah had to be forgiven since some of the challenges facing the country were formidable. I would describe the embassy's mood as one of resignation more than cynicism and disillusionment. Already at this point, the Soviet Union was trying to exert whatever influence it could in Africa in competition with the United States. Moscow invited Nkrumah to visit the Soviet Union. Sputnik flew into space while we were in Ghana and that was a boost to Soviet prestige. The Soviet Union could now trumpet its technological sophistication and power as well as its anti-imperialist record and its supposed egalitarianism. Competition and rivalry with the USSR for influence with the leaders of emerging Africa began seriously during my two years in Ghana.

Q: Ghana started out with some economic prospects. How was that when you were there?

TAYLOR: Before independence, it was the leading producer of cocoa, a status that gave it a large foreign exchange reserve in 1957. The Cocoa Board set up by the British was very efficient and effective. The system was based on small producers - not large plantations. The farmers were assisted financially and with technical know-how by the Cocoa Board. The country had a relatively promising economic future. Wilson Flake pushed hard for more U.S. assistance. Eventually this led to a commitment to build a large hydroelectric dam. This project was related to large, high quality bauxite deposits in the country. It was hoped that the power generated by the dam would enable Ghana to develop a capacity to refine the bauxite and produce finished aluminum. Just before I left, signs increased suggesting that corruption was becoming a major problem. Eventually, rampant graft and poor governance would undermine what had been excellent prospects for economic growth at the time of independence.

Q: Were the opposition leaders on a learning curve?

TAYLOR: Yes, I think so. Many of them had been educated in Great Britain; Nkrumah, as I mentioned, had an American education. The level of sophistication of many Ghanaian politicians impressed me. The opposition in particular. They operated within the boundaries of their society and culture, but nevertheless they seemed quite effective those first two years as a democratic opposition in a new Third World country. Of course, democracy served their purposes at the time since they were in the opposition. Still, they seemed to me to be genuinely committed to democratic principles.

Q: To what western power did people look for a model?

TAYLOR: Increasingly the Ghanaian people looked to the United States. Nkrumah was not that well acquainted with Great Britain; he certainly was not as knowledgeable about the UK as were most other leaders of former British colonies. Ghanaians in general, admired American society and institutions. No doubt the British had done some good things in the Gold Coast, but they had been the rulers for decades, imposing themselves when necessary by force. The intellectual community was very Anglicized, but the U.S. was increasingly seen as the model for those who wished to see democratic principles take root in Ghana.

Q: What conclusions did you reach how the Ghanaian educational system was developing?

TAYLOR: The educational system as it had developed since the end of WWII in Ghana was quiet good. Literacy had steadily increased. Public schools were supplanting missionary education.

One was impressed with the role of women in Ghana. They were the market traders, but also fairly well represented among intellectuals and the young professional elite.

Q: Were the U.S. racial problems raised with you by your Ghanaian contacts?

TAYLOR: Surprisingly, not very often. In retrospect, it was quite amazing that in 1958, when Jim Crow was still rampant in the southern States, this was not a more sensitive issue for the Ghanaians. That was striking. It was seldom raised or reported on in the tabloid, sensational press.

Q: I know that you were interested in Asia, but after your tour in Ghana, did Africa seem to offer some attractive career prospects?

TAYLOR: I seriously considered Africa as an area of specialization. A deputy assistant secretary visited Accra when I had been there for almost two years and during a dinner conversation, he urged me to give Africa serious consideration and at least to seek another assignment in Africa. He told me that Africa was a great opportunity with new embassies opening up all the time. I was interested, but I decided that I was even more interested in Asian cultures and societies.

Q: Did your children enjoy Ghana?

TAYLOR: The children were very young, but they had a good time. We had beautiful beaches and many interesting side trips we could take with the family. We had no health problems. We took malaria pills, but beyond the occasional bouts of diarrhea, we didn't have problems.

Betsy and I traveled a bit up country, where we stayed in old colonial guesthouses used by traveling government officials. Because of the children, we did not travel to other lands, except for a trip to Upper Volta. But we did get to know Ghana quite well.

PART III1959-1968

Q: In 1959, you left Ghana. What was next?

TAYLOR: When the inspectors came to Ghana, one of them said he would recommend that my next assignment be In the Executive Secretariat, the staffing office for the Secretary. I thought that was going to be my next job. But sometime before that, I told Personnel of my hope to be assigned to Chinese language training. Unexpectedly, I received a letter telling me that I had been accepted. But, I had a problem; I was still a language probationer - having failed the Spanish test at the time of the entrance exam. Therefore I had not been promoted. I was still a lowly FSO-8. My career was not going anywhere until I passed a language exam. I tried studying Spanish while we were in Ghana and retook the written test there. I failed again. Personnel said that I really couldn't wait until I could pass a Chinese language test. I needed to do something about my probationary status right away. I then proposed and the Department agreed to give me two months of Spanish training before beginning Chinese. When I came back, we moved into an apartment in Alexandria. I finished a 2-month Spanish course and tested 3 plus in reading and 3 plus in speaking. What a relief that was! The week after passing the Spanish test, I started Chinese language training. Maybe the only time that has been done.

Q: W you at all concerned that you might end up in a Spanish speaking area?

TAYLOR: I think an assignment to Latin America or Spain never entered my head. When I passed the Spanish language test, I had already been assigned to Chinese language training. I went out one door at FSI and in another.

Q: Had you ever tried to learn Chinese on your own?

TAYLOR: I was a complete neophyte when I entered Chinese language training.

Q: You went to FSI first?

TAYLOR: Right - for nine or ten months.

Q: What was that like?

TAYLOR: We covered the waterfront pretty mucboth reading and speaking. In the first month, we concentrated on spoken Chinese. Then we began the infernal memorization of characters. Three of us made up the class. It was a good experience in every way. The teachers were excellent. It's pretty hard to be enthusiastic day after day teaching your language to neophytes, but our Chinese teachers did it with great spirit.

Q: At the time, we had not recognized the PRC. Did you expect that we would do so or did you think you would be tied to Honk Kong or Taipei?

TAYLOR: I went into Chinese affairs because I was convinced that US relations with the PRC would eventually become one of the most critical elements in our foreign policy. I had no doubt that the role of China in the world would grow geometrically. I also knew that some day we would recognize the PRC and all the old Consulates would open up. I knew the day would come when I would be working on the mainland of China.

Q: Do you remember who your fellow students were?

TAYLOR: One was Marty Gale, a Foreign Service officer who had been vice-consul in Monaco. He had become well acquainted with Grace Kelly, lucky dog. Through that fortunate connection he was, while in Chinese training, offered a job managing some investments of the Prince and Grace in Bermuda. He resigned from the Service. I think he ended up as an advisor to the Bermuda government and Monaco as well. I never heard of him again. I suppose he's retired now and playing lawn bowls somewhere on the islands and having kippers for breakfast.

The other student was a young CIA officer. After completing the time at FSI, the two of us went to Taichung, Taiwan to continue the two-year course. The CIA chap also soon resigned and left government service. So, I was the only one of the three who stayed in the Foreign Service.

After the completion of language training, I was assigned to our embassy in Taipei as a political officer. Consequently, I spent the last few months learning Taiwanese, which, of course, is also a Chinese dialect.

Q: You were in Taichung essentially for eighteen months. You were there when Kennedy became president. Did that raise expectations?

TAYLOR: Yes, especially for those planning to work in Chinese affairs. We had high hopes that there would soon be recognition of the PRC - or at least some serious rapprochement between the U.S. and China.

Q: Did you learn something from your teachers about the situation on Taiwan and in the PRC?

TAYLOR: The faculty represented a wide variety of experiences and viewpoints. Of course, no one was pro-communist. But we did hear a lot about the mainland; most of the faculty had come from there with the Peoples Liberation Army hot on their tail. We had only one teacher who was Taiwan born.

Q: During the election campaign, a vigorous debate arose about Quemoy and Matsu. Was that an issue while you were in language training?

TAYLOR: Naturally, it was a major issue. This was soon after the Quemoy crisis of 1958. At that time, tensions ran high across the Strait and it appeared that war could break out. The language school students made a trip to Quemoy. In those days, the two sides were shelling each other every other day. Wisely, they picked the same day. An old Nationalist Air Force plane flew us onto the island on one of the off days. We explored the extensive fortifications that had been cut into the granite mountain that formed the core of the island. It was striking. It was evident, however, that militarily, Quemoy was not important to Taiwan. It might have provided some early warning if an invasion of the big island was in the planned stage, but it was real estate that primarily had political importance. For Chiang Kai-shek, Quemoy and Matsu were part of the mainland and thus their occupation rationalized his claim to be the leader still of all China. Despite the crisis of 1958, the islands were also important to Mao. Although Mao saw the islands occupied by his enemies with US support as an affront, they also provided a valuable link for him to Taiwan. Thus he probably was content with Chiang's occupation.Q: While in school, did you get much information about what was going on the mainland?

TAYLOR: While attending FSI, we had very good lecturers - academics like Harold Hinton. They would speak to us - Hinton in a machine-gun delivery - on the economic and political situation in the PRC. Even more important, perhaps, was the reading, both assigned and self-selected... I started to read everything I could lay my hands on about China, but especially about contemporary China. I started a pretty good library on Chinese affairs; it now contains hundreds of books.

Q: Did your wife also take language training?

TAYLOR: We had two young children, so it was not possible when we were in Washington. When we arrived in Taichung she began to take classes. We paid for these private lessons. Today, they are provided to spouses free. We had Chinese servants - a maid/nanny, a cook, and his wife. None of them spoke any English at all; so Betsy's Chinese became very good. She is fluent still today, but does not read Chinese.

Q: Who was our ambassador in Taipei at the time?

TAYLOR: At first, it was Everett Drumright. During the 1940s, he was a relatively junior China specialist who survived the McCarthy era unscathed because he was so young and because he had not been critical of Chiang Kai-shek or the Nationalists in his reporting. Most senior China specialists, like John Service, were of course highly critical of Chiang and naï¿½ve about the intentions of the communists. Drumright became ambassador in 1958. He held the view that our support of Chiang Kai-shek was critical to U.S. security interests in the Far East. That, he believed, was the overriding consideration. The regime's internal policies, which included suppression of any political opposition, constituted a domestic question in which, he believed, we should not get involved. In our confrontation with the PRC, we needed the support of the Nationalists in such things as intelligence, but more importantly in the event of war with China, Taiwan would be a key strategic asset and a valuable political ally. Whether or not we liked the KMT's domestic policies was beside the point, he thought. Admiral Alan Kirk succeeded Drumright in July 1962. Kirk was a good old salt who had been in command of the allied naval forces on D-day, but he lasted only seven months due to bad health. Another former admiral, Jerauld Wright, replaced him.

Q: You said that in the last six months you concentrated on learning Taiwanese. How different is that from Mandarin or other Chinese dialects?

TAYLOR: It is something like the difference betweePortuguese and Spanish. There is a commonality that allows people to have a limited understanding of each other's speech. They are different languages; although once you know one, it is of course much easier to learn the other.

I did have some difficulty switching after 18 months of Mandarin to Taiwanese. But I was looking forward to the assignment in the political section, my main mission being to cover Taiwanese politics and local affairs. The Taiwan provincial assembly met not too far from Taichung, so while still at the school I made a point of meeting a good number of assembly members. I invited a few to our house for dinners and once a good number for a large reception. I don't remember asking the embassy's permission to proceed with these social occasions, the purpose of which was to make contacts for my forthcoming job. I just went ahead.

Q: Did you get the impression during your tour in Taichung that the Taiwanese were "second class" citizens with the mainlanders who had fled to Taiwan calling all the shots?

TAYLOR: The history of the Taiwanese under Kuomintang (KMT) rule had been up to that point quite tragic. In 1947, the Nationalists brutally suppressed a Taiwanese uprising, killing about 28,000 Taiwanese. In the 1949-50 period ,as the Nationalists fled to Taiwan, KMT security services executed several thousand other native Taiwanese suspected to be opponents of KMT rule. These were traumatic experiences, which have not been forgotten almost 65 years later. When I arrived on Taiwan in 1960, no open political dissent was allowed. The mainlanders, who had come with Chiang in 1949, dominated the government, the military, the police, and the strong public economic sector, which controlled all infrastructure but also a number of major industries. In the Nationalist military in 1960, no native Taiwanese had obtained the rank above captain.

The Taiwanese were an oppressed majority. It was just a fact of life. No one thought anything could be done about it for the foreseeable future. I reported on the views of the Taiwanese political leaders and other Taiwanese elite in business, church, etc. The KMT allowed independent candidates to run for local elections but not to form opposition parties A couple of nominal parties from the mainland days still existed in the Legislative Yuan (the central parliament), but under martial law only the KMT could operate on Taiwan. In effect, the independents formed an opposition to the ruling party. I got to know a good number of these independent politicians even before I left Taichung.

Q: Was the junior member of the political staff usually assigned to cover domestic politics in Taiwan?

TAYLOR: It was either the embassy or more likely the China desk back in Washington that suggested that I study Taiwanese as well as Mandarin. This followed a decision to assign a junior officer in the political section to follow native Taiwanese affairs.

The new mayor of Kaohsiung, Henry Kao, was typical of the local opposition politician who operated within the rules and ran for office as an independent. That the KMT allowed him to win was considered at the time quite extraordinary. Chiang Ching-kuo, who was Chiang Kai-shek's son and then responsible for internal security as well as covert operations against the mainland, had been convinced by Kao to allow him to assign monitors to every polling station to insure a fair outcome. Kao thus became the first non-KMT mayor on Taiwan. I got to know him quite well. In private, he would condemn the KMT for its dictatorial and authoritarian ways as well as for its policies that kept native Taiwanese out of government, the public sector, and the military. Still, he was careful not to condemn President Chiang Kai-shek or the grand policy of returning to or "counterattacking" the mainland. Of course, he did not mention the subject of Taiwanese independence. That was far beyond the "pale."

Nevertheless, even in the early 1960s, one could detect the emergence of a group of island-born politicians who saw a path for themselves to position and influence in local and provincial affairs, and down the road possibly something more - provided of course they did not step over the boundaries set by the two Chiangs and the KMT.

Q: During this 1962-65 period, what was the embassy's attitude towards this emerging native political movement? Did we see it essentially as a Taiwan internal issue or were we concerned that the Taiwanese might try to establish some kind of relationships with the PRC?

TAYLOR: In the 1960s the chemistry of US-Taiwan relations began to change. President Kennedy was elected in 1960 and ran into difficulties almost immediately in our relations with the Soviet Union. The debacle of the invasion of Cuba was a bad start to say the least. Looking around to recoup and perhaps interested in the subject, the Administration began to consider the state of democracy around the world and what today we refer to as "human rights." This involved taking a hard look at civil liberties even in dictatorial countries that were our allies, like Taiwan. The new "look" in America's world posture had an impact on the embassy's priorities, even when we still had an ambassador (Drumwright) who was completely sold on Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT. Still, the Kennedy people began to make it known to the KMT that it had a strong interest in civil rights and democracy.

For many years, the embassy kept its distance from the budding Taiwanese opposition, not even showing moral support whenever they ran afoul of the government and were locked up. But with Kennedy's election, the embassy started to pay greater attention to these people and to the attitudes of the Taiwanese people in general. As I said, my assignment was a new one for the embassy, and reflected this new interest, and very likely an instruction from Washington.

Q: Was there any concern that the Taiwanese, if they ever were to take power, might take a different position on foreign policy issues?

TAYLOR: Ambassador Drumright worried that if the Taiwanese ever took control, the staunch anti-communist line of the KMT would be watered down and Taiwan could even try to adopt a somewhat neutral position. Drumright believed that if a free and fair election was held on the island, the KMT would lose and the Taiwanese opposition would take charge. He was wary of the opposition's stand on the Cold War and China; at best he thought its position was unpredictable, at worst, it would be opportunist. He saw the Republic of China as a very important U.S. partner - and an unsinkable aircraft carrier - in the Far East. This contribution, he thought, was vital in the Cold War and in the containment of the PRC.

In 1961, a Taiwan magazine called The Free China Review became increasingly liberal in its editorial content. It was supported by the Republic of China's most famous intellectual, Hu Shih, who had been ambassador to the U.S. during the early part of the war with Japan. After 1949, Hu remained in New York. His magazine began to call for democratic reform on Taiwan. About this time, an informal collection of intellectuals and non-party politicians that shared these views soon formed an informal study group. It included a mainlander named Lei Chen, editor of Free China Review, and the Taiwanese Mayor of Taipei, Henry Kao. They and others discussed the possibility of forming a political opposition party. Lei and one of his associates were arrested one night and charged with sedition. The associate was also accused of being a communist agent. The whole affair was handled with a heavy hand by the authorities. The charges were clearly trumped up and the court had already made up its mind before the trial began. That was not surprising in light of the KMT's track record on opposition parties. The "plotters" were sentenced to long jail time.

The Department sent a cable to Drumright instructing him to make representations on behalf of Lei Chen. He was told to make it clear to Chiang Kai-shek in no uncertain terms that we did not take kindly to his high-handed methods in suppressing democratic opposition. This was the first such lecture the Department had thought of sending to the Gimo since 1950. The ambassador was told to point out to the Gimo that the draconian police measures then commonly practiced in Taiwan might well lead to events like those in Korea that had recently ended with the ouster of Syngman Rhee. Drumright did not follow his instructions; rather, he sent a reply to Washington that pointed out that Chiang Kai-shek would pay no attention to our jawboning in this fashion because he knew that if free and fair elections were to be upheld, the KMT would be defeated. Therefore, neither he nor his son would neither allow such elections nor a formal opposition. That was certainly true, but Drumright went on to paint a dire future for U.S.-Taiwan relations if the KMT was ousted from power, a regime that he considered to be the lynch pin of our East Asia policy.

The Department did not answer Drumright, but soon thereafter Admiral Alan Kirk replaced him. Kirk had been in charge of naval operations on D-Day under Eisenhower. He was selected for the Taiwan job by the Kennedy administration because, in its view, the main challenge in the Far East at this point was not the internal situation in Taiwan and the future of democracy there, but rather events on the mainland after the debacle of the "Great Leap Forward." We know now of course that that this utopian effort by Mao was a miserable failure resulting in millions of deaths by starvation. At this time, thousands upon thousands of Chinese were fleeing the PRC for Hong Kong. For many KMT old timers on Taiwan there suddenly seemed the real possibility of a successful "counterattack" that would take them back to the mainland. In any case, Chiang Kai- shek at the least had to appear to be girding up for the vaunted attack in order to appease his military and other mainlander supporters. He felt had to make it appear that he was seriously preparing for an invasion of the mainland. The ROC military did begin to make plans and discuss the various possibilities - e.g. a direct attack by sea or one through Burma. Military exercises were held and the CIA station chief at the time, Ray Cline, lobbied back in Washington for US support of a KMT move on the PRC. But it was fairly clear to most of us in the political section that despite all of the KMT military activity, Chiang did not intend actually to lead an attack without all-out US involvement.

Cline had an unusual relationship with Chiang Ching-kuo, Chiang Kai-shek's son. The two men seemed to agree completely on political and strategic matters; in fact, they probably agreed on most things. The two used to go on bashes together at night. Some said that they even looked alike. So, Ray became a stout defender of the regime usually urging Washington to go along with whatever Chiang Kai-shek wanteat the least to supply him more military equipment and supplies in order to mollify his demands for action.

Kirk was appointed ambassador because he was a distinguished elder and senior military officer and therefore in theory should have been compatible with Chiang. Furthermore, his naval expertise included leadership of the momentous Normandy landing. Soon after his arrival, he called on Chiang and forcefully stated the U.S. position on the prospect of invading the mainland. He said he had been involved in a major invasion by sea and he knew that to be successful, the invader had to have enormous and overwhelming resources, particularly manpower on the order of the numerical advantage the Allies had when they invaded Normandy. He laid out what in his view would be required for a successful attack on the mainland. It was obvious the KMT did not have these kinds of resources. Kirk bluntly added that the United States would in no way become involved in either the invasion of the mainland or in repulsing a follow-up PRC "counter-attack." After that conversation, Chiang refused to see Kirk ever again. Kirk had to leave six or seven months after his arrival for health reasons.

Q: Did people at your level take the Chiang threats seriously?

TAYLOR: Most of us at the junior level were more skeptical than the senior officers. Ray Cline, as I said, took it very seriously and even supported the idea of an invasion. The Ambassador and the Department had to take the Gimo's threats seriously and had to prepare counter-arguments. In the summer of 1962, President Kennedy made an important statement about the situation in the Taiwan Strait; he said publicly that the U.S. would not support any kind of military action across the Strait.

But Chiang continued to raise the issue and in 1965, the rhetoric again reached a high point. Cline by that time was back in Washington as the DDI (deputy director for intelligence) at the CIA. Ray had a very close relationship with McCone, then the CIA Director. Again, he used his influence to try to get the U.S. government to support Chiang's aspirations at least at some level. Washington did cooperate in very limited military actions in an effort to placate Chiang - and the CIA. For example, we supported the dropping of several 100-man parachute commando units. It was Chiang's purported idea that these groups would provide intelligence on whether the population might rise up against the communist government, especially given the poor economic circumstances on the mainland. Several teams were dropped, but the PLA quickly wiped them out.

But the issue of a ROC invasion of the mainland kept coming up, even in 1965 and 1966 when Johnson was president. In 1965, as the Vietnam war heated up, the Gimo's proposal was to invade southwest China. The argument was that that this would secure our position in Vietnam by blocking further assistance from the PRC to the Viet Cong. This proposal again had the strong support of Cline and the CIA. At one stage, Chiang proposed sending Nationalist troops to Vietnam. The Department and the Joint Chiefs rejected that proposal over the objections of Cline and the CIA.

Q: While you were there, was Ray Cline considered to be extreme?

TAYLOR: You have to remember that in the 1950s, our relations with the Nationalists were conducted primarily by the CIA. Our ambassador knew little of what either the CIA or the military were doing. Sometimes he learned about these matter from the Nationalists. So, Ray's position was not unusual.

The CIA station and Chiang Ching-kuo's organizations dreamed up a number of operations that turned out to be debacles. Most ideas of course were scuttled. The Nationalists usually ended up with some new military equipment to keep them happy. These activities, those actually carried out and those aborted, kept the ROC special operation troops busy and well fed. Sometimes, however, these schemes had serious consequences. For example, a CIA covert operation from Taiwan to stir up insurgency in Tibet took place in 1958-59 - that is it predated the Tibetan uprising of late 1959. The only result was the death of a lot of Tibetans. Another joinROC/CIA covert operation sought to stir up an uprising on one of Indonesia's main islands. This adventure also was a fiasco. The Indonesians shot down and captured an American pilot named Pope. Washington suddenly reversed course and began wooing the Indonesian military by sending them modern military equipment and weapons.

Q: Was there the usual division in the political section between junior and senior officers, with the younger staff looking at the KMT as a relic of history?

TAYLOR: I reported on native Taiwanese affairs and therefore had to explain their point of view. Thus, I came to understand their complaints against the regime more than others in the Embassy. I reported extensively on the absence of democratic practices on Taiwan and how the KMT manipulated political life on the island, suppressing all important public dissent. Private dissent, however, was quite common. This was the fundamental difference between Nationalist rule and that of the Communists. The mainlander population made up 15% of the island population and yet they completely dominated the police and the military establishment as well as the state economic sectors. I wrote reports on this situation, which the embassy forwarded to Washington. I was in the embassy only a short period before Kirk replaced Drumright. The DCM was Ralph Clough - an very open and supportive Chinese-language officer. The Taipei government lodged protests on several occasions about my activities. It was particularly suspicious of my meetings with the Taiwanese opposition or "non-party" politicians. The ambassador or the DCM would tell me about the protests, but I was never instructed to cease and desist. I always assumed that in these meetings the conversation was being taped. Often that was true.

I believe by 1962 the Department accepted that KMT-mainlander dominance could not last forever. We had to pay more attention to future Taiwanese leaders. I think it was in 1961 that the ambassador was first instructed to remonstrate with the KMT about its suppression of Taiwanese aspirations, but the Gimo told him to forget it. By the time I arrived, we would delicately raise this delicate issue only when some serious act of police suppression took place - which by then was very seldom.

Q: Were you able to give leader grants to Taiwanese?

TAYLOR: We did. Unlike in the 1950s, Washington possessed some collective level of understanding of the Taiwanese position and how this might affect the prospects for long term stability. And, as I said, in terms of cold-war policy, the new Administration believed it was in American interests to begin to pay more attention to human rights. Thus, we selected people like Mayor Henry Kau for U.S. study grants. When Kau came up for re-election in 1965 or 1966, the government refused to provide poll watchers; that discouraged him enough so that he didn't run for re-election. He did run again later at the end of the 1960s. We made informal demarches to the Nationalist government at various levels to encourage the government to allow more open and transparent elections. During my tour, the policy of encouraging greater political say for the Taiwanese began. It was still limited, but at least the initial steps were taken.

A local politician named K'ang Ning-hsiang, who at one time worked in a gas station, was the first independent politician to be elected to the national assembly, called the Legislative Yuan. K'ang was also the type of oppositionist we tried to encourage. Twenty years later, after opposition parties were allowed, K'ang would be one the moderate leaders of the Democratic Progressive Party. Originally, the Nationalists had refused to have new elections to the Legislative Yuan. As mentioned before, a provincial assembly existed that was made up mostly of native Taiwanese. But the Legislative Yuan (LY) left little real power to the assembly, the two bodies in effect legislated for the same territory and population. But the Yuan passed the principal laws of the land and controlled the bulk of government spending. In the mid 1960s, the KMT decided to allow some supplementary elections to the L.Y, and this allowed a handful of Taiwanese to become members. K'ang Ning-hsiang was one of those.

By the mid-1960s, Chiang Ching-kuo was not only his father's right hand and his eyes and ears, but he was also as well the brains of the party. Chiang Kai-shek's health was failing, and this left more and more of the burden of government to the son. It was during this period that Chiang Ching-kuo and some of the more progressive elements that had long been associated with him decided that the KMT had to take a longer-range view of its future. It had to look beyond the slogan of returning to the mainland. It was Ching-kuo's view and that of some of his inner coterie that the KMT was likely to be stuck on Taiwan for the indefinite future, and thus it had to move away gradually from its authoritarian rule. The goal was eventually to become a more open and democratic institution, and eventually even be able to win a free and open election.

Ching-kuo's new approach had Washington's support. As events moved along, we increased the jawboning about the need for the KMT to ease its authoritarian ways. The reformers under Ching-kuo felt that the KMT could for many years keep political control on the island while allowing greater Taiwanese participation in political life and a more open society overall. They wanted this reform process to take a long while, during which time the mainlanders would keep control, but they also recognized that eventually, the Taiwanese would control the KMT and the government. This was, at the time, all theoretical but it was a profoundly important change in thinking - the leaders-to be of the dictatorial KMT regime were informally but decidedly embracing the principle of real reform and the eventual target: popular democracy. As Alex De Tocqueville said, despotism is in its greatest danger when it is reforming itself.

Q: Were we seeing Chiang Ching-kuo as a new broom or just the old broom in a different disguise?

TAYLOR: Our views of Ching-kuo began to change around 1965 when he made another trip to the U.S. He was then defense minister. Until then, he was viewed as principally the enforcer of his father's dictates, including the brutal suppression of dissent. But during this visit to the U.S., he talked about a new position on Taiwan's relationship with the PRC that was a clear departure from the standard catechism. It was a position which was much more acceptable to us. He said that in the long run it was still the KMT's fervent hope to return to the mainland, but he realized that this might not happen in his life time. Of course, the goal could not be abandoned, he said, but for the foreseeable future his government's focus would be on Taiwan and its economic and political growth.

Ching-kuo's idea was to make Taiwan such a model of economic and political success that its example would put enormous pressure on the mainland to follow suit. After 1965, that is in fact what the Taipei government focused on: first, economic development, and then in a much slower manner political liberalization. The reformers envisioned many careful steps forward, some to the side, and some backward, but in the final analysis, popular democracy was the direction the Nationalists followed thereafter. Chiang Ching-kuo and his friends thought they could complete the process in twenty years. Quite amazingly, they had that amount of time and, helped by events on and outside the island, they did it.

Q: How good was our intelligence about events on the mainland?

TAYLOR: The CIA of course had close ties to the Nationalist intelligence apparatus, run by Chiang Ching-kuo. But neither the Department nor the CIA paid much attention to the human intelligence that the Nationalists were collecting. It was not considered reliable. Sometimes it was fabricated. What was most valuable for us was the open monitoring of China's media by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS). The National Security Agency also had facilities on Taiwan for other signals intercepts. Information from this source - the NSA - was highly useful to the military but seldom provided political insights.

By this time, we were running U-2 flights over the mainland. This was a program Ray Cline had successfully pushed. The U-2s first spotted China's secret nuclear weapons facilities in the far northwest. Nationalist pilots flew these spy planes, but the CIA controlled the operations. The latter was something of a sore point with the Nationalist Air Force. Two or three planes and their pilots were lost. All of these intelligence operations were as far as the Nationalists were concerned under the command of Chiang Ching-kuo.

We had wide range of exchanges with Nationalist intelligence on what seemed to be going on the mainland. By the mid-1960s, they were much more objective about events within the PRC and on the mainland. That change reflected Chiang Ching-kuo's influence. In the early 1960s, for example, the Nationalists viewed the Sino-Soviet split as a great farce - a deliberate effort to mislead the West. This was CKS' idea. In the mid-1960s, Ching-kuo developed his own think tank staffed by American-trained political scientists, and they produced a much more sophisticated analysis. When I went back to the Department assigned to INR, I covered Taiwanese matters as well as Chinese external affairs. I was involved in these exchanges with the Nationalists and I thought they were useful.

Q: By the time you left Taiwan in 1965, what were your thoughts about the island's future?

TAYLOR: I believed that eventually - sooner rather than later - the political opposition would come to the fore and native Taiwanese would take over the government. I did not know how this change would take place - peacefully or not - but I was sure it was coming, probably within ten or twelve years. I felt that the U.S. should take a longer-range view of events on Taiwan and do more than it was doing to foster a political situation on the island that would allow the transition to take place peacefully and democratically. Well, I was off a decade, but US actions did eventually push the KMT toward political reform. This push, however, came not so much from jawboning and threats of sanctions as from our steps toward dï¿½tente with the mainland beginning in 1971.

Q: By 1965, Johnson had been president for a couple of years and had just been re-elected. Did our continuing involvement in Vietnam have any impact?

TAYLOR: This certainly did become an important focus. Over a period of time, the island became a major support base for the US military in Indochina; it may have been more important than Thailand or the Philippines. Taiwan provided maintenance for military equipment, most especially aircraft. Air Asia was the CIA front that did this work. Taiwan industry also provided an increasing number of items for the US military on Vietnam. All of this contributed to the economic takeoff of Taiwan that had been steadily gaining speed since the Fifties. Chiang Ching-kuo at first thought that this extensive support for the war in Vietnam would be an important aspect of an emerging new partnership with the USA.

When Ching-kuo came to Washington in 1966, he called for a new, more dynamic, and genuine partnership between Taiwan and the U.S. He thought the true alliance he envisioned between the two governments could continue indefinitely, particularly if the Nationalists began to show real progress toward expanding human and civil rights on the island. Chiang Kai-shek always postured on these issues, but his son thought that he could gradually bring to fruition real reform in tune with American policies, or at least enough to keep us - and the Taiwanese - minimally satisfied. He indicated to his American interlocutors that he understood that such a partnership would require the ROC to cease its posturing on the return to the mainland. Reflecting this new US-Taiwan partnership idea, Chiang Ching-kuo offered to send Nationalist troops to Vietnam. But State, Defense, and the White House rejected that offer. The CIA supported it. As part of his longer-range policy, Ching-kuo himself by 1965 had virtually ceased to talk about returning to the mainland. A mentioned, his father, however, continued to urge immediate military action against the PRC. Ching-kuo implied that this sort of talk was rhetoric.

By the mid and late '60s, Chiang Kai-shek's Congressional support was waning. On Taiwan, he still had a powerful constituency on the island among the military and the political class that had fled with him to the island. These exiles still dreamed of returning to the mainland. They also saw their positions on Taiwan based upon the claim to represent all of China. But we were beginning to see cracks in the Nationalist old guard. For example, the defense minister explicitly told us not to take the President too seriously when he proposed attacks against the ML.

About this time, American society and government began a remarkable rather bi-partisan shift in its views of the PRC. Even though China was becoming more radicalized than ever under Mao's Cultural Revolution, ironically the idea of reassessing our China policy began to grow in the United States. In 1965-66, Congress began holding hearings on the issue. That's when the scholar Dock Barnett floated the idea of "containment without isolation," a theme that became very popular. More and more politicians and commentators began saying we had to so something about our PRC policy. One those leading this new approach was none other than Richard Nixon. In a 1967 article in Foreign Affairs, Nixon said that we could not continue to keep the PRC isolated. Instead, it had to be brought into the world.

The key factor bringing about this change in American thinking about China was the sharp escalation of the Sino-Soviet split. Dean Acheson's prediction was coming true. Not only where the two communist giants parting company, but they were also on the verge of war. This presented the opportunity for a grand geo-political leap forward by the United States. Dï¿½tente with China would reorder the balance of forces and political perceptions in the cold war. Kissinger and Nixon would also see it as opening a window for the United States to exit Indochina. After all, the main rationale for our getting involved was that behind Hanoi and the dominoes of Southeast Asia loomed the hostile Anti-American giant we called Red China.

It was the US move toward rapprochement with China that provided the principal incentive for the movement toward a one-man, one-vote democracy on Taiwan. Ching-kuo understood that the idea of a close strategic partnership with the United States was no longer feasible. The KMT/mainlander dictatorship could no longer seek to justify its rule on the basis of its claim to be the government of all China and its promise to recapture the mainland. Nor could it expect support from the USA and the American people on the basis of its contribution to the containment of China and its usefulness as the good China versus the bad China. In the long run, he understood, Taiwan could only retain its integrity in relation to the mainland and the support of the United States and the world if it were to become a popular democracy.

Equally or more important than world trends, events on Taiwan itself were reshaping Ching-kuo's view of the long-term future of his regime. These developments included the island's rapid economic growth, its increasingly educated and urban population, and the exploding interaction of the ever more sophisticated Taiwan people with the outside world. Even before 1970, this complex of economic, social, and political developments had persuaded Ching-kuo that the KMT had to take as its long-term goal, its transformation into a popular party. This meant moving slowly toward an open democracy and eventually a party and a government that would be run primarily by native Taiwanese. He began this process of party and constitutional reform in the late 1960s.

Chiang Ching-kuo and his reformers intended for this transformation to take place very slowly and in a controlled way. When they began, they thought they had at least twenty years to complete the process and that's about what it took. Along the way, there would be many zigs and zags many steps forward, many back, and many to the side... nevertheless the goal in Chiang Ching-kuo's mind was always clear - a popular democracy. Instead of reacting viscerally to changes in American policy toward China in the early 1970s, Ching-kuo turned these developments to his and Taiwan's advantage.

For him, the major geopolitical shift that was taking place in US/China relations and the world generally was not an excuse to crackdown politically on Taiwan, as conservatives believed, but a reason to move forward. Again, Chiang Ching-kuo understood the broader dynamics at play. During my time in INR in Washington from 1965-1968 and again in the NSC from 1976-1977 I followed Taiwan affairs among other subjects. Thus I had the opportunity to see how the political dynamics on the island were playing out after the opening of US-China dï¿½tente.

It was obvious that America's political detachment from Taiwan from 1971 to 1979 gave Taiwanese oppositionists and mainlander power holders on the island a common interest in unity and stability. This meant that most Taiwanese activists or dissidents understood they should not rock the boat too much, but at the same time the KMT leaders had to keep the craft moving ahead toward eventual democracy. "Being together in the same boat became Ching-kuo's favorite metaphor. The American withdrawal from Indochina and the collapse of Saigon confirmed the conclusion that the long term survival of a separate government and distinctive society on Taiwan had to be based on popular support. Expanding prosperity throughout the Ching-kuo era gave most Taiwanese a compelling stake in a stable Taiwan boat and was of course a key factor in Taiwan's successful transition. Thus Ching-kuo gave high priority to economic growth. Related to Taiwan's success was the existence of a Taiwanese opposition that persisted in peaceful struggle and, as "participatory politics" gradually expanded, kept pushing the boundaries, but more or less played by the rules.

While protesting the moves by Nixon and Carter, Ching-kuo in the end believed they had done Taiwan a favor. Taiwan emerged in the 1980s as a unique international entity, an avowed sovereign state with few formal diplomatic ties but enormous economic and financial influence. It also had gained a stature and a degree of independence it had not had as a weak, totally dependent ally of the United States.

PART IV1966-1974

Q: You left Taipei in 1965. What was your next assignment?

TAYLOR: I was returned to Washington to work as an analyst in INR. For the first ten months, I covered Taiwan and Thailand; then I was switched to work on Chinese external affairs.

Q: In either or both of your Taiwan or INR assignments, was the issue of recognition of the PRC a topic for discussion?

TAYLOR: Yes, starting in the early 1960s, Taiwan's position in the world community, including the UN, began to erode. France was the first to recognize the PRC at the expense of its diplomatic relations with Taiwan. A number of other countries followed suite. When I was working in INR, one of the hot issues was what our position should be in the UN on the increasingly hot issue of seating the PR. Support for seating the PRC was rising. So, a lot of thought and discussion focused on this issue. Out of this dynamic, the question of U.S. recognition of Peking also emerged at least as a topic of informal discussion among officers in the Department.

In 1966, a movement was afoot in the United Nations to support a resolution proposed by Italy, which would have allowed both the PRC and Taiwan to have seats in the UN, with the PRC taking the Security Council position. Some bureaus of the State Department favored this solution; they thought it would represent real progress in dealing with the China anomaly if the Italian resolution were adopted. The anomaly, of course, was the continued representation of all of China in the UN by tiny Taiwan.

Some of us, however, believed that the proposal was a dangerous one for the United States. Although I was not in the regional bureau at the time, I did draft a memorandum for Alan Whiting, then Director of Analysis for East Asia, who forwarded it to the Secretary of State. I pointed out that if we were to support the Italian resolution and thereby promote a two-China policy, that would mean our everlasting involvement in the Chinese civil war. I thought that before we jumped on that bandwagon, we should consider the issue very carefully. I said it would be better to continue to support Taiwan as the China representative in the UN until we had our relationship with Peking in better shape. If we were to be in the forefront of supporting a two-China policy, then we would be increasing the prospects of involvement some day in a war with the PRC. In the final analysis, we did not support the Italian resolution.

In the meantime, Sino-Soviet relations were still deteriorating. At the end of the 1960s military skirmishes were breaking out on the border. The logic of US-China rapprochement gained strength on a daily basis.

Q: You were in INR until when?

TAYLOR: 1967.

Q: Did you in INR feel that Dean Rusk was paying much attention to the China issue?

TAYLOR: Rusk was of course preoccupied with the Indochina war. In terms of the China issue, I think he had an open mind. But politically it was difficult to even talk about this when we were building up in Indochina on the basis of the China threat. The Sino-US Warsaw talks, were suspended during the Cultural Revolution and did not startup again until Nixon became President.

Q: What were you seeing happening on the mainland?

TAYLOR: The Cultural Revolution was totally bizarre - self-generated chaos in the most populous country on Earth. On foreign policy, Mao was also pursuing a radical policy that sought to polarize the global communist movement and in fact the world itself. That meant taking on the Soviet Union and its alleged socialist revisionism. The revisionist trend, in Mao's eyes, was as dangerous as American imperialism. Perhaps more so. It was remarkable that with these seemingly irrational and fanatical happenings in China, and in light of the Vietnam War, there occurred in America a national reappraisal of our tough line toward China. It was happening in Washington but also in the country as a whole.

Alan Whiting felt that eventually we would have to recognize the existence of communist China and deal with it. By 1969-1970, Mao was becoming much less of a threat to United States interests in light of his confrontation with the USSR. Mao had in fact become a "Titoist" in his relations with Moscow but, unlike Tito, one who loudly espoused a struggle to the death for world revolution. So, even before Nixon, an emerging sense emerged that some kind of normal relations with the PRC was a desirable and realistic possibility. At the same, the Vietnam War was still raging. An American plane crashed on PRC territory. The US Air Force placed several nuclear-armed planes on Taiwan. Despite these tensions and despite the radical nature of Mao's pronounced policies, we saw opportunities for a new relationship with the PRC because of its anti-Soviet stance. Eventually, this crisis and a sign of flexibility on Taiwan provided the two wedges that Nixon and Kissinger used in their opening to the PRC.

You asked about the information we were receiving about events in China at this time. It mostly came from open sources - newspapers and other media - and signal intelligence. The U2s provided good intelligence on nuclear and military matters. We received reports from Hong Kong on what refugees from the PRC were saying about conditions in that country. The CIA, however, didn't really have any unique insights; it didn't have significant sources on key political matters inside the PRC.

We did occasionally get some interesting reports from countries bordering on the PRC about the latter's external activities. Most of these reports came from friendly government services; they did not provide critical information, but were useful.

Q: While you were studying the PRC, did you or your colleagues come to the conclusion that North Vietnam and the PRC were never going to be very close allies?

TAYLOR: In the mid and late 1960s, China-watchers did not generally consider the possibility of a falling out between North Vietnam and China. A historic recollection existed of long-standing tensions and animosity between the two countries. One of the reasons Washington had rejected Taiwan's offer of troops was that we believed the South Vietnamese would not welcome them. When I was in Hong Kong in the early 1970s, however, the potential for a split between North Vietnam and China did become evident to some of us. In 1973, I drafted a cable (in the name of our Consul General David Osborne) suggesting that if by chance the United States pulled out of Vietnam and the South collapsed, serious tensions between Hanoi and Peking would probably develop as the two communist powers, one supported by the Soviet Union, would compete for influence in the rest of Indochina. Inevitably, I suggested, Hanoi would turn to Moscow for assistance. And the Soviets, I believed, would be more than happy to oblige. A few days later, we received a message from the Department giving us an INR comment on my cable, very likely a comment requested by the Assistant Secretary or even the 7th Floor. INR confidently dismissed the notion that the scenario I suggested would ever materialize. Peking and Hanoi had too much in common, and Vietnam would always seek to balance its relations between the two communist giants.

Q: What were your views and those of your Asian expert colleagues in INR about our involvement in Vietnam?

TAYLOR: Some of us felt that our original objectives in Vietnam were reasonable ones. Initially, we believed it would be seriously damaging to US security interests if North Vietnam, supported by the PRC and the Soviet Union, conquered South Vietnam. Maoist guerrillas throughout Southeast Asia would be encouraged. Moderate governments would be dismayed. Mao was pushing peoples war in most countries of Southeast Asia, including Burma, which had a stoutly neutral, left-leaning government. The escalation of our role in South Vietnam in 1965 did perhaps play a role in the Indonesian military's decision in 1966 to act against the Pro-Peking PKP (the Indonesian communists), which with Sukarno's support seemed well on the way to seizing power. In short, the domino theory was at the time a logical one, but how things would actually play out was unpredictable.

Those who felt as I did recognized that such a horrendous use of deadly force as we were then unleashing in Indochina could have unpredictable consequences. We understood that the conflict in the South was not just a case of communist aggression. Vietnamese nationalism was the primary motivating force behind the Viet Gong. So, FSOs of my "ilk" were skeptical not enthusiastic supporters of the war. The question was whether we could succeed at an acceptable cost. In short, from a geopolitical point of view, our policy of intervention initially seemed as warranted as it had been in Korea years earlier. Not only was our objective in South Vietnam a worthy one but also until the Tet offensive we thought it was working. After 1968, however, the best course in Indochina seemed to be to cut our losses. The Sino-Soviet split provided a promising opportunity to do this.

Q: During your tour in INR, was there any work being done on the PRC's relationships with North Korea?

TAYLOR: That was not very high on our priority list. As the Cultural Revolution took off in China and extended into the PRC's foreign policy, tensions between the two countries erupted. The Maoists brought pressure to bear on their "comrades" to follow in their footsteps in denouncing Soviet social imperialism and in supporting people's war in various places. Neither the North Koreans nor the North Vietnamese did so, of course. Some strains existed between Peking and Pyongyang, but I don't think at that time we paid much attention to them. By the early 1970s, Zhou En-lai had succeeded in ending China's most provocative posturing abroad.

Q: You finished your INR tour in 1967. What happened next?

TAYLOR: I went to the Center for Chinese Studies at the University of Michigan. I had the title of "Staff Associate." I completed my work for an MA degree in one year. At the same time, I wrote a book, which Praeger published titled, China and Southeast Asia, Peking and Revolutionary Movements. I should have thought of a better name, something like, "Love on the Great Wall." The book was a history of the Chinese Party's relations with the various communist parties in South-east Asia. It was required reading in courses at universities ranging from Harvard to California. It included a chapter on the CCP's historic ties with each party in the region. It was a fascinating and timely subject, given the wars and insurgencies then raging. As mentioned before, at the time, the Chinese were proceeding full speed ahead on a revolutionary policy to support communist insurgencies in Burma, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Thailand in addition to Laos and Cambodia.

I tried to make the study as objective as I could. It became clear to me that the rationalizations of Mao's radical internal movement had led logically to these external manifestations. I didn't think that China's open intervention in neighboring countries' affairs would in the long run be helpful to the communist movements in Southeast Asia and would badly boomerang on Peking itself. In all the countries of the area the ethnic Chinese population dominated commerce and industry. Suspicion and resentment of China was endemic. For example, the Malay Communist Party lost the possibility of support from the Malay population during its heyday in the 1950s because of the open support it received from China and the fact that its members were largely ethnic Chinese. When Peking in the late 1960s tried to revive the MCP's insurgency, the party again remained a Chinese movement and again it failed. Mao's efforts to essentially take over the leadership of the world communist movement by proclaiming a more radical line than Moscow led to polarization of the communist camp; either you were with Mao or against him. North Korea and North Vietnam did successfully sit on the fence between China and the Soviet Union. For Hanoi, however, this balancing act ended with its triumph in the South and the ignominious retreat of the United States.

Q: What attitudes did you find on campus concerning our Asian policy?

TAYLOR: Attitudes were of course overwhelmingly negative. 1968 was a terrible year to try to explain much less defend American foreign policy. Vietnam dominated the discourse, not only on Asian policy, but also on foreign affairs in general. As the residenForeign Service Officer, I would frequently be invited to participate in discussion groups and panels on the subject. It was pretty tough. Before I left Michigan in 1968, the Tet offensive took place.

I saw my job as explaining our policy - why the U.S. Government felt strongly that it had to intervene in Vietnam. I made the presentation as impersonal as possible, acknowledging that legitimate arguments existed on the other side. The use of war as an instrument of policy, I said, should always be accompanied by an uneasy conscience - especially in the case of war on a massive scale. I tried to get the students to accept at least intellectually that rational arguments for war existed in this case; perhaps in their view not compelling arguments, but nevertheless not illegitimate ones. Those who opposed the war might also consider the consequences, I suggested, if they should be proven wrong. Privately, I told friends that it increasingly appeared that the war could not be won unless we exterminated the North and possibly China with nuclear weapons. The intervention had, after all, been a terrible miscalculation. George Ball had been correct. The only one at the top with, well - guts and brains.

Q: How was the faculty at the Center? Was it very liberal or was there a good mix of views?

TAYLOR: On foreign policy, most of them were liberal but moderate and pragmatic. Like myself, they were anguished by what was happening in Vietnam; I think by that point almost all of them opposed our continued involvement in the war. But they were not radicals. They believed that we needed to change our basic relationship with the PRC, in part because they felt that Mao's extreme policies at home and abroad were in part due to the fact that China was isolated. We all believed the U.S. would have to find a basic accommodation with the PRC.

Q: After you left Michigan in 1968, what was your next assignment?

TAYLOR: I went to Kuching as US consul for Sarawak and Sabah, states of Malaysia, and for the British protectorate of Brunei. It was a Somerset Maugham assignment in the heart of Borneo. We lived there from 1968 to 1970. This was shortly after the collapse of the MCP insurgency in Sarawak, which had been supported by China and Sukarno Indonesia. Sukarno had opposed Sarawak's becoming part of Malaysia. He called his policy "Confrontasi." By 1968, Sukarno had been replaced by the military and Indonesia had accepted the incorporation of Sarawak and Sabah into Malaysia.

Q: What was Sarawak like when you arrived?

TAYLOR: Kuching was essentially a southern Chinese town, much like the other Chinese cities where we had lived - crowded streets and blocks of shops with sidewalks under an arcade. Kuching had well over a hundred inches of rain a year. Hokkien, also the native Taiwanese dialect, was the spoken language of the Chinese population. My limited ability in this dialect proved useful in winning smiles. We lived in a house on Pig Lane built on stilts because of heavy rainstorms and snakes. We found cobra skins on the patio or "orchid house" where we usually ate. Parts of the year, it rained and rained and rained - often and copiously. On my travels into the interior, I would usually fly to Sibu, which was on the Rejang River in the heart of Borneo. From Sibu I would take an old river steamer upriver to visit the Jungle bazaars. Among the passengers, one expected to see Humphrey Bogart or Peter Lorre. Where the steamers ended their trip, I would climb aboard a traditional Iban long boat outfitted with the important addition of an outboard engine. In this sort of craft, I would speed through the rapids and then up quiet tributaries, eventually arriving at traditional long houses in remote areas that had not changed in decades or centuries. Betsy went with me on one of these trips.

After eating a traditional dinner in a long house, along with drinking the potent "arat," we would sit around on a bamboo floor and listen to music on little battery-run tape machines. Unfortunately, they were not traditional songs we heard but Elvis Presley, the Beatles, and other modern primitives.

Q: Why did we have representation in Sarawak at all?

TAYLOR: The post was established originally because of our concern for the insurgencies in South-east Asia, most of them supported by the PRC, and in the case of Sarawak also by Sukarno Indonesia. As I said, the insurgency had essentially ended in Sarawak by the time I arrived. A few guerillas remnants remained, but terrorism had stopped. We were also interested in the overall welfare of Malaysia, which had become independent about ten years earlier. Our interests in good relations with Southeast Asian countries were then very strong, because of the Vietnam War. Brunei oil was also important. In short, it was a piece of the world that seemed worth having one American officer who understood its political, economic, and social dynamics. The Kuching consulate was like one of the many US Navy destroyers cruising around the world doing nothing particularly vital, but providing training and experience for unknown contingencies and an initial command for a middle grade officer.

We did not issue visas. It was strictly a reporting and representation post. I wrote about internal political affairs, the relationship of Sarawak and Sabah with the Malaysian government and with Indonesia, and about the economies of the area. You can go to any place in the world and find fascinating aspects of political and social life. Where there are humans there is politics and a competition for power. For example, I reported on the developing relations between the Chinese, the Malay, and the local indigenous people, a complex subject. Brunei, a neighboring state, which I also covered, was oil-rich. The Sultan was an absolute ruler and absolutely rich although he also created a little welfare state for the people. Brunei was a story out of Somerset Maugham. Oil of course was its major export then as it is now. The second largest export was empty soda bottles. The Bruneis imported quinine water and coca-cola from Singapore and sent back the empty bottles. In other words, except for oil Brunei had no other exports.

Q: What were you observing in Brunei?

TAYLOR: Primarily, the political situation and the oil and timber businesses. Brunei seemed likely to become independent at some point and so part of my job was simply to build a good relationship with the Old Boy, his royal highness. Soon he would have a vote in the United Nations, ASEAN, and other international organizations. Besides, his financial holdings alone warranted good relations. Actually, the Sultan was an Anglophile and pretty much had to be nudged toward independence by the British. He loved England. He had a museum in Brunei devoted to Churchill memorabilia. It was one of the world's best museums of this genre - maybe the only one.

The British really ran the country and Shell produced almost all of its wealth. Brunei was at the time a "special" protectorate; it did not gain independence until 1984. As far as the Sultan was concerned, the internal affairs of Brunei were as the same as they had been for 500 years; i.e., under the rule of the Sultan. The British viewed it as a protectorate, but as far as the Sultan was concerned, he was in charge of all domestic affairs. He wanted and expected to remain absolute ruler forever. He had once authorized a go at an elected assembly with limited powers, but while I was there it was in suspension. Some token opposition political types did carry on with whom I could talk. But it was all very low key. A Ghurka battalion existed to protect the Sultan. Their presence enhanced the feeling that one was in an outpost of the Raj.

The British Governor was a jolly good chap, who could have served anywhere in the old colonies. Along with the Falklands and Hong Kong, this was the very last. Shell was the only oil company allowed to operate in Brunei. Tons of sterling flowed into this little settlement and that was even before the first tremendous rise in oil prices. At least 50% of the working population were employees of the public works department - or at least they were on that payroll. Many didn't really work at all. One quarter claimed to be related to the Sultan, and this was displayed by a special flag that fluttered over many of the simple wooden huts that sat on stilts in the Bay. The government provided free medical care for the population and education was also free all the way through college - Oxford even - for those who could pass the entrance examination.

Q: Was there any efforts by the Chinese communists to influence the situation?

TAYLOR: No, China did not enter the picture in any way in Brunei except that the commercial class was, as elsewhere in Southeast Asia, ethnic Chinese. I did a good bit of economic reporting on the oil industrits developments and prospects. I visited a couple of the oil rigs in the South China Sea.

On Sarawak and Sabah, the third state that I covered, I wrote economic reports primarily on the timber industry, but also on fishing, tourism, etc. I visited the great virgin timber cutting areas in both states. In Sabah, I also had the chance to tour an "Orangutan jungle warfare training camp" as I called it. In this camp, Baby oranges that had been confiscated from smugglers trying to get them out of the country for sale on the global black market were given the chance to learn survival skills, mostly just by hanging out with other oranges. Eventually they were released some place deep in the forest far from the camp.

In Sabah, the Malays were a smaller minority than in Sarawak, but again they were again in charge politically. The natives were largely Christian. Together with the Chinese they constituted a majority. But the Malays essentially had a deal with the Chinese. In return for their political support for the Malay party (UMNO), the Chinese would be left free to pursue their business interests. The same social-political contract existed on the Peninsula - Malaysia proper. So, major political tensions did not exist. In Sarawak, the Ibans were running the government when I first arrived. But they later lost out to the Malays (UMNO) who proved to be better organizers and manipulators - and the Chinese made their alliance with them.

One subject of interest was the reported use of Sabah as a supply base by Moslem insurgents in Mindanao. Yes, the insurrection was going on back then, but of course without an Al Qaeda connection. I kept in touch with police and military officers in Sabah trying to get some impression of what was going on and what was Malaysia's attitude. Washington, however, did not display a high degree of interest in any of the subjects I covered. Sarawak, Sabah, and Brunei were not high on the U.S. foreign policy agenda at that time. The desk officers at State, Commerce, and other agencies probably read my reports. Still, for the United States of America, it was a small post worth maintaining. Today, the U.S. Consulate no longer exists in Kuching, but we have an Embassy in Brunei.

Q: What were your views of the sway of the Malaysian government in Kuala Lumpur?

TAYLOR: As I noted, relations between KL and these states was a major subject of interest at least in Malaysia and in our embassy. The indigenous political leaders in Sarawak and Sabah were highly sensitive to what was going on in the capital. Eventually, the people in KL - the ruling UMNO party - supported the Muslim politicians in the two states. The Muslims, although not the most populous group in either state, did take over politically in both places in the process of open elections and a reasonably free but corrupt political process. Tensions between the indigenous people and the Malays have always existed under the surface. Some native intellectuals dreamed of an eventual separation from Malaysia out of fear of a Muslim take-over. But times were good and the police were effective. No one seriously talked of pursuing this goal during my time there.

Q: How about the Chinese community? The Chinese have been accused of causing the "emergency" in Malaysia. Was there tension between the Malay or the indigenous people and the Chinese?

TAYLOR: Almost all ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia are urban folk. But in Sarawak, a unique Chinese peasant community of pepper growers existed. This relatively poor population had been the main recruiting basis for the MCP guerrilla movement in the state. When the insurgency started in Sarawak, most of the fighters were ethnic Chinese as was true in other parts of Malaysia. As I observed, in all three states for which I was US Consul, ethnic-Chinese heavily dominated the timber industry and virtually all other commerce. But suppressed racial tensions were not nearly as high in Eastern Malaysia as on the Peninsula. The Chinese communities in these states saw their interests and security best served by cooperating politically with the Malays rather than the Iban and other native people. While, I was in Kuching, in 1969, the largest race riots in Malaysian history took place in Kuala Lumpur. An unexpectedly good showing in the national election by a leftist Chinese party not aligned to UMNO sparked the upheaval. The violence was seen as a message to the Chinese community not to challenge the unspoken social-political contract that assured Malays political dominance, including most government jobs and state university admittances, in return for allowing the Chinese to dominate the urban economy.

Q: Did you have problems with American visitors?

TAYLOR: No. We did have a large Peace Corps contingent in Sarawak and Sabah. The Peace Corps director was a welcome part of our small official American community. The volunteers were remarkable people. I would visit some of them in their far-flung posts. Some lived upriver in longhouses with the local Ibans. Incidentally, in certain longhouses, the residents would display shrunken skulls which, they said, their ancestors had acquired in the old days. Taking a head had been the final and necessary step into full manhood. This custom was hard on relations between neighboring clans and tribes.

As I said, I was the only State Department officer at the post. A declared CIA officer as well as a communicator and a USIA officer completed the American roster. In addition, I had a local secretary and a local driver. It was fun and we enjoyed it. Like a naval officer, I was in command of a small ship covering a huge area; I was the American representative. I didn't have to worry about consular work. So, I spent my time reporting on political and economic developments of interest to US companies and the US government. I also of course sought to enlighten opinion makers, leaders, and the up-and-coming about US policies.

Q: What was your next assignment in 1970?

TAYLOR: I was posted to our Consulate General in Hong Kong. I was chief of the office in the political section responsible for following Chinese external affairs. The consulate general's political section was split between two offices, one reporting on PRC internal developments and one on PRC external affairs. The Consul General when I arrived was David Osborne. During my last year there, the Consul General was Chuck Cross. I was in Hong Kong from 1970 to 1974.

David was an outstanding officer as was Chuck. David was one of those people who had an infuriating facility for learning foreign languages. He spoke fluent Mandarin and Japanese, and while he was in Hong Kong, he learned enough Cantonese to give speeches in that (to me) strange vernacular.

Q: What was the PRC doing outside its borders that attracted our interests in the 1970-74 period?

TAYLOR: Well, a lot was going on. It was a time of major upheavals in world politics. At the beginning of 1969, Sino-Soviet tensions had almost broken out in actual warfare. Skirmishes had broken out on the Sino-Soviet border with heavy casualties along the Ussuri River. By early 1970, the Soviets were suggesting to us and to some of their Eastern European allies that they might have to use nuclear weapons to take out the Chinese nuclear facilities. Moscow expected that these comments would get back to the PRC, which they did. Kissinger for one passed them on. Dean Acheson had, many years earlier, predicted that some day the Soviet and Chinese communists would split. Twenty years later it was happening - and in a dramatic fashion.

Q: How was the Sino-Soviet split seen by you and tour colleagues?

TAYLOR: The split did not happen overnight; it had been developing over a decade. The first clear evidence came in the ideological rhetoric, which emanated from each camp in 1959. In 1960, Khrushchev tore up Russia's agreement to assist the PRC, most importantly with help in the development and production of nuclear weapons. By the early 1960s, the split became a political one that was manifest primarily in an exchange of hostile rhetoric. In the mid-1960s, however, the PRC again adopted radical internal policies - the Cultural Revolution and the Communes. Mao felt it was necessary to purge the party of its more moderate elements and the bureaucracy in order to insure that the PRC would not follow in the Soviet revisionist footsteps. Soviet "socialist imperialism" became, in his view, an enemy on par with the U.S. or even worse.

Skeptics abounded on the extent of the riff. For example, as mentioned, many in Taiwan considered the argumentative rhetoric to be a subterfuge to mislead the West. Most China experts in the West, however, saw the seriousness of the dispute. We saw it as a personal and ideological quarrel but also a national rivalry for influence, which reflected some important differences in national interests. For example, Taiwan.

Q: Were you informed about analysis being made in Moscow and Washington on this split?

TAYLOR: The Soviets did not have any representation in Hong Kong at the time. But a lot of exchanges took place in Moscow and Washington about what was going on. In one effort to "leak" their position, the Soviets even sent a journalist - actually a KBG agent - to Taiwan to talk to Chiang Ching-kuo about what might happen if they (the Russians) attacked the mainland. The Soviets again expected that this exchange would get back to Peking, put the PRC on edge, and perhaps encourage some anti-Mao thinking in the Chinese leadership. By 1969-70, the Soviets believed an opportunity had emerged to make mischief by playing off a disaffected part of the PRC leadership against Mao. In fact, a grievous split had developed in the Chinese leadership that was not readily apparent. After Nixon's inauguration, the beginning dï¿½tente between the PRC and the U.S. gave momentum to this split. By 1971, the Soviets were apparently having secret exchanges with Lin Biao, the PRC defense minister. Speculation was rampant on where the PRC was going internally and externally.

Q: When you arrived in Hong Kong, the Vietnam war was very active. How did that factor in to your analysis?

TAYLOR: I believe I mentioned before that while in Hong Kong, I had written a piece, which Osborne liked, in which I speculated that in light of the Sino-Soviet split, if North Vietnam were able to conquer all of Vietnam, then we could see a split between Vietnam and China, possibly a violent one. We got back a cable from Washington, drafted in INR that took exception to my conclusions; Washington saw no evidence to support my predictions and thought we were merely speculating. After our withdrawal from China and -Vietnam did of course fall into a bloody and unannounced war.

Q: At the time, was there any evidence that the PRC might change its attitude toward Vietnam?

TAYLOR: Starting in 1970, signs appear of differences between the two regimes. They had to do with how Vietnam should respond to the American incursions into Cambodia. In 1971, another disagreement developed on how to respond to the South Vietnamese incursion into Laos. Internal splits existed within the PRC leadership on these same issues. The position as developed by Zhou En-lai and eventually supported by Mao, opposed a large counter-offensive in either Laos or Cambodia. The Chinese leaders felt that it was counter-productive and too risky to provoke the Americans with a large-scale counter-offensive, such as the North Vietnamese had launched during Tet in 1968. Most importantly, the Chinese were seriously entertaining secret overtures for dï¿½tente from Nixon and Kissinger.

We saw splits widening between the USSR and the PRC, developing between the PRC and North Vietnam, and emerging within the PRC leadership itself. Various public statements and articles in the Chinese media hinted at these splits.

Q: Let's pursue this a little further. What were your main sources for information?

TAYLOR: Again, primarily from overt sourcethe media. We read carefully what was in the Chinese press and what was being said on the Chinese airwaves. FBIS (Foreign Broadcasting Information Service) still monitored those broadcasts. FBIS had a large monitoring operation in Hong Kong, as did the British. As on Taiwan, NSA continued to conduct signal intelligence that monitored communications between Chinese cities and sometimes between the Chinese leadership, including the military. That intelligence was somewhat helpful, although the Chinese knew what we were doing and tried to avoid sensitive subjects while talking over open phones and over the radio. Actually, we found open sources to be the most valuable.

Q: What about PRC efforts in other countries? They invested considerable resources in Africa, for example.

TAYLOR: China's foreign policy took a sharp turn in the mid 1960s. It became more militant in the support of Third World causes. This trend accelerated in 1966 with the Cultural Revolution. By then, Mao wanted to foster a polarization of both the Third World and the world communist movement into radical pro-Peking wings and "revisionist" pro-Moscow wings. In effect, he tried to challenge both the U.S. and the Soviet Union for world leadership. The PRC began working in Africa, not with communist parties, but with the newly independent, non-communists regimes. The Soviet Union was the principal sponsor of the communist movements in Africa, especially in Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia but also in South Africa where it backed the ANC, which was non-communist but included members of the South African Communist Party. Thus, in independent Africa, as distinct from Southeast Asia, China emphasized relations with established governments not revolutionary movements.

In Southeast Asia, the radicalization of China's foreign policy in the 1960s was reflected in its open supporboth material and rhetorical - for communist insurgencies in Malaysia, Burma, Thailand, and the Philippines - as well as of course in Indochina. Understandably, that caused a sharp deterioration in relations between these countries and the PRC. Even in India, the Chinese were supporting "Maoists" and other extreme revolutionary elements. This was all part of Mao's Cultural Revolution, which in large part was a challenge to the 'revisionism" or relative moderation of Soviet foreign policy. What we saw was an amazing radicalization of China's foreign policy.

To jump ahead, in the mid and late 1970s, after the US defeat in Indochina, the USSR became the principal backer of Communist and anti-American insurgencies in the world. The Soviets and its ally Cuba backed pro-communist insurgencies and coups in Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and little Grenada. Most importantly for China, Moscow backed Vietnam in asserting its hegemony in the rest of Indochina. This led to the 1978 Vietnamese invasion and occupation of Cambodia, which threw out the terrible Pol Pot regime. China backed Pol Pot, not because it particularly liked his ideology, although he was a devout Maoist, but because it opposed Vietnam's effort to impose its hegemony in an area in which China also had a traditional interest. China thus began to back off from its support for communist insurgencies in Southeast Asia. All these developments strengthened and widened the common strategic interests that were the foundation of US-China dï¿½tente. Also, of course, this opened the door to China's improved relations with the countries of the region, most of which had been alarmed first by the fall of the United States in Indochina and then the aggressive moves by Hanoi with the aid of Moscow.

Q: Did we view the radicalization of some parts of the world as an aspect of the Cold War against the Soviets or as a PRC attempt to export its policies?

TAYLOR: I think it was both. In the 1960s, Mao believed that in supporting communist insurgencies against US allies in Southeast Asia he could make these countries pay a price for their support of American policies, especially in regard to the Vietnam War. But he also saw these subversive efforts promoting his thesis about "peoples war." He hoped this policy of radical support for insurrections in neighboring countries would show that Peking's revolutionary policies were far more vigorous and effective than those of Moscow. Mao wished to be the shaker and mover of the world revolutionary movement. This led him into adventures that had nothing to do with the United States, but only hurt China's position in the world, including the Third World. For example, Communist China had always had good relations with Burma, a strictly neutral country and in rhetoric a socialist one, but in the mid and late 1960s and even the early 1970s, Peking blatantly aided a new communist guerrilla offensive in Burma. Mao's policies were also aimed at his domestic audiences. His revolutionary view of world affairs paralleled his radical efforts at home to create a truly egalitarian society with the communes and the purge of the party, government bureaucracies, etc.

Q: What were our views of the Chinese diplomats?

TAYLOR: During my tour in Hong Kong, the mainland officials we knew, such as those in charge of CCP-controlled media, were nice chaps but politically behaved pretty much like puppets. Whatever view came out of Peking in the morning, they would religiously mouth in the afternoon. If they were required to wave the little "red book" at a reception, they would do so.

Q: Did we see a weakening of the PRC as the Cultural Revolution "ate its young"?

TAYLOR: By 1969, the Sino-Soviet dispute was becoming violent and the Russians were hinting at the use of nuclear weapons if a war started. This shook up thinking in the PRC. It was time to end the chaos of the Cultural Revolution. By 1970, the People's Liberation Army had for all practical purposes taken over the country. It essentially ran the government, both at the national and provincial levels. It also suppressed the most radical elements of the Red Guards. Mao himself felt that the Cultural Revolution had gone too far and therefore sanctioned a de-facto military government. In addition, a real military threat now existed on the northern borders. Beginning in 1969, Nixon made a number of gestures that suggested a serious American interest in improving relations with China. China's strategic and foreign policies quickly began to change.

In 1970, Nixon and Kissinger initiated private, secret exchanges with the Chinese, about which not even the Secretary of State was aware. The presidents of Pakistan and Romania facilitated these discussions. But it became evident that changes were taking place both in Washington and in Peking. Heavy anti-American rhetoric kept coming from China, but it included nuances that suggested that some new thinking was taking place and that differences existed within the leadership. Articles and editorials, for example, indicated serious divergences between the People's Liberation Army Daily and The People's Daily about the threat that the U.S. presented to China as compared to that from the Soviet Union. The American invasion of Cambodia in 1970 not only created a split between China and North Vietnam, but one within the PRC itself.

Q: Was there any thought being given in the consulate general to the desirability of an "opening" to the PRC?

TAYLOR: We all thought we were heading in that direction, even though we knew nothing of Kissinger's efforts. We were reporting the subtle changes that we were seeing in the Chinese media. We had to read between the lines of the Chinese press; it was a challenge to convince some officials in Washington that the PRC was prepared to seriously consider dï¿½tente with the United States. Kissinger and Nixon, however, clearly saw what was happening. At the same time, Zhou En-lai perceived the growing Soviet threat as an opportunity to move toward rapprochement with the United States - perhaps something he had favored off and on over the years. Our Consul General, David Osborne, and all of us in the political section believed it was wise for the U.S. to ease tensions with the PRC if we could. And, we thought, new geopolitical dynamics were making this possible. Thus we were very much in step with what Nixon and Kissinger were trying to do, although at the time we not aware of how far they had taken matters. In the dark, we sent our own suggestions to Washington on what steps might be taken to create a more positive atmosphere between the two countries.

Q: Did we notice a diminution of Mao's influence?

TAYLOR: By 1970, it was clear that Mao was not as vigorous as he had been. But he was still in charge, unlike Chiang Kai-shek, who by this time was not involved in the day-to-day affairs of his government and may even not have been kept current on major developments. In the PRC, the leadership knew that Mao's days were numbered. Individuals and factions were jockeying for position. The major factions included: Mao's wife, Jiang Qing and her Cultural Revolution group; the senior military group loyal to Marshall Lin Biao; other senior PLA officers; and the more moderate or pragmatic civilian group headed by Zhou En-lai. We saw signs of this rift developing as early as 1970.

In 1971, the visit of the U.S. ping-pong team to the mainland was the first sign that something was happening. Zhou En-lai played a y prominent part in this ice-breaking visit. Then came the incursion into Laos by the US military. This brought forth a Chinese response that was much milder than might have been expected. At the same time, unbeknown to us, Kissinger and Zhou En-lai were busy exchanges messages. Zhou stressed that PRC-U.S. relations could only become closer if U.S. support for Taiwan was somehow mitigated. In late 1970, Mao told members of his defense counciwe only knew this much later - of the secret contacts with the Americans. He said that the openings were promising and that he intended to pursue the opportunity for closer relations with the U.S.

It was about this time that Jiang Qing and probably Lin Piao as well came to realize that a rapprochement with the U.S. would weaken their positions in Peking. We noticed signs of increasing tensions within the communist leadership. Before Kissinger arrived in Peking in July 1971, an article in People's Daily alerted its readers to "internal enemies" who had "illegal relations with foreign governments." That was a red flag, a clear signal that something was amiss within the leadership. We suspected the "foreign government" referred to was the Soviet Union. Then Kissinger made his famous visit to Peking. Some one high up, we speculated, must be suspected of wanting to improve relations with Moscow.

We learned of Kissinger's presence in Peking just after Secretary of State Rogers was informed. We were surprised, although not entirely shocked since the visit was consistent with what Nixon and Kissinger had been saying publicly. Nixon had permitted trade to develop; the U.S. government had blessed the ping-pong team's visit; and other individuals and groups were now allowed to visit China. Nixon used the name "Peoples Republic of China" instead of the old phrase "Communist China" or "Red China." The Kissinger visit was the first step in building closer ties with the Peoples Republic.

Q: After it became clear that some closer relations were in the wind, what were you picking up in the media, which gave some clues to Chinese reactions? Did you see further split after the Kissinger visit?

TAYLOR: I mentioned earlier the reservations that the People's Liberation Army had about the idea of dï¿½tente with America. Subtle signs of this existed, but were noticeable nevertheless. Now we know that in fact that very serious tensions were running through the regime on this subject. Lin Piao recognized that Kissinger's visit was the beginning of the end of his influence and that he would not be Mao's successor. The Marshall recognized that his policies were not acceptable any longer to Mao, but that Zhou En-lai represented the future. In retrospect we thought the article in the People's Daily in July that spoke of "internal enemies" was in fact referring to Lin Biao who was probably having some kind of an exchange with the Soviets. Moscow had made some gestures in 1970 to appeal to those in the leadership who most favored the idea of a return to peaceful and mutually productive relations with the USSR. Despite the near-war state on their borders, both sides sent warm messages on their revolutionary holidays in 1970.

A few days after Kissinger left Peking in July, 1971, we noticed one morning a spurt of anomalies on the mainland, most importantly, a directive that grounded all Chinese civil and military aircraft. This was an unprecedented stand down. Other intercepted military messages gave further credence to the assumption that something big and unusual was going on. After a few days, articles in the Chinese media began to denounce an unnamed person who among other things assumed a false modesty by asserting that he had "only made modest contributions" to his country. That passage about false modesty was repeated several times. The head of our internal reporting section, Sherrod McCall, thought that this line sounded familiar. He went back into the files and found that Lin Biao a year or so before had in a show of humility said on several occasions that he had "only made modest contributions." Sherrod speculated in a report to Washington that Lin was behind the anomalies and that perhaps he had met his final fate.

Looking back, we saw how portraits of Lin in The China Pictorial magazine had changed. He had appeared on the front cover in several issues during the preceding year. Then a month before Kissinger arrived in Peking, the magazine ran a picture of him without his military cap. That was the first time we had ever been seen him without his cap. He even gave his speeches in the Great Hall of the People wearing his little PLA hat. It turned out that he was quite bald. It occurred to us that someone confident of Mao's support was trying to humiliate Lin with the bald picture. The next edition of The China Pictorial, which came out around the time of the Dr. K. visit, showed Mao and Jiang Qing in front and Lin Biao standing behind them. These anomalies were indications that Lin Biao was involved in the aircraft standdown and that he was probably on his way to being purged or was already out of the picture. Peking Then released the shocking news: Lin Biao had allegedly mounted an unsuccessful anti-Mao coup, which had failed. He was said to have fled in a military transport plane with his wife and others. His plan was to go to the Soviet Union. The plane got as far as Mongolia where it crashed. Lin's failure cleared the way for the US and China to proceed with their rapprochement. President Nixon made his historic visit in February 1972.

Q: How did that play in the Chinese media?

TAYLOR: It was of course lauded as a great break through for the PRC. Peking media and spokesmen described the Shanghai Communiquï¿½ as a major step by the U.S. toward supporting the PRC's contention that Taiwan was part of China. However, the theme that the U.S. was still an imperial power and an enemy of the Chinese people actually continued to be played at the same time, even though it was admitted that the U.S. imperial role was abating out of necessity. At the same time Soviet "social imperialism" was said to be by far the greater threat to China, Thus it was matter of allying temporarily with the lesser threat - the United States. This starkly expedient explanation was the ideological rationalization for the opening to the U.S. that was repeated for the next several years.

When President Carter recognized Peking as the government of China, the PRC dropped the theme that the US was still a major although diminishing threat. The Soviets invaded Afghanistan at the very end of 1979. Soviet support for Vietnam caused further apprehension in Peking and in 1978, Deng Xiao-ping who was by then the de facto leader of the PRC launched a large scale military attack across the Sino-Vietnamese border to teach Hanoi "a lesson" for its invasion of Cambodia. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the very end of 1979 convinced the Chinese that the Russians were trying to encircle China with a ring of hostile states. Thus the Sino-US informal alliance reached its zenith at that time - 1980 - the year I arrived in Peking as political counselor in the American Embassy. But, we are getting ahead of the story.

Q: After the Nixon visit, did the PRC reduce its revolutionary efforts in the Third World?

TAYLOR: The revolutionary rhetoric sharply abated, as did the material support that the PRC was providing the communist guerrillas in Southeast Asia. Over the next few years, this sort of assistance further diminished, and eventually the insurgent radio broadcasts from China one by one shut down. This opened the door to the gradual improvement of the PRC's relations with the governments of Southeast Asia (except for Vietnam) - a process that has continued unbroken down to this day. China's relations with Japan and other governments also steadily improved.

Q: Did we see eye-to-eye with the British on the China analyses?

TAYLOR: No fundamental difference existed between our analysis and that of the Brits. The question of Hong Kong's status was not then even a subject for speculation. During the Cultural Revolution, some Red Guards in Hong Kong demonstrated against the British and even rioted a couple of times. But Peking then gave strict orders to the Red Guards not to disturb the situation in Hong Kong. Even with its loud rhetoric about the evils of the imperialist world, of which Great Britain was certainly a part, the PRC didn't want to disturb the arrangements with Hong Kong because it was vital to its economic well being, providing China 25% of its hard currency earnings.

By about this time, the PRC also began to diminish its aid to African countries. This aid had increased dramatically through the 1960s as the PRC competed with the Soviets for influence on that continent. As I suggested before, the period of the 1970s witnessed a return to more normal relations between the PRC and all governments everywhere. Some remnants of the old ideological rhetoric of the 1960s continued, but it steadily softened.

Even after we opened a US Liaison Office in Peking in 1973 and as our common interests in containing the Soviet Union grew, dealing with the PRC on bilateral issues could be difficult. In negotiating sessions, Chinese officials often would go into high dudgeon, lecturing us about one thing or another. But gradually a more or less a traditional diplomatic style returned.

Q: How was our role in Vietnam playing during your Hong Kong tour, recognizing that by 1974 we were pretty much out of that war?

TAYLOR: The PRC clearly welcomed the peace agreement reached in Paris in 1973. The Chinese had been hoping for such an outcome for several years - certainly since 1971. They were of course happy to see the U.S. having to retreat from Vietnam but they did not want the U.S. to leave East Asia. They had to fine-tune their rhetoric. The Mao-Zhou En-lai view was that geopolitical realities for the time being required that U.S. power remain in East Asia. Given the Soviet threat, US presence was a stabilizing factor. The Chinese were seriously concerned that the U.S. humiliation in Indochina might result in the American people and Congress losing interest in the region. At the time of the Paris Peace accord, the Chinese fully expected the North Vietnamese in good time to push on and eventually take Saigon. But they were probably glad the Americans had a couple of years to disengage before the collapse. On this issue, we didn't notice any differences in the PRC leadership or in the media. As I said, the PRC clearly welcomed the 1973 accords.

Q: Did you find the Hong Kong press reporting fairly accurately what was happening in the PRC?

TAYLOR: Outspoken independent papers existed in Hong Kong. Certainly, the English language and part of the Chinese language press were not intimidated by the PRC and they spoke out as they saw fit. We got to know editors of communist media in Hong Kong. They were very careful in their analysis.

After the Kissinger visit, nations around the world rushed to recognize Peking and also to vote them into the United Nations. The State Department made a substantial show of trying to maintain a seat for Taiwan in the General Assembly. As I recounted earlier, back in 1965-66, when I was in INR, I had argued that a two China policy would be very dangerous over the long term. In Hong Kong, David Osborne essentially agreed with me; consequently, our reporting from Hong Kong reflected this position. We said that the U.S. should be wary of a two China policy in the long run because we felt that it would foster a permanent hostility in Peking against the U.S. and perhaps lay down the foundation of a future war. As it turned out, I don't think Nixon and Kissinger ever intended to win that vote in the UN. Kissinger had promised Zhou En-lai that formal recognition of "One China" would follow in the second Nixon Administration. Kissinger did not want to be stuck with having won a two China's arrangement in the UN that Peking refused to accept.

While Secretary Rogers and the Department were going through the motions of trying to get votes for a two-China representation, that position was undercut by Kissinger on the day of the vote in the UN by arriving in Peking. Consequently, the Department's position was soundly defeated in the UN. I think Nixon and Kissinger were just trying to demonstrate support for Taiwan to minimize the anxieties that Republican conservatives were showing about the visits to Peking. They were also trying to mollify Taiwan, which was of course apprehensive about how things were developing.

Q: During this period, were you and your colleagues getting excited by the prospects for better PRC-U.S. relations?

TAYLOR: We had been waiting for this moment. We could now actually foresee the time when we would visit or be assigned to the PRC. We had been studying Chinese and Chinese affairs for a long time - China watching, it was called. Watching from afar. The closest I ever got to the PRC was Quemoy and the New Territories (Hong Kong) border with the mainland. Kissinger and Zhou agreed that liaison offices would be established which could exercise diplomatic functions. Thereafter, a real competition for assignment to Peking began. I applied for the job of political counselor, but Nick Platt got the job. Don Anderson, another close friend, was also assigned to the political section; he had been in Paris serving as interpreter at the Paris talks with the Chinese.

David Bruce became the first chief of the Liaison Office. Bruce had had a number of important diplomatic assignments, although he was not an FSO. He was part of the super-rich Mellon family, having married into it. In 1973, I made my first trip to the PRC. My wife and I went for a week as guests of the Platt's. It was a great experience finally to be in Peking. Living in Hong Kong and in Peking obviously were different, especially in regard to how the Chinese viewed foreigners. The Cultural Revolution was still officially on.

On the last morning, I bicycled around Peking on Nick's bicycle - we were leaving that afternoon. Then we caught the train, which was to take us to Canton in a thirty-hour journey. When we got to Canton, some Chinese functionaries approached me and asked me to join them in the station's private waiting room. They said that they had a report that while I was in Peking, I had entered a protected military area on a bicycle. It was true that I had biked along a canal and had been stopped by a Chinese soldier who told me that I was in a restricted area. I turned around and left. I told the Chinese that I had a diplomatic visa, which gave me immunity from any questioning by Chinese officials. But I could tell them that yes, I went bicycling in Peking; I had by mistake apparently pedaled into a military area, where I had been stopped. No wall or gate existed. After the guard explained the situation, I had turned around and pedaled away. The Chinese were not satisfied and told me that I should have done this and that. By the time they got finished with their drawn out questioning, we missed our train to Hong Kong. The next one would not leave for a couple of hours. I told the Chinese that I would not discuss the matter with them any longer; that if they wanted to pursue this trivial matter, they would have to contact the Liaison Office in Peking. If they did not stop the questioning, I was going to call the Office myself and report that I was being detained. They finally went away and we caught the next train.

When I got back to Hong Kong, I reported what had happened in Canton. A couple of days later, the PRC Foreign Ministry called in one of our DCMs - strangely, we had two - and lectured him as the Chinese are wont to do - especially so in those days. It was the same sermon that I had received about how the imperialists were always trying to abuse the PRC and steal China's secrets, etc. I was disappointed that the USLO officer did not make a sharp complaint about my brief detention. USLO, however, bent over backwards to avoid any friction with the Chinese. Kissinger had told them not to make any waves. They simply expressed regret for any misunderstanding.

We had a peculiar situation in Peking at this time. As I mentioned, we had two DCMs - Al Jenkins and John Holdridge. When USLO was being established, a fierce competition broke out for assignments to Peking. Al Jenkins had been the director for Chinese affairs in State's Far Eastern Bureau. Secretary Rogers appointed him as DCM. But John Holdridge had been working for Kissinger at the NSC on the secret opening to Peking. Kissinger and Rogers feuded over the question of who would be the DCM in Peking. Finally, it was agreed that there would be two DCMs. Each had the title of Deputy Chief of Mission. Each had his own car and all the other amenities and privileges that fall to a DCM. In the country team meetings, they took turns on who would sit in the DCM's chair. It was a unique arrangement, which led to many wry comments.

Q: When your assignment in Hong Kong was up in 1974, where did you go next?

TAYLOR: First, I should say a few words about the events of 1973 and 1974 that we reported on in Hong Kong. Mao was still alive and the Lin Biao coup or whatever it was had been crushed, but the struggle for succession was now well underway. One had to read the Chinese papers carefully to see what jockeying was going on. The political fight seemed fairly clear even though it manifested itself in odd ways. For example, we found attacks on Confucius and Confucianism in article after article. These attacks came primarily from the media controlled by Jiang Qing. The People's Daily also carried some criticism of the ancient sage, but these were quite different from those appearing in Jiang Qing's press. No one was defending Confucius. The allegorical Confucian, it seemed clear, was Zhou En-lai. In the middle of this maneuvering at the top, Deng Xiaoping returned from jail, obviously brought back by Mao, who had had a change of heart, probably at Zhou's suggestion. Deng again became part of the leadership group. Mao knew Zhou was terminally ill and apparently he wanted one of the old guard trusted by the military to return. At this point, I returned to the Department as the China Desk Officer.

Q: Before we get to your next assignment at the NSC, let's talk about how you found the bureau and the China desk in particular after several years. Did you find a different world in Washington in light of the seismic changes that had taken place in Sino-U.S. relations?

TAYLOR: It was a different world alright. When I was last in the Department, we had no official contact with the Chinese government on the mainland. Taiwan dominated the activities of the China desk. When I returned, I found a separate, small office for Taiwan affairs and a separate big and growing Office for PRC matters.

Q: In this 1974-75 period, what was happening in Chinese internal affairs?

TAYLOR: On Internal matters, he period was dominated by the power struggle that was beginning to take shape when I left Hong Kong. Mao did not appear to be suffering from serious senility but his declining health intensified the power struggle. The symbolic attacks on Confucius (Zhou En-lai) continued. Deng Xiaoping was now exercising day-to-day operational control of the government and the party. He had the power to appoint and dismiss senior officials. In 1975, Zhou En-lai after a long bout with cancer, died. He was cremated and his ashes were cast into the sea as he wished. That brought forth a wave of pro-Zhou demonstrations on the day of his memorial services. They began as a peaceful commemoration on Tiananmen Square and then grew in size. Speeches were made that had an anti-regime tinge. The crowd became unruly. Finally, hundreds of police and soldiers suppressed the demonstrations. This episode allowed Jiang Qing and her allies to blame Deng for the episode on the grounds that his management of affairs, including the police, had allowed the demonstrations to take place. Deng was even accused of fomenting the troubles. Mao was persuaded by his wife to send Deng again into house arrest in Canton. It seemed that Jiang Qing had taken control and was becoming the heir apparent.

Q: What were our views of Jiang Qing and what did we think he ascendancy might do to Sino-U.S. relations?

TAYLOR: She was unstable, at best. She had climbed the ladder from an unsuccessful movie actress to the seldom seen wife of the Great Helmsman to a political powerhouse herself. In 1974 or 1975, Pol Pot made a visit to the PRC. He had his picture taken with Jiang Qing and not with Zhou En-lai. That was an example of her rise and of the fact that she was attempting to take over foreign affairs as she and the Cultural Revolution group had done in 1967-1969. Some believed that she had accumulated enough power to assure her succession as ruler of China once Mao went to the Western Paradise.

Mao at this time, however, was shilly-shallying. He was torn between Deng's practical approach to domestic and foreign issues - which were similar to Zhou's before he died - and Jiang Qing's revolutionary and radical approach. She and her allies were able to put doubts in Mao's head about Deng's approach and the potentially negative impact it would have on the Chairman's revolutionary legacy. Surprisingly, the official view of USLO in Peking was that no serious power struggle was going on. In 1974, during the anti-Confucian campaign, it was apparent to us in Hong Kong that a struggle was raging quietly but fiercely over the succession. Our mission in Peking, primarily John Holdridge, one of the DCMs, disagreed. John's position, as reflected in USLO's political reporting, was that no signs existed of any great internal struggle. Senior USLO officers talked to a numerouChinese officials and all confirmed that no bitter political strife existed within the Chinese leadership. John's conclusion was that the US Con Gen in Hong Kong misunderstood the situation in faraway Peking and that we were over-reacting. On the contrary, USLO's interpretation of events was a classic case of "localitis." They tended to believe what their eyes saw and their ears heard. In Maoist China that presented a contrived impression of reality.

Q: I assume that the mission in Peking was having its difficulties in carrying out its tasks. It must have been quite isolated, whereas Hong Kong was probably obtaining better information.

TAYLOR: Our mission in Peking existed in a state of isolation like all the other missions there. But it had access to the same principal sources as we did - the Chinese media. In fact, despite its isolation, USLO still had access to a range of PRC officials and even academics. The problem was that in Peking, the human sources mouthed the government's line. In Peking, you could not find a Chinese that would admit to any significant rift in the leadership; all of USLO's contacts told them that the Politburo was working on a consensus basis and all was well. A mission or embassy, whose principal task is to improve relations with the host country, has a tendency to overlook potential difficulties that might interfere with better relations - or at least to minimize them.Q: Of course, there is always the danger that some negative report from an embassy may end up in the press with obvious repercussions in the foreign capital. Iran was the worst example of this syndrome that comes to mind.

TAYLOR: Yes, but that was not the problem in Peking. USLO simply did not see or hear anything negative to report in regard to the stability of the Chinese leadership. Consequently, in 1974, a running debate emerged between the Hong Kong Consulate General and USLO in Peking. This was not well known except to the diplomats involved. On one side, was Sherrod McCall of our office, backed by David Osborne and then Chuck Cross, and on the other, John Holdridge and perhaps other members of the USLO staff. USLO chief David Bruce concurred in John's assessment. In sum, Hong Kong believed an easy transition to a post-Mao leadership was unlikely. USLO strongly disagreed. Ironically, David Bruce nominated John Holdridge for the "dissent award" for that year for disagreeing with our analysis. Both CIA and INR were in accord with our interpretation. John thus bravely stood out alone, insisting no power struggle was going on. Holdridge won the award. He was of course wrong. He won the award for dissenting from the right analysis!! Only a few "insiders" know that story.

PART V1974-1980

Q: In 1975, you were assigned to the NSC.

TAYLOR: That's right. One of my colleagues covered Indochina, another did the PRC; I covered all the rest of East Asia, including Taiwan. I was at the NSC from 1975 to 1977, when Carter became president.

Q: Tell us a little about how the NSC operated during this period after Kissinger became secretary of state and Ford was the president. Was there a feeling that the power center had moved to the Department?

TAYLOR: I might add that when Mao died in 1976 my colleague at the NSC who covered mainland China, like USLO in Peking, did not see a power struggle brewing. I pointed out what seemed to me obvious signs of a political struggle. Within two or three months of Mao's death, military members of the Politburo arrested the Gang of Four and brought Deng back once again to take charge. Well, as it happened no harm was done by the failure at the NSC and USLO to recognize what was happening inside the Forbidden City. By this time Sherrod McCall had left Hong Kong, so he received no credit for his insightful analysis of the brewing internal struggle. John Holdridge, who also served under George W.H. Bush at USLO, went on to be an ambassador and assistant secretary for East Asia. John was an outstanding officer, but Sherrod was in my opinion the more astute analyst.

When Henry Kissinger was the national security advisor, the power center on foreign affairs was of course in the NSC. When he moved to the State Department just as I arrived, one could hear the "sucking sound" as power moved with him. Brent Scowcroft, who had been Kissinger's deputy, replaced him as the NSC advisor. I worked for Brent. Brent was a magnificent guy to work for and a very good selection for the advisor's job, but in light of his previous relationship with Kissinger, he was not likely to try to compete with the new Secretary of State. Kissinger was the foreign affairs master; he continued to have direct access to the President with or without Brent. Scowcroft tried to do the job as he saw it; he (or his staff) summarized for the President the views of the various departments on major issues, providing a range of recommendations with pros an cons for each. Kissinger would then see the President privately and have his views accepted. We spent much of our time, pulling papers together, summarizing them for the President, and then providing a range of options. Scowcroft insisted that whatever we sent to the president be balanced with all sides fairly described. In the final analysis, on key issues at least, Kissinger's views would usually prevail because he would speak privately with the President.

Q: How were relations with Taiwan during your NSC tour? Was there a feeling that we would be better off if Taiwan disappeared?

TAYLOR: The Taiwan issue became rather muted afteNixon's resignation and the collapse of the US position in Indochina. Ford and Kissinger decided that they should not try to move to formal relations with Peking during the remainder of the President's term. That left the question of our diplomatic relations with Taiwan on the shelf. In 1974 or 1975 we informed Chiang Ching-kuo that the Ford administration did not see any need to significantly alter the U.S. relationship with Taiwan. This policy was primarily dictated by domestic political concerns. The Ford administration was reluctant to run the risk of stirring up the ire of the conservatives. During Nixon's visit in 1972, Kissinger had indicated to Zhou En-lai that formal diplomatic relations between the PRC and the U.S. would be established in the President's second administration. As we all know, events in the U.S. derailed the second term and the plan.

Q: Did you feel that things were on hold once Nixon left office?

TAYLOR: I wouldn't say that. Relations with the PRC continued to develop in various ways. The question of formal diplomatic relations with the PRC and the status of our politico-military relations with Taiwan were put on hold. The Pentagon did not seem to understand that a break in military ties with Taiwan was a real possibility whoever won the presidential elections in 1976. The MAAG in Taiwan, for example, decided it needed a new bowling alley and so it built one. At the same time, military exchanges with the PRC began. The first US Naval ship visit to China took place in 1975.

1975 was a year full of huge crises. Most dramatically, our efforts in Indochina crumbled in a heap. South Vietnam then Cambodia and Laos fell to the communists. I had just taken up my new job at the NSC when the Pol Pot forces in Cambodia seized an American freighter, the S.S. Maraquez, and its crew. Pol Pot, carried away with his triumph, was also engaging in a sweeping genocide on his own people. At the NSC meeting on what do to about the freighter, Kissinger said that we had to send in Marines to free the detained Americans. Some of those at the meeting suggested that we try other ways to get these people back before we used force. We might try the diplomatic track via the PRC. But Kissinger turned down all of the options. The Marines were sent in and, as I recall, suffered 30-40 casualties before rescuing some of the seamen. One of the helicopter pilots on this mission was an old Marine friend. He said it was a suicide mission. The Cambodians were waiting for them.

Q: What else did you cover besides Taiwan?

TAYLOR: I was responsible for all of East Asia accept Indochina and the PRC. That meant I covered Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Thailand, Burma, and maybe a couple more places I've missed. I read all the incoming traffic and intel reports on these countries from every agency, including the FBIS take. My main job was to shepherd through the interagency process decision papers for the President. But occasionally something possibly important would catch my eye that others had seemingly missed and I would try to generate interest and action on dealing with it.

In 1976, for example, it seemed to me that the North Koreans were becoming notably more extreme in their denunciations of the U.S. I thought they were possibly setting the stage for some unpleasant event. I checked around the bureaucracy both in State and Defense to ask whether anyone shared my concerns. No one did. I suggested that Defense might wish to get the embassy's and the military's view in Seoul of the situation. As it turned out, in August, a violent incident in the DMZ occurred. A platoon of US soldiers was trimming a tree that blocked an important line of sight. The North Koreans had warned us not to touch the tree. Our work platoon was set upon by North Korean troops armed with bats and sticks; they brutally killed the two officers in charge of our platoon.

Q: Were you involved in the U.S. government's reaction to the incident? We did marshal forces and dispatched them to South Korea and environs.

TAYLOR: We had a big build-up over this tree incident. Eventually, we sent another platoon to finish the trimming job.

Q: I remember all of this vividly because I was the newly arrived Consul General in Seoul. I remember going to our Charge' Tom Stern who also was newly arrived and suggesting that if further efforts at tree trimming were made that our troops have some electric saws with them which were pre-tested to make sure that they worked. It would have been a catastrophe if the troops had gotten to the tree only to find that the electric saws were not functioning!

TAYLOR: I was involved in the follow up because the NSC and the president had to approve he planned reaction to the DMZ incident. I remember going to the Department of State to the crisis center to listen in real time to what was happening in the DMZ as the renewed tree trimming took place. We were waiting anxiously to see what the North Korean reaction would be; in fact their side made no response and the tree was duly trimmed. We had approached the Chinese immediately after the North Koreans killed the two officers and suggested they warn their friends in Pyongyang that any further such outrage would have direct, large scale, and deadly consequences. Still, the North Koreans got away with brutally murdering two young Americans. As usual when they were caught in some terrorist act, they simply stopped the egregious action but paid no price for what they had done. They have done this repeatedly over the years.

Q: You are suggesting that in this period we really viewed the PRC as a force for peace in the area.

TAYLOR: Yes, in practice we did, although formally US military doctrine and grand strategy papers still assumed China was the principal threat after the Soviet Union. I proposed and oversaw the preparation of a broad review of US interests and objectives in the Asia-Pacific region. That review was the first major reformulation of our goals in that area in several years. It reflected fundamental changes in geopolitical dynamics: new Sino-Soviet tensions over Indochina; rising tensions between Vietnam on the one hand and China and Cambodia on the other; our military draw down in Thailand; and the refocus of our attention on Northeast Asia, insular Southeast Asia, and the Southwest Pacific. This broad analysis was reflected in a speech on US policy in the Asia-Pacific region that I prepared for President Ford's delivery at the East West Center on December 7, 1976. Others in the Government were involved in the final product, but as stated in the Evaluation Report I received from Brent Scowcroft, the basic text and key sections of this speech were mine. The address in Honolulu had considerable national and international impact. Our Asian allies enthusiastically welcomed it and the press dubbed the six principles it enunciated as "The Pacific Doctrine."

Some of the main assessments reflected in the speech were later bourn out. In 1978, Vietnam invaded Cambodia, the Soviets sided with the Vietnamese, and the PRC took Cambodia's side. This resulted in the biggest war ever between communist states, a conflict that basically reshaped world politics.

Q: As I understand it, you were a China expert, but in the NSC you covered almost everything else, particularly Japan. Was there anyone in the NSC at the time who had spent any time in Japan or on Japan?

TAYLOR: No one. The emphasis in those days was on China; it was noted at the time of my assignment that the powers-to-be had again chosen a China expert to cover Asian affairs at the NSC instead of a Japan specialist. Some people suggested that we were taking Japan for granted. The NSC was a very small group; as I said we had one senior Asia expert supported by three officers - one on Indochina, one on the PRC, and myself covering the rest of the region. A Japanese expert would also have been responsible for many countries with which he or she might not have been a specialist. I think that my appointment reflected the greater importance of China on security issues. With Japan, our major concerns were economic, primarily trade. Our trade deficits with Japan were widening, although nothing like they were eventually to become. Sino-US trade was then tiny. My main job was not to be an area specialist but to be the working level interagency staff officer for the National Security advisor and thus for the President - and sometimes the Vice President.

Q: Did the issue of arms for Taiwan come up during your tour?

TAYLOR: It did not. Conservatives in Congress sought to expand arms sales to Taiwan.. Kissinger was in charge of China policy and the Ford Administration did not give in to the limited pressures that arose for greater military sales. Most people believed that we would sooner rather than later have diplomatic relations with the PRC and no longer with Taiwan. Then, it was expected, the US would abrogate the defense treaty with Taiwan. I did draft a memorandum for General Scowcroft suggesting that it was in US interests to encourage Taipei-Peking negotiations and that we should gradually move away from our position that we were simply not involved in any way on this question except that it be a peaceful process. We favored a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan-mainland conundrum and thus we should be able to say at least that we therefore hoped talks between the two sides could begin sooner rather than later. At the same time, by reiterating our support for the principle of one China, we would strengthen the assumption that this would be the broad framework in which a settlement would be reached. At the time, of course, the Taiwan Government itself endorsed the principle of One China. One idea I floated was to encourage Lee Kuan-yew, Prime Minister of Singapore, to play the role of interlocutor or broker between Taipei and Peking. Later, in writing my biography of Chiang Ching-kuo I discovered that Lee had in fact been something of a messenger between Chiang and Deng. But it is uncertain how far this may have gone before Chiang's death in 1988. In 1976-1977, we still had diplomatic relations with Taipei and only "unofficial" relations with Peking. In a memo to Scowcroft I suggested that we ask the State Department to consider proposing to Peking a Sino-US peace and friendship agreement. This would be an interim step toward diplomatic relations. I knew this was not likely to go anywhere, however, as Kissinger would not welcome the NSC making policy recommendations on China.

Q: Was there a feeling that Kissinger and the State Department was really running U.S. foreign policy?

TAYLOR: Kissinger was certainly the Bismarck on foreign policy, in both administrations. Nixon formally made the major decisions but with Kissinger being the conceptualizer and point man. But in the Ford Administration, Kissinger's role was even more dominant. He decided which foreign leaders would be invited to the U.S. and to the White House. So far as I know, Ford never tried to change that dynamic. Of course, the Ford Presidency was in an unusual situation and it was not surprising that the famous Secretary of State played such a dominant role in foreign affairs. At least Henry was at that point officially as well as in fact in charge of foreign policy.

Q: What were some of the other things you did at the NSC.

TAYLOR: I will give you some examples. I wrote the scope paper and talking points for President Ford's meeting with the Emperor of Japan. I wrote a memo highlighting decisions necessary to enhance South Korea's air defense. I reorganized and rewrote briefing memoranda that the State Department had prepared for the Vice President's 1976 trip to four Asia countries, adding a number of substantive issues and talking points in the process. I drafted replies on diverse Asian issues for the President and the Vice President to letters from congressmen and other prominent individuals. I monitored US military exercises for possible political problems. And I wrote memoranda to Scowcroft on a range of policy issues such as our strategy in the United Nations on various issues

Q: In 1977, Carter was elected president. What happened to you?

TAYLOR: With the change in administrations, most of the FSOs on the NSC staff were replaced. Although we were professionals it was assumed that our loyalty to the new president might not be total. The only one that did not leave was Bill Gleysteen, at the time the senior Far East advisor. I spent the time before my next assignment working on a couple of projects. First, I chaired a policy paper for the new administration on Korea. The options paper, I recall, carried the new designation, National Policy Decision Memorandum or something like that.

The paper was to set out the options for the Carter Administration regarding our troop presence in Korea. In the campaign, Carter had said he would withdraw all American forces from the Peninsula. This was a complex and sensitive question as many interests and agencies had to be considered. The drafting sessions would have a dozen or so agencies and bureaus represented. I drafted and redrafted. The final options with pros and cons for each alternative policy ranged from complete withdrawal to zero withdrawal with two in-between alternatives. No agency supported total withdrawal. Most supported no withdrawals or the minimum option. The afternoon that I planned to send the completed Memorandum to the Assistant Secretary, I was told that Carter had just told a press conference that he intended to remove all US forces from South Korea. That seemed to preempt the question. Still we sent the paper forward.

Q: We in Seoul were appalled because we felt very strongly that an withdrawal of American forces would tempt the North Koreans to invade the South once again. Carter's decision was stupid and eventually it was not implemented. We hoped that Washington would find a fig leaf so that the troops would not be withdrawn.

TAYLOR: Yes, as it turned out, such an outcry ensued from Congress, South Korea, you people in Embassy Seoul, and Japan as well as of course the Pentagon, that in the end Carter did not withdraw any troops during his tenure. President Carter is a great man, but this was typical of his leadership style. He had strong ideas and frequently did not give much weight to the views of his advisors and experts. I was Diplomat in Residence at the Carter Center in Atlanta from 1990 to 1992. As I got to know him slightly, I gained some understanding of his temperament and style. In retrospect, I don't think anyone who knew President Carter was surprised by his unilateral, preemptive decision in early 1977 on Korea. Still, he was and is a pragmatist as well as a visionary and willing to back down completely if his ideas don't pan out or if they run into a fire storm. He is very confident about his knowledge, and he is a thoughtful and insightful. But his ego and instincts could sometimes get him in trouble.

When I arrived at the Carter Center in 1990, Iraq had just invaded Kuwait. The issue then of course was what would be the U.S. reaction. Carter made a public pronouncement saying that we should not take any military action to drive Iraq out of Kuwait, but only protect Saudi Arabia. The Center had on its staff a prominent Middle East expert by the name of Stein. Carter had not talked to him prior to publicly announcing his views on the Gulf crisis. At the next monthly lunch with the President, Carter said knew that some of us might disagree with him on the Gulf issue. He invited us to state our views. We went around the table and every staff member, except one - a very liberal Africanist - strongly supported intervention to reverse Saddam's occupation of a member country of the United Nations or the League of Nations - the first time such an annexation had happened since 1940 and the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states. Carter listened to the discussion and then said: "Thank you very much. Now let's move on to the next subject." That was the way he operated if he felt very strongly about an issue. At times, when he had made up his mind, he seemed almost uninterested in other peoples' views. He knew what he wanted to do and that was the way it was going to be. He is, I believe, a humble person, but by no means modest.

Q: I think in Carter's mind, he just didn't want another Vietnam and that meant the withdrawal of the troops from Korea. He also felt that anything he said in his campaign was a promise the American people and he felt obligated to follow-up on it. As it turned out, the 2nd Division is still in Korea today. There may have been some small withdrawals, but certainly nothing close to what Carter had envisaged in the campaign.

TAYLOR: Well, that was my Korean experience. Then I was assigned to the Micronesian Status Negotiations Team. The team was commissioned to negotiate with the various Micronesian entities - The Marshall Islands, the Carolines, and the Marianas - on their future political status. The chief negotiator was senior FSO Phil Manhard, who had been in prison in Vietnam for five years. He had been the US Consul in Hue when taken prisoner by the Viet Cong. My assignment as Phil's deputy was also an interesting experience. We convened a big conference in Honolulu with the Micronesians and their lawyers and advisors. The meeting went on for about a week and produced what became the final agreements on the status of the Micronesians.

Phil was a very talkative person. When he first called me on the phone to offer me the job as his deputy, I listened to him for almost an hour. I soon found out he also talked at great length also in the office. I assumed that this trait was a reaction to his having been in prison for so long, mostly in solitude - five years in the Hanoi Hilton! At the Honolulu conference, Manhard delivered the opening remarks. He talked on and on and on. After an hour, I began to wonder whether there would be any end. He talked until lunchtime. It turned out that Phil's style was making the Micronesians feel right at home; that was their way of negotiations - the elders sit around and talk and talk until they are worn down and finally they all agree on something. Consequently, it turned out to be a successful negotiation.

Q: After that stint on Micronesia, were did you go?

TAYLOR: I was offered the job of political counselor in South Africa. In light of my interest in Africa and especially given what was happening in South Africa, I was delighted to accept. I stayed in South Africa until 1980. For three years, we moved back and forth between Pretoria high on the veld and beautiful Cape Town on the sea. The Carter administration was only a few months in office. It was taking a more forceful rhetorical position against apartheid and the South African regime. John Vorster was the prime minister. Early on, Vorster had a meeting in Geneva with Vice-President Mondale, who took a very strong position against apartheid.

The National Party leaders decided that the Carter Administration was launching a campaign to bring down the Government and end apartheid. When Vorster returned home, the white dominated media went into a feeding frenzy attacking the alleged American threat against South Africa. At the same time, Washington increased pressure on Pretoria for progress on the Namibian question. The issue had been before the UN for many years. During World War I, first the British and then the South Africans had occupied Namibia. South Africa of course ran the territory as an apartheid state. UN Resolution 435 called for independence for Namibia. South Africa finally agreed to discussions on Namibia's future with a UN "Contact Group," including the US, Britain, Germany, and Spain.

In sum, a great deal more was going on than our embassy in South Africa had ever experienced. The U.S. Administration was pushing a vigorous anti-apartheid policy, demanding progress on the Namibian issue, and in a related policy joining the British in an effort to promote negotiations over the future of what was then called Southern Rhodesia. Meanwhile, the South Africans were carrying out various covert projects to destabilize the new Marxist Governments in neighboring Angola and Mozambique. Until 1976, the US Government had been involved in the former project, providing lethal aid to Jonas Savimbi and his UNITA organization. The Embassy was also focused on uncovering evidence that South Africa was embarked on a nuclear weapons project. Meanwhile restlessness in the black community was increasing as was re-examination of the future by the white elite. All that made for a full plate for the embassy and especially the Political Counselor.

Q: Where were you actually located in South Africa?

TAYLOR: I was part of the small embassy team that moved every year from Capetown to Pretoria and back. Pretoria was the executive seat of government and the Parliament was in Cape Town. This was the arrangement made at the time of Union after the dreadful Boer War. The High Court was in Bloemfontein. I arrived in Pretoria a year after the uprising in Soweto, which was the most dramatic confrontation between the black community and the government since the slaughter of demonstrators in Sharpsville in the early 1960s. In fact, the Soweto uprising was much more violent and lasted much longer than the earlier troubles. By 1977, the black community throughout much of the country was militant and active.

In my political section, I had two officers who followed internal affairs. Steve McDonald was one. Steve, an ebullient and gregarious man, was a superb officer - just the right man for the job. He had a wide range of contacts in Soweto and other townships around Pretoria and Johannesburg. He regularly played basketball on the courts of Soweto, and at his home frequently played the guitar and sang soulful ballads for his black and white South African friends. These close personal ties between an embassy officer and the non-elite black community of South Africa were precedent breaking. Unfortunately, after this tour in South Africa, Steve resigned from the Foreign Service, but he continued to work on African affairs for various NGO committees and organizations interested in that country and U.S.-South Africa relations. He is still active in that field today.

From the top down in the State Department virtual unanimity prevailed about our policy. Before I left Washington for South Africa, I met with deputy assistant secretary for African Affairs, Bill Edmondson (later our ambassador to South Africa). Bill told me that our job in the political section was first of all to get out and report on what was happening in the black community. The second priority was to understand the political dynamics within the Afrikaner community and the National Party, and the possibility of significant change. I was told that with all our contacts we should continuously and strongly underscore the American Government's strong opposition to the Apartheid policies of the South African regime. Of course, the regime and most of the white population viewed that position as the equivalent of a declaration of political war.

Soon after I arrived, I found that within the embassy, a spectrum of views existed. Some people, like the military attaches, had close relations with important segments of white South Africa. The attaches and their South African counterparts regularly socialized and naturally became friends. Some American officers felt a certain sympathy toward the regime. To some extent, that was true of the CIA station as well. Some American administrative personnel in the Embassy also did not understand why we were so critical of the South African government. These people lived, as we all did, in white communities that were not too different from those in America - except everyone had at least a maid servant. We all had white South African neighbors and friends.

I instituted a weekly brown bag lunch to which all American embassy staff were invited. We used the occasion to bring people up to date on what was happening in our relations and, as we saw it, within the country. I think that effort was fairly successful; We usually had good turnouts. We continued this practice through most of my tour whenever I was in Pretoria. We did not have such meetings when we were in Capetown, which was so small that such a program was not necessary. The ambassador, the DCM, a political officer, three secretaries, a communicator, and myself were the only embassy personnel who made the annual trek to Capetown. The other embassy sections and personnel remained in Pretoria.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

TAYLOR: Initially, it was Bill Bowdler. He was succeeded by Bill Edmondson in 1978. Afterwards, Bowdler became Director of INR, then Assistant Secretary for American Republic Affairs. When the Reagan Republicans took over the White House, they gave Bill something like two hours to clear out of his office. It was like a Bolshevik revolution. They blamed him for coddling the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

Bowdler and Edmundson, were both fine ambassadors in every respect. Both Bills were effective in carrying out Carter's mandate to put pressure on the South African government to reform and demonstrate to the black community our support for peaceful change. At the same time, we needed to work with the South African government on a number of key issues. Among these was the future of Rhodesia and Namibia. Shortly after my arrival the UN "Contact Group" on Namibia sought to open negotiations with the South Africans.

Several US/British delegations also came to South Africa to talk about Rhodesia. Andy Young, our UN ambassador, led a couple of these teams. Their objective was to encourage the South Africans to urge the leader of the white Southern Rhodesian government, Ian Smith, to negotiate an end to the Emergency (the guerrilla war) and a transition to a majority-rule government. I accompanied some of these delegations to Harare where talks were eventually begun on the holding of one-man-one-vote elections.

The political section reported the ongoing dialogues with the South Africans on both Rhodesia and Namibia and provided analysis of Pretoria's position and recommendations on how we might move things along. The United States did not have representation in Rhodesia or Namibia so we also reported on internal developments in those territories.

Q: How did you find dealing with the South African foreign ministry, especially on the Rhodesia and Namibian issues?

TAYLOR: The South African diplomatic corps was very professional. We had a productive relationship with them. My South African colleagues were highly educated and strictly oriented to problem solving. I worked most closely with Neil Van Hearden, who was the foreign minister's principal aid on the issues of Rhodesia and Namibia. I saw Neil at least once a week at lunch; sometimes if the issues could not wait for the weekly lunch we would meet in his office to discuss hang-ups in the negotiations. Neil was definitely a pragmatic diplomat. As in any negotiations, "the devil is in the details;" and we were the detail men, seeking to find compromise language that all the parties could accept. His approach was always a positive one, and, I think, so was mind. Neither one of us was confrontational or ideological.

The foreign minister himself, Pick Botha, was a characteflamboyant and swashbuckling. AT the time he reminded me of Von Ribbentrop. But he was not a die-in-the-wool defender of apartheid. He was in fact a realist also, but a good actor as well. Occasionally, he would let slip something - in his speeches or comments - which suggested that despite his bombast and bullying attitude, he did not agree with the white apartheid code He seemed too understand that the days of apartheid were numbered. In our assessments of the evolving situation in South Africa, we would occasionally point to Botha as an example of the weakening of confidence in the system on the part of the Afrikaner elite. Botha came from a prominent Afrikaner family. He was an intellectual who understood the dynamics and realities of the South African situation - social, economic, political, and international. Pik played a key role in persuading the Rhodesian regime to switch its fundamental strategy, abandoning white rule and instead banking on the success of a white-supported, moderate black-led political party. As far as their own country was concerned, Botha, Van Hearden, and other members of the Afrikaner intelligentsia, including politicians, journalists, and university professors, understood that the death of their apartheid system was also a matter of time. But, still, they hoped to delay the day of reckoning for many years.

Q: On the Namibia and Rhodesia as well as apartheid, did you run into many ideologues who were less interested in solutions than they were in their soap-stand?

TAYLOR: The average National Party MP was still a "bitter ender," believing wholeheartedly in the goodness and workability of the apartheid system. The Prime Minister, John Vorster, was among them. The average Afrikaner man-in-the-street was even more benighted. In South Africa, the Afrikaners and the English both had hoary democratic traditions. Thus representative democracy, the rule of law, and freedom of speech existed for the white community - at least as long as one did not become involved in stirring up the black community.

Q: Why did the South Africa want negotiations to succeed? Wasn't it in their interest to maintain the status quo?

TAYLOR: It was calculation of enlightened self-interest on the part of people like Pik and my friend Neil. Other Afrikaner elites, including many in the Broderbund (a semi-secret organization of the Afrikaner elite), were also able to see that at least the Afrikaner had to start moving gradually away from apartheid. The most prominent leaders of Afrikaner South Africreligious ministers, politicians, teachers, etc - were tapped to join the broderbund - something like being tapped for "Skull and Bones" at Yale. It was this group that informally determined the position of the Afrikaner community on any issue of great public debate. The head of this group, while I was there, was Chancellor of Rands Afrikans University. It became clear to me in my conversations with him and his peers that a decisive segment of the elite had seen the 1976 uprising in Soweto as a watershed. The uprising together with increasing international pressures, such as the militant rhetoric of the Carter administration and economic and financial sanctions, were changing the mind-set of intellectual Afrikanerdom.

Unlike South Africa, the black opposition in Rhodesia had taken to arms and a full-scale guerrilla and terrorist war was raging. With the advice and support of Pik Botha, Ian Smith began to support the emergence of a black elite class that would be less radical and more amenable to political compromise. The leader of this new black group was a ProtestanBishop named Muzorewa. The Bishop received assistance from both the Smith government and Pretoria in building a political organization. Pik and eventually Ian Smith believed that Muzorewa could win an honest election. Pik and the Afrikaner elite decided to follow the same strategy in Namibia. There they decided to accept independence for Namibia but they expected to continue control through a mainly moderate, black dominated, multiracial political movement - although the leader was white. As in Rhodesia, the South African Government believed that this puppet party could win a popular election in Namibia against the nationalist guerrilla group, SWAPO. The moderate, white supported black parties in Rhodesia and Namibia were seen as potentially leading a new bloc of African nations that would be friendly to South Africa. Botha and van Hearden both thought that the days of absolute white rule in Rhodesia and Namibia were numbered and that the longer the liberation movements went on, the more radical they would become.

Ian Smith had implanted special branch (intelligence) operatives throughout Rhodesia - in every village lived a paid supposedly secret agent. These agents served as the "eyes and ears" of the government. In my lunches with Neil, we would discuss what was happening in Rhodesia as the elections neared. He would tell me with increasing confidence that the Muzorewa group was making headway in its struggle for power. The Special Branch agents were reporting that the Bishop would win a free election. The Lancaster House negotiations in London were concluded with the Rhodesians and South Africans convinced that the Bishop could defeat Mugabe and Nkomo - the two prominent black leaders of the long insurgency. As the election began, I can remember Neil telling me that the Bishop would certainly win; the only issue was his margin of victory. As it turned out, Muzorewa was slaughtered at the polls; he got something like 8% of the vote. It seems the villagers had told the special branch agents what they thought they wanted to hear - they would vote for Muzorewa. The Bishops' defeat shocked the establishments in both in Rhodesia and South Africa.

This result in Rhodesia influenced the South Africans to hold back on the Namibia negotiations. In 1979, we had been close to an agreement on holding elections in Namibia. South Africa had felt for sometime that its allied political organization in that desert state, the "Turntable Alliance," could be victorious in a free and open election. The South Africans held a unilateral election themselves without benefit of UN monitoring. It turned out that 110% of the Namibian population voted!! This election "victory" further emboldened the South Africans to believe that their adherents would win a free election in Namibia. So they began to be more accommodating in the negotiations with the "contact" group. But after the very poor showing by Muzorewa in Rhodesia, the South Africans pulled back, recognizing that they had very badly judged the situation in Rhodesia and probably in Namibia as well. Ronald Reagan's victory in the 1980 Presidential elections also encouraged them to believe thaAmerican policy would become more friendly. Negotiations continued off and on over the years. In 1988 the negotiations on Namibia and Angola took place in Havana, where I happened to be the chief of the US mission or Interests Section. But, again, that is getting ahead of the story,

Q: Tell us about Andy Young's visit. How did the embassy react?

TAYLOR: The trips were successful. Andy was very open; he got along very well with the Afrikaners. He was not confrontational even with the hardest line types. He was philosophical and very effective in the negotiations. The South Africans in turn respected him. Thus Andy played a valuable role in bringing the South Africans along on the Rhodesia issue. He gave them confidence that although the Carter Administration's rhetoric was stronger than that of any previous administration, it nevertheless would try to be helpful and not adversarial or confrontational. The U.S. was not going to go beyond public pressure and persuasion. Actually, the Administration in fact did not apply any major economic sanctions, even though it had legislative authority to do so. I think Andy Young was helpful in showing the South Africans that we were interested in solutions and progress, not in specific actions that might have been confrontational and which might have defeated the end purpose. We wanted solutions that were also best for South Africa.

Q: Other people in discussing South Africa have often referred to the "Night of Long Knives" - an era of black retribution. How did the embassy in your day see an end game?

TAYLOR: When I arrived, our contacts with the black community rapidly increased. As I mentioned, Steve McDonald was especially effective in getting to know black South Africans, from regular students to leaders such as Steve Biko. All of us in the political section established contacts in the black community. The ambassador as a matter of course invited black South Africans to social functions and lunches at the residence. Thee three consulates in the country also gave these contacts a high priority. Increasingly, we saw the unofficial black political leadership as well the professional and intellectual elite as remarkably pragmatic in their thinking about the future. Surprisingly, they were not embittered or looking for revenge. They had every right to be angry, but generally they were not. Militancy was increasing among younger blacks and black consciousness was being raised generally by militants Steve Biko. In context, however, Biko was not radical. The radicals were represented by the Pan-African Congress (PAC) that called for nationalization of all white farms and businesses and even the forced emigration of the white population Biko was arrested about one month after my arrival just as I was on my way to see him in Port Elizabeth. He was killed the next day while in Police custody.

Ambassador Bowdler attended Biko's funeral outside of Pretoria. The funeral was attended by tens of thousands watched by a thousand or so policemen and riot squad officers. Our security officer and Rich Baltimore were going to escort the ambassador to the funeral. The day of the affair, we were sitting in my office discussing the arrangements and how the ambassador would get to his seat, etc. I warned them that if they used our portable radios to communicate with each other or the car, this might seem suspicious and provoke a reaction from the security forces. They agreed, and the security officer also decided to leave his gun at the office. Of course, none of us could guess from which group trouble might emanate: the black attendees or the security forces. Rich suggested that if the police moved in swinging batons, his colleague (our security officer) should grab him and shout, "I've got this Kaffir!" If, however, black rioters were running amuck in their direction, Rich would grab the security officer and shout, "I've got this one!"

The funeral passed without disorder. The ambassador's picture by the gravesite was on the front pages the next day.

As to the ultimate outcome of the struggle, I came to believe South Africa could and probably would avoid a "night of the long knives," a civil war with, in the end, the whites fleeing into a final bastion in the Cape. We can discuss that further when you like.

Q: What was our evaluation of the Biko episode? Did we think it was governmental policy or the doings of some over-eager local policemen?

TAYLOR: The police and the government were intent on intimidating the black leadership. Early on I made a trip to the Eastern Cape to call on black leaders, including Biko. After I arrived at the airport in Port Elisabeth, I went to pick my rental car. At the desk, I was told by the young woman employee that two men had asked whether a man named Jay Taylor was renting a car with her company. She had told them, yes. As I left with the keys, I could see in the terminal window two men following me. I got in my car and drove around the parking lot. I was clearly being followed. I had an appointment to see a colored activist before my appointment with Biko. The police followed me all the way to this meeting and the ostentatiously waited outside the man's house. They were obviously trying to intimidate the black leaders with whom I had appointments. The gentleman I visited that afternoon was arrested the next morning. I was scheduled to see Biko that same morning, but when I arrived at his office, I was told that he had been arrested the night before. Two days later, we learned that the day after his arrest, Biko had died as the result of a beating. Of course, it seemed possible, even likely, that Biko and the activists I had seen in Port Elizabeth were picked up because I had made appointments with them. The intent presumably was to intimidate the activists and discourage me and my colleagues from making such contacts. Since black dissidents like Biko were regularly detained in any event, we decided to continue our contacts with them, if they were agreeable.

Q: Did we do anything after we heard what happen to Biko?

TAYLOR: We let the regime know in no uncertain terms that we considered this a heinous crime. The State Department called in the South African ambassador in Washington and Bowdler told Pik Botha that the killing was an outrage that reflected either a malevolent government or an out-of-control police force. Of course, the South African Government denied that they had anything to do with the death; they claimed he had died of natural causes. The Justice Minister, Jimmy Krueger, was an unreconstructed Afrikaner who strongly supported apartheid; he publicly proclaimed, "The death of Steve Biko leaves me cold." But the killing it was a turning point in terms of energizing international pressure on South Africa and activism in the black community.

Q: Did we believe at the time that the security apparatus was a force upon itself, not necessarily responsive to the political leadership?

TAYLOR: They were basically responding to the political leadership. But they had considerable leeway, as usually the case. They had secret covert units. These were exposed during the investigations of the 1990s. Some of these units had pretty much of a free hand. The justice minister, for example, might not have known precisely when an assassination was planned and carried out. By the 1980s, the security services had gone beyond arrests and beatings. Bombs were being sent to ANC leaders in Mozambique, Zambia, and Angola. The South African Defense Forces (SADF) were mounting raiding parties against ANC facilities and people in Angola and Mozambique and even Zambia. BOSS and military intelligence sent Letter bombs to ANC leaders in exile. The SADF increased its raids into southern Angola in pursuit of SWAPO fighters and to eliminate their bases. South Africa increased its military aid to and support of UNITA, the Angolan insurgents, in order to hinder SWAPO's operations in Namibia and to challenge Cuba's military presence in Angola. The Cuban military presence had originated in 1975-1976 as a response to SADF intervention in Angola in support of UNITA and its leader Jonas Savimbi. The UNITA leader, incidentally, at this time put himself forward as an anti-communist fighter but originally he had been a Maoist," purporting to be more Marxist than the MPLA.

"BOSS" was the fitting acronym for the Bureau of State Security. "Boss" was also the appellation that blacks traditionally used when addressing white males, not just their employers. The BOSS headquarters was in the same building in Pretoria as the US Embassy. The security services were large; in addition to the bureau of state security, intelligence and covert teams existed in the police and the military.

We had several excellent attaches during my tour there. One went on to become a respected academic specialist on Africa. But a few considered South Africa an important strategic country in the U.S. global "Cold War" against the Soviets. They viewed the maintenance of a white government as vital to our security interests even if we did not agree with its internal policies. We had a standing order that no Embassy official or members of his or her family was to travel to Namibia. This ban was intended to demonstrate our opposition to South Africa's continued occupation of Namibia and its failure to carry out UN Resolution 435 that called for independence. I was the exception to this rule. I went regularly to as part of my responsibilities. One day, we learned that our army attachï¿½ had, without approval, accepted an invitation from the South African army and toured its military camps in Namibia. He felt that he had to accept the invitation to get a better understanding of the military situation there in light of the ongoing negotiations. I felt that in light of his blatant breech of standing instructions, the attachï¿½ should be sent home. The ambassador, however, after giving the officer a severe lecture, let him finish his tour in Pretoria.

Shortly after this incident, the Ambassador dispatched me on a two-week tour of all South African military bases in Namibia. The bases were primarily along the Namibia-Angola border where the guerrilla war was being waged with SWAPO, the black Namibian nationalist movement, and across which South African Defense Forces launched raids and sent military supplies to UNITA. The South African military provided me an escort and transportation, usually via helicopter. Learning that I was a helicopter as well as fixed-wing pilot, the South African pilots let me ride in the co-pilot's seat and sometimes take the controls. Sometimes I traveled in huge lumbering anti-personnel carriers called "Hippos," which were especially designed to absorb and deflect land mines. Later, during the suppression of the black uprisings in the 1980s, I would see on television these great metal beasts bullying their way through Soweto and other townships.

Q: What was our view of the military situation in Namibia?

TAYLOR: It seemed the South Africans had the military situation pretty much under control, unlike in Zimbabwe where guerrilla groups were able regularly to mount night raids and then safely scurry back across the border. Terrorism was a regular and violent reality in northern Namibia, an area called Ovamboland, but only sporadic in Windhoek and the rest of the country. In Namibia, the white farmers, none of whom lived in the northern part of the country, did not have to worry about being ambushed as in Rhodesia. Nevertheless, the South African presence in Namibia was a drain on the country's resources. Only a few deaths a month among the white conscripts began to create a backlash. Within South Africa, whites were free to express their opinions, and the parliamentary opposition and white intellectuals in general constantly hectored the Government about Namibia. Sentiment was growing among South African whites in favor of an exit from Namibia.

Q: What was the embassy's view of boycotts?

TAYLOR: Different views existed on this subject. Some felt that the burden of the boycotts would fall on those least able to bear them; namely the black community. An economic squeeze on the country would likely increase unemployment primarily among blacks. This embassy group supported a policy that focused on persuading the South African business community to institute policies of equal recruitment, training, pay, and working conditions for blacks. Almost all American businesses in South Africa subscribed to the so-called Sullivan Principles, which incorporated these goals. In some American and British-owned companies, blacks were increasingly employed in supervisory and senior positions. Those Americans against sanctions believed that the withdrawal of US investment would just make the economic situation worst for the blacks.

Most of the black leadership in and outside South Africa, however, supported boycotts, financial sanctions, and any other legal measure that would apply economic pressure. If the black community suffered as a result these measures, they believed that the community's standard of living was already so low that additional unemployment would only have a marginal effect. I personally thought we should avoid an all-out economic war on the country and instead apply selected but especially painful sanctions - as in the banking world.

Q: Was our embassy prominent in trying to bring change as compared to the representation of other countries, particularly Western European ones?

TAYLOR: In terms of political pressure on the South African system, I think we did play a leading role. This was because the South Africans felt they could survive a European effort to totally isolate them, but over the long term and perhaps sooner they would collapse if the US opted for such a policy. On economic and financial sanctions, the Europeans were in the lead. The Europeans also generally took a stronger stand on Namibia.

Q: You mentioned that Steve McDonald of your staff was the officer primarily responsible for liaison with the black community.

TAYLOR: Yes, as I said, he was exceptional. We also had a more junior officer, Rich Baltimore - an African-American - who also concentrated on black South African affairs. He was likewise an excellent officer He had recently received a law degree from Harvard. One FSO in the section spoke Afrikaans. He maintained contact primarily with that community and also with other white groups, reporting on their attitudes as well on parliamentary politics. A fourth officer worked across the board, as we all did occasionally. We also made a point of knowing leading MPs, key government bureaucrats, journalists, writers, professors and other members of the chattering classes. In addition, like FSOs everywhere, we exchanged views on subjects of the day with our diplomatic colleagues. We covered the waterfront pretty well.

Q: Were these contacts primarily for source material for reporting?

TAYLOR: Yes, but they were also elites whom we tried to influence. We assessed views across the board on internal affairs and also on subjects like the negotiations on Rhodesia and Namibia. The objective was to understand the dynamics of political life in South Africa, perceive trends, and where possible increase understanding and support for the views of the United States Government and of the American people. I also served as the Ambassador's advisor and reporting officer in regard to the on-going negotiations with the government on the two neighboring territories as well as on other non-economic subjects. The ambassador made representations to the foreign minister and I worked with Van Hearden and others in the Ministry on a range of issues, including not only the question of internal oppression, but also on: South Africa's armed intrusions in neighboring countries; it relations with these and other African countries; its nuclear program; its position in the United Nations; and its position on issues of concern to us in international organizations. But we did not get involved in any discussion about a possible quid pro quo for any significant change in the government's domestic policies.

Q: Were we suggesting to the black community that the time would come when it would rise to the country's leadership?

TAYLOR: They did not need us to tell them that. The black leadership believed that victory was only a matter of time. They were remarkably optimistic. This attitude really began in 1977 or perhaps even much earlier. Biko presented an outstanding example of this up-beat attitude.

Q: Did your government contacts indicate any unhappiness with the killing of Biko? Did any of them see as it as a major mistake?

TAYLOR: Many white intellectuals felt it was both horrible and stupid. I am sure Pick Botha felt that way. Neil Van Hearden was extremely angry with his "stupid fellow Boers." He could not understand how the police and the Justice Minister could be so dense as not to see the repercussions of their actions. He and other Afrikaners realized that the murder had consequences, particularly internationally, which far outweighed any temporary benefit it might have had domestically. They were correct of course. Biko became a martyr at home and abroad.

Q: Were you at all concerned that Baltimore and McDonald in their continuing presence in Soweto might be stirring up trouble for the U.S.?

TAYLOR: We were not out of order in these activities. Certainly we were not breaking the law. The South African regime would periodically protest our visits to Soweto and other areas and our contacts with black leaders. It would, for example, protest to the ambassador about meetings that I held with various leaders of the black community through out the country. I was accused of making provocative statements in these meetings that encouraged unrest. But the regime could never present any evidence of to back up their charges.

Q: How did you and the ambassador and other members of the embassy handled the social activities - the 4th of July celebration, dinners, etc.?

TAYLOR: The Ambassador and other Embassy officers made a point of inviting to their social events - and working lunches - a cross section of people from all South African communities. We paid no attention, of course, to apartheid. I found lunches to be the most productive was to get to know persons of interest. During my three years in South Africa, I probably hosted two or three hundred lunches.

When the ambassador hosted a large reception, the Political Section would provide him with a list of potential invitees that always contained a large percentage of black citizens. The same process was usually used for smaller affairs, such as dinners. We not only wanted to be inclusive but also to clearly appear to be that way. I do not remember any white South Africans refusing to accept invitations to mixed social affairs. One outstanding USIS officer in Johannesburg was an African American. He and his young family found life in apartheid South Africa frequently irritating and sometimes oppressive. They could of course go where members of the local black community could not - by showing their diplomatic passports. Nevertheless, his presence would sometimes raise eyebrows and indirect signs of disfavor. Our Harvard law graduate, Rich Baltimore, however, was a bachelor, and a very sophisticated young officer. He found dealing with apartheid an interesting challenge. For example, for a time, he had a white girl friend from the French embassy. He enjoyed escorting this young lady to restaurants or movies where all the other customers were, of course, white. He laughed at the glares and curious glances he would receive on these occasions. Rarely was he ever challenged to show his passport because the theater, hotel, or restaurant staff always assumed that no South African black would have the nerve to do what he was doing. Once, while driving from Capetown to Pretoria with his French girl friend, he spent two nights in hotels on the road. In both cases, he had advance reservations and in neither case did the desk clerk challenge him, even though he was probably the only black who had ever stayed at these hotels, especially one with a white female companion. White beaches were other places he integrated. So Rich "had a ball" challenging the system, but for African-Americans who had families the situation was different. They had a tougher time.

Q: Did you have African Americans coming to South Africa to make political statements or to raise some hell about apartheid?

TAYLOR: A considerable number of African-Americans, both prominent and not, did come to South Africa after the beginning of the Carter administration. The prominent sought to use the opportunity to bring the plight of South African blacks to the world's attention and to give encouragement to members of that community. These visitors also helped to foster a perception in both the white and black communities that the U.S. was becoming more and more active in the global drive to end apartheid. It was during this period that I first met Jesse Jackson. As political counselor, I traveled with him to Johannesburg and Durban, where he spoke to mixed groups. He was, of course, a powerful speaker. He was candid in his assessment that changes in South Africa would eventually come, and the faster, the better it would be for all concerned. I don't think that this kind of tour would have been possible before 1976.

Q: Did you have any American, black or white, entertainers who used the stage to make statements?

TAYLOR: In the late 1970s a movement began in the global arts community to put South Africa on the proscribed list. So we had few American entertainers. The boycott of South Africa started with the international cultural community. One year, South African did host a world boxing championship, which became a big occasion. It was held in a large rugby stadium. The African-American boxer beat the South African champion, an Afrikaner. The black community took delight in the outcome. The white community feared boycotts in the sports arena - most especially rugby, which was an obsession - more than other anti-apartheid action abroad..

Q: Was Buthelezi in the picture during the time we are discussing?

TAYLOR: Buthelezi was certainly a political force; he held the middle ground in between the regime and the militant black community, led by the ANC, which at the time was, as you know proscribed. Other militant black groups contended for influence, like Biko's Black Consciousness Movement, which had not yet been banned. Buthelezi was the leader of the Zulu tribe; he was not in the line of ascension to the Zulu throne, but he was related to the royal family. His ancestors were something like chancellors to the hereditary king of the Zulu nation. The king, however, was only the nominal leader of the tribe. Buthelezi was the real political leader. He was a well-educated man, but on special occasions appeared in the stunning leopard skin cloak of the traditional Zulu warrior.

He participated in the local elections even though they were held under apartheid ground rules. Buthelezi was also chief minister of Kwa Zulu, the Zulu "homeland." Most of the black community strongly opposed the homelands as a key component of Grand Apartheid with a capital "A." But Buthelezi viewed his election in Kwa Zulu as a step forward. He continued, however, to attack apartheid and the central government. He believed that working within the established system might be a quicker way to end apartheid and white control than the path chosen by the ANC. We were in contact with Buthelezi and his Inkatha Party primarily through our consul-general in Durban.

Q: In your contacts with the universities - and USIS' - did we notice any change in outlook among the white students?

TAYLOR: Yes. USIS travel grants were given not only to promising young black leaders, but also to white student leaders and young white politicians of both the National Party and the opposition. The white universities in South Africa were excellent academically but, except for Stellenbosh, the major Afrikaner college, also hot beds of anti-apartheid thought. They were the spawning grounds in the white communities for the "new South Africa." Professors in these institutions also generally recognized that refusal to change would lead to more and greater violence and to international pariah status for the country.

Responding to these pressures, domestic and foreign, the government proposed a new constitutional arrangement. Many in the anti-apartheid movement in the U.S. viewed this proposal - put forward by the new Prime Minister P.W. Botha, as a token gesture totally without significance. Of course, the black community in South Africa felt the same. The Ambassador and I agreed, however, that P.W.'s "reform" was a first step away from grand apartheid. It moved the white regime from a set hard position onto the first gentle decline of the famous slippery slope. The government's objective was to try formally to incorporate the "colored" and Asian communities into the political life of South Africa. In the new dispensation, there would be three parliaments: a white one, a colored one, and one for Asians. The status of the black community did not change. The assumption was that the "homelands" would continue and that was where the blacks should and would find their political life. It was a strange, Jerry-rigged, three-ringed parliament, which obviously did not please anyone; it was an effort by the regime to show that it was not opposed to having people other than whites involved in the political life of South Africa. In addition, the Nats hoped to co-opt into the system the colored and Asian populations. The National Party had excluded the former ethnic category excluded from the voter rolls in 1948.

The three-ring racial parliament did not make sense of course, but still we saw it as a first step toward an unraveling of the system. It also promised to split the National Party. The most conservative wing of the Party vehemently opposed giving any political rights, even nominal ones, to any non-whites. That was another reason why we at the embassy were more positive about the regime's proposals than most others. The arch-conservatives in the Party saw the new dispensation as we did - that is as a first step toward if not onto the slippery slope.

It meant, we believed, the eventual end of a system for which the Afrikaners had fought for centuries - a purely white, Afrikaner-dominated country. The right wing of the right-wing National Party understood that to grant even the small accommodations suggested by P.W. Botha was to start the beginning of the end of apartheid and all that the "Nats" had cherished. The government's proposal, in the view if the extremists, violated the fundamental principle of South African governance - only whites had political rights. That principal was at the core of the conservative philosophy. Once the Party allowed a token departure from the principle, the ultra-right correctly understood, the rationale of the whole system would rapidly erode.

In the end, the archconservatives lost and new parliaments for coloreds and Asians were duly elected, with those two communities in theory having the same political rights as whites. This took place shortly after I left, but at the time the debate was going on, it was clear to me that deep fissures over the future of apartheid were opening in the white community. The Afrikaner intellectual elite were looking to a process of reform that might take many years, but they were intent on eventually finding a "new dispensation" that most black South Africans could accept. They understood that the "crumbs" that the regime was offering would not be adequate and that more progressive action would be required.

Q: Did the Indian government - most of the Asians being Indian - play any role?

TAYLOR: No, in fact no Indian embassy existed in South Africa. The two countries did not have diplomatic relations - or for that matter, economic relations either. It was only in the UN and other international bodies where India expressed its very negative views on apartheid and conditions in South Africa. A sizable Indian population live in South Africa, descendents of workers in the cane fields in Natal. Today, they are an urban population, mostly involved in commerce. Like the coloreds, the Indian community did support the National Party in the first post-apartheid elections in 1994.

Q: What role did Nelson Mandela play during your time in South Africa?

TAYLOR: Mandela was the most admired figure in the black community, even though he was in prison where he had been for about fifteen years. Winnie Mandela, his wife, was prominent and we had contact with her. She was frequently at the ambassador's residence - that is, when she was free to move about, which was not always. Shortly after we arrived, she was "banned" - a quaint legal device by which the regime isolated certain people from normal life, including human contact. Sometimes, "banning" took the form of house arrest. At other times, it simply restricted the number of people that the "banned" person might meet at any one time. Their writings and even their photos could also be banned. While I was in South Africa, Mandela's picture, for example, could not be published anywhere in the country.

Q: If you went into a house in Soweto, would there be a picture of Mandela on the wall?

TAYLOR: Yes, practically always in the homes of leading black citizens like doctors, teachers, and political leaders. But also frequently in the ordinary shacks of urban and rural blacks.

Q: When you left South Africa in 1980, what were your views about that country's future?

TAYLOR: I wrote a "swan piece" in Cape Town at the end of my tour as political counselor. Entitled, "The Next Trek," it was essentially optimistic. During my three years in the country, as I described earlier, I detected a major although quiet shift in the thinking of the South African white elite, most especially, the Afrikaner elite. They were trying to find a solution that would accommodate the demands of the non-white populations for political rights. It was evident to me that this white elite understood that some profoundly new "dispensation" had to be offered. Domestic and foreign pressures were just too great. The average Nat member of Parliament was not suffering from any such angst. But the social and intellectual elite, as represented in the Broderbund, the corporate community, and even the military officer corps, reflected a new calculation of enlightened self interest that would eventually, I thought, open the door to profound change.

Many liberal observers, including some American correspondents, thought that the Afrikaners could not and would not adapt, violence would eventually increase, this would lead to greater repression, this would provoke greater resistance, and on and on. Shortly after I left South Africa, the New York Times correspondent, Joe Leylyveld wrote a book, Move Your Shadow, in which he predicted such a scenario leading to a bloody climax, probably with an Algeria-like outcome. But the white elite increasingly understood this would be the result of standing pat. Thus they were seeking to move away from the homelands policy of Grand Apartheid but in a gradual way. In 1980, even the most liberal "Nats," people like Pik Botha and Neil van Hearden, believed the reform process should and could be drug out for two decades or longer. They wanted to hold on to power as long as possible, but they also hoped for more time to build up the black middle class.

These Afrikaners realized, however, that the end result would have to be black majority rule. Among the Afrikaners, to the right of the arch conservatives, existed a fascist-like element. If Grand Apartheid was to fail, these right-wingers preferred a partition of the country, with a separate white/colored or all-white nation carved out of South Africa.

I thought violence would increase over the next decade. But while average Afrikaners thought of themselves as "bitter enders," they also had a strong tradition of accepting the decisions of their communal leadership as to how best to assure the survival of the Afrikaner people. Moreover, while maybe ten percent of whites were relatively poor, the majority of whites enjoyed the Liker Lieu, "the sweet life." Most had: at least one maid; a car; hearty meals every day; good schools for their children; excellent and free universities; endless opportunities for sports; a beautiful country to tour of mountains, game parks, and beaches; and marvelous weather. If they thought this "sweet life" could be protected, they would eventually accept whatever solution their leaders proposed to end the ballooning, ever more violent struggle for political power with the black population. And the elite, I was convinced, would in the end agree to hand over political authority to the black majority in return for a promise of stability and a non-vindictive, non-confiscatory national policy. The black leaders, I thought, would likewise see this solution not as a concession on their part but an act of enlightened self interest by the black community.

In sum, I believed that in the short term more violence would certainly erupt, but nevertheless a promising future for South Africa was quite possible. The leaders and indeed the peoples of all communities in the country wanted to avoid a "night of the long knives." Six years later (1986), at a dinner at the Arlington home of Bill and Donna Edmondson, who had returned from South Africa, I bet the other guests at the table that in five years there would be a black president of South Africa. That year was a particularly violent one in South Africa, with major uprisings in the townships, brutal enforcement of martial law, and government incitement of black-on-black violence. Tens of thousands would die before the drama would end. But my prediction was off by only three years. I lost the bet. Still, it was a moral victory.

The year I retired was 1994, the year of the first democratic, one-man-one vote elections in South Africa. As we all know, Nelson Mandela was elected President and the ANC took command of parliament and the central government. Five years later, I wrote, produced, and directed a PBS documentary on South Africa called, Ubuntu, African and Afrikaner. Broadcast of Ubuntu by PBS stations across the USA began in 2000 and continued to be rebroadcast through 2003. If I may, I will later insert here the text of a brief PBS promotional mailing to member stations in 2002.

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Q: I don't suppose that the AIDS epidemic had yet reached the consciousness of South Africans?

TAYLOR: No, it had not. In 1980, Western countries were just beginning to recognize and examine this deadly epidemic. The disease of course existed then in Africa, or even perhaps started there, but it was not recognized as the horrendous scourge it would become.

Q: How did we deal with the homelands?

TAYLOR: We had no officials dealings with them at all. The homelands were set-aside on a tribal basis. They elected their own government officials, but we did not recognize them as leaders of sovereign states or legal governments as Pretoria did. In my travels, I would visit these areas and talk with "homeland" officials, but most other embassy officers and their families were not allowed to travel in these territories. I was the principal American embassy contact with "homeland officials" except for those of Kwazulu, who were covered by the consul general in Durban.

PART VI1980-1987

Q: You finished your tour in South Africa in 1980? What was your next assignment?

TAYLOR: I went back to Chinese affairs as political counselor in our Embassy in Peking. While I was in South Africa, the then-DCM in Peking, Harry Thayer, called and asked whether I would like the assignment. Of course, I did.

On my return to the U.S., I took a couple of months of Chinese language refresher training. Before leaving Washington, I was rated S- (speaking) 3, R- (reading) 3+. As you know, this rating was a passing grade - it reflected a level of proficiency sufficient for professional intercourse. Previously I had earned a S-3+ and a R-4, but Chinese is very hard to learn, yet very easy to forget, especially the written language.

Q: How were our relations with the PRC in 1980?

TAYLOR: It was another extraordinary period. We were once again going through a transition in American leadership and a new pattern was about to begin - new, incoming American Administrations, Democrat and Republican, would henceforth begin with a more critical view of China than the outgoing team. The Chinese side also remained ambivalent. Chinese media still referred to the U.S. as an "imperialist power" even though events since the Kissinger visit in '71 had progressively, even dramatically enlarged our common interests.

In 1971, Mao had decided that the bigger threat to the PRC was the Soviet Union. In the mid-1970s, as the U.S. position in Indochina collapsed and tensions grew between China and Vietnam, Sino-Soviet relations again sharply deteriorated. Peking's anti-U.S. propaganda diminished to some extent, but its rhetorical references t"U.S. Imperialism" continued. That year, Peking still provided some rhetorical although diminishing support to Maoist insurgents in Thailand, Burma, and other Southeast Asian countries. In large part, this dichotomy reflected a split in the Chinese leadership between a more conservative group and the new Deng wing. The differences, however, were more muted than in the 1970-1976 period. With the death of Mao in 1976 and the arrest of the Gang of Four that followed, the pragmatists had steadily gained ground.

In the second half of the '70s, the Soviet Union appeared to be changing the correlation of global power. Russia established a naval base at Daning, Vietnam and signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation with Hanoi. Pro-Soviet military officers seized power in Afghanistan, South Yemen, and Ethiopia. Pro-Castro (and thus pro-Soviet) forces took over in Nicaragua and Grenada, and seemed on the verge of doing the same in El Salvador. Marxist Angola and Mozambique were in the Soviet camp. In 1979 and 1980 America was humiliated by Iran. The Soviet Red Army began deployment of medium range missiles in Eastern Europe. The Soviets indirectly aided the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1978.

Because of these and other developments, common strategic interests between China and America were sharply on the rise, and Washington and Peking sought to reach an agreement on full diplomatic relations. Immediately after the liaison offices in 1979 were turned into embassies, Deng Xiaoping made a spectacular visit to America. I remember vividly the picture of him riding a stagecoach around a Houston Rodeo, waving a cowboy hat. It was another stunning example of the dramatic reversals that occur in human affairs but that are seldom perceived as in the realm of the possible.

In the negotiations leading up to the exchange of diplomatic recognition, U.S. arms sales to Taiwan had been the most troublesome issue. At the time, we made it clear to Peking that we intended to continue sales for the time being. Finally the issue was finessed. Deng agreed to put the subject aside but with the warning that it would not be forgotten. The break with Taipei, however, angered conservatives in the States. Republicans in Congress, aided by Teddy Kennedy, who had decided to challenge Carter for the Presidential nomination in 1980, passed the Taiwan Relations Act. The Act declared that any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including embargo and blockade, would be considered a threat to peace and a matter of grave concern to the United States. It also declared that the U.S. would continue to provide defensive arms to Taipei without regard to Peking's views. In some ways the TRA was a stronger security commitment to Taiwan than the U.S./ROC Mutual Security Treaty that would be nullified within a year.

But Deng was in no position to make a fuss about the TRA. In early 1979, the Chinese PLA moved across the Sino-Vietnamese border to teach the Vietnamese a "lesson" for their invasion of Cambodia. It was an undeclared but very bloody war. On our satellite photos we could see Chinese military graveyards in Kuangsi province near the border. We could calculate to some extent Chinese casualties. At the end of that year, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Moscow's pinchers again seemed to be moving closer around China's underbelly. The wars in Vietnam and Afghanistan were raging when I arrived in Peking in 1980 as the Embassy's political counselor.

Q: As I remember, the Chinese had more problems with the Vietnamese than they anticipated.

TAYLOR: That's right. The Chinese intended to teach the Vietnamese a painful but only a brief lesson. Whether the intended dictums were in fact learned is debatable. The Chinese paid a much larger price than anticipated; they lost tens of thousands of soldiers; it was a very bloody war, even if undeclared. China's second undeclared war with a communist country and former ally. The Chinese attack did not distract the Vietnamese from completing their occupation of Cambodia. The Vietnamese also continued to expel ethnic Chinese, another reason for the PRC's hostility. Perhaps a million Chinese who had lived for generations in Vietnam fled or were pushed out of the country at that time.

The Chinese did not meet their basic objective in this venture - Hanoi's withdrawal from Cambodia. They did, however, concentrate the attention of the PLA and the Chinese people on Vietnam and the Soviet threat. The Chinese media harped on the grave menace posed by Russia. Thus, the Sino-Vietnam war served another purpose for Deng. Despite the failure to win a decisive victory, it tended to solidify military support at home for him and to diminish Chinese public attention to the issue of Taiwan. Cooperation with America was viewed as increasingly important. Deng now had greater flexibility to build up the informal strategic alliance with the United States in order to contain the expanding power of the USSR. The semi-alliance also provided a foreign policy frame work for liberalization of the economy. But in the fall of 1980, a large monkey wrench was headed for the growing but still fragile structure of Sino-US political and military cooperation. The threatening instrument was the election of Ronald Reagan, who in his victorious campaign had promised to restore "official relations" with Taiwan.

Talking with everyday Chinese in the parks, more than once I heard someone say when they learned I was an American, that they were happy the U.S. and China were friends and allies, "meng guo." In 1980, a de-facto Sino-American alliance existed. At PLA briefings for American military visitors, one would see maps like those at a Pentagon briefing at the height of the Cold War-lots of aggressive red arrows coming out of Russia-in this case many pointing at and around the PRC, others at Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia. Numerous U.S. military delegations visited China in those years. The new relationship was most dramatically manifest in Sino-American cooperation in aiding the resistance in Afghanistan - an effort that soon grew into a huge operation costing billions of dollars and involving tens of thousands maybe a few hundred thousand of Chinese-made weapons going to the Mujahideen through the good offices of the Pakistani intelligence service. Actually, it was a three-way partnership: Saudi Arabia in large part paid for the weapons. The Chinese had earlier agreed to the establishment of a US monitoring station near the Sino-Soviet border. The station's mission was to access Soviet missile development, testing, and deployment.

Q: Who was your first ambassador?

TAYLOR: When I arrived in Peking the ambassador was Leonard Woodcock, who had led the negotiations leading to full diplomatic relations. Woodcock had been leader of the Auto Workers Union of America . Carter appointed him head of the U.S. Liaison Office before it became an official embassy in name as well as substance. He was a wonderful man but a very quiet person. He could sit through an entire dinner and initiate no conversation himself and only respond briefly to questions. Still, it proved an effective negotiating style with the Chinese-the sage Buddha, as contrasted with the usual talkative American. It worked with General Motors and it seemed to work with the CCP. I thought of the exact opposite style demonstrated by a previous boss Phil Manhard, who talked until problems or opposition melted away. A key role in the negotiations, however, was played by his deputy, J. Stapleton Roy, an outstanding Foreign Service officer and China-born, China specialist. I had known Stape for twenty years. Woodcock assumed the title of -U.S. ambassador to China on January 1, 1979.

Q: Did Reagan's candidacy make the Chinese nervous in light of his conservative views?

TAYLOR: Very much so. Deng had established a close relationship with Carter and Brzezinski. As noted, next to Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, the PRC had become our most helpful ally on Afghanistan. Then came Ronald Reagan who during the campaign had said that if elected, he would maintain good relations with Peking, but that he would also re-establish "official ties" with Taiwan. His conservative foreign policy advisor, George Allen, along with Senator Barry Goldwater were very likely responsible for candidate Reagan taking this position. When Reagan was elected a few months after my arrival, we told our contacts at the Chinese Foreign Ministry that they should focus on Reagan's commitment to good relations with the PRC and not make any rash moves or demands.

Al Haig was the new secretary of state. His views on our relations with the PRC were very similar to those of Kissinger and Brzezinski. He believed that our relations with China were key to global stability and specifically the containment of the Soviet Union in its new expansionist phase. He made the China relationship a key element in our foreign policy. Thus, Haig very much wanted to accommodate the PRC on the arms sales issue. But he could not convince the White House. Allen agreed that the PRC was an important player, but did not feel that other U.S. objectives, including the defense of Taiwan, needed to be subordinated to that relationship. The Chinese knew Haig and his strategic views. I think this assumption about the high strategic value Haig placed on the relationship, figured in China's hardball approach to the arms sales issue. If they took the relationship to the brink over arms sales to Taiwan, they could count on Haig to try to move the US position as much as possible to accommodate their view. Haig could count on the support of Vice President George Bush on China policy. Bush, of course, had been head of the US Liaison Office in Peking when Henry Kissinger was still basking in the recognition of US-China detente as the grandest geopolitical move in the post-war era. As Reagan's number two, Bush had to be careful not to be too pushy on China policy, but clearly he also gave high priority to China's strategic importance.

The issue of arms sales to Taiwan had become focused on the question of whether or not the US would permit the sale of an advanced fighter aircraft (referred to as an FX type) to Taiwan to replace its aging tactical fleet. The CIA and the Defense Dept. concluded that Taiwan did not need an FX to assure its adequate air defense. But, unknown to Haig, when Lee Kwan-yew visited Reagan in the summer of 1981, Reagan asked him to convey a message to President Chiang Ching-kuo on Taiwan assuring him that Taiwan would receive "some sort of advanced fighter that would be acceptable to him." It seems safe to conclude; in fact almost certain, that George Allen and possibly Goldwater had planted this idea with Reagan. But they did not inform Haig.

The fall North-South Summit in Cancun provided the Chinese an opportunity to send " a shot across our bow" on this issue. Very possibly they had intelligence sources either in Taiwan or Singapore that informed them of the Reagan message to Chiang Ching-kuo. Reagan was at Cancun as was Zhao Ziyang, the PRC's new Prime Minister. In a meeting with Reagan, Zhao voiced strong opposition to the continued US sale of military equipment to Taiwan. The Chinese indicated in public and private that if the United States sold an FX fighter to Taiwan, Peking would downgrade relations with Washington. In a more sweeping demand, Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua insisted that the United States give a date certain for the end of its arms sales to the island.

At informal meetings in Peking with our Chinese colleagues, my staff and I stressed that politically it would be impossible for the President to agree to end arms sales to Taiwan on a given future date even if he wanted to, which was not likely. The Chinese emphasized the pressure that conservatives and anti-reformists in the Communist Party were applying to Deng Xiao-ping on this issue. Deng, they suggested, had assured his colleagues at the time of normalization that the arms sales question would be addressed shortly and that a favorable outcome would be achieved with Carter or his successor. We argued that our conservatives were tougher than theirs. They should not push too hard.

Through 1979 and 1980, Deng had held off pressing Carter on the arms sales question because he did not want to complicate Carter's electoral prospects. It was no secret; the Chinese very much wanted Carter to win. Also the Chinese war with Vietnam and then the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan made it most untimely for Peking to consider a crisis on the Taiwan question. Then in the summer of 1981, career diplomat and old China hand Art Hummel replaced Woodcock.

Because of an indiscretion in dealing with a Japanese gift, Bill Clark replaced George Allen at the NSC. The Reagan insiders had originally put Clark, a close friend of the President, in the State Department to be Haig's deputy. Although Clark had little or no foreign policy experience, the conservative leaders in Congress and those around the President in the White House believed Clark's close friendship with Reagan would be far more valuable than any expertise in moderating Haig and keeping tabs on him. But with Allen gone, Haig, for some time was able to take the lead on China policy. At the end of the year, the Chinese grew even stronger in threatening serious consequences should the sale of an FX fighter be approved. More alarming, they were repeating the demand that the United States had to give a date certain for ending all arms sales to the island.

In late 1981, Washington announced that it would not approve the sale of an FX aircraft to Taiwan but would okay production on the island itself of the much less advanced F-5E fighter. The F-5E, an upgrade of a 1960s plane, was not the fighter Chiang Ching-kuo considered adequate. Yet, with the Reagan promise in his pocket he remained silent. At this time, Haig also approved negotiations with the Chinese on a communiquï¿½ that would address the arms sales issue. I do not remember which side first suggested the idea of a communiquï¿½. It was probably the Chinese. I also do not know if Haig obtained White House approval to begin the talks. My guess is he did not, assuming this was his prerogative, although he must have notified the NSC (Bill Clark).

As political counselor, I was involved directly in the negotiations, which on our side were led by Ambassador Hummel or in his absence by the new DCM, Chas Freeman. Chas was a tough and astute diplomat, who also was a genius in learning foreign languages. After the same two-year Chinese course the rest of us took, he was an interpreter-grade speaker. He even took notes during meetings in Chinese. Once or twice, Assistant Secretary John Holdridge was in town and chaired the negotiations on our side; Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Han Hsu led the Chinese side. Usually the Chinese would treat us to an opening harangue about American interference in Chinese affairs over the past hundred years. We would reply that the charges were intemperate and false and in no way contributed to finding a mutually acceptable solution to the issues at hand. We would then get down to exchanging positions on 1) how the Chinese could satisfy us as to their peaceful intentions in regard to Taiwan and 2) how we could satisfy the Chinese that our arms sales to Taiwan were not an obstacle to negotiations between the island and the mainland and would adjust as progress was made toward a peaceful resolution.

At some point, possibly this was in 1981, Haig sent a memo to President Reagan that underscored the strategic importance of the China relationship. In this memo, a copy of which I saw, Haig argued that Carter had messed up the Taiwan arms sales issue at the time of recognition and had thus threatened the critical geopolitical connection begun by Nixon. The suggestion was that flexibility on the arms sales question was critically required because Carter (not Reagan) had stirred up the matter and provoked the Chinese.

In May, 1982, as the negotiations seemed to have run into a dead-end, Reagan signed letters to the three top Chinese leaders (Deng, Zhao, and Hu Yaobang) - an extraordinary, probably unique presidential gesture. These letters strongly reaffirmed America's commitment to the one-China principle and recognized "the significance" of Peking's 1981 nine-point proposal to Taiwan for unification. Most importantly, in the letter to Zhao, Reagan wrote that in the context of progress toward a peaceful solution of the Taiwan-mainland issue, "there would naturally be a decrease in the need for arms by Taiwan." Whether Bill Clark at the NSC saw these letters in draft is uncertain but they laid the foundation for the agreed upon communiquï¿½.

Vice President George Bush then made a visit to Peking in May, where he had a long talk with Deng Xiaoping, which carried over into a Chinese feast for lunch. The elderly Deng tossed back four or five "gan bei's" of high octane maotai. Bush tossed down one or two shots and thereafter only touched the liquid to his lips. Bush's views were similar to those of Haig: we could restrict without any specifics whatsoever our future arms sales to Taiwan but only if China agreed that this action would be linked to China's strong commitment to a peaceful resolution. At one point in the meeting, Bush said that no one in the Administration saw such sales "going on forever." When Bush returned to Washington, he was helpful in the final maneuvering that squirmed through a final draft accord. About this time, Paul Wolfowitz, who was head of Policy Planning at State, sent a memo to Haig strongly opposing the communiquï¿½. Haig ignored the complaint, but by this time pro-Taiwan Congressmen as well as officials in the White House were becoming worried that the negotiations would seriously restrict our arms sales to Taiwan and end up pressuring the Government in Taipei into negotiations with Peking on reunification. Wolfowitz was in their camp.

Wolfowitz, of course, would eventually become the intellectual wizard of neoconservative Republican officials who, among other things, would successfully push for the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Wolfowitz has a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, where his mentor was the Hobbesian philosopher of international relations, Leo Strauss.

Haig's tactical reason for pursuing the Communiquï¿½ was simply to get over the current imbroglio with Peking. The dispute had its roots in Reagan's remarks about Taiwan during the presidential campaign. These remarks had put pressure on Deng Xiaoping within the Chinese leadership to address the issue. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had reinvigorated America's strategic interests in close ties to China, and thus the contre temps was also an opportunity for Deng to settle the issue on an acceptable basis. For Haig there was also, I believed at the time, a profound strategic reason to settle the issue. Most of his "China hands" agreed with him. The long term well-being and security of the people of Taiwan, the China mainland, and America would be served, we believed, not by just the rhetoric of "peaceful resolution" of the Taiwan issue but by actual negotiations between the two Chinese parties leading in the foreseeable future to a peaceful agreement on unification or confederation. Such an agreement would be under the rubric of One-China but with full autonomy that amounted to de facto independence for Taiwan. If such a resolution did not materialize, we thought, the push for Taiwan independence would steadily grow over the years and the U.S. commitment to the security of the island could lead to a tragic Sino-American war sometime in the coming century. In our opinion, Taiwan was the only possible issue in the foreseeable future between China and the United States that could provoke such a war.

Since 1981, pronouncements and messages by the Chinese leaders had indicated they might well accept a fig leaf, "One-China" solution. This kind of solution and the only sort conceivably acceptable to the people of the island and the US Congress would include Taiwan's right to its own armed forces, no political role for China on the island even in the distant future, and a seat for the island in the General Assembly. Under such a One-China umbrella, the existence of a democratic Taiwan would have an enormous effect on the political dynamics of China. At the same time, Deng Xiaoping, some of us believed, had the wisdom and equally important the political flexibility to sign such an agreement. His successors probably not.

While at the time not obvious, existing political conditions on Taiwan in the early 1980s also were actually more promising than any time before or after for this kind of One-China, fig-leaf or "big umbrella" accord. In 1991, Chiang Ching-kuo, President of the Republic of China on Taiwan sent a message to the in-coming chief of the American "unofficial" mission in Taipei, Jim Lilly, a former CIA officer who was close to George Bush. The message said that Chiang's major goals for the future were: democratization, Taiwanization, and "development of working relations with China." Politically and personally, Chiang was deeply committed to the principle of One-China. Thus it appeared that while Chiang wanted as strong a hand as possible in dealing with Peking, he in fact intended at some point to begin direct talks.

Conservatives in the White House and in Congress were upset with Haig over a number of foreign policy issues, including the Middle East and the proposed Soviet-West European pipeline. The proposed communiquï¿½ with Peking on arms sales to Taiwan was another cause of their rising discontent. The White House Senior staff, including James Baker, Meese, and Deaver did not at all like Haig's aggressive and sometimes imperial style. Goldwater sped out to Taipei in early June. From a ranking Taiwan official, I later learned that Goldwater had personally re-assured Chiang Ching-kuo that, as Lee Kwan-yew had informed him the previous year, Taiwan would receive "some sort of advanced aircraft" that would meet Taiwan's needs. In addition, the Senator very likely told Ching-kuo that he need not worry about the forthcoming US-PRC communiquï¿½. On June 23, Goldwater informed Reagan that Haig had lied to him (Reagan) about the communiquï¿½. Reagan, who hated firing people, called in the Secretary and abruptly asked for his resignation. Haig agreed but said he would stay on until his replacement was confirmed. The amenable President agreed.

Regan offered the job of Secretary of State to George Shultz, former Secretary of the Treasury. Schultz accepted and from an office in Foggy Bottom, put together a staff, closely followed events, and awaited his confirmation. Haig was still behind his desk as Secretary and working on getting through the Communiquï¿½ with Peking. In the Embassy we came up with what we envisioned as a final draft to present to the Chinese. To keep the message from being seen by people like Wolfowitz, we sent my deputy Peter Tomas back to Washington with the draft. Bill Rope, Country Director for Chinese Affairs, polished the language and sent it up to Haig along with an alternative draft with less forthcoming language from the Chinese perspective. Rope also briefed Schultz on the matter. Haig sent the two alternatives to Reagan with a note saying that if we chose the less-forthcoming draft, the Chinese would probably "degrade" the relationship with the United States. Reagan chose the tougher version but then after NSC intervention agreed to amend it. We presented the "final offer" to the Chinese, who proposed a slight change that was actually better from our perspective. We were told Deng had approved this position.

On July 14, the day Schultz was sworn in as Secretary by Reagan, the President issued a statement in which he outlined six assumptions regarding the forthcoming communiquï¿½. The director East Asian affairs at the NSC, Gaston Sigur, had phoned the Taiwan desk at State and asked it to draft something that would "ease the shock" of the communiquï¿½ on Taiwan. Most of the assumptions were affirmations of the Taiwan Relations Act. One notable assurance, however, stated that the United States "has not altered its position regarding sovereignty over Taiwan." The PRC immediately said that these assumptions or assurances were not valid or relevant.

Perhaps because of the announced "assurances" or an effort to test Shultz, the Chinese tried to open up the negotiations, demanding additional changes in the draft. Their changes would have removed the linkage between China's policy toward Taiwan and the promised US action on arms sales. Shultz decreed that linkage was essential. In Peking, Ambassador Hummel and Minister Han Hsu initialed the draft. In the communiquï¿½ the PRC affirmed that it was its "fundamental policy" toward Taiwan to bring about peaceful unification. Our side said that in light of this position, the United States would limit the quantity and quality of its arms sales to Taiwan and that such sales would "gradually diminish, leading over a period of time to a final resolution." When Jim Lilly in Taipei informed Chiang Ching-kuo of the wording of the forthcoming communiquï¿½, he (Chiang) was not at all concerned. With Reagan and Goldwater's assurances in hand he could relax.

In his candid and outspoken memoirs, Shultz incorrectly writes as if the communiquï¿½ was negotiated largely under his watch and was not controversial at all. In his book, Schultz praises John Holdridge and Arthur Hummel for producing the communiquï¿½, a document that the rightwing and the neoconservatives - and eventually George W. Bush - thoroughly hated. But Schultz seemed not know about the behind-the-scenes maneuvering that had been going on to overturn or neutralize the effect of the communiquï¿½. Early the next year, Wolfowitz, who had become Assistant Secretary for East Asia, pushed for an arms sales package for Taiwan that would increased these sales to the island by over 60 percent to $1.3 billion. This was Wolfowitz's first effort to neutralize the Communiquï¿½ by ignoring it. This came up during a meeting on Shultz's plane flying to Peking. The Secretary said, the Communiquï¿½ represented the word of the United States and the President and "we are going to carry it out." Wolfowitz started to say "But..." Shultz cut him off, "No buts"! Today in 2005, with Colin Powell gone from Foggy Bottom, there is no one to cut off Wolfowitz.

After the Communiquï¿½ became official on August 17, A US Government statement and Reagan himself in later public remarks asserted that the US commitment on limiting arms sales was linked to Peking's commitment to a peaceful resolution of Taiwan's future. That assertion was true, but the linkage was an informal one. Peking issued its own statement saying no linkage existed, implied or otherwise. Later in a published 1983 interview, Reagan mis-stated the essence of the communiquï¿½. He declared that all the communiquï¿½ meant was that if the two sides peacefully worked out an agreement on reunification, there would be no need for arms sales to Taiwan. "nothing was meant beyond that." In September, the Chinese Communist Party declared its "equidistant" policy between the two superpowers. Rhetorically, the historic strategic relationship had ended. Deng Xiaoping, however, continued intensive military, intelligence, and covert cooperation with the United States.

Today (2005) U.S. arms sales to Taiwan have increased enormously in both quantity and quality. Proponents of this policy emphasize linkage - the scale and increasingly high tech nature of these weapons transfers are responses to Peking's threats aimed at Taiwan, such as the missile tests of 1996 and the large missile buildup over the past six years in Fukian province opposite Taiwan. The escalation of arms sales and military technology to Taiwan, however, predated the mainland's saber rattling. For example in 1992, George Bush in the midst of the presidential campaign, approved the sale oF-16s made in Texas to Taiwan, and before that the Administration had approved the "indigenous Taiwan fighter," a modified F-16 (See below). The Chinese military buildup on the coast since 1996 has, in my view, been a decidedly wrong-headed tactic for Peking. But it is probably accurate to say that this massive deployment was in good part stimulated by political developments on the island that year that indicated a new direction toward rejecting the One-China principle and affirming an independent status - a direction that Taipei did take in 1999.

Q: We talked about the Taiwan treaty and the arms communiquï¿½. Can you talk a little about negotiating with the Chinese? Also, did the Chinese have any understanding of the battle-taking place in Washington?

TAYLOR: Negotiating with the Chinese was fun but difficult and often frustrating. The Chinese have been negotiating with "barbarians" and "foreign devils" of one kind or another for thousands of years. They are old hands at it.

One of their predilections, which probably has antecedents in the mist of history, is that when discussing a difficult issue with foreigners - particularly a contentious one - the Chinese will in high dudgeon, posture, rant, and rave. The communist mentality seems to reinforce the Mandarin ploy of lecturing to the foreigner about his misdeeds. A foreign diplomat often has to listen to a lot of scolding before getting down to business on a contentious issue. This allows the Chinese negotiator to take a "principled" stand from a lofty platform. If the question involves a matter of principle - which differences between states frequently do - the Chinese will seek to put the other side on the defensive. Many of the negotiating sessions would open with the Chinese questioning America's reliability and goodwill.

Also, under a communist regime, but perhaps also in the days of the dynasties, the Chinese postured as a political requirement. The record had to show a strong stance against some perceived grievance imposed on them by the foreigners. Most contentious negotiations, of course, involve posturing to some extent. We had to establish our own political bona fides with the powerful critics in the Administration and Congress in mind. We could not give these critics grounds to assert that we (Haig's minions) were being patsies. Therefore we also made sure that our principled position was laid our clearly and forcefully. Hummel and Holdridge were good at this.

Q: It is said that the Soviets seemed set until the last minute and then would suggest some acceptable formulation. Was that also a Chinese strategy?

TAYLOR: Yes. That certainly was an essential element of the Chinese strategy - perhaps even the most important element. The Chinese would "hang tough" until the last minute; they seemed to believe that compromising was somehow abhorrent. They would wait until they felt that they had squeezed out every last drop of blood on a particular point and then they would make a concession. Of course, we behave like that ourselves. But I think this approach is more part of the Chinese culture than it is ours. When we finally reached agreement on the draft communiquï¿½ in the June of 1982, we shook hands with our negotiating partners across the table. We had reached an accord that we knew both Reagan and Deng would sign - in Reagan's case we had been told he had approved it. One of the American delegates - I think probably Ambassador Hummel - said that we had enjoyed the whole process, even though it had been challenging and often difficult. He went on to say that we had discovered that Chinese negotiators stand firm until the very last minute. Han Xu replied that Hummel's comment was very interesting because his delegation had reached the same conclusion about our side. In reality, I think the Chinese know that Westerners are wont to approach negotiations with the assumption that there will be compromises. The Chinese exploit that.

Q: That sounds very much like labor-management negotiations which always seem to end with the negotiators coming out after an all night session looking haggard and unshaven, not because in fact it had taken them that long to reach agreement, but because their constituents expected them to look that way at the end.

TAYLOR: I think each side has to show that they squeezed the other as much as possible. Most or all of us involved in the negotiations felt even years later that the 1982 arms communiquï¿½ was a good one. Both sides had ceded some important principles, which led to a compromise that served the fundamental interests of the PRC and the U.S. as well as Taiwan. It ought to remove Taiwan as a possible source of war between China and the United States, while assuring the autonomy and freedom of the people of Taiwan. At that time, Taiwan seemed to be only conceivable source of a Sino-American war as far as the eye could see. That was 20 years before the rise to power of the Wolfowitzian hegemonists, who before 9/11/01 identified China as the main potential national rival of the United States and proclaimed in the National Security Doctrine of September 2002 that the US will now allow any nation to rival its power, even on a regional basis.

Q: We have alluded to the battle taking place in the early 1980s in Washington between the conservatives, who were firmly devoted to Taiwan, and those who felt that the PRC was as important if not more important than Taiwan. Do you think the Chinese understood what was going on in Washington?

TAYLOR: When we met with the Chinese informally, we would in effect continue the negotiations. This was at the working level - on our side, primarily DCM Chas Freeman, my deputy Peter Tomsen, and myself. We would have lunch periodically with our Chinese colleagues - off the record exchanges. We would discuss some particular phrasing at issue to see whether we could informally, "speaking personally," etc., come up with compromise language. Both sides would talk about the political context within which the negotiations were taking place. As I mentioned, we would tell the Chinese that the issues we were discussing were delicate and politically very difficult for the Administration in light of the various political currents flowing in Washington. Secretary Haig, we assured them, was doing his best to accommodate the Chinese side on this issue. But they had to understand the Washington climate and the impact it had on our negotiations. If the PRC pushed its position to extremes-the negotiations would collapse.

The Chinese would nod understandingly, because, they said, they were negotiating in an even more volatile political environment. They would point to the neo-Maoists who were purists and uncompromising. They too faced battles within their regime between the hard-liners and the more "modern" faction.

Let me add one further thought about negotiating with the Chinese. They would often insist on some minor point that seemed hardly worth arguing about. In such instances, they would more often than not prevail - it was not worth arguing about. This made them feel good since they saw winning on these minor points as a precedent and a victory worth having. This proclivity stemmed from the Chinese need to establish a superior position.

I will give you one example of this. I was responsible for negotiations with the Chinese in 1975 on the myriad agreements required in connection with the first Chinese archaeological exhibition to the United States. At time, the PRC had a liaison office in Washington and I was the China desk officer. The Chinese office and I negotiated the arrangements together with representatives of the National Gallery. One of the issues that arose, among many, concerned insurance. The U.S. government accepted responsibility for insuring the artifacts - up to a certain amount. We said that any losses due to force majeure such as earthquake, floods, and lightning would not be included or at least we would pay a much smaller amount in the event of loss or damage. The Chinese insisted that lightening not be included in the list of possible acts of force majeure. We asked why it was any different than other acts of nature. The Chinese insisted that lightening fell in a different category for reasons that seemed entirely illogical. So we set lightening aside and said that we would return to the issue later. The Chinese insisted on resolving the matter right then. Finally, we agreed to leave out lightning so long as we added the phrase "and other natural disasters." They agreed. My guess was that some senior official in Peking going over the draft cabled in from Washington had penciled out "Lightning," and no one was prepared to challenge him or her.

I remember also talking to a Boeing representative about a contract with which he had been involved. The deal called for a number of 747s and spare parts - the particulars of the planes and the parts were spelled out in great detail. The deliveries of first the planes and then the spare parts began. One day, the Chinese asked why shelves for the parts had not yet been delivered. This puzzled the Boeing people because such shelves had never been included in any of the contracts. Upon inquiry, the Chinese explained that when they visited the Boeing facilities before concluding the deal, they had been taken on a tour of the warehouse where they looked at all the parts they would soon contract to buy. They were quoted a price for each part, which the Chinese assumed included the cost of shelving since that was the way the parts were displayed. Boeing said that usually shelves were not included in their contracts, but after further exchanges in the subject the company bought the shelves and delivered them to the Chinese.

Q: You were in Peking from 1980 to 1982. How were your living conditions?

TAYLOR: Chinese society was still very austere and tightly controlled unlike today. The first year, no private food markets existed or private shops, or, in fact, stalls selling anything. One could buy only in government-owned outlets. Likewise for services - all government provided. No shoeshine boys or pedicab drivers existed in the Peoples Republic. In Peking, foreigners went to a "Friendship Store." The PRC's Diplomatic Services Bureau controlled foreigners' living quarters and personal staff. The same bureau ran the "Friendship Store." This and similar stores were rudimentary and somewhat akin to food markets in the 19th Century. The meat would arrive fresh in the morning and lay on open tables in huge hunks. Members of the diplomatic corps would rush in to buy a piece of the meat before it spoiled.

The Cultural Revolution had by then gone into the dustbin of history. Deng had announced the first major economic reform in 1980, essentially returning the agricultural economy back to family farming, although the land was still owned by the government. In 1980, the mainland was under the control of a totalitarian regime - politically, economically, and culturally. Before we left in 1982, you could see the beginning of profound changes. Women began to wear skirts. That was the first deviation from Maoism. In 1975, when I was the China desk officer, we hosted some negotiating delegation that included women. Once, I gave two of the women delegates a ride back to the PRC liaison office on Connecticut. The women asked whether we could stop at a drug store. Appropriately, the nearest one was named "People's Drugstore." We went in and they looked around. They didn't speak English. They then told me they wanted to buy women's stockings - those in the little white eggs. Each bought ten or so of LEGGS pantyhose. When I arrived home, I told my wife, "Honey, we've won!"

That was the beginning; by 1980, Chinese women began to wear makeup, use nail polish, wear hose, and cut their hair differently. Pretty soon, they were all beautiful again.

I had first visited Peking in 1973 on a TDY trip. At that time, China was strictly Orwellian. Everyone dressed the same and looked the same - for women - no makeup, no jewelry. By 1980, you could see the beginnings of change in the countryside. Under Deng, the local authorities began to apportion out commune land to the individual farmers. That was an enormous task; only in China, I think, could it have been done in a matter of months. By the early 1980s, other aspects of the political, economic and cultural landscapes were beginning to change. Before, only one hotel existed in Peking that was suitable for foreigners - the "Peking Hotel." It had been built by the French in the 1920s; and enlarged by the communist government in the 1950s. Today, of course, Peking is like Hong Kong with five star hotels sprouting up all over. In our days, no five, four or three star hotels existed in the PRC. We traveled by train and plane, and sometime ship. Flying in China was an adventure. Once, my wife and I were out in Kansu, boarding a plane that was completely full. The people in charge put folding seats in the aisle. They also carried aboard a person on a stretcher, which they placed across the aisle. They hung the IV line so that the aisle was then filled with the stretcher and the folding chairs. When the plane took off, the people in the folding chairs hung on to the arms rests of the seats beside them.

We met a couple of American oil workers who had been part of an American team employed to extinguish a oil well fire in Xinjiang. They sat somewhere else on the plane, but in Peking, while we waiting for our baggage, we saw one of the workers looking very glum. He had a big box in his hand. I asked him what the problem was. He said the box was filled with broken china, which had been a present meant for his mother. When exiting the plane, he had stumbled across the body stretched in the aisle. The box had fallen out of his hands.

Q: Did you get a chance to talk to people as you traveled through China?

TAYLOR: The Democracy Wall had come down, but the Chinese people were increasingly open. It was far different from the dark days of the early 1970s. Occasionally, if I wanted to talk to editors or academics, I would be told that that would be "inconvenient" - ("bu fang pian") Usually, however, I would get in to see people like the vice-governor of the province or the mayor of a big city, and sometimes University heads and professors. As I remarked previously, casual conversations in parks or on trains would often produce interesting quotes or little vignettes of everyday life. After talking with dozens of people, there would be enough nuggets to illustrate or enliven a political commentary. We became good friends with our Chinese counterparts in Peking, and these dinner and lunch conversations would usually elicit useful quotes. Steaming down the Yangtze in 1980, Betsy and I met a group of Chinese opera singers on vacation. These were not the falsetto singers of Peking opera but classic singers in the Western tradition. Before the Cultural Revolution, they put on stunning productions of Carmen, Aida, and even Madam Butterfly. But after Madam Mao took over as grand butterfly of culture and replaced all musical performances with her own revolutionary opera, our friends were subjected to "xia fang," the process of being sent down to the countryside where they worked on pig farms and other productive enterprises of the working masses. This assignment could last for years. After the return of Deng Xiao-ping, the singers one by one returned to Peking, finding what jobs they. But their best singing years were behind them. Western opera resumed as an option and our friends became teachers. We went to their homes for dinner and they came to our residence in the diplomatic high rise on the Street of Eternal Peace, Chang An Jie. We never talked about politics. But these friends gave us a personal link to the life of Peking and some understanding of their fears and their hopes.

Q: Did you get many questions about the U.S. from your Chinese colleague?

TAYLOR: Curiosity, even an excited interest about the United States, was common. The curiosity increased the further went beyond the small towns and into the rural communities. In those days, it was still rare for any Chinese outside of Peking to see a Westerner. Sometimes large crowds would follow Betsy and I down the street. The word would get out that we were in a particular office building and when we exited we would be met by dozens or even a hundred spectators This was especially true when Betsy was with me. Much more during the summer months if my daughters were along. They were especially mysterious - young, good looking, American girls.

Q: Did people approach you to try to practice their English on you?

TAYLOR: Yes, that happened all over China, including Peking. It was particularly true for young Chinese guys. On trains and other public places, Chinese young men would come up hoping to practice their English. Non-Chinese speakers, including young women, could usually travel alone in those days. They could get along by seeking out an English speaker among passers-by or fellow travelers. Sometimes this did not work. One summer, my 21 and 19-year old daughters went with a group of young American friends to Inner Mongolia. Cynthia had a badly sprung ankle and was on crutches. After visiting a temple in Hohehut one day, the group decided to walk back to their hotel. Cynthia was on crutches. An old man on a bicycle stopped and by hand-language offered to give her a ride on the back of his cycle. She gave him the name of the hotel. He smiled and nodded. Her sister and friends waved as she and the old gentleman rode off. In 20 minutes or so, the man stopped in front of a hotel. Cynthia shook her head and repeated the name of her hotel. The man pedaled away to another establishment. Again, wrong place. This routine was repeated several times. Fearing the worse, Cynthia started to cry. The Good Samaritan by this time seemed to envision himself suffering a terrible death for kidnapping a young foreign woman. A horrified look dominated his face, a countenance which only further terrified Cynthia. Her sister and friends arrived back at the hotel and when they found Cynthia was not there, they also assumed the worse. She had been kidnapped! The hotel called the police and when they arrived Cynthia's sister demanded the army be called out. They were growing desperate when in a few minutes the old man and Cynthia, both weeping tears of joys, wheeled onto the scene.

The extensive travels Betsy and I made throughout China helped me to gauge the mood of the country and to have a visual picture to go along with reports and statistics about what was happening. A lot of impressions came through osmosis and not in answers to direct questions. It was a land that a communist bureaucracy and mindset still ruled. Old ways of dealing with visiting "barbarians" stemmed back to Confucius and were reinforced by the communists. Often one encountered amusing aspects to the Mandarin treatment. The term, "It's inconvenient " (bufangbian), was the standard way to deny a request. In 1975, when I was the China desk officer, I escorted an American medical delegation to the PRC. The group's specialty was Schistosomiasis, a parasitic disease spread through a certain fresh water snail - "oconolamia" I believe it is called. China had then and still has a major problem with Schistosomiasis. In many areas the snail carriers can be found in the paddy fields where farmers spend many hours of the day. The delegation consisted of six or seven scientists, the trip coordinator from the sponsoring foundation and myself. We traveled throughout the Peoples Republic for about two weeks.

From the beginning, it was obvious the Chinese did not want us to see the oncolomania that they used in their laboratories. My guess was that the group's pre-arrival request to take back home samples of the Chinese variety of the snails raised suspicions among Chinese security or party personnel. Probably, some official linked the request of the Americans doctors to the possibility of germ warfare. Why would the Americans want our snails, they must have asked? At the research centers we visited, our Chinese hosts prevented the delegation one way or another from seeing the relevant institute's laboratory. It was an incredible charade; quite hilarious actually, as the Chinese tried to explain why it was always bufangbian to visit the laboratory. It was closed for repairs, or the people in charge had to go to the countryside, or it was just bufangbian. The Chinese doctors and researchers at every stop were highly embarrassed by the game they had to play.

We went to Wuhsi to visit a major hospital, which was also a Schistosomiasis research center. We were housed in a guesthouse situated on the banks of a large lake. After our arrival we had free time before dinner and a few of us started to walk around the lake. My doctor friends saw snails in the water. They were not Oncolomania, but one of the doctors took several of the creatures back to his room and put them in a jar in his bathroom. The next morning, before our program for the day started, several of us again went for a walk along the lake. We noticed several boats on the water along the shore as well as people walking along the banks. When one boat went under a bridge on which we were standing, we could see that they were collecting all the snails they could find.

Apparently one of our security watcher had observed us the previous day and reported to the authorities that we were collecting snails. The American doctor who originally had picked up the snails returned to his room at noon only to find that the jar of little gastropods was gone. The story gives some of the flavor of what it is like working and living in a party/security/ bureaucratic state.

The Chinese leadership debate on how far to proceed with relaxation was the critical domestic question that occupied our political section in Peking. We had several outstanding Chinese-language officers who reported on this and other internal political subjects. They were led by Charlie Martin, who later worked for me in Washington, and who today (2004) iPresident of the American Chamber of Commerce in Peking. Bob Peterson, who is currently the Director-General of the Foreign Service, was then a young political officer in the section.

Q: You finished your tour in Peking in 1982. What was your next assignment?

TAYLOR: I went to Harvard on a Una Chapman Cox Foundation grant. I wanted to write a book comparing China and India. I had taken a couple of trips to India, but I really knew little or nothing about the country. I did know a bit about China. I was intrigued by the cultural, political, and economic differences between the two countries. I spent the fall at Harvard reading up on India; then Betsy and I went to India for three months, traveling around and through the entire country, north to south, east to west. We went by canal boat, ferry, bus, petty-cab, camel, train, and airplane. Along the way I called on intellectuals of all sorts to discuss my project. My interlocutors included journalists, writers, sociologists, political scientists, women's advocates, businessmen, and occasional figures in the arts. We talked with more than a hundred persons we met along the way. Of all the adventures we had, perhaps the most memorable was the five days we spent in Srinegar, living on a houseboat with the Himalayas marching to and fro in the background. We were delayed one additional night when in our cozy houseboat, we were snowed in. I returned to Harvard and spent another six months writing the book.

Q: Your research territory seems quite large. How did you narrow down the range of topics you could have discussed?

TAYLOR: In retrospect, the project seems stupidly audacious, if not arrogant. Doak Barnet, then the grey eminence of China scholars, in a review said that he would have advised me not to even start such a book. "The topic was much too large." But, he said, it turned out to be a "tour de force." Needless to say this was one of my favorite reviews. Another grand old Sinologist, Lucian Pye of MIT, declared it, "bold, and very provocative," and Donald Zagoria praised it in Foreign Affairs.

In the book, I focused primarily on cultural differences between the two countries and how that was reflected in contemporary life in such areas as poverty and wealth, political systems, religion, economic performance, and even foreign relations. For me, the study of the two countries dramatized the dictum that culture determines the course of human affairs and the behavior of nations and individuals. China and India are alike in many ways; for example, they both have a deep cultural tradition of honoring education. Both have sophisticated, intellectual, and artistic elites. Differences in their economic performance in the modern era can also in large measure be accounted for by their different cultural heritage and thus different histories. Chinese have attributes that give them an advantage in some areas of modernization over Indians. The differences, however, cannot be ascribed to either education or native intelligence. The interaction of physical and social environments together with the happenstances of history shaped their cultures.

India as well as China is now taking off economically, including in high technology fields. In the old days, it appeared that Indians, like the Chinese, prospered as a group only when they settled in other countries. In recent years, the two societies have shown that their different cultures are in fact both compatible with a modern, high-tech, consumer/saving, economies. In India, the philosophy of life, as exemplified by the caste system, is essentially a religious one. The Indian sense of community centers on religious identity. Chinese culture has a linear view of life, rather than the circular one of India. In the Chinese philosophy, one does necessarily accept the status into which one is borne, but one can move up; life is less fated.

Q: I think that history would show that the Chinese have lived in a meritocracy. The communists may have skewed that somewhat, but the essential philosophy still exists.

TAYLOR: That's right. The culture of meritocracy goes back to the traditional Chinese view of the nature of man. The Confucian view is that all men and women are equal at birth, but they become unequal because some receive better upbringing, education and training. That is different from the Judeo-Christian philosophy, which usually stresses the equality of all human beings regardless of age, education, or life circumstance. We all have certain unalienable rights and God judges all by the same standards. A Confucian, however, would say that a person who becomes a criminal consciously becomes a "bad" person and thus loses whatever rights he or she was born with. This concept can explain and justify the inequalities of human society more easily than that of the West. Confucian morality is not as egalitarian as Christianity, but it is nevertheless inherently egalitarian in that individual fates are not determined at birth. Indian philosophy. On the other hand, is much less equalitarian; it does not include the concept of equality; rather it emphasizes that one must live with the lot that one is born into - the caste system. The view that life is fated permeates Indian society. This ethos inclines Indians more than Chinese and Westerners to believe that individual initiative cannot fundamentally change a person's status in this life.

But even within this cultural context, in recent years, India has been performing well in modernization and development. The economy's normal post-independence "Hindu rate of growth" - 4 to 5 percent a year, has increased to almost 8 percent. India, like China, has a strong tradition of education, but more than China it also has an inclination toward abstract thought and deductive logic. Because of this intellectual culture India has proven to be very competitive in science and technology. But India may never achieve the rapid economic growth rates of China, Taiwan, Singapore, Korea, or Japan - all Sinic cultures. The differences reflect inherited culture.

Q: Was the book published?

TAYLOR: Praeger published the book under its Greenwood Press imprimatur. (Praeger also published my first book.) The Dragon and the Wild Goose sold out the first run and two years later came out in a second, abridged edition and also as a separate paperback. The "Wild Goose" is a reference to the mount of Brahma - Hinduism's ultimate eternal force - who lives between heaven and earth - between the spiritual and the material worlds. The Dragon, on the other hand, is a practical figure of power with both feet - or really, all feet - on the ground.

Q: So in 1983, you finished your book and the stint at Harvard. What was next?

TAYLOR: I came back to the Department as the director for analysis for East Asia and the Pacific in INR. I really wanted to be the China country director; Paul Wolfowitz, the new assistant secretary for the Bureau interviewed me. As I mentioned, Wolfowitz had been strongly opposed to the 1982 arms sales communiquï¿½ with China. The interview did not go well as we immediately got into a discussion of the communiquï¿½. He thought it was a disaster. For him, the PRC was a fact of life, but Taiwan was an important and committed US ally in the area, and its interests and security deserved priority. I argued that we had succeeded in getting the Chinese to accept our linkage of their peaceful policy toward Taiwan with our agreement to gradually reduce arms sales to the island without any specifics. Over the long term, it was profoundly in the interests of the American people and those of Taiwan and the mainland that the two sides agree on a mutually acceptable one-China formula - a formula that would likely amount to a fig leaf. I told him that we disagreed on the communiquï¿½, but if I were to be appointed country director, I would always tell him frankly what I thought but would execute his policies as best I could even if on occasion I disagreed. That was not enough assurance for Wolfowitz and I did not get the job.

Paul had been appointed after Haig's "purge." Eventually John Holdridge was replaced, as was the China country director, Bill Rope. Wolfowitz encouraged other people who had been involved in the communiquï¿½ to seek some other employment in the Department. He was not about to hire the FSO who had been the man in the field who had done most of the staff work on the negotiations.

So, I went to work in INR. A year later, Mort Abramowitz took over as the INR Assistant Secretary. I had known Mort for many years. We had good intellectual chemistry. I was in INR/EAP from 1983 to 1985.

Q: How did you see the role of INR during Abramowitz' tenure?

TAYLOR: As events since 9/11 have demonstrated, INR plays a valuable, I would say an essential role. The Secretary needs a small staff of analysts who have access to the flood of intelligence being produced around town, who produce none of the raw intelligence themselves, and who are not involved in policy making. Without a policy stake either in how collected intelligence is credited and interpreted or in the credibility of the collection process and bureaucracy, INR analysts are able to provide relatively objective assessments. As a July 200New York Times article on the Bureau explained, INR's approach is purely analytical. It owes no allegiance to particular agents, imagery or intercepts. Perhaps most importantly it shuns worst-case assessments, which, in my view, are often the downfall of CIA analysis. At the Agency, the greatest fear is missing a very bad development like 9/11 or Iraqi WMD. Thus, the tendency is to predict the worst possible case. If the sky does not fall, the explanation is that your exposure of the situation eliminated the threat, or more likely, the alarming prediction is simply forgotten. I had many personal experiences in dealing assessments of that sort.

Again quoting the Times, "INR analysts also tend to be older (most are in their 40s and 50s), more experienced, and more likely to come from academic backgrounds than those at other agencies, and they are more often encouraged to devote their careers to the study of a particular issue or region... they are willing to take on the accepted analysis and the politically correct interpretation and take a second, harder look."

The Bureau thus acts as a critical check not only on what the intelligence agencies are telling the community, including the Secretary of State and the President, but also on what the policy and regional bureaus are saying. INR has no policy ax to grind. Of course, as with all intelligence organizations, whether or not it carries out its mission depends on the culture of the organization and the quality and the character of the analysts and most of all its leadership. The Assistant Secretary for INR of course is also under pressure, if nearly always unspoken, not to contradict or complicate with his findings a major policy backed by the Secretary. It is the culture within INR, however, that it is its job to provide objective analysis come hell or high water. If a Policy Bureau or even the Secretary is unhappy, too bad. I still wonder why Powell did not take along one or more INR analysts when, as he tells it, he spent days at CIA going over its intelligence on WMD that he was to include in his UN Security Council address just before the Iraq War began. I wonder if CIA excluded the analysts from INR, saying the information was super secret. The CIA intelligence, of course, was totally wrong and sometimes fabricated and its analysis inexplicably lacking in distinct qualification and sound judgment.

Of course INR has also made mistakes, but far more often it has been proven correct when it has challenged a conclusion of the CIA and the intelligence community as a whole. INR today (2004) has 165 analysts. CIA has 1,500, and the Defense Intelligence Agency 3,000. Since 9/11 President Bush has ordered a 50 percent increase in the CIA analysts. INR staffing, however, is about right to serve the Secretary's needs. It would be a mistake to increase it size. It is more efficient because it is lean and mean and not a gigantic industry. The recent (July 2004) report of the Senate Select Committee on the intelligence debacle related to the war on Iraq recounts how in several critical assessments INR disagreed with the more or less categorical conclusions of the CIA. In every case INR was right, the CIA was wrong. Most importantly, before the war, INR produced an assessment challenging the assumption that after a successful United States invasion and occupation of Iraq, a democratic, unified, and friendly Baghdad government would likely emerge.

Q: Bill Casey was the head of CIA when you were in INR. I think there may be general agreement that he tended to bend the analysis to suit his predilections.

TAYLOR: To say the least. Secretary Shultz has charged that the CIA repeatedly lied to him and mislead him, that it constantly distorted its analysis to serve its own strong policy views, and that he simply could not trust Bill Casey. I was personally involved in several cases where Casey intervened to impose his views, and the most astounding example of his malevolent behavior - the debacle of the Iran-Contra affair - took place during my watch. Before that scandal broke, Casey made sure that the CIA's analysis of the situation in Iran would support the illegal covert sales to Iran that President Reagan apparently later approved and which Casey and Oliver North managed.

Similar cases occurred. One of those concerned Mexico in which the national intelligence officer (NIO) for Mexico eventually resigned rather than alter his analysis. Casey wanted to emphasize the dangerous, explosive revolutionary threat to Mexico's stability. His aims were always to find some reason to support the right wing policies and covert actions that he wanted the U.S. government to pursue whether in southern Africa , Latin America, or elsewhere. On the Soviet Union, CIA's slanted analysis was especially important. Under Casey's guidance, the Agency declared that Gorbachev's reforms were just verbiage, and when it seemed to he roundly conservative Margaret Thatcher and finally to the anti-communist commander in chief Ronald Reagan that Gorbachev was serious, the CIA declared that the entrenched Soviet party, military, and KGB bureaucracies would not permit any real change. Reform could not happen in the Soviet Union. After Casey's demise, Bob Gates as the new Director continued to assert that Gorbachev and the reformers simply wanted a breathing space with the West in order to gather their strength for another onslaught against the Free World. Shultz and perhaps most importantly Nancy Reagan and to his credit eventually Ronald Reagan, did not buy this. Instead they believed a profound historic shift was taking place in the Soviet Union and thus in world politics.

Another example of Casey's intervention occurred when I was INR/EAP director working on an important assessment of what was happening in the Philippines. The CIA upstairs, and I assume it was Casey, changed a position which had been endorsed by the total intelligence community except the CIA. This analysis had to do with the Philippine situation in late 1985 - the year before Marcos' resignation. The assessment went through the normal drafting sessions during which we in State were able to change the CIA draft about 180 degrees on a couple of key judgments. One of those issues concerned the future of the country if Marcos left the presidency or was ousted by the pro-Aquino forces. This paper was written after the murder of Benigno Aquino and the ascent to prominence of his widow. Mr. Aquino had led the opposition to Marcos from exile and when he returned to the Philippines from the U.S. he was assassinated at the Manila airport. Mrs. Aquino then became Marcos' most outspoken opponent. We argued that in case of Marcos' departure from the scene, there would probably not be major instability. We believed Mrs. Aquino and those who supported her such as the Catholic Church were solidly anti-communist and democratic.

That led us to the conclusion that the Philippines would in fact be more stable if Marcos was replaced. Surprisingly, all agencies, including the CIA representative who chaired the meeting, agreed to accept this conclusion. A couple of hours after I returned to my office, I had a call from the CIA rep. He said that he had to withdraw his clearance - for a while, anyway - until the CIA director could approve the assessment. Later the same day, he called back and said the paragraph that predicted greater stability after Marcos' departure was being taken out of the paper - I assumed this was because of Casey's views. That forced us to add a footnote to the National Intelligence Assessment that stated our position. The original passage in the text was deleted and replaced by dire predictions about instability that would ensue if Marcos were to leave his position one way or the other. This view played to President Reagan's deep sense of loyalty to Marcos and his fear, probably fed by Casey, that another Sandinista Nicaragua or another post-Shah Iran would emerge if we deserted yet another friendly dictator. It also reflected the view others had given the President that Mrs. Aquino was "an empty-headed housewife" and anti- American.

Q: One of the things INR does is to review material published by CIA and other intelligence agencies. Were the CIA reports viewed as somewhat skewed?

TAYLOR: In certain other cases, of which I am aware, the CIA analysis was dead wrong and even deliberately slanted. This was not just my view. The traditionalist conservative, pro-Reagan Secretary of State (Shultz) felt he could not depend upon the objectivity of the "intelligence" that Casey put out in policy sensitive areas. The Director's strong ideological views, the Secretary said frankly in his memoirs, inevitably colored Casey's selection and assessment of material. Let me go back for a second to the role of INR in trying to keep policy bureaus as well as other agencies honest in their use of intelligence. I would like to illustrate by using the debate that arose in 1984 and 1985 about an "indigenous fighter" aircraft for Taiwan. This issue was related to the 1982 Sino-U.S. communiquï¿½, which we discussed a moment ago at some length. As mentioned, President Reagan, unknown to Secretary Haig, had, through Lee Kwan-yew, promised Chiang Ching-kuo a "suitable" advanced fighter aircraft. After Haig's resignation, Wolfowitz and the pro-Taiwan White House were determined to honor this commitment despite the arms sales communiquï¿½, which such a transfer would clearly violate unless China departed from its "fundamental policy" of peaceful unification. Stuck with the Communiquï¿½, the pro-Taiwan group was doubly determined to provide the promised fighter, which would be a leap in quality or technology over the aircraft we had provided Taiwan in the past. Thus emerged the idea of an "indigenous fighter" which General Dynamics would design and then help the Taiwanese to manufacture.

The indigenous plane was to look (and quack) very much like an F-16. At least initially, it would have been little more than an assembly operation in Taiwan using General Dynamics' manufactured parts, including US jet engines, electronics, and weapons systems. In the memorandum recommending that the U.S. proceed with this program, Wolfowitz told the Secretary that the sale would be consistent with the agreement reached under the 1982 "arms sales" communiquï¿½, a document, you will remember, Shultz had told Wolfowitz represented the word of the United States and of the President. The rationale was that we would not be selling an aircraft as such to Taiwan, but merely supplying some parts. As Director of Analysis for East Asia and the Pacific, I viewed this as a patently specious argument, and Mort Abramowitz agreed with me. So, INR took the position in memos to the Secretary that if the U.S. Government in its wisdom decided to approve this project it should do so recognizing that it would violate the spirit if not the letter of our commitment to the PRC. Our position was that if we wanted to go ahead with the project for compelling policy reasons, fine, but we should not fool the President and ourselves by saying that it would not be a violation of the spirit and the letter of the Communiquï¿½. We concluded that it was uncertain how China would re-act, but it would certainly see the sale as seriously reneging on our key commitment in the Communiquï¿½. Of course, none of us in INR knew of Reagan's promise to Chiang Ching-kuo. The decision was already fixed.

Mort and I attended several meetings where the issue was discussed. The views of "the powers that be" were strong and clear. The number of senior officers at these gatherings who dodged talking frankly about the subject struck Mort and myself as telling. In an Orwellian dance, everyone except Mort and I dodged the question how the shipment of fighter aircraft blueprints, forms, molds, parts, engines, warfare electronics, and weapons was not an "arms shipment." At one meeting, Mort whispered to me, "You can cut the politics in this room with a knife." No one dared agree with the plain truth - the sale would violate the Communiquï¿½ however we explained it to the public and the Chinese or to ourselves. As I recall, "L" (the Legal Bureau) concocted a lawyerly exposition on why it was not a violation. Of course, the decision had in fact already been made in the White House and it was deemed unthinkable to back away from Reagan's promise to Ching-kuo. Shultz, despite his earlier edict that we would carry out the 1982 Communiquï¿½, felt he had to go along. He did have to... or else resign.

In 1984, congressional hearings explored the murder of a Chinese-American writer in California killing perpetrated by Taiwanese members of the Bamboo Gang who had been hired by Taiwan's military intelligence service. Confronted with hard evidence (for his protection, one of the assassins left a tape in the US spilling out the whole story), Taipei finally admitted to its involvement but said it was a maverick operation. When I was doing research for my third book - a biography of Chiang Ching-kuo, I learned that while these hearings were going on and while the "indigenous fighter" decision was supposedly still pending, Gaston Siguthen the NSC staff member on Asiarranged a meeting between a senior Taiwan official, Oliver North, and Adolfo Caldera, a leader of the Nicaraguan Contras. The latter asked the Taiwan official if the KMT or some other entity on the island could secretly provide a large cash donation to the Contras. When informed of this remarkable approach arranged by the White House, Chiang Ching-kuo, deeply worried by the possible fallout from the California murder case, was delighted to make a donation. Two months later, at about the time that the first secret million-dollar deposit was made to the Contras' bank account, Chiang Ching-kuo was informed that we would proceed with the "indigenous fighter" program.

My "China guy" in INR was Charlie Martin, who had worked for me in Peking. Charlie, in my opinion, was the best China analyst in the US Government. As we were preparing our final analysis for Mort to send to the Secretary on the "indigenous plane" issue, Charlie wanted to say that the Chinese reaction would be so strong that it would threaten the relationship. I insisted that we say the Chinese would be very upset, even outraged by the news, but that their concrete reaction was unpredictable. Deng Xiao-ping, I believed, had many reasons to want to keep the relationship going and might well complain mightily but do nothing to shake the basic relationship. Wolfowitz and company might get away with it. Peking's reaction in fact was rhetorically strong, but no concrete reprisal followed. Our main point was that we should be honest in what we say in our memos to each other and to the Secretary and the President. That is the INR credo.

Q: Was Vietnam much of an issue while you were in INR?

TAYLOR: I think by that time we had pretty much written Vietnam off. The PRC was still involved in its undeclared war with its former ally to the south. The Vietnamese thus were even more dependent on the Soviets for military supplies and economic assistance. Hanoi at this time made no move to establish a dialogue with us. They were busy with the Chinese and with occupying Cambodia. We of course opposed their violent take over of Cambodia and the puppet government they established in Phnom Penh. We did have a non-lethal covert action program to provide some support to the non-Pol Pot anti-Vietnamese resistance - not to Pol Pot, which some people allege.

I was the State Department's representative on an inter-agency working group on MIAs and POWs. That, at the time, was our principal interest as far as Vietnam was concerned. The issue was highly politicized. Active interests groups in the country insisted that Americans were still being held prisoner in Vietnam. We devoted lots of resources to trying to track down rumors and alleged evidence that might verify this suspicion. We offered large rewards to people in the Indochina area who might be able to bring us reliable information. The word got around and soon persons were bringing in dog tags and other items that seemed American, knowing we would pay money for possible evidence. Our people in the field listened to many first-hand or even fourth-hand stories about possible American POWs in Laos or Vietnam. The Pentagon and the CIA checked out each story as best they could. It was a difficult task because so much false evidence and made-up stories existed. Of course we had no sources inside Vietnam.

Q: Did you find it difficult to believe that some Americans were still being held by the Vietnamese? I think it was largely a political ploy by those conservatives who resented the way the war ended.

TAYLOR: No agency wanted to be seen as not seriously exploring the question so long as there was the slightest possibility some MIA somewhere was still alive. A few public interest groups were honestly concerned with the issue. Others, perhaps a majority, were involved for political reasons or even self-promotion and financial gain. The Committee tried to deal with the issue in as exhaustive a manner as possible. It was a question that the government could not ignore. We could not be seen as just going through the motions. The Army was the lead agency; the rest of us would meet monthly or bi-weekly and tried to offer helpful ideas from our agencies.

Q: During your service on this committee, did you ever come across any evidence that would have suggested that an American was still being held captive?

TAYLOR: Two or three stories that were brought to our attention seemed possibly credible. For example, a Vietnamese, who seemed to have no ax to grind and expected no reward, reported that while traveling from Hanoi to another place in Vietnam, he saw "two men" who "might" have been Caucasian. We asked friendly governments with diplomatic representatives in Vietnam to help us check out these sorts of stories. In every case, we found that the story had grown legs over time. We never had firm or reliable evidence. Almost ten years had passed since the end of the war and there really was no longer any conceivable reason for the Vietnamese secretly to keep any Americans. Either they had freed them or shot them. Fortunately, Senators McCain and Kerry, two Vietnam war heroes, came out about this time saying that they did not believe Americans were still being held by the Vietnamese. They in fact denounced those few who were leading families to believe that this definitely was not the case. The Senators supported an American opening with Hanoi as the way to recover the remains of missing Americans.

Q: When I was in Saigon in 1969-70, the town was filled with American deserters. I am sure they all tried to get out as we left, but I always wondered whether they all made it.

TAYLOR: That would make an interesting novel or movie. I don't know, but in the early 1980s there certainly were still quite a few Caucasians to be seen wandering around Vietnam, including French deserters from the 1950s. Some of these were the basis of the false sightings of American MIAs.

Q: Did you anticipate what would happen in the Philippine in 1986? TAYLOR: Actually, we did. Together with my analyst on that country I traveled throughout the Philippines in the fall of 1985. That visit resulted in a memo I drafted from Mort Abramowitz to Mike Armacost, the undersecretary for political affairs. I took the position that Marcos could very possibly be overthrown through some kind of popular uprising. But, we speculated, more likely he would become overly confident of his ability to win another election without rigging the vote count. He had many ways of controlling the campaign and thus shaping the outcome. We speculated that if the United States pressed him to agree to closely monitored polling, he could well decide to proceed with no rigging at the polls themselves. But if he did so, he would discover at the last minute that he was losing. At this point he would probably blatantly steal the election by rigging the count. This act in turn would create such a public uproar, probably supported by the Army and the Church, that he could be forced to resign. That is actually what happened. Marcos became overconfident, the actual polling was quite straight forward, he quickly realized he would lose, and it was only through altering the results after the closing of the polls that he "won." By this blatant corruption of the process, he lost what credibility and support he had and this led to the popular uprising that, with the key support of the army, overthrew him. Our predictive analysis, I was told, helped the 7th floor deal with the crisis in a way that encouraged the favorable outcome. Casey, I am sure, was not happy.

Before the crisis, the dynamics of the American position on the Philippine issue was shaped by the fear of the President and right wingers that if Marcos was ousted, the communists would seize the initiative and perhaps take over the country. Reagan thought that Jimmy Carter had allowed the Iranian crisis to explode in 1979 by abandoning the Shah when the latter faced an outburst of internal opposition. The resulting fall of the Shah cost the Democrats the election. Reagan was obsessed with the goal of not repeating this scenario. Besides, the President felt a personal as well as political camaraderie with a strong anti-communist leader like Marcos. This inclination was backed up by the NSC staff and Don Regan, who repeatedly warned that the United States should not abandon Marcos or trust Mrs. Aquino. One morning Poindexter showed Shultz a newspaper headline saying "State Dept. assails Marcos." "The President doesn't want that," Poindexter warned, "...watch it."

Wolfowitz, so far as I know, fully supported the Shultz position, but did not play a major policy role on this issue. The Under Secretary for Political Affairs was Mike Armacost, whose last position was as ambassador to the Philippines. Mike was very close to the Secretary and became the key policy man on this crisis. The tense atmosphere between State and the White House on the Marcos question was also shaped by the much more bitter arguments then raging under the covers between Shultz on the one hand and Reagan and the NSC on the other over the proposed secret and illegal sale of U.S. arms to Iran in exchange for American hostages. A story that becomes more relevant in discussing my next job.

Mort Abramowitz himself visited the Philippines in January, 1986. He returned convinced that Marcos was digging his own grave and that the Philippines and the United States would be better off without him. According to Shultz's memoirs, when Mort returned, Shultz upbraided him for offering his strong anti-Marcos views in a staff meeting. Mort argued that he could separate any policy views he gave the Secretary from the objective analysis of his bureau. But, the Secretary warned, pushing a policy view inevitably colors an appraisal of fact and undermines the perceived integrity of an intelligence organization. Mort always insisted that our job was to produce as objective analysis as possible without any regard to what he or any other official in the Department thought. But I think the Secretary was right that the INR Assistant Secretary should not volunteer his own views on a policy debate but only "fact-based analysis," including the costs, benefits, and other consequences of the different policy options. Mort, of course, henceforth adhered to the Secretary's guidance.

The CIA predicted a 55% to 45% Marcos victory in the February 8, 1986 elections. We thought if this was the result it would be fraudulent, and this outcome would in turn lead to a massive public protest. When blatant fraud first became evident soon after the polls closed, Reagan's public statements seemed to favor Marcos. Finally, the abuse of the process became so obvious that a reluctant Reagan was finally persuaded by Shultz to issue a statement condemning the outcome, but until February 24 he refused to press Marcos to abandon the presidency.

Q. Aside form the advanced fighter issue, what about China?

TAYLOR: Wolfowitz believed that the PRC was not really that important to the U.S. in strategic terms. A succession of Administrations, he thought, had exaggerated the strategic role of China. His view was that committed allies like Israel, Singapore, Japan, Taiwan, and Western Europe were key to American security. Those were the countries that we had to support. He thought that the U.S. should have a stable relationship with the PRC, but it was not a country of great strategic importance to us.

Our analysis in INR was that China was on a zigzag but still fairly solid path of reform and, for the foreseeable future, would not likely return to Mao's radical days in internal or external policies. For the next 20 years and probably much longer, we thought, only a war with the United States would likely reverse this promising but likely zig zag course. As long as the Taiwan issue remained defused, we believed, China would recognize its powerful stake in good relations with the United States and increasingly play a constructive role in world affairs. With its human potential let loose, China's economy and its power and influence in the world would likely grow rapidly. For the foreseeable future, China seemed likely to pursue internal development and economic strength as its principal path to influence and prestige in the world, not military dominance much less expansion. Human affairs being predictably unpredictable, we amended such long range projections with the usual qualifiers. Economic crisis, bloody power struggles, or a conflict over Taiwan could conceivably upset China's evolution toward a positive and healthy role in world affairs.

I personally believed that this analysis led to the conclusion that cooperation between China and the United States was key to peace and stability in Asia, and that mutual recognition of this fact provided the two nations a common strategic interest as great as that which sprang from our shared need to contain Soviet expansion. If, however, this should prove eventually not to be the case - certainly a possibility - then we would have surrendered nothing by continuing and developing the strategic partnership with Peking that had emerged since 1972. Our military strength would remain as well as our capability to unleash a surge in the production of new weapons systems if necessary. The key to the long term viability of Sino-American cooperation in maintaining peace and stability in Asia was a successful handling of the Taiwan question. The latter goal, I believed, could probably only be achieved by agreement on at least a superficial "One China" resolution of Taiwan's status.

Q: Were there signs of greater democracy in the PRC or economic reforms?

TAYLOR: In the 1980s, a strong consensus persisted in China against any idea of returning to the radical policies of the Cultural Revolution. But the "struggle" over how far to go to stimulate economic growth with capitalist techniques and whether at the same time to allow a more open society still deeply divided the Chinese leadership, especially the political question. Backward steps on political and cultural reform were followed by forward ones. This "to and fro" on reform was a symptom of Chinese development in those days. The "conservatives" and the "reformers" were pulling and tugging on Deng, who wavered between the two groups and at the same time played them off against each other. For example, Deng backed off the "democracy wall" policy after solidifying his power in 1978-79. In 1980, we watched him carrying out policies on political reform that seemed to be consistent with the views of the conservatives. The PRC at that time went through a period attacking "spiritual pollution" - Western and bourgeois influences. But it wasn't long before it appeared that the "reformers" with the permission of Deng once again held the upper hand. But Deng remained consistent and strong on the need for far-reaching economic liberalization. Our analysis of this pulling and tugging was a key aspect of our assessment in INR of what was going on in China and what it could mean for the United States.

Q: Did you have any feeling what Secretary Shultz was thinking on both the PRC and the Philippines? Did he support Wolfowitz?

TAYLOR: After Shultz replaced Haig in 1982, he soon appointed Paul Wolfowitz to take John Holdridge's place as EAP Assistant Secretary. It is not clear if Shultz ever supported Wolfowitz' views on US/PRC relations in general. He did not agree with Paul's negative views of the August 17 Communiquï¿½. As recounted earlier, Shultz in his memoirs does not mention any controversy at all over the Communiquï¿½ and writes mistakenly as if it had been negotiated during his early days in office. He also gives the Reagan Administration credit for "Our revival of US-China relations... (that) helped turn that nation toward a potentially constructive path." A success, he notes, that was contributing to the historical emergence of a new zone of progress in Asia. In reality, US-China relations needed "revival" in 1981-1982 because of pressure from the Republican right wing to back away from the one-China policy and specifically to provide Taiwan an advanced jet fighter. Haig had convinced Reagan, and apparently Shultz, that Jimmy Carter had messed up relations with China by his handling of the arms sales issue and that the 1982 communiquï¿½ was the only way to revive the relationship.

In any event, as time went on, it was clear that Shultz did not share the neo-conservative Wolfowitzian view of China. Although he supported the Reagan Doctrine of using support for armed insurgents to overthrow selected weak Third World communist states, Shultz's views in the 1980s were in contrast to the hegemonic doctrines of the George W. Bush Administration twenty years later. Shultz, for example, said that during his time in office, the US objective was "sharing rather seeking to monopolize world power and leadership."

During his six years in office, the Secretary became more and more interested in the PRC and the strategic importance of the relationship, not just in regard to countering the Soviet Union. Wolfowitz headed EAP from 1982 to 1985 or 1986 when Gaston Sigur, a balanced and moderate conservative academic then at the NSC, replaced him. In 1987, Shultz made an important public statement in Shanghai during which he reaffirmed our commitment to the "One-China" policy. But most importantly, in that speech he also expressed U.S. support for peaceful efforts toward achieving China-Taiwan reunification, implying that the United States was not just committed to peaceful means whatever the outcome but also to actual reunification in some at least nominal form.

Many of the senior foreign service officers closest to the Secretary, Mike Armacost, Nick Platt, and Charlie Hill, were East Asian specialists (Platt and Hill were Chinese-language officers). All of these officers' views of China were, I believe, more or less in keeping with the traditional State Department outlook since the Kissinger/Nixon breakthrough ten years before. I have always thought that these three FSOs reinforced Shultz's balanced view oUS/China relations. Charlie retired along with Shultz in 1989 and went with him to the Hoover Institute to help the Secretary write his memoirs. My guess is Charlie did the bulk of the writing based upon his voluminous notes and Shultz added his personal touches and comments. Charlie now teaches at Harvard, where he is reportedly and no doubt deservedly very popular.

Q: What other issues came up during your time as Director of Analysis for East Asia and the Pacific.

TAYLOR: We covered half the world, more or less. Japan at that point was seen as buying out corporate America. Incredible asset inflation in Japan - real estate and stocks - provided Japanese investors a staggering amount of paper capital, assets that they could convert into dollars at a very favorable rate. Japan's trade surplus with the United States was soaring to unprecedented heights, so there was a lot of dollars available that they could use. In US media, virtual hysteria prevailed on the subject of the rise of Japan and the fall of the USA. In our papers, we pointed out the bubbles that were inflating in front of the Japanese face. I mentioned this to my son, John, who wrote a article in New York Magazine, puncturing the myth of Japanese hegemony. One favorite US policy objective that all Administrations had pushed since the 1950s was greater Japanese spending on its defense - in other words, its military power. At the Pentagon, Secretary Weinberger was encouraging Japan to take on responsibilities for a 1,000 mile perimeter of defense stretching into the Pacific. We raised the provocative question whether this was really a good idea. Most Asian nations, we noted, were not enthusiastic. Why fix something that was not broken.

Meanwhile, Taiwan was going through a key period in its political transition. In 1979-1980, the Government cracked down on the informal opposition (opposition parties were not allowed), but now Chiang Ching-kuo seemed to be back on the reform track. I should have been more optimistic. I was taken by surprise by how fast the island moved to multi-party democracy in the immediate two years after I left the INR/EAP job. Nevertheless, the opportunity in the early Eighties once again to follow Taiwan affairs would be helpful to me when, after retirement, I would write a biography of Chiang Ching-kuo for Harvard University Press.

In the early 1980s, Taiwan's secret nuclear weapon's program was once again an issue of continuing high-level concern, as was the suddenly fast changing relations between the island and the mainland. The interaction of political reform on the mainland and on Taiwan had struck me as important when I was in Peking. In the 1983-1986 period, this dynamic gained increasing force, eventually pushing Taiwan to the brink of real democracy and the mainland to the out-of-control democracy movement that crashed and burned on Tiananmen Square in 1989.

At this time, we analyzed a number of other key issues: Hanoi's on-going war with China, prospects for its occupation of Cambodia, the outlook for Pol Pot and the Anti-Pol-Pot, anti-Vietnamese resistance, and the interplay of China and Russia in the region. Thailand's ongoing experiments with democracy were another item of interest. Likewise: the ups and downs of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and China's rapprochement with its members. Indonesia seemed to be secure under Suharto, although corruption was soaring. Malaysia and Singapore were success stories. Deng Xiao-ping was interested in little Singapore as a model in which economic growth, an expanding free market sector, a relatively open society, and a pro-forma democratic system combined with tight political and social control. In 1985, New Zealand refused to allow US nuclear-powered armed ships to enter its ports. This created an unprecedented crisis down-under, and our shop provided on-going assessments of the political dynamics of the decision in New Zealand and the reaction in Australia.

Q: In 1986, you left INR/EAP. What was your next assignment?

TAYLOR: Before going on, I might note that while I was still serving as Director of Analysis for INR/EAP, the head of the US observation Team and Liaison Mission in Windhoek, Namibia, an FSO by the name of Stan Keogh, was killed in a terrorist explosion. Stan had replaced me as political counselor in South Africa and then was appointed to the mission in Namibia. Loving my travels in Namibia as I did, I volunteered temporarily to replace him. In the summer of 1985, I worked in Namibia, traveling and writing reports on the security and political situation, including in the combat areas. I submitted endless thoughts on how we might try to get the talks underway again on implementation of UResolution 435.

In 1986, I became deputy assistant secretary for intelligence coordination. I served in that position in 1986 and 1987. Essentially, I was the senior "point-man" for the Secretary of State responsible for assuring or trying to assure that all intelligence operations by US agencies, including the clandestine collection of information and covert actions of all sorts were consistent with US foreign policy. The job covered CIA, DIA, the other military intelligence agencies, NSA and also FBI counter-intelligence operations against foreign missions and personnel in the United States. It was my office's responsibility to monitor these activities so that the Secretary had a staff member with full knowledge of all such operations or activities. Bill Casey was, unfortunately, the director of CIA at the time. But he did make the job interesting.

Q: How were you so lucky to draw this assignment and what did you find when you took over?

TAYLOR: I was asked by Mort Abramowitz to take the job. My staff and I held regular meetings with the CIA, sometimes in the Department and sometimes at the Agency, during which time we were briefed on existing and proposed covert actions. We always made sure that someone from the appropriate regional bureau was involved in these discussions or I would brief the assistant secretary or DAS concerned. I was the Secretary's representative on both the National Intelligence Committee and the National Counterintelligence Committee. In addition, we coordinated with the FBI and other law enforcement agencies on bilateral and multilateral cooperation on international crime issues as well covert operations directed against foreign missions in the United States.

For example, in the early 1990s it was revealed that the FBI turncoat agent, Robert P. Hanssen, had revealed to his Soviet handlers that his Bureau had secretly dug a tunnel under their new Soviet Embassy on Wisconsin Avenue and were tapping into their internal phone lines. One of my predecessors, after much high level discussion and debate, would have cleared this project for State before it went ahead. This big hole in the ground was another fiasco in the great game of espionage. It brought back memories of the famous Berlin Wall tunnel of the 1950s. By burrowing under the Wall, the CIA had been bugging the conversations of East German officials for years. But in the 1990s, we learned that STASI (East German Intelligence) had known about the tunnel from the beginning and had cleared off on all the information we ever gleaned from these taps. For almost forty years, numerous careers were made in the Agency on the hundreds if not thousands of secret reports that disseminated this information.

Bill Casey had been an Office of Special Services (OSS) officer during World War II and he harbored great enthusiasm for covert activities. In Reagan's first term, covert operations increased fivefold over 1979. This information, as well other figures and incidents I may cite regarding intelligence operations have all been in the US press or published in various books. Reagan continued and greatly expanded the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan and selected new battlefields ranging from Libya to Nicaragua. I can not give you any figures myself, but according to John Prados, a writer on intelligence matters, more than 50 covert operations were reportedly in progress by 1984, about half of them in Central and South America.

I suggested to Mort a briefing for Secretary Shultz on current or recent U.S. lethal or paramilitary covert actions around the world. Among the lethal actions I included were efforts to promote or support a coup d'etat. My staff and I put together a large highly classified poster outlining the key covert actions that involved the overthrow or destabilization of an established government. I also prepared a set of guidelines or principles for judging covert action, and put all of this information and analysis in briefing books for the 7th floor principals.

Secretary Shultz, Deputy Secretary Whitehouse, and Mike Armacost, the Political Undersecretary, attended the one-hour briefing. In August 1985, after a three-year battle with Congress, the Reagan Administration had won a repeal of the 1976 Clark Amendment prohibition against US military aid to rebel forces in Angola. In November, Reagan authorized a covert and lethal program of lethal aid to UNITA. It should be remembered that UNITA was a former "Maoist" organization, and its leader Jonas Savimbi was essentially an opportunist but also a tribal nationalist. The United States was now sending weapons to a South African supported insurgent group fighting to overthrow a regime recognized by most of the world, the United Nations, and virtually all African countries as the legal government of Angola. This was the Reagan Doctrine in action, the mirror image of the Brezhnev Doctrine. Both were a violation of the most basic element of international law rationalized not on the basis of a direct threat but of an assumed necessity. This was an omen of what was to come under President George W. Bush.

By January 1987, Washington was Sending the UNITA rebels Stinger missiles and other anti-aircraft weaponry. (Again, as with other once-classified actions, the renewed aid to UNITA has been widely reported in the US press and other open publications, includinShultz's memoirs.) Meanwhile, the South African Government, with Bill Casey's encouragement, continued to develop and supply the RENAMO insurgency in Mozambique. About the time I took the DAS job in INR, the CIA was claiming that RENAMO controlled most of the country. At the same time, Shultz and company were trying to woo Mozambique's leader, Samora Machel, away from his Soviet alliance. The difference between RENAMO and UNITA was that the Cuban army was in Angola but not in Mozambique and that UNITA had a ten-year history of support by the South African military and right-wingers in the US Congress.

The Afghan covert program, first begun in the Carter Administration, would eventually achieve a stunning victory, driving the Soviets out of that country. The trauma of its Afghan adventure played a decisive role in the Soviet Communist Party's lost of prestige at home and the selection of a young reformer named Gorbachev as party and state leader. This appointment in turn led to Glasnost and Perestroika and then the unraveling of Soviet control of Eastern Europe and finally at home. The record of Politburo meetings in Moscow during the mid and late 1980s show some uncertainly about the long-term significance of "Star Wars" but no other anxiety over Reagan's military buildup. Instead it was the quagmire in Afghanistan that stirred anger, frustration, and angst among the Soviet leaders.

On the other hand the successful multi-billion dollar program to arm the Afghan Mujahideen also eventually extracted a terrible penalty. It led to the rise of an armed, extremely militant and antediluvian Islamist movements in Afghanistan (most of our weapons went via the Pakistan intelligence organization to the fundamentalists); the creation of Al Qaeda; and to a new stage of Islamist international terrorism. If the United States had not launched the huge paramilitary covert effort that defeated the Russians in Afghanistan, how would history have been changed? Would the name Al Qaeda mean nothing to us today? Would the USSR still exist? Or through the other dynamic changes going on within Soviet society that had nothing to do with Afghanistan would Gorbachev and the reformers have come to power anyway? Gorbachev certainly believes so. He tells us in his memoirs that it was the gradual decay of Soviet society and its economy together with the increasing education, urbanization, and sophistication of the Russian people that brought Soviet reformers and liberals to power. I suppose history will never know for sure the answers to these questions.

Actually, it was Mort Abramowitz who successfully pushed the idea of providing the Afghan resistance Stingers. We had been supplying the resistance with European-made air-to-ground missiles but they were not nearly as effective as the Stinger. The Pentagon opposed the transfer fearing the weapons would fall into Soviet or terrorist hands, Some thought the Stingers would end up in the underground weapons market and someday be used by terrorists to shoot down commercial aircraft. I myself thought this was a high risk. But despite the great upsurge in terrorism, 18 years later, maverick Stingers have only damaged one Israeli airliner and one US Air Force transport. Casey of course was enthusiastic about the idea and Stingers were soon on their way. They played an important role in the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and thus in the fall oSoviet communism.

Q: Was the Iran-Contra affair an active project at the time and were you at all advised about it?

TAYLOR: Of course I was not informed. In November, 1985, McFarland told Shultz of the first illegal shipment of missiles to Iran in return for a hostage release. Shultz was outraged and heatedly opposed this enterprise, which was originated and promoted by Israel Schultz said it was crazy, stupid, illegal, and totally contrary to long standing US policy for dealing with terrorists. It was too late, however, to stop the operation. At least McFarland refused to stop it. Over the next two months, Reagan convened two White House meetings on the subject. Vice President Bush was present, but later denied it. Casey was clearly the mastermind of the missile deal. At these White House meetings, Shultz and Defense Secretary Weinberger strongly opposed any arms for hostages operations. But the President had obviously had long discussions with Casey on the matter, and he went ahead and authorized future shipments to Iran by issuing a presidential "finding." Shultz was constantly misled by Casey and Poindexter about what was happening with Iran, but it seems clear he received enough reports and rumors to know that the operation was probably continuing - an operation that he had told the President was illegal, unconstitutional, and bound to blow up in their collective face. But Reagan remained unmoved. It is not certain whether after January 1986 Shultz again talked directly with Reagan about this matter before it broke in the media.

Cy Vance had resigned as Carter's Secretary of State over a policy involving Iran that he thought was too risky - the 1980 rescue attempt of the Iranian hostages. The arms for hostages policy was a thousand times more egregious than the hostage rescue plan - it was a criminal offense for one thing. Simple integrity, of which Shultz normally seemed to have a more than ample supply, would seem to have required him to threaten to resign over this matter long before the scandal broke in the media, and to have followed through if necessary. For me, the Zhou En-lai excuse does not work. As for North, I met him in a couple of NSC meetings that we both attended. He focused on Central American matters - Nicaragua and El Salvador. Early on, he had the reputation in State of being a "loose cannon." He and poor Bud McFarland both seemed to be straight out of "the gang that couldn't shoot straight."

When the story broke in the press, INR and all of the Department of State, except for Shultz and a handful of his close staff, were caught completely by surprise. The rest of us immediately tried to figure out what this was all about. At first the NSC crowd and Casey actually continued - with Reagan's approval - the arms for hostages operation. At a NSC meeting, Reagan said that Shultz and the other seniors present should sign a paper saying they all knew of and supported the policy vis a vis Iran. Shultz refused. The newspapers began to run stories on Oliver North and the CIA's role in the building scandal. But before the Congressional investigation really got started, the House and Senate intelligence committees took secret testimony from Casey. I went with Mike Armacost to attend the intelligence committees' hearings - the first was to be at the House on November 21. When the session opened, the question arose whether Casey should be put under oath. The chairman said he knew Casey would of course tell the truth whether under oath or not, so why bother. I always wondered about that. During the hearing that followed, Casey denied that he knew about the November 1985 CIA transfer of missiles from Israel to Iran - an act done without a presidential finding and thus clearly a criminal offense. Casey said he was out of the country. Maybe he had heard of a shipment but thought it was oil drilling bits.

That was Friday. Mike and I returned to the Department after the House session. Mike knew and I suspected that Casey had outright lied. Back in the office, I received calls from a number of Congressional staffers; they wanted to know what we thought of Casey's testimony. They also believed he had lied. On Sunday, Casey sent a note to the President urging him to fire Shultz. At Monday NSC meeting, an angry Reagan did not attack Casey and Poindexter for the deepening scandal but amazingly proclaimed that the hare-brained missile sales had been a historic success. The very next day, Attorney General Ed Meese dropped the bomb! He informed the same group, with Reagan again presiding, that his investigation had discovered that funds from the missile sales had been diverted to the Contras - another criminal offense, another violation of the Constitution, another political debacle. This was too much. Reagan, who had praised the work of Poindexter and North the previous day, now fired them both. But what about Casey, Reagan's old friend and the mastermind of the grand scheme? Amazingly, Casey carried on with his secret activities, persuading Reagan to authorize the CIA to continue its contact with Iran in order to build upon the "relationship."

Meanwhile, Casey told his deputy, John McMahon, to find a scheme to pretend the November 1985 shipment came under the January 1986 Presidential finding. McMahon believed Casey would leave him hanging out to dry and refused to cooperate. McMahon, however, was hardly clean; he had gone along with the whole adventure. On December 2, Casey amended his story to Congress and said he did know of the November 1985 shipment. Finally, on December 14, Schultz told Reagan of CIA's unilateral efforts to win favor in Teheran by persuading Kuwait to release convicted terrorists tied to Iran and the establishment of a direct Iranian-CIA phone line. Schultz said he was obligated to inform Congress of all these facts. What did Reagan do then? We don't know. Mortified at the Pandora's Box of vipers he had let loose, he certainly told Nancy. Afterwards, he probably called Casey and told him the jig was up.

That same day, as I recall, Casey was scheduled to appear before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. We expected that this session would be the moment of truth. Casey must have been sweating blood. He could assume Shultz was informing the Committee of everything he knew, including the diversion of illegal Iranian funds to an illegal Contra account - of which ten million dollars would be found missing. As I was getting ready to go to the Hill, I got word from the Committee staff that Casey had been rushed to George Washington Hospital. A brain tumor it was later explained. Bob Woodward claimed to have snuck in and talked to him before he died. Casey had a family funeral, but for years I always suspected that Casey, who Shultz called "a streetfighter," was really running a bar on some island off Belize. His last covert operation. Alas, he probably passed away a few years ago and his beautiful mulatto girl friend buried him at sea as he had wished, together with a bible and a cake. Casey was the only on who could have fingered Reagan. Whatever his end, Casey - and pretty much Ronald Reagan - escaped the judgment of history for an incredible debacle, which would not be surpassed until the 2003 invasion of Iraq on cooked intelligence.

Q: What happened to your job as soon as Iran-Contra became public? It must have occurred to some people that you were not in a position to report on all covert activities. Could any one in the Department trust the CIA after this episode?

TAYLOR: Iran-Contra illustrated the possibility of a CIA director carrying on an illegal covert operation without any interference from his Cabinet colleagues. Defense Secretary Weinberger also knew about the Iran-Contra scheme and opposed it as illegal and risky but he cooperated in carrying it out. George Shultz and his deputy found it crazy as well as criminal and unconstitutional but neither resigned. Casey was a close friend of the President and a powerful political partisan. He grossly distorted intelligence analysis as well as covert action to serve his ideological views and his passions. If nothing else the incident should have told the country that the CIA director should not be politician or a close friend of the president, but an individual of proven integrity as well brains.

Unfortunately the practice of CIA directors run amuck continues. 17 years later, George Tenet oversaw, not as did Casey a criminal misuse of the CIA, but a historically much more momentous tilting of analysis. Tenet was not a friend of the President when the Administration began but, according to Bob Woodward, quickly "bonded" with him and made a point of himself attending the President's morning intelligence briefings. (He had also taken the precaution of naming the vast CIA complex after the President's father, who had served as CIA Director for only 11 months.). Although not a member of the cabinet, Tenent became part of the political team. The Casey/Tenet experiences tell us that the organization and structure of the CIA are not the problem. Certainly money - a usual remedy for the Agency's failure - is not. Likewise, imposing another level of senior bureaucracy in the form of an Intelligence Tsar or adding 50% more "human intelligence" going to improve the situation. In the public mind and in the heart of the media, the cloak and dagger image is how they mostly think of the CIA. Restoration of full independence, integrity, reliability, and accountability to the CIA comes down principally to the character of its leadership and its resulting culture. The Casey/Tenet experiences cry out for Congressional action mandating that the CIA director not be in the cabinet, not be a politician, and not have personal ties to the President. In terms of organization, the most important reform that could be made would be to make intelligence analysis a completely separate bureaucracy.

Q: What happened as a result of Iran-Contra?

TAYLOR: There were some positive follow ups to the scandal. I proposed to Mort that we suggest a new presidential decision memorandum that would tighten up the guidelines for approval of any covert activity or any change in on-going actions established by presidential "findings." Each covert action would have to include a statement by the State Department spelling out what U.S. interests and objectives would be served, providing a cost-benefit analysis, and declaring that the actions envisioned. were legal and constitutional and the risks were acceptable. In addition, all existing "findings" would have to be renewed on a regular basis and renewals would also require State Department concurrence. In addition, I proposed a working group to review implementation and a "sunset" principle in which each Presidential "finding" would have to be reviewed and justified each year. Mort refined the ideas and took them up with the Secretary. Eventually the NSC incorporated them in a Presidential Decision Memorandum. I also brought about a revision in the description of the role of covert action in a long-term intelligence strategy paper prepared by the intelligence community for the Congressional committees.

Following up with a review of on-going programs, we directed all chiefs of mission to regularly review any covert actions going on with their host countries. I won an agreement on the elimination of five covert action programs and one sensitive anti-narcotics program. In all these cases it was agreed after close review that the costs and risks far out weighed the possible benefits.

Q: In light of some of the most recent reports on our covert operations that did not enhance our reputation, I would have thought that CIA and State would have had entirely different views of such operations.

TAYLOR: One has to distinguish between two major categories of covert actions. There are those that are intended through direct or indirect violent action to bring about immediate and fundamental political change in a target country, or in some cases destabilization is considered a sufficient goal. These regime-change actions can involve military support of insurgent groups, either existing ones like UNITA in Angola and the resistance in Afghanistan, or, as in the case of the Nicaraguan Contras, insurgent forces essentially created by us. Most covert actions, however, are more innocuous, such as black propaganda campaigns, the provision of financial assistance to non-violent, dissident groups, or organizations pushing for human rights. They might also involve support of newspapers and radio stations expected to support our point of view. During the Cold War, some of these activities were successful; others were not.

Q: Afghanistan was a pivotal point in the Cold War.

TAYLOR: The Afghan covert program was begun in the Carter years. It met all the principles, in my view, of an acceptable lethal covert action intended to overthrow or destabilize a regime:

Thus, in my opinion, the Afghan covert operation was fully justified. During this same period, we also provided non-military assistance to groups opposing the Vietnamese occupation oCambodia, but not of course to Pol Pot. Here again, the conditions were met for a successful program. Where we did not have the clear and strong support of most regional governments, our traditional allies, the American people, and the Congress, our covert activities intended to overthrow or destabilize existing and internationally recognized regimes ended badly as iAngola, or to no particular benefit in places like Libya. Nicaragua was a distinct case.

It could be argued that the resumption of US aid to the Contras in 1986 - this time openly approved by Congress - provided the necessary pressure essential to persuade the Sandinistas to accept the Esquipulas peace process and agree to monitored elections in 1990, which resulted in their defeat by a democratic coalition. It could also be argued, however, that US support for an armed rebellion in an internationally recognized state was justified only if that state was violating international law by attacking other states, itself supporting insurgencies, or by some other illegal acts across its borders to destabilize other countries. To use large scale violence to promote regime change in a country that did not meet these conditions and under circumstances inconsistent with the criteria listed above, undermines America's moral authority in the world and eventually its security.

Gorbachev wanted an end to tension in Central America and without the Contras would have likely still pressured the Sandinistas to cease support for insurgencies in El Salvador, Honduras, or elsewhere. It was the policy of containment and internal changes in Russia, not the Reagan Doctrine, that eventually brought down the Soviet Union. By the same token, containment, I believe, would have worked in Central America. This could have included the threat of a Contra-like response if the Sandinistas renewed their support for insurgents in the region. As it was, our violation of universal principles of relations between states in the case of Nicaragua and the neocons' perception that it was a success would soon come back to haunt us. The Reagan Doctrine was the precursor of the George W. Bush Doctrine of US hegemony and preemptive action in its defense.

During my time as DAS, I suggested two new non-lethal covert actions, which were approved by the regional bureaus concerned, the CIA, and the White House. They were implemented under the new procedures. Since 9/11, the controls we introduced have probably gone by the board and it is another time of free wheeling covert operations by the CIA and the Pentagon. More debacles are likely.

Q: As a student of cultures, can you summarize the culture of the Agency and the Department in the mid-1980s?

TAYLOR: In my day, CIA officers, like FSOs, included the usual spectrum of personalities as well as professional and political outlooks. I had many good friends in the Agency. With one extreme exception, all the station chiefs I knew were people I trusted and liked. Most were sophisticated and outward looking, and politically moderate. Not extremists by any means. The trade, however, did attract persons with an inclination to deception and to demonization of enemies. For these persons, the Agency was a law unto itself. I had experience with one Agency officer who was a fan if not a member of the John Birch Society. In my mind, he lacked both moral and professional courage not to speak of political judgment and a sense of decency. But, I have also known an FSO with the same qualities. So, on balance the character or temperament oFSOs and normal CIA operations officers are the same.

Covert and paramilitary operations, however, probably tend to recruit more "knuckle draggers" than does agent recruitment, foreign liaison, and other aspects of regular CIA "operations." Agency officers did generally tend to believe more than their Foreign Service colleagues in an aggressive response to the Soviet threat and in the effectiveness of covert intervention, lethal and non-lethal, and the importance of information collected clandestinely through human agents. After all, that was their trade. FSOs grew skeptical of covert action through experience; for example, my own in Taiwan and on other Asian assignments in the 1960s, 1970, and 1980s.

FSOs also knew that information obtained clandestinely by the Agency was very often over-rated. In some major cases it was even planted but still distributed for years as credible and valuable stuff. On one or two occasions "intelligence" was distributed even when the Agency knew it came from a double agent. The two tunnel fiascos I referred to earlier - the Berlin Tunnel in the 1950s and the 1980s Soviet Embassy tunnel in Washington - produced reams of secret or top secret CIA reports that were avidly read for years throughout Washington. But the KGB knew all along of the two tunnels' existence and they screened information to be put on the tapped wires. During the Cold War, every CIA agent in East Germany was a double agent for STASI. Every one. In the early 1990s, former CIA Deputy Director Bobby Inman informed Congress that we had learned this from STASI files after the collapse of the Iron Curtain. Again, a good guess is that a few hundred or more CIA operations officers spent much their careers handling these unknown double-agents. Many received cash awards for their "recruitment" successes and a few thousand secret reports based on their scurrilous or worthless information were circulated on high. Almost certainly STASI's mentor, the KGB, likewise had control of many if not most Russian agents the CIA recruited over the years. These gaffs are seldom revealed. Thus the CIA's lack of accountability for its errors is staggering. Later, I will mentioned the case of alleged Cuban double agents.

Q: In most of the interviews I have conducted, I have been told that the CIA never uncovered information that was important to policy development. All of the information it gathered went to Washington where it was put through the bureaucratic maze. Were you cognizant that reports from the overt side of the U.S. government - the embassy's substantive sections - were acted upon whereas the material from the covert operations disappeared in the ether?

TAYLOR: I personally know of one outstanding case of clandestine agent reporting that served a vital purpose. On Taiwan, the CIA recruited a young Chinese cadet in the military academy. Eventually, this man rose to be a senior officer in Taiwan's secret nuclear weapons laboratory. Thus, for 20 years we knew precisely what the Taipei Government was doing in this field. Under U.S. pressure, the program was shut down three times, hopefully for the last time in 1988.

In my own career, I cannot recall any other really critical intelligence obtained through a planted agent or by the suborning of a well-placed individual. This is in contrast to the flow of strategically and sometimes politically critical information from technical intelligence - communications intercepts and satellite photography. Of course, many of the thousands of CIA humint reports I saw over the years, while not critical, were useful when combined with other information.

Penetrating Third World countries very near or even at the highest level has not been that difficult. The information thereby obtained has been sometimes helpful in our dealings with certain governments and in specific negotiations. But, at least in my experience, except for the case of the Taiwan spy, CIA agent information has never been vital to US national security. In a totally imaginary example, having the vice-president of Ghana reporting to the CIA would not likely produce critical information. The Agency was never really close to penetrating policy making levels in the tough targets, such as the Soviet Union, China, North Korea, Vietnam, etc. Likewise today with terrorist groups. Having a few thousand more CIA operations officers, including a good number in non-official cover overseas, will not likely achieve such penetration.

Most of the few critically important Russian agents we had - not the double agents - were, so far as I know, "walk-ins." In other words, Agency operatives did not recruit them. My retired CIA friends agree that "walk ins" were the bread and butter. My guess is that "a few good men or women" could have handled all of the really valuable assets in the hard target countries. The critically good foreign agent reporting on Taiwan's nuclear program beginning in The 1970s, was probably recruited by one or two good CIA officers and controlled over the years as a part time job for one operations officer. The rest of the clandestine-agent reporting from Taiwan - that is from paid sources in the government - ranged from useless to significant but not vital. I would guess that if we had had no "human intelligence" at all during the Cold War, there would have been no major difference in the course of history. Technical intelligence, on the other hand, played a vital role.

Q: Many in Congress are calling for more CIA spies abroad and for CIA infiltration of Al Qaeda itself. What do you think?

TAYLOR: After 9/11 and then the debacle on IRAQ WMD, the CIA has complained that its failures reflect cuts made in the Agency's budgets and thus in its personnel. But, in my opinion and again in the opinion of my CIA friends, if the Agency had had 5,000 additional operations officers at work in 2001, it would have had no better information and produced no better analysis on Al Qaeda and Iraqi weapons than was the case. Some senior professionals I know believe the Agency is too big not too small. But, the favorite prescription for dealing with intelligence failures is in fact to give the CIA more money, specifically to have more so-called "human intelligence."

Senator John Edwards and others in Congress and the media have found the simple solution - put American agents inside Al Qaeda. It seems simple. Why did we not think of this before? The answer is that the CIA and other Western intelligence organizations are inherently not good at infiltrating their own people into hard targets like terrorist groups or absolutist regimes. During the Cold War, neither the CIA nor any other democratic clandestine service was able to penetrate the inner circles of the Soviet Union. On the other hand, it is ideological governments and organizations that operate in a society or culture in which it is feasible to send their compatriots or fellows off to live secret undercover lives for years with the uncertain hope of eventually infiltrating key elements in a target government or group for the purpose of influence, espionage, sabotage, or terrorism. Such imbedded agents, of course, do not have diplomatic immunity. "We don't do that," a friend and former senior CIA operations officer recently told me. "We're bureaucrats." CIA officers in the field collecting intelligence either liaise with friendly or non- adversarial clandestine services of other countries or, with various enticements and arguments, seek to recruit or suborn foreigners with access to the secret information we want. Contrary to the popular image, CIA's clandestine officers have not previously assumed deep, non-diplomatic undercover identities. Indeed, it's not our thing.

If the Soviet Politburo was exceedingly hard to penetrate, it is virtually impossible for non-Moslem services in democratic societies to themselves infiltrate fanatical Moslem groups. We can hire ten thousand young Americans and teach them Arabic or Farsi or some other language of a Moslem country and their chances of personally penetrating Al Qaeda or similar groups will still be close to nil. Penetrating Islamist terrorist organizations can really only be done, if it can be done at all, by governments of Moslem countries. The CIA is no doubt already poring a hundreds of millions of dollars into supporting intelligence services in these countries for this purpose. But this work requires a limited staff of trained and astute American liaison officers, not an army of cloak and dagger guys lurking in the bazaars of the Middle East. But it also demands a high degree of professionalism to vet foreign obtained intelligence.

We also do not need any additional or even different intelligence analysts. INR with 165 analysts did a better job in assessing Iraqi WMD and the consequences of a US invasion of that country than did the CIA and DIA with a total of more than 4,000 analysts. Instead, what is required is a leadership of the intelligence community that is devoted one- hundred percent to the integrity of its reporting and analysis and is willing to correct serious exaggerations and distortions of its product by the President's team.

Q: The public impression of CIA officers is that their work and their lives are like those of James Bond.

TAYLOR: Yes, it certainly is. The new Disney-like International Spy Museum in Washington plays up the 007 secret agent illusion. This privately run Museum even has a James Bond-like automobile with retractable machine guns. The exaggeration and romanticization of the clandestine agent or of "human intelligence" (known in the trade by the irritating name, "humint") has, in my opinion, grossly distorted the disposition of resources between overt and covert reporting, and contributed to debacles from Iran-Contra to IRAQ WMD. Hollywood's glamorization of the trade, of course, has been a key source of the misperception of what the CIA is and what it does. Everybody thinks they know what spy agencies do. But Congress, the media, and the public have little appreciation of the important role of Foreign Service reporting or even what it is. Working with the Admin Bureau, INR/C (my office) launched two study projects to underscore for Congress the role of foreign service reporting in the conduct of our foreign relations, crisis management, and, yes, in intelligence collection and analysis.

We knew how many CIA operations officers were working abroad and how many Foreign Service reporting officer. I felt it was part of my responsibility to do what little I could to maintain the ratio of CIA to Foreign Service reporting officers abroad. During my time, working with the Management Office we urged all chiefs of mission to take a critical look at the staffing of their posts, including that of the intelligence agencies. In particular they were asked to closely examine the justifications for new, additional positions sought by the CIA and other intelligence agencies. Actually, we were able to institute a rule that a new intelligence position established in one post would have to be off set elsewhere by a cut. We suggested our embassies should also take a close look at existing staffing. Some chiefs of mission did pay attention to this issue and tried to hold the line or even took the initiative in seeking elimination of some intelligence positions; others did not seriously vet requests for staff increases from the secret services. Again, all the efforts to restrain the growth of intelligence personnel in our missions abroad and to retain any balance with overt reporting has, since 9/11 and Iraq, no doubt gone with the wind.

Q: Was there any way to get the information you got from CIA out to the missions?

TAYLOR: CIA reports are of course distributed within the government and to Foreign Service posts, depending on the classification. These reports sometimes include comment on the source and analysis by the field and by headquarters. In the field, the analysis is supposed to be shown to the chief of mission for his comment if he chooses to add one. But the CIA has its own, separate communications system. That system is protected vigorously by the Agency since it serves a useful purpose for them in more ways than one. It provides the Agency an independence that is perhaps necessary but also subject to abuse. The chief of mission does not have automatic access to administrative and informal chat messages between the station and the Agency that may in fact contain analysis of major events undercutting the views of the COM or pertaining to the functioning of the post or to the COM himself. Sometimes a station chief will use informal code words within encrypted messages, thus allowing him or her superficially to deny to the COM that he or she is sending a communication on a given subject.

Q: What else did you do as DAS?

TAYLOR: I testified before the Congressional intelligence committees on sensitive subjects and briefed all out going ambassadors on what was happening at their posts in the clandestine and covert fields. I represented the Secretary at various meetings in the White House on intelligence and covert action, drafted letters for the Secretary to Casey on sensitive issues, and prepared the agenda for the Deputy Secretary's weekly luncheon with Casey. I also spent quite a bit of time in improving coordination with the FBI, Defense Intelligence, and DEA on their clandestine activities. Finally, I wrote numerous memos for Mort Abramowitz and sometimes drafted memos from him to the Secretary on operational intelligence and related policy issues. The subjects of these memos included: reforming the intelligence community; building a bipartisan policy on Nicaragua; examining U.S. policy on the Afghan conflict and toward Cambodia, Yemen, Angola, Libya, etc; and devising a broad policy framework for addressing the four regional conflicts of the day. Finally, pursuing a favorite hobbyhorse, I argued in favor of making the DCI post a career, non-cabinet position. "Upstairs," however, did not want to pursue that idea. Too bad, since in the aftermath of Iran-Contra a window existed for gaining White House and Congressional approval of this key reform - in effect undoing Ronald Reagan's mistake of making the Director's job a cabinet and thus a highly political position.

PART VII1987-1994

Q: You left your job in 1987. Where did you go next?

TAYLOR: I was assigned to Cuba as the chief of the U.S. mission in Havana known as the US Interests Section or USINT. I was greatly surprised at the assignment. I had passed the Spanish test back in 1959 but had never had a Spanish-speaking assignment. While on an official trip to Thailand, I received a call from the senior DAS in INR, who told me that I had been selected to go to Havana as chief of the Interests Section. Officially, USINT was part of the Swiss Embassy in Havana. Actually, USINT was located in the old US Embassy, a six story building on the seafront. At the time, it had 28 American employees, including Marines, and about 100 Cubans. The Swiss Embassy was a small office with two or three Swiss officers. I told my colleague that I would like to return to Washington before making a decision.

When I arrived back in town, I told the Director General of the Foreign Service, George Vest, that Cuba would be a great assignment, but that I was quite happy with my current work and would like to stay there for another year. I was involved in a lot of interesting matters, most particularly the Iran-Contra affair and the follow up. As I mentioned, we were trying to develop and implement new procedures that would hopefully discourage another "adventure" like Iran-Contra. The DG admitted that Personnel had not given me any advance notice - or even an inkling of the Havana assignment - which was a deviation from normal practice. He said that he would tighten up the procedures in his office to insure that there would be no more such "surprises." He asked me to think about the offer and to reach a decision.

I did cogitate on the matter for a couple of weeks. It is bad form in the Foreign Service to turn down a Chief of Mission (COM) position, even if it did not carry the formal title of ambassador. I knew the job would be under constant scrutiny from powerful domestic forces not inclined toward any dealings at all with Castro - even with the existence of the Interest Section. My friend, Stapleton Roy, then the Executive Director of the Department told me that Israel was an extremely tricky post for a COM in light of the domestic sensitivities, but Cuba was even more of a hot potato. After weighing the pros and cons, I decided to accept the assignment. I talked to Elliot Abrams, the Assistant Secretary for ARA (American Republics Affairs). I told him that I was delighted to go to Havana and do the best job I could as a professional. That meant that I would call "a spade a spade" and make candid assessments of things as I saw them. I added that I would of course implement his policies whether I agreed with them or not. I would be honest and above board. He agreed that would be my proper role. I also talked to Mike Kozak, who was the DAS in charge of Cuban affairs. I told him the same thing I had told Abrams and he also agreed that I had outlined a perfectly acceptable position.

Iran/Contra had warmed up the already hot domestic debate about our Central American policies; in particular what to do about Sandinista Nicaragua. The Administration's key objective in Latin America was to oust the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, who with the aid of a broad pro-democracy front in 1979 had overthrown the dictator Anastasio Somoza and taken power in Managua. Before the end of 1980, however, pro-Cuban Marxists had taken over the Sandinistas and the government. The Sandinistas and Cuba then targeted El Salvador. By the spring of 1982, US covert aid via the CIA began flowing to the Contras, the new anti-Sandinista insurgent group based in Honduras. When this covert project was leaked to the press, the Administration conceded that it was involved in covert training and arming Nicaraguan exiles in Honduras not to over throw the Sandinista regime but in order to put pressure on it to stop its own subversion across its borders. The idea that the United States was openly supporting an armed exile insurgency against an internationally recognized government with which the US also had diplomatic relations seemed shocking to most Americans. Congress passed the Boland Amendment forbidding US agencies from aiding the overthrow of the Nicaraguan Government. In the House of Representatives the vote was 411 to 0 in favor of the amendment. In 1984 the Congress forebade all Contra aid, whether to overthrow or just pressure the Sandinista Government.

The President, the NSC, and the CIA then connived to keep the flow of funds going to the Contras by various illegal means, including the famous diversion of funds from the illegal sale of missiles to Iran. The Congress in June of 1986 reversed its ban on aid to the Contras and authorized a $100 million package of assistance to defeat the pro-communist guerrillas in El Salvador. Castro had provided arms and other support to the pro-communist guerrillas in El Salvador (the FMLF) as well as to the Sandinistas before they took power. It was not surprising that Abrams took a very hard line against Castro. I thought he was a very tough but rational conservative. We could disagree, I believed, but work together.

At the time (1987), I did not know that Abrams was aligned against his boss, the Secretary, opposing the Esquipulas peace process in Central America. In alliance with the hard liners at the NSC, Abrams' objective was to back the Contras until they swept the Sandinistas out of power, not to engage the Nicaraguan comandantes in endless haggling over elections. As Shultz later said, this group, which included Abrams, viewed the Contras as "an end in themselves." Shultz welcomed his staff differing from his views, but why he permitted Abrams to lobby against his policy on this key issue is inexplicable. I assume it demonstrated the power of his faction on the Hill. As I was to learn, Abrams did not welcome strong dissent from his own subordinates.

In 1984-85, Radio Marti, a new semi autonomous part of USIA, began regular broadcasts in Spanish from Florida using a medium wave frequency. Marti could be heard throughout Cuba and it quickly became popular. CANF gets credit for having pushed its creation. Almost all Cubans owned medium wave radio sets. Castro reacted aggressively to the beginning of Marti. He said the broadcasts were a violation of Cuba's sovereign rights, an insult, and a provocation. He was in a particular huff because we had appropriated the name of the Cuban hero of the revolution against Spain. In response, he suspended the Mariel migration agreement, which he had signed with Washington in 1980, the last year of the Carter administration.

The aim of this agreement had been to resolve the migration crisis that had begun with the Mariel boatlift that year. The accord in effect had regularized migration matters between Cuba and the USA. It set out procedures for Cuban political refugees as well as regular immigrants to come to the US in an orderly way. Potential refugees and other immigrants were to be processed and cleared by our office in Havana. At the same time, the Cuban government agreed to resume cooperation with the return to Cuba of those refugees who had come to the U.S. in the Mariel boat lift and who subsequently had been convicted of crimes in the U.S.

For the African Bureau, the most important issue with Cuba was the fact of its sizable troop deployment in Angola. The Cubans had had a very substantial military force in Angola since 1975-1976 when they went in to help the new communist government (headed by the Movement for the Liberation of Angola or MPLA) resist a South African military intrusion in support of the guerrilla movement called UNITA (and the soon defunct FNLA). In his memoirs, Secretary Shultz assumes the Cubans arrived in Angola as part of the Brezhnev Doctrine of not permitting the internal overthrow of any Marxist State. UNITA, however, could not have threatened the MPLA regime without South African and US intervention on its side in the mid-1970s, the former with armed forces and the latter with arms supplies.

The MPLA also gave sanctuary and a rear base to SWAPO, the nationalist and leftist guerrilla movement in South African-ruled Namibia. This provided both the pretext and the provocation for South African intervention in Angola. One agreement among the parties in 1984 that did not address the Cuban troop issue broke down. Meanwhile, South Africa with the aid of ex-Rhodesian black and white guerrilla fighters had also begun a large scale insurgent group called RENAMO, which sought to overthrow the communist government oMozambique. Bill Casey unofficially endorsed Pretoria's RENAMO effort. Shultz had been afraid that Reagan could be persuaded at any time by Casey, Buchanan, and various lobbyists to support RENAMO. Reagan tended to support any anti-communist movement. But in 1985, Shultz managed to arrange a meeting in the White House between Reagan and the Mozambique leader, Samora Machel. Reagan liked Machel, and that was that.

In 1986-1987, Chet Crocker still saw as feasible an accord in Angola in which all parties would agree that there should be no foreign troops or other outside interference in Angola; that is, the South Africans and the Cubans would both withdraw their troops and, left unspoken, the US would also cease its aid to UNITA. The second part of an Angolan settlement would be South Africa's agreement to abide by UN Security Council resolution 435 calling for democratic elections and independence in Namibia. South Africa had indicated it would agree to this only if all Cuban troops withdrew from Angola. Castro's position was that Cuban troops would remain in Angola as long as South Africa threatened the MPLA regime. All the parties insisted they wanted to see peace and independence in Namibia and elections there without outside interference. These not-incompatible positions suggested to Crocker that a broad solution was possible. Such an accord could also hopefully provide the basis for internal reconciliation in Angola between the MPLA and UNITA, thus giving the United States the context for ending its aid to UNITA.

But congressional right wingers, Bill Casey, and the President himself, made realization of these goals difficult. Reagan as well as Casey were both sympathetic to the South Africans and to any "freedom fighters" against Marxist regimes. Casey "viscerally and unswervingly" opposed everything Shultz and Crocker were trying to do in southern Africa. The CIA worked secretly with South African intelligence to counter the State Department's diplomacy. Pushed by Senator Helms and others, the Reagan Administration renewed covert aid to UNITA, thus establishing an unspoken informal alliance with South Africa in Angola. Meanwhile, talks had started up once more between the Angolans, the Americans, and the South Africans, but the Cubans were again not included. In 1986, the UNITA leader Savimbi visited Washington, and the renewal o"covert" US aid to his organization was made public. Also in 1986, Castro said at a Non-Aligned meeting that Cuban troops might have to stay in Angola to protect it until apartheid was overthrown in South Africa.

A serious dispute now grew up between the AF and ARA bureaus. AF wanted to include Cuba in a new round of talks on Angola and Namibia but ARA was dead set against it.

In April, a ranking Cuban counter-intelligence officer defected to the United States. Castro soon after went on television to release the names of about fifteen Cubans, who, he said, had been double agents reporting to the CIA for many years (as I recall he said it was "more than 20 years") but also to their own government. Presumably, Castro was revealing this story of intrigue and deception because of the recent defection. The CIA, as is its practice, refused either to confirm or deny Castro's story. Of course, I can also neither confirm nor deny. But its interesting: Castro knows if the CIA's efforts in Cuba were really a debacle or not, but the American people do not know.

Castro played up the account of the alleged double agents, including videotapes shown on TV that seem to show American officers stationed in the U.S. Interest Section - and in some cases, their wives - walking into palm groves and other remote sites apparently leaving material, money, and notes in secret "drops." Cuban Television also displayed sophisticated radio and camera equipment, which it said the CIA had provided the Cuban agents. Some of the alleged double agents, including a ship's captain and an airline pilot, recounted how they had been recruited, told by Cuban intelligence to cooperate, and sent by the CIA to Virginia for lie detector tests and training. They said they had all passed the polygraph. Incidentally, my concern with counter-intelligence matters over the years led me to believe that a polygraph test might well catch the amateur spy, but probably not a trained professional. That is why, during the Cold War, the KGB never used it.

Sometime in the late spring of 1987, a Cuban air force general, Raphel Del Pino, also defected. He had been a hero in the battle of the Bay of Pigs. He escaped from the island by flying a Cuban military plane to Miami with his family. That created a lot of excitement among the Cuban-American community. The Cubans insisted that the aircraft be returned. Meanwhile, they took retaliatory actions; for example, they canceled the flights that we had been making to supply our Interests Section in Havana, including many classified pouches. That meant that members of the section had to take turns flying the pouches in and out of Miami on the regular charter flight.

The Cubans were also upset by new US surveillance flights over Cuba. The Cubans could not claim that long-existing satellite overflights violated their national sovereignty, but they could and did vigorously protest manned aircraft flying over their country. Engaging in such flights is not a normal practice between states that are trying to have a serious although not necessarily a friendly relationship. It probably also was violation of international law, justified in extreme situations but not in non-threatening ones. In sum, as I was leaving for Havana, a number of contentious issues existed between the U.S. and Cuba.

Shortly, before I left, I asked both Kozak and Abrams to provide a brief but detailed talking point regarding the potential for improvement of relations between the two countries. I was told that I could say that once the Mariel migration program had been restarted "then, and only then, could there be discussion broader issues." It was under these circumstances that I arrived in beautiful if somewhat crumbling Havana.

Q: What were you told before your departure about the Cuban-American community in Miami because that is a powerful lobby in the U.S.?

TAYLOR: The Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF) headed by Jorge Mas Canosa dominated the Miami Cuban community. Like many exile cultures, CANF was of course interested in bringing down the hated regime, but it was even more concerned about its position as the major political force in the exile community and in the U.S. CANF opposed any activity that undercut its goal of weakening and eventually overthrowing the Castro regime. A belief in the imminent collapse of the hated regime was a key tenet in the group's outlook Thus it had opposed the setting up of the two "interest sections," and continued to argue against bilateral agreements between the two governments. As happens in such political environments, the leadership of the exile group fell to the more militant elements - i.e. those who made the most inflammatory comments about the need to oust the hated regime.

Q: You went at the end of the Reagan administration. Were you told to be concerned about domestic U.S. politics because particularly the Republicans seem to pay considerable homage to the Cuban-American community in Miami?

TAYLOR: I didn't get any specific instructions about this matter. The Cuban community and the Foundation were of course in very good standing with people in the Administration - particularly Elliot Abrams. A prominent Cuban-American named Sorzano, who had been a member of the Foundation and close to Mas, was the NSC staffer for Latin America. This was a pretty clear signal as to the priorities of the Administration regarding Latin America. I asked whether I should stop in Miami to pay a call on Mas but was told that would not be necessary. I said I would stop and have lunch with him during a later trip, which I did. I called at the Foundation's office in Washington before I left.

Q: It is said that in the Israel situation, anything that is reported in the morning, will be on some Senator's desk in the afternoon - even before it gets to the Department. Was that the situation in Cuba? Were you told that you could have entirely private correspondence with the Department?

TAYLOR: As I mentioned earlier, I told Elliot Abrams during our first meeting that I would be totally candid in sending him my views. If the issue was especially sensitive, I said, I would send the message NODIS and EYES ONLY or as an "official-informal" cable so that only Abrams would see them. Jorge Mas through his position on the Radio Marti Board could have had access to some of our lower classified cables. During a lunch discussion with him in Miami one day, he did seem to know the substance of a recent message we had sent to the Department. CANF had close contact with the Cuban Desk, which soon turned notably unfriendly toward my reporting from post and it seemed toward me personally. I don't know why, but Mas and the Foundation soon assumed that I was too "soft" on Castro. They appeared to have heard that I was recommending policies, for example on Angola, which were not in accord with their views. I assume this judgment came to them through ARA or possibly Sorzano, who as NSC director for Latin America, also read my messages.

In reading the previous year's cables from Havana I did not find any penetrating analysis. The office reported conversations with Cuban officials and foreign diplomats, what Castro said in public, what propaganda was emanating from the regime, and what was going on in Cuba so far as they could learn. But the reporting was essentially factual; it did not attempt much if any analysis or speculation. For example, I wanted to read an assessment of what was motivating Castro in his actions on the migration agreement, Radio Marti, and the supply flights. What was he thinking about the US/Angolan/South African talks going on and what were his current objectives in Angola and Central America? What did he think of Gorbachev and Glasnost? And how could we best play the situation to achieve our goals, such as promoting human rights? The office also might have asked whether the Blackbird flights where producing any truly valuable intelligence that we were not getting from satellites.

Q: The Havana Office was perhaps reflecting the time when the "hard-liners" had taken over ARA. You went to Cuba after Iran-Contra, which must be a sobering experience for ARA.

TAYLOR: One could make a case for a policy that sought to maximize Cuba's isolation; keeping Cuba out of the Angolan talks for example, while also trying to address practical bilateral issues like migration. Likewise, one could reasonably advocate reliance solely on pressure for amelioration of the regime's systemic human rights abuses and a rejection of incentives as an additional and parallel way to bring about change. This kind of policy line could have been argued professionally. In theory, it was even possible to recommend a war against Cuba and explain it in a professional way absent flag waving or polemics. But it was not professional to treat the presentation of alternative views or policy options as a hostile action. It was distressing to have policy differences discussed in strident terms, which what I soon encountered.

At this time, Cuban desk memos to Abrams, sometimes then sent on to the White House, did attempt to analyze what Fidel was up to by his recent actions - canceling the accord, jamming Radio Marti, stopping support flights, etc. These memos concluded that Castro was deliberately trying to destroy the ties that had been established with the U.S. since 1978. His objective, they speculated, was to provoke us into some rash (presumably military) response. Why Castro would want to do this was not clear. From what little I had read, I thought the analysis seemed at best debatable. I think I have somewhere the date of that memo.

More likely, it appeared to me, Castro was reacting to events rather than initiating them. Radio Marti was having an impact and Castro was taking retaliatory action. Not too surprising. The cancellation of the USINT supply flights may have been a response to the Blackbird over flights and the holding of the defector's airplane. The supply flights among other things had been bringing in large classified pallets, which in turn provoked some wry Cuban comment. It was a stretch to suggest that Cuba's jamming of Marti's signal and the cancellation of the flights were part of an effort to provoke the United States in order to destroy the tenuous bilateral connections that had been established with great difficulty. But that was the ARA view. I thought a broader dynamic was probably at work, including what was happening in the Soviet Union and in US-Soviet relations.

Q: Tell us a little about the interest section. How was it staffed? How did it operate?

TAYLOR: The staff included a deputy principal officer who also did economic reporting. A CIA analyst was aboard on loan as our political officer. Since the Department would not authorize a new State political reporting position at that time, the Agency was asked to lend us a good analyst. The man they sent was outstanding - a fluent Spanish speaker, and an energetic and insightful reporter with a keen analytical sense. He was strictly a State employee while in Havana. In latter positions, his CIA affiliation would become public knowledge. In addition, the roster included, a researcher, two communicators, an administrative officer, an assistant administrative officer, a USIA public affairs officer, a security officer, and a consular section with a chief and three or four other officers. A contingent of five or six marines was also on board. As an old Marine, I officiated at the traditional Marine Corps Ball held at the residence. Finally, we employed about 100 Cuban employees provided by the Cuban Government, no doubt including a number of undercover intelligence officers.

Once the Mariel Agreement was restored, the Consular officers processed immigrant visas and also political refugees. The latter task sometimes involved going to a Cuban prison for interviews. Castro, under the accord, allowed a few thousand Cuban citizens a year to go the States to visit relatives and return, and the Consular section processed these non-immigrant travelers as well. Essentially, I concentrated on reporting and analysis of Cuba's foreign policy, including making demarches to the Foreign Ministry on issues between us, and recommending courses of action. I tried to meet a wide range of Cuban officials and others in Cuba's quasi non-public sector such as churchmen, writers, artists, and think tank types. I also established close contact with those foreign diplomats who were serious "Castro watchers." Trying to get a feel how the system worked, I visited plants, schools, hospitals, farms, and of course sugar mills, and cigar factories. I tried to do one or two of these visits a week. I wrote thought pieces not only on bilateral and foreign affairs but also on internal issues, most especially human rights and popular attitudes. The political officer reported on trends inside the country, including popular attitudes. He even did a regular market basket survey, reporting on prices and availability of various goods and foodstuff. When we get to human rights I will discuss the important role of the PAO and the Chief Consular Officer in this area.

Q: How did you see Cuba in 1987?

TAYLOR: As I mentioned, the key bilateral issue of the moment was resumption of the Mariel agreement. We wanted: 1) to avoid another chaotic inflow of undocumented Cubans arriving by boat in Florida; 2) to resume the program returning convicted felons to Cuba; and 3) to restart the refugee program for Cuban political prisoners. On external matters, Cuba was a key actor on two important U.S. interests, Central America and Angola. On the former, I thought we should explore how if at all Cuba might change its policies in a way that would encourage the Sandinistas to go along with the Esquipulas peace process and hold internationally monitored elections. More intriguing because it seemed more possible was getting Cuban troops out of Angola. There were of course other matters of concern regarding Cuba. It was: a vital a cog in the Soviet Bloc throughout the world; a serious violator of human rights; and a major player in the Third World or the illogically-named Non-Aligned Movement. Finally, we had a strong interest in promoting human rights in Cuba and providing the Cuban people access to objective information about what was happening in the world and in Cuba. Eliminating the jamming of Radio Marti was thus an important objective.

I took my job to be one of trying to figure out how we could best deal with the Cuban government so as to achieve these objectives in whole or part. This meant first of all trying to analyze the dynamics and interests that lay behind Castro's position on these various issues. I thought it was an elementary principle that we would treat the regime as a serious government if we hoped to achieve serious results. This meant that their side would have to see benefit in any important changes they made. Whenever the Cubans professed a willingness to cooperate, I thought, we should test them but be prepared for failure.

Critical to achieving some success, I believed, was having the flexibility to hold out to Castro the prospect that significant advances on key issues could open the door to an improvement of bilateral relations. As mentioned, I had asked for and received the maximum encouragement about future relations that Elliot Abrams was willing to offer - "only after renewal of the migration agreement could there be any discussions about broader issues." I thought this was a fairly good position. The implication of the statement was that discussion of issues like Angola and even improved bilateral relations were possible if Cuba cooperated on certain matters. In fact, the only condition mentioned in the approved statement was resumption of the migration accord. The implication it seemed to me was that once this condition was met, the bilateral atmosphere would clear and then we could address the more difficult "broader differences" including Angola, Central America, and ultimately bilateral relations.

The Cubans and we approached all of these questions in the context of the important changes taking place in world politics. By 1987, Gorbachev had been in power a couple of years. Perestroika and Glasnost were actually being implemented, and contrary to the neocon view were real, far-reaching reforms. Freedom of speech was making astounding gains in the Soviet Union. A powerful process of change seemed underway. At the same time, relations between the U.S. and the USSR appeared to be on a brand new course. It was possible that Soviets could soon decide to withdraw from Afghanistan. In October 1986 at Reykjavik, Iceland, Reagan and Gorbachev - to the dismay of some of their respective staffs (i.e., Richard Pearle) - had almost agreed to eliminate ALL nuclear weapons! Gorbachev and Raisa were now expected in New York in December. They would receive a stirring embrace by the American people enthralled by the prospect of not just peace with the mighty Soviet Union but actual friendship.

Castro was very astute - perhaps the most astute and clever of all the communist dictators. He understood the dynamics of what was happening in world affairs. The changing circumstances, I thought, could possibly give him a new perspective and new interests and priorities regarding Central America, Angola, relations with the U.S., and possibly even human rights. If the Soviet Union and the United States were to continue down the path of dï¿½tente, Castro would be isolated and in a difficult situation regarding Angola and Central America. After all, he probably could not keep his army more than a few weeks in Angola without Soviet support. Apparently influenced by people like Carlos Aldana, the Politburo's chief ideologist, Castro, I believed, had decided he must try to get on board the dï¿½tente boat. In other words, Castro most likely did not want to destroy the existing ties with the United States, as the Cuban desk in ARA and Elliot Abrams thought, but rather he felt compelled by a changing world to seek his own improvement of relations with the United States. I said all this in a series of cables to ARA, mostly OI, exdis, or nodis. This would have been in September, October, and November 1987.

Re-establishment of the Mariel agreement would be the key first step. Soon after I arrived in Havana, I met with the Cubans who would be my counterparts in the Foreign Ministry and in the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party. These were: Vice Minister Ricardo Alarcon and German Blanco, head of the United States Desk at the Ministry; and at the Central Committee, Jose Arbesu and his assistant named Alcibaides. The Cubans, in answer to my inquiries, said that the Cuban Government was willing to discuss restoration of the Mariel agreement and that its resumption was basically in their interests. On Radio Marti they said that if the US would concede that Cuba had the right to broadcast on medium wave into the United States, it was possible that the jamming of Radio Marti would end. They wanted to know how agreement on these issues would affect the bilateral relationship and broader questions such as Angola. I emphasized that discussions about "improved relations" and broader issues could come after such an agreement. I also made a point of calling on the Latin Ambassadors as well as all the NATO envoys in Havana and stressed the same point to them. They all said they would urge the Cubans to resume the Mariel Accord and lift the jamming of Radio Marti.I reported to Washington that Cuban officials, including Alarcon, seemed interested in finding a solution to current bilateral problems, but had sought a linkage between Cuba's right to broadcast in the US as the US did into Cuba. Alarcon had also stressed that the Cubans wanted to discuss Angola, noting that in Luanda the US side was trying to persuade the Angolans not to include the Cubans in the on-going negotiations. In addition, the Cubans wanted to raise the issue of the Cuban plane being held in Florida. I suggested to ARA that we could find a face-saving way to accommodate the Cubans on their "broadcast rights" without surrendering anything, that we could hear them out on Angola, and that perhaps we should consider returning the plane. I got back a sharp and negative response. The desk warned that we would be falling into a "Cuban trap" if we agreed to talk about radio rights (other than the subject of Havana stopping its jamming of Radio Marti) and other issues (Angola). In the mind of ARA, Castro was simply looking for an opportunity to play a trick and provoke us.

In reply, I said I did not think Castro was setting "a trap" and that we could easily deal with the issue of radio rights by simply saying that Cuba could broadcast into the United States as long as it met all international standards and regulations. This was giving away nothing at all. Castro, I thought, probably wanted a fig leave to abandon the jamming of Radio Marti. On Angola, I said Castro's objectives might not be to disrupt the talks. I suggested that the Cuban ruler was aware that fundamental improvement in relations with the United States depended upon changes relating to both Nicaragua and Angola, as well as to the migration accord, and if we played our hand skillfully with Castro we might promote our objectives in these two areas. We should proceed cautiously, I said, but the possibility could provide a strategic framework for our relations with Castro and how we dealt with the issues in the upcoming meeting.

Prior to my arrival in Havana, Castro had told Nelson Rockefeller's daughter that Cuba would be interested in participating in the negotiations that were on going between South Africa and Angola brokered by the United States. Rockefeller's daughter took the message back to George Shultz who relayed it to Elliot Abrams. The African Bureau was never informed. In early October, I sent in a long cable assessing the key issue of Angola. In my report, I suggested that Castro had important incentives to try to settle the Angolan crisis. Pressures existed as well. For one, the Soviets were not interested in having one of their client states interfere with their rapprochement with the U.S. Gorbachev wanted to solve the Angolan issue for financial as well as political reasons. Castro was dependent on Soviet support to retain his forces there. The Cuban people were also becoming unhappy with the long deployment of Cuban men and women to that far away country. The troops had been there for more than ten years and they suffered a low level but steady rate of casualties.

I concluded that Castro probably did want or more likely needed an honorable way out of Angola. If so, this position could also be seen as part of his apparent recognition of the changing dynamics of world affairs and his now increased need to improve relations with the United States. Every senior diplomat in Havana, I reported, as well as the Catholic Bishop and other clergy in Cuba agreed with this assessment. I said that of course Castro might use the talks simply to further the existing fissures among the various parties in Angola. But it was very unlikely the Cubans would withdraw their troops or be told to withdraw by the MPLA until Havana was a participant in the negotiations. I thought that we should test Castro and see what happened. I sent this message NODIS for Elliot Abrams, but not "Eyes Only."

Q: Did you notice any discontent among the Cubans on the Angola issue?

TAYLOR: When asked about Angola, Catholic clergy and most other Cubans, including even some officials, would say that the ordinary citizen was growing tired of the involvement. In my opinion, a combination of growing domestic unease and the rapidly changing relationship between the two super-powers was driving Castro to be forthcoming on Angola and other issues.

In response to my message on Angola, I received a biting reply from Abrams suggesting that after only a few weeks I was not in a position to assess Cuban motives and that I needed to be steeped deeper in Angolan history and all the inequities perpetrated by the Cubans in the region. It was clear, ARA said, that Castro would not leave Angola until the communist revolution had succeeded in South Africa. This was a reference to Castro's 1986 statement that in order to protect Angola, Cuban troops might have to stay until apartheid was ended in South Africa. This eleven-year old proclamation by Castro was quite different from Abrams portrayal of it. The debate in Washington over whether or not to involve Cuba in the talks took place within the context of a broader struggle over policy toward South Africa that had raged within the Administration from the beginning. Right wingers such as Pat Buchanan, Jesse Helms, Bill Casey until his death in December 1986, and until his firing over Iran-Contra, John Poindexter, supported cooperation with the South African apartheid government, including its intelligence and military organs, against leftist black movements in southern Africa, meaning most of the key black nationalist parties, including the African National Congress.

This proto-neoconservative group saw the white South African Government as a valuable strategic asset against growing Soviet influence in Africa. The Shultz/Crocker camp advocated promotion of solutions to the internal conflicts in the region, such as in Angola and Mozambique, while pushing for an end to apartheid in South Africa. The moderate group that believed this was the way to prevent the spread of leftist and communist influence in southern Africa included the State Department generally outside of ARA, and a large majority of congressmen and women, including many Republicans. The American public seemed clearly on this side of the debate as well. After 1986, the Iran-Contra debacle plus new political realities gave the advantage to Shultz and Crocker.

Q: Did you get the feeling that you were dealing with "true believers" in the Department and that ideology was trumping professionalism?

TAYLOR: In ARA, the mind-set that persisted seemed to me not only unprofessional but also detached from the situation on the ground as well in the world arena. It was a frozen war mentality - just as it seemed maybe the Cold War was melting down. But more than a Cold War outlook, I now wonder if as far as Elliot Abrams was concerned it also reflected early manifestations of the neocon worldview. Richard Pearle and other proto-neocons were at that moment still doing what they could to prevent President Reagan from accepting the authenticity of Gorbachev's professed desire for peace and reform. As noted earlier, even the post-Casey CIA was still insisting that Gorbachev was either faking his reformist ideas or else he would never be permitted by the all-powerful nomenclatura to institute them. For Pearle and his fellow proto- neocons, it was perhaps beside the point whether or not Gorbachev was sincere. Likewise, Abrams may have thought Castro might indeed want to get out of Angola, but in the Hobbesian, misanthropic weltanschauung of today's neocons, we should not permit him to do so.

Hopefully, history will examine the question further. But looking back from 2004, I am struck by the similarities between the Reagan period and the current Administration of George W. Bush. Strikingly, many of the characters are the same - Abrams, Wolfowitz, Pearle, Rumsfeld, Feith, Libby, Bolton, Wurmser. Everyone but Oliver North. (By the way, a friend of mine, a CEO of a substantial energy services company - not Halliburton - was an Annapolis class mate of North. He tells me that most midshipmen who knew North at the time thought he was a "scumbag.") Even Admiral Poindexter made a cameo appearance at the Rumsfeld Pentagon. His last Dr. Strangelove idea, however, went too far even for Wolfowitz and Co., at least once it was leaked. Resurrected from the old Reagan regime, a breed of ideologues unique to the American tradition now dominates the G.W. Bush Administration.

The Administration's hard line group in the 1980s, as today, believed the United States must not limit its use of military power just for the defense of itself, its allies, and its friends by countering or preempting threats that were real or "real time," that is in some reasonable and realistic timeframe. Rather, in the 1980s version of the doctrine, American military power should be employed with limited regard for the sanctions of international law as a pro-active tool to destabilize and destroy communist regimes. In the updated George W. Bush version, the ultimate goal is the maintenance of American dominance or hegemony - no nation or group, whatever its perceived intentions - will be allowed ever again to rival American power.

The neocons like the proto-neocons also believe, Machiavelli-like, in the need at times to be unscrupulous, deceptive, and even cruel. President Reagan and Bill Casey, for example, condoned the unconstitutional and criminal transfer of missiles to Iran in 1985-1986, the swapping of arms for hostages, the illegal funding of the Contras, and lying to Congress, all in the interest of the pursuit of ideals. Half a million civilians died in Angola partly as a result of the Reagan Doctrine, and to no purpose. 50,000 or so died in Nicaragua purely as a result of a U.S. armed intervention applied to an internationally recognized but communist or pro-Soviet government - a government with which we had diplomatic relations. There is no evidence that the neocons, while still believing that their ends are worthy and their means necessary, feel much remorse for the tens of thousands even hundreds of thousands who died and are still dying as a result of their policies.

Like Shultz and James Baker, Colin Powell today is a traditional, internationalist who believes in collective security and military strength but also in the equal importance of America's moral authority and the promotion of international law. The ideological nature of ARA under Abrams was reflected in the strident, dogmatic, sometimes cynical tone of messages and memos that I saw, not just those addressed to me. I recall one memorandum of conversation between Abrams and Yuri Pavlov, the Director Latin American affairs at the Soviet Foreign Ministry. The two men were speaking about Nicaragua. Abrams sounded like Soviet diplomats of the early 1950s - doctrinaire, polemical, belligerent, and threatening. Pavlov sounded like a traditional American diplomat - conciliatory, rational, and objective. I think I have somewhere the date of this memo. This and the traffic between ARA and myself in 1987-1988, including "official-informal" cables, would make a fascinating study.

Sometimes the ARA messages I received were flippant. At one point, I suggested that on the question of Angola, we might tell the Cubans that a final solution, including the complete withdrawal of Cuban troops "would significantly improve the climate of US-Cuban relations." I was told not to say any such thing. Instead, I could offer the tautological promise to the Cubans that such a solution of the Angolan issue "would remove one of the issues between us."

Q: Did you send copies of your messages on Angola to AF?

TAYLOR: Several weeks after I received ARA's categorical and strident denunciation of my Angola cable and it was obvious that there would be no other follow-up, I sent an official-informal cable to Chas Freeman, a DAS in AF (and an "old China hand" who had been DCM in Peking when I was there). I suggested that Chas read my Angola thought piece of a month earlier, which he did. AF's subsequent follow up changed the dynamics in Washington on the issue of Cuba and the Angolan talks. ARA remained dead set against having Castro involved in the negotiations even though it was clear that the Angolan problem could not be solved without Cuban participation. Chet Crocker, the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, won the battle on the 7th floor. On Christmas Day, I received instructions that had been cleared by all concerned in Washington to see the senior Cuban official working on African issues (Jorge Risquet) and ask a series of questions about Cuba's current intentions regarding Angola and its attitude toward the talks. That started a US/ Cuba dialogue for the first time about Angola and the possibility of Cuban involvement in the talks.

This was followed up with talking points on Angola drafted by AF to be delivered at a January meeting in Mexico City with the Cubans. At the meeting, our side led by Mike Kozak, as instructed, told the Cubans that a genuine solution in Angola that all sides could welcome "would contribute to improved US-Cuban relations." Re-implementation of the migration agreement, the Cubans were also told was the first step in this process and this step would also lead to a "further improvement in bilateral relations."

Overall, the talks in Mexico City were a success. Cuba agreed to resumption of the migration agreement, including a renewal of the program returning to the island Cubans found guilty of criminal behavior in the U.S., and the recommencement on an enlarged scale of the political refugee program. We said that we would issue up to 20,000 immigrant visas each year. Furthermore, the Cubans simply stopped jamming Radio Marti, although we had no real leverage over them on this issue. I believe this notable success - Cuba agreeing virtually to everything we wanted - was due to the striking change in our posture, including a stated, explicit willingness to discuss other issues, including Angola, a categorical assertion that re-implementation of the migration agreement and a successful outcome in Angola could open the door to" improved US/Cuban relations." This, I thought, was fantastic! During the next year of negotiations on Angola, I repeated over and over to the Cubans the approved linkage between a successful outcome on Angola and improvement of US/Cuban ties. The outcome in Mexico City confirmed me in my view that Castro was reassessing his tactics on a wide range of issues and this might open the door for us to make progress not only on Angola, but possibly on Central America and even human rights. Holding out the prospect of better relations was indeed proving to be a productive incentive for Castro.

About this time, the war in Angola, which had been heating up, escalated in a dramatic fashion. The MPLA had decided to increase the pressure on Savimbi in light of the negotiations. In response, the South Africans sent in a large expeditionary force. The South Africans gave the MPLA a beating and recovered some of the ground that Savimbi's UNITA had lost. UNITA was now using the antitank and antiaircraft missiles we had provided them. The Cubans charged that South African military personnel were actually handling the weapons. Shultz later revealed that covert aid to UNITA that year had risen from $18 million to $40 million. Responding to appeals from Luanda, Castro rushed a tank brigade, MIG-23s, and other reinforcements to Angola. The Soviets supplied the shipping. All the warring parties were trying to maximize their positions before serious talks began on an overall settlement. The reinforced Cubans attacked and forced the South Africans back. When the stalemate was more or less restored, troops from the various armies were just about in their original positions before the South African intervention. However, the campaign was seen as a success for Cuba. On instruction, I continued to talk with the Cubans on Angola throughout the escalation in the fighting. This was a testament to AF's ability to deter the Administration from over-reacting to the Soviet-backed Cuban military action to counteract the South Africans.

During the next year, the U.S, led by Assistant Secretary Chet Crocker, mediated a series of meetings on Angola that included Cuban delegations and that twice took place in Havana. The South African and Cuban military officers attending these meetings got along famously. Crocker told Shultz that the Cubans were conducting themselves in a "statesmanlike way and making a positive difference." But according to the Secretary, at this time right-wing staffers in Congress, "fueled by information from the CIA," were telling Savimbi that the State Department was prepared to sell him out by depriving him of South African support but leaving loopholes that would permit the Cubans not to withdraw. Crocker reassured Savimbi this was not the case.In December of 1988, all the parties concerned, including Cuba, signed the final Angola-Namibia Accord. At the signing ceremony, Secretary George Shultz congratulated the Cuban delegation for its positive contributions to the success of the negotiations. As we predicted was likely, Cuba lived up to its commitments and even withdrew all of its military forces from Angola well before the scheduled date. Elections were held soon after in Namibia and it became an independent state ruled by the former national guerrilla organization, SWAPO. This also laid the groundwork for the declaration by the MPLA in the 1990s that it was no longer a Marxist party and that Angola would henceforth develop as a free market economy. UNITA/MPLA peace talks repeatedly broke down and the Angolan civil war continued for another 15 years. In February 2003 MPLA soldiers killed Jonas Savimbi and UNITA was finally disbanded.

After the successful conclusion of the peace efforts, in 1989, I wrote a thought piece suggesting options on how we might follow up on our commitment to the Cubans that, if they cooperated in a positive outcome on Angola, this would result in improved US/Cuban relations. Among the options, I included one to do nothing. Abrams had moved on by this time, replaced by Bernie Aronson, a Democrat and a moderate and open-minded person. The new country director for Cuban affairs, Bob Morley, was also an outstanding professional. Still, Mike Kozak, a holdover from Abrams' days but an officer I respected, sent me a zinger saying that we had never made any commitment to the Cubans about improving relations. I sent him back the relevant cable numbers, but heard nothing further on the subject from him. Needless to say, no consideration was given to following up our pledge, a pledge approved at the highest level. I wondered what our reactions would have been if Castro had blatantly turned his back on a firm commitment made to us. Nevertheless, there would again arise in 1989 another context in which we had the opportunity to tie a desired and important change in Cuban policy to the possibility of better relations with the United States.

Q: Before Abrams departed the scene, Cuba was already playing a positive role in the Angolan/Namibian negotiations. What was his reaction to this striking refutation of his view that Castro would never cooperate?

TAYLOR: Despite the on-going success of the Angola negotiations and the earlier resumption of the Mariel accord, the basic view among the Abrams people, so far as I could tell, was that these were essentially tactical maneuvers by Castro that did not really reflect fundamental changes in the regime's communist predilections, its anti-Americanism, or its revolutionary ambitions in Latin America. I also did not believe a basic change in the regime's ambitions and ideology was likely. But, I argued, as in the case of Gorbachev, while adhering to his beliefs, Castro's actual behavior on specific issues was changing. These changes, I thought, could start his regime down the garden path if not the greasy pole. In the meantime, we could achieve important US objectives as on Angola and Namibia, human rights, and perhaps even Central America. I believe the proto-neocons never had any intention of following up on the commitment they were compelled by Secretary Shultz to make, promising that success in Angola would lead to an improvement of bilateral relations. Instead, they saw Cuba's actions on the Angolan peace process, which had confounded their dire predictions, as a retreat, which signified weakness. Consequently, in their mind, the U.S. goal continued to be to isolate and weaken Castro as much as possible. This was certainly what Jorge Mas believed.

Q: With whom did you deal with in the Cuban government?

TAYLOR: In 1988, Castro appointed Carlos Aldana, a politburo member, to be the key person on US affairs. This was an informal assignment, but it was clear enough. Aldana, who was the Party's chief ideologist, had remarkably become the most important relative reformist in the inner circle - or so it seemed. Events and rumors suggested that Aldana was sympathetic to Gorbachev's reforms, and that within the Politburo he promoted the policy of seeking a fundamental change in relations with the United States as the necessary condition for internal economic reform and long term political stability. In any event he was a problem solver. The policies he apparently advocated beginning in 1987 were: renewal of the migration agreement, a commitment to withdraw from Angola, some softening of the then absolute suppression of dissidents; and finally a new approach to Central America. I had regular meetings with Aldana over the next two years.

I also had contacts with "think tanks" and universities, all of which were government or party institutions. The scholars and "thinkers" in these organs were careful about what they said, and we always highly caveated their comments to us. But many of them wanted to be seen as true intellectuals, capable of being objective. So it was possible to have useful discussions with some of them on issues such as Angola and human rights, keeping in mind their ultimate ties to the regime. We described these relatively open intellectuals as "wishful thinkers" pushing, within acceptable limits, for change. Several of the key personalities of this sort - including Osvaldo Martinez and Jose Luis Rodriguez - eventually became government ministers.

At the same time, we developed contacts among Cuban journalists and others in culture and media who were not just agitprop robots but could offer interesting insights. Some of my closest personal contacts were in the cultural field. On the office staff when I arrived was an energetic Public Affairs Officer named Jerry Scott. An equally outstanding USIA officer named David Evans replaced him. Scott and Evans introduced me to fascinating Cubans, including writers, ballet dancers, poets, movie directors, etc. All were eager to have contact with us and we included them in many social activities. Unlike in the Soviet Union, Cuban artists did not have to join the communist party to be successful, but most were believers in or apologists for the regime. Still, like the academics, many of them also had pride in their integrity and self image, and were concerned with how as how we perceived them. In private they could be sardonic or even moderately critical about the regime. Jokes about Fidel and the pathologies of the system were one way of expressing a certain disparaging and thus independent attitude. From these friends, one could gain some sense how the political atmosphere in Cuba was developing.

On day I had lunch with Garcia Marquez, the Nobel novelist. He wanted to discuss a personal matter and to request US Government cooperation. I reported the conversation and suggested that if possible we accommodate Mr. Marquez. He was a close friend of Castro and thus could be an interesting contact. I received back a blistering cable from Abrams, asking what I was doing having lunch in the residence with a known sympathizer of communists and terrorists. I replied that most of my contacts in Cuba were communists who had sympathized with various terrorists. Abrams copied his message to Otto Reich, our Ambassador in Caracas. The Ambassador, a Cuban-American with strong CANF connections, sent a cable confirming that Garcia Marquez was a terrible person.

Q: What about the human rights situation?

TAYLOR: Human rights, of course, were a major concern. Castro knew full well that his record in this area was a real obstacle to any possibility of a true relaxation of relations with the United States. Thus, he began to initiate small but important changes. For one thing, following entreaties by such visitors as Cardinal O'Conner, he began to release the political prisoners who had been held since the early days of the new regime. These old timers were called, plantados historicos. More important for the situation inside Cuba, he began to allow some dissident voices to be heard. Before 1987, Cuban dissidents were either in Miami or in a Cuban jaithis was a situation very much akin to the fate of Russian dissidents under Stalin. But in 1987, the situation became similar to that in the post-Stalin era in the USSR when Refuseniks were in and out of jail but sometimes back in their homes speaking against the regime with any one who came to visit.

A few Cuban political prisoners were released from prison and if they chose not to go to the United States were allowed to live at home and even create little informal bands of dissidents. While they could not publish or print written material nor hold meetings, they collected adherents one by one, word of mouth. In addition, for diplomats, foreign journalists, and eventually visiting foreign dignitaries, they became the principal source of comment on human rights in Cuba. Their treatment varied. Sometimes they were given unusual leeway and then sometimes for little reason they would be put back in jail. Some of these dissidents were probably government provocateurs, at least one proved to be so, a lady named Tania Diaz. But most of these refuseniks literally were dedicating their lives to peacefully challenging the regime.

Dissidents who elect to stay behind rather than flee are often not trusted and in fact resented by activist exiles who live abroad in comfort and freedom and who profess to speak for the people of their oppressed homeland. This is often true even if the stay-behinds have spent time in jail. The Miami community and under Abrams even ARA tended to be suspicious of the first such dissidents of this sort in Cuba. This was because, their existence suggested Castro was willing to tolerate some level of dissent and that Cuba might not be completely a Stalinist-type regime. The exiles and the old ARA did not want to believe that Castro could make even a tactical relaxation of his draconian controls. No doubt, a few were government plants. Others, the Government tried to paint as collaborators, thus distorting their credibility. In the 1990s, Havana claimed that Elizardo Sanchez, the most prominent dissident when I was there, had cooperated with the Ministry of the Interior (MININT). Elizardo denied this, saying that like others, he had, when pressed, simply talked with MININT agents. If Elizardo was and is a "double," it was a costly counter-intelligence ploy. For years he denounced in scathing terms the abuses of the regime, including alleged of torture. Some exiles were also suspicious of the Catholic clergy in Cuba because they continued their mission on the island, thus allowing Castro to argue that freedom of religion existed on the island.

At USINT, I organized a system for maintaining contact with the former prisoners and human rights activists who remained behind in Cuba. Our goal was to provide them moral support but not to posture for the sake of posturing. We did not want to put the dissidents in any more danger than they were. Castro, in an apparent further effort to improve the climate with the U.S., began to give the refuseniks a bit more leeway in what they could do or say without necessarily ending up back in jail. I asked our chief consular officer, Bill Brencik, to serve as USINT's human rights officer charged with following and reporting on the informal movement that was slowly growing.

Our PAO was also very much involved in making these contacts. The PAO and the chief consular officer would visit refuseniks like Elizardo Sanchez. I myself avoided inviting them to the residence or going to their homes. I thought that would be pushing the envelope to no good purpose, possibly putting the dissidents in more danger than they were already, and lending credence to Castro's charges that they were stooges of the USA. We encouraged other embassies also to keep in contact with the dissidents. The Cuban government noticed our activities. German Blanco and on another occasion the Foreign Minister called me in to warn against these activities. I explained that the persons in question were free citizens of Cuba whose opposition to the government was stoutly non-violent and as far as we knew they had no organization, much less one that had been declared illegal. Thus our contact with them did not violate our diplomatic status.

In several cables, I examined what strategies we might adopt at the 1988 UN Human Rights Commission meeting in Geneva. In previous years, the United States had lobbied for a resolution strongly condemning Cuba for its human rights record. I suggested that we try something else; namely a resolution that might earn the support of a large majority of the Commission. Such a resolution would call for an investigation of the human rights situation in Cuba by an UNHCR delegation. I also thought the charges we made should be those that could clearly be substantiated, of which kind many existed. But to gain credibility we should avoid charges that were particularly shocking but evidence of which was scanty. Ricardo Bofill, the political refugee referred to earlier, once in the United States, released statements charging murder and disappearances in Cuba of other activists. We suggested that rather than simply repeating these charges and seeking a resolution condemning Cuba, the US delegation should ask the UN Commission to investigate these and other allegations and report back the next year. ARA did not like our approach. But the Human Rights Bureau did and that became our strategy in Geneva. The Human Rights Commission did vote to initiate an investigation in Cuba and Castro, to every one's surprise, agreed to cooperate.

In expectation of the UNHCR investigation, Castro made several positive moves. He permitted a UN Human Rights delegation to come to Cuba to investigate the situation there and to listen to the testimony of anyone they wished. Again to everyone's surprise, this commitment was carried out. He also allowed the ICRC to visit all political prisoners in Cuba; he permitted our consular officers to interview potential political refugees in prison; and he began to relax some controls on the Catholic Church, allowing the assignment, for example, of foreign priests where needed. Sometime later, as Castro sought to arrange a visit by the Pope, he changed the constitution of the Cuban Communist Party removing its commitment to atheism and permitting believers to join. At that time at least, the Cuban Party was the only communist party that had taken such a step. Catholic priests could supposedly join the Party, but few if any believers rushed to sign up. Meanwhile, the strict ban on organized or public political activity, including publications and meetings continued. Cuba remained a card-carrying police state, but it was a quasi- rather than a full totalitarian regime. In my view, the limited progress was another aspect of Castro's reaction to the tectonic shift in world politics.

Q: Did you detect any restiveness among Cubans after thirty years of one-man rule?

TAYLOR: The mood was changing. In the late 1970s and early '80s many Cubans saw themselves bestriding the world stage or at least a part of it. Numerous events had led some Cubans to increased national hubris - and thus admiration of Castro. These included: the US debacle in Indochina; the communist takeover of Afghanistan; the Sandinistas' victory in Nicaragua; the successful Cuban military role in Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia; Castro's sticking it to the USA in the Mariel boat exodus; and Cuba's impressive victories in baseball, boxing, pole-vaulting, and other sports at the Olympics and elsewhere. Fidel was also the recognized leader of the Non-Aligned Movement. All this despite the continued austerity of everyday life for Cubans.

But by 1987, the Cold War was abating and with it Cuba's importance on the world stage. The Soviet Union had run into serious internal problems and a creeping malaise. After the quick death in succession of two old party hacks as leader of the socialist motherland, a reformer who called for a new world order of peace and stability now led the USSR. In the Soviet Union, the press was becoming remarkably assertive. In its novel pursuit of historical honesty, the Soviet Government itself admitted the Katyn Forrest massacre in Poland and published the secret protocols of the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact. Even my official contacts like Alarcon were shocked by these revelations, and they said so. In China, Hu Yaobang, an outspoken liberal in the Chinese Communist Party context, was ousted in 1987, but still an impressive level of reform was taking place. Deng Xiaoping was carrying out a sweeping changes in China's agricultural sector, in effect returning the land of Maoist communes to family farming. Various moves toward political as well as economic reform were taking place in most of the communist world; the global Zeitgeist was changing.

No upsurge in the demand for political change, however, took place among Cubans. The main reason was that any public protest or organized opposition would have been quickly knocked in the head. But informed observers inside Cuba, both foreigners and locals, including Catholic pastors with whom we talked as we traveled around the country, also did not detect a rising level of animosity toward the regime. After having been in Cuba for about a year, my impression was that about 25-30% of the population strongly supported the government. They were ready to man the barricades, at least for a few days if not longer to defend Castro's Cuba. These militantes for the most part held middle or even lower to high positions in the party, the government, the military, the internal security apparatus, or the economy. Probably another 30% or so were unalterably opposed to the regime. Probabl40% were neither haters nor devotees of Castro. In a crisis, this group could swing to whichever side seemed to be winning. It would depend on the chemistry of the moment.

In a free election with an open campaign Castro in the late 1980s would have probably lost by a wide margin. But even in countries that have had a communist dictatorship imposed upon them, like Mongolia or Poland, the communist party has maintained support in key elements of society even after their walls come tumbling down. As long as an East European communist regime had the solid support of its core and the backing of the Soviet Union, it could resist strong challenges and even revolutions. Unlike most communist dictators, however, Castro possessed a certain historical legitimacy. I'm not sure, he probably still does today. Neither the Russians nor anyone else brought him to power. He created his own revolution. Moreover, his successful stand off for decades with the giant to the north provided him further credibility among many Cubans and other Latins. Thus, it seemed to me that Castro was likely to retain control for some time.

Q. Did the change from Reagan to Bush make a change in our Cuban policy?

TAYLOR: Yes, it made a big change. As I mentioned, the country director Bob Morley was a true professional, a problem solver, not an ideologue. The next year, Elliot Abrams departed to face criminal charges that he lied to Congress. Abrams was the figure in the Iran-Contra scandal who obtained a ten million dollar secret donation from the Sultan of Brunei for the Nicaraguan Contras. Typical in this Keystone Cops caper, Oliver North, provided the wrong secret bank account number in Switzerland, and the Sultan's ten million were lost never to be recovered. My businessman friend who knew North at Annapolis has other ideas where the money probably went. Like the current neocons, in the early and mid-1980s, this hard-line group sometime acted as the gang that couldn't shoot straight. Remember the cake and the Bible delivered to the Ayatollahs along with the missiles?

Before Abrams left the Department he gave me an unsatisfactory Evaluation Report - the annual assessment that is the principal element in an officer's promotion and future assignment. In what may have been a first in the foreign service, the then country director, Bob Morley, who of course worked for Abrams, sent to Personnel a two page memo praising my performance as the chief of mission at Havana. Morley had declined to perform the usual practice and draft Abrams report on my performance. Instead, he wrote his own. It was a courageous thing to do. Quite unprecedented. The letter was put in my file along with Abrams evaluation, but also with a memo from Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, Richard Schifter, commending my "outstanding work on human rights in Cuba under trying circumstances." Following is a brief quote from Schifter's letter:

"The constant flow of information and analysis which you provided and your highly skilled efforts to nurture and encourage the fledgling human rights movement in Cuba, while avoiding actions that would give the Castro regime a pretext for claiming U.S. interference in domestic affairs, contributed immensely to the success of our efforts..."

Earlier, Secretary Shultz wrote a personal note commending me for my "contribution to our foreign policy... particularly in the area of human rights... in an especially challenging environment." Little did the Secretary know how challenging it was. That note was also in my file. These letters all related to my period in Cuba when Abrams was my boss. After I departed post in 1990, the Promotion Board awarded me a "performance pay award" of several thousand dollars - probably the first such award given a chief of mission who had received a failing grade from his assistant secretary. Abrams was found guilty of perjury but pardoned by President George H.W. Bush. The second Bush put him in the National Security Council in charge of Middle Eastern Affairs, a position he held during all the misrepresentations, exaggerations, cooked intelligence, and gross mis-calculations leading up to the invasion of Iraq and the occupation. Surprisingly, his name has hardly been mentioned as among those responsible for the adventure that will probably prove to be the greatest debacle in American history.

Q: Was Cuba an issue in the 1988 elections?

TAYLOR: As I recall, Cuba was not an issue at all in the presidential campaign of 1988. Bush swept Florida with the support of the Cuban-American community. But the new Secretary, James Baker, intended to build a broader base of support for our Central America policies. The focus was on El Salvador and Nicaragua. As the new assistant secretary, Baker chose Bernie Aronson, a lawyer and a democrat, who had worked in the labor movement. Baker wanted a consensus builder. Policy-wise, he wanted a good outcome to the mess in Central America. When Aronson was appointed, Cuban officials were cautiously hopeful opportunities would open up, or so they told me.

Q: What specifically happened in regard to Central America?

TAYLOR: Aronson did not want to go out on a limb on any Cuban-related issue, and it was incumbent on him to try to massage the Miami community. But, on Central America, if the geo-political pay off was promising, he was willing to explore the idea of a possible dï¿½tente with Cuba. His was not an ideological approach. Bernie was a breath of fresh air. He authorized my informal conversations in Havana on Cuba and Central America to continue. My political officer and I met many times with Aldana and his assistant, Garcia Almeida. We stressed that Cuban aid to the guerrillas in El Salvador posed a grave problem. The Cubans insisted that such assistance had already ended and would not begin again. They repeatedly claimed that Cuba wanted to contribute to an outcome in Central America that all parties could accept just as it had done in regard to Angola.

We also discussed the subject frequently with Yuri Petrov, the new Russian Ambassador. Petrov, was a protï¿½gï¿½ of Yeltsin and a remarkably liberal-minded communist, symptomatic of the "New, New Socialist Man" in Gorbachev's Soviet Union. Petrov stressed that Moscow did indeed want to see an end to tension in Central America and that Castro indeed wanted to cooperate in the peace process in the area. Clearly, Petrov's talking points on this subject came from Moscow. Petrov was close to Aldana and he urged me to take Aldana's remarks on Central America seriously. Petrov indicated that Gorbachev, as he had in Angola, wanted to eliminate Central America as a source of tension with the United States. He also implied that the Russian leader wished to get Cuba off the shoulders of the Soviet Union.

I reported my frequent meetings (usually accompanied by my astute political officer) with Petrov, suggesting that his remarks strongly supported the notion that we should explore the possibilities on Central America with the Cubans. Moscow at the minimum, I suggested, wanted Castro not to be a problem on this critical issue for the United States. A comment to me in late 1989 from Petrov's Political Counselor drove home Gorbachev's amazing redirection of the Soviet weltanshauung. Musing about events in Europe and the next step in detente, the Counselor suggested that one idea would be for the Soviet Union to join NATO. I told Betsy I was reminded of the LEGGs stocking incident with the Chinese women cadre in 1975. Again, it was like, "Honey, we've won."

In the summer of 1989, Aldana repeated that Castro was serious about wanting to contribute to a peaceful and stable Central America. But, he added, the Cuban leadership had heard that the United States was planning to launch TV Marti with broadcasts beamed from a dirigible over Florida. The Cubans, he said, felt like the USA was intending to spit in their eye. The TV Marti project was already well under way. The idea had been simmering for some time. In 1989, Congress, pushed by Jorge Mas and his friends, voted funds to start up this TV version of Radio Marti. The station was to be run by the Voice of America and was to be ready by early 1990. Aldana said the Cuban Government was confident that it could jam the TV Marti signals with 90 percent or more success. But its initiation would have a significant effect on US/Cuban relations.

Aldana and I talked about Central America and TV Marti over the next few months. Aldana, by the way, was, at this time, mentioned by Cubans as being on the short list of possible successors to Castro. Aldana repeatedly stated his main points:

Cuba wanted to contribute to a peaceful settlement of the crises in Nicaragua and El Salvador; Cuba had stopped its arms shipments to the area and did not intend to resume them. Cuba would effectively jam TV Marti if it began; but Cuba would see the broadcasts as evidence that US hostility toward Cuba would not change whatever the regime did.

Q: Did Aldana expect the US simply to drop TV Marti?

TAYLOR: Surprisingly, no. At least, that was the message they sent us at that time. I believe it was in the fall that Aldana added an intriguing point:

if the United States felt it important to have American style TV news broadcast into Cuba, there might be other arrangements which the Cuban Government could find acceptable. For example, CNN or PBS' McNeil-Lehrer News Hour might be shown regularly without censorship on Cuban television. But not TV Marti.

This seemed a rather remarkable proposal to be coming from a member of the Cuban Politburo. I reported Aldana's remarks to Washington and suggested that we consider delaying TV Marti broadcasts, which would be blocked in any event, while we explored further the alternative that Aldana had suggested and the Cuban position on Central America. One proposal on the alternative TV news source could be to suggest an American-produced, Spanish-language commercial news program.

Aldana seemed to believe that the new Bush Administration might be amenable to a real break through in US-Cuban relations. But, he understood that for Washington the test would be Central America. At least, Aldana wanted Cuba to be seen as trying to take part in the peace process. But even if it was superficial, I thought, this posture could be useful. But, I speculated, Aldana probably did in fact favor the line of general detente as well as some domestic economic liberalization.

Q: What was happening in regard to economic reform?

TAYLOR: Cuban intellectuals understood that the island and they themselves were being left behind. In many ways, Cuba was still a very backward society, partially because of its dependence on the Soviet Union and sugar. It was not unusual in Cuba to see animal powered carts in the countryside The Cubans provided sugar to the Soviet block at subsidized prices and in return received oil and other products at low prices. This arrangement kept Cuba in the sugar business. Many other countries gave up sugar farming because of the consistently low world market price and subsidies to growers in the United States. Cuban sugar mills seemed like rusting relics of the early industrial revolution, but they kept on grinding. Traveling around, I was always surprised by how outdated the farms were - cane was still cut by machete. The pueblos, larger towns, and Havana itself were also crumbling relics. It was clear that Cuba was falling further and further behind in economic development.

A few in the Cuban Communist Party and the government, like Carlos Aldana, who apparently understood what Gorbachev was trying to do - that is, put a more economically efficient and more human face on communism. This group felt that the Socialist Bloc, the Cuban party, and Cuba itself all had to modernize. They wanted the communist system to become more productive by the use of some elements of a free market system. But, like Gorbachev, they also seemed to accept that a pre-condition for modernization and change in the socialist world was dï¿½tente with the capitalist - we would say the democratic - world. By the summer of 1989, following events in Poland and the bloody Tiananmen incident in Peking, Castro had concluded that Glasnost and Perestroika were slippery slopes that where blindly followed would eventually dump socialism into the dust bin of history. But even still, he recognized that with the likely diminishment if not the ending of Soviet Bloc aid and subsidies, some important changes would have to be made in Cuba's economic regime.

Q: How was Castro reacting to events in Afghanistan and the Soviet Bloc?

TAYLOR: In my talks with Aldana, Alarcon and Arbesu it was apparent that Castro fully understood the disaster for the Soviet Union that Afghanistan had become. This was an intervention, with which Castro had never been happy and about which he had never been consulted, but had publicly supported. The summer of 1989, in his July 20 Moncado Anniversary speech given that year at Cienfuegos, he declared for the first time that Cuba might have to survive without the Soviet Union. I was there, just getting ready to walk out, when I heard him say that Cubans might some day "wake up and learn that the USSR has disintegrated." Despite the tentative wording, he was in fact predicting a momentous historical event - the fall of the USSR. But, he proclaimed, if this happened, Cuba and the Cuban Revolution would continue struggling and resisting.

In a fascinating historical reference, Castro recalled that at the most dangerous moment of the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, Cubans (meaning Castro himself) refused to make any "concessions to imperialism," and were prepared to die rather than retreat or yield. I heard this sitting in my car outside the stadium. This passage was a reference to Castro's fervent opposition at the height of the '62crisis to Khrushchev's proposal to withdraw the Russian missiles in exchange for a US pledge not to invade Cuba and to remove its missiles from Turkey. Instead, Castro, in a message to the Soviet leader, insisted that the nuclear-armed missiles aimed aAmerican cities remain, and if the US Marines, then massing in Florida, did invade Cuba, the Soviet Union should launch a massive first strike against the United States. As Castro has explained, at that time the Cuban people (again meaning himself) knew that in such a nuclear exchange their island would likely be extinguished, but still, for the sake of the world revolution, they were willing to go to the brink of such an outcome rather than compromise. Khrushchev was not willing to do any such thing. Castro's analogy between 1989 and the 1962 crisis was clear, in "this special moment for the world revolution" the Cuban people (that is, Castro) were prepared to fight to the last Cuban against the imperio, whatever happened to the USSR and socialism elsewhere.

This speech came well before most Western observers thought the collapse of the Russian communist state was a serious and near term possibility. The Moncado Anniversary speech of 1989 laid the ground work for what came to be called "the Special Period in peace time," a time of grave austerity for Cuba occasioned by the end of Soviet Bloc aid and subsidies. To meet the drastic drought expected in foreign currency he gave the go ahead to a commanding emphasis on expanding tourism and eventually "dollarization," turning Cuba into a two-part economy - peso and dollar. He also commanded a variety of other emergency measures. Expecting a painful shortage of oil, for example, he bought 100,000 Chinese bicycles.

The effort to boost tourism was a remarkably successful program. The target for 1990 was 200,000 tourists. During the year 2003 more than 2 million foreigners would stretch out on the sands at Varadero and the other beautiful playas of Cuba. Castro reluctantly accepted the collateral social and ideological damage that would come along with the expected tsunami of foreign bourgeois looking for pleasure. My last year in Havana, 1990, young women began to appear along the Malacon and even Quince Avenida, waving at foreign men passing in cars or taxies. Before "the Special Period," prostitution had supposedly been wiped out, and in fact previously one saw little public appearance of the trade. Except for tourism and the dollar economy, however, Castro was cautious on economic reforms, but some important experiments did go forward.

Dealing with global political questions, however, was different. Even at this time, Castro, pressed by the Russians, was still willing to give Aldana the authority to continue to explore the possibilities of an improvement of relations with the United States, including the possibility of broadcasting in Cuba a regular schedule of CCN, PBS, or Telemundo news programs, presumably with Spanish subtitles. But now the Cubans linked this question to another developing issue in our relations - the plan to begin US-Government financed television broadcasts to Cuba - TV Marti.

Q: Before you talked about Cuba and Central America? What was happening at this stage.

TAYLOR: Early in my tour, in several cables I wondered if Castro in his efforts to accommodate to the shifting sands of global politics might also be willing to change his policies in Central America as he had in Africa. Aldana, Alarcon, and Ambassador Petrov claimed that Castro was well aware of the changing currents in Central America. For one thing, Gorbachev, in his pursuit of detent, wanted an end to US-Soviet tensions in that area as he had in Africa. Thus, Castro, we were told, wanted to play a positive role in Central America as he was then doing in Angola. Cuba, they claimed, was no longer providing arms or training to the FMLF in El Salvador and would not do so in the future. Moreover, they insisted their government also understood that for the foreseeable future a communist regime would not be the best solution for Nicaragua. Yes, they asserted, this meant Cuba could accept an electoral victory in Nicaragua by a non-Sandinista party. These assertions, if true - a big "if" - meant that our objectives regarding Cuba's policies and actions in Central America had to a large extent already been achieved.

In my cables, I stressed that this was a proposition not necessarily to be taken at face value. But I proposed that we test Castro on the question. I thought if we could get Castro to support, even if only rhetorically but convincingly, the Esquipulas peace process in Central America, including monitored elections, then that might further edge the Sandinistas toward actually carrying out the elections, which they had by that time agreed to. But much earlier in a 1987 cable, I had said I assumed that our strategy in Nicaragua was to try to push the Sandinistas toward democratic elections that they might well lose. In the fall of 1989, with Bernie Aronson now on board as head of ARA, I again proposed a possible parallel between Nicaragua and Marcos' situation in the Philippines in 1986. Castro's open support for a genuinely free election in Nicaragua could significantly contribute to achievement of a similar outcome in that country. The experience in Angola suggested that it was at least possible that Castro perceived that the fundamental shift underway in world politics had fundamentally altered revolutionary prospects in Central America for the foreseeable future. I ended my cable by saying that my assessment could be wrong in its basic assumptions, but that I thought we should at least explore with the Cubans what they had in mind in regard to Central America.Q: In 1989, events in Eastern Europe raised the possibility that some of the communist regimes could collapse. What was the view about Castro's position at that time?

TAYLOR: For 30 years, the exile community had believed Castro was on the verge of collapse and the Abrams proto-neocons also adopted this assumption as one of the foundations of their policy. The Ochoa affair and the collapse of the Berlin Wall led to intense pressure on USINT to predict the near-term, if not imminent, collapse of the Castro government. Some in Washington and Miami argued strenuously that the execution of Ochoa and three of his co-defendants was a sign of deep, irreversible splits in the regime that were certain to worsen and steadily weaken to the point of rupture. (Some also argued that - even if the splits didn't exist prior to the trial - the execution would cause them.) The likely loss of Soviet subsidies was also cited as nearly certain to aggravate popular suffering, instigate widespread protests, and - especially if the state apparatus overreacted in a repressive manner - lead to the regime's downfall.

If this conclusion was true, it followed that the United States should increase pressure on the regime in any way possible and minimize its dealings with Castro. In the then existing political environment, some Foreign Service officers and some senior people in the CIA absorbed this view. I am told that even my successor in Havana, a fine officer and not an Abrams proto-neocon (Aronson was then Assistant Secretary), told the USINT staff in 1990 that Castro's days were numbered. That was 4,000 days ago. After the trial and execution of General Arnaldo Ochoa in 1989 for drug smuggling, the CIA National Intelligence Officer for the Western Hemisphere insisted that the Cuban Army would soon revolt. Although working-level CIA analysts on Cuba did not share this view, an official Agency assessment at the time, concluded that the collapse of the regime was imminent. A Miami journalist, Andres Oppenheimer, wrote a book entitled, "Castro's Final Hour." Today, when they meet him, Oppenheimer's friends point to their watch.

However much my like-minded colleagues and myself would have liked to see the pressures on Castro lead to rapid democratic change, our job was to report the government's weaknesses and strengths as we saw them. Our conclusion in 1989-90 was that the "crises" at home (the Ochoa affair) and abroad (in the Socialist Bloc) constituted a serious blow to the government's credibility and to its previous image of near invincibility. Nevertheless, we said, the government had substantial political assets remaining and had begun showing the flexibility to mount a strategy that could enable it to survive for years to come. This was an unpopular conclusion in some quarters and prompted numerous personal attacks on myself and the political officer (who as I noted was a career CIA analyst on loan). To some people, noting a police state's residual strengths and suggesting it could well survive for some years reflected sympathy with it. But, 14 years later, the accuracy of our reporting and analysis, I believe, has been borne out.

Much of our reporting effort was devoted to exploring the regime's growing vulnerabilities and residual strengths. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Central and East European embassies, which previously had limited their interaction with us to discrete social events, practically flung wide their doors. Having invested for decades in Cuba - just to be cut off with the fall of the wall - they got a taste of the "class enemy" status that we often endured in dealing with the government, including the close surveillance which we in USINT were subject to. (If we have time, I will mention later examples of this surveillance and harassment.) These new diplomatic friends were eager to piece the analytical puzzle of Cuba's future together with us. The Czechs encountered a serious problem when two dissidents took refuge in their ambassador's residence. The Czechs refused to turn them over to the police. A day or two later, more avowed dissidents (I am not sure of the number), obviously MININT agents, also fled into the residence. The next day, the faux dissidents began methodically trashing the residence. Eventually, the Czechs had to call in the police, who took away the original refuge seekers and the MININT agents.

The government's declaration of the "special period of peace time" that merged in the second half of 1989, bordered on a plan for autarchy. It appeared in part to build on the regime's greatest strengths: maintaining political control and controlling the distribution of scarce resources, but it also included not only an all-out promotion of foreign tourism and some economic relaxation as well.

Betsy and I, usually accompanied by the Section's political officer, made numerous trips around the country to see what was happening as "the special period" began. Again, we crisscrossed the entire island, sometimes by Cubana Air, but usually driven by our excellent chauffeur and guide, Orlando. We saw flexibility, albeit usually hidden under mounds of hoary rhetoric such as the revived slogan "Socialismo o muerte." Under the screen of public revolutionary cant, we perceived an almost surreptitious redrafting of some tenets of socialism and even fidelismo. Enterprise directors who in the past hewed closely to the Marxist catechism of "to each according to his need," were reworking their talking points to reflect the emerging need for increasingly generous material incentives to workers. "To each according to his production," they would say without batting an eye.

Citrus and tobacco farmers told us that those who produced more, were now paid more - sometimes with hard-currency certificates. A law governing foreign investment was passed, and expanding tourism was identified as a major economic engine. The enfeebled King Sugar was soon to be dislodged. Inefficient state farms were trying to mimic the successes of the country's thousands of private farmers, who were among some of the richest people in the country. The media insisted that perestroika wasn't coming to Cuba's shores but nevertheless it began to lay out new guidelines for managers, emphasizing workers incentives, rationalization of accounting books, and waking up to the fact that change was necessary for national survival. Many state enterprises were beyond reform. But the message to the Cuban economic and other bureaucracies seemed clear, change was in the wind.

So, while the Comandante's rhetoric pretended that nothing was changing or would change, the meaning of socialism was being rewritten to accommodate some stretching of the ideology. Most of these changes fell short of deserving the label of "reform," but we sensed that they amounted to a regime survival strategy that, while excruciatingly slow and limited compared to that of China and Vietnam, over time could, by giving the people a little breathing room, give the government breathing room. Economic conditions continued to worsen while I was there until August 1990, but the gameplan that we first discerned in 1989-90 later evolved into the compendium of adaptive policies later called "dollarization" in the second half of the new decade. It could be argued that since that time the tinkerings have amounted to little. Some have in fact been rescinded. Maintaining control has certainly continued to be far more important than improving people's lives. But today, people who continue to follow Cuban affair closely tell me that the changes that were made have over time eroded the ideological underpinnings of the regime, the people's relationship with the state, and their expectations of it.

In December 1989, I went back to Washington and talked with Bernie Aronson about Cuba, Central America, and TV Marti. I told Bernie that the Cubans wanted to know, if they played a positive role in Central America, could they really expect a new era of U.S.-Cuba relations? On the other hand, we wanted to know if Castro was willing and able to play a useful role at this time in Nicaragua and EL Salvador. I said I thought it was possible. It was also possible that Fidel could, if he wished, throw the Nicaraguan election train off the tracks. I said that Petrov had indicated the Russians were leaning on Castro to be forthcoming on the issue. Before I left, Petrov had said that Aldana would have a specific proposition for us. This was intriguing to say the least.

Aronson instructed me to tell the Cubans we would listen to any concrete proposals regarding what they might do in regard to Central America that would prove their bona fides and significantly encourage the Sandinistas' implementation of a democratic settlement - that is free and monitored elections. If their proposals seemed helpful, Aronson concluded, the Cubans could then be invited to participate in broader discussions, perhaps in the Esquipulas process, and this in turn would have consequences for their relations with the United States.

In my discussion with Aronson, I stressed that the Cubans could and would jam TV Marti in such a way as to bar reception to virtually all of the population. Bernie offered no guidance on this question. At the Cuban desk, however, Bob Morley showed me an inter-agency study that was about to be submitted to the NSC. This was in early or mid-December, 1989. The study unanimously recommenced what we had been suggesting, namely that we delay the launching of TV Marti while exploring with Carlos Aldana his suggestion that there might be an acceptable alternative in which American commercial or Public news broadcasts would be received in Cuba on a regular basis. Then, the Berlin Wall came tumbling down. The same week, in Bucharest, Ceausescu fell.

Q: What happened after your return to Havana?

TAYLOR: When I returned, I immediately set up a meeting the next morning with Aldana in his office. I intended to pass on what Bernie had instructed me to tell him and to receive the proposal Yuri had indicated would be forthcoming. That night, the United States invaded Panama. In the morning, tens of thousands of Cubans were "spontaneously" demonstrating in front of the Interest Section. A platform had been built overnight and loud speakers were broadcasting a steady stream of vitriolic speeches. Over the next week, supposedly a million Cubans took part in the protest. Our Marines went on riot alert. Aldana's assistant, Garcia Almeida, telephoned to say the meeting obviously would have to be postponed. But he asked if he could come to see me. I, of course, agreed, and he rushed over to the Interest Section, pushing his way through the mob to get in the building.

To my knowledge, this was the first time a Cuban official had called at USINT. My wonderful secretary, Vivian, by mistake put salt rather than sugar on the table along with coffee. In the usual Cuban fashion, Garcia put several spoons in his cup. At the first sip, he gagged. After being assured that we were not trying to poison him, he said that in view of the invasion, Aldana would have to postpone our meeting. But, he emphasized, we should simply "cool" things for a while until the dust settled; then early next year, we could hopefully continue the discussions as planned. He said that there would have to be an interval during which time the Cuban government would strongly protest our military actions in Panama.

Over the next few days, I made my way several times through the excited crowd to drive to the Foreign Ministry. There, I protested the protests, and on one occasion received a serious protest in return from the Cuban side regarding the temporary detention by US forces of the principal Cuban diplomat in Panama City. I talked on the phone to Bernie about the detention and it was quickly cleared up. Along with what had just happened in Berlin and elsewhere in the Communist Bloc, the invasion of Panama excited the hopes of the Cuban-American community in Miami.

Q: What happened on TV Marti?

TAYLOR: The Miami exiles now believed that for sure Castro's days were numbered. Bumper stickers appeared proclaiming, "Navidad en la Havana." The dictator would be lucky to survive until the end of the coming year (1990), they thought. Mas and the other exile leaders immediately stepped up their pressures to put TV Marti on the air ASAP. By this time, Mas had read the interagency study. Even before, he knew full well that the TV broadcasts would be effectively jammed. Mas' priority objective, however, was not to bring unbiased TV news to the Cuban people. If this had been the goal, we should certainly have explored Aldana's proposal that Cuba accept regular news broadcasts by CNN or PBS. But Mas' real intention was to create a provocation that could stir Castro to retaliate, perhaps by illegally beaming broadcasts into the USA or even trying to shoot down the dirigible, "Fat Albert," that was planned to be the transmitting tower. In event, the launching of TV Marti, Mas surely calculated, would be a feather in his cap and another multi-million dollar employment opportunity for CANF supporters.

In the existing environment, Castro needed only a little shove, the community thought, to do something reckless. TV Marti might do the trick. At least it would throw a monkey wrench into any US-Cuban cooperation such as on Central America. Mas lobbied strenuously on the Hill and he almost certainly reminded the White house that candidate George Bush in 1988 had in person promised CANF and other Cubans in Miami that TV Marti would definitely go ahead. Neither Abrams, who was present, nor anyone else had the cohones to tell Bush the serious problems with the project.

The NSC met to review the inter-agency paper and decide what to do about TV Marti. The White House, however, had clearly made up its mind long before. Although USIA technical people agreed that the TV Marti signal would be "very fragile," the politically appointed head of USIA argued that some Cubans would hear the broadcasts and the programs should begin ASAP. The unanimous interagency recommendation in favor of exploring the alternative policy was ignored and the Council voted to begin the broadcasts.

At least somebody at the FCC was awake. President Bush's order to proceed with TV Marti included a proviso that all of the station's transmission had to be consistent with international regulations. Mas, I was told, opposed this restriction, but, not surprisingly, the NSC agreed with the FCC. The restriction meant that TV Marti could not interfere with existing Cuban broadcasts. That limited TV Marti's broadcasts to a time period between 2 a.m. and 5 a.m. One Sunday after mass, a group of Cuban parishioners told a Section officer that they hoped the United States would not begin TV Marti if in fact Castro could as he claimed jam it. Please don't give him another victory, they pleaded.

On the night in February when TV Marti began broadcasts, we divided USINT staff members into various teams, each with a car and a portable, battery-run TV set. Beginning at 2AM, the teams drove around Havana and its suburbs to test the reception of the TV Marti signal. I was part of the exercise. Beginning promptly at 2 am, we all saw a brief picture of the lead-in with the anchors at their desk. But after that, "Click," and a screen of snow appeared along with an audio of confused static.

Immediately after 5 am, I telephoned Bernie Aronson, who had risen early for the occasion, and told him that TV Marti had not been received anywhere in the areas we had monitored. The next day, we canvassed religious leaders, diplomats, and other sources in Havana about the reception. We heard the same response from diplomats. Most notably, catholic priests around the country reported to their Bishop in Havana that essentially zero reception was the rule in their local areas. Western correspondents said they also could not receive the signal and had not heard of anyone who had. We circulated a questionnaire to visa applicants, asking whether they could receive TV Marti in their homes. After several weeks, the results showed that an overwhelming majority (about 95%) of the 2,000-or-so respondents said that they could not receive TV Marti. Cubans told us it was called "La TV que no se ve," (The TV that cannot be seen"). In short, the evidence was overwhelming - the broadcasts were effectively jammed.

We reported all this to Washington. In response, we received a cable saying that our research was deficient because USIA had conducted a survey that indicated that a majority of Cubans were receiving and watching TV Marti, getting up in the wee hours to do so. I returned to Washington and attended a meeting at USIA with the TV Marti director, senior USIA officials (I think including the Director), Jorge Mas, and others. I told them what our surveys had shown. I said the jamming was almost 100% effective. Spots existed here and there where the signal was received sporadically, but those instances were few and far between. When the programming first began each morning, usually a few seconds of the opening scene could be seen before the jamming cut in. All of our contacts in Cuba, including the clergy and human rights activists, reported that few if any persons on the island were receiving the signals from TV Marti.

I was told, however, that USIA had commissioned a survey by a professional polling company that indicated otherwise. Two of the pollsters were at the meeting. The USIA-sponsored survey had been conducted at the Miami airport. The pollsters interviewed people arriving from Cuba, both residents of the island and of the USA. In other words, Cubans landing in Miami, some of whom had never been out of Cuba before, found themselves in front of a total stranger who out of the blue asked them whether they had been able to see TV Marti while in Cuba.

I invited a USIA representative to come to Havana with or without the polling contractor to conduct his or her own survey there. I said it was ridiculous to believe that a survey conducted in Miami was more trustworthy than all the on-site tests and surveys we had made in Cuba itself. Night after night, we had seen it - actually, not seen it with our own eyes! And our eyeball tests had been confirmed by diplomats, priests, the Catholic Bishop, Cuban activists, and Western journalists. It was unanimous. TV Marti for all practical purposes was not being seen. Mas said I was wrong. I again invited any or all of those in the room to come back to Cuba with me and see - or not see - for themselves. Silence prevailed around the table.

I don't think anyone there really believed TV Marti signals were being received in Cuba. It was a Kafkaesque moment - a true Orwellian experience, to see a room full of grown, educated men and women so afraid for their jobs or their political positions that they could take part in such a charade. Again looking back, this behavior was in keeping with the Hobbesian philosophy of the proto-neocons of the 1980s and the neocons of the current Bush Administration: bald deception by the enlightened ruling elite is sometimes necessary. The rule: when caught in a total fabrication, simply insist it is true. Similarly, Dick Cheney in 2004, despite the reports of two commissions to the contrary, continues to insist there was an ominous connection between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda, and Saddam and terrorist attacks against America. (In reality, the CIA, not Al Qaeda, had collaborative connections to Saddam, and it was at the time when he was killing thousands with poison gas.) In 1990, Aronson and ARA understood what had happened and told me as much. They rolled their eyes. But Bernie did not pick up the cudgels on the TV-Marti fiasco. He had other, bigger problems.

So, 14 years later, good humored TV Marti anchors, handsome men and beautiful women, continue to open their show at 2:00AM and a slick, professionally produced two hours of news follow. But still the Cuban people can not and do not see the programs. The ideas of Leo Strauss, the neoconservative philosophical icon, have been confirmed: 1) the steel will of a determined political elite, even in a democracy, can - in the service of a presumed good and essential cause - impose projects that override the basic rules of common sense and rationalism; and 2) deception is the necessary norm in political life. Come to think about it, these are the same rules under which Castro has always operated. I believe the cost of TV Marti is about $16 million a year. No Democratic or Republican politician cares to take on this unique waste of taxpayers' money.

Eventually, the TV Marti programs were also transmitted by satellite. But the only Cubans who can see these broadcasts are the elite who have satellite receivers: the Cuban internal security police, Castro, and perhaps other Politburo members.

Q: I guess the $16 million is sort of a payoff because there must a number of people in Miami who are now employed by TV Marti.

TAYLOR: That's probably true. I would guess there are dozens or even a hundred or more well paid jobs that go to members of the Cuban-American community. The invasion of Iraq, now justified largely on the basis of expelling a dictator, has again excited the exiles in Miami. Most recently, CANF and others have successfully pushed for the US Government to invest in a new TV Marti transmitting station - a C-130 flying high - but in US air space. The hope is that this signal will be strong enough to override Cuba's jamming. This may be another fiasco in the making.

The TV Marti episode was a sign to Castro that there could not be an improvement in U.S.-Cuba relations even under the relatively moderate, common sense Administration of George Bush. For the Bush White House, like most Democratic as well Republican Administrations, Cuba was just not that important. Aldana, who apparently had been the principal figure in the inner circle pushing for a new relationship with the U.S. and for domestic reforms, was discredited. Castro sent him off to be the manager of a state enterprise outside of Havana. At the same time, the fall of The Wall and other dramatic developments in Eastern Europe strengthened Castro's conclusion that even minor democratic reforms would destroy a communist government. The events in China leading up to the Tiananmen Incident in July 1989 drove the point home. The possibility that he could be nudged onto the slippery slope of political reform vanished for good.

Q: How did you as a professional deal with this political maze? Did you become cynical?

TAYLOR: I just kept plugging away. I was a professional and I called the shots as I saw them. The worst they could have done would have been to fire me - which CANF did try. It was a fascinating experience - to be in Cuba at that time and to be involved in the heated internal struggle over Cuba policy. Actually, except for the African, ARA, and Human Rights Bureaus in State, the Miami exiles, and rightwing politicians, no one else in the nation seemed to care. In the George Bush Administration, ARA was understanding and cautiously supportive. I should say that all the concerned departments of the US Government, except USIA, at the principals level supported my recommendations on TV Marti. But none wanted to make an issue of the counter decision made by the political leadership. On some other issues, for example, cooperation on drug trafficking, I was alone in floating alternatives and presenting what I thought was an objective interpretation of Castro's situation, his intentions, and our related interests.

I wouldn't have missed it for the world. Cuban policy is one of the frustrating but endearing aspects of the foreign policy of a rich and powerful democracy in which the interests of ethnic/religious and exile groups play a big role. As a result, as a nation we can often act irrationally and seemingly not in the country's best interests. Its human nature to take advantage of power, and in America, money and votes can outweigh common sense on foreign policy. Likewise, in a democracy those not directly affected often let relatively small minorities focused on a single foreign policy agenda have their way, particularly when it seems to involve little cost and when on the other side dictators are involved. As American politics becomes increasingly driven by money, that phenomenon is enhanced. In government as elsewhere, true integrity is fairly rare. Careerism is a common disease. A healthy, democratic system will eventually self-correct. Still, in that USIA meeting room, I did think of all the good burghers and bureaucrats of Nazi Germany who went along with a travesty, although of quite a different order.

Q: Was Castro perceived as still being on top of his game and fully supported by the Cuban population?

TAYLOR: Although the popular mood had soured considerably since 1980, I didn't see any diminution of Castro's power or health while I was there. To live to a ripe old age and thus survive a few more US presidents, Castro gave up cigars. He also exercises at least an hour a day. In 1990, I thought we should predicate our plans on the assumption that he would be around and in charge for years to come, perhaps even 10 or more. It has now been 14 years since I thought that. Obviously, anything can happen, including sudden death from natural causes or assassination. Although Fidel would lose a free election, I believed that the core of his support - maybe 25-30 percent of the population - remained strong. He was an expert at playing on Cuban nationalism and even many of those Cubans who in an open free election would have voted against him, were impressed by his victories against the odds, particularly those over the "Yankees." Castro, of course, was and is central casting's version of a charismatic dictator. When he had an opportunity, such as the Mariel crisis of 1980, the serious outbreak of fighting in Angola in 1987 and 1988, the incident involving alleged double agents recruited by the CIA, or - to jump ahead to 2000 - the case of the young refugee, Elian Gonzales, he would put himself at center stage. For him, politics was and is theater.

He plays many roles - the communist "Big Brother," the Western Romantic, the macho, Latin caudillo. Like Mao, Stalin, and Hitler before him, he hardly ever fails to enthrall visitors of whatever political persuasion with his magnetism, charm, and detailed knowledge of almost any subject that is raised. Like his historical models, supreme confidence in his own mission gives the Cuban leader a special magnetism. His "hubris-nemesis" complex has imparted to him energy, ambition, and dynamism. He has always dreamed of glory, of being enthroned as a savior in the hearts of Latin Americans, if not all humankind. Once he said he would be glad to be the Pope. He has sought to achieve the ideal of the revolution - creation of a new, unselfish socialist man - while also destroying his nemesis, his Moby Dick - the United States. After leaving Cuba in 1990, I discussed all this in a book entitled, The Rise and Fall of Totalitarianism.

A more recent thought, upon which I have touched on briefly, would suggest that Castro's fervent support of high socialist ideals at the cost of truth and law is similar in principle but not in degree to the amoral idealism of American neocons. During the Cuban-missile crisis in 1962, Castro urged Khrushchev not to remove the missiles and if the US as a result invaded Cuba, to launch an all-out first strike with nuclear weapons against the United States. The American neocons today support the threat of nuclear weapons not just to deter any nuclear attack on the United States or its allies but also if necessary to maintain America's overwhelming military Dominance, most notably over China.

But, back to the popular mood in Cuba. Radio Marti, I think, in its early years raised the general level of political consciousness in Cuba and thus to some extent of popular dissatisfaction. A number of factors, however, in addition to the threat of brute force, kept discontent from bubbling up. These included the pervasive surveillance system of block committees and other informers. Cubans, although tired of the society of scarcity and fatigued by incessant propaganda, turn out for mass rallies - as much as ten percent of the population on some occasions. During the protests of the US invasion of Panama in December 1989, a total of a million Cubans over a seven-day period reportedly congregated before the USINT building on the wind and wave-swept Malacon. Of course they came because their work unit or organization was told to send them on certain days and certain hours. And most came in buses. Nevertheless, my guess is that the majority of the demonstrators vaguely agreed with the cause behind the protest, although they were not all that angry about the matter. Most important, it was a day off.

For most Cubans no real alternative to the current regime existed then or I believe exists today. Considerable tacit, and in some cases active, support for the regime, however, was also generated by a common belief that reasonably good education and health care were freely available to all as well as a full if monotonous diet. Beef or pork was rare but chicken was probably served one to three times a week in most homes, pork, maybe once and a week. Cuban socialism was good at producing eggs and making ice cream. During my time in Cuba, a family of four received a ration of four dozen eggs a week! Some regularly fed the family dog a raw egg. Others suggested that after the revolution a great statue to THE EGG would be raised, for it allowed Cubans to survive. The local government provision shops also doled out a large ration of sugar - the same family of four could buy up to a pound of sugar a week at a very cheap price. Cubans always bought anything and everything on the ration list if it was available. What they did not need they would sell or barter. Non-rationed items were also snapped up regardless of what they were. A common story was of someone joining a queue and after a while asking the person in front what it was they were waiting to buy. The ice cream was also delicious and cheap enough for popular consumption. Preferring rice, the Cubans were terrible at making bread. For three years we did chose not to have bread at home. In small pueblos as well as in the big cities ubiquitous coffee bars sold Cuban espresso. Cheap rum was available as well as a local beer and a version of coke.

Subsidized highbrow culture was provided, including European quality ballet, orchestra, and opera. As in sports, children were selected at an early age for these pursuits. As a way out of socialist drudgery, boys were as anxious to become ballet dancers as girls. As a result, male Cuban dancers were then at least overwhelmingly heterosexual. Homosexuals had been jailed early on in the Revolution but by the 1980s were winked at but did not live openly together. The famous Alicia Alonso ran the renowned Cuban Ballet; at seventy, sometimes tottering around on stage herself. The hundreds of little cafes and clubs that used to enliven Havana with their own salsa bands were, however, long gone. Thus, informal groups or "clubs" of musicians who played at home, like the now famous "The Buena Vista Social Club," came into existence.

As in other communist countries, the cities of Cuba lacked the color and vigor of pre-Castro days. I believed that a traveler beamed anywhere in those days could tell immediately that he or she was in a communist city. Cubans who lived in the pueblos and the city slums were poor by US standards. Petty crime in Havana Vieja was a constant problem. The wife of Sonny Metha, the liberal-thinking editor of Knopf, while visiting Havana, was mugged near the Hotel Nationale. She came to the office one Saturday morning to get a new passport and told me her story. After she returned to New York, she wrote a mostly-positive article about Cuba but omitted the story of her mugging. One day, on the steps of the old Catedral, a thief grabbed Betsy's purse, but she managed to hang on. Overall, however, life in Cuba in the 1980s and probably still today was and is not like the grim existence in North Korea or before the 1990s in Bulgaria and other Bloc countries. One difference was and is the beautiful Cuban weather and the glorious Gulf waters that the regime offers free to the people. For Russian families, an assignment to Havana was then like a posting to heaven. Some Cubans called the swimming pool at the large hotel where many Russians stayed, "the Bay of Pigs." Every year one or two hurricanes ripped through the island, but basically it was a grand island climate, a nice breeze nearly always whistling through the cane. And at the end of it all, funerals were provided free - a little payment would get you a better coffin or something other than a small government-issue stone. Probably cradles were free as well. Because of the low birthrate, special allowances existed for children along with long maternal and postnatal leaves.

In between the cradle and the grave, the opiate of the masses was and is television. Virtually every home had a set. Baseball, soccer, boxing, and basketball were favorite programs. All baseball games were - what else? - free. Work units gave out the tickets. Most popular, however, were the up-to-date American movies that were pirated in Mexico and broadcast several times a week. The Cuban station would seldom miss a Hollywood film like "Platoon" that made America look militaristic or full of crime and violence. But surprisingly the card-carrying station producers also broadcast a great many movies that left a favorable or straightforward impression of life in the United States. Despite the very unreal aspects of most movies, romances and police films usually gave such an impression simply by showing everyday life and how society worked or even didn't work in the USA.

Actually, Cuba at that time was just beginning to produce good films on its own. The writers and directors, some of them I knew, would poke fun at Cuba's political and economic system and the social pathologies it produced. Castro's tolerance of such satires was another indication that Cuba might slowly evolve toward a more open society, although certainly not a democratic one as long as Fidel was around. Here, I might note, that while Castro was in some ways a Big Brother figure, he was not openly deified. One did not usually see his picture in government offices or schools. Instead, the honor went to Che Guevera, Jose Marti, and other revolutionaries of the past. Castro is a narcissistic personality, but he understood that his God-like stature among the intelligentsia was best projected without the slavish idolization of a Kim Il-sung.

Cubans freely tell jokes about Castro and pass on true stories of the eccentricities of the socialist system of scarcity. An old lady friend of ours said a window frame in her house had rotted out and her underground handyman said he could fix it but he did not know when - first a window that size would have to be stolen. A priest said that in Cuba only Nine Commandments were in effect. "Thou shall not steal" had been removed.

Q: Did we do anything to ameliorate popular resentment of the United States that sprang from old memories and history and was constantly fanned by Castro? Or was it so strong that little could be done about it?

TAYLOR: Radio Marti was fairly effective at doing just that, at least while I was there. Later, especially after 2000, it apparently became highly propagandistic and polemical. I understand it has lost much of its audience. At the insistence of USIA, Radio Marti originally did not indulge in blatant propaganda. Rather it ran interesting features and balanced news programs. Then under insistent pressure from Jorge Mas the organization moved to Miami. There it became the creature of CANF.

Among Latin Americans, Cubans are the closest to North Americans in popular culture. Cubans are fun loving but good organizers. At all the old gatherings of the Non-Aligned Movement, Cuban personnel normally played the key administrative role wherever the meetings were held. Cubans, of course, like Americans, love the intricacies and arcania of baseball. Castro is a big fan. He has told visitors that someday, Havana will be in the Major Leagues. Also like Americans, Cubans, even without the stimulation provided by Hallmark, pay a lot of attention to Mother's Day and Valentines' Day - dia de los romanticos. They take these days more seriously than we do. Of course, they remember and resent the long history of interference and dominance by the Yankees as well as the corruption of post war Cuba by US gambling and criminal interests. The public schools naturally play up and embellish these memories to a fair-thee-well. But as a pure impression, I personally think anti-imperialist resentment in Cuba is superficial, especially in the young generation, which is much more interested in North American pop culture and sports than in what happened half a century ago. During the 1950s Revolution, Castro did not pitch his revolution as an anti-U.S.-imperialism cause. That came after the victory of the revolution.

Q: Besides the renewal of the Mariel agreement and the Angola settlement, were there any other developments while you were in Cuba?

TAYLOR: Many other issues arose during my tour. One dealt with the Olympics to be held in Seoul, Korea. North Korea refused to participate. The South suggested holding some of the events in the North if Pyongyang would participate, but that didn't change the mind of Kim Il-sung. People became concerned that the North might try to disrupt the games in one way or another given its record of violent behavior. The Soviets agreed to participate in the Seoul Olympics, a decision that infuriated the North Koreans. But Castro, in a gesture of "solidarity" said that Cuba would not participate. It seemed to me that if the International Olympics Committee could change Cuba's position that might diminish the prospects of any North Korean attempt to create trouble during the Games in Seoul. So I suggested to Washington that we get the IOC involved and explore how we might encourage Cuba to attend the Games. The desk rudely rejected this suggestion.At one point in 1988, the Cubans tried to relieve our growing concerns about the construction of a nuclear power plant in Cienfuegos. The Soviets were building the plant. We worried about its safety because it was the same type of reactor that had blown apart in Chernobyl the year before. Newspaper articles in Florida warned of a possible Chernobyl next door. Informally, I asked many lay-man's questions in Havana about the plant. The Cubans suggested that I visit the facility. With Washington's approval, I spent two days climbing round the gigantic construction site and talking to the engineers and supervisors. Near the site was a little Russian community of workers and their families. I returned to Havana and gave a detailed report. Of course, I knew nothing about nuclear energy or weapons so my visit could hardly calm concerns. But it was a start. Again, with Washington's approval - many agencies would have been involved, such as Energy - I suggested to Washington that we follow up with a visit of US experts. Given the horrendous if remote safety implications, the inter-agency bureaucracy agreed on this initiative and a team soon arrived. That was another example, in my mind, of Castro's willingness in some limited respects to follow the path that Gorbachev was taking toward a general policy of cooperation.

Q: Did you have a steady stream of visitors who wanted to see Castro?

TAYLOR: We did indeed. Surprisingly, a number of congressmen came to Havana. Near the end of 1988, two prominent congressional visitors arrived back-to-back. One was Congressman Torricelli (Democrat, New Jersey) - later Senator - who was known then as being quite liberal. He had a large entourage with him. Castro summoned him one evening for his usual night session. The next day before the Congressman and his staff departed for Washington, my wife and I and the PAO, Jerry Scott, had dinner with them at a government-owned restaurant. At the dinner, Torricelli enthusiastically described all the things he had seen in Cuba - factories, schools, hospitals, public works, etc. He was very impressed. He compared Cuba in favorable terms with the poverty stricken Latin American countries he had visited.

I politely suggested that one had to make such comparisons within some context. Cuba was run by a quasi-totalitarian government; the regime controlled virtually everything, especially its appearance to the outside world. Under Castro, Cuba had achieved some impressive gains, but in such societies, as I knew from Maoist China, things were never as advertised. Cuba was a "propaganda society" which for foreign visitors featured Potemkin villages and happy liberated campesinos. I also pointed out that when Castro took over, Cuba was among the most developed countries in Latin America together with Argentina and Chile, so the comparison should be with those countries. I suggested that Costa Rica was probably now ahead of Cuba in most social indices although it was probably well behind 30 years before. But Torricelli was convinced by what he had been told had happened in Cuba since the revolution and by what he had seen. He became quite cutting in his remarks. Our conversation turned heated; it was the first time in my Foreign Service career that I had ever gotten into a contentious argument with a Congressman. I have politely disagreed with others, but this was a real argument. Torricelli left the next morning and shortly after Senator Pell arrived.

Pell stayed with us at the residence. The first night, he got the call to see Castro just as we were having dinner about 8:00 o'clock. Pell was a gentleman if there ever was one, but he understood that these preemptory summons to an audience were cast to put the visitor in an inferior even supplicant's position. He sent back the message to the President that he would be along after he finished dinner. I had breakfast with him the following morning and asked how the meeting went. He said it was odd because Castro began by saying that Jay Taylor was doing everything he could to wreck U.S.-Cuban relations. The leader said I was even trying to turn American friends of Cuba against Cuba and the Revolution. Pell said that Castro was very upset. I gave Pell a description of my conversation with Torricelli the night before his meeting. We agreed that my evening spat with Torricelli had probably been taped.

The next time I heard about Torricelli was a couple of years later when he became a leader of the anti-Castro group in the U.S. Senate. He proposed and passed legislation bearing his name and that of Senator Helms that in various ways tightened restrictions on contact with Cuba and even threaten sanctions against foreign subsidiaries of American companies that did business with Cuba. I was told by someone who was very close to Torricelli that after his return from Cuba he had approached anti-Castro groups in Miami, including CANF, for substantial contributions. I must have been very persuasive in my argument with him, a record of which I am sure is resting somewhere in a MIINT file in Havana.

Q: Did you escort visitors when they went to see Castro?

TAYLOR: We did not have formal diplomatic relations and therefore my attendance at such meetings would not have been appropriate. I would see Castro periodically and informally when I had some important matters to take up with the Cuban government, such as the Angolan situation. I would usually do this at Cuban Government receptions for foreign VIPs. Betsy and I would first go through a reception line and then Castro would invite me to see him privately in a secluded room. I did attend the long, separate interview he had with Chet Crocker during the Angola-Namibia negotiations.

Q: How were the other diplomats?

TAYLOR: The Latin American embassies tended to be critical of U.S. policy toward Cuba. They thought we were irrationally tough and that the policy of isolation did not work. When I made my initial calls on these ambassadors I used the exact words that had been given me by Elliot Abrams and Mike Kozak. When asked about U.S. Cuban relations, I would say that until the Mariel agreement was restored, there would could not be any discussion of broader issues. I would then go on to list all of the other outstanding issues, such as the Cuban presence in Angola, its role in the Central America, and human rights. I said that there had to be progress on all of these issues before relations could substantially improve. I would then usually be interrogated further to find out exactly what my general comments meant. I would not get into any specifics. But the possibility of improved relations in some unstated fashion and very heavily conditioned was a key element in my presentations. The Latins were eager for signs that we would in fact seek some kind of rapprochement. I was well aware of this inclination and tried not leave them with exaggerated expectations. The Ambassadors reported back to their respective capitals my conversations with them. Sometimes these reports would get back in various ways to Washington. I found out later that the Argentine Ambassador, downplaying the conditions I had stressed for any discussion of better relations, said I had indicated that US policy was changing, and that our goal was a fundamental improvement in relations with Cuba. Although Abrams had approved the talking point I used on the subject and in an expanded version it would soon be incorporated as an official line in our talks with the Cubans, he was in fact determined to avoid an actual improvement, regardless of what Castro did on the migration agreement, Angola, etc. Thus, a report like that of the Argentine Ambassador convinced Abrams I was working against his policy.

In a 1987 meeting on my first return to Washington for consultations, Abrams told me just this: I was working against his policy. I replied that he had been badly mis-informed. I had not deviated from the talking point he had approved. I had emphasized it through repetition, a tactic which led the Cubans to believe that renewal of the migration agreement would open the talks about Angola and bilateral relations. But the Cubans understood there was nothing more specific promised than that we could talk about these matters. I assumed his policy was to have the migration agreement renewed, to see the radio jamming stopped, to have Cuban troops withdraw completely from Angola, and for there to be some progress on human rights in Cuba. All of these objectives, I said, can best and probably only be achieved by telling the Cubans that their realization will result in an improvement in US/Cuban ties. I do no recall Abrams precise reply, but the meeting did not clear the air.

All European envoys - German, Dutch, French, British, etc - agreed that Castro was not a benign figure and that he would have to make considerable changes in order to be accepted by Western Europe as a legitimate leader. But at the same time, they all felt that the USA was not following the wisest course to bring about this necessary change, a situation that they attributed to our domestic political condition - the power of the Cuban-American lobby, and the power of the US Congress.

The Canadians had good relations with Cuba and this was sometimes an irritant to Washington. Canada was the major source for Cuban tourists. The consular officers in the Canadian Embassy were busy with the various needs and problems of the thousands of their compatriots who flocked to the island's beaches. One task was processing visas for young Cuban men who had married single Canadian women they had met on the white sands of Varadero. Usually, the women were older than their young lovers who had successfully wooed them. The suspicion was that many of the bridegrooms were simply looking for a ticket out of Cuba. While I was there, a Canadian firm bought part ownership in the Cuban Government's nickel mining company.

Q: Were you able to get other embassies to take up cudgels on some issues of importance to us?

TAYLOR: We did quite a lot of that. For example, I would ask for assistance from my diplomatic counterparts on political prisoner cases that I had taken up with Alarcon. But the most effective intervention was that of US Congressmen or other American VIPs. Castro, for example, in the spring of 1988 freed 48 of 57 prisoners on a list submitted to him by Cardinal O'Conner, who had paid a visit. Also on Angola, most of the Western Ambassadors and some Latin and African ones made representations urging a peaceful settlement.

Q: What was the story on cooperation on anti-drug trafficking?

TAYLOR: Early in 1988, the Coast Guard and other American law enforcement agencies began to report that drug traffickers were making airdrops over Cuban waters. The drops were picked up by speedboats, which continued to U.S. shores. In January, I suggested that we enter into a dialogue on this issue with the Cuban government. I thought that we should at least test to see how far they were willing to go. ARA and CANF felt that this was the wrong approach; it was assumed that Castro and his government were probably cooperating with the drug traffickers. Shortly after I made my suggestion, several people were indicted in Miami for trafficking. The accused confessed that they had picked up the drugs in Cuban waters and even in some cases in Cuban ports. I received instructions to approach the Cuban government to describe these events and the confessions of the traffickers. After my first presentation to the foreign ministry, I was told that I should contact Politburo member, Carlos Aldana, on the subject. At our first meeting, Aldana expressed great doubts that any smuggling through Cuba was going on, blamed the exiles in Miami for starting the rumors, and suggested accused traffickers were trying to get lighter sentences by dragging Cuba into the story. But he promised to investigate.

At some point in 1988 or 1989, the case of Robert Vesco, the fugitive American financier, also arose. He had absconded in the 1960s after being charged with a multimillion-dollar fraud and eventually ended up in Cuba. We had information that indicated that Vesco from his residence in Cuba was also somehow involved in drug trafficking. The Cubans also expressed skepticism about this story, but promised to investigate it as well.

At several meetings with Aldana I passed detailed information from the US Coast Guard - giving time and date of the airdrops. At one point, Aldana told me that Havana was conducting its own serious investigation. Within a few weeks, the Government announced the arrest of a General Arnaldo Ochoa Sanchez. Aldana, I believe, briefed me before the public announcement, although I am not certain. The arrested General was a Cuban hero; he had led the Cuban troops during the successful fighting in Angola a year or so before and in the 1970s in Ethiopia. It is fair to say that he was the most famous Cuban General at the time aside from Fidel. He was also personally close to Fidel; according to some, Castro thought of him as a son. Ochoa, his aide, and several officials from the Ministry of the Interior (MININT), were charged with treason - collusion in drug trafficking - supposedly without the knowledge of their superiors. The trial was televised. The General explained that his aide had learned that MININT was raising US dollars by facilitating drug drops and that he, the General, had foolishly approved the aide's suggestion that they do the same thing in order to raise dollars for hard currency needs of the army corps he now commanded in Cuba. Ochoa said that in Africa he and all other Cuban commanders had normally engaged in black marketing to raise hard currency for critical equipment and supplies. He had thought the drug venture would be in the same class. In any event, the one operation he had approved was fouled up and never took place. All the accused were found guilty and Ochoa and three others were sentenced to death. They appealed. Most thought Castro would save them from execution. But a day or so later, the morning news announced that Ochoa, his aide, and two MININT types had been shot at dawn. People were amazed.

My theory is that Castro saw himself like Simon Bolivar at a time when the Revolution of the Americas seemed threatened. The Spanish had recaptured several provinces. The future looked bleak. At that time the general closest to Bolivar, Manuel Piar, was charged by subordinates with plotting an insurrection and sentenced to death. Many thought Piar was innocent. But Bolivar upheld the sentence, and then wept for days. By this act, however, the Liberator reputedly showed his steel resolve. For him, the struggle, the cause was everything. And reputedly for Bolivar it worked. The shock supposedly welded the army together. We had no evidence at all that Ochoa had been suspected of plotting against Castro. But in an important respect, according to my theory, Castro saw some parallel and hoped that the execution of the General would likewise demonstrate that for him, La Causa overrode everything.

Q: Are you confident the case did not go beyond drug trafficking?

TAYLOR: Many observers did speculate that Castro viewed the general as a potential threat to himself or his plans for the succession and that this was the root of the problem. That was the speculation in the early days of the trial. But after having talked to innumerable Cubans, including those who knew Ochoa well, I came to the conclusion that Ochoa was probably not a political threat nor perceived as such.

The government claimed that the Minister of the Interior, Abrantes, did not have any idea that his people were running the drug smuggling operation. That did not seem credible to me and many others. A few weeks after the trial and executions, the Minister himself was dismissed and arrested on charges unrelated to drug smuggling. Did Castro or his brother know about the drug shipments? Possibly Raul knew, but I doubt Castro did. Maybe so; but he was probably too smart to become involved in something that was almost bound to come out. Abrantes could have assumed or gotten a hint like that Reagan presumably gave Casey regarding diversion of the Iranian missile sale funds to the Contras: "do what you have to, but don't tell me about it." Several years later, a defector who had once been an aide to Ochoa told me over lunch in Washington that he agreed with my analysis of the case.

Q: While you were in Havana, did you see any reason why Castro would have wished to have better relations with the U.S. - in light of his virulent anti-Americanism?

TAYLOR: In the period I was in Havana and probably all along, Castro was ambivalent about Cuba-U.S. relations. I think he knew that the most important positive aspect of his political image was the perception that he was willing to stand up to the rich "giant" up North and that he had done so repeatedly and mostly successfully. Grenada was the only occasion where he came off looking bad. The US embargo also allowed Castro to blame the country's economic failures and even its tight "homeland security" controls on the United States. But beginning in 1987, a period existed when in reaction to new pressures and incentives he seemed to seek a fundamental improvement in relations with the United States. To achieve this, as I recounted, he took important steps on Angola and limited ones on human rights, and even professed a willingness to cooperate on Central America and to compromise on a US TV news service to Cuba. Of course his principal objective was to retain control. And he was not about to take any step that he thought would threaten this central goal. Consequently, real steps toward democracy were and still are highly unlikely as long as Castro is in charge. But if the United States had lived up to its commitment to significantly improve relations after the successful implementation of the Angola/Namibia Accord, Fidel could possibly have been edged near and perhaps onto the slippery slope of reform. Changing popular expectations might then have swept him out of power as it did other dictators of the period, including eventually Gorbachev himself.

Castro wanted to assure that his Revolution would outlast him. Thus, he could have believed that normalization of relations with the United States would give an important element of legitimacy to his regime in his final years and carry over into the succession. Economically, he could also have foreseen major benefit in improved relations with North America. But he would have wanted to carefully control US investment and business presence in Cuba to minimize the political impact. People like Aldana seemed to believe that major changes in the economy and movement toward something of an open society, a la China, could only come after a real relaxation of relations with the United States. Possibly, this thought also lingered in the back of Fidel's mind and was the reason he gave Aldana approval to begin some changes toward limited Incentives in the economy.

Before the Ochoa trial, Aldana told me that Cuba was interested in closer cooperation with the U.S. in controlling the drug trade. As I recall, he offered to have DEA agents enter Cuba to interview foreign drug traffickers in Cuban jails and to exchange information on the subject. I proposed that we consider the Cuban offer and returned to Washington for an inter-agency meeting on the subject. Many in the US Government believed that Castro was fully aware of the drug trafficking that had taken place in Cuban waters. I said we didn't know for sure but suggested that we test the Cuban government to see whether it would cooperate in the future. I had no takers. I suggested the Coast Guard send an officer to talk with its Cuban counterparts, but the interagency group thought that what I was suggesting might be interpreted as a major change in U.S. policy. Politically, the U.S. government did not want Castro to be seen as anything but "evil." Consequently, the existing pattern of limited cooperation continued on an ad hoc basis: the US Coast Guard would radio the Cuban Border Guards about a suspicious flight or boat sighting in Cuban waters and the Border Guards would presumably follow up.

Q: You seem to suggest that U.S. policy was almost cased in cement and that no indications from Cuba would move the administration.

TAYLOR: Some people believed thaCuba's cooperation on bilateral issues, including even migration, was neither necessary nor desirable. To engage Castro in a serious dialogue on any subject meant a public recognition that Communist Cuba was a serious state and could carry out agreements. ARA under Elliot Abrams supported serious negotiations on the migration accord and little else. The Cubans carried out their part of the bargain on migration, including, to the surprise of many, taking back convicted felons. And, as I explained at some length, Havana played an important part in the Angolan settlement and lived up completely to its commitments in that agreement.

I might mention that sometime in 1989, Jorge Mas called on Secretary of State of Baker, to urge that the Secretary fire me. Elliot Abrams had left the Department by this time. Baker must have asked Bernie Aronson what Mas' outburst was all about. I don't know the details, but I was simply told of the approach by Mike Kozak and warned to take care.

Q: One of the interesting aspects of our Cuban policy is that the threat it posed paled in comparison to the Soviets, but nevertheless we were much tougher on Cuba than we were on the USSR. I wonder whether had we been a little more forthcoming, we might have had a different situation today. Did you see it that way?

TAYLOR: The way I answered visitors who asked that question was to say that inconsistency is rampant in foreign policy as in other aspects of human affairs. It is a habit not limited to little minds. Different circumstances bring about entirely different priorities. Because the Soviet threat was huge, dealing with Moscow was of the highest priority. And of course enormous differences existed in the pulling and tugging of U.S. domestic politics on the two issues - dealing with the Soviet Union and dealing Cuba.

In some of my analytical messages, I discussed what seemed to me to be the cost/benefit consequences of a U.S. policy that in return for significant moves by Castro was willing actually to improve bilateral relations, including a softening or eventually removal of the embargo. First, we should have made some concrete but limited change in the embargo that acknowledged Castro's critical cooperation on Angola. Then, when and if he lessened his grip at home, we would take other steps toward ending our policy of isolation and pressure. Basically, it seemed to me that internal reform in Cuba would come from within, and that to encourage this sort of change we should gradually increase private contacts and exchanges, including economic ones, depending on events within Cuba. But, by the spring of 1990, Castro was almost certainly dead set against any internal political reform and even any broad economic change at home beyond large scale tourism, the dollar economy, and a limited private sector. Still, even then, he would have possibly responded to a more open door American policy. The idea was to test him. I think the new ARA under Bernie Aronson more or less agreed with this view, but it had to face domestic political realities - George Bush had to win Florida in 1992 - and to consider priorities - Cuba was way down the list.

An illustration of pressures on the Washington decision-makers was the telephone maintenance issue. When I was in Havana, all the telephone connections between the U.S. and Cuba went through 40-year old AT&T equipment. The available circuits were extremely limited and because of the age of the equipment the system broke down repeatedly. Sometimes it took hours to get a call through from Havana to Miami or vice versa. AT&T raised the possibility of upgrading the system. I favored whatever option would maximize the number of circuits so that the supply would exceed the demand for private communications between Cubans in the U.S. and in Cuba. I believed that the greater the number of calls, the better for U.S. interests, not to speak of the interests of Cuban-American and their relatives on the island. Restricting calls far below the demand would only serve Castro's interests.

Washington had turned down previous efforts to upgrade telephonic traffic. It was, I believe, in 1989 that the US Government finally agreed to expand the circuits by laying another cable and installing new, although outdated equipment in Cuba. Elements in Miami, including, I recall, CANF, opposed any upgrade at all; they were not interested in a project that might indicate closer U.S.-Cuban relations. The cable was laid and calls significantly increased, but not as much as they might have had the most modern radio technology been used. After I left, the issue took on a new dimension when Havana demanded, as apparently is the practice on international traffic, a share of the receipts generated by the calls placed in the United States. US-made calls represented the great majority of the traffic, as Cuban-Americans did not want their poor cousins on the island to pay. This created another crisis, about which you will have to ask my successor.

Q: What about Guantanamo?

TAYLOR: As all Americans know by now, Guantanamo is an American Naval base in the southern part of Cuba near Santiago. Betsy and I visited the base once, flying in via Jamaica, because the Cubans would not allow us to enter via the gate. It is a totally self-sufficient base. It makes its own water with one of the world's largest desalination plants. Guantanamo is a great natural port able to host large warships, including aircraft carriers. There is a narrow continental shelf off of Guantanamo, and subs can consequently dive shortly after leaving the harbor. Finally, the Navy uses exercise a large swatch of the Caribbean south of Guantanamo as a live-fire area. When I was in Cuba, some 70-80 Cuban old timers who worked on the base were still passing in and out the main gate everyday. The base itself is a little California town: McDonald's, Burger King, bowling alleys, swimming pools, Little League parks, movie houses, low-slung public schools, and housing areas with palm-lined streets. The treaty that gave us use of the land said that we could hold on to it in perpetuity, but that we should pay a nominal rent - something like, as I recall, $1000 per annum. So, annually, one of the least demanding things that I did was to hand over a check to the Cuban government in this amount - or whatever it was. Castro never cashed the checks; he put them in his desk drawer.

Q: Did Guantanamo become an issue at all while you were in Cuba?

TAYLOR: Occasional incidents took place, for example when a Cuban would try to escape to the Base either by crossing a land-mined "no man's land" or by swimming from the sea or across the Bay. Occasionally shootings by the Marines took place when they thought someone was trying to break through the perimeter.

Guantanamo possessed a Navy squadron of A-6s. In approaching the runway, the planes had to make a tight turn into final in order to avoid Cuban air space. That gave the planes very little leeway in making their final approaches. As a Marine pilot carrier-qualified in the old tail-wheel, prop planes I appreciated the performance.

It always seemed to me that our occupancy of Guantanamo gave us a potential tool to use some day in encouraging a transition to a democratic regime in Cuba. During my musings on this possibility in one cable, I suggested that at some point we might even say publicly that once a democratic regime had been established in Cuba we would be willing to negotiate the return of the base or a new lease, whichever the people of Cuba wanted. Something like a cruise missile immediately shot down this idea. For the Navy, Guantanamo was and is a very valuable training base and it doesn't have to worry about public protests. This was, of course, before the base became a famous refugee camp for Haitians and then the prison for detainees from the war in Afghanistan.

Q: I think one of the great games played in the Foreign Service is to figure out who might succeed a dictator such as Castro. I did that when serving in INR and worrying about the succession in Ethiopia after Haile Selassie. What was our speculation on how Castro might leave power and what might happen after that?

TAYLOR: Castro's brother, Raul, was and still is the designated successor in all sectors - military, party, and government. He is not charismatic like his brother or striking in appearance - he has a weak chin. But many Cubans and some diplomats who knew him insisted that he should not be underestimated. My view was that when Castro departed from the scene, the regime would go through a period of instability under Raul; there would be a lot of pressures and a period of uncertainty, but the party, the military, and the bureaucracy would probably see it in their interests to keep things going under Raul. Adjustments would be necessary because with Castro gone, the government would lose most of its historic or moral authority, particularly among the middle, younger, and intellectual group of Cubans. Economic liberalization on the pattern of Vietnam would very likely begin fairly soon. If Raul had to govern under a rising threat from the U.S. in the immediate post-Castro period, he could be strengthened politically. Thus, we felt that when Castro departed the scene, the United States should emphasize patience and calmness. If we did not have to worry about the political reaction in exile-Miami, which would then be in a high state of excitement, we might at that time send a message to Raul, indicating that the United States had no hostile intent toward his government and stood ready to respond to any significant effort to bring about a more open and prosperous society on the island.

Q: Was there any concern that if the attitude of the regime were to change, the exiles might return and claim the property they had lost?

TAYLOR: In Eastern Europe and China there have been restorations of private property taken by communist governments. It is not inconceivable that Cuba might go through the same process even under a successor communist government. The Cuban-American community in Miami, including CANF, has wisely not agitated for a return of residential properties. They seem to realize that to make such claims would militate against any popular effort to oust the communists in Cuba. Fear of losing long occupied family housing has in fact served to discourage sentiment for a fundamental change.

Q: Did we have a record of the property expropriated from American firms?

TAYLOR: I believe that as confiscations began in the early 1960s, American citizens and business firms could register their properties at the American Embassy. I think there is a list of such properties somewhere. A number of well-to-do Cubans brought jewelry and other items to the Embassy before flying off to Florida. Technically and legally, these items should not have been accepted. Legally, they cannot now be sent to the States. The dispensation of these items will have to be negotiated. So, they for the time being they remain in boxes and file cabinets in the USINT (Embassy) basement. Businesses are different. According to the Helms-Burton Act passed in the early 1990s even companies that were not American firms at the time of expropriation can lay claims under U.S. law to their business properties on the island. For example, a strictly Cuban entity whose business was nationalized could under U.S. law seek compensation in a US court.

Q: What else should be said about your tour in Havana?

TAYLOR: In the summer of 1989, during his July 26 Moncado anniversary when he spoke about the possible fall of the Soviet Union, he also as usual made a strident attack on "American imperialism." I was in the diplomatic enclosure and as usual on hearing such language I walked out of the stadium. I sat in my car in the parking lot and with Orlando listened to the rest of the speech on the radio as I had done before. For the first time, I heard Castro express direct concern for what was taking place in the communist-socialist camp. He could not predict what might happen, but he called on Cuba to be prepared for very difficult times. Later he defined this as "a special period in time of peace," which he compared to war.

Q: You left Havana in September 1990, after three years.

TAYLOR: That's right. I left just as the Iraq-Kuwait crisis was building up. Iraq had invaded Kuwait in early August. Several weeks later, I went to the Carter Center as "diplomat-in-residence."

Q: Did you feel that after your Cuba tour, you had been shunted aside when it came to ambassadorial assignments?

TAYLOR: I was impressed and moved by the remarkable, even unprecedented gestures of support that I had received for my work in Cuba, especially in connection with Abrams' rating. Others can judge better than I, but I felt my reputation in the Department was enhanced by my performance and by Abrams strong attack on my work. I personally did not agree with a number of the policies of Secretary Baker - TV Marti of course being one, Panama the other. But I felt Baker and President Bush had overall brought professionalism and common sense to American foreign policy. It was they who wisely guided our words and deeds as the Soviet Union collapsed, then pronounced not a new policy of hegemony but a new order of international law and cooperation. They began a prudent and appropriate reduction in America's military machine. Then they skillfully demonstrated their commitment to both US military strength and collective security under the UN by reversing, with worldwide support, the first annexation of a UN (or League of Nations) member in 60 years. I am referring, of course, to the "Good Gulf War."

After Havana, I went to the Carter Center for two years. I had three major tasks at the Center. I taught a course at Emory University on international relations one year and the next at Spelman College. At the same time, I was the principal coordinator for the Carter Center's worldwide election monitoring program. The first projects I organized and implemented were in Guyana and then in Zambia. We were all prepared for a similar project in Liberia but it was cancelled. In these exercises, we recruited and trained observation teams six weeks prior to the elections and then deployed them to the polls on election day. My third major activity was to write another book: The Rise and fall of Totalitarianism.

Q: Did you have much contact with President Carter?

TAYLOR: When I was serving in Peking, I was the control officer for former President Carter and Mrs. Carter's visit to China. Betsy and I traveled with them to Xian. Consequently, we had the pleasure of getting to know them casually. In Atlanta, I also enjoyed contact with the President, occasionally briefing him on projects. For example, I worked out for the Center a new understanding of cooperation with the two partially US-government funded NGOs that promoted democracy and also monitored elections abroad. President Carter personally headed the observer delegation in Zambia and I spent a bit of time with him at that time. President Carter's projects in promoting health care around the world are as important as his work on conflict resolution and promotion of democracy. He is a true humanitarian, but despite the gentle manner also a very tough guy.

As I mentioned before, the 1990 Iraq crisis was well underway when I got to the Center. We were building up our military forces in Saudi Arabia, preparing to drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait. President Carter publicly called for a very limited military response - just enough to defend Saudi Arabia not to liberate Kuwait. During a lunch one day with the regional and conflict resolution specialists at the Center, Carter said he knew that most of us at the table disagreed with his position on Iraq and Kuwait; nevertheless he wanted to hear everybody's views. So, one at a time, we all chimed in, including the prominent expert on the Middle East, a professor named Stein. All of us, except the African specialist, disagreed with the President. He thanked us for our views and then went on to the next issue. No further discussion took place. He was a man who made up his own mind.

Q: After your tour at the Carter Center, what was your next assignment?

TAYLOR: In 1992, I was assigned as a senior member on Task Force 2000 - one of the periodic committees that the Department convenes to look at possible reorganization. We spoke to every principal in the Department. I concentrated on a number of issues, such as arms control and security issues. Our final study included my recommendation that we abolish the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) and incorporate its functions into the Department. The Department at the time did not accept that recommendation, but subsequently Senator Jesse Helms picked it up and mandated it; he did the same thing for the functions of USIA. I think he was right on both accounts.

I also recommended that a new bureau be established to be responsible for narcotics matters and all other aspects of international crimes. That recommendation was accepted and the new bureau was established. I also wrote a paper for the study on International Law, stressing the need for a more institutional emphasis on its key role in American security and diplomacy. The new Clinton Administration was not interested in making international law a major theme in its foreign policy. I also wrote a classified report on intelligence collection and analysis. In addition, I prepared an unclassified section on Foreign Service reporting, touching on some of the concerns that I had raised in the classified report. The unclassified paper stressed the importance of Foreign Service reporting not only as a basis for action by the Executive Branch, but also as an adjunct to the analysis of intelligence information. I pointed out that the Department was slowly, but surely, losing out in the reporting arena, which was really one of the core responsibilities of the Foreign Service. The CIA was submitting more and more reporting and analysis based on overt sources. As the Department's reports became fewer and fewer, other agencies' output, although also reduced, nevertheless were becoming the predominant source. After finishing my work on Task Force 2000, I went to the National War College to write a few papers on China and East Asia and take part in a war game at CINCPAC in Honolulu. I formally retired in January 1994.

It had been - in my own limited and biased view - a breathtaking career of 41 years, including fours years as a pilot in the US Navy and the Marines. In my first five years of retirement, I wrote my fourth book, a biography of Chiang Ching-kuo (The Generalissimo's Son) published by Harvard University Press. I also turned out numerous op-eds and full-length articles for The Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, and The New York Time. As I mentioned earlier, in a entirely new venture for me, I wrote, produced, and directed a PBS documentary on South Africa, Ubuntu, African and Afrikaner. I was also fund raiser, book keeper, publicist, handyman, and everything else for this project. It took a few thousand hours of work and involved many crises and a few points of near abandonment but ended up a successful and rewarding experiment. I am currently writing another book for Harvard University Press, and hope at some point to do something on Cuba. Actually, I've already written a play, Fidel I Ochoa, based on the case of General Arnaldo Ochoa. Occasionally I dash off a poem and plan soon to internet-publish a collection of 200 or so of these odes. Following is one about Cuba:

CUBA

Q: Did you feel that the Havana assignment had a detrimental effect on your career?

TAYLOR: If I had not gone to Havana I am sure I would have followed a different career track for the rest of my time in the service - one that probably would have kept me in the Far East - as I still prefer to call it. But I don't think about "what if." The Cuban assignment was a "chief of mission" position, ranking in importance above half or more of US embassy missions abroad. I enjoyed my time on that beautiful island; it was important work, challenging, rewarding, and fun. We made many friends, Cubans, Americans, and others. Our family loved coming to visit. And, ah! The weather! The beaches! All that and one of the magnificent residences of the Foreign Service. James Michener stayed with us for several days. As recounted in a small book he wrote about his Havana trip, one evening, after a cozy dinner with Betty and me, he recalled the operatic gypsy girl who, remembering vaguely her noble childhood, sings, "I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls." "What," he asked, "will you do when you have to leave these marble halls and return to your log cabin in Tennessee?" "Ah," I replied, "The life of an American diplomat is to leave one marbled hall after another aware that he is heading back to the log cabin."

Finally, I think I did some worthwhile things.

Q: I would guess that although you were dealing with a real intractable problem - U.S.-Cuba relations - it was probably more challenging and Interesting than being a chief of mission in a lot of countries. I would think that the participation in the policy making for Cuba was far more important than it might have been for many other places.

TAYLOR: I mentioned before that I was given the option by the DG of turning down the offer to go to Cuba. But he himself said that Havana was one of the twenty most important chief of mission posts in the Foreign Service. I could have gone to many other assignments and never have had the same level of challenge and impact that Havana provided. I twice took myself off the list for very small ambassadorial posts. So, again, I have no regrets about my one Latin American experience; it was a fitting addition to my Asian and African assignments and rounded out my career.

A few years after I retired, I was attending a conference on Cuba in Washington. At lunch one of my table companions was the FSO who been the deputy director of the Cuban desk when Elliot Abrams was Assistant Secretary. He told me that I had stirred up an endless stream of controversy. But, he said, "I can say one thing, you are an honest man."

That's what I tried to be - a professional with personal integrity.Q: Thank you very much.

TAYLOR: You are most welcome.

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Resume:JATAYLOR

WRITER/DOCUMENTARISTThe China Quarterly described China and Southeast Asi(Praeger,1975, revised edition and paperback-1979) as "The standard work on the subject." Foreign Affairs called The Dragon And The Wild Goos(Greenwood, 1987, revised edition and paperback-1990) "a very rich comparison of Indian and Chinese societies and cultures." Distinguished China scholar Doak Barnett declared it "a tour de force." Reviewers characterized The Rise And Fall of Totalitarianism (Paragon, 1993) as: "insightful and original," and "an intellectual roller coaster" The Times Literary Supplement (London) said The Generalissimo's Son; (Harvard University Press, 2000) was "superb... magnificently researched... a fascinating story." Currently writing a biography of Chiang Kai-shek, also for Harvard Press.

Writer, director, producer, PBS documentary, Ubuntu, African and Afrikaner (2001). In development: a new documentary, Divided Dragon, which will explore the dynamics of the potentially Earth-shaking quarrel over the status of Taiwan.

Articles and "op eds" on world affairs in The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, and The New York Times. Speaker on China, Taiwan, Cuba, South Africa, and other world issues.

FOREIGN SERVICEAwards and commendations for reporting and negotiations on: China, Taiwan, South Africa, Namibia, Rhodesia, Cuba, and the Philippines. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research; representative of the Secretary of State on all senior national intelligence committees. Chief of Mission, US Interests Section Havana, Cuba. Diplomat-in-Residence, Carter Presidential Center. Senior member of "State 2000" task force that drafted 1993 reorganization plan for the Department of State.

ASSIGNMENTS: ASIAN AFFAIRS: Director of Analysis for Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department oState; Political Counselor, US Embassy Peking; White House NSC staff member for East Asia (Japan, Korean Peninsula, Taiwan, Indonesia, Oceania, Thailand, Burma); Officer-in-Charge, Chinese Affairs, Dept. of State; chief, Chinese external affairs reporting, US Consulate General, Hong Kong; US Consul for Sarawak, Sabah, and Brunei; analyst, Chinese external affairs, Dept. of State; political officer, US Embassy, Taipei. AFRICAN POSTS: Chief, US Liaison Office/ Observer Team, Namibia; Political Counselor, US Embassy Pretoria/Cape Town; 3rd secretary, Accra, Ghana; Coordinator, Carter Center election monitoring projects in Zambia and Liberia (also in Guyana).

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End of interview