

AMBASSADOR J.D. BINDENAGEL

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: February 3, 1998

Copyright 2002 ADST

Q: Today is February 3, 1998. The interview is with J.D. Bindenagel. This is being done on behalf of The Association for Diplomatic Studies. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. J.D. and I are old friends. We are going to include your biographic sketch that you included at the beginning, which is really quite full and it will be very useful. I have a couple of questions to begin. While you were in high school, what was your interest in foreign affairs per se? I know you were talking politics with Mr. Frank Humphrey, Senator Hubert Humphrey's brother, at the Humphrey Drugstore in Huron, South Dakota, and all that, but how about foreign affairs?

BINDENAGEL: I grew up in Huron, South Dakota and foreign affairs in South Dakota really focused on our home town politician Senator and Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey. Frank, Hubert Humphrey's brother, was our connection to Washington, DC, and the center of American politics. We followed Hubert's every move as Senator and Vice President; he of course was very active in foreign policy, and the issues that concerned South Dakota's farmers were important to us. Most of farmers' interests were in their wheat sales, and when we discussed what was happening with wheat you always had to talk about the Russians, who were buying South Dakota wheat. We were greatly influenced by the views of leading politicians like Humphrey and by South Dakota Senator George McGovern, whose Food for Peace idea became a beacon for liberal policy of the Kennedy Administration and helped South Dakotan farmers sell their wheat. These politicians' politics may have been based on local interests in agriculture, but those interests brought us high school kids closer to Russia and the Cold War.

Q: What about Russia and wheat? Was Russia a purchaser or a competitor?

BINDENAGEL: Russia was a purchaser and there was always the question whether their harvests would not satisfy their needs or would provide the market for South Dakota farmers. Each year market uncertainties would affect the price of wheat worldwide. In addition, the US Government would determine whether to allow the Soviets to purchase American wheat. This debate was our window on international politics; U.S. relations with Russia were very much on our young South Dakotan minds.

Q: As a high school student and even before you were busy singing and in sort of various extracurricular activities. What did you read? Any sort or types of books?

BINDENAGEL: One of the books that forcefully struck me early, was a book called "Giants in the Earth" by O. E. Rolvaag, a Norwegian immigrant to the Dakota Territory at the turn of the century. The book described life on the prairie, its character and interaction with the elements, especially the weather. As you will find when you talk to people from the prairie, or at least from South Dakota, that the elements of nature play an incredibly important role not only for the crops but also for our very survival. Rolvaag was a very important novelist for me; he captured the characteristics necessary for survival in the bleak, bleak prairie -reliance, individualism and community. These values were certainly our link to Jacksonian Democracy, a frontier culture where government actively supports the well being of the community's political, economic and moral welfare. Also, I read other pure American literature of John Steinbeck, Jack London and, Mark Twain. Those were the adventure and novels that we read.

Q: How about Willa Cather and something like that?

BINDENAGEL: I should of course talk about "Small Town on the Prairie," Willa Cather from neighboring Nebraska was a favorite author. Not to forget Laura Engels Wilder from DeSmet, South Dakota. Of course, both authors were part of the genre that explained our lives to the world. By the way, DeSmet and our capital, Pierre, were named for the Catholic missionary Pierre DeSmet from Belgium, who helped bring education to the Indians and the settlers in the Dakota Territory in the late 19th Century.

Q: I was going to say that you were coming out of the period when there was a considerable literary focus on that particular element, area of the country. Follow the literature of the '20s and '30s and '40s, of course they are still being read. There was quite a school around the prairies.

BINDENAGEL: Indeed. And for us the literature was not only entertainment; books helped us understand our daily life. It was our literature; we discussed it to understand our connections with life and our outlook on the world. As you see in the "Life on the Prairie" and the connection to politics, you find very much the conflicts we faced, whether in the Cold War's conflicts or in the elemental conflicts we faced eking out a living on the very harsh prairie. We were children of pioneers on the prairie and our lives were described in the literature. Our politics were shaped in the discussions that we had at the Huron J.J. Newberry's store soda fountain with Hubert Humphrey's brother Frank, while we drank cherry coke. Frank would tell us stories about his brother's political exploits in Washington, and we listened in awe of the great man from our hometown.

Q: Were there any particular ties to Scandinavian countries, other than some people were from Scandinavia? I was just wondering that.

BINDENAGEL: For me there were very few ties for us to Scandinavia, other than the bachelor Norwegian jokes. Our family had a strong personal history of our arrival in Dakota Territory. My great-grandfather Carl, a Prussian Musketeer of the Fifth Pomeranian Regiment emigrated from Prussia after the Battle of Koeniggratz in 1866. He came first to the Burr Oaks Farm in Ford County, Illinois and then later homesteaded in Dakota Territory in the 1870s. Our life eighty years later very much focused on our own frontier-like experiences drawing from these settlers.

In fact, my great-grandfather, Carl Bindenagel came to Spink County in Dakota Territory shortly after Colonel Custer took his U.S. Seventh Cavalry through the Black Hills in 1874 and demonstrated that the U.S. Army would provide security to the European immigrants who wanted to settle the land there.

World War I became the breaking point for ethnic connection to Germany that created a true "American" identity for German immigrants on the prairie. That was particularly true for the German community, but also to European settlers. Until the Great War, German ethnic identity was strong. My Grandmother, Elsie Bindenagel, told me that after the first World War, a distinct American, not German-American, identity was created among my kin in the Dakotas, and probably also in the U.S. After that awful conflict, the old countries, Germany, Norway, and Sweden began to lose their hold on the settlers' identity.

Q: What about maps? Did maps play much of a role or not? My generation is older and we had WWII as kids. We followed it on maps and we really got to know maps.

BINDENAGEL: We didn't do much with maps.

Q: What about when you came to college? Did your view of foreign affairs open up at all or was it still rather constrained?

BINDENAGEL: My views on foreign affairs were really affected by my personal experience. I was in college in 1967; at that time my brother, Steven, was an in the U.S. Army and stationed in Nha Trang, Vietnam. The focal point for us as we approached age of 18 was the military draft. Vietnam and the draft gave us a focus on foreign policy; it was very personal and shaped our views. The Cold War was our reality; it meant to give your life for your country. It determined my sense of public service, military service, national service. My sense of obligation was strong; my father was in World War II, an infantry soldier who fought in Europe in 1944-45. My brother was a crew chief mechanic on helicopters in Vietnam. So, my focus, interest in foreign policy was very much driven by my sense of obligation to serve the United States in the Vietnam War and the Cold War.

Q: Looking at this era, one begins looking at University of Wisconsin, University of Minnesota, Columbia, University of California, all that. What were some of the currents in your school?

BINDENAGEL: Of course there was a heated debate about the Vietnam War, and it was politicized, serious, even life threatening. Nevertheless, there were light moments. While Columbia University students in 1968 were rioting against the Vietnam War and its campus was exploding, we at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion were demonstrating, too. We were less politicized, but we had a good social life, good camaraderie that was developed at USD. Still, we had a different view of the world from our place on the prairie.

Q: Did the Foreign Service come across your horizon at all?

BINDENAGEL: No, neither as a high school student nor as a college student did such an elite profession as diplomacy cross my horizon. Such a career was seemingly beyond my possibilities. I went to the University of South Dakota to major in a very practical profession. After my first year of studies, I switched to political science, having been deeply influenced by a great man, Professor Dr. William O. Farber, a wonderful mentor who inspired students to stretch beyond the horizons of the prairie. In fact there were several of us at the University that he mentored, people like Tom Brokaw of NBC, Phil Odeen of BDM, Senator Tim Johnson and many others. Dr. Farber was a man who encouraged personal and intellectual development and inspired young people toward great achievement.

Q: Coming from this particular state in time, was there a socialist bent towards what you were getting? I am talking about cooperatives and things, broad socialism as opposed to doctrinal socialism.

BINDENAGEL: Politics in South Dakota were fascinating. As I said, the farmers really dominated our interests. The farmers were very conservative, but at the same time there was this prairie socialism that is very much a part of our upbringing. If you look at our key industries, you would see that electricity, an assumed service elsewhere in the U.S., was not in the Dakotas. Electrification of very isolated farms was not economical and needed government assistance to provide it. So a government program, called the REA, was created. REA by the way is much better known as the "Railway Express Agency" but for us it was actually the Rural Electrification Association. That is; the association that brought electricity and subsidized those poor, isolated farmers whose lives were greatly improved by electricity.

We also had in South Dakota a problem with cement to build highways and other infrastructure. So the State built a factory to supply cement so that we were able to build highways and other projects. So there was an element of social concern or prairie socialism, but at the same time we had a very deep conservatism. South Dakota Senator Karl Mundt was, for instance, the father of the Senate's committee on Un-American Activities. We had two senators during my high school time, Senators George McGovern and Karl Mundt. While on the one hand George McGovern, one of the fathers of the Food for Peace Program, was very much a liberal progressive politician, Karl Mundt was a very conservative politician on the other hand. Karl Mundt was one of the fathers of the Nixon-Mundt bills that brought us the Walter-McCarran Act in a period of fear about the communists. Both Senators captured the unique aspects of politics in South Dakota.

Q: You graduated in 1967 and went to the Army?

BINDENAGEL: No, I graduated from Huron High School in 1967 but went to University of South Dakota at Vermillion for two years. In the summer of 1968, between my freshman and sophomore years, I worked at the Chrysler Corporation Belvedere, Illinois, assembly plant. I became a member of the United Autoworkers Union, the UAW, and found myself working on the "body drop" where the overhead rail brought the car bodies to the ground level line together with the car frame. It was not a really exciting job, except one time when a co-worker switched jobs with me and we fumbled the next car in line and stopped production for a minute or so. That act must have cost the company my entire summer salary. In any case, I was from Huron, Humphrey's hometown, and the Vice President was running for president after Lyndon Johnson had dropped out of the race. Of course I spoke glowingly of him and his policies, despite the George C. Wallace bumper stickers and buttons worn by many of the workers. From my view these discussions were fun and remained fun until the Chicago Democratic convention when the debate turned ugly and violent. One morning as I was blithely dropping car bodies on frames when the foreman came over to me and told me abruptly to shut up and keep quiet. It did not take long to know why. Several other workers suddenly gathered around me and stood with tools, chains and other potential weapons. They made some provocative remarks and I continued to do my work as if they were not there. After twenty minutes, their break time ended and they returned to their work stations. The foremen came up to me and warned me never to speak about politics again on the job. I learned a valuable lesson in free speech; it does not come free. Intimidation may have worked in the short run to silence me on the job, but it strengthened my determination to excel in college. In my sophomore year at the University of South Dakota, I was told that I had become a resident of Illinois because my parents had moved in to Illinois in 1966. Consequently, and with the good advice of Professor Farber, I transferred to University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign in 1969.

Q: When you were there what you were taking?

BINDENAGEL: At the University of Illinois I majored in political science, with a minor, due in great part to the Vietnam war, in Asian studies. I took a course in Chinese at South Dakota, and took courses necessary for an interdisciplinary degree at Illinois.

Q: Did you find the atmosphere at the University of Illinois at Urbana different than in South Dakota?

BINDENAGEL: Yes, by then in 1969 the demonstrations at the University of Illinois against our involvement in Vietnam were much more serious; we were headed to confrontation with the police already in 1969. In the fall of 1969 we had the lottery that decided our draft numbers. I can still remember sitting around our house at 301 South Busey Avenue in Urbana, where I was living in with many other students. We all watched the television and as the numbers were being pulled; some of us were absolutely crushed by a low number and others elated by a high number that they got.

My draft number was 190, which was ambiguous, but actually my Rockford, Illinois, draft board (where my parents lived) did draft to number 190. I was ambivalent about what I would do. The demonstrations at the University of Illinois became polarized and heated. There was a professor, Mike Parenti, at the University of Illinois who wrote a book called "Anti-Communist Impulse." He was in the Political Science Department where I was a student; he had some friends around, among other political science professors who were deeply opposed to the Vietnam War. In the fall, Parenti and others organized demonstrations and a campaign to protest the Vietnam War. It culminated in the spring of 1970, as we saw what was happening at the Kent State, where the National Guard shot and killed four protesting students. At the University of Illinois the National Guard were also called to bring order on our campus. The State Police came often. One serious demonstration in May 1970, we had several thousand demonstrators on campus, the State Police came in formation and broke up the picket line that had been set up around one of the buildings and blocked garbage trucks from picking up the garbage. Police used that picket line as a reason to attack the demonstrators and in fact beat up Mr. Parenti who was later then charged and convicted of attacking a policeman. You had a very tense period from 1968 bombing, and the Cambodia bombing in 1970 at Christmas. For me facing induction into the army, the debate was existential, as it was very intense debate among the students.

Q: Where were you coming out on this?

BINDENAGEL: I was personally very torn. I had been a cadet in the Reserve Officer Training Corps at the University of South Dakota, a mandatory program that had grown out of the Land Grant Legislation of Abraham Lincoln that required militia training at land grant colleges. The University of Illinois was also a Land Grant College, but had abolished the mandatory part of ROTC. After I received my draft number of 190, I decided to stay in the Reserve Officer Training Corps, so I was clearly on the side of those who chose to support the government even though I was uncertain about our policy in Vietnam. It was a difficult time. As I walked through campus in May 1970 among the armed National Guardsmen, who were townsmen in uniform, I found it unreal. Here I was an ROTC cadet and these guardsmen were standing on this campus blocking my way; it was chilling, having just seen similar guards kill students in the spring of 1970 at Kent State. The whole scene was very unnerving.

Q: Can you explain what happened at Kent State?

BINDENAGEL: At Kent State there was an anti-Vietnam War demonstration and the National Guard was called in to quell the protest. As they moved against the demonstrators to break them up, shots were fired. Four students were killed. This created at Illinois a very tense relationship between the National Guard on campus and students, and the situation deteriorated significantly that spring and into the fall.

Q: How did you feel the administration handled it?

BINDENAGEL: The students also attacked our university administration when we saw other university Chancellors being blocked in their offices. The Chancellor at the University of Illinois, Jack Peltson, was also held hostage in his office. I thought he handled it fairly well. He never became the focal point. He did have his office cleared by the police or the Guard at one time; however, he did engage with the students. However, by using the Police and National Guard on campus the focus was on the abuses of power implied by the call of Police brutality.

Q: You graduated in 1971, with a major in political science? Any languages?

BINDENAGEL: I had Chinese from South Dakota, only one year, and French. And from high school I had German.

Q: Then what happened? You were in ROTC?

BINDENAGEL: ROTC. In June 1971, I was commissioned a Second Lieutenant US Army Reserve and waited orders until November calling me to duty. During that period I stayed at the University of Illinois and worked at the library, waiting until I could go into active duty. I went into active duty in November, went to the Infantry Officer Basic Corps at Fort Benning, Georgia. Then in January or so went to the Military Intelligence School at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. In the meantime, I married my college sweetheart, Jean Lundfelt, in December of 1971.

Q: How did she feel about the Vietnam war? She was from where, the University of Illinois?

BINDENAGEL: She attended the University of Illinois with me: she is from Downers Grove, Illinois. We met when she was protesting the university's decision to close the undergraduate library, which was threatened by Vietnam War protesters. Perhaps I could best characterize the ambivalence of being in the military at that time by saying that when we got married and we were going to Fort Benning, Georgia, our wedding announcement said that we were living in Columbus, Georgia. That was all.

Q: How did you get into the intelligence side?

BINDENAGEL: Actually, I was a rather outstanding ROTC student, I was one of the top students, and a so-called "distinguished military graduate." There were some reasons for that. One is, those people who were "distinguished military graduates" were able to choose a branch of the Army other than Combat Arms. I chose one of the support combat arms as a way of fulfilling my duty and something that I thought was less likely to get me killed as an infantry officer. Nevertheless, I was sent to the Infantry Officer Basic Corps.

Q: What type of intelligence were you trained to do?

BINDENAGEL: I was trained in counterintelligence and in tactical intelligence. Counter-intelligence of course was policing the internal concerns of the Army and tactical because I was attached to the infantry.

Q: Then you were sent to Germany?

BINDENAGEL: "I was given an opportunity" as they say in the Army, to volunteer for indefinite service, with a promise that I would go for one year to Germany. This quite frankly would delay for a year my transfer to Vietnam, a difficult place to go at that time. I chose the offer I could not refuse.

Q: 1972. At that time, we were beginning to pull out anyway. I left Vietnam in 1970, the Embassy, and the so-called Vietnamization was a real draw now.

BINDENAGEL: Yes. The calculation for each of us depended on your military occupation specialty, your MOS. For us in my occupation specialty, military intelligence, we had a deficit until late 1973. At that point the drawdown had come to point where they had more officers than they needed. At the beginning of 1974 we were told that there as an excess of lieutenants in the field and several of us in Więrzburg decided that it would be right thing to do to curtail our assignments. And on February 28 1974, I left military but stayed in Germany with Jean. I worked a temporary job at German electric company for several months. We also used that opportunity to travel around Europe to Sweden, Spain, the Netherlands, France and Germany.

Q: I want to go back a little to your military time. You already covered a lot of that in your paper, but what was the feeling in the military where you were about the Soviet threat at that particular time, 1971-74?

BINDENAGEL: We were of two minds. One, you recall that the U.S. Government had begun MBFR, Mutual Balanced Force Reduction, talks in Vienna. We saw that as an effort to keep us Europe because the threat didn't seem to be very serious, perhaps that was correct or not, I don't know. It wasn't evident to us that the Soviets were actually threatening us. On the other hand what we saw in the fall of 1973 was a different kind of threat, and it redefined the threat for us. We were in military exercises in October of 1973 in the forests of Franconia, Northern Bavaria. We watched very closely the reports about the war that had broken out in Israel, the Yom Kippur war. As we were exercising to fight the Soviets across the Central Front in Europe, we heard President Nixon's call for defense condition three (DEFCON 3). By calling the defense condition three, we were actually set on war alert which was a shock to us because we had focused only on the Central Front in Europe, which didn't seem to be threatening us. Suddenly we were being told we were on alert to deploy to the Middle East, because the Soviets allegedly had sent troops to Syria to be used against Israel. This alert was a significant shock to us. We came back into garrison, divided into groups, checked our equipment, and began to recamouflage our trucks and jeeps into sand camouflage. So it was a very short but significant period of time when the threat changed for us, from one of the Central Front to a worldwide threat. The implications of the Cold War breaking out anywhere, not only in Vietnam, the European Central Front, and then in the Middle East became very evident too. Particularly a friend of mine, Andrew Tourville, a lieutenant with me at the time in Więrzburg, and I had a lot of discussions about what the threat was and what did it mean, until the Yom Kippur war. It is strange now in retrospect to see that we chose not to stay in the military, armed to the teeth to fight and that instead I chose to go as a diplomat behind combat lines with just my wits to engage with Cold War enemies against the United States. Andy and I resigned from the military the same day.

Q: There you were a lieutenant in the Army, and their real concern particularly in Vietnam but also elsewhere, was about two things: the fact that so much of the equipment had been sent off to Vietnam, and the morale of the troops. Leary talks about the hand grenades being thrown at the officers, and other things like this. It was still a drafted army. There was a problem with drugs and all. Was this a difficult time?

BINDENAGEL: It was a very difficult time. As I said I was trained for counter-intelligence but I found most of my time dealing with social problems: drugs, alcohol, and lack of discipline. Certainly the equipment we had was simply dismal. Our own motor pool was a tent, this is Germany where winter is serious, and we had a tent. We had no office in the motor pool, so the sergeant found an old bus, which he personally converted into a little office. We had severe morale and motivational problems among the troops, although my intelligence detachment was actually less affected than the rest of the infantry division. But it was a very demoralizing time. In fact, anecdotally, we had a comment about going out on maneuvers against the Soviets. A very sad commentary it was. We joked that we would just tell the infantry troops that in each of the Soviet tanks that they would fighting there was a kilo of hashish, we felt that that would be their motivation to fight. That's how bad, how difficult it was to be in the Army in Europe at that time. We had a few soldiers back from Vietnam that had a few months left before separation and they were very disruptive. They had been in Vietnam and then they were sent here where we didn't have any real equipment, we didn't have any real purpose. As I said, the threat wasn't as real as it was in Vietnam so they had a very hard time.

Q: What about the attitude of the Germans that you were meeting while you were in the Army towards our presence there?

BINDENAGEL: There were several attitudes. We lived off base in a little town called Rimpar, near Würzburg, a village where the neighbors, such as Peter Zuber, were very friendly to us. They invited us to wine tasting parties; they took us on outings; they were very generous. They were usually younger people, about our age and tried to integrate us in their lives and were very supportive. On the other hand, there were several older people in the neighborhood who had directly experienced World War II; they were concerned that our presence was provocative and would provoke the Russians into attacking. They particularly didn't like our (Hawk anti-aircraft) missiles and were very concerned. As a result, when we encountered people in the very beautiful Residenz Gardens Park, perfect strangers didn't hesitate in stopping us and telling us how provocative our soldiers were. Such encounters were not unusual. The overall climate was very, very good. However, individually they liked us very much and concerned themselves with our well being. They, too, were very concerned about our morale problems. And yet when we had annual German-American Volks festival, the townspeople in Würzburg would flock to the base to eat American ice cream and play games.

Q: Were you running into the German students? For some reason I have the vision of German students taking protest much more seriously than American students do. You know, painting themselves up, all sorts of things. I mean, this is newsreel. Did you get any of that?

BINDENAGEL: Yes, we did. Leighton barracks, where the Third Infantry Division headquarters was located, is on a hill inside the city of Würzburg. Würzburg itself is a university city. There were regular demonstrations against the Vietnam War. What always struck me though, was that there weren't violent demonstrations, it was the orderliness of the demonstrations. Approaching Leighton Barracks up Rothendorfer Strasse through the residential area, the green grass of the private lawn stretch in front of the Army housing area. Of course in Germany there are unwritten rules that you don't walk on the grass. And indeed, these demonstrators protesting the "murderer" American soldiers in Vietnam were very orderly and kept off the grass. And would scream their slogans and then dissipate.

Q: How did our military react to this?

BINDENAGEL: Actually they were pretty calm. The gates were usually closed as we saw the demonstrators come; the military stood inside and did not provoke the student demonstrators. In the back of my mind was the Red Army Faction attack on the Frankfurt officers' club that killed an American officer. The RAF was a serious terrorist threat to Americans, especially the military. They also kidnaped and attacked German Businessmen and officials. The demonstrators' chant that sticks in my mind still is "Ami go home." I was always struck with that, "Ami" as American or French for friend; I could never tell.

Q: When I was in Germany in 1953-58, that was the thing you would see, "Army go home."

BINDENAGEL: Chants like those were heard all the time. In fact, if you allow a flash fast-forward to the time when I was assigned to Bonn years later, I went into the History Museum in Bonn in the 1990s and heard the chant. The museum has a video of the times, and as I was walking through for the first time I heard this echoing sound "Ami go home, Ami go home." It was a familiar chant that immediately drew my curiosity. I went over to video that showed a leading German leftist, Rudi Dutschke, and some other demonstrators protesting American presence, who was killed by police. I was getting flashback 25 years later of my own life there.

Q: As a counterintelligence officer, were there attempts by Germans, East or West, to disrupt things or do things, was this a problem?

BINDENAGEL: No. We really didn't have any counter intelligence cases that took us into the realm of intrigue. We had a division military intelligence unit that was another battalion that did this as well. Perhaps they did, I didn't.

Q: Did you have a good idea of your Soviet counterparts on the otheside of the border?

BINDENAGEL: We had no personal idea and certainly no contact. We had only movies and propaganda that the military showed us. The image we had was very nebulous, but respecting them as a worthy enemy. Although, I must say, if you allow another flash-forward to October 1989, when I was living with my family in East Germany. We went to Mulhausen, home of Thomas Müntzer, the East German's ideal revolutionary from the Peasant's War (Bauernkrieg) of the 1500s. As we were driving our little Volkswagen Jetta out of Mulhausen to Eisenach, near Meinigen, which is across from our Army sector of the Fulda Gap, I came upon a 30KM speed limit sign on a cobblestone road. I muttered to myself, saying, "Here we go again, another lousy East German road," but to my surprise I suddenly found myself smack in the middle of a Soviet tank maneuver. There were six or eight tanks, huge things, all their tubes pointing West to where I had been stationed in the army and they were moving very fast maneuvering over the road and down the tank trails. The entire fearful Soviet soldier images that I had suddenly appeared in this real-life roar of Soviet tanks preparing to invade West Germany. I must say I became very uncomfortable about this confirmation of my own perception of the Red Army soldier, the enemy from 1972 was still very vivid in my mind. Here is was 1989 and they were still quite capable of moving into the direction of where I had served as a Army officer, nearly twenty years earlier. We drove quickly through and got out of there knowing that tangling with a big Soviet tank would have minced my little car and its passengers.

Q: You got out in '74 and you spent little time traveling around. Was it Germany or all over?

BINDENAGEL: My wife Jean and I moved across all Western Europe. We went to Italy, Spain, Netherlands, France, Sweden, and Norway. Had a very nice time camping, visiting friends the Tourvilles whose own travels with an infant introduced us to new adventures. For six months we lived in Germany and made trips. In Sweden we visited a high school exchange student, Stephen Spinnell, who had become a doctor in Umea. He took us to experience the midsummer's night festival and to hike above the tree line in Kvikkjokk, where even the feared mosquitoes could not go. It was a carefree time of pure pleasure.

Q: Were you thinking about going to work?

BINDENAGEL: Very little. Actually at that time I went as an auditor (Gasthörer) in a course at the University of Würzburg, with the idea that I would stay there. GI bill benefits were possible to use at a German University as well so I had this idea that I would attend the university. My German was not at a level where I could be admitted immediately so I spent this first semester, between traveling, auditing classes. I learned that a four-year course of studies at a German university simply would not work for us. We came back in August of 1974 and I went back to the University of Illinois to get a Master's Degree in Public Administration.

Q: What were you looking at? You went to get a Master's in public administration in 1974. What did that point you towards?

BINDENAGEL: I had this conflict whether I would be in public service or business. Obviously that was resolved when I decided to seek a degree in public administration; I still wanted to work for the government. By that time I had also had foreign experience, I had learned some German, and I had an orientation about the role of use of force and the role of military. I did not want to be in the military, but I wanted to do something that would live up to the Humphrey image of public service. In fact I had seen the Foreign Service exam advertised while I was in the field after the 1973 Yom Kippur war, and decided that I would like, among other things, to try to take the Foreign Service exam, which I did that fall.

Q: So you took the exam in...?

BINDENAGEL: December of 1974.

Q: I assume you passed it.

BINDENAGEL: I passed it.

Q: You took the oral exam? BINDENAGEL: In spring 1975 in Chicago.

Q: Can you describe the exam at all?

BINDENAGEL: Vaguely. We went into this exam with its three-person panel. I recall Elaine Shunter and Ms. Ostrander were two members of the panel. We went through a series of situational open-ended questions. "What would you do if?" "If you were sent to some place and you wanted to establish a new consulate, and you were on your own, what would you do first, second, third? How would you deal with it?" With various scenarios thrown in, we had a good back and forth. There were a lot of questions about the U.S. I remember something about "What book would you recommend someone who wanted to see the U.S.?" I also remember my answer which was John Steinbeck's "Travels with Charlie" which was always struck me as a great guide to see the U.S., take six months with man's best friend a dog and have a great time. They asked about Sweden, some of the places I have been in Germany. It was very intense, how long it lasted I don't know.

Q: About an hour. I used to give the exam in '75.

BINDENAGEL: I remember Schunter and Ostrander well. The funniest thing was after the exam, they excused me from the room, deliberated, and then called me back in to say, "We have decided to recommend you for further consideration." And I looked at them and said, "What does that mean." They replied, "You passed." I admittedly was anxious for their answer.

Q: How did Jean feel about this?

BINDENAGEL: Very good in the first instance. At the University of Illinois she had a job with a heart surgeon, and we had very good social life, however, we knew that we had to get on with life. Suddenly, in June I was asked to come in immediately to join the new Foreign Service class. I accepted, and we were uprooted. It was an adventure. That decision unleashed a very serious discussion with Jean over what to do with her career. She was in anthropology at the U of I, graduated with high honors, she had a full fellowship to graduate school and gave that up when we went to the Army. So the discussion we came back to the kind of life do you want to have. At that time Foreign Service made it very hard for two careers. We faced a very crucial decision because it was virtually impossible for Jean to pursue advanced degree because she would need three or four years to complete her Ph.D., and I knew we couldn't be at one place at that time. She deferred to my career, and we made a deal that we would pursue a traditional family. We both agreed that a traditional family is a very honorable and important family structure to have and we dedicated ourselves to each other. That was painful, difficult, particularly with pitifully low Foreign Service salaries that limited our ability to do things. We were only in Washington for very short period of time and we went to Korea.

Q: During your basic officers course, could you characterize your class?

BINDENAGEL: Dr. Henry Kissinger administered the oath of office to our class, which was one of the largest and most diverse incoming Foreign Service classes. It was large because it was called at the end of the fiscal year, which ended on June 30 at that time. Apparently, the State Department had hired few people during the year and was rushing around trying to fill the open positions before the end of the fiscal year. We had over a hundred people. Some 20 members of the class came from USIA, three or four from Agriculture, and of course most for the Foreign Service. We had tremendous diversity of backgrounds and people. Mostly people around 24 to 26 years old. Agriculture people were much older in that respect, but basically that same generation of late '60s early '70s.

Q: In talking to your classmates, how did they feel about the America's role in the world at that time?

BINDENAGEL: There was a very strong sense of purpose. That spoke to my background from South Dakota. I recall some speaker to the incoming class getting up and saying that you folks are joining the "Foreign Service of the United States," not the State Department; yours is a career for our country and there are many things that you can possibly achieve. It was that sense of purpose, of commitment, of loyalty, of Esprit de Corps that certainly inspired me. We then broke into smaller groups and talked about the political issues of the day. What had happened in Vietnam was of course always present in these discussions. But other thing, the arms race, loomed large. We did an exercise in disarmament on how to build mutual trust. Of course, the process broke down quite easily into mistrust. We also played Diplomacy, the board game, making alliances and breaking them.

Q: Making promises, which you wouldn't keep. This is a nasty game. Where did you want to go?

BINDENAGEL: I wanted to go to Asia and since I had a political science degree with a minor in Asian studies. I was delighted that I got my wish, with an assignment to Korea. It was exactly what I wanted and Korea was the only country that I had not studied at the University. I studied of course China, Indonesia, Japan, and Southeast Asia. I knew little about Korea, and this assignment would fill a last piece of what I had anticipated would be a long career in East Asian and Pacific affairs.

Q: You were in Korea from when to when?

BINDENAGEL: 1975-1977.

Q: And what were you doing?

BINDENAGEL: I was a Junior Officer in the Economics Section, I was actually a Commercial Officer. Worked for John T. Bennett, who was the most senior economics officer, then we had Jim Marshall, John Perkins to whom I reported directly. John had a little trade center operation, it wasn't official trade center, but it had a little business promotion element, and that's where I spent most of my time. Meeting businessmen and promoting America.

Q: I would think it would have been a very exciting time to be in Korea. A country just reaching a 1000\$/capita, obviously it was going to be a interesting market. Economically rather exciting place, wasn't it?

BINDENAGEL: It was very exciting. In Germany I had personally experienced the oil shock of 1973. I was still in Army when the German Government declared driving-free Sundays for three weeks; the German Government banned cars from the streets. Seeing no cars moving in Germany was a shocking experience and made the importance of oil real and immediate. From that oil shock I had gained personal awareness of the tremendous impact the oil crisis was having on economic structures in a country like Germany. When I arrived in Korea, Korea was reaching a level of economic prosperity that was disappearing because they had no natural resources; they had to import oil. Importing expensive oil would wipe out any earnings that they had, and their economy would collapse. Coming into that Korean crisis and seeing these people with very strong Confucian ethic, very strong commitments to education, to achievement and to structured society was exciting. The fact that the local employees would work 18 hours/day without blinking an eye to achieve what they though was necessary was an infectious climate for a strenuous work ethic. We really wanted them to achieve, and we wanted Americans to be a part of their success. We certainly were omni-present, since our commitment in the Korean War.

AID had had a large mission in Korea and was a dominant force in U.S. economic policy. However, as the AID mission shrunk, the Economic Section expanded its contacts, including to economic leaders like Kim Jae Ik and others who were running the huge economic miracle that was about to occur. The Korean future was certainly uncertain. I had no idea whether they would be able to achieve survival. However, much to the world's surprise by the end of my two years, they had weathered the storm. Some new forms of industrial organization were key to their success, including the chaebol organizations that began to dominate the economy. The Chaebol are large conglomerates, vertically and horizontally integrated conglomerates that are controlled by a very few people and worked hand in glove with the government. Politically the country still had the strong Presidency government of Park Chung Hee, who was ruthless. Before I arrived the North Koreans had sent a patrol into Seoul to assassinate Park Chung Hee. They killed his wife in an attack in downtown Seoul, next to the Embassy's Compound II, where Jean and I lived. So we had a sense the communist North Koreans could infiltrate at will, a feeling that I had never experienced across the Central Front in Europe. Although this event had occurred shortly before I arrived, there were constant reports of infiltrators being picked up. So you had a politically tense situation and an economically fascinating time.

One important story was when I was duty officer in the second week of the North Korean incident in which two officers were killed. The act "tree trimming" incident in 1976 occurred in the DMZ. The UN Force tree trimming crew had gone into the DMZ to remove tree limbs that had obstructed the UN Forces view to the North. The North Koreans came into the DMZ, isolated the two American officers and killed them. Then we massed an incredible armada and military force to go in and decided to take down the tree. A very dramatic moment in which I, as the Embassy duty officer, delivered State Department messages relating to operations orders to General Stilwell, commander of the UN Forces. With an armada off shore and squadrons of aircraft in support, we cut down the tree, then the tension eased, and we went on with our negotiations, which in the end drew a ten centimeter line across the village of Panmunjom in the DMZ separating the UN Forces from the North Koreans. That was the most dramatic time I had in Korea.

Q: At that point all was the threat for something from North Korea. That never knew was out of your mind.

BINDENAGEL: Never. The comparison, the analogy I drew from my military time was, we noted that on the 38th parallel occasionally a helicopter would stray into the DMZ and be taken down. That happened in the Central Front often, where we would stray mostly into Czechoslovakia. But there was a dramatic difference in the kind of threat and the constant military action that was on the DMZ. We had visitors constantly. Richard Holbrooke came in 1977 as the Assistant Secretary. I remember being part of the delegation dealing with him. Another distinguished visitor was Governor Busby, who came from Georgia; we had delightful time. One funny moment came at a dinner for Governor Busby, who was a very big man, when he was complimented by his host for having very large ears. Large ears in the Buddhist tradition are a sign of great wisdom. However, the Governor didn't know this fact, and was quite flustered as to what it meant. We were able to tell him and to assure him that this was a very high compliment. With that he, too, burst into laughter.

Q: What about on the commercial side? In many ways this is where the action was in those days. And the Koreans are an interesting group commercially. Could you tell me about how the Koreans seemed to operate on the commercial side and what were we doing? Were we pushing them to buy our stuff or were we also pushing them to sell in the U.S.? What were we doing at that time?

BINDENAGEL: What we were trying to do in the Embassy was to promote U.S. exports. Apart from selling to them, there were some joint ventures we promoted. AMPEX, for instance, had invented a video technology and was looking for a partner. AMPEX was trying to sell their videocassettes in Korea. AMPEX developed VHS technologies and was unable to sell them well in the U.S. But in Korea and more importantly in Japan were able to make inroads, and those two took over the manufacture of that video technology and then competed with us in the U.S. So we very much saw this market as a place to sell things and to help them, but they very much used it to gain technologies that we were not exploiting as fast as they could, like the video technologies and they came in as a competitor. VHS came to us via the Japanese afterward, an oft-told story in Korea. We also had some competition; for instance, the Germans built a diesel motor factory which led to other downstream projects. We encouraged the Koreans to develop their infrastructure, their talent and they were masters at beating us in our own game. The Canadians were building a CANDU nuclear power reactor, and as soon as the welders had learned that high degree of skill at the expense of the foreign investor, they would go off and set up their own companies or move to other employers. Labor was still not trained or paid at the international level. In my time Korea moved from a poor, developing country to an emerging economy as we began to call success stories in Asia.

Q: Did that make you gun shy? You know, you might be able to sell something once but then it's turned around and they compete with you?

BINDENAGEL: I was there at the earlier stage. That came in the '80s, when we had tremendous trade problems with them. The trade problems we had with Korea were with mushrooms, shoes and textiles. They were the main trade frictions we had, and later in the 1980s they moved to manufacturing and we had other trade problems.

Q: Could you explain why mushrooms?

BINDENAGEL: In part because Koreans could grow them for a very low price. More importantly, mushrooms in Pennsylvania were disadvantaged and the Senator from Pennsylvania wanted to ensure that his Pennsylvania suppliers to the market were not endangered by this low wage country's competition.

Q: Did you get involved in any negotiation one way or the other with the Koreans?

BINDENAGEL: No. I was a junior officer working on promotion, I wasn't really engaged in the negotiations.

Q: I know. I was running the Consular Section that time and I remember one of my officers, Steven Kennedy, I had to send out. There was a dispute with a Korean firm over shoes or something like that. Koreans who were involved in this were threatening to attack the Americans. I had to send Steve out with the Americans when they left, just to lend a quasi-immunity. Koreans, particularly at the mid-management, they were held accountable for anything that happened. So they could not accept losing a deal or being disadvantaged in a deal, so they got quite upset and almost physical.

BINDENAGEL: That certainly was constantly in the discussion, and when I said working 18 hours a day I meant factually as well. Koreans were intense, uncompromising, and goal oriented. You could even say that at any cost they were going to win. They were existentially threatened economically, politically and militarily, so it wasn't an issue of negotiation, it was their own existence. That sense permeated all the dealing that I had with them.

Q: What about the American Chamber of Commerce? I'm really thinking about American manufacturers, not necessarily Chamber of Commerce. But there were quite a few American firms represented there. How were they doing?

BINDENAGEL: I really don't recall. They were very active with us in terms of demonstrating their products, and with the trade and economic policy side of the section, on the trade disputes, but I really don't recall.

Q: Did corruption cross your screen at all, or was that at different level?

BINDENAGEL: The only kind of corruption I saw was the fixation on the name Walker, because general Walker had done wonderful things in the war to protect the country and the role of Johnny Walker scotch which appeared as a gift, as encouragement, sometimes used against you, that's the level of corruption that I saw.

Q: I was wondering if there was any concern in the economic section about the role corruption played in the economic development?

BINDENAGEL: Yes, in fact we had with Chaebol, these conglomerates, economic section, commercial section work very closely to try to see how they were organized and what they were doing. They were, however, very closely held organizations and I wasn't able to penetrate them from where I was sitting. We did deal with couple of cases where we tried to expose arms sales that were connected with Chaebol, which had the potential of revealing payoffs or some other corruption. We dealt with the World Trader Data Reports - WTDRs - background material on firms. We would actually try to look at companies and interview them. We had several export control cases, where they may have diverted controlled exports and we needed to make end-user reports. But in terms of corruption, we saw little.

Q: Was there a problem of trying to get American firms to sell things to Korea, Korea being so unknown market? The reason I say this I remember one country team meeting when John Bennett or some one from the Economic Section mentioned the problem that Koreans had been buying a lot of Japanese products and they wanted to buy some American. So they wanted to buy a fire engine. They picked an American company, but it really wasn't interested in selling fire engines abroad, they'd rather stick to the American market. Would you know of a problem...?

BINDENAGEL: I don't know that it was particularly the case with Korea. But certainly at that time exporters were smaller, percentage of exports from the U.S. was very small. The fact that John Bennett and John Perkins wanted to actually have a commercial operation to encourage Americans to come there, it certainly was to encourage and help them to deal with this market, because it was unknown to them. There was a constant theme in the discussion - how we could help? When Elliot Richardson, who was the Commerce Secretary, came and talked about American business, he sent our message back to the U.S. that he was in Korea and Korea was okay. The unknown market syndrome was certainly an issue. I am not so certain that it was a Korean issue as it was an American issue. As regards the Korean interest in not buying the Japanese, that too has a more social, historical, political connection. They didn't want to be dependent on the Japanese who had conquered them in 1905 and subjugated them, and had even abolished all Korean names. This constant latent anti-Japanese feeling did have an effect on purchasing decisions; it was helpful in selling the U.S. as a balance to becoming overly dependent on the Japanese. The same was true for investments; the Japanese sold the Koreans older, dirtier industries that the Japanese didn't want anymore. We had other newer industries for cooperation.

Q: Did you find yourself in a position of being an enthusiastic salesman to American business representatives who were coming out to look at Korea for the first time?

BINDENAGEL: Yes, I was a young, enthusiastic Foreign Service Officer, I was given a mission, and the mission was fun and worthy. The fun thing was it brought me out to the Korean community. I met Korean business men, I went to various places and met people and talked to them about what they were interested in and what they wanted to do, made connections with businessmen. For me it was an opportunity to be out with the Koreans to understand what was happening, and as Junior Officer that was ideal. It was delightful.

Q: I know from the Consular Section's viewpoint, we were giving visas to an astounding number of Koreans who were going to graduate schools at absolutely first-rate Universities. Were you seeing this in the economic field or was this at the beginning?

BINDENAGEL: That was happening in fact, you reminded me that in fact when I was at the University of South Dakota, Bill Farber, the professor that headed the Government Department, was interviewing prospective professors. He would bring in students to meet with these candidates to be professors. One of them was a Korean. His name was Zeon, pronounced "Chun." I had met a young aspiring graduate student professor at South Dakota and then I found him again as a businessman in Korea, years later. In some sense, indeed, the presence, the emphasis on higher education, the need to go the U.S., Kim Jae Ik, who was tragically assassinated in Burma a few years later, attended the University of Oklahoma, if I remember correctly. There was tremendous interaction and it did have a tremendous impact in Korea.

Q: Did you get out at all from the Commercial Section for the ricbusiness?

BINDENAGEL: Absolutely. We have a lot of rice in the U.S., and we were selling a certain kind from Louisiana, which was not a favorite kind in Korea, but since it came under the Commodity Credit Corporation and Food for Peace programs and was supported very much by a Congressman from Louisiana, Otto Passman. His visits were very good political lessons. When Otto Passman came to visit the fact that we had a very large government program supporting his State's crops in a recipient country, the Koreans lavished him with gifts and entertainment and they took the rice, whether they liked it or not. I did see this.

Q: Did you end up sort of as an escort officer for him?

BINDENAGEL: I was around, I was never his control officer but I was around in several of his meetings and activities. Certainly the agriculture section, economic section paid very close attention to anything he wanted. It was actually AID, Dennis Barrett who was his control officer. Dennis handled him very well.

Q: There became a minor scandal, Koreagate, about rice. There was young Korean lady who worked for the Congress - Osuzi or something?

BINDENAGEL: Yes that's right. That was a Washington event though, not a Seoul event. I remember the Koreans were very proud of this armored boat they built in 1597, it was called the turtle-ship, to fight against the Japanese. And Congressman Otto Passman was given a small, but nice replica in pure silver.

Q: I am told that a certain Congressman would arrive, and they'd brush aside the control officers and would go to a hotel where a tailor would be to suit them up, and then young ladies would arrive to soothe their nerves and what have you, and it was of this nature...

BINDENAGEL: I did see the suits, they were delivered to the hotel othe Embassy, and there were a lot of them.

Q: You left there in '77. In your impression where was Koreeconomically at that time?

BINDENAGEL: Korea had made great strides economically, but none politically. They still were highly leveraged, however, and had expanded their manufacturing capabilities. One stellar example was the supertankers they were building. They were determined to protect their shipbuilding industry. They had actually built a supertanker that had been launched and was of course to be the future of oil shipping. They had begun to manufacture a Hyundai automobile, the Pony, which later became simply Hyundai. They had an engine plant, they had achieved, in my view they had gone through a critical period and they needed to proceed down that path. Obviously they didn't make the structural changes and today we see the facts. But at that point they were well on their way and they had gotten through the crises.

Q: We are talking about today as most of Asia has gone through crises, about too cozy relationships between the government, banks and industry and all. So they will have to work their way out of it and it just happened, in the last few months.

BINDENAGEL: And the three sets of books that the highly leverage structures that they had.

Q: What do you mean when you say "highly leveraged" structure?

BINDENAGEL: Businesses had many loans and always very short on cash, running on cash flow and when the cash flow runs out, you cannot pay the loans. Consequently, they faced collapse. Now, in February 1998, I understand that they are reorganizing Chaebol, their big conglomerates as well as their relationships with the government and banks.

Q: And in '77 you went whither?

BINDENAGEL: It's an interesting story and an important story about the Foreign Service and how assignments are made. I was assigned to The Hague. En route to my assignment and before leaving Korea, I learned to my dismay that my position in The Hague had been upgraded and someone else had been assigned to it, so I was unassigned. By then I had learned that in Foreign Service you had not only your performance to worry about, and how you deal about it, but also how you deal with people. The DCM's secretary Roz Fishman at the time wrote a letter to her former boss, David Anderson who was office director for Central Europe in the Department. In that letter she mentioned that I was a good young officer, or something to that effect, and that he should take a look at me. David needed someone to fill a position. I became his candidate and was assigned to Bremen.

Q: I was his first boss.

BINDENAGEL: David was a great boss to me. At the time, David was faced with closing the Consulate General in Bremen and he didn't want to close it. He had a vacancy in Bremen. There were three officers and a vacancy had appeared. The central system was not planning to fill it as a way of slowly cutting down and closing the consulate. David, having heard from his former secretary Roz that I was unassigned, had me assigned to Bremen. Some where between my departure from Korea, my home leave and arriving in Washington I was assigned to Bremen, much to my delight. I was sent to FSI, the Foreign Service Institute, for 12 weeks of German, and then on to Bremen. [There was of course more to the story. I learned subsequently that Larry Eagleburger, who was assistant secretary for European affairs at the time, had arranged a meeting with Secretary Henry Kissinger for German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, whose law firm was in Bremen. Genscher made an impassioned plea directly to Kissinger to keep the consulate in Bremen open. Kissinger yelled at Eagleburger for setting him up to make a decision on Bremen. Eagleburger, who was a close friend of David Anderson, did just that and the consulate was saved from the axe.]

Q: You were in Bremen from 1977-79. What was your job in Bremen?

BINDENAGEL: I was one of three FSOs; I was the Economics Officer. We had the ConsuGeneral, Irv Schiffman, and a consular officer, first Doug Hunter and then Joyce O'Keefe.

Q: Can you describe Bremen in those days?

BINDENAGEL: Bremen was a small consulate with two important historical and political connections with the U.S. First, for the citizens, the Bremer, American occupation after World War II kept the independence of the city-state of Bremen. We prevented Bremen from being joined to Lower Saxony, which was part of the British Occupation Zone. We needed a ocean port to supply our troops in the South, and we chose was Bremerhaven the port of Bremen, which was separated by a little bit of the Lower Saxony. Second, Bremen was important for U.S. interests, particularly as we implemented the Master Restationing Plan in the 1970s when we decided to build an Army base at Gerlstedt, and deploy an Army unit there. Strategically, this deployment was a part of the "master restationing plan" which would deny the Soviets a route of entry into Germany. Alexander Haig told me a couple a years ago that he had met a KGB officer after the fall of The Berlin Wall, who explained the Soviet assassination attempt on him as the Supreme Allied Commander, I believe. The Soviets wanted to remove him as the strategic thinker that had blocked their invasion access across the North German Plain. They didn't want this plan or such thinking to continue. Whether it's true or not, the point is that Bremen had a very strategic and historical connection to the United States. We also had economic connections with Bremen's cotton exchange as well as its tobacco exchange.

The tobacco market was very interesting. When the Indonesians gained independence from Dutch after the Second World War, they moved their sale of tobacco from the Netherlands to Bremen. All Dutch tobacconists had to travel to Bremen to buy their Dutch East Indies tobacco. Making the Dutch travel to Germany, who the Dutch blamed for the Second World War, was the most humiliating act the Indonesians could impose on the Dutch. And tobacco, of course, has its own political connection to the U.S. Ninety percent of the American tobacco is grown in North Carolina and the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee today always played an important role, Senator Jesse Helms, who also intervened with the State Department to keep the consulate open. Consequently, tobacco was important to me in the whether to close the post or not. My job was to supervise two very effective German Foreign Service National Employees, Peter Berben and Chrystal Wagner, who prepared the reporting for Germany on cotton and tobacco.

Q: Was there any concern at that time about promoting, assisting, tobacco?

BINDENAGEL: None.

Q: We are looking today at tobacco as a major export but we feel very uncomfortable about it.

BINDENAGEL: No, we were very much market oriented and how to get Virginia and Burley tobaccos into German cigarettes and to expand the market. There were important cigarette manufacturers in Bremen and in Hamburg, BAT (British American Tobacco) and Reemtsma for instance. We traveled to Hamburg, the other German port city, to prepare the tobacco reports. Tobacco was a very active and very important industry for us at that time.

Q: There had been a hiatus, the Vietnam war was over by this time. How were Americans viewed would you say in Bremen, was there a difference between what you saw as an Army officer?

BINDENAGEL: Certainly. First of all we were only three or four Americans in this city about the size of Washington, DC, 600,000 people or so. The consulate was very much a part of Bremen's social life and its politics. In addition, we had a small contingent in the city of NASA employees. The space project that the US government was working with the German government on was the palette to carry the space lab, which was being constructed in Bremen. So we had National Aeronautical Space Agency, six or seven official Americans in the "Development Ring North" (Enwicklungsringnord) of Daimler- Benz corporation in Bremen. And in fact our NASA colleagues also played an important role in the community with visits by congressmen like Dan Pasqua, by diplomats and by scientists from the Montgomery, Alabama space center. One of those visits I hosted a group of American and German scientists for a reception at the Consul General's residence between the departure of CG Schiffman and the arrival of his successor, Ralph Graner. It was absolutely fascinating to hear the stories of the Americans, who were German scientists at Peenemunde with Werner von Braun during World War II. They had developed the V-2 rocket, which became the basis for the U.S. Delta rocket program. Most Americans experience was centered on the U.S. military presence as in my own in Bavaria, when I was with the Third Infantry Division. In Bremen we never had a large military presence, and we diplomats gave the Germans a different view of America, a rather normal group of Americans.

Q: Bremen is part of what State?

BINDENAGEL: It's the city-state.

Q: City-state itself. It was SPD?

BINDENAGEL: It was run by the social democrats for many years. The mayor was Hans Koschnik for 12-15 years. He was a conservative social democrat and the kind of social democrat as Helmut Schmidt. The politics at the time were absolutely fascinating. We had the Social Democrats with the large majority, the F.D.P., a small liberal party, and then you had a Christian Democratic Union party of about 30%. The social make-up of the city reflected basically the make up of the political parties. The largest group was the Protestants, the smallest group were Catholic. Socially, it was interesting for us. We met an American citizen, although he was really a German, Gustav Rasch. Mr. Rasch had been in tobacco business, his father's tobacco business. He was in the U.S. in 1938, learning the tobacco business, when he was interviewed about the contemporary Chancellor and the time, Mr. Hitler. Not speaking English very well, he was asked what he thought of "Mr. Hitler." And hearing the colloquial American English for a non-committal statement "He's a good SOB [son of a bitch]." He described Hitler as an SOB. Not long thereafter, he got a letter from his father in Bremen saying "Gestapo has visited us, you shouldn't come home at this time." His comment apparently was published at the local American newspaper and then in The New York Times. The Gestapo had read it, interviewed his father and Gustav stayed in the U.S. When the war broke out, he was interned in Indiana as an enemy alien and then drafted into the U.S. Army. He became an American citizen en route to the Pacific Theater. He was taken off the troop ship at San Francisco harbor with several others, sworn-in as a citizen and returned to the troop ship which then proceeded to the Pacific war. At the end of the war he was sent to Germany in the occupation and negotiated his way back to Bremen. In the late 1970s, he introduced us to his circle of friends; he was very nice to us. Although he had children that were somewhat younger than we were, he included us as "family" and part of his circle. Our circle expanded with the addition of the flour mill manufacturer and some other people in the community. We found ourselves wondering why we were so welcomed into this city of Bremen, at least into this group. The mystery was solved when we found out that they and we were all Catholic. No one had said a word about religion; it was simply a reflection of the social life in the country.

Q: Germany at that time, I don't know how it is today, there was much more of a division one doesn't think about very much, as an American about this Catholic/Protestant division. I remember my wife was addressing Catholic girl-scouts and there were Protestant girl-scouts in the same little town, and all that. Did you find religious differences an important factor?

BINDENAGEL: Religion was very much an important factor but not so religious. It was a social factor. In fact, German society is organized in circles of organizations, whether they are clubs, the Catholic church group, the Protestant church group, soccer teams, business clubs, bankers groups, and most other hobbies and sports. The society is structured that way. History and religion have shaped social networks built around their churches. Today attendance at church is rare, but religion still is the basis of the society's structure. We didn't even realize our inclusion was based on a religious connection because it was almost entirely social. We were invited to go biking, ice skating, hiking along the canals. We enjoyed dinner parties, birthdays, anniversaries and other special occasions with our friends, who were also Catholic. The Protestants did the same, again politically organized around the social democrats, they didn't talk about being Protestant, they talked about being Social Democrats.

Q: One of the big issues during the Jimmy Carter administration, Helmut Schmidt was the Chancellor at that point. These two didn't get along very well, and it was particularly over the so-called neutron bomb. Did that play any part in what you all were doing, did you get any reverberations from that?

BINDENAGEL: Absolutely.

Q: Could you explain what the issue was?

BINDENAGEL: We come back into Germany after a three-year absence and the political debate had changed from U.S. troop deployments to nuclear issues rockets and bombs. Jimmy Carter had proposed a bomb that would destroy people but leave buildings intact, the so-called "neutron bomb." He proposed to counter deployments from the Soviet Union, the so-called SS-20 missile, and Helmut Schmidt had given a speech in 1977 to the IISS, asking that the U.S. do something to counter the Soviet threat. Jimmy Carter's response was to deploy the neutron bomb. The reaction in Germany was so negative because it was appalling to think that you could kill the people but not destroy the buildings. Helmut Schmidt backed off his very subtle request and Jimmy Carter then withdrew the idea of having the neutron bomb. Carter's turnabout of course got a visceral reaction against the U.S. We were weak and could not defend Germany. Consequently, we had a very serious debate about our steadfastness in the face of the Soviet threat of the SS-20. The issue also hit a personal level when Schmidt went to visit President Carter. President Carter was a very active early morning riser, who wanted to be constantly on the go, and invited Helmut Schmidt to an early morning breakfast. Well, Helmut Schmidt is what Germans call a "Morgenmuffel;" he was cranky, cantankerous in the morning. Since it was a President of the U.S. inviting him, he came, but he was not in a good mood. As a result of this morning meeting, their relationship never worked, at least from my point of view. Of course, there were other things that overcame their individual differences but it was always tension. That tension played out in the neutron bomb with neither side really being certain of the other.

You could even argue that Helmut Schmidt's push for European Monetary System (EMS), which was announced in Bremen in 1978 at a European Community Summit, demonstrated a European independence. President Carter's comments about the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the consequent U.S. military build-up, frame the uncertain relationship between the two leaders. The Carter administration in 1979/80, before leaving the office, increased the defense budget in recognition of the Soviet threat after the invasion of Afghanistan, but by then the nature of the relationship with Germans was sour, at least from what we could see there in Bremen.

Politically, this played out in Bremen, our little corner of Germany, the Green Party seized the opportunity to offered by the debate over anti-nuclear sentiment, including anti-neutron bomb and anti-nuclear energy issue. The Greens took the fear of meltdown and nuclear waste and damage to the environment along with the fear of a nuclear war and won tremendous political support. Dr. Petra Kelly, whom I knew well, was a German who had studied at American University, became a leading spokesperson for the movement. She was an abandoned child adopted by an American GI. Kelly participated in the anti-Vietnam War movement in the U.S., which greatly affected her views on war and the United States. You had Otto Schily, who had a very different background, coming from and SPD family in the Ruhr area of Germany, anti-Nazi, very anti-authoritarian movement. He later became Justice Minister in the Schröder SPD-Green Government in 1998. Rudy Dutschke, who was one of the '68 revolutionaries in Germany, and who had been shot by police in a Berlin demonstration at the end of the 1960s also appeared in Bremen. All these and many other personalities converged in an election in September of 1979 in Bremen, where the Greens for the first time were elected to a State Parliament. That threw German domestic politics into a political upheaval. I remember going with our political reporter that evening at the parliament, when the results were coming in, and taking to Petra Kelly and Otto Schily. She introduced me to Rudy Dutschke. We saw a tremendous amount of anti-war, pro-Communist feeling in that anti-democratic party being elected into the democratic political system in Germany on the Central Front. The Greens appearance on the political scene became a very unsettling development in German-American relations. It was for me delight to write three of four cables that talked about this new arrival to the political scene, to give some political reporting into the Department. It was a surprise for a small consulate to be in the thick of things, and it was a very exciting development for me.

Q: Looking at the Green Party, which today is a respectable party but at this time was not very respectable...

BINDENAGEL: Absolutely.

Q: Were you and other people in the consulate beginning to take a look at this party on the ground and see that it was different than it was being portrayed in the U.S., less Soviet control and all that?

BINDENAGEL: There were several political groups in the Greens coalition. This new movement was noticed not only in our Consulate, but also in Frankfurt and several other places. In our case in Bremen a "Citizens Initiative" was created to prevent the building of the Hellman House which was a building right on the ramparts around the historic site. These citizens' initiatives were grassroots democratic individuals that we sought out and reported on their activities. As for the Petra Kellys and Otto Schilys, we were very uncertain where they would go and how they would move. As for Rudy Dutschke, we were concerned about his association with the Greens and his activities, which we thought were anti-authoritarian, anti-democratic. The Green movement was very hard for us to sort out and to determine what direction the Greens would go.

I spent most of my time, then and later, with Petra Kelly, and in the group that developed around her and Otto Schily. They had an internal conflict whether they would really fight against the democratic system or fight against individual issues, like the construction of the Brockdorf nuclear power plant, which they protested after I left Bremen. The German police and Grenzschutz, border patrol, used helicopters to combat them at Brockdorf. That police action made a very dramatic scene that heightened the confrontation. The German government didn't know how to deal with this new force, which was willing to do things like sit on the railroad tracks and try to divert trains to and the construction of the nuclear waste site at Gorleben. They were willing to chain themselves to trees. They had popular support but they were a very mixed bag of individuals with different backgrounds and commitments.

Q: Did you find, the German government has always had a reputation, whatever government it is, of being rather heavy-handed dealing with things? Was there any truism to this or not?

BINDENAGEL: One of the things that you develop after a long period of time in a country is experience and understanding of peoples' reaction to all sorts of situations. You mentioned the split between the Catholics and the Protestants. Of course, the Thirty Years War was a worst case conflict where the population of Germany was reduced by 40 percent. That war had tremendous effect on German thought throughout time. Even Hegelian dialectic, I would argue informally here that such thinking - taking one extreme position on one side and another extreme view on the other leading to confrontation and ending in a synthesis of views - is very much a German intellectual process which probably came from the Thirty Years War. Consequently, Germans' extreme reactions could be explained. When the German Government was confronted with something like the Greens, their first reaction was extreme.

There is a tendency to react harshly and very forcefully with the idea that the other side will do the same and there will be a clash. And then the issue becomes one of finding the synthesis from the clash. Whether you find a synthesis or only confrontation is an open question. Of course, we focus on confrontation as a German reaction or even as a trademark of German negotiation. Americans focus in the first instance on consensus trying to build consensus and keep harmony. And only when consensus and harmony breaks down do we move to confrontation and to unconditional surrender. I personally have so often engaged in this debate about how to interpret German reactions and how to react to their reactions. This human dynamic is a constant theme in our relations.

Q: Did you find, speaking of this, in a German education... I know that the French have the way of looking at things which, to the American, the American is more likely to try to make order out of chaos, whereas the French think that somebody deliberately made the chaos and what's behind it or something like that. There is a different way of looking at things. Did you find that German education turned out a different type of thought process with the people you were dealing with, how they looked at situations, than you as an American would?

BINDENAGEL: Yes. Germany's historical experience was chaotic. The discontinuities of their history make it difficult to create the stability we enjoy in the United States. As a result there is a focus in education, business and government in rule making. If you can only have the right rule and everybody follow suit, social peace will follow. Social peace and order in the work place become highest priorities. The problem is of course when you don't have discontinuities and disruptions. After long periods of continuity and social peace, you have a lot of rules; you have today rules on rules on rules. This encrustment of rules spawns rigidities and the society is unable to break out of its rules, even when it must in order to progress. And that is the political situation in Germany today. That rigid rule enforcement was the basis of the protests in an otherwise socially peaceful country when the Greens made their political debut. Everyone feared a new discontinuity that would threaten the entire fabric of society. And since the Greens came from the university experience of relative freedom from rules, they refused to be traditional. The rest of society was trying to impose order on the chaos but the Greens didn't. The Greens refused to be a traditional political party, in fact they refused even to take the name "party" and called themselves a Green Movement, the Greens. The Greens did not fit the mold and it was very hard for an educated or informed public to deal with this new political force in Germany.

Q: How about as Economic Officer, did you find that we played much of a role or was it quite diminished compared to what it would be in Korea, because of, obviously trade lines had been established since 1820s or something like that, and I would think there wouldn't be much need for somebody to get in between this?

BINDENAGEL: That's absolutely correct. The old trading patterns were well established. What I found was a personal example of economic relations between the U.S. and Germany. We discovered to our delight that one of my wife's ancestors actually had come from Bremen and immigrated into the U.S. in the 1850s. Herman Theophilus Plate was a prime example of trading ties; he was the Bremen Consul to Philadelphia, 1856-61. Of course a consul at that time was really a businessman, and his business was trading cotton and tobacco, which in 1856 in Philadelphia was a good deal. By 1861, however, he had a problem when the Union blockaded the Confederate States and cut off his supply of cotton and tobacco. He had other interests as well. In 1859, when oil was discovered at Titusville, Pennsylvania, he along with a Bremen merchant, Mr. Schuette, exported some of this black oil to Bremen. It was one of the first oil shipments from the U.S. to Bremen. To our dismay we learned that he discontinued his oil export business, thinking that, as the family history says, that it would never replace whale oil in lamps. Meanwhile Herr Schuette went on to work with Mr. Rockefeller, but that's a different story.

There were discontinuities in trade as well. Quite naturally they were interrupted by the two world wars, but afterwards, as with our friend Gustav Rasch, these old connections reasserted themselves. It is clear that a young second-tour Foreign Service Officer in Bremen, could not create great strides in our relationship or bring much value added to tobacco and cotton trade, but I could learn about Germany. For me the real value of being in the consulate, a small place where contact with all sorts of Germans, cotton and tobacco merchants or the flour miller. You could actually connect to the politicians in the city and they were interested in including you in events. We had a few official visitors like Congressman Pasqua who came to the science center working on the space shuttle. We spent a lot of time with the space scientists working on the space lab pallet which was then shipped to the U.S. We had a different kind of experience, but value added compared to Korea, we were not as active.

Q: What was your feeling at that time, obviously this was going to change over time, but had the Germans worked themselves out of World War II at this time or was this still... I mean trying not to be too assertive on the international scene, was this at all...?

BINDENAGEL: No, we were in Wismar, Germany, when the Federal Republic, West Germany became 25 years old. My 25th birthday coincided with their 25th anniversary discussions. The debates begun in 1974 continued during our time in Bremen. The Germans had very serious discussions about how they had come through the first 25 years, how much they had yet to do, how to deal with the Third Reich history, whether to end the ban on all Nazi symbols and other topics. There was a discussion about neo-Nazis and how disruptive they were. The Germans in 1978 were still very much working through their own history and had not come to the terms with the Hitler regime. The division of the country was also a constant question, the threat of the Soviet Union was certainly constant. In our encounters with the space community we had a special insight into the debate. During a Marshall Space Center visit with half a dozen scientists from the U.S. who were actually German scientists who had been picked up from Peenemunde, the V-2 rocket base, at the end of the war. I hosted a reception for them, which turned out to be a tremendously fun evening. They regaled us with stories about their experiences in Peenemunde inventing the V2 rocket. They related the trials and successes of the V-2; how they had succeeded in launching it. They then exchanged stories about their work on the Delta Program and the other space programs of the U.S. For me it was a strange bridge between two worlds here were the same people in now in responsible U.S. positions, who had personal World War II experiences in the rockets that Hitler had used against the Allies. One generation was not enough to heal the wounds of the Second World War. Divided Germany in 1978 was not a finished product.

Q: What about, you are close to the Netherlands. Particularly after the WWII there was not a warm and cozy relationship between the Dutch and Germans, particularly on the side of the Dutch. Obviously they were still the same generation that had been taken over by the Germans. Was that still a problem, did you see that where you were?

BINDENAGEL: There were virtually no relations from Bremen towards Dutch. The only one that was active was tobacco. We kept close contact with Gustav Rasch and he took us to the Dutch tobacco market in Bremen. In so far as that is an example, the Dutch did not like coming to Bremen to buy and sell the tobacco. There were basically no relations. On the other hand the social life, which connects that part of Friesland in Germany with Friesland in the Netherlands, was a link. We had a very harsh winter in 1978 and for the first time in several years they flooded the fields. We went out with some friends, Gustav and some other friends to go ice-skating. Normally you could go ice-skating on the canals, but they flooded the fields and you could skate, as they used to be able to do, from Bremen all the way into to the Netherlands and back on wooden ice-skates with a metal blade that would strap onto your shoes, called "Hollander" in Germany. So, in some sense there was a connection at some time with the Netherlands, but it was not so political.

Q: What about the shipping business? One traditional job of a consulate is to deal with shipping and American seamen. But our shipping had fallen off out, what about that?

BINDENAGEL: We had a very few cases, but we did have a few and as the back-up Consular Officer, I had a few encounters with sailors. We had several cases where we signed sailors off ships, and a couple of disciplinary cases where the Captains of the ship would bring them in and pay them off in our presence. We also took depositions, not many, but enough to get that flavor that there was still a role for the consulate. Interesting consular issues that I dealt there with were things like young Germans whose parents, normally a mother, who was a German and the father was an American. They wanted American citizenship.

Around that time in 1977 there was apparently a case in the U.S. where an American had joined the Israeli Army and therefore lost his citizenship, He fought in U.S. Court to retain it and was successful. Young Germans who were also young American citizens had to fulfill their Bundeswehr service and consequently swear their allegiance to the German Army. They didn't want to lose their citizenship and under this new ruling could keep their American passports. We had several of them coming in and said "I don't want to lose my American citizenship." We also had American teachers who in the late '60s and early '70s couldn't get jobs in the U.S. and came to Germany. They, too, were required to swear allegiance to Germany in order to teach. As they reached five years and were eligible for tenure, they had to decide whether to stay in Germany. Because each year they had signed allegiance to the German federal state as part of their contract, that act brought into question their American citizenship. We had several of those cases where we had to deal with the American's decisions about their lives and how they related to the U.S.

Q: The laws were relaxing all the time. This was the period when the courts made it almost impossible unless you wanted to lose your citizenship.

BINDENAGEL: Right, we were in that transition when faced with such cases. The German law allowed for citizenship to pass through the husband only and not the wife, so they were very often caught in personal crises. It was all a good learning experience and was very interesting. We had a few repatriation cases for destitute Americans as well.

Q: Do you feel any, the hand of the control of the Embassy much?

BINDENAGEL: No. We had Ambassador Stoessel visit us; he set a very friendly embassy-consulate connection. Frank Meehan, the DCM, came. I remember Dick Smyser, the Political Counselor, came several times. Perhaps they were interested in us but more likely I assume they were curious about the Greens. Those visits were very friendly and very interesting, but for the most part the Embassy left us alone. We had more competition with Chuck Kiselyak in Hamburg. When the Longshoreman's strike broke out in Bremen, the first in a hundred years, we sent out the first cable and we had competition from Chuck who said: "But really, all the shipping is in Hamburg." Nevertheless, we were allowed to report on the Longshoremen strike and I was able to do important reporting. Bremen was very congenial, very fun.

Q: It sounds like an excellent place to sort of get a feel for both the country and the job?

BINDENAGEL: Absolutely. It was certainly not high pressure, but there was ability to develop and explore things and to really get to know how you relate to the Foreign Service and to political, economic and consular issues. And it was broad enough, from cotton, tobacco, space science, the Longshoremen's strike, to the Greens political movement. There were plenty of things to do and yet time to absorb them and understand how they related to foreign policy.

Q: I thought we might stop at this point, because it's easier to stop here, because you were leaving Bremen in 1979 and you were going back to German Desk, where you served until 1983. So we'll pick it up there.

Today is February 27, 1998. J.D., you were on the German desk when?

BINDENAGEL: I was a desk officer from the summer of 1980 to the summer of 1983.

Q: Where did the German desk, could you describe how big it was, how it was organized and what you were doing?

BINDENAGEL: The German desk has a delightful history. I understand that it was really organized by Eleanore Dulles, as Office of German Affairs. It had an esteemed group of directors who guided German policy through all the post-war period. The Office included the Federal Republic of Germany, (West Germany), the German Democratic Republic of Germany (East Germany), Berlin, Austria and Switzerland. It was the center of policy for the German-speaking countries of Central Europe. I really focused on our policy towards Germany, East/West Germany, issues dealing with the whole range of political issues, domestic political issues, and economic issues. And it also had a separate desk for Berlin because Berlin had a special status and was treated neither as a part of the GDR nor a part of the Federal Republic.

Q: Why was it treated that way? Was it to avoid legal complication or was it because of the facts of the matter?

BINDENAGEL: It was a legal issue. We developed a very extensive legal regime around our rights and responsibilities as victorious powers of World War II for Berlin and Germany as a whole. Those responsibilities included the joint Four Powers "occupation" of Berlin, and the residual rights for Germany as a whole, of course devolving much responsibility to the two Germanies. But in Berlin that joint occupation still remained, at least technically, operational. That limited sovereignty for the Germanies left the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, France and the U.S. sharing decision making over Berlin and as unification came later, we were to exercise the residual rights and responsibilities for Germany as a whole.

Q: What was your particular slice of this pie?

BINDENAGEL: I was one of three Desk Officers on the German Desk, and my slice included German domestic politics and economics. I must say economics was one aspect that was very political at that time. I recall two incidents that describe the role of an economics officer at the desk at that time, and political significance of it. The first was when President Reagan named Dr. Arthur Burns, the former Chairman of the Federal Reserve, to be Ambassador to Germany. He came to the State Department and met with the Office of Central European Affairs. As I introduced myself as the desk officer for economics, Arthur Burns, also an esteemed professor of economics, creator of the Council of Economic Advisors as well as former Federal Reserve Chairman, looked at me and smiled, and said, "Economics? The State Department?" and then knowingly shook his head in disbelief. Nevertheless, we came to win him over to the important role the State Department plays in the "political" economics. For instance, the issues that dominated the German-American relationship focused on the German economy and the unemployment at that time.

Germany's commitment to social peace was deep. After World War I and the German Revolution of 1918 as well as after World War II, unemployment led to violent riots. In 1918 severe unemployment actually led to a revolution, consequently, the Germans were prepared to go to great lengths to maintain social peace, with spending programs, job programs, to provide for peace at the expense of a more capitalist, laissez-faire economics. We in the U.S. view economics in a much more detached way of promoting prosperity rather than from the violent politics that lead to revolution. However, in 1982 the German unemployment figures reached about the million, and the Social Democrats under Helmut Schmidt were politically threatened. The SPD response was to propose a jobs program. However, their political coalition government partners, the liberal thinking, capitalist-oriented Free Democrats, prominently led by the Economics Minister, Otto Graf Lambsdorf, opposed this SPD-proposed social program.

In the U.S. the economic debate had focused on Ronald Reagan's supply-side economic policy, which in German the longest word that I was able to use at the time; it was "Angebotsorientierte Wirtschaftspolitik" when translated directly from "supply-side economics." Otto Graf Lambsdorf proposed such a policy as an alternative to the SPD plan. In the spring the Social Democrats were unable to pass their jobs program in the Bundestag, over the opposition of their coalition partners, the Free Democrats. However, when they sought to fund it through the budget process in June, their partner's opposition foiled them. By September, Economics Minister Lambsdorf presented a paper on supply-side economics prepared by Economics Ministry State Secretary, Mr. Tietmeyer, who later became the President of the Bundesbank. Chancellor Schmidt was unable to block Lambsdorf or to convince him to remain in the coalition. The Free Democrats left the coalition on October 1, 1982 bringing to an end the Helmut Schmidt government. The Free Democrats then under Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, with Economics Minister Otto Graf Lambsdorf, joined in coalition with the Christian Democratic Union to elect Helmut Kohl as the Chancellor in October of 1982.

I was in Bonn at the time. The State Department sent us desk officers to visit our countries and "consult." The intense debate over economics was my excuse to travel and get a better understanding for the events that were unfolding. I met with the political parties, the political foundations and of course the Auswärtiges Amt. I had an appointment in the Foreign Office with Wolfgang Ischinger, who had just returned to Germany from his assignment in Washington, where I had met him. He was in Foreign Minister Genscher's office. As I arrived in the Foreign Office on October 1, everyone was gathered around the television watching the Foreign Minister announce the withdrawal of the F.D.P. from the governing coalition. Of course the F.D.P. ministers all had to resign and the Foreign Office was abuzz with dire predictions of their individual fates. Wolfgang was totally preoccupied, but I was delighted to share this moment with them. Chancellor Schmidt became German Foreign Minister for the three weeks it took to form the new Kohl-Genscher coalition.

My trip was cut short a few days later during my consultations in Berlin when I was called by the Operations Center and patched through to George Washington University hospital to learn of my son, Carl's, premature birth. I raced home to see him and his mother; he survived.

Q: As of now, 1998, Helmut Kohl is still the Chancellor.

BINDENAGEL: Helmut Kohl is still the Chancellor, he is running again this September of 1998 for an unprecedented sixth term. He has exceeded the term of office of Konrad Adenauer and is approaching the term of office of Otto Bismarck.

Q: Was there any change in our approach to Germany as seen through your work, when Reagan administration came in, in January 1981?

BINDENAGEL: Absolutely, there was a very good relationship with West Germans, we had almost no relationship with the Communist East Germans by design. Up until 1974 we had no official relations whatsoever with East Germany. We established diplomatic relations with the German Democratic Republic in 1974, but that relationship never developed much. On the other hand, our relationship with West Germany was very close. We worked very closely in NATO and all international fora. When Ronald Reagan took office there was the conflict over economic policies and there were differences with Helmut Schmidt on dealing with the Soviet Union.

Most of our policy differences can be captured in the debate surrounding the West European decision to build a gas pipeline from the Yamal peninsula in Siberia to Western Europe. Under the Carter Administration in the Fall of 1980, we had concerns about the impact of the pipeline on natural gas prices. I drafted a briefing memo for Deputy Secretary Christopher's meeting with Deutsche Bank spokesman Wilhelm Christians, which was very hard hitting. In fact, in 1986, years later, I met him at a reception in Moscow and since this meeting was contentious, I asked him about it. He recalled vividly the encounter, which presaged what the Reagan Administration would later do for different reasons.

This gas pipeline project was viewed from the incoming Reagan Administration was that the pipeline was inappropriate financial support for the Soviets (and paralleled the debate in arms control). We argued that the pipeline would become an export income earner for the Soviet Union, and would help them build their military power and at the same time create a dangerous dependence on Soviet gas by the West Europeans that could significantly change the political dynamics in Western Europe against the United States. We staunchly opposed the pipeline, however, were unable to find a quick common solution, or even a common approach to this issue with the Western Europeans, particularly with the Germans.

In the spring of 1981, shortly after Ronald Reagan had taken the office, we began intense discussions with the Europeans, which eventually led to our determination, for foreign policy reasons, to impose sanctions against European companies which continued to trade with the Soviet Union. That decision also affected American companies like General Electric which supplied gas turbines that would run the gas pipelines, it affected Caterpillar that would supply the pipeline equipment. Most damaging to our business relations was its affect on West European companies. The reaction was fierce and centered on the extra-territorial application of U.S. law. As a result Europeans sought additional contract protection from such action or rejected contracts from American companies. The effect of the law continues to date with the question of Iran-Libya Sanctions Act and with extra-territorial application of U.S. law in Iran and its oil exports.

Q: How did this play in Germany?

BINDENAGEL: The policy debate was a genuine disagreement about how to approach the Soviet Union, a divergence from our policy of detente that the Germans supported. The Reagan policy was seen as moving to what the Germans feverishly sought to avoid, a confrontational approach. The Russians had deployed missiles, SS20 missiles, which were intermediate-range nuclear missiles capable of reaching Europe, but not the U.S. That threat changed the political-military situation and was a Soviet effort to decouple the U.S. from Europe. The U.S. was not threatened and theoretically could let the Europeans protect themselves. The wedge policy pursued by the Soviets did wreak havoc on our relations. Our policy was to confront these moves by the Soviet Union and not to help them economically. The Europeans, particularly the Germans, moved to engage, to seek detente, to seek compromise, to work with the Soviet Union, there was a growing tension in our relationship. As a desk officer I was in the middle of these policy debates, especially between the positions taken by Assistant Secretaries Richard Perle, DoD, and Rick Burt, State.

As important as the pipeline issue was to the German-American relationship and to the tensions it caused, crucial decisions were not economic. They were still the cold war security issues; the decisions to counter the SS20 deployments. Helmut Schmidt, in a 1977 IISS speech, had asked during the Carter Administration to take note of threatening Soviet missile deployments. The U.S. decision to deploy the Neutron Bomb and President Carter's subsequent decision to not deploy became a contentious debate about German confidence in American steadfastness in defending Europe and was the backdrop for the Pershing Missile deployment as a response to Soviet SS-20 missile deployments during Reagan Administration. In the end we were steadfast and in 1983 we deployed Pershing Missiles in Germany.

Q: From the vantage point of the German Affairs Office, how was the Pershing Missile Deployment, which was the counter missile for the SS20, seen? Was it seen as something that Germans would go along with or was it seen as something that might break them away from general agreement with us?

BINDENAGEL: We had long arguments about the military effectiveness of these missiles and their effect on detente. We had endless arguments about where war would be fought, if the Soviet Union and the U.S. had weapons that would reach Western Europe but not each other's homeland. Frankly, our concern was whether the Germans in particular, and other Europeans, would allow us to deploy even if we developed a missile to respond to the SS-20.

Q: Did you find that our attitude towards the Germans was more, I'm not sure it is the right word for it, more complacent, that the Germans would be with us, as opposed to the French who seem to be wanting to stick a burr under our saddle all the time? Did you find that it was hard, and I'm talking about you in the Bureau, it was hard to make the powers of be in the rest of our policy apparatus that Germany weren't somebody who could be taken for granted?

BINDENAGEL: I recall two or three activities at that time that illustrate what you are asking. One was a meeting with the head of the Deutsche Bank, Wilhelm Christians, who came in to see Deputy Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, at the end of the Carter Administration. As I noted earlier, we were talking about this project of gas pipelines and what effect it would have on energy prices and energy dependence. I had prepared the briefing memo for this very tough exchange between the two principals and was quite taken with the tone of the exchange. The atmosphere of mutual trust that I had seen among Americans and Germans in Bremen, which was warm, reassuring, reinforcing dedicated to common goals seemed to change to one of seemingly unreconcilable differences in policy and national interest.

Germany's national interest was to meet its need for energy and to reduce its dependence on Middle East oil. After the oil shock of 1973 with its rationing and driving-free Sundays in Germany, the German federal government had tried to expand their nuclear energy sector, which created significant domestic political problems. They tried to expand the use of coal and other fossil fuels, but were trying not to overdo coal burning, because of environmental concerns. There was an intense and growing German policy debate around the energy issue and we had supported reducing dependence on Middle East Oil and on fossil fuels. The Wilhelms-Christopher conversation had focused on the energy debate, in particular on not forcing increases in natural gas prices by creating more demand for Soviet gas. Their talk was not on the U.S. fear of increasing German dependence on the Soviet Union.

In the Reagan years we took a more confrontational approach toward our European friends, leaving behind the more conciliatory approach. Consequently, there was increasing tension in German-American relations. The debate shifted to an anti-Soviet effort as we moved to the question how to deal with the Soviet Union in the early days of the Reagan Administration. Larry Eagleburger was Assistant Secretary for Europe and Alexander Haig was the Secretary. Both were very sympathetic with our efforts to work out a common policy with the Europeans, but found themselves confronted in the inter-agency debate with a policy of sanctions to stop the Europeans from developing Soviet gas. The centerpiece of the debate became the Germans plan to build a natural gas pipeline from the Yamal peninsula in Russia to Western Europe. The Reagan Administration did not want the Soviets to earn hard currency from the sales of natural gas with which to fund its military machine nor to create Western European dependence on Soviet gas and was determined to stop the pipeline.

The German desk was caught in the middle and argued that the Western European dependence on Soviet gas was not a threat. An economically strong Ally in West Germany was a key pillar in our defense. We simply disagreed about the West European view that the money the Soviets earned from gas sales would keep their military strong. The West Europeans argued that the Soviets needed the money to keep their economy going and their people satisfied. The political analysis to back by the Administration's point of view overrode the political analysis in the State Department. The Administration threatened the West Europeans with foreign policy economic sanctions against their companies if they proceeded with the sales of Mannesmann pipe, pipelaying equipment and gas turbines. Secretary Haig argued against sanctions saying they would erode the support for the U.S. among our allies. He lost the battle, sanctions were imposed, and he ended up being fired. From where I sat, I would say that his stand on the pipeline and against sanctions pitted him against the anti-Soviet forces in our government and was a significant contributing factor in his dismissal.

There were sideline debates as well. Our fundamental concern with Berlin's vulnerability as we remembered our responsibilities for Berlin and led us to demand that the Germans create an underground reserve of natural gas for West Berlin to avoid threats of a Soviet gas-cutoff for the Western sectors of the city. In addition, I was asked to travel to Peoria, Illinois, on a State Department outreach program. Peoria is the home of Caterpillar tractors, the maker of pipelaying equipment such as that used for the Yamal pipeline. After sanctions were imposed Komatsu pipelayers replaced Caterpillar and the Peorians were hopping mad at the State Department for imposing sanctions. I met with Caterpillar and with the local Illinois press to explain our position, but doubt that I convinced any of those who had lost their jobs that we were on the right side of the Cold War. They saw the sanctions as a failure and the replacement of their pipelayers as a terribly costly policy to their interests. The greater good is a hard sell.

Q: Well, Haig had been NATO Commander, and understood the issues there as opposed to the early Reagan Administration which was a bunch of people sort of posturing, who really didn't have that much knowledge of foreign relations. Or am I simplifying?

BINDENAGEL: No, I think you have captured the conflict between the traditional practical approach of Henry Cabot Lodge versus Wilsonian idealism. The Reagan Administration came in with a view, with an ideal view of the world, Alexander Haig came in with a very practical view and we were caught between the two views. Obviously, those of us working in the trenches, or on the German desk, were oriented more toward the practical Alexander Haig approach. We asked: how do we work sanctions, how do we work it with the Europeans, how do we find a common interest to seek out options for Secretary that were possible? The example of the controversy over the construction of a gas pipeline from the Yamal peninsula in Russia to Western Europe was an key debate for us. For the last two decades this incident has shaped my own thinking on conflict resolution even when we approach the same goals. Conflict or cooperation with the Germans and the rest of the Europeans is a mixed bag of successes and failures.

Q: How did we view, from your perspective the GDR, East Germany at that time, economically, politically?

BINDENAGEL: If the Soviet Union was the evil empire, the German Democratic Republic was for many in the Reagan Administration the heart of the evil empire. East Germany was a "closed society" and was very foreign to us, it was the worst of the worst, they were constantly harassing us and that made life difficult; we were ideologically opposed to almost all that they were doing. It was a very cold and difficult relationship. We had just a few bilateral issues. From my vantage point on the German desk - we had a special desk officer for East Germany, Bruce Clark - the GDR was a plague on our house. On the economic side there was the Leipzig Fair each year and that Fair was the extent of our relationship; American companies attended, tried to make sales and had a presence and then departed to return the following year.

Q: What was our impression of the East German economy at that time?

BINDENAGEL: The East German economy had the reputation, not necessarily based on analysis, but the reputation of being the best in the Soviet Bloc. It functioned; it produced things; and it provided a certain standard of living, which in East Germany, seemed to be higher than in the rest of the Soviet Union.

Q: I know the East German reputation sort of got built up as being somehow that, no matter, Germans are Germans, and they are really efficient and they can do things. And yet, after the amalgamation of East Germany into West Germany it's almost as all they had to junk everything in East Germany and start all over again. Do you think we were over-evaluating the ability of East Germany to produce?

BINDENAGEL: Yes, we were over-evaluating, but in defense of those who tried to figure out what a "closed society" was doing, there were intangibles that we couldn't measure. First of all there were no public statistics, all the East German information was contained in secret East German documents. We had to rely on what we could observe, what we could see and to judge based on the products that were exported. GDR products were clearly inferior but prices were lower. In any case, they did sell and they sold a lot. They had a few areas where they were actually technically and even technologically advanced. Even if some observers ridiculed Erich Honecker's touting GDR advances like the "world's largest microchip," the GDR had some successes. I wouldn't say they were world competitive, but they were advanced for the Soviet Bloc. On a later assignment in the mid-1990s I met one of the engineers who had reverse-engineered an IBM 386 computer. He was very proud of that achievement that made the GDR the major supplier of computer chips to the Soviet Bloc. Of course, they were constantly behind the West. However, I would later find out what really mattered to the real success of the GDR was its ability to do what we called during my time in the U.S. Army: "field expediency." They could make things work that shouldn't have worked with just a little ingenuity and friends to help find parts. When unification came that field expediency; that is, the personal network of contacts, the use of products, the ingenuity that it took to make the economy function disappeared. For analysts trying to determine what happened, there was little or no tangible evidence that it ever existed. So our "Western" analysis seemed totally wrong after unification. Well, we weren't totally wrong, but there was no evidence that there was anything there that would support our position that the East German economy was functioning. In fact, traditional western analysis concluded that the East German economy did not and could not work. Nevertheless, they did make and sell products. We came up with the theory to explain what happened and decided that the GDR could last only so long as it could draw on the capital and the plant equipment that existed from the last century to the 1930s. When that capital was totally exhausted, the GDR would collapse, and they were close such a collapse by the end of the 1980s. Economic collapse, however, did not necessarily mean the political demise of the East Germany, after all the Soviet Union lasted seven decades by use of military force and internal terror.

Q: What about the East German influence abroad? I mean one is always hearing about East Germans being..., one of the great exports was police expertise in the places like Lybia and other places, they seemed to be as you say the "heart of the evil empire," they seem to be able to export this ability to control populace and all. Was this a concern of ours?

BINDENAGEL: East German sales of instruments of internal repression were a concern. We of course had our own controls on police equipment exports. Exporting instruments of communist and totalitarian state had always been a problem and actually confronted us in several places, in Africa in particular, with East German security types. But export license requests didn't play much of the role for the Desk because GDR didn't play much of the role except a little bit in trade. Berlin issues - the Four Power rights and responsibilities for Berlin and Germany as a whole - dominated what the U.S.-GDR bilateral relationship because they ran the sector checkpoints in Berlin for the Soviets. On the other side of checkpoint Charlie they had their own checkpoint, they harassed people, they required a minimum daily currency exchange; they didn't let certain people in, they didn't let certain people out. That was the focus of our relationship with the GDR in the context of our responsibilities to protect the city of Berlin.

Q: Who was the head of the Central European Affairs at that time?

BINDENAGEL: At that time Tom Niles, and then after Tom left to replace Eagleburger as assistant secretary, John Kornblum became country director.

Q: Did Niles and Kornblum have... Was Germany high up on their affairs or did they seem to be focused elsewhere?

BINDENAGEL: Germany and Russia dominated everything they did. The office had one officer who did Austria and Switzerland combined, one doing Berlin, one doing East Germany. But really all the focus and attention that the two directors spent was on the Federal Republic.

Q: What was the evaluation of Kohl that you can recall before he actually became the Chancellor?

BINDENAGEL: Chancellor Kohl had always been underestimated and we shared that view. Before he was elected he was a regional minister president, who had run and not succeeded in becoming a candidate for chancellor. Franz Joseph Strauss had run in 1980, but was defeated by Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. In contrast, Schmidt was a towering figure for us and by contrast the later Chancellor Kohl seemed to be a regional provincial governor. Helmut Schmidt was a strategic thinker, economist, former Finance Minister, and internationalist. The contrast between the two gentlemen was tremendous.

Q: The dislike between Helmut Schmidt and Jimmy Carter, particularly as the neutron bomb was part of what set this off. Schmidt didn't trust Carter and thought that Carter as an undependable person. Was Schmidt around when Reagan came in? Reagan of course not being the greatest intellect in the world, and Schmidt being sort of world class intellectual, how did that work from your perspective?

BINDENAGEL: The contrast is remarkable. President Carter and Chancellor Schmidt were never personally close. They had different lifestyles, they had different approaches to policy and their personal chemistry never worked well. Schmidt criticized Carter for making commitments and then not living up to them, which for Germans is almost a sacred principle. *Pacta Sunt Cervanta* deal is a deais part of their culture and political life, it's as close to being sacred as you can be. Reagan was elected in November 1980; Helmut Schmidt came to Washington shortly thereafter, ostensibly to meet with President Carter. A private meeting with Reagan for Schmidt was made at Blair House. The meeting was private; there was no press. President-elect Reagan and Schmidt exchanged views, treated each other with respect, and began a very positive, cordial relationship at the beginning of the Reagan presidency. The key question for Helmut Schmidt, and the question for Ronald Reagan, was dealing with the intermediate range nuclear missile threat posed by the Soviet Union. How to approach the Soviets, how to deal with the same neutron bomb issue that torpedoed the Carter-Schmidt relationship, how to counter the SS20 intermediate range nuclear missiles aimed at Germany, or quite simply how do you deal with the Soviet threat? And while I can't make the connection directly because I didn't see it, the outcome was a common commitment: "We must respond." As the policy conflicts between us however arose, a distance began to grow between the two leaders over the pursuit of confrontational or cooperative approaches to the Soviets.

By the spring of 1981 when President Reagan named his Ambassador, Reagan looked for someone who had a very close relationship with Helmut Schmidt. Dr. Arthur Burns, who knew Helmut Schmidt as German Finance Minister, was very close to Schmidt personally. There was in my view a concerted effort by the Reagan Administration to reach out to Helmut Schmidt, to the Germans, to make sure that that relationship worked because it was pivotal in the own efforts in Reagan's policy toward the Soviet Union. The Reagan-Schmidt partnership lasted over a year. As summer 1982 passed, Helmut Schmidt was increasingly under pressure and then in September, 1982 he lost his standing in the Social Democrats. I attended the SPD convention in Cologne when Schmidt and his handful of supporters were isolated by Willy Brandt, Herbert Wehner and their supporters, dissidents in the Social Democratic Party, who were opposed to the deployments of Pershing Missiles to counter the Soviet SS-20s. That internal SPD fight over missile deployments and another effort by his own Economics Minister, Otto Graf Lambsdorf, a leader of the Free Democrats (FDP) to force a supply-side economic policy "Angebotsorientierte Wirtschaftspolitik" on the SPD ended the SPD-FDP coalition in October.

When Chancellor Kohl took office that warm relationship between the Ambassador Burns and Helmut Schmidt was an obstacle to Burns' relations with the new Chancellor. In fact, while there was tremendous amount of respect for Burns by Kohl, Kohl kept a distance to our esteemed Ambassador for some time, as they worked through Kohl's resentment of the warm Burns-Schmidt relationship. By 1983 in the summer, when I left the desk for assignment in Germany, Arthur Burns had become close to Helmut Kohl in policy terms, in terms of respect and in terms of access, but not personally.

Q: Did you get a feel for Reagan and Kohl?

BINDENAGEL: Reagan and Kohl hit it off very nicely, very well. They both had a sense of history, they both had a sense of destiny, knew here they wanted to go. In summer of 1983, two years into the Reagan Administration, the debate over the deployment of the Pershing Missiles had taken off, that had been very important to their personal relationship and to the politics. President Reagan was determined to respond to the Soviet Union and deploy the intermediate-range nuclear Pershing missiles in Mutlangen. However, the political situation in Germany had changed dramatically, the Greens had been elected in 1979 to the Bremen Bürgerschaft, the Parliament in Bremen. They moved to tremendous protest against the atomic energy and the atomic weapons, and they combined the forces of hundreds of thousands throughout the country.

BINDENAGEL: The switch to Kohl was almost seamless in terms of U.S.-German relations. After Chancellor Kohl was elected by the Parliament in October 1982, he had to stand for an election. However, Genscher's FDP, his new coalition partner, had switched from the Social Democrats to Christian Democrats and their ratings in the polls went down to two percent. An early election threatened them with political extinction, if they failed to reach the five-percent hurdle to get into the Bundestag. Consequently, Kohl moved elections from October to March 1983. From October to March there was a lot of uncertainty of whether the Chancellor could be elected, how he would do it. I witnessed the election at the ZDF television studio in Washington as Chancellor Kohl was elected and the Free Democrats made the five-percent minimum to get into the Parliament and the coalition was launched.

Then, as soon as Kohl was elected, Pershing Missile deployment, which had split the SPD in 1982 and undermined Chancellor Schmidt, faced Kohl. The U.S.-German debate focused immediately on the issue: "To deploy or to not deploy." In the summer of 1983, I came to Germany as a Political Officer reporting on domestic politics and was to follow the demonstrations against nuclear power and the domestic debate on Pershing missiles. I attended all party conventions and the German decision to deploy would determine the course of the Cold War. Deployment became, in the fall of 1983, the policy issue that dominated all of us; it wasn't certain that Chancellor Kohl could actually make the decision to deploy and bring his party and the free Democrats to vote in order to deploy these missiles in face of Social Democratic opposition led by Willy Brandt.

In the fall there was a huge demonstration on the campus of University of Bonn, 300,000 or more demonstrators came and I joined them. Willy Brandt spoke to the multitude and opposed U.S. Pershing deployments as too provocative of the Soviets. There was a tremendous tension in the country as the SPD joined the Greens in opposition to our missiles. In addition, there were constant anti-nuclear demonstrations against spent fuel storage in Gorleben, in Lower Saxony, the site promised to store nuclear waste, permanently and safely. There had been demonstrations against nuclear power plants in which the border police, in a military-like action with helicopters and armored personnel carriers, moved against the demonstrators at Brockdorf in 1981. The tremendous buildup of street power and growing uncertainty of whether the Green Movement, led by people I had met while posted in Bremen - Petra Kelly, Otto Schily, Rudi Dutschke - combined with Social Democrats, who were now in opposition, could block the Kohl government Pershing Deployments.

Q: You came to Bonn in 1983 and you were there until when?

BINDENAGEL: Until 1986.

Q: What was your job?

BINDENAGEL: I was in the internal political unit reporting on domestic politics.

Q: Who was our Ambassador?

BINDENAGEL: Our Ambassador was Arthur Burns, appointed by Reagan in 1981. He stayed on until 1985 and then Rick Burt came. He had been Assistant Secretary who came out as Ambassador in 1985. So the last year was with Rick Burt.

Q: How did Burns operate within the Embassy?

BINDENAGEL: Bill Woessner was his Deputy Chief of Mission. Bill had been in Bonn with Ambassador Walter Stoessel and Arthur Burns asked him to stay, and in fact, he stayed total of six years to run the Embassy. Arthur Burns spent a lot of time with the German senior politicians. He gave three or four major speeches a year. He maintained close contact with President Reagan through an economic advisory board that the President had. And really focused on discussion with political leadership and also with students, and his public appearances.

Q: We talked about it somewhat before from the Bremen perspective, from the Bonn perspective, you are looking at internal politics. These protests, how did you see them what was sort of dynamics and concerns about the protests? Was it just over the issue or did you see maybe another force coming out of this?

BINDENAGEL: Right. That's a very good point. There were at least two issues beyond the specifics of deployment of missiles or nuclear weapons. One was the role of the communist East Germans. Was there an outside effort to undermine West German government? Yes, that was known. However, the more troubling was the grassroots growth of citizens' initiatives that had been created and evolved into the "Greens" Movement, which had become a political force by being elected into State Parliaments. Now that movement was challenging. The movement had some democratic legitimacy, that is, it had been elected to parliament, even though it was borne of the 1968 extra-parliamentary opposition (Ausserparlamentarishes OppositionAPO). The APO movement had swept through Europe in 1968, was an anti-Vietnam War, anti-American movement, was anti-military and anti-NATO, and appeared to culminate into a grassroots German peace and pacifist movement that would have tremendous detrimental effect on German democracy and Germany's relations with the United States. We thought this grass-roots movement could certainly adversely effect attitudes in the German body politic undermine more that just the deployment of the Pershing missiles, particularly since its members were adamantly opposed to NATO; the even called for a dissolution of NATO. Dissolution of NATO is in fact still in the Green Party's platform today in 1998. These were fundamental issues. My job was to find out just who are these people were and whether we could work with them. I met them ofteformer General Gerd Bastian, Petra Kelly, Otto Schily, and Joschka Fischer. I kept track of their policy thinking and tried to understand how they were motivated, why they were so opposed to our policies. We reported on the goals of these organizations and on the people. In fact, they were sincere in their personal commitment to doing away with all things nuclear, whether their opposition to nuclear power plants or nuclear medicine or nuclear whatever, nuclear missiles in particular. There was a sense that none of the major political parties cared about the environment, cared about the basis of life, were only working for material goods. So you had a philosophical, ideological and anti-democratic mix that found strong grass-roots support.

Q: I would imagine that at this time, and we were sort of reaching again a major confrontation with the Reagan Administration, the things were happening in Afghanistan and all, that there must have been a great concern on our part that the Germans might be getting soft and if they got soft that the whole thing would collapse on our side.

BINDENAGEL: Exactly. We had seen the Carter Administration in 1979 begin to change American views of the Soviet threat with the invasion of Afghanistan. Carter proposed an increase in U.S. defense budget and the Reagan Administration came in with a strong ideological, confrontational approach. The suggestion that the Germans were going soft, that the Germans would not be able to stand up to these kinds of confrontation we would pursue was a basic tenet of our approach. There was of course, from the German perspective, reinforced by Carter's decisions on the Neutron Bomb, that historically, and even in recent personal experience by German policy makers, a question whether the U.S. would keep its word. The French constantly played on this theme of American unreliability. The French kept repeating that the Americans would leave Europe at some point and you couldn't count on them forever. Of course, historically we didn't confront the Russians and stop the building of the Berlin wall in 1961. That had a very important impact on Willy Brandt's thinking about the limits of American willingness to intervene in Europe. We had the neutron bomb decision, which we have discussed. So there was enough uncertainty whether the U.S. would stick to its decisions to give the argument credibility. In other words, both sides were not certain how steadfast either would be in the face of a serious confrontation. That's why all of the attention was focused then on the German decision to deploy or not deploy the Pershing missiles.

Q: How did this play out?

BINDENAGEL: After the major Bonn anti-Pershing demonstration in the fall of 1983, President Mitterrand came to the Bundestag and gave a speech in favor of deployment. That was a very important signal for the Chancellor to say that the French were with him. That Mitterrand speech emboldened Kohl to meet this internal challenge by the demonstrators and pursue the deployments. The vote in the Bundestag on the night of November 23, 1983 was dramatic. I went to the Bundestag, but to get there I had to go through three police perimeters to get past what's called the Bannmeile, literally the banned zone or prohibited zone for demonstrations. The police had three of these interlocking fences that were set up normally to control crowds at demonstrations. I moved through the demonstrators to get into the Bundestag for this debate and the vote without incident. As the debate moved to an emotional pitch, the Chancellor made his arguments and in the end the vote passed. With our embassy trusted political reporter, Richard Volk, we got word to Washington and there was a tremendous sigh of relief in Washington that the Germans indeed decided to deploy the missiles. It was the defining moment for the Chancellor of Germany, not only for his relationship with President Reagan but also with Mitterrand and the French, and his own population. Kohl was justifiably proud that that the vote was the turning point for his own stature in his own country. It also signaled that the arms race would move to confrontation, a confrontation that would end the Cold War.

Q: What was our analysis that you were getting, where you were, about the French who usually were the odd man out, were strong on this?

BINDENAGEL: We were concerned that the French attitude would make them soft on Russians as anyone else. There was a rather tense debate between the Germans and the French at that time. The French had their own nuclear tactical weapons, which were capable of reaching Germany, but not the Warsaw Pact countries. The Germans were very uncomfortable with this idea. They needed to sort out their relationship with the French. Germany as a non-nuclear power was never comfortable even in the highest leadership positions with using or discussing or engaging in nuclear war scenarios since the war would be played out in Germany. They needed strong French support to convince them the U.S. would stay with them. For the French, we understood that they too did not want to the Germans moving closer to the East, away from that relationship with the French themselves.

Q: Well, Germans acting as a buffer for the French and it allowed the French to have a lot more room for free wheeling and suddenly to discover that your buffer might be doing little free wheeling itself, it just makes one nervous.

BINDENAGEL: If you just take the historical example, the French have delighted in letting the Germans fight among themselves in German territory over the last couple hundred years. In the Thirty Years War, the French played a very important role in supporting the both sides in that conflict, but especially the Protestants, and prolonged the conflict for their own national interest. In the contemporary context, the Germans were very aware of the French need for Germany to be the buffer against the Warsaw Pact, to be the frontline state, a description they used themselves. Nevertheless, German steadfastness in NATO was the very key element in the French support for West Germany; that is, divided but with West Germany in NATO. But that French support didn't mean the anti-deployment demonstrations in West Germany ended. Quite the opposite happened. They intensified as the actual deployments came in Mutlangen, Baden-Wuerttemberg, a small military installation, was inundated with demonstrators. Human chains linked hands of protestors for hundreds of miles throughout the country and were taking place repeatedly. The American television movie "The Day After," depicting the world after the nuclear exchange, was shown in the U.S. and was then translated into German. For the Germans, it was a depiction of Germany the day after and was very upsetting, very emotional and contributed to a very tense period.

Q: As it seems to do in England, there were some demonstrators on, I don't know, some green something, there seem to be sort of professional demonstrators, people who enjoyed demonstrations. Often either young people it or middle aged women for whom this was seen to be the way of life almost. Did you see a development of this type of person?

BINDENAGEL: Certainly there were holdovers from the '68 revolution, as they liked to describe it, who protested as a sort of profession. There were Easter marches, there were gatherings and other parts of the movement that sustained the effort to keep the protests alive. There were, I wouldn't say middle aged, rather the older population, senior citizens who had experienced World War II, who were very present and very insistent that we in particularly in the Reagan years we were creating conditions for war. Those who experienced World War II thought that we wanted to play out the Third World War in Germany and that the Reagan Administration was too confrontational and dangerous. These attitudes played well in the Social Democratic Party, in the senior citizens' group and the '68 group. When these started to come together then you had also the younger element of society that joined the Green Party. The Greens political movement evolved into a political party, although they refused to call themselves a party and tried to called themselves a movement. The Greens were elected into Bundestag, a group but not a caucus represented in the Bundestag. Frankly after all I had seen, we were fortunate that they had a legitimate political way to exert political influence on decisions.

Q: How did you find these protest groups, as a political officer, talking to various people in these movements, both in the Green Party, Green Movement and outside of, but the protest movement?

BINDENAGEL: For the most part, there were a few exceptions, but for the most part they were extremely friendly to the U.S. They had very good feelings about the people of the U.S. They liked what we were trying to do, they liked to visit, and they enjoyed our lifestyle, however they had very specific objections to our policies. The pacifists did not want the military used as an element of policy. From their point of view they felt, they had a motto, "Nie wieder Krieg vom Deutschen Boden." This was translated as, "Never again shall wars emanate from German soil." That motto is a very arrogant saying that means, if we Germans don't start a war there won't be any. And you Americans are forcing us into making war by demanding we station all your military people here, putting new missiles on our soil and creating the conditions for war and that's very dangerous. Joschka Fischer, for instance, grew up in Wiesbaden and used to tell me that he simply considered that American soldiers, even those deployed in Germany, as a part of the landscape. They belonged there, they were perfectly welcome there, he just didn't like to use them in war. So the Greens did not have a clear, acceptable picture of our role in Germany, but that also had very mixed views on Americans. There were a few communists, who were adamantly opposed to Americans, didn't want to have anything to do with us, but they were very much a minority.

Q: Was there in this group, and variations thereof, an understanding of the Soviet Union and the Soviet system in the German Democratic Republic and all, and understanding that maybe this could be an either/or type of situation?

BINDENAGEL: Their views of the Soviet Union and the GDR were romantic. The Greens views were not based at all on realism or in terms of personal experience of what the life was like there. Many of them had visited and were treated as VIPs much better than they were treated in their own country, that is with respect and with some interest in what they were thinking, so they had a very romanticized and not very realistic view. Very few of them had gone to the GDR. Petra Kelly led a demonstration for peace in East Berlin and was arrested, but such efforts were few and not consequential in changing views in the Greens.

Q: Were any people in this group former sort of refugees from the GDR?

BINDENAGEL: Not that I recall. These people were all West Germans, they were committed West Germans. They saw West Germany as having its own identity, and they saw East Germans as having their own identity. They were different Germans.

Q: At this point looking across the spectrum, across all the parties and movements, was there much feeling towards, we got united Germany or was this something that just wasn't there?

BINDENAGEL: Not among these people. Among the opposition, Social democrats and the Greens and other opposition groups there was not interest in pursuing a unification policy. It was the government's officially declared policy. In the Christian Democrats there was actually anger about the lack of a strong and active U.S. position on unification. I recall 1983 coming to Germany, of meeting Hans Veen at the Adenauer Foundation and being treated to a lecture on the lack of U.S. activism on German reunification; He wanted to know why it was not at the top of our agenda. I took the comments as a plea that if we did voice our support, they could do so also. It was not, I thought, a real commitment to German reunification as an achievable policy. There was, however, a sense particularly among more conservative elements of the society, including especially organizations from Czechoslovakia and Poland who had been former German areas, Silesia and the Sudetenland. Those organizations played an important role in the internal workings of Christian Democrats as a small but important conservative constituency dedicated to keeping this issue alive. But frankly, German unification was not on an active agenda. There was a goal, it was an important statement, but active policy was designed to do things that could be done to improve lives in GDR, which was really West German policy.

Q: Did you see, were this groups, the former Sudeten Deutsche, the Polish group and the other ones, were they sort of a wasting asset, getting older, or were they bringing their children into it?

BINDENAGEL: The leaders were people who were actually expelled. They felt very strongly and were very adamant. The generation that had made the transition was less active but the third generation was almost as active and as vehement as the first, expellees themselves. So you had this three-way mix.

Q: One of the things, of course anyone who deals with Germany can't help but doing this looking at the neo-Nazis or whatever it might be defined as, which apparently is a rather slippery definition. I mean it's anybody who acts rather totalitarian I guess. Were you looking at neo-Nazis and what were you seeing?

BINDENAGEL: Neo-Nazis in this period didn't play any significant role. They had in the 1960s, and the Nationalist Party of Germany (NPD) had also been elected to the Parliament.

Q: Nationalist Party of Germany.

BINDENAGEL: The NPD had been elected on the right and the comparison with the Greens on the left was always analyzed in the Hegelian dialectic. The West Germans had the NPD in the 1960s and now they had the Greens. The Greens were accused of being the communists as the NPD were called the fascists. The focus of domestic politics with the Greens was to try to reduce the communists' influence. The Social Democrats tried to reach out to the East Germans in a formal political relationship, the SPD-SED Dialog, that was to confront the Socialist Unity Party of the East German Communist Party with its own internal contradictions. There was a series of efforts to deal with the communists that led to accusations that the SPD was sympathetic to the communists, or what they called socialist thinking. This was not the case with the conservatives and the West German Neo-Nazis. The Neo-Nazi's played virtually no role. On the other hand, leftist terrorists played a role through political assassinations, especially the Red Army Fraction, RAF, was very active.

Q: RAF stands for?

BINDENAGEL: The Red Army Fraction, an outgrowth of Baader-Meinhoff Group, those were two individuals whose gang engaged in political terror and had grown out of the 1968 APO, extra-parliamentary opposition movement. Those terrorist acts were directed against U.S. military and killed several Americans as well as German political and industrial leaders. The RAF assassinated prominent businessmen and prominent German political leaders throughout this period. I arrived in Germany in 1972, shortly after the RAF bombed the U.S. Officers' Club in Frankfurt, and shortly before the September 5, 1972 attack on the Israeli athletes by the Palestinians in Munich. I was in Bremen when Hans-Martin Schleyer was assassinated and had just returned to Washington when Foreign Office Political Director von Braunmuhl was shot outside his home. Many others were killed as well. The last victim of the RAF was shot in his home in April 1991. He was Mr. [Herold] Rohweder, head of the unified German Trust Agency that I had met while was selling East German industry after unification. I learned of the assassination during a Congressional Study Group on Germany Delegation meeting I attended in Germany at the time.

Q: What about how the Germans were treating their guest workers? Was that a problem?

BINDENAGEL: Guestworkers in Germany was an issue. After the labor shortages that brought them to Germany ended, the "guests," mostly Turks and Yugoslavs decided to stay and were in fact immigrants. The guestworker problem in the early 1980s grew as unemployment rose and approached a million. Politicians looked for something to encourage guestworkers to return home after one or two generations. There were some incentive programs that were set up but there was never an effort to force anyone out. The Nazi past weighed heavily on that political debate and prevented expulsion, but there was an encouragement for them to leave. The Germans stopped of course allowing new workers to immigrate. None of those efforts worked, of course, because family members would join family members and in case of Yugoslavia there was a significant population in Germany already. By the time the Yugoslav republics broke up in 1991 German immigration soared and the foreign-born German residents were eight percent of the population, the same as the United States.

Q: What about looking at the Universities at this period. Lately there's been a lot of criticism from within Germany of the university system, that it's big and doesn't produce very much.. Classes are too big, many structural problems. Were we looking at the university system and seeing what they were turning out, contrasting to how we did?

BINDENAGEL: We probably were having such a dialog, but it wasn't something that came to my attention. The universities and the political debate on university campuses were separate; they didn't occur in the same way it is occurring now. The political debate over missiles took place on university campuses, but it was not about the university. Those debates were volatile and could have led to social unrest. If you go back to German history, social peace is the basis of their social programs. It's not the safety net in our sense of the Great Depression, it is one step beyond that, social conflict in German history, including several revolutions, is quite destructive. However disturbing the universities' campuses were in the 1980s, they were protests of the political agenda.

Q: Did you see the universities where traditionally, in many countries you have the faculty that is sort of Marxist or semi-Marxist, and they train each generation goes through almost their Marxist phase. I have a daughter who has done this, coming out of a New England school. But you know, then they leave and all of the sudden it's shocked them, and they become solid conservative citizens. Where there universities playing this thing then or was it different?

BINDENAGEL: Certainly college preparatory gymnasiums had these teachers, one of the extraparliamentary opposition goals was to march through the institutions and to become teachers in the high schools and universities. They were doing that. But the real revolution that took place in the universities was to have open enrollment. In the 1970s the university administrations capitulated to the APO demands, reduced entry requirements (except for numerous clausus majors) and basically took everybody. So you diluted the ability of the professors to reach out to students and created tremendous numbers of students. The government gave a small stipend for students to help pay for cost of living. There was no tuition and all who desired could go. And graduation rates slipped, that is time in school spread out from eight semesters to 10, to 12,13, 14 semesters before you graduated. The quality of education began to slip. While people recognized the problem, had some debates about it, and cut the subsidies for students, real reform never really came.

Q: What about the economic system? You mentioned the economic system, but I'm really thinking about the social welfare system. In Germany, there always seemed to be so many rules and regulations about how society... if you could open shops on Saturday, and that sort of thing. Did you see this as important within the political context?

BINDENAGEL: That symbolic debate about store closing hours, the so-called "Ladenschlussgesetz," symbolized the debate about the rigidities in the German economy, the need for order, and the translation of order into rules. The high cost of labor, the high cost of fringe benefits and the unwillingness to hire new people because you couldn't fire them made for serious rigidities. The debate about the German economy, its rigidities, the options for solving structural problems has gone on for years. The "Ladenschlussgesetz," the Store Closing Law, really was the focus. This law goes back a long way, but the debate ran all the way to last year. You couldn't buy anything on Sunday. The stores had to close at 6:30 in the evening and they had to close at 1 o'clock on Saturdays. The whole concept behind that was of course that you have free weekends and you spend time with your family, and it is a family friendly operation. It also had the effect of protecting the small mom and pop stores, and driving up prices. Recently the Ladenschlussgesetz was actually changed.

If I can flash forward for a second, when I was in East Berlin in 1989 during the revolution, there was in the Bundestag Ladenschlussgesetz debate in West Germany, at the same time as the revolution in the East. So I would listen to Radio Sender Freies Berlin, the radio station Free Berlin in West Berlin giving the news report for an hour. For about two weeks I heard newscasters say something like: "There was a demonstration in East Berlin on the Alexanderplatz; the Stasi and the Volkspolizei moved in and cleared the demonstration." Then there would be a break and the next story would be: "In Bonn, the Bundestag is debating the Store Closing Hours Law to determine whether or not the stores may stay open on Thursday nights until 8 o'clock." There you have proof that the two Germanies were in two worlds. The West German world was going along fine; they were doing okay even if the economy had its rigidities. They were bumping along through the unemployment problem; they had changed the Government but not changed the system.

Q: But during this '83-'86 period, looking at this seeing the rigidity of the German system and all, which you say is really a form of preventing a revolution more than anything, which is certainly an admirable goal, looking at it now you had enough time in Germany so you could look at it through disinterested but practical eyes and not as just an American looking at this, did you think they were probably right for their particular society to have their social rigidity?

BINDENAGEL: Yes, they were certainly willing to pay a high price for social peace. We as Americans are not willing to pay that price, but the Germans certainly had every justification to do that. The question for them was whether they needed to accept social instability. The unemployment rate in 1982 was a million people and cost Chancellor Schmidt his government and brought Helmut Kohl to power. Today the unemployment rate is over four million people. It's 12%. If unemployment has not caused social instability, then the question becomes can the Germans still afford this kind of social safety net process they have. It's a debate Germans are reluctant to take on because they have seen in the meantime the revolution in the eastern part of the country. Although they are not quite certain what happened in the revolution, they have seen the high unemployment and are probably still willing to pay their price. We are not and that will continue to be a conflict between our countries.

Q: Somebody reading this in a decade or so might find the completely reversal, but we are finding ourselves with the lowest unemployment we've had at any time and we have open up our system so can look at the German system, as you say it encourages unemployment because nobody wants to hire because they don't want to get stuck with them. And you have to pay hire rates, so it doesn't encourage the expansion of economy and opportunities. It's a hard thing to fine tune.

BINDENAGEL: And frankly, because of the German proclivity to order and rules, rules become more important than outcomes. If you follow the rules, you are safe and fair, there are costs, but the outcomes are worth it. We, on the other hand, are really concerned about the outcomes, we want to know how many new jobs we've created, what kind of new things we are producing. The Germans, they seek to insure that everybody is employed and those who are not working are taken care of. And that's quite different, contrast in a way that two worlds approach these kinds of issues.

Q: Did you see that following the debates and all within Germany that there was a surplus of regulations about things over which there was no need to be regulations?

BINDENAGEL: Absolutely. The anecdote of the day was that the neighbor either wanted to remodel his house or to build a house. The whole focus of the discussion was how many permits did you have to have to build a house. In the U.S. you need one building permit, of course under that comes plumbing and all those things, in Germany you need about 5000. You could start building something, but it would take you forever to get started and then you need to make sure that you get constant permits and so on. That was the point, the vignette the people used to say: "We can't do this any longer." But they have.

Q: A great number of young Germans go to the U.S. to get education, our universities have quite a few Germans. Did you find this was a group coming back and trying to kick things around?

BINDENAGEL: No, they came back, found excellent employment. From American universities they were well educated and could obtain good jobs, but for the most part they did not play a role of activists. That has a lot to do too with the political system. The political system is built on political parties. Parties at the very local level chose who the candidates are, the candidates are then put on the lists. You have two votes in Germany, you vote for the individual and they are maybe 50 or 60 who are directly elected to Bundestag, the rest are all voted by party slates. So you have a tremendous power over the individual who may wish to come back and put his newly found experience to work and change things. I used political parties as an example but the same thing applies for other institutions.

Q: What was your impression of the Bundestag members that you talked to?

BINDENAGEL: Because it is a parliamentary system, the Bundestag members are also the government. And they are a very dedicated group of people, and very much interested in being in the U.S. It was almost obligatory that Bundestag Member who wanted to deal with any one of the issues, whatever it was, had to come to the U.S. Whether it was science or security, they had to come and interact and determine where Germany fit vis-a-vis the U.S. We were the base line, and they would use us to judge where they were. The political parties at this point, Social Democrats were in the U.S. all the time trying to find good arguments against the deployment of weapons. When the Christian Democrats came to the U.S. in the late 1970s and early 1980s, they had been in opposition long time and came to learn about us Americans.

One of the most important events that came out of this exchange of visits was in May 1985 when President Reagan came to Germany on an official bilateral visit. His visit became known as the "Bitburg Trip." I was the site officer at the Hambacher Schloss where a group of businessmen had staged a democratic protest in 1832. I learned that Kohl raised the possibility of visiting the Bitburg cemetery to commemorate the fallen soldiers in World War II as he had with French President Mitterrand at Verdun. He apparently asked President Reagan to come to Bitburg in November 1984 while visiting him in Washington. President Reagan accepted Chancellor Kohl's request and the date was set for May 1985. We began preparation for this very important visit probably January or February 1985. I don't remember exactly when Mike Deaver came out to do a visit to various sites that Chancellor's office had proposed, but I went with him to the Bitburg cemetery on a cold, wet and snowy day. We did not stay long, nor did we notice the graves of the Waffen SS soldiers buried there. The events were planned course for Kohl's home state of Rhineland-Pfalz, and included the Bitburg military cemetery, which the Chancellor himself viewed as a very important symbol of reconciliation for World War II. He had met with French President Mitterrand at the cemetery at Verdun to help heal the wounds between those two countries for the First World War. Kohl had hung in his office his picture with Mitterrand, both stood holding hands overlooking the Verdun cemetery. It is a very moving and thoughtful picture. However, the French picture was taken 70 years after the war. In 1985 wasn't, only 40 years had passed since World War II had ended. Instead of healing, the Bitburg visit opened old wounds. Perhaps through a lack of knowledge, it was lost on the planners that unlike Verdun where French and German soldiers were buried, there was no comparable cemetery in Germany for Americans. Our wartime policy was not to bury a single American soldier on the territory of Germany. We took all the fallen soldiers and buried them in Luxembourg or Belgium or some place, but not in Germany.

Q: This was deliberate policy? I never really thought about it.

BINDENAGEL: The policy was deliberate. I first learned of the policy when in Bremen a soldier who had stayed after World War II had died, and had a headstone sent with the assistance of the consulate in Bremen. I learned that American soldiers were entitled to a headstone and that it could be sent to Germany, but there were no American cemeteries or American soldiers buried in Germany. Years of good relations with the post-war Germans had also buried our memory of that fact and obviously politicians were not aware of the policy. When we heard about the cemetery at Bitburg, we visited it and found it a very dignified cemetery. It has a little wall around it and the gravestones are flushed to the earth, which would provide a nice ceremony where you could lay a wreath at the tablet at the front. As was snowing, on the first trip with Mike Deaver, no one examined the graves, except apparently, a couple of reporters, who brushed the snow aside from one of these graves and found an "SS" marking on the grave. Once that fact became known, all good intentions were thrown aside and the trip became one of the most painful controversies we had in the German-American relationship. No American president was going to lay a wreath on the graves of the SS.

The Embassy political section was charged with determining who was buried there and what was going on. The Germans tried to reassure us that these graves were not the hated SS, but soldiers, the "Waffen SS." Robert Johnson, who was in the Bonn group that dealt with the records of the Berlin Document Center and had Nazi records, began to look through the 2000 so graves registrations to see who these individuals were and what their units were, and to report back to the White House. That the German soldiers were "Waffen SS" made no difference, they were still Nazi deathhead SS.

Q: These were basically drafted SS.

BINDENAGEL: Right, but one cannot explain the difference to the American public between Waffen SS and SS. I've been in Germany a long time, and I knew there was no way that you could differentiate. Few of the soldiers' units were in question and this was reported back to the White House. Bud McFarland was the National Security Advisor, and Bud wrote to Horst Teltschik, who was Chancellor Kohl's National Security Assistant and said: "Let's not go to Bitburg."

After Horst Teltschik received this letter, Chancellor Kohl saw what was happening and made it a serious crisis for German-American relations. The Chancellor recognized that all the goodwill he had built up with the Pershing Missile deployment and the steadfast commitment of President Reagan to Germany, was at risk if Reagan did not go to Bitburg. Kohl feared that Reagan's rebuff of a public commitment to visit Germany (and therefore Bitburg) would throw the relationship back into the turmoil and risk his chancellorship. The Chancellor then wrote to the President saying: "You must come." George Schultz was Secretary of State and was furious. In that letter Mr. Kohl had a sentence about the political domestic risks that would no longer be cancelled if Bitburg did not happen. Kohl himself, having been elected only in 1983 and facing elections in 18 months, threatened that Bitburg would end his career. He portrayed the feared rebuff as reneging on the commitments that the two of them had made, the steadfastness of the relationship would fail; the Chancellor would be forced from office.

The President had to make the decision and we at the Embassy were asked to look for other appropriate places to visit such as a concentration camp. I was already assigned before that to prepare the visit to the castle at Hambach, which was a scene in 1832 of a group of Germans demonstrating for democracy. A revolutionary movement that was quickly defeated, I might add. I was asked to go look for an appropriate site in the area to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust. The city of Worms, which is a city with a thousand-year Jewish history in Germany, was an alternative for the President. I went to the thousand year-old Jewish cemetery and the synagogue and reported on the possibilities. At the same time, Bob Johnson who had done work on the Bitburg graves went up to the former concentration camp at the Bergen-Belsen. In the end President Reagan agreed to visit the Bitburg cemetery, but he also decided to visit Bergen-Belsen. So we had a compromise, but the Bitburg cemetery visit was an irritant because any compromise except for the President not going to Bitburg was not going to be satisfactory to the American public. Adding Bergen-Belsen changed the nature of the trip for the Chancellor from his hoped-for reconciliation, nevertheless. The visit ended without serious incident, but was not the glowing success Kohl had planned. There were a few anecdotes that illustrate the kind of tension the Bitburg debate created among the advance team and the embassy's organizing party. When President Reagan was picked up in Bonn by his 150-car motorcade in Bonn to take him to a helipad, the motorcade left downtown headed for the Rhine River Bridge. However, there are two helipads in Bonn, one on each side of the Rhine River, and as the 150-car motorcade reached the center of the bridge, the police escorts stopped and turned the entire motorcade around in the middle of the bridge. The lead police car was going to the wrong helipad. Mike Deaver, as this maneuver took place, got out of this car and told George Schultz: "See the State Department can't do even a motorcade right." Schultz, I was told was steamed. The motorcade, of course, did pick up the President and he went to Bitburg. The Bitburg wreath-laying ceremony was dignified, but marred by the Waffen SS graves. Reagan went to the Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp Memorial, a sad reminder of man's inhumanity to man. My event at Schloss Hambach was the last one on the trip. We had about 10,000 young people, although we only planned on 5,000 young people coming to the castle. The hillside was filled with cheering people as the President gave a very nice speech, and the sun shone radiantly on him on an absolutely gorgeous day in the Rhineland-Palatinate. Afterward, we had a conversation set up for the President to meet a small group of students, and the President went back to talk to them. He was having a very nice time with these young people, who were delighted to meet the President. Although Mike Deaver at this point was very nervous because the President was about half an hour late, Nancy Reagan, told Mike that he would just have to wait. Nancy told him that Schloss Hambach was the best event of the President's day, he was enjoying it, and King Juan Carlos who was the next on the schedule would just have to be patient. She made sure the President was able to enjoy the young Germans.

Q: How was the German press playing up the Bitburg business?

BINDENAGEL: One, as a conflict with the U.S., two, as the insensitivity of Chancellor to Nazi history, and three, as Kohl's excuse for his own history; he was criticized for his comment about his luck of the late birth - being born late so he didn't serve as a Nazi. He was attacked roundly. A radio program spoof, of a helicopter flying around over Bergen-Belsen and a lost President, caused a great stir. There was a high tension throughout the whole visit. The press was very harsh, and I assumed, although I don't recall what happened in the U.S., I assume Bitburg was not well received here.

Q: Well, it was certainly played up at. Were there any other issues during this '83 -'86 period?

BINDENAGEL: Those are the real highlights. Ambassador Burns left in the summer of 1985, Rick Burt came in, we had many security issues such as the potential use of chemical weapons and the Strategic Defense Initiative that played a role. The conflict over chemical weapons was a key interest for Ambassador Burt, but basically the relationship was on good standing.

Q: During this, up through '86, was the "Soviet threat" essentially over? I mean Soviets were there, but were you operating under the idea that Soviets might invade at some point?

BINDENAGEL: We still believed in the Cold War and international tension was very high. If you recall, the President met in October of 1986, right after I left Germany, in Reykjavik and proposed abolishing all nuclear weapons. There was the tremendous tension. We still were confronting the Soviets around the world. SDI, the Strategic Defense Initiative, had come into the debate. That dominated a lot of what we were doing. The threat of missile attack was very real, the issue of the window of vulnerability came, the whole question could we all seal off our country from a nuclear attack. Now the nuclear threat was very much in evidence, especially as we stationed new missiles in Germany. The walk-in-the-woods debates, the arms control debates were dominant everywhere and we were deploying new missiles. It was not a happy time.

Q: Looking at it at that time, the Germans have the reputation of not being the best of neighbors, I was wondering if looking at Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and particular problems around there, have they learned sort of to keep their hands off, one might say?

BINDENAGEL: The Germans' relations with the West were okay. The real complication was the front line on the other side. Poland was constantly an issue. The eastern border of Germany was not defined, because big portions of Poland were actually Germany and you had the Soviet Oblast of Kaliningrad, which was actually Königsberg, East Prussia. The wind blowing from the East was a constant undertone of doubts whether the Germans were trustworthy and good guys, whether they still believed in the borders of 1937 or the borders of 1945. There weren't any borders in 1945 because the Polish area was still under Soviet administration technically, as was, is, Kaliningrad. There was an unresolved issue about borders, coupled with the German expellee groups from Silesia and the Sudetenland living in Germany. They played a small role in the electorate, perhaps only two percent of the electorate, but when you have a narrow election two percent is a very important part. The question of whether Germany could be trusted or not focused less on the West and almost exclusively on the Polish border. It wasn't even their border, it was the East German border, but theoretically Germany was still Germany.

Q: Was there much in the way of a relationship between West Germany and East Germany?

BINDENAGEL: There was an extensive network, a very extensive relationship was built. West Germany even had a ministry for Inner-German Affairs. The West Germans paid for a lot of improvement of highways and infrastructure. They negotiated for the release of political prisoners, in which they bought freedom for tens of thousands of East Germans. Honecker's lawyer, Wolfgang Vogel, was an important player for both sides in that very unpleasant aspect of their relationship. They also had economic relationship. They tried to have official discussions and shortly after I left, in 1987, Honecker visited Bonn and was received as a foreign leader. He also visited his home in the Saarland, West Germany. So there was a relationship and they tried to ease the tensions of the Cold War.

Q: Were we encouraging them or were we just letting them, as far as this relationship is...?

BINDENAGEL: We were trying to restrain them occasionally. We felt that this heart of the evil empire really was the heart of the evil empire and we ought not to do too many good things for the official East Germans. We fought against increasing the vulnerability of Berlin. And their bilateral dialogue, particularly the social democratic direct dialog with the East Germany communist party was a concern to us. We were concerned, not what was happening in East Germany, but rather what effects a warm relationship might have on West German politics, especially on its role in NATO.

Q: You left there in '86 whither?

BINDENAGEL: I headed off to the State Department Operations Centewherl became a Senior Watch Officer.

Q: You were there from '86 until...?

BINDENAGEL: From '86 -'87. Then I became an American Political Science Association Congressional Fellow with Lee Hamilton for a year and then at the Canadian desk and then back to Germany.

Q: Let's talk about the Ops Center. Could you explain how the OpCenter worked and what you were doing?

BINDENAGEL: The Ops Center is also known as the Watch, was just that. We had three Senior Watch Officers and a team that rotated on two-day basis. Three 8-hour shifts would start off with an eight to four, four to midnight and midnight to eight o'clock shifts. Moving two days at each one of those and then two days off. When you stood watch, you dealt with problems or crises that occurred, especially at night. We handled phone connections for senior officers, deaths in families, hijackings and much more. When a Pan Am plane was hijacked in Pakistan, we had to provide the initial reporting and establish contacts between the pilot, the post and dozens of U.S. agencies until a task force was set up to deal with the crisis.

Of course, we saw a lot of sensitive messages being passed back and forth. At that time the Iran-Contra debate was going on and Ollie North was ordering operations which involved some special activities. Once he told us to recall and destroy some cabled message and months later the investigation into his activities sought it. With a bit of good fortune, we were able to find a copy for the investigators. Basically hours on the watch were consumed watching CNN, checking the wire service tickers - we had running tickers all the time - monitoring cable traffic from posts abroad, acting as telephone operator. We were always looking for issues that would alert the Secretary to events that he would have to deal with in the next day. We worked closely with the INR Watch to prepare the "Morning Summary," which was an overnight report for the Secretary.

Q: Any things hit you while you were there?

BINDENAGEL: The hijacking of Pan Am plane in Pakistan was a high moment, and dealing with some of the issues in Iran-Contra were also extremely interesting, if troubling.

Q: Were you feeling any sort of political pressure or were you sorof passing the hot potato on?

BINDENAGEL: We were passing hot potatoes, dealing with the issues only in the sense of holding them long enough to get them to the responsible people. We had no action responsibility other than to make sure that the connections are made.

Q: Something I didn't ask you about Germany that has just occurred to me. Did you get involved at all with the both the bombing in Libya and the aftermath of the nightclub in Berlin? Did that happen on your watch?

BINDENAGEL: Yes, the La Belle Disco bombing did take place in West Berlin, killing a few people. That incident was traced to Libya and was handled directly by West Berlin. I did later actually deal with the investigation in East Berlin when I was DCM and sought East German Interior Ministry cooperation and then later as chargé d'affaires in Bonn when the judge demanded our evidence, but not as the bombing occurred.

Q: What about the bombing in Libya, how was that viewed?

BINDENAGEL: The bombing of Libya was also on our watch. The reaction in Germany was two-fold. One, a horrible thing that we have done, how can you just bomb out of a blue like cowboys in the Wild West, and the second, was a stern reminder from the Germans to remember the "Stauffenberg" lesson, a reference to the failed Count Stauffenberg plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler. "If you're going to kill him, make it work," they told us. There was a lot of concern after the Libyan bombing about our own security in the Embassy. Several measures were taken to beef up the physical security, including the construction of checkpoints in the housing area and armed police patrols near the school. Before the bombing Washington did consult with the Germans by sending General Walters to brief them.

Q: When you left the Ops Center, you were Congressional Fellow from '87-'88. Who was Lee Hamilton?

BINDENAGEL: Lee Hamilton was the Congressional representative from the Ninth District in Indiana and was second ranking Member on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, as it was called at the time. I was American Political Science Association Congressional Fellow, which began with a two-month course at Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies, and then I joined Lee Hamilton's staff. The whole point of this was to learn how Congress worked. We had a range of assignments from constituent mail to preparations for meetings, for speeches and working with the HFAC Committee staff. In December 1987, Lee asked if I would work with Jed Johnson, the Executive Director of the Former Members of Congress to create a "Congressional Study Group on Germany." We drafted up some goals and objectives and Lee sent a "Dear colleagues" letter, inviting Members to join. We organized the first meeting of the Bundestag Agriculture Committee and the House Agriculture Committee and hosted a day and a-half meeting with Chairman Kika de la Garza and a German Bundestag delegation from the Agriculture committee. I took the group out to St. Louis where they visited Monsanto and to the University of California, Davis as well as other places. I enjoyed learning something about agriculture and the politics of agriculture. The fellowship culminated at the end of the year with a visit over the 4th of July to Congressman Hamilton's district where I could see how Congressman worked in his constituency. At that point my connections in the Operations Center helped as the USS Stark was attacked; I set up several calls through the Operations Center for the Congressman to be briefed on developments in preparation for a TV appearance.

Q: This is the American destroyer in the Persian Gulf attacked by alraqi plane, although we were sort of on the side of Iraq at the time.

BINDENAGEL: Right. Acting quickly, I got on the phone with the operations center. I was debriefed and was able to give Lee an update on the attack. We were later connected with the Near East Asia Bureau in the State Department and Lee was able to prepare for his public appearances. Lee was invited to join a morning talk show and speak on the Congressional view of the attack and the U.S. response. You can see the value of Foreign Service experience working with a Congressman and on a fast breaking issue. It was really a delightful year, and one that every Foreign Service Officer should have an opportunity to do.

Q: What did you get out of this exposure of Congressional view poinof foreign affairs, that you maybe carried over with you later on?

BINDENAGEL: The real value of being there was to see how the political interaction among their constituents' concerns and foreign policy. Working in the House of Representatives, we were really dealing directly with the constituency and relate the concerns of the constituency to foreign policy. Surprisingly, there were ways to communicate, to understand and to connect. Of course, working with Lee Hamilton who is a real professional both in foreign policy and as a Member of Congress, gave me a tremendous insight in how to communicate and to see the politics as it affects the policy.

Over the last 15 years since then, I've used and built on that experience to develop personal contacts with Members of Congress, especially in the Congressional Study Group on Germany, to encourage closer international cooperation with their districts. For instance, I have pointed out that foreign direct investments in their districts are not foreign but rather another constituency in their districts. Robert Wise, the representative from West Virginia (and now Governor of West Virginia) is a case in point. West Virginia has a large investment by a German company, BASF, and we arranged a Congressional visit to the BASF central headquarters in Mannheim, where he met with the CEO, talked to him about his West Virginia operations as well as trade, investment, and environmental issues. This chemical company is a "West Virginia" constituent and from that encounter, a year and a half ago, they've had several more meetings. The connection between the foreign policy and Germany was important when it becomes a constituent concern of this Congressman. Bob Wise has been active in foreign policy since then. I really learned a lot.

Q: Then in '88, where did you go?

BINDENAGEL: In '88 I went to Canadian desk for very short time, from summer of '88 till March of '89. There I was the Deputy and then as Acting Director of Canadian Affairs, where we worked on the Permanent Joint Board of Defense. It's a cooperative defense effort that had been started in World War II with the Canadians and covers a whole range of security issues. During that period the U.S. held elections and in February 1989 President Bush made his first visit as President to Canada. There were other meetings as well as for Secretary Shultz with his counterpart, Minister of External Affairs Joe Clark.

Q: What were defense issues?

BINDENAGEL: For the most part we concentrated on cooperative training exercises with the Canadian Navy, Canadian Land Forces. We went to Goose Bay to review NATO air force training up there. Of course, through process our good Canadian friends gave us a few history lessons, explaining the importance of the Revolutionary War in defining the Canadian identity, especially the U.S. invasion of Canada.

Q: You are talking about the 1776 war?

BINDENAGEL: Right, the 1776 war when we invaded them, and how we captured them and mistreated them and how after all they would never forget this historic role of the United States. I was well in-tune by the end of this assignment to the importance of our leading principles of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" from the Declaration of Independence and the differing Canadian Weltblich o "peace, order and good government" that comes from their Constitution. While both very democratic, the differences separate the two of us. One note of humor. When we had an Army tank maneuver exercise in New York, the Canadians protested because we had not notified them as required. They asked whether we were planning to invade then! A little overblown, but we were required to notify them because it was near their border but the point was political and respect was demanded.

Then we had another issue of rights of international passage under the ice cap under the North Pole, which we were testing because of the Soviet Union on the other side. We had submarines that could go under the cap, but the Canadians considered these waters Canadian national territory and demanded that we notify them and get their permission for passage. We refused to recognize the passage as Canadian territory, but we did work out a notification system. While we would tell the Canadians when the U.S. Navy was transiting, they would acknowledge the notification. We were not asking permission and they were not blocking passage. It was a reasonable accommodation. On the economic side at that point the Canadian Free Trade Agreement had been negotiated, there was an election in the fall of 1988 in Canada. After that election the new Government ratified the Canadian Free Trade Agreement and we began the implementation. That was in December and we began implementation in January 1989.

There were a lot of activities and a lot of very interesting issues. Probably the greatest number of issues with Canadians was demonstrated in the meetings with Minister of External Affairs Joe Clark and Secretary George Shultz. We had a briefing book that we had 50 or so different issues. It was a very complicated relationship, but when the Secretary got to the "Porcupine River Caribou Herd" migration across the Alaskan tundra, even the usually hard-headed Secretary had to chuckle. The image of porcupine caribou was a good one [laughter]. There were a lot of serious issues with Canada, and it is a very important relationship for us.

Q: On the Canadian desk, I hesitate to ask this question d we have a secret file or something, but do we have a secret file or something that says "In case Quebec becomes independent, this is what we do?" Or is this just one of these things... This is an issue that keeps coming up, and we know the sensitivity of the Canadians. Or is this something that you can't even talk about?

BINDENAGEL: During my time the Canadians had a debate on the Meech Lake Accord which was to resolve this double nation issue, and it failed by one vote from a Native Canadian. Our whole approach was to treat this sensitive question as a domestic Canadian issue, which we kept our hands off. Only they could decide their fate, and we wanted to respect their sovereignty. And no, we have no secret files, no preparations, no speculation as to what States might join or not join the U.S.

Q: We have a policy of no policy absolutely?

BINDENAGEL: We respect their sovereignty, and since they joined British North America in 1776 they are okay. [laughter]

Q: Did we find that there were attempts of Québécois to establish their own lines to the U.S.?

BINDENAGEL: Yes, the Québécois, as they like to call themselves, always thought that Québécois was more appropriate one...[laughter]

Q: I would think that Quebecker would be a pejorative term? I mean English it sounds that way.

BINDENAGEL: Sounds funny.

Q: But anyway.

BINDENAGEL: When the Quebec government had tried before to establish an office in Washington, the State Department told them: "No." They tried again during my time to have a trade office during my time and were told that it would not be appropriate; they were represented by their national government. They were very active culturally, and tried to establish cultural office connection. I don't know if that actually came to fruition. Again, I was made aware of the sensitivity of that issue, when I met with Jacques Pariseau, the opposition leader, who defended of Quebec independence. I had to explain what the meeting was about to calm unwarranted concerns. The explanation was no problem, it was appropriate, but the meeting was very sensitive.

Q: Were you getting this "Why don't you pay more attention to us?" type thing?

BINDENAGEL: We always got that sense that we were ignoring them. There was "Why can't we have not only Deputy Assistant Secretary in the State Department taking care of us? We need somebody in the White House, we need an Ambassador who can access the President on the daily basis and bring the issues of the IJC, the International Joint Commission that deals with the border issues directly to the President every day." Sometimes when we got really frustrated we would ask that they stop whining. But that's really all. They wanted, and deserved a lot of attention, They got it, but Canada never seized as much as attention in the U.S. as we did in Canada.

Q: Did you find any problems with the fact that sort of the Governors of the Provinces and the States? I mean there are all these connections on the border and all, that really bypass the State Department, between say Vermont and Quebec, or what have you, Dakotas and Saskatchewan, did this in true cause problems or where you just thankful that someone else was taking care of the problem?

BINDENAGEL: The relationship was so complicated and there were so many actors that it was very hard to track. What we have in the Embassy in Ottawa are representatives of almost all our Federal Agencies, they must number over 40. We had institutional arrangements we the International Joint Commission to deal with issues that had governors and provincial leaders engaged. The other divisive issue that we had at that time was Acid Rain Agreement. We picked and chose those issues that we could deal handle and put the rest of the issues into joint commissions where the U.S. governors played extremely important role. While there may have been tension at some times, most issues were too complicated that they were too much to take on. The relationship was just too complicated. Salmon wars, fishing rights over salmon on the West Coast, continue to the day, they were always out there. That fishing dispute is really a border dispute where our borders come in at an angle, if you draw the line out you find out that there is a disputed water with us, who gets what fish there. That one will be very hard to resolve.

Q: Fish wars have... John Quincy Adams was dealing with the fish wars.

BINDENAGEL: The Canadians had a confrontation with Portuguese fishermen off their coast and they had a couple of inspectors board a Portuguese ship (I think it was Portuguese), which took them back to Portugal! The Canadians did not think highly of that act of kidnaping and armed their patrol ships with 50 caliber machine guns for the first time. I recall that they actually did fire them once across the bow of a fishing ship, so there were other concerns.

Q: Was Mulroney the Prime Minister the whole time you where there?

BINDENAGEL: Yes, Mulroney was the Prime Minister.

Q: Did you have any feel for the difference between Bush and Mulroney and Reagan and Mulroney? I would have thought he got on very well with both of them.

BINDENAGEL: He did get on very well with both. When Mulroney came to Washington at one point he spoke to a joint session of Congress. He was delightful, funny, very pleasant and at the end of his speech he switched from his fluent English to fluent French, much to the consternation of the joint members of the Congress who were sitting there. At the end he said "You will pardon me for speaking in French but I wanted to speak to my constituencies in Louisiana and in Quebec." [laughter] I am not sure whether Louisiana Congressmen appreciated it, but there was laughter in the House Chambers.

Q: In 1989 you left for Germany?

BINDENAGEL: Right, but to the "other" (East) Germany. In 1989 I went to East Berlin. Ambassador Richard "Dick" Barkley, who had been my political counselor at Embassy Bonn asked if I would be his Deputy Chief of Mission. I was delighted. I had to leave the Canadian Desk early, but I Assistant Secretary Roz Ridgway approved and I was able to depart. We arrived in East Berlin on March 20, 1989.

Q: You stayed there how long?

BINDENAGEL: We left in November 1990, after German unification abolished the GDR and we closed our embassy. However, in March of 1989 the Communist Government of East Germany was still well entrenched, Erich Honecker was the Chairman of the Council of State (Staatsratsvorsitzender).

Soon after we arrived, I took my family to downtown East Berlin. My daughter, Annamarie, was eight years old at that time, and my son, Carl, was six. We went down to see the Berlin Wall from the eastern side of the Brandenburg Gate. Jean, my wife, my two kids and I were standing there trying to tell just what this Wall was. The Brandenburg Gate towered over the empty square Pariser Platz. The sun was coming out from behind the ubiquitous clouds; it was absolutely gorgeous day. My daughter spotted a group of people standing on risers on the western side of the wall, peering across the Brandenburg Gate and looking our way. I recall she said: "What are they doing?" And I replied: "They are looking at us, we are a curiosity, we are like prisoners behind a wall. And they look at us, they know people here are not free." Of course we were diplomats and we could leave, but East Germans weren't. The kids were fascinated with the idea that we were among the prisoners.

We joined Maria Magdalena church in our Pankow neighborhood just down the street from our home at Platanenstrasse 93. Shortly after we joined the parish, first communion was celebrated and there were six or seven kids taking their first communion. A couple of the children were our children's age and the four struck up a friendship. Our two asked the others how they felt about being prisoners. They explored the East Germans' reasons for attending church, which they learned was tolerated but discouraged by the government. The kids who were confirmed in the Christian Church were taking not only vow for their Christian beliefs but they were also taking a vow that would exclude them from high school, exclude them from good jobs, university and certain careers. Christians were discriminated against by the communist government, which would not let them go to higher education, unless for some other reason, they had other connections. Our children were becoming politically aware as they explored this "communist" life that their new friends had.

Our children also played with another group of East German neighborhood children, who were not in the church. They played together until the Father came home, discovered our children in his apartment and demanded to know whose children they were. When he found out they were Americans he was extremely nervous because he could lose his job or be imprisoned for contacts with Westerners. Our kids left and we did not see the other two children until about two years later when we were leaving. They were still in the neighborhood, but obviously the Father was very concerned about being accused of connections with Americans. Those penalties imposed by the communists had a chilling effect that left a strong impression on all of us. That was our introduction as a family to this place of the communist paradise.

In addition, in front of our house we had People's Policeman (Volkspolizist), who patrolled the block to check on our visitors. We also had a Schwarze Pumpe gas company man, who came into the house each day to check to see if the gas was working. Of course we recognized that the telephones were bugged and that we were occasionally being trailed. It wasn't funny, but it was strange. We tried to accommodate ourselves to be aware of this new security context and how it affected our lives. We had a cook and a couple of household staff, all of whom either reported to the East German State Security, the Stasi, or were informal co-workers of the secret police. We were well covered in every aspect.

Q: During this period events started to take over, but around that time when you arrived, the GDR was unchangeable, was it solid?

BINDENAGEL: That was the conventional wisdom. If the Soviet Union was the "Evil Empire," the GDR was its heart. Reagan may have made some new openings as he did in June 1987 when he challenged Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall, but the view that East Germany was evil was still potent. Nevertheless, between Reagan's confrontation and Gorbachev's Glasnost and Perestroika, there was something in the air. Gorbachev had proposed restructuring the Soviet economy, Perestroika, and creating more openness in the society, Glasnost. I recall he gave a speech at the UN General Assembly, I don't remember the date exactly, comparing himself to Franklin Roosevelt. He praised Franklin Roosevelt for the reforms that he had made during the Great Depression that saved capitalism, and Gorbachev envisioned himself doing the same for communism. He would make this great reform and the socialist state would continue, reformed but it would last forever. Well, those two policies were opposed adamantly by Erich Honecker, who believed quite the opposite. If you began this process you would never maintain control, Honecker maintained and he defied Gorbachev. This defiance was done at great risk because the GDR was totally dependent on Gorbachev; in true sense it was a satellite of the Soviet Union. East Germany had no political legitimacy from its people; it was dependent on the military support of the Russians.

Q: Let's talk about... There was an Embassy at this point. Who was the Ambassador, and where were you located and how did you operate?

BINDENAGEL: The Embassy was on Neuestatische Kirchstrasse, two blocks North and East from the Brandenburg Gate, just around the corner from the Soviet Embassy, which was on Unter den Linden in sight of the Brandenburg Gate. The American Ambassador was Richard Barkley, I was DCM and Jon Greenwald was the Political Counselor. Reno Harnish was the Economics Officer and was later replaced by Mike Mozur. We had those six Foreign Service Officers and were a very small operation. Mary Rose Brandt was the Consular Officer, Gerry Werner was the Public Affairs Officer.

Q: When you arrived there, how did we deal with the GDR government?

BINDENAGEL: The Ambassador met with the members of the Politburo on an irregular basis. Jon Greenwald in the Political Section met with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs America Section that dealt with relations with the U.S. Beyond that there was very little official contact. We dealt with the dissidents and the church and we had a person, Emre Lipping, who was in charge of that portfolio and attended church meetings and gatherings of dissidents. The GDR even had officials, including State Secretary Gysi, in charge of church affairs. However, for us the GDR remained a "closed" society with little possibility for contacts.

Q: Were there other, British and French Embassies doing some of the same things you were doing?

BINDENAGEL: Very much the same thing. The German Permanent Representative from West Germany was doing somewhat different things; they were more deeply engaged in trying to find out what the society was doing. They also had many more resources and access because they were spending a lot of money in GDR.

Q: During this time were we not trying to open up and spend more money, I mean, was this time almost a watching brief would you say?

BINDENAGEL: It was very much a watching brief. We had Leipzig fair, which was still our main bilateral activity. We did have a lot of commercial contacts with the East Germans. We had a congressional delegation that came in March shortly after I got there, headed by John LaFalce from Buffalo, New York. They had a good round of talks. We met with Egon Krenz, who was Honecker's deputy, Congressman LaFalce met with several bankers and other kinds of economic people, we had some consular issues but they were very individualistic. Politically, we had dialogue on CSCE because they were a part of that process. But otherwise, we were more interested in what they were doing domestically. How would Honecker react to Gorbachev's moves? The SED, communist party, was planning a party convention in 1990; we thought there would be perhaps a leadership change in GDR. After President Bush had come into office in January, we had gone through a policy review regarding East Germany. In our deliberations, Jon Greenwald proposed the basic theme: "If the GDR would to change their policy and leadership perhaps then we could make some kind of opening to them." What could we do? We could intensify our trade relations, we could be more actively engaged with them on CSCE." That was our thinking in spring of 1989. These policy reviews were called in Washington "status quo plus." We weren't talking about any initiatives, or any other new policies with the GDR.

Q: What was our view of Honecker?

BINDENAGEL: We really didn't like the East German communist leader Erich Honecker. Honecker sought an invitation to the United States and had sent one of his ideologists, Otto Reinhold to Washington in 1988 when I was on the Canadian Desk. Reinhold was followed by Herman Axen, his foreign policy guru. Honecker badly wanted to have a visit with us to gain some legitimacy for his regime. We frankly had policy debates over whether we wanted anything to do with them. We demanded that they rescind their "shot to kill" order at the Berlin Wall, and to abolish minimum currency exchange requirements so that there would be more free flow of people, and a whole series of other policies. The Washington Post came out in the spring of '89 and had an interview with Honecker, which was his effort to go to Washington. He had been to Paris, he had been to Bonn, he was going to Holland, so the crowning event of his life and the legitimacy, was to go to the U.S. We just weren't interested.

Q: What about getting out and around?

BINDENAGEL: Getting out and around was no problem for us. We were not under any restrictions for meeting people so Ambassador Barkley was out a lot, had plant visits and talked to local leaders and things. John Greenwald as well. As a traditional DCM, I stayed in Berlin most of the time myself running the operation, trying to give some coherence to what we were producing.

Q: What about life there? Shopping, and that sort of thing at that time? Meeting with the local people, shopkeepers, etc.

BINDENAGEL: East Berlin was a difficult place for American diplomats. In the first instance, the contact with East Germans was very limited. We had contact in our church and a few people from there are our veterinarian, a few people in the neighborhood who were curious but very leery, shopkeepers are all communists, there is no contact there. The shopping itself in the GDR was pretty abysmal, particularly since we had access to West Berlin. But living in East Berlin and trying to contact people in East Berlin and then going to Ku'dam in West Berlin, and seeing this opulence and this wonderful success story of western society, made it very difficult to go back. Our colleagues in West Berlin, who were in the "Occupation" housing, lived in rather large houses, had all kinds of creature comforts of home, and a very nice lifestyle. In some sense, they took on the attributes of those who were the wealthy cousins and we were the poor cousins, living in the poor section of Berlin. There was a tension that existed between the two missions. You could say that we were tainted by our association with the communists. I would argue, although I can't prove it, that assignment to East Berlin had a negative affect on people's assignments in the bureau and on their careers afterward. The tension was such that many of us preferred not to go to West Berlin, only for some specific "Western" shopping or dining need.

I met regularly in West Berlin with the Minister from the German Permanent Representation Office, Joerg von Studnitz, and our French and British counterparts. We shared our conversations and exchanged notes on a regular basis on the developing revolution in the GDR. We sensed that that was the most important contribution that we could make, was by living there and whatever contact, limited as it was that we had, it was still more than anyone else had, and we could make that contribution to judgements.

Q: Will you tell about developments? We're talking about with months while you were there?

BINDENAGEL: Right. The process of political deterioration began to accelerate at the time that we came. Not that there is any cause and effect, we just showed up. The first event that became for us significant was the May 7 local elections. They had community elections on that day. I was very curious of how this would work. I was invited the night before the election by Walter Andruczyn, who was visiting East Berlin. He had served in East Berlin before and he had invited me to meet Thomas Krueger, a young East German who had put together some people to do poll watching at various districts the next day during this communal election in Berlin. What the Krueger group wanted to do was to cover enough of the polls to enable them at the end of the day when the local polls closed to confirm the numbers given by the authorities. No one doubted the outcome for the GDR "National List." When the poll watchers finished collecting all these numbers and compared them with what the official results were in the newspaper the next day, trouble began. I thought it seemed rather reasonable democratic action, but this was a totalitarian system and challenging or checking on the government was a rather risky thing to do. But it was a fascinating night, listening to these stories to these young people.

I was so curious that the next day after church I said to my family: "Well let's go down to our polling place, and let's see what this election is all about." So we traipsed down to Blumenthalstrasse, the kindergarten that had been converted for the day into a polling place, walked in the door, Jean kind of looked around, kind of, "We're here, can we do this?" "Oh, sure:" I replied and we went inside. I took out my East German ID card and showed it to the person who was running the place. I said, "We're here, we're American diplomats, we live down the street, and we wanted to see how this election works. Can you take a couple of minutes and tell us?" They were quite shocked and surprised, and yet they were very friendly. There were three people sitting at the table and they said, "We have this book of registry, so when people come in and show us their ID card, and we check to see if they are on the registrar. Then we give them a ballot." Then the voters were to walk across the room to a table. As they walked across the room, they passed six or seven people sitting in front of them. Just sitting there. All you have to do is fold this ballot. On the ballot there was one list; there was nothing to check or anything, just the list. It was called the National List and had all the names of all parties, affiliations behind the individual candidates, but they had only one list. All you did was fold this, walk past these officials and drop it in the ballot box. Being a "fair" system, if you did not want to vote for somebody, you could go a little bit further, and turn left, and stop at a table. The table was private. It looked like they had taken an old door and cut it into three pieces so you could put it on the side so you could have a private vote and you could line through anybody you didn't like. And then fold up your ballot, drop it in the box, and walk out in front of the assembled panel. These people were, of course, all neighbors who knew the voters and would report you to the Stasi. I thought, this was a rather intimidating system, but fascinating. The next day the results were published. Not surprisingly, the national list received 98% of the vote. However, my new friends, the Thomas Krueger gang, announced that their tally didn't match the one of the government. It was only 85% or so in the districts they had watched, instead of 98%. Plenty to win, but not valid.

So began the process. Police came to visit them, they were harassed, some were arrested. They were not held in jail, but they were not free and this intimidation process began. They had challenged the GDR beyond the limits of toleration accepted by the GDR. The next step was for the GDR to just lay down the law. But then the events of May turned attention to China. Gorbachev visited China and he was going to talk about Glasnost and Perestroika in China where the democracy demonstrations on Tiananmen Square in Beijing had seized the world's attention. Gorbachev had to be taken in a back door to meet the Chinese leadership. Pictures flashed across the TV screen in the GDR as well, of how a communist government dealt with the demonstrators who went to the streets. By June 4, 1989 tanks rolled killing people, many were arrested. This Chinese repression of a "counterrevolution" obviously suited Honecker because the next day or a few days later he invited the Chinese Foreign Minister who was in Moscow to come to East Berlin. To send a very strong signal to the domestic population there: "If you guys fool around with us, you are counterrevolutionaries, we like the way Chinese treated their counterrevolutionaries." That threat became the discussion on the street of what was happening.

About the same time, there was another visitor to East Berlin. His name was Mengistu. He was from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. While he was in East Berlin there was a coup attempt against his government in Addis Ababa. It failed. He went back to Ethiopia and the message that the GDR released in June was:

"You know, this coup attempt against this communist leader failed because he had 150 East German Stasi security specialists. If any of you in the Central Committee decide me, I, Honecker, should not be your leader anymore, remember, I have Stasi, I have my state security people. Don't fool with me."

So there we had two examples of the budding revolutionary debate. I mean, hindsight is much clearer. At that time in fact I came back to Washington for a visit and had dinner with former Berlin Governing Mayor Eberhard Diepgen here in Washington at a German Embassy Officer's home. We talked about this very thing. He had been the mayor of West Berlin. He just lost the mayor's job in January to SPD leader Mr. [Walter] Momper, who was the West Berlin mayor in 1989-1990. We chatted about the situation in East Germany and he agreed that the impending crisis in East German was threatening.

In the summer Honecker went to the meeting of Warsaw Pact in Romania, got sick, and came back for medical treatment. The thought in the government was: "Okay, maybe we won't have to have a counterrevolutionary movement; maybe the threat will just go away." Honecker left Günter Mittag in charge. Günter Mittag was an old-line communist but he was "acting" so he didn't have the same kind of authority as Honecker. However, to keep the threat against the counterrevolutionaries strong, Honecker sent Egon Krenz, his likely successor to China to reinforce the message that the GDR would treat challenges to the SED the same way that the Chinese had on Tiananmen Square.

During that summer, one event captured the debate for us. The same East German protector of the communist ideology and who had been in Washington in 1988 clearing the way for a Honecker visit, Otto Reinhold, spoke to the counterrevolutionary issue on his August 1989 radio-show. On the radio-show he would normally give ideological announcements and arguments for debate. In August 1989, he proposed a rhetorical question addressing both Gorbachev's Perestroika and those who wished for West German-like economic reform (and prosperity) when he said: "What reason would a capitalist East Germany have to exist next to a capitalist West Germany?" The answer was easy. None, of course, and therefore Reinhold went on to argue that they would have to remain communist. However, his question was more penetrating than at first noticed. Well, if you frame a question like that, you can just stop with the 'none', because there is no reason for the GDR to exist if it were to be capitalist (and prosperous). Therefore the question became: "Well, should we be capitalist or not?" So Reinhold promoted that debate about the capitalist future of the GDR that became the center of attention.

Q: You talk about the center of attention. Were you finding through one source or another that East Germans were talking about this?

BINDENAGEL: This was not a national movement. Very few individuals dared to challenge the East German Authorities. Those that were, were the people like Thomas Krueger, and Ruth and Hans Misselwitz. Ruth Misselwitz was the Lutheran minister in the Pankow Lutheran church. Her husband had visited Washington in 1988 and I met him during his year-long exchange with the Lutheran Church. Their children and his wife were not allowed to leave the country and that deeply impressed me. They were brave enough to talk about the repression in the GDR. Ruth is one of the most impressive revolutionaries that I met during this period. As they moved through this debate, it was really only a small elite that was actively resisting. But the point was we were on the ground hearing that something was going on, and we wanted to know what how they would challenge the East German government. At the same time, obviously somewhere outside of where we were in our little world, the debate was what's happening in Eastern Europe, there's change, the Washington Post and Herald Tribune ran an editorial in August 1989, which stated the conventional wisdom. If the Soviet Union were to intervene anywhere to defend its interests it would be in the GDR. And they are willing to do act to defend their interests. That's what we believed, that's what we've been taught for all of our cold war experience and that was the framework. If the Soviets were to intervene then we would be facing a confrontation and such a confrontation, if you follow the cold war thinking, would lead to an uprising in the GDR, followed by the Soviet Union crushing the dissidents and then attacking the West. That was the worst case scenario, but that was the game plan for the World War III, that I could attest from my Army experience. That scenario was the context for the fledgling revolution in East Germany.

That revolution began with a few demonstrations that had also been a part of this anti-nuclear, anti-missile deployment protests in West Berlin. One major effort was undertaken by a Lutheran Pastor, Christian Fißler, from the Nikolai Church in Leipzig. Fißler had begun a protest movement, sanctioned by the GDR in the early 1980s, to fight the deployment of the U.S. neutron bomb back in 1978. He was only able to continue in this little circle with the encouragement or at least tacit support of GDR, which was given because Fißler's group was anti-Western. As the debate evolved through the deployment and withdrawal of the Neutron Bomb and then turned against the deployment of U.S. Pershing missiles. This little group also transformed and began to question the SS-4 Soviet short-range missiles in Germany as well as the SS-23. As the debates against the deployment the GDR reached out in 1989, Gorbachev had nearly four years of the new policy changes in the Soviet Union, Glasnost and Perestroika. The East German protest movement used Glasnost to protest without confrontation. Demonstrations at Nikolai Kirche in Leipzig became the focal point of demonstrations every Monday night to speak out for peace for freedom of travel guaranteed by the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. Every Monday night at six o'clock, at 5 o'clock they would have a vigil, which grew in intensity as the GDR arrested some of the protesters. The vigil added a plea for their release. After the vigil the protesters would march outside, careful to talk about renewal of the GDR, not revolution.

Q: While they were doing this were you all sort of taking soundings and including help from our intelligence sources, finding out what was going? I mean, did you have any feel for the ferment from intelligence source or from personal Embassy observations?

BINDENAGEL: Yes, we had a sense that much was changing. We had Embassy officers, secretaries and visitors in Leipzig to watch the demonstrations and to talk to the demonstrators. Imre Lipping was our man in Leipzig and he reported that the demonstrators were very serious. However, their theme was renewal of the GDR. They didn't want to talk about revolution because that would lead to accusations they were counter-revolutionaries and they would face certain arrest, even death as in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. The demonstrators told us that one Monday the husband would participate in the demonstration and his wife would stay at home with the children. The following week the wife would go to the demonstration and the husband stayed at home. The fear they felt was intense; they feared for their lives. This fear was real, although it was not a subject covered much in the press.

The demonstrations seemed to be peaceful, but the question was always when do the security forces move against them and crush them, because at that moment of truth there was only one historical example in East German history June 17, 1953 when Soviet tanks rolled and crushed a worker's uprising. A few hundred to few thousand people participated in the September 1989 Leipzig Monday night demonstrations. The focal point of political events swayed between Leipzig and Berlin where Honecker prepared for the 40th anniversary of the GDR. Soviet President Gorbachev was coming to Berlin on the 6th of October to celebrate East Germany's 40th anniversary. We assumed that Gorbachev would demand Honecker accept Glasnost and Perestroika or would not endorse Honecker as East Germany's leader, which would signal the beginning of change of leadership. We had this discussion in the Embassy, Jon Greenwald was looking at the party itself, and saying, "They know that Honecker's time is coming to an end, and he is opposed to Glasnost and Perestroika." Jon asked if Gorbachev would give him a nudge and make way for the next generation. Gorbachev wanted Hans Modrow to be his man because Modrow was close to Gorbachev and believed in Glasnost and Perestroika. Honecker knew this relationship was threatening to him and didn't want Modrow anywhere near Berlin. He kept him in Dresden as the SED leader there, away from the Central Committee and the Politburo. Honecker knew if Modrow were in the Politburo, Gorbachev would have his man in place to follow Honecker and proceed with the renewal of the GDR. This internal battle was very intense and all eyes turned to Gorbachev's visit as the determining event in the life of the GDR, which also reflected our view that East Germany was not legitimate; that it existed because the Soviets supported it.

The 40th anniversary of the GDR became the demarcation between continuation or renewal of the GDR and revolution. That summer young East Germans headed off on vacation to Hungary with the intent of never returning. The Hungarians had clipped the wire off the Iron Curtain in May, and by July or August there were several hundred GDR citizens in Hungary. Ambassador Barkley and I went to have coffee with Wolfgang Vogel at his modest lakeside cottage. Wolfgang Vogel was Honecker's lawyer and had negotiated spy exchanges. He had worked with Ambassador Barkley when I was in Bonn as one of Barkley's political officer. He was famous for the exchange of U-2 pilot Gary Powers, who was shot down over the Soviet Union, and for the freedom of Nathan Sharansky as well as dozens of other dissidents and spies. That August we asked him about the East Germans who were caught in Hungary. He understood that the Hungarians had signed back to the UN Convention on Refugees, which had meant that they would not return people fleeing from communism if they said they were refugees. This was significant because the Warsaw Pact required the Hungarians to return the fleeing East Germans. We reasoned that if Honecker's lawyer knew that this issue was there, he knew that his boss Honecker had a problem keeping his youth in country. The Hungarians did just what I would argue Gorbachev wanted them to do; they acted independently to support Glasnost and Perestroika. They could be more open and reformed, but still communist. They didn't need to fear these young people and could tweak Honecker's rejection of Glasnost. The Hungarian action had nothing to do with the West in my view, it had everything to do with Gorbachev and Glasnost and Perestroika. Although I must add that German Foreign Minister Genscher was astute and exploited the situation to get the East Germans out; the East Germans were immediately eligible for West German citizenship. In any case, the Hungarians let these young East Germans go and they arrived in Bergenland, Austria with some fanfare. The Hungarians obviously, with hindsight, underestimated what releasing these people would release in political fallout. They didn't make it clear that they were making a statement in support of Glasnost and against Honecker's recalcitrance, they just let these people go and signaled their support for freedom of travel.

Q: I take it Honecker at this point was sort of an anachronism with in the Block? He was the worst figure as far as people, he had no popularity...?

BINDENAGEL: That's right. He and the Czech leader were the two pro-Stalinist leaders still resisting Glasnost. They were the two stalwarts to Stalinism, and Gorbachev had to encourage them to go. The Hungarians led the way by doing accepting Glasnost and that had encouraged everybody. In the back of our minds we knew that the Poles had begun the revolution in 1980 with Solidarity. The East Germans, and there were million East Germans who had signed up to immigrate, started to pour over the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian borders. On October 3rd, just before the 40th anniversary the GDR closed their border. That is they had a visa requirement for Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The U.S. Embassy in East Berlin was immediately affected on the night of the 3rd of October. During the day 18 people were leaving the GDR and were turned back at the border because they didn't have visas. They didn't go home however, they arrived in Berlin and went to the Permanent Representation Office of West Germany seeking to emigrate. The West German Mission had been closed since July 1989 because over 100 refugees had sought the same route to freedom and it took my friend Joerg von Studnitz months to win exit visas for them. On October 3 these new group turned to the American Embassy. They arrived at the American Embassy late in the day, and knocked on the door. A consul came out to meet them and said: "What are you doing?" As he opened the door they rushed in and the moment was captured on television. There were five children under five and 13 adults. They told us that they wanted out of the GDR because they knew that after the 40th anniversary the security forces would crush them and they would never get out of East Germany. They feared that the American embassy was their only chance to flee after being turned back at the border. I reported to Ambassador Barkley and he immediately called Wolfgang Vogel to inform him that we had these people in the U.S. Embassy. He asked for some assistance and told Vogel that he thought it appropriate that they leave. Working with Mary Rose Brandt, the Consul General, we got their names and their identification, and Mary Rose Brandt took the names to Vogel's office in the Reilerstrasse. Vogel went through the process of getting approval from the Stasi and Honecker. The East Germans stayed overnight in the front hall outside the "hardline" we used for security. We went shopping for them to get some food and took care of them.

At the same time outside the Embassy and around in East Berlin were 60 or 70 TV crews preparing for 40th anniversary with nothing to do. We didn't think that they could see inside the building but we didn't know. In the morning there was a news report that there were these people in the Embassy.

Q: Whose news?

BINDENAGEL: German, but it didn't matter. It was a West Berlin news service. I think what happened there was a journalist inside. As I came down I recall a journalist sitting inside the lobby, who didn't say anything and left. The next day we had the spotlight of the world turned on us. Suddenly we had 200 people outside the Embassy trying to get in. The building itself was an old building, which was built in the 1880s. After the Second World War it had been the home of East German craftsman guild; we had taken it over in 1974 when we established diplomatic relations with East Germany. The front door was cut from a wooden frame in the center archway and it was very unstable. Although we had asked the State Department for money to replace it with something more stable, we had to live with the shaky portal. The refugees were between this wobbly door and the hard line security parameter, which they obviously could not pass. We had no choice but to keep them in the very front entry where this door could actually fall on them, if it came to a confrontation.

In the morning two hundred people converged on the embassy and stood outside our door. I went out in the late morning to Vogel's office and he gave me this pad of little pieces of paper with his signature on it, and name of each of the fleeing East Germans, which was their free pass to get out.

Then when I returned to the Embassy to give out the passes, the question became whether we could convince these people that this slip of paper was real. By about 3 o'clock in the afternoon or even earlier, the 200 people outside were getting restless, and they were right up against the building. As DCM, I took one of the most difficult decisions and called the East German Foreign Office and I said, "We need to maintain the access to the building, could you have the demonstrators move on the other side of the street? We don't want you to disperse them, it's fine that they demonstrate, but we need access, we can't get access." I knew the danger of that decision when they loved that idea that the Americans asked for the Volkspolizei to move against East Germans. They ordered in the Volkspolizei to come and force the 200 people back across the street, but still in front of the embassy. As the "Vopos [German guards]" were moving the crowd, a woman sat down on the sidewalk with her kids. The Vopos returned for her, picked her up and put her on the back of a police truck. The whole scene was eerily reminiscent of the Nazis and the transports during the Holocaust. The entire event was filmed by TV crews and was shown immediately on television, including CNN. I was inside the chancery building so I couldn't see what was going on outside, nor was I watching television so I couldn't see what was showing on television, but the TV crews covered all angles. We still had the eighteen fleeing Germans to set free with their Vogel exit passes and could not open the doors without expecting a rush from the still assembled demonstrators across the street. About 4 o'clock, I decided that we had to close the embassy for the day. I told Ambassador Barkley: "What we really need to do is close the Embassy and people would perhaps go home so we could get these 18 people out." Well, the word that we were closing reached the demonstrators outside of the building and also the television crews, which reported immediately and surprised the State Department. Jim Dobbins, the European Bureau Deputy Assistant Secretary called before I could get from the front door to my office. He was outraged and irate. Apparently, he had just heard it from the Secretary's office and they were yelling at him, and he was yelling at me. They assumed that we were closing the embassy permanently, as the West Germans had done earlier and to do so needed a decision by the State Department. I explained dangers of the door, the crowd of demonstrators seeking to force their way into the embassy and tried to reassure him. I said: "Jim, it's 4 o'clock, we'll be open tomorrow, we're not closing like the West German mission, we just need to provide for the safety of these people we are helping to flee East Germany..." He was still not happy, but given assurance that we were just closing early for the day and not permanently shutting, he reluctantly accepted my report. We wanted to maintain an open Embassy and had no argument with Washington. Ambassador Barkley also went back to Vogel and asked him to take into consideration any of the demonstrators who also applied for exit visas and asked that they be treated favorably. Vogel gave us assurances that the message would be delivered and told Barkley that he had already identified the woman and children, who were loaded on the police truck to get them exit visas. After we closed for the day, we were able to let the East Germans out without incident as they made their way to West Berlin and freedom. That facilitation was the kind of role we could play in this revolution.

Q: When you say you got them out, what did you do?

BINDENAGEL: We just opened the door, they had decide for themselves to walk out on their own. We were not going to force anybody out. We had to convince them that what we had done was legitimate. Wolfgang Vogel called and he talked directly to them, explaining that they had to believe in this piece of paper and that voice on the phone (Vogel's) had negotiated a free passage for themselves and their husbands and wives.

Q: Did somebody go with them to see if they got out?

BINDENAGEL: No, we didn't, but we had no feedback; they either left or they were happy. However, for us the issue was not to repeat an earlier incident in the same embassy when a fleeing East German was turned away and immediately arrested by the East German police. Not repeating that nightmare was always the question for us. We would not expel people from the Embassy, nor could we give them asylum nor could we guarantee their immigration. We could only act as a facilitator between them and the GDR government, in this case with Wolfgang Vogel. We had found Wolfgang Vogel over the many years we dealt with him a very honest, straightforward man, even if he was dealing with the devil as Erich Honecker's lawyer. Vogel was still a respected person.

Q: And they got out?

BINDENAGEL: They got out. I know some of them got out and I assumthe rest of them did too.

Q: Then what happened?

BINDENAGEL: By then we were already noticing that the revolution was like a video flashing before our eyes, all the demonstrations and activities had been set on fast forward and the revolution was going 24 hours a day. It became very hard for us to keep up with all of these events that kept occurring. The next big event was the Fortieth Anniversary of the German Democratic Republic when Honecker would receive Soviet President Gorbachev in East Berlin. Barkley was invited to a State Dinner for Gorbachev and other communist dignitaries like Nicaraguan Daniel Ortega and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. The communists all came. Honecker had a torchlight parade - Fackelzug - that evening on the 7th. The embassy staff was in the Embassy and gathered there in the Political Section with Political Counselor Jon Greenwald. On the street the Free Democratic East German Youth (FDJ), wearing their blue shirts and carrying torches, marched in a torch lightparade. Like Hitler's Jugend, the FDJ marched by the Brandenburg gate. They marched around the Embassy, beginning at their assembly point behind the Embassy at the Metropole Hotel. Once their torches were lit, they marched in front of the Embassy turned left and marched down Unter den Linden where Honecker was standing on risers in front of the Kronprinzenpalais. Honecker was glassy-eyed, kind of aged, with his almost mechanical arm waving at them. The FDJ looked happy and cheerful as they marched. Whether they were acting or really having fun, it was hard to tell. The torches were impressive and it looked like there were hundreds of thousands of them. Actually, maybe ten thousand that were marching around but in a circle repeatedly around the U.S. Embassy. What was terror under Hitler seemed to be a farce under Honecker; the Fackelzug evoked mixed emotions.

The mood in East Berlin that night was very eerie, and it was at that evening that Honecker and Gorbachev met. Even the message that came out of that meeting was a riddle. We understood that Gorbachev had said to Honecker: "Those who come too late will be punished by history." What does this mean? We could only assume that it meant that either Honecker changed and took Glasnost and Perestroika, or he would be punished and be over. Gorbachev then went into the streets and had some interviews that were shown on television. In theory these were real East Germans talking to him, I doubted it. The questions Gorbachev was asked about the problems in the GDR. His comment that he wished the Soviets had East German difficulties later appeared on television, so I'm sure it was all staged. His message was delivered and he left.

The minute he left that evening on 7th of October there was a demonstration at the Gethsemane Church, which was between my house and the Embassy. As I drove home that evening about 8 o'clock, the demonstrators blocked the street. The church is one block back from the Schillinghauserallee and the demonstrators, who were numbered thousands had poured out into that street. I stopped, because I couldn't get through, rolled down my window and asked what was going on. As I chatted with some of these demonstrators, I learned of their fears of a crackdown by the East Germans now that Gorbachev was gone. After they moved aside, I drove home.

During that night the people's police moved against these demonstrators, they had trucks with big shovels in the front, they had dogs, they arrested about a thousand people. They took them to various staging areas just as the East Germans thought it would happen. They were interrogated, they were mistreated, no one was killed, but the stage was set. People understood that the crunch was coming. This was now the time for the security forces to confront the demonstrators and take the Chinese solution. So tensions rose dramatically.

The previous Sunday at our church, Maria Magdalena in Pankow, the priest at the end of the service said there would be gathering of the members of the parish to talk about the debate over the "renewal of the GDR," code words for what was to become the revolution. After that Saturday night, the 7th of October events could not be contained even with Catholic Church discussions for peaceful action of renewal. On the 8th of October I took my family to church. At the end of that church service the pastor said, "The mass has ended and you can go, but a member of the parish would like to read a letter." There had been a discussion out in the church circles that they needed to take action (Catholics, unlike the Lutherans, were not politically active in the GDR). Writing a letter seemed to be a reasonable, not provocative thing to do. No one left the church. This parishioner got up and in front of the church and said: "We met, we talked about the renewal of our country and what we needed to do. We decided we would write this letter to head of the People's Chamber, Volkskammer, the parliament. They are supposed to be representing us. We wrote this letter. 'Dear Mr. Sinderman...'" He went on and said something like, "We demand the separation of the SED, the East German Communist Party, from the government, we demand SED out of our schools, we demand the right to pursue our religion." I was thinking: "This is like St. Paul's Cathedral in Frankfurt in 1848. This is serious. This man is declaring himself and anybody who signs this as an enemy of the East Germans. He brought the letter to the back of the church and he said, "I don't want any scribbling, I want to be able to read your name and address." A lot of people, but not everyone, signed it. Then they went outside to the courtyard around the church and now they didn't know what to do. They knew they would be reported on by their friends and neighbors and expected visits by the Stasi. Slowly they got their courage and they walked outside of their church. And nothing happened to them.

On Monday night, October 9, 1989 there were protest vigils at the Gethsemane Church in Berlin, and as always in Leipzig and Dresden as well as other places around the country. The vigil at the Gethsemane Church was one at the same church that had been attacked by the police on Saturday night. The Maria Magdalena parishioner went to the Gethsemane Church. I'm told that he got up and said, "We are with you." He was a Catholic and Catholics were renown for not being political at all and for tolerating all, while the Protestants had fought for their role in the society to some degree of success or not. He said, "We join with you in this effort."

Such vigils after October 7, and reports like this, whether this report was totally accurate or not, signaled the change from renewal to revolution, although honestly we did not yet see what would come out of this mess. There was unity among the dissidents after the attacks by the police on October 7 as well as the sense that confrontation was coming and would end in a very unpleasant way. There seemed to be no alternative, and the dissidents had to stick to what they believed in. On Monday, the focus turned to Leipzig. The demonstration in Leipzig on October 9, 1989 was the largest. In the month of September the numbers went from a few thousand, to tens of thousands, to hundreds of thousands. On October 9th we really feared that now there would be a confrontation. The six leading figures from the community met in the afternoon, among them were Kurt Mazur, the director of the Gewandhaus Orchestra, who currently today is the director of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. Kurt Mazur, the SED East German Secretary for Leipzig, a cabaretist, a couple of communists and police representatives set down at a table to discuss what they could do. They really didn't have authority from Berlin to do anything because they had to get from Berlin permission to prevent the demonstration. However, if the situation got out of hand the Volkspolizei would intervene and Honecker's counter-revolutionaries would be put down first in Leipzig on October 9th. The risks confrontation were known knew already on October 3rd, when the GDR imposed a visa requirement on East Germans traveling to Czechoslovakia or Hungary. The SED was greatly embarrassed by the trainload of East German "refugees," who had been released from the West German Embassy in Prague. The Honecker regime demanded that the train pass through East Germany and the Germans get papers from the GDR as they went to Hof in West Germany. The train was blocked in Dresden and there had been a confrontation in Dresden at the train station. Police used tear gas and clubs to clear the tracks to move away other East Germans wanting to get on the train. All sides were very much on a verge of a violent confrontation.

The six men gathered in Leipzig on the afternoon of October 9 decided they needed to act. Kurt Mazur agreed to make a statement, which he would tape on a little cassette and would allow it to be played on the radio. The others would not stop it from being played. What is still not clear in my mind, because we were not there, was whether or not police agreed, tolerated, or simply ignored the plan to broadcast the Mazur message calling for no violence. The tape was played shortly before the Nikolaikirche vigil that evening. The tape basically said "demonstrate, no violence." Unstated was "the police will not do violence against you." As a result a huge demonstration occurred with perhaps one hundred and fifty thousand people, who marched around the center ring of Leipzig. There was no serious, violent confrontation, although there were some isolated confrontations on the fringes.

Then the crises moved from the street back to the SED and the Central Committee and back into the Politburo. That week Honecker demanded that the counter-revolutionary acts had to cease. The next week in Leipzig the demonstration numbers doubled and two days later, on Wednesday the 18th, Honecker was deposed.

At that point the focus was totally on the Politburo. Egon Krenz took over from Honecker, who was deposed. I was in my office speaking with a journalist from the Wall Street Journal when I received the call that Honecker was deposed. I noted the change to the journalist, who reported it without attribution. Ambassador Barkley was at the barber and I reached him during his haircut. We hurriedly tried to determine the meaning of the change in the Politburo.

Egon Krenz we noted did not fire all members of the Honecker Politburo, he got rid of only half of them. We determined that he already immediately didn't have any credibility with the man in the street. Then the focus began in that Politburo to seek to establish legitimacy and get the people with them. They were nervous about the demonstrations, dissident activity and so many youth escaping their paradise. We as well as they were focused on how the SED would address the concerns of the people out on the street who wanted the freedom to travel. The idea created by the Politburo was to revise the travel law allowing more travel with the hope that changes would take care of the question of the refugees and so forth. On the 6th of November, the GDR announced a revised travel law in their newspaper, Neues Deutschland. At the same time the Premier, their head of government, Willie Stoff, resigned, and became acting, interim Premier.

Ambassador Barkley came into the Embassy briefing that morning and asked what was going on. It seemed that he couldn't get to the embassy because there were demonstrations. He wanted to know what was going on. It was a fascinating staff meeting. Jon Greenwald and I were already chatting and Jon reported that the SED had changed the travel law, and that they had really liberalized the travel regime. He was certain they were trying to make travel a reality. We set out to find out what the demonstrations were about during the day. We were surprised to see that the people rejected the changes to the travel law as too little, too late. The dissidents were emboldened by what they had achieved. They had rid the GDR of Honecker; however, they now had this weak guy Krenz, whose government moved to change the travel law but they didn't like it. They wanted more. This of course caused panic in the SED and the Politburo met again on the 9th. It was the day to consider among other things more changes to the travel law.

That afternoon I went out to Aspen Institute in West Berlin for a reception, in honor of Hildegard Boucsein, who David Anderson had been chosen as his deputy director. David was a retired Foreign Service Officer, and former U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia. He hosted this reception for his deputy, and everyone came. There were mayors of East Berlin, West Berlin, there were all the military commanders from the West, all the political leaders. It was clear later to all of us that nobody had an inkling of what was about to occur that evening. At the end of the reception Wolfgang Vogel asked if I could give him a ride downtown to his car which was in central Berlin, so I said "Of course." We drove together to the Ku'dam and on our way to get his car he told me about the GDR lawyers collegium. They had met that day and recommended to the Politburo changes to the travel law that would resolve this confrontation and help get the process back on track. I dropped him off on the Invalidenstrasse, where he told me later he had gone across there in 1961 and saw Soviet tanks stationed as the Berlin Wall was built. On November 9, 1989 he had crossed to see Trabants lined up and demonstrators already gathering.

Q: Trabants being?

BINDENAGEL: The little East German car, two-cycled car made of plasticized pressed wood, with a little lawn-mower-like engine that spewed out a mixture of gasoline and oil. It was the symbol of the economy. It worked but you wouldn't want to have one. I went back into the Embassy with my hot news to find Jon Greenwald and his crew excited. They just heard an announcement by East German [Guenther] Schabowski, who had said something like "If you want to go to the West, you get the visa and you can go to the West. If you want to immigrate, the GDR will set up a new office to process immigration immediately." Jon said: "This announcement is unbelievable as well as the changes from the last couple of days." Jon sent Imre Lipping, a political officer, out to find out the text of the Schabowski announcement at the press center. He sent Heather Troutman, another political officer, out to Checkpoint Charlie to see what was happening. In the next hour or two we watched the second broadcast of this statement by Schabowski on the eight o'clock West German news, Tagesspiegel. Jon got the text and sent a cable immediately with the text. We called the Operations Center and the White House Situation Room to try to make sure they got the cable. I talked to Harry Gilmore who was the U.S. Minister in West Berlin and basically said "Harry, looks like you are going to have a lot of visitors soon, but we are not sure what it looks like, probably tomorrow or the next day when they start issuing visas."

As I drove up Schillinghauserallee in East Berlin to Bornholmerstrasse, which is a checkpoint across the Berlin Wall where my children went from East Berlin to school in West Berlin, I saw Trabant automobiles parked haphazardly around the streets and a group of people standing in front of the gate. I heard them saying something, but I couldn't understand exactly what it was they were yelling. I decided that I could watch them on television. I saw on the other side of the Wall a television crew with its lights on. I thought I could probably see this on television and besides I needed to get to a telephone. As soon as I arrived home around 10:00 pm, I got on the telephone and obviously made noise as I turned on the television. Jean, my wife, came in and said, "What are you doing?" I told her that something was going on at the Wall and we had to find out what was going on. She was concerned that our kids were sleeping, but I told her we had to do this as the Berlin Wall was being besieged. I called Ambassador Barkley and told him to turn on his television. He was incredulous and I told him he would not believe what's happening. I called Harry Gilmore to revise my earlier statements. I said, "Harry, remember I told you that you would be seeing lots of visitors maybe in the next few days. Well, they might be tonight. It looks like things are going to break loose, we don't know how it will happen."

We watched the TV, we saw those first people go through the Wall. We saw the lights come on in the neighborhood, we spent several hours talking, coordinating, it seemed to be going peacefully. I got a couple of hours of sleep, woke up my kids because they had to go to school. I put them in the car with Annamarie, my daughter, in the car with two other kids with some trepidation. I decided to drive behind them in my personal car to the same Bornholmerstrasse checkpoint. When we arrived, there were people everywhere at seven o'clock in the morning. There were people going back and forth, and yet they were very nice. They saw the red diplomatic license plate that indicated a diplomatic car that carried Annamarie, they moved aside and let her through. As she drove off through the Bornholmerstrasse into West Berlin, I said to myself: "Well, there she goes. Will I see her again? What's going on here?"

Shortly afterward, the GDR announced that their visa requirement, which had not been imposed overnight, would be required as of eight o'clock in the morning. I stayed at the checkpoint watching people coming back and forth. About 20 minutes to eight, there was a huge influx of people coming down the street to try to get across into West Berlin before the eight o'clock deadline for visas. When eight o'clock came the people were still everywhere, and in order to avoid a confrontation, the visa requirement time was moved to noon.

I went to the office, went through all of the activities we were doing. At noon the deadline was moved to Monday, and for us, the Berlin Wall had, as we had reported earlier, become irrelevant. The Wall had not only become irrelevant, the East German government had become irrelevant. They lost the authority of government to do basic things like issue visas. They had no control over that crucial aspect of their authority. The Soviets didn't intervene. We thought they would do something. They were clearly taken by surprise as East German government was taken by surprise what had occurred.

But that wasn't the end of the story. For weeks I tried to figure out who gave the order, why did they do this? We asked guards, we asked individuals, nobody had seemed to have given an order. I had been at Bornholmerstrasse, a checkpoint that was on a bridge over the S-Bahn train tracks and it had two or three police barracks in it. Driving across the checkpoint, I had seen that these barracks were filled with soldiers with rifles. I'd seen fire-hoses laid out next to these barracks in preparation to spray against people. The hoses were used on people as we saw on television at the Brandenburg Gate. I couldn't figure out what was happening. A couple of months later, Jean and I were over having coffee with some of the people from the church where we were, and we were talking about his story. One of them got up and said, "Would you like to know what happened?" I said, "Of course, I want to know, I can't figure this out." This person went and got his East German identification card, which is a billfold-like picture passport. I opened it up and on one side there is a picture and on the other side is his name and date of birth. On the picture the guard at Bornholmerstrasse, where this person had been that night, had stamped across the picture an exit visa, making the ID invalid. He was thrown out! They expelled the first hundred or so people who were standing there that I had seen there that night. They threw them out and were intending to close the gate area to avoid a confrontation. Getting rid of the first demonstrators by expulsion was an expedient solution. But what went wrong?

What went wrong was on the other side of the street when they got through the gate was this guy with the camera. The camera team was from Spiegel Television I learned later, in fact several years later in Hamburg. I was telling the same story when Steven Aust of Spiegel stopped me before I said what I have just said and told me, "Would you like to know what happened," and I said "Yes." He told the same story. His TV crew was waiting on the other side, they filmed these people, they didn't ask if they were expelled, they just filmed them. But then they went back after having collected these films and interviewed the guards and some of the people and had found that these people were indeed expelled.

The beauty of the multi-media world that we live in, the only thing that was in public domain was all these people were free. That's why all the lights came on in the neighborhood, because they saw on television all these people were going and they got up and took the only chance they had for freedom. They knew the GDR would not give them visas, and decided to go on their own. when the visa requirement gave them the window. They poured into West Berlin, thinking it was over, that was the only chance they were getting. People were driving from miles outside Berlin to get there in time to go across because they thought it was the only chance in their life they would have to go to Berlin. And it was because the television only reported what they had seen and not the facts, and good that they didn't in this case.[Note: I would like to add my written recollections on the night the Berlin Wall fell, as contained in a speech I delivered at the University of Notre Dame on the Tenth Anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall.]

The Fall of the Berlin Wall, Heroes of Bornholmerstrasse November 9, 1989
The Birth of the Berlin Republic

A speech by Ambassador J.D. Bindenageformer Deputy U.S. Ambassador to the German Democratic Republic

Thank you, Professor Wegs, for the invitation to speak at the Nanovic Center for European Affairs. It is a rare pleasure for a practitioner of diplomacy to step back from the intense pressure of instant analysis and reflect on some of the implications of today's politics on the ideas that shape our lives.

The major conflict of ideas that has shaped my career was the East-West confrontation between capitalism and communism. In fact, I have spent a majority of my professional career defending freedom from the communist threat. The symbolic vortex of that conflict was at the Fulda Gap in Germany, where a million soldiers from NATO were lined up against a million soldiers from the Warsaw Pact ready to destroy the world. I myself was an infantry officer in Wuerzburg, Germany, near the Fulda Gap, this main Soviet invasion route across Central Europe.

Recently, a friend of mine, Major General Bruce Scott, recounted his briefing to newly commissioned army officers in this post-cold war world. General Scott was somewhat uncertain whether these new officers knew about the significance of the Fulda Gap, or even whether they knew if the Fulda Gap existed. When he voiced his concern in his briefing, a young lieutenant responded that he had just returned from a visit to Fulda, Germany, where they had built a new shopping center and he could assure the General that there was a Gap there. He had shopped there himself. How times have changed.

The division of Germany, Europe and the world into two fundamentally opposed ideologies prepared to destroy the world seems so distant, but the fear-filled emotion of the division of Europe in the Cold War has left lasting legacy for us. The division of Berlin, symbolized by the Berlin Wall, was for us a deeply terrorizing reminder of man's inhumanity to man.

During the first year of the Berlin Wall more than 50 people died trying to escape the communist paradise. On August 17, 1962, 18-year-old East Berliner Peter Fechter tried to escape near Checkpoint Charlie. As he climbed the Wall, his own East German border guards shot him. For hours he lay helpless and unattended at the foot of the Berlin Wall while he bled to death. The worldwide rejoicing at the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989 was easily understood everywhere as an end to this affront to the dignity of human beings everywhere. Throughout its 28-year existence, the Berlin Wall divided, but did not conquer the spirit of the Germans in the German Democratic Republic. The end of the Berlin Wall brought a new, reborn Germanthe Berlin Republidedicated to human dignity, founded in democratic institutions of the Bonn Republic and the democratic revolution in East Germany.

I was the deputy American ambassador in East Berlin when the Berlin Wall was breached. Later I was country director for Germany in the State Department and then deputy and acting American Ambassador in the Berlin Republic. The question most asked over the past decade was and is; "What is the Berlin Republic?" The following question was inevitably; "What does this new Germany, the Berlin Republic, mean to the United States?"

Although the revolution of 1989 was the last act in the cold war, no hot war ensued. Now the Berlin Republic has begun to take its rightful place in Europe; recently Chancellor Schroeder described it as a major European power. Germany has undoubtedly become a major European power deploying its military forces in combat alongside its NATO allies for the first time since World War II and modernizing its economy to compete globally. I would like to explore with you today my observations on the Berlin Republic and its implications for German-American relations.

The future of our relations with Germany depends on our shared values, our shared interests and our common solutions to issues in European security, economic reform and global issues.

Founding Myths of the Berlin Republic

In order to analyze these issues, I would like to turn to some of the founding myths of the Berlin Republic.

The political culture inherited by the Berlin Republic is one of continuity and discontinuity. The Federal Republic's Basic law, created fifty years ago, embodies the country's continuity in democratic institutions from the Bonn Republic. The Democratic Revolution of 1989 led to the democratic government in 1990 that ended the German Democratic Republic and swept away most of the East German institutions political, social and economic only the political party of the East, the re-christened Socialist Unity Party, now the Party of Democratic Socialism, has remained.

The common commitment to core values of freedom, as demonstrated by the 1989 Revolutionary movement decrying the GDR Travel Law and the respect for human dignity, in remembrance of those who died in the Holocaust, embodied in Article I of the Basic Law and captured in the motto "Nie Wieder Auschwitz" unite the halves of the formerly divided country.

Democratic institutions legitimized by popular sovereignty in the March 18, 1990 election in the GDR that gave a mandate for German unity and in the September, 1998 election in the Berlin Republic that defeated a sitting government for the first time in contemporary German history.

Belief in the Social Market Economy that formed the basis for the transfer of wealth, at an annual rate of \$100 billion per year, from the western to the eastern states to fund unfunded social security, unemployment compensation, retraining programs and infrastructure.

Shared History with the United States

The United States shares with the Berlin Republic common commitments to freedom, the respect for human dignity, democratic institutions and belief in the market economy. We also share contemporary history.

Beginning with Secretary of State James F. Byrnes Speech of Hope in Stuttgart in 1946 which offered Germany a place in the community of nations again, the United States stood up to defend Berlin from Soviet attack beginning with the Berlin Airlift in 1948. On June 17, 1953 the East Germans rebelled against their Soviet occupiers and their effort for freedom was brutally crushed. After the Berlin Wall was built in 1961, it became a symbol for our troubled times. President John F. Kennedy won our hearts and those of the Germans when he said that free men everywhere would be proud to say that they were "Berliner." For ten years we negotiated with the Soviets to create stability in Berlin and Germany, eventually signing the Quadripartite Agreement in 1972. In the 1980s we deployed Pershing missiles to defend Germany and Europe against the Soviet SS-20 rockets that were aimed at Germany. By 1987 President Reagan called on President Gorbachev, in the spirit of Glasnost and Perestroika to "Tear down this Wall." Just two years later the Germans in the GDR did just that in the Democratic Revolution of 1989. Americans and Germans shared this history of Berlin and the fight for freedom.

We also lived up to our promises. It was American support for German unification that was the key element in completing the East German's peaceful, democratic revolution. We negotiated the 2+4 Agreement with the two Germanies and "Victorious Powers" of the Second World War, and on October 3, 1990 helped to bring the three parts of Germany together - the Federal Republic's forty-year-old democracy, the freedom-seeking East Germans and Berlin - to create a peaceful, democratic Germany in the heart of Europe. The Berlin Republic was born. And with the new Berlin Republic has come an enlarged NATO and many economic challenges; its new members can hope to enjoy some of the same freedom, peace and prosperity found in the Berlin Republic today.

The Heroes of Bornholmerstrass November 9, 1989

Let me share with you one anecdote that captures the spirit of freedom on the 1989 Revolution. I was a fortunate eyewitness when the Berlin Wall came tumbling down (Ich war dabei) twenty-eight years after the East German leader Walter Ulbricht erected this hated symbol of communism and division. I was the deputy American ambassador in East Berlin reporting on that democratic revolution that would bring down the Berlin Wall, help end the cold war and create a new order, in which Germany emerged once again united, sovereign and strong.

Throughout the year 1989, dramatic events stirred a new sense of freedom in the world and challenged the cold war. Soviet President Gorbachev began his Glasnost and Perestroika experiment. Students in China demonstrated for democracy on Tiananmen Square and were brutally crushed by communist tanks. In the two Germanies 2 million soldiers still stood face-to-face across the Berlin Wall ready for war.

On the night of November 9, 1989, the entire world held its breath waiting for the Soviet tanks to roll and crush the German revolutionaries as they had done in 1953. Although the Soviet tanks did not roll out, revolution has changed our world.

The United States throughout the Cold War preached self-determination in an effort to promote democracy movements and stationed millions of American soldiers in West Germany to deter a communist attack. East Europeans had repeatedly tried and failed to find freedom and break the yoke of communist rule. Despite failed attempts in East Germany in 1953, in Hungary in 1956, in Czechoslovakia in 1968, and in Poland in 1980, in the summer of 1989 the Central Europeans tried again.

At the American Embassy in East Berlin, we knew that the Red Army's response with its million Soviet and East German soldiers deployed along the German-German border would determine the success or failure of this new democratic revolution. A Washington Post editorial in August that year reminded us that if the Soviet Union intervened anywhere in Europe to protect its interests, it would do so in East Germany.

Nevertheless, some East Germans wanted their freedom and sovereignty and were willing to demand some of their rights guaranteed in the Helsinki Final Act signed by their communist leader, Erich Honecker. These brave souls sought freedom to travel and abolishing the East German travel law became the symbolic cry for political freedom during their revolution. They knew the words of President John Kennedy, that free men everywhere would be proud to call themselves Berliners, and they knew President Ronald Reagan's challenge to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall. They were testing that strong bond of common destiny in our commitment to the dignity of man, the rule of law, and freedom.

Events in the revolution were breathtaking. Tens of thousands of GDR citizens had fled to the West and a million more were seeking to emigrate. Demonstrations by thousands of demonstrators in the streets of Leipzig, Dresden and Berlin threatened the government and by October 18 had led to the ouster of German Communist leader Erich Honecker. The new GDR leader, Egon Krenz, was also a communist and desperately needed to establish control of the government and to win support of the people. We knew events could unravel the stability of the cold war and our embassy reported on November 6 that the GDR Politburo was changing the despised Travel Law and predicted hopefully that if such changes continued, the Berlin Wall would become "irrelevant."

Based on our embassy's reporting, President George Bush was told in his November 9 morning briefing by his intelligence briefer, that the GDR had opened possibilities for freer travel for its citizens and that the Berlin Wall might as a result become "irrelevant," the very description used by the American Embassy's Political Counselor Jon Greenwald report. Now was the time to determine whether this revolution fit the definition. I had never lived through a revolution and only knew the textbook definition. I was about to experience it very personally.

While, as Timothy Garten Ash has noted, a century was defeated at the polls, I believe that it was the democratic revolution that spread from Solidarity to the Kremlin and ended communism in Europe. It is in the aftermath of the end of the cold war that I have found the comments of Ralph Waldo Emerson about the American Revolution to capture the new dynamic of European politics at the end of the Millennium. He said, "If there is any one period one would desire to be born in, is it not the Age of Revolution, when the old and new stand side-by-side, when the energies of all men are searched by fear and by hope, when the historic glories of the old can be compensated by the rich possibilities of the new?"

It Began as Any Normal Day in the Revolution

Events during that Thursday in November were calm; President Gorbachev had ended his visit in honor of the fortieth anniversary of East Germany with a warning about the dramatic events East Germany saying, "Those who come too late will be punished by history." Little did we now that history was about to overtake us.

That same evening in Berlin I attended Aspen Institute Berlin Director David Anderson's reception for his new deputy, Hildegard Boucsein, with the mayors of East and West Berlin, the Allied Military Commanders, East German spy-swapping lawyer Wolfgang Vogel and many others. We were an unsuspecting group of insiders. What was about to happen at the Berlin Wall later on November 9, 1989 would be a surprise to us all.

At the end of the reception, East German lawyer Wolfgang Vogel, who had negotiated the freedom of Soviet dissident Sharansky and earlier the U-2 pilot downed over Russia, Gary Powers, asked me for a ride to West Berlin where he had parked his car. Of course I was pleased to offer him a lift and to seek his assessment of the East German reaction to the changes in November 6 GDR Travel Law that had been rejected by thousands of demonstrators throughout the country. Vogel as Honecker's lawyer was most likely to know the GDR's next steps.

A few months earlier when U.S. Ambassador Richard Barkley and I visited Vogel at his modest home on the Titi Lake, he told us that the Hungarians would likely allow several hundred East Germans in Hungary escape to the West. The Hungarians had dramatically cut down the barbed wire fence along their border in May. Indeed, the Hungarian border was viewed as an escape hatch from the communist bloc and cutting down the fence launched a flood of refugees in late summer. The Hungarians were about to honor their new commitment to a UN convention on refugees and to ignore their obligations under the Warsaw Pact to return East Germans to the GDR. Vogel would surely clue me in on Politburo thinking about how to respond to the revolutionaries' demands for the right to travel freely.

On our way to the downtown West Berlin's heart on the Ku'dam, Vogel told me that the GDR attorney's collegium had met November 7-8 and proposed additional changes to the GDR Travel Law. Vogel thought the new changes, not yet announced, would satisfy East Germans' demand for more freedom of travel.

Back at the American Embassy

As I drove into East Berlin around seven-thirty, the acrid smell of sulfur from East Germany's brown coal met me. It was a knowing feeling that the smell brought to my nostrils; the smell clung everywhere, in my clothes surrounding the buildings. The smell of brown coal gave the whole of East Germany that sinister, dreary appearance that had become so familiar.

I went directly to the embassy where I found a greatly excited political section. They were stunned by East German government spokesman Guenther Schabowski's statement on television. He had told the world that the Politburo agreed to more changes in the Travel Law and East Germans could get visitor visas quickly (in kurzem) for travel to the West from their local "People's Police" and the GDR would open a new processing center to handle emigration cases immediately.

Although beyond anything we could have imagined, Schabowski's oral statement was open to widely varying interpretation. NBC anchorman, Tom Brokaw, who attended the Schabowski briefing, asked if this meant the Berlin Wall was open; Schabowski reportedly said; "Yes." He rushed to the western side of the Brandenburg Gate to announce to the world that the Berlin Wall was open. The East Germans heard; "Travel to the West is possible immediately." The revolution, once remarkably controlled, with its Monday night demonstrations in Leipzig and Dresden, seemed to be spinning out of control.

We sent one embassy political officer, Heather Troutman, directly to Checkpoint Charlie and another, Imre Lipping, to the GDR press center to get the text of the statement. While we were hunting down the travel law text, the first East Germans, attempting to cross without visas, were sent back home by the guards at Checkpoint Charlie who told them to first get visas. It seemed to us that the GDR guards could keep things under control, while the new procedures were being worked out.

With the text of the announced freedom to travel and emigrate in hand, we translated it and cabled it to Washington. I telephoned the White House Situation Room and State Department Operations Center to make sure they had the report and to alert them to the latest developments. Then I called Ambassador Barkley and the American Minister in West Berlin Harry Gilmore, and we diplomats shared our quick assessment of the Politburo announcement. We thought the East Germans would get their visas and then head to West Berlin. Little did we know how quickly the East Germans would test the will of the border police to let them leave and return.

After assuring ourselves that we had reporting officers in place to follow events and had reported the latest news, I headed home to the near-in East Berlin suburb of Pankow around 10:00 PM. As I drove up Schönerhauserallee in East Berlin I was surprised to see so many East German, plasticized pressed-wood Trabant automobiles seemingly abandoned near the Bornholmerstrasse checkpoint crossing over the S-Bahn train into West Berlin. At the end of the street near the checkpoint, I saw dozens of Germans standing at the barrier and shouting at the guards defending the crossing.

I knew the crossing well. I crossed it regularly; my children crossed there daily to attend the German-American John F. Kennedy Schule in Zehlendorf, West Berlin. Inside the crossing were barracks filled with armed border police. Fire hoses, like those used later at the Brandenburg Gate were carefully laid out in readiness to repel any wall jumpers. Across the checkpoint safely in the West, the bright lights of a TV camera crew, was poised on the bridge ready to instantaneously transmit pictures of this confrontation at the bridge around the world.

I hurried through the last few blocks to get home quickly. Inside, I turned on the television to see which pictures were being beamed at the East Germans from the camera I had seen. My wife Jean rushed in to the TV room worried I would wake our children. I explained the latest events and how our worry seemed to be turning into excitement as we witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall. I called Ambassador Barkley, Jon Greenwald our political counselor and Harry Gilmore in West Berlin. We knew events would soon envelop us.

The Berlin Wall Falls

Within minutes the Berlin Wall was breached. First, a wave of East Berliners came through the Bornholmerstrasse checkpoint signaling freedom for all East Germans. They streamed across and their pictures were flashed around the world. They were free! But I had a sinking feeling. Did they have visas? What happened to the visa requirement? Who was in charge? *

A few hours later, around 6:30 A.M., I followed my third-grade daughter Annamarie's school van to Bornholmerstrasse on her way through the crowd to school in the West. Her van moved into the masses of people now streaming in both directions. Seeing the red diplomatic license plate, the people stepped aside to let her through. I stood there watching my child disappear into the West with some uncertainty of her fate. My son Carl was to follow in less than an hour.

GDR radio announced that visas were required to travel as of 8:00 am on November 10. I stayed at Bornholmerstrasse and as the hour approached the crowd grew larger and pressed against the checkpoint as panic spread. The fear of being shut in, of having missed the chance to see West Berlin before the GDR shut the gate, was palatable. Shortly before that appointed hour, that deadline was moved to noon. Later, the deadline was revised to Monday. However, by Monday the Krenz government had lost its legitimacy and its authority; the people had demanded and won their freedom. Power and authority had passed from the SED government to the people, who were now in charge. No one knew what would happen next.

No-mans-land and the Death Strip

We were all caught in the blurring pictures of the revolutionary video stuck on fast-forward. Events in those hours overwhelmed us with a mixture of anxiety, euphoria and hope for the future.

When our children, Annamarie and Carl, returned from the John F. Kennedy Schule in West Berlin, my wife, Jean, and I decided that we, too, would test the new openness of the Berlin Wall. We ventured down to the Wall at Eberswalderstrasse, where the buildings were in the East and the sidewalk was in West Berlin, and where terrible scenes of desperate people jumping to their freedom or death [took place] in 1961 when the Wall was built.

The "Bausoldaten," soldiers on construction duty, were deconstructing the Berlin Wall at Eberwalderstrasse. They had already taken several three-meter tall, one-meter wide sections out of the Wall by the time we arrived. Lined up in front of this gaping hole were hundreds of East Germans dutifully waiting for the East German Volkspolizei to issue them visas in accordance with the November 9 Schabowski statement.

We had our diplomatic identity cards and proceeded to enter the no-mans-land through the new crossing point. As we, accompanied by our dog Willi, stepped into the eerie space between East and West, seven-year-old Carl exclaimed; "There are two walls." Indeed, at the end of the no-mans-land stood towering above us was the whitewashed wall on the western side.

We crossed into West Berlin with numerous East Germans and were greeted with cheering West Berliners and a sense of time suspension. Disoriented, we found a playground for our children where they played while Jean and I tried to absorb the strangeness of standing in West Berlin amid so many East Germans. Unification had just happened among the Germans and we were witnessing the mixture of two conflicting systems separated for two generations. Berlin had become an East German city overnight.

After getting our personal bearings we turned back toward East Berlin and stepped back into the death strip on our way home. As we entered the forbidden zone an East German guard who blocked our way and demanded our passports approached us. When we produced our East German Diplomatic identity cards, he rejected them saying that the crossing was only for citizens of the German Democratic Republic. We argued that we, too, lived in East Germany despite the fact that it seemed incredible that any Westerner would voluntarily lived in that communist country. After some heated dialogue, we were allowed to pass. Stepping back into East Berlin was like wandering into the twilight zone, the country had disappeared, and a revolution swept away the Berlin Wall and would soon sweep away the very existence of East Germany itself.

The End of East Germany

I knew East Germany's days were limited. Only intervention by the Soviets could prolong its agony. President Gorbachev risked Perestroika and Glasnost in Russia if he chose to intervene militarily in the GDR; he would lose East Germany if he did not. We had no idea of the next steps or how the revolution would play out.

While the world was caught up in the euphoria of the pictures at the Brandenburg Gate, President Bush instructed us that there would be no dancing on the Wall. The East Germans had won some freedom, but the revolution had unleashed the forces of history contained by the cold war.

Meeting with Gorbachev six months later, Gorbachev told President Bush that Germany could decide whether or not to join NATO. In the intervening months the greatest diplomatic venture since World War II was undertaken with the greatest skill. Germany, with the vision and skillful leadership of the American President and Chancellor Kohl, was unified and this millennium may end in peace with Europe whole and free.

Postscript

There is a postscript to this story that I would also like to share. I felt there were some unanswered questions about those first wall jumpers at Bornholmerstrasse checkpoint. Did they have visas? Just what did those guards with the hoses and rifles do to defend the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989? A few months after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Jean and I were having coffee with the Uwe Gerson family, friends from our local East German church. Among the guests were East Germans that had been among those at Bornholmerstrasse that night.

As we recounted this story, one of them asked if we knew what actually happened to the first freedom-seekers who burst into the lights of the Spiegel TV cameras and changed the course of history. Of course we did not and were intrigued to hear a first-hand account. Herr Gerson's brother took out his GDR identification card, a paper passport with a photograph on one side and his name typed on the other. Across the picture was a GDR exit visa stamp. A stamp that actually invalidated the I.D. card. It hit us. The first people crossing into the lights of the TV camera* had been expelled! The GDR had tried to save itself from its discontented citizens by throwing the rascals out of the country. Be gone you revolutionaries, they must have said. The last laugh was on those guards. The television pictures of people held back by a hated system fleeing into freedom were too powerful to resist. The heroes of Bornholmerstrasse had taken their fate in their own hands. East Germany fell to the irrepressible human desire for freedom.

The pictures were enough to rouse other East Germans from their sleep and head for the Berlin Wall. The numbers soon overwhelmed the guards and the East German government's implementation of its exit visa requirement was delayed and delayed. Meanwhile the Germans in the GDR continued their revolution and took ownership of their country.

* Note: The Spiegel TV crew filming the East Germans great escape only reported the first Germans to flee were free. Steven Aust, editor of the Spiegel told me in October 1996 that he had sent that crew to film the crossing and had later interviewed the guards who let the people into West Berlin. He confirmed that the first to cross into the West had been expelled by the East German guards.

Conclusion

American support for German unification allowed the East German's peaceful, democratic revolution success. On October 3, 1990, they would join with the Federal Republic's forty-year-old democracy to create a peaceful, democratic Germany in the heart of Europe. The Berlin Republic was born.

Since then it is clear that the Berlin Republic, now under SPD Chancellor Schroeder, has accepted the responsibilities accruing to a major European power in providing security in southeaster Europe. The bombing war in Kosovo was also a seminal event in German politics. Along with the United States, Germany chose to lead our effort to stop the human rights abuses, ethnic cleansing that had echoes of Nazi atrocities. In fact, the elevation of human rights as a basis for armed intervention in violation of the sanctity of sovereignty will have lasting effect on political relations for the next Millennium. Some have argued that the intervention in Kosovo signaled the end, not of the cold war, but of the Westphalian Peace that has governed international relations for centuries.

In Germany the Kosovo decision is deeply rooted in the new political culture of the Berlin Republic. Not only must war not emanate from German soil, but as Foreign Minister Fischer has reminded us: "Nie Wieder Auschwitz" is the motto that takes precedence over the sanctity of sovereignty. This political commitment to human rights is deeply embedded in the German "Basic Law" in its respect for human dignity and is undoubtedly a founding myth of the Berlin Republic.

Along with the New Berlin Republic, the political world has changed fundamentally. The Soviet Union was swept away in revolution in 1991. NATO has enlarged its membership; NATO has intervened militarily with Bundeswehr forces to stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. Former Warsaw Pact members can hope to enjoy some of the same freedom, peace and prosperity found in the Berlin Republic today. Europe has adopted the EURO as its unified currency.

Q: While this revolution was going on, particularly at the early stages, this was a time when the mobs were building up, over a period of time these demonstrations and all, the scenario, all of us who were in the Foreign Service and anyone else who I brought it up with, this was going to happen, it was going to build up, there was going to be an explosion, the East Germans have been trying to get out, the government will try to stop them, the West Germans, with or without our consent are not going to let this happen, they are going to maybe storm in or something like that, and the Soviets were come in and World War III. So you are sitting there, watching what in our old scenario was World War III beginning to develop and the end of civilization as we know it. What were you reporting back? Were we just sort of reporting, and was there anything come from Washington, or were we looking at Soviet tanks and East German tanks, what was the Embassy doing?

BINDENAGEL: I can't speak for Washington, but at the Embassy we were inundating the government with individual reports of what was occurring. There were demonstrations on Alexanderplatz, which were put down by East Germans. We knew that the National Volks Army was on alert but not engaged. We focused on the connection between the Soviet army and the NVA, the East German Army. The escalation steps were well known and the "People's Police" on the streets were the first line of defense. If that line was breached, then you go to the "Betriebskampfgruppen" or militia. The militia appeared during the Gorbachev visit. The militia were mostly old guys in National Guard-like uniforms, they looked like Army and they had Czech weapons as they were wandering around the streets. These were the guys that had marched down Unter den Linden to set up the Berlin Wall - the Anti-fascist protective Wall - in 1961. We watched them appear on the streets and looked for signs of NVA deployments, however, we never did see any Army on the streets. We wondered where the Russians were and found them still in their barracks. Nevertheless, we were nervous. We were all very nervous, but we watched that to the extent that seven or eight embassy officers could have access to see what was going on. But we were the diplomats on the ground and were right there to see all these demonstrations. We saw where the chain of violence might occur and reported on developments daily.

We did have some frantic questions from Washington. Once there were news-reports out of Washington in the middle of the night. I recall being asked about a confrontation with a Soviet tank in Bernau. Somebody obviously reported this event but it was very hard to find out what had occurred. It took us a day to find out that the mayor from the small town of Bernau outside of Berlin wanted to move a World War II trophy tank that was on a pedestal in a downtown square to some other sight. The confrontation was apparent Soviet dismay with the mayor.

There were reports of East Germans having fights with Russians near their commissary, but they were Russians married to Germans. Those incidents turned out as far as we could determine as domestic or personal quarrels, not political incidents. Later there was another report in the middle of the night when I was called by the State Department Operations Center about a group of East Germans attacking a Soviet military installation in the Harz Mountains. I was in Berlin and the Harz Mountains are not nearby and told the Ops Center the we would find what we could. We usually talked to working journalist to expand our coverage of events and our network of contacts. In this case I turned on the radio and I heard a nighttime BBC report that had that part of the report, there was a confrontation of East Germans with the Soviet installation in the Harz Mountains. The report went on to say that this installation was a radio antenna site and the East German was telling the Russians that some day this land will be our country again. I called the Operations Center and asked if they want to check that report as well and that seemed to settle that rumor. In reality, the point was that we were very tense. We were doing little things to control rumors, and reporting furiously on bigger things like the demonstrations and debates inside the SED, trying to find any indication that we were crossing that threshold of dissent to revolution and we were extremely nervous.

Washington only began to wake up to the dangers of the changes on that night of November 9. All the reporting that we have done seemed to have been swallowed up ahead of time. Although I learned later that the President's morning briefer on November 9 had reported to the President our assessment of the November 6 changes in the GDR travel law, which we said would make the Berlin Wall irrelevant. Washington knew there were changes. In all honesty, we did not predict a revolution, you couldn't have predicted a revolution. We didn't know when the confrontation would happen, we simply tried to keep track of things. But I tell you, after the 9th of November, Washington turned its attention to every little event that was about to occur in East Germany.

The next major political event for us occurred a month later when Secretary of State James Baker came to West Berlin to give a speech on U.S. policy in Europe, focusing on NATO, the EU and OSCE. At this point in November after the Wall had been breached, we did a report to the State Department making some suggestions of kinds of initiatives we could take to gain control of this situation and Baker would include a restatement of our policy on German unification. We suggested new initiatives; my favorite was to re-open our Consulate in Leipzig, which was the heroic city of the demonstrations and symbolic of the coming revolution with Nikolaikirche vigils and Maestro Mazur's timely intervention to prevent violence. We had another advantage. As part of our rights negotiated in our diplomatic recognition of the GDR in 1974, we agreed that the GDR could open an office in New York and we would have the right to a second office in East Germany. We also suggested initiating conversations with upcoming communist leaders because we were waiting for a new leadership to follow Glasnost and Perestroika, opening relations with the West.

One of the suggestions we made was have Secretary Baker visit with the East German leadership. By that time Hans Modrow, the friend of Gorbachev, was named Premier and took office on 18th of November. We saw this appointment as an opportunity to pursue Glasnost in the GDR and to find out if Glasnost and Perestroika had a chance after Honecker. We argued that a meeting with Modrow would be important. Never in history of the GDR had a US Secretary of State visited the GDR. The highest-ranking official had been John Whitehead, Deputy Secretary of State. So we would be breaking new ground in having a higher level official visit and send the signal that the U.S. was prepared to do business with a new regime. I called Jim Collins, one of Baker's Deputy Executive Secretaries and my former boss from the Operations Center. I called him repeatedly and told him that we really want Baker to come. We thought a visit was just the right thing with the debate in East Germany moving toward free elections. We argued that if the GDR had free elections, the communists would be defeated. He told me that the argument in Washington was not so clear and warned that if I wanted an answer immediately, the answer would be an emphatic "No!" I accepted the wait and declined Jim's offer to keep the possibility of a visit alive.

Baker came to West Berlin on the evening of December 11th. Ambassador Barkley was hosting dinner for Congressman Gephardt in East Berlin with prominent East German leaders, including Deputy Premier Christa Luft. Baker called Barkley to West Berlin to meet with him and he left the dinner. As his replacement I enjoyed the lively conversation in his absence about supporting Perestroika and Luft's proposal that the U.S. support joint ventures with GDR companies, of course with 49% foreign ownership. Barkley's meeting with Baker included General Walters, who was Ambassador Walters from West Germany. They discussed whether or not the Secretary should go to meet with the East German leadership. Ambassador Dick Walters had a very good argument in that he said if Baker went, he would be seen supporting the communist leadership and reinforcing their hold on power. Walters argued that Baker should not go to East Berlin. Barkley argued that the new GDR leadership was committed to elections and if they have actually free and fair elections, they are finished. Afterward the dynamics in the GDR will change in our favor. Baker had a clear presentation from both his ambassadors in the Germanies who were speaking really from the two very different perspectives. General Walters speaking from the World War II and onward experience, a very legitimate point of view, and Barkley from his experience of living in revolutionary times when all politics were beginning to change. Baker dismissed the two Ambassadors and then told Under Secretary of State Bob Zoellick to tell Barkley that he would come to East Berlin after his speech the next day.

When Ambassador Barkley came back to our dinner about 10 o'clock at night, he pulled me aside and informed me of the Secretary's decision to visit the next day. Our tiny embassy was to host the Secretary of State in East Germany he told me. I was delighted, but quite aware that no secretary had ever been there before and that we were short on time to find someone for him to meet. Barkley and I conferred and I set about to find a host.

We went over to the dinner table, adjourned for coffee, and Barkley asked Modrow's deputy, Christa Luft, if she would call the Premier and ask him to meet Baker the next day. Recognizing the validity of Walters' point of view, Baker said that he also wanted to meet with the church leaders who were leading the protests and running the revolution. I called Imre Lipping, who was covering the politics of the churches and asked him to invite Bishop Leich of Eisenach. When Imre called back and said the Bishop was unavailable, we called and made an arrangement to meet at the Potsdam Nikolaikirche with Manfred Stolpe, who was an East German church leader at that time and who later became Minister President of Brandenburg. They both agreed.

Secretary Baker sent Karen Grooms to meet with us the next morning, we went to the site visit. Anne Bodine, our administrative officer, and Karen put together this visit in less than a day. The work may have been painful, but the pain was short. It was really fun in a fascinating way. Baker had a speech in West Berlin and delivered U.S. policy on the architecture of CSCE, of European Union and NATO. And then he added a part, which we had also suggested, we'd hoped he would even say something like German unification. One of the "back-channels" I had was with the State Department Policy Planning Staff and most of my conversations were with Jim Holmes on a secure line. Jim Holmes was clearly heard by Baker and Zoellick and the policy planning office was influential in getting our message to the secretary. Our request to restate U.S. policy in support of German unification won Baker's approval, but he had four conditions. Among them were continued German membership to NATO.

Anyway, after his speech in West Berlin, Baker's motorcade, big Mercedes cars and West Berlin police paddy wagons drove off with their big blue lights and sirens. They arrived at the Glieneckebrücke, this spy-exchange bridge, where Nathan Sharansky, the Soviet dissident, had been exchanged as well as U-2 pilot Gary Powers. The Motorcade stops and of course the West Berlin escorts cannot cross over the bridge past the Soviet sentry. All of these impressive Mercedes police cars and the paddy wagons had to stop and just the American cars go across. They were met on the other side by the other German police car, the Wartburg, which is a little tiny Fiat like thing that sported a little tiny blue light, maybe 20 watts. They drove up to the Interhotel Potsdam where Baker met with Modrow. I met the party in the hotel, where I have chatted with Modrow. When Baker arrived, Modrow made the point that Americans should support the DGR in Perestroika. The East Germans wanted to make these changes, and promised 49% joint ventures with American to get the economy going, which would be good for all. Baker made one point in reply that after the GDR elections, we'll be glad to talk to you about Perestroika. Baker then talked about U.S. support for German unification and Modrow looked surprised and asked what about German unification?

As background I must say that Modrow had given his inaugural speech in the Volkskammer on November 18th saying that perhaps two Germanies could have a "Vertragsgemeinschaft," a "contractual agreement" but not unification. Also on 28th of November, West German Chancellor Kohl had given a speech calling for a confederation of German states, as an interim phase before discussing unification. The United States seemed to be ahead of both German parties as they were moving very quickly toward their own unification.

Q: Between the time when the Wall sort of opened up and the Baker visit, what was happening as far as, was the Wall open, were the people going back and forth?

BINDENAGEL: The GDR over the weekend of November 9-12, 1989 agreed to open 20 or more crossing points through the Berlin Wall. The next day, on November 10th, I took Jean, our two kids and our dog down to Bernauerstrasse, where the sidewalk was in West Berlin and the building was in East Berlin. The pictures of people jumping out windows to freedom in West Berlin when the Wall went up were world famous. That morning we started to cross the Wall with a long line of people getting visas. The police were stamping visas for everybody, but since we had our GDR pass and we could go back and forth through the other checkpoints, and we simply proceeded through the Wall. We didn't get in line because we didn't have our passports to obtain a visa. We walked through no-man's-land into West Berlin, and as we crossed Carl, my son exclaimed that there were really two walls. One was on the East Berlin side, which was three slabs of concrete laid sideways on top of each other, then came the death strip, and across the death strip plowed areas with raked sand, mines, sensors, razor fences and towers. There was also a road for the guards to patrol the death strip. As we stepped into this eerie area my son said, "Gee, there are two walls. Look at all this." The West Berlin, that Wall was one that you saw everywhere with its murals memorialized was made of poured concrete with a big foot on it. That's the West Berlin Wall. We strolled into West Berlin, where the people cheered. It felt a little uncomfortable. We only spent a few minutes at a playground there where we let the kids play for a while, then we came back. As we came back, the GDR guards wouldn't let us pass into East Berlin. And they started arguing at this crossing point that the promise was only for the GDR citizens. But we argued that we also lived there, and I showed them my ID card. I said "Well, where do you think we live? We live in East Berlin." They then let us through. I told the story to Ambassador Barkley; he tried it on Saturday and he had to go through three levels of command before he could get back. The East Germans opened several crossing points and activity then began. Film crews filmed the East Germans' euphoria of travel and openness with East Berliners going to West, lining up for "Greeting Money" - a hundred marks - and the buying of forbidden fruit, symbolized mostly by bananas. You could buy bananas rarely in the GDR and bananas became the symbol of the change. Walking down the Ku'dam, people got bananas. They missed the whole revolution, and suddenly it was peaceful and people were coming and going to West Berlin. Things began to change. In GDR cities round table governments were formed to follow the Polish model placing local citizens along with the SED functionaries together to govern. Of course, the rubric was on renewing the GDR. There was never talked about revolution - revolution in German is a dirty word. It's a very difficult, violent and destructive event. The roundtable discussion was about the renewal of the GDR.

However, just before Secretary Baker came to the GDR, just a few days before, on the weekend of 7th-8th of December, one of West Berlin Mission Minister Harry Gilmore's friends, and a West German SPD member visited Rostock, in East Germany. He reported back to Harry that he had seen the roundtable there and noted that city governments were collapsing. He really feared, as he told Harry, that East Germany was on the verge of civil war. Harry did what every good political officer should do, and reported this story to Washington. However, he didn't give us the courtesy of informing us that he was reporting this report about the GDR, nor did he comment in his report about the validity or meaning of what was going on. Of course, he wasn't really in a position to comment on another country: he just sent the cable off to Washington. The lights lit up in Washington at the National Military Command Center, the Ops Center, the White House Situation Room and the CIA Command Center like you wouldn't believe. This is the scenario painted of the Operations Plan for World War III, uprising in East Germany - here it comes!

When we got this cable and I called the political section - Jon Greenwald had already left for home, and Emre Lipping joined me and Mike Mozur, the Economics Counselor to give me an instant analysis of the West Berlin report. They wrote a very long cable very quickly and did a great job of explaining developments in the GDR. I took the report to Ambassador Barkley and we talked about how do we present the analysis. We agreed that, "The only thing that counts is the summary." If we did not get the story right and Barkley argued that the current draft was not right, it would not work. He turned to me to go back and rewrite the summary. In a few short paragraphs I wrote "The situation in the GDR is serious, the city governments are collapsing but roundtable governments are taking over, and yes the garbage is still being collected and demonstrations happen on Monday nights. The pace of this revolution is breathtaking." Then I sent the cable to Washington, hoping to reassure the government that World War III was not breaking out, at least not yet.

Before Baker left for Berlin, he met with the Washington Post editorial board. On his way to the editorial board he stopped by the Operations Center, where they gave him an update of overnight events so he wouldn't get blind-sighted about crucial development. The Ops Center had seen our cable analyzing the prospects for Civil War in East Germany and they gave him a copy. Now James Baker is a very smart man, and he folded up this cable and put it in his pocket. Perhaps that was not kosher, but it is a very smart thing to do because when meeting with the Washington Post editorial board about his trip and NATO, they asked him: "What are these reports about the deterioration, or unrest in the GDR?" Being a smart politician as well, he reached into his pocket and said, "Let me tell you what Mr. Barkley's Embassy in East Berlin has to say about this situation." He read the summary, and that ended the question. Obviously the journalists took very good notes because the next day the summary appeared in the Washington Post, almost verbatim. The following day it appeared in Neues Deutschland, the communist newspaper in the GDR, on page 8, as I discovered reading ND. I reacted immediately, "Good Grief, this is a translation, what's going on here?" I ran over to Barkley, and I said "Look at this, this is our cable." I got on the phone, called the German desk. They said, "Oh, yes, didn't you see that? We thought that was great." "Well you didn't even tell me!" Anyway, I guess it was the Secretary who released it, so it was okay. That was what was happening between those periods, November 9th and December 12th.

Q: I think this is probably a good place to stop. So we finished thBaker visit. And we'll pick it up after that.

Today is the April 8, 1998. J.D., again the Baker visit was when?

BINDENAGEL: December 12th, 1989 in Potsdam.

Q: After Baker left, what was happening? How was Baker received?

BINDENAGEL: The conclusion was a great one. We had not anticipate much interest in the press. The GDR was in its glory on November 9th, when the Wall came down, and after that it seemed to have passed from the daily news as the revolution spread throughout the rest of the Central Europe. However, the Secretary had about 20 or 30 press traveling with him and much to our surprise as Secretary went into his meeting with Modrow, the press gathered outside and it had grown to about 130 of journalists. The Secretary came out and said "We have an announcement to make, about open and free elections." Modrow announced that elections were planned for May 6, 1990. Then he tried to turn to a new debate. However, Perestroika, Glasnost, the policies of Gorbachev were put on the back burner. The focus was then on elections in the GDR. Would there be elections, and if so, when. May 6th 1990, they were planned.

Politics in January were working on two tracks. One was the unification track that Baker had mentioned in the meetings. The U.S. was for unification; the GDR revolutionaries were still for the renewal of the GDR. And Modrow in January, as Premier Modrow and with the PDS, the Party of Democratic Socialism, ahead of the pack on unification and renewal. And the event that had happened just before that, if I may back up a bit to December 21st.

On December 21st, the politics of unification really became apparent. West German Chancellor Kohl had visited Dresden in East Germany on the 19th, for his first visit. Baker had come on December 12th, Kohl on December 19th, and then on December 21st President Mitterrand, all visiting East Germany. However, Mitterrand's visit was a return visit for the state visit that Erich Honecker, the GDR leader, had made to Paris. While we were promoting unification and Kohl confederation, Mitterrand was promoting two Germanies. He had given a speech just before that in Kiev, arguing the case for two Germanies, the British were also for divided Germany and wished for two Germanies, which were better than one Germany. My good friend, the DCM of the Soviet Embassy, Igor Maksimichev was giving a speech, the same speech in several places, once at Aspen Institute Berlin, talking about the rise of the Fourth Reich. So the U.S. was rather isolated in politics around unification. Here was Mitterrand coming to East Berlin, meeting with Egon Krenz, speaking at the University in Leipzig and then hosting a Gala in East Berlin.

Unfortunately for me the Mitterrand Gala was the same evening as the Embassy Christmas party. We had prepared some good lyrical songs and we were going to have a blast. I was invited to the reception for Mitterrand, but decided that as much as I liked the Embassy party, this Mitterrand party would be a rather interesting evening. I went to the Palast Hotel, which was next to the German Cathedral of the Prussian Hohenzollerns, I walked in as Margo Honecker, Mrs. Honecker, the Education Minister, assembled with other members of the Politburo. The leader of the Communist Party was about to be chosen that night was there. He was Gregor Gysi, the son of Klaus Gysi, the State Secretary for Church Affairs who was an acquaintance of Ambassador Burns, was about to be named head of the Communist Party. It was an exciting evening. As Mitterrand seemed to be giving the PDS, the SED the follow-on party of democratic socialism reform, socialists, support for the GDR as a separate State from the Federal Republic. Mitterrand came gave his speech and didn't stay too long, but the air was filled with excitement. A new party the, East German Social Democratic Party, had been founded and the leader of the Social Democratic Party was there was well, Ibrahim Bï¿½hme. Ibrahim Bï¿½hme was thought to be a real revolutionary, however, as it turned out a few months later he was really an agent of the East German State Security, or Stasi. The end of the GDR was beginning to become very clear. The question then for us was, "Would it hold?" Could you avoid the questions of civil war, as it had been raised just before the Baker visit? As the month went on, the next day in fact a very important event happened on December 22nd.

The Brandenburg Gate was opened for pedestrian traffic. There were crossing points on both sides of the Brandenburg gate. Symbolically the opening was very important, as the President, Richard von Weizsäcker, had said often, "As long as the Brandenburg Gate remained closed, the German question remains open." And then suddenly on December 22nd, the Brandenburg gate was open, as soon as Mitterrand had left. Resolving the German question was on the political agenda. What happened in January was fascinating, because...

Q: But let me stop at this point J.D. Was there any debate within your group of the people you were talking to, on the American side and then others, at this sort of Mitterrand time, would say, "What's that for the U.S., maybe it's a good idea to keep Germany divided?"

BINDENAGEL: You know, that was an interesting question, and I thought there would be more debate. But once Baker had made his speech, President had endorsed unification, there was very little visible debate that we could as least see sitting in East Berlin. It seemed that the President had taken a leadership decision, in spite of what the British were saying and their concerns, the French and their concerns, the Russians, they all seemed to be historical concerns. President Bush focused on our commitment to West Germany, the democracy that had been built up and the fact that we'd had something like 15 million soldiers in West Germany. It seemed to be that constituency in the U.S. that he touched, it was very strong and powerful one, and there wasn't very much debate about the U.S. supporting German unification.

There were others that did object to unification. I met during this period twice with the Brussels representative of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), Maram Stern. He met with the East German Foreign Minister Fischer, raised concerns about German reunification and encouraged the East Germans not to move so quickly. This lack of support for German unification became of course a serious point of contention later when the GDR record became available and known to Chancellor Kohl. Some years later when asked about the WJC and unification, Kohl revealed the contents of the conversations between the World Jewish Congress and Fischer. Kohl's relations with the WJC were soured in a very important way as a result. But despite the efforts of people to delay and the concerns of others to prolong the division of Germany, events on the ground were moving very quickly.

Q: Everyone was being behind the times, things were taking over. Traditionally we think of the French as playing the spoiler and just going off in the different track, but we generally agree with the British and the British may have wanted to move a little slower. Was it the feeling that the French were playing the usual spoiler role or was this more serious than that?

BINDENAGEL: The power of European historical experience was very evident in all of their arguments. There was a very deep, deep, deep concern about a powerful Germany in the center of Europe, uncontrolled, not a part of a greater element in itself. Even in our own pronouncements, if you look at Secretary Baker's December 1989 speech and you will find that we conditioned our support for German unification, particularly on Germany remaining in NATO. Giving Germany a place in Europe was a very strong theme that ran through the entire debate. For us, NATO, for Germany, for Helmut Kohl, the answer was the European Union or how to embed Germany in European Union. Chancellor Kohl, during the debates that came after the Fall of the Wall, made several concessions of German sovereignty in order to have Germany have a place in Europe. Most important one perhaps in this point in history was his decision to propose German economic monetary union to become a European monetary union, which led to the introduction of a new currency, the "Euro." Kohl put European monetary union on the table; he didn't negotiate it of course until much later.

Q: Moving then to the events of January 1990?

BINDENAGEL: In January we faced many very fascinating events. I knew Prime Minister Hans Modrow well and his leadership was key to the events. He was a member of the PDS, Party of Democratic Socialism, which was the successor to the Communist Party in Germany. Modrow was a very close friend of Gorbachev, with whom he vacationed. Modrow wanted a separate East Germany, although in his opening speech to the Volkskammer, the Parliament, he called for a confederation or what he called for a "Vertragsgemeinschaft" with West Germany. It could be literally translated as "contractual community or federation" of German states, a point that Kohl picked up on later, on November 28th when he talked about his "Ten-point Plan" for German reunification. In January however, there was a surge in popular support for Modrow prior to the GDR election, and he hoped that this popularity would help him win those elections. However, Modrow made what I considered a fatal error; he decided to not abolish the internal state security system, the Stasi office that kept track of everyone. He decided, based on an argument that every country had an espionage fighting secret service, that one element of the hated Stasi, the Staatssicherheit, needed to remain, although the internal security mandate would be curtailed. The new office would be the external arm of the Stasi, renamed the "Amt für National Sicherheit." The moment he took that decision, the political support he had been building simply evaporated.

After his support disappeared, stability of the GDR was again threatened and by the end of January, he advanced the date of elections to March 18, 1990 from his call for elections for May 6th, as he had informed Secretary Baker only a month earlier. Modrow's support was waning and his ability to carry on the campaign was slipping away. Modrow needed to have an earlier election so that he could have a chance to continue governing.

Fascinating events began to occur with increased rapidity. People began to doubt the stability in the GDR. The next brilliant move to exploit the opportunity, if I may say so was done by Horst Teltschik, who was the West German the national security adviser to Helmut Kohl. On the first weekend in February, as the Chancellor was planning to go visit Gorbachev, Teltschik declared that East Germany would be unable to pay its bills within 24 hour"Die DDR wurde Zahlungsunfähig... Of course, it was a rather stark assertion, based a little bit on fact, but a brilliant political move, because it brought into question the entire financial situation of the GDR. Not so much for the GDR, which was teetering on bankruptcy since 1983 when Franz Josef Strauss bailed them out with a one billion-mark loan, but for Gorbachev. Chancellor Kohl did not need to pose to Gorbachev the question: "Will you pay for the GDR?" Teltschik's question in the press posed it for Kohl before the Chancellor visited Gorbachev. During that visit Gorbachev told Kohl that German unification was a possibility that could be acceptable in Gorbachev's eyes. The shocking news for us was that Gorbachev even talked about unity of Germany. The existence of the GDR was based entirely on a sovereignty that grew out of the military force of the Soviet Union, and Gorbachev's musings of German unification were devastating blows to the GDR. East German leadership, including Modrow could only understand that Gorbachev would not use the Russian military to sustain the GDR. That conclusion was read everywhere and accelerated the process of unification dramatically. I was at a conference of the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik in Pullach when the announcement of Gorbachev's statement came over the television. Immediately, the Germans in the room grasped the significance of the statement and were jubilant. Horst Teltschik won my greatest admiration for his daring statements that had dominated our conversations. I had to content myself in responding to Michael Stürmer's demands that we open our consulate in Dresden the heart of German culture, not in Leipzig. Jim Dobbins, Deputy Assistant Secretary was at the meeting and called on me to defend my decision in favor of Leipzig, which I defended easily as Leipzig was the Heroic City of the unfolding revolution.

About the same time, President Bush was meeting with leaders in Ottawa for an open-skies conference. There the unification policy was born. That policy was directed from Washington, and we watched the results of the revolution move from our hands in East Germany to the capable hands of Secretary Baker, Dr. Condeleeza Rice, Robert Zoellick, Bob Blackwill and Phil Zelikow, who were working with their counterparts in West Germany. After the March 18th election when the East German revolutionaries were elected, they joined in the negotiations as well and the talks became known as the "Two plus Four process."

This reference to the Four Allied Powers that were victorious in World War II and were responsible for Berlin and Germany as a whole, reminds me of an incident that occurred in West Germany, in West Berlin. In December, just prior to Baker's Berlin visit, Ambassador Walters, seeing that the situation was very unstable, took an initiative to call the four Allied ambassadors responsible for Berlin - the U.K., France, the USSR and the U.S. - to get together. He proposed meeting to discuss an on-going topic the "Berlin Initiative" at the old Allied Kommandatura building, in West Berlin which hadn't been used since 1948 when the Soviets marched out. The four Ambassadors arrived and had their picture taken, which appeared in the press. They didn't have much discussion, but the symbolic value of the four victorious powers of World War II meeting to decide the fate of Germany was too much. West German Foreign Minister Genscher was furious and I'm sure, although I wasn't part of it, I'm sure he shared his ire with Mr. Baker.

That led to the question who will make the decision about German reunification, and in the open-skies meeting that was taking place in Ottawa, formulation was proposed by Genscher that we should call this process "Two plus Four." That is the two German states would take their sovereign decisions and the four victorious powers by the right of the conquest in the World War II would participate in that process. The agreement itself would become a surrogate for a peace-treaty with Germany. There in Ottawa, the U.S. along with its other allies launched the "Two plus Four" unification process. Embassy East Berlin was brought back into the picture to support the Washington-based talks.

On March 18, 1990, Lothar de Maizière, Christian Democrat, was elected the first and only democratically Prime Minister of the GDR. Marcus Meckel, SPD and a Lutheran Minister, was named Foreign Minister. De Maizière was of the CDU, Mr. Meckel was a social democrat and Meckel chose as his deputy Hans Misselwitz. I had met Hans Misselwitz in Washington in 1988 when Hans came as a guest of the United Christian Church. He had been a chemist; however, he had decided he was too revolutionary to be a chemist and so he couldn't have a career in chemistry. He had changed careers and had just completed his studies at a theological seminary. He was married to Ruth Misselwitz and he was able to take a year with the United Christian Church and had come to Arlington, Virginia, where he was to study for a year. The East Germans forbid travel to the U.S. by his wife and his children. We met several times at the home of a German pastor, Berndt Wrede, in Arlington, Virginia, and we had some wonderful conversations about the dissident movement in the GDR, which served me well before I went to East Berlin.

After the March 18th election Misselwitz was State Secretary in the Foreign Ministry. We had many conversations and I had open access to the East German Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the 2+4 negotiations to discuss East German positions, however, the U.S. government saw little role for the GDR negotiators. This was due in part to their inexperience and their desire to take Polish positions to the table as their own. Washington talked almost exclusively with Genscher.

Marcus Meckel the GDR Foreign Minister, the first, last and only democratic Foreign Minister, had unification ideas that were really not in tune with the rest of us. This is 1990, before the Soviet Union disappeared, before the Warsaw Pact disappeared. Although the GDR was withdrawing from the Warsaw pact in order to join the rest of Germany, Poland was still in that orbit. Misselwitz and Meckel tried to engage with their Polish friends, with whom they had a revolutionary period in the Solidarity movement and had worked very closely, and as they came into more power they wanted to put the Polish agenda on the German unification talks. We did not.

Q: Is this the border firm between Germany and Poland?

BINDENAGEL: Actually, you raise a very interesting question. The Polish-German border was unsettled. In fact, all of Germany was unsettled, the borders of Germany were from 1937 and became one of the key issues decided in "Two plus Four" talks. The decision was Germany would be made up of three parts, that is West Germany, East Germany and Berlin. The Germans were to renounce their claim to those parts of Poland, which had been Germany. Those parts of Germany that were under the administrative control of the Soviet Union since the end of the war, that is Königsberg, or Kaliningrad, were left outside the three named parts of united Germany. At some point at the next ten or twenty years this issue of the status of Kaliningrad will come back again. We know that in the "Two plus Four" agreement Kaliningrad is not part of Germany but we also know that it isn't a contiguous part of Russia. Corridors, like that from Russia through Lithuania - the Danzig Corridor or the Berlin Access Routes - have always caused problems. The Danzig corridor that played a role in World War II, the Berlin corridor that played a role in western access to West Berlin and in German unification. The Russians have to now drive through Belarus or Lithuania to get to their territory there in Kaliningrad. But I digress.

We saw many events around "Two plus Four" as very important events.

Q: What were you getting from the people you were talking to from our Embassy in Bonn, about the role of Genscher? Did Kohl and Genscher seem to be on the same path or was one leading the other? How was that duality viewed?

BINDENAGEL: Our Embassy in Bonn and our Embassy in Berlin were worlds apart. Communication between the two Embassies took really place through Mr. Zoellick, or Mr. Blackwell, whenever we were informed. There was very little direct discussion. I participated in as a staff member, not at the table, in the "Two plus Four" meetings that took place in East Berlin. But having served in Germany many years I knew many people and with two of them we talked informally to keep track of what was being said. The East Germans were running their government but had to ask what Genscher was doing and why he did what he did. The basic East German contribution was to make the 2+4 agreement possible in the first instance, not in the details of unification.

Q: What was the feeling about Genscher that you were picking up? Was he a driving force?

BINDENAGEL: Genscher was certainly a driving force and the strongest drive that he tested, although it never went very far, was to insure German unification by considering not having Germany in NATO. This idea was bandied about and was quickly shot down, but it was out there as an idea that could be perhaps resurrected at some point and it made us very nervous.

Q: I was going to say, that would have made everyone nervous, because this would have meant a Germany with its own armed forces, a powerful Germany not under any sort of overall control.

BINDENAGEL: Exactly. Our policy was built on the idea that although Germany was sovereign and could decide its own fate, however, we expected that they would find their fate with us in NATO. Alternatives to German NATO membership were very unsettling; that view was shared throughout Germany. Other issues, more fun. Once when we had "Two plus Four" negotiating session in East Berlin with Bob Zoellick. We had a very interesting "Two plus Four" discussion at Schloss Niederschonhausen. I was fascinated by our equally unbending approach to the Russians, whose rigid positions seemed so out of place. The presentations were very stiff and formal with little movement from any position. The fun came afterward. Mr. Zoellick wanted to visit the headquarters of the East German Army, the NVA (Nationale Volksarmee), and meet with the Minister of Defense, the newly elected democratic Minister of Defense, Mr. Rainer Eppelmann. Mr. Eppelmann and his NVA were headquartered in Strasbourg outside of Berlin because Berlin was "demilitarized" by the victorious powers from World War II. I had the task to escort Zoellick from East Berlin, through the GDR to Strasbourg, a circuitous route that was very time consuming. We followed the archaic Allied Power rules governing the divided city of Berlin, which in Berlin meant that Westerners had to leave Berlin from West Berlin, go out into the GDR, go all the way around Berlin and come to Strasbourg, rather than cutting through town. We were precluded from entering the GDR from East Berlin under these rules because there were no checkpoints marking the end of Berlin and consequently East Berlin appeared to be part of the GDR although the Allies refused to give recognition to East Berlin as the capital of the GDR. Such was the theology in "Berlinery." We followed the rules, however, in order to make sure we arrived in Strasbourg in time we asked for East German police escort. Unlike the police escort that we thought we were going to get, we got a very conscientious policeman, or one who wanted to torpedo the visit. He drove a little less than the speed limit, which made us somewhat late, then he took us on what he thought to be a shortcut but it turned out to be a dead end and then we had to double back, and by the time we got to Strasbourg, Mr. Zoellick was steaming of course. Minister Eppelmann was also steaming and has just left without seeing Zoellick. It was a very instructive point about end of Berlinery. At least from Mr. Zoellick's point of view these rules were finished, he would never travel under them again. We went straight back through Berlin to West Berlin. And indeed, the passing of Berlinery had started and would have a direct impact on how we were operating after the Fall of the Berlin Wall.

Q: Did you get any feel for how the East Germans, were they left differential towards the Soviets, were they looking after themselves all this time?

BINDENAGEL: After the democratic elections, the East Germans were looking to the Poles, to the West Germans to define their role. They were basically told by the West Germans what to do and were not able to get any international support for what they were doing. But there were fun events in this time of transition. Speaking of Strasbourg reminds me of the visit by Jim Woolsey, who was at that point negotiator for the Conventional Forces in Europe negotiations. He wanted to go to the same headquarters of the East German Army that Zoellick had attempted to visit. This time we were more successful. We arrived on time. We did the same Berlinery theological logistics all the way around Berlin, but we got there on time. We went into the NVA headquarters and were met by the East German colonels in uniform, who escorted us into the conference room. There we met with a young, 20-something year-old State Secretary Marzinek, who was a revolutionary, although he had served in the NVA. He and Mr. Woolsey had a correct and pleasant discussion, as these East Germans Officers looked on in bewilderment. They clearly were baffled and uncertain about this American Ambassador talking directly to their State Secretary; it had never happened before. Jim Woolsey tells the story to this day. It was really funny. Strange world was coming, the world was coming apart, that's really what we were experiencing. That the old no longer fit, it was still in place, were would that world go?

Q: Were you getting a feeling at all from East Germans, were they concerned about their role in the former government, particularly Stasi, was this beginning to make people nervous?

BINDENAGEL: Absolutely. The nervousness increased as we got closer and closer to unification. However, the democratically elected Volkskammer decided to open the Stasi files themselves. They passed a law and began the process of historical examination that led in some cases to recrimination, but the process was an historical examination. After unification the law was passed again in the Bundestag creating the same law into law for all Germany. So that historical review process began already in the first months of unification. There were exposés of people like Ibrahim Bihme, the leader of the social democrats. Yes, there were scandals. Ron Brown had come and visited us at this time...

Q: He was Secretary of Commerce.

BINDENAGEL: He was later Secretary of Commerce. He and his son wanted to see some of these revolutionaries and I took him out and we went to a church basement we met some revolutionaries, including Wolfgang Schnur. Unfortunately, Schnur turned out to be a Stasi agent! I later found that such revelations were common. Several of the people that I dealt with, in fact, somebody working at USIS, Steven Laufer, who had been also a speech writer for Berlin Governing Mayor Diepgen, claimed to be a South African, turned out was not only Stasi but was actually an agent for the KGB. He was working at the Press Section in the American House in West Berlin. There was always the question of who worked for the Stasi. In the Embassy itself, our employees were all from the "Dienstleistungsamt" or the DLA, the East German Labor Office. Every one of them reported to State Security, and as unification was nearing, many of them confessed to us that they were reporting to the Stasi. Of course, they did it only because they had to if they were to keep their jobs. Others were embarrassed, some quit and disappeared, some denied that they ever did anything to harm us. Our own household staff told us almost immediately that they were interviewed regularly about what we were doing, what we said, there were wiretaps on our phones and so on. Stasi surveillance was very much a part of the fabric of life and it was a very serious problem.

Q: Was our Embassy in Berlin, were you feeling more and more a kind of observer to things that were happening?

BINDENAGEL: Yes, the Embassy was very much sidetracked in fomenting or supporting the revolution. The Embassy in East Berlin never really was able to play much of a role domestically except on occasional interventions in unification process. But what we did do is report on events with our analysis and work with Washington to support the unification process. We worked closely with the democratically elected Prime Minister to GDR Lothar De Maiziere. We brought the highest U.S. visitor to the GDR, Secretary Baker. Although he had come to visit under the old government, he helped move the elections forward and supported unification. We tried to work very closely to get a visit with President Bush, which was not possible. However, we were able to win an invitation for De Maiziere, the democratically elected Prime Minister, to visit President Bush. Working with Robert Hutchins, at the NSC's European Office, we worked very hard to arrange visit and talked about how to win GDR support for the 2+4 talks outcome. We wanted to recognize not what the Embassy had done but rather what the East German revolutionaries had actually achieved. They elected a democratic government with a mandate for unification with Germany. President Bush in June of 1990 did receive Prime Minister De Maiziere in the White House and made the right point that the U.S. recognized not only the West German role, but also what the East Germans had done to achieve the end of division of Germany. I was very pleased as we saw the end of division of Europe that we had recognized some of the revolutionaries that helped make it possible. This was a very important symbolic message that was overlooked in the shuffle of papers moving through June 1990, which was a very important month in German unification.

At the end of the month German economic monetary union took place, where East German currency was abolished, and exchanged for German, D-Marks at three different exchange rates. In the night of June 30-July 1, armored cars moved through the quiet streets of Berlin with police escorts, sirens screaming. Overnight the D-Mark was delivered and at effective rate of 1.8 East marks to the D-Mark. The D-Mark put East German industry out of business overnight. The conversion raised prices way beyond the market value of anything the East Germans could produce. It gave some cash to individuals, their savings were converted at 1:1. The used car market was exploding, you could make a lot of money selling used cars, computers and stereos. It also sealed the fate of East Germany. There was no economy left, East Germany was disappearing on the way to unification. The NVA military was free from the Soviets, but had no role. The place really was unraveling.

Q: I would have thought that you all in Berlin would have been following the economy very closely, because if all of the sudden the so-called independent country loses its currency, as was in those days, today with Euro coming in it's a bit different, but in those days that's as much sovereignty as you could possibly give up.

BINDENAGEL: Absolutely. And we did follow events very closely; we reported on the effects of what was happening. We reported on collapse of companies and efforts to deal with the debt issues of companies, which were converted at the same exchange rate, including debt. As a result companies couldn't sell anything and their debt was higher than they could ever repay. We spent a lot of time trying to work with them to see what could be done to support new investment. We did a lot to try to see if American business would be interested.

In the postal, area, as they moved through unification, East German Postal Minister, Fischer I think was his name, proposed the idea they keep East German postal system, which also included telecommunications, separate for ten years from the Bundespost in order to modernize it. We had 15 or so American companies absolutely clamoring to get into that piece of Germany, to bring in cellular and digital phones, to bring in fiber-optic cable, to move this new Germany into the 21st century and to have a piece of action. The Federal Post Ministry in West Germany was, however, much stronger and in negotiations this idea was squashed. In fact I received an irate phone call from Mannesmann which had an American company as a subcontractor, very irate, screaming at me, what I was doing trying to cut them out of the market and so on. To which I could only explain that we had 15 American companies that were willing to do things other than lay copper cable which is what they still had in stock and they started to do until they ran out. Nevertheless, the Germans combined the two postal services into one postal area, and kept our companies out at initial stages of unification. It caused a lot of bad blood in 1990 period. But yet, we did follow the economy very closely.

Q: Were we as aware during this period before of how almost abysmal the production of the GDR was? Or was this beginning to surface, because we always thought of the GDR as being a crown jewel of Soviet Block economy and that kind of blinded our eyes to what was being produced, or how was that dealt with at this time?

BINDENAGEL: The state of the East German economy was fascinating. The first fact was that the people ate well; they had cars and they had electricity and they lived better than anywhere else in the Soviet Union. The second fact was that all statistics, including environmental statistics, were all top-secret. That secrecy covered everything from industrial production to public health; all statistics were kept secret. We, the West, were then shown the exemplary examples of East German productivity. With its secrecy the GDR had in this totalitarian system, they simply controlled information, which prevented a transparent examination of the economy. There were a few industries, which were really stellar industries, for example the computer-chip industry. Honecker touted the expertise in the computer field by praising the manufacture of a microchip, which was ridiculed privately as "the world's largest microchip." Nevertheless, it was in that industry, right at the time of 1989 revolution that the GDR had been able to reverse-engineer a 386 IBM computer. I visited the factory and met with the engineers after unification and they were very proud of their achievement. It was the GDR, as they asserted, that kept all the Soviet component parts for East Bloc computer systems working. Despite the West's export control regime, Coordinating Committee (COCOM), they had been able to get access to Western computers and the technology to crack the system. However, such successes were exceptional. In more traditional industries we knew the situation was much worse. The roads were deteriorating and were generally in a bad shape. The railroads and the two automobile companies were of poor quality. Factories spewed out effluents damaging the environment. Waldsterben, death of the forests, was a great concern. But as long as all of the data was classified, some of it "Top Secret," our analysis was something that was based on intangibles. The intangible that made East Germany work was "Vitamin B." Vitamin B, stood for "Beziehung" or "contacts" and was a kind field expediency to correct problems but was not evident. For example, you could not see them take a shovel and make a plow out of it. You couldn't see it. You couldn't see bartering trade that would bring things from the West to get in the crucial materials that you needed in order to keep producing. The system only worked on "Vitamin B," on contacts, personal relationships, that were everywhere.

Q: The Italians call this Vitamin B "arrangiarsi," which means "tmake arrangements."

BINDENAGEL: That's it! But if you're an economist, you simply can't say "I don't have any statistics, however, I have seen a couple of really great examples of economic efficiency. Anecdotally, this place works." Unfortunately, that was the basis of much of our economic calculations. The East Germans knew that they had a 2/3rds economy, not some economic miracle.

One joke circulated at the time along these lines:

East German manager meets a Japanese manager (at the time the powerhouse economy was Japan.) The East German expresses his awe and admiration for the Japanese economy and asks the Japanese manager to lift the cloud of bewilderment and tell him the Japanese secret. The proud Japanese manager looks at the forlorn East German and declares: "Our secret is quite simple. We work one-third of the time for ourselves, one-third of the time for our company and one-third of the time for the Emperor." "Eureka," exclaims the East German manager, "Now I understand. We, too, work one-third of the time for ourselves, one-third of the time for our company and we have no emperor!"

Of course when the unification process took place, there was much more transparency. We started seeing these dismal factories and we said, "How does this work? This is a factory built in 1880 and it's still using the same equipment! I wonder why the Soviets didn't take it with them!" And then we saw that the special cases were few. The monetary unification took place and the Vitamin B relationships disappeared. There was no way that they could barter and the economy began to collapse. When we came to look more closely at the economy, we did not see the "Beziehungen" that had kept it together. The relationships simply weren't there. And then we were roundly criticized; the criticism was, "How could you ever believe that anything could ever work in such an economy? This is stupid you didn't see this disaster coming." Well, it wasn't stupid, it was a closed society, cloaked in secrecy and functioning on this field expediency. We made the best analysis based on very limited knowledge and defended our efforts. Of course, we should have seen, we should have known more, but we didn't, and when the collapse came it came very rapidly and very deeply, and the place was very much shut down. Some of the collapse was also induced by the introduction of the D-Mark, which converted East German debt into hard currency that none of these companies could pay. That currency conversion contributed to the collapse of the East German economy, even when none of us mourned its disappearance.

Q: During this time, we're up to the summer of 1990, was the Embassy sort of trying to play catch-up, where things happening so fast...? Were you for one thing seeing yourself as worked out of a job?

BINDENAGEL: As a matter of fact, it was a fascinating time. Since humor often reflects reality better than analysis, let me recall two jokes that were circulating at the time. One was a reference to Otto von Bismarck. During the fall of '89 and through the spring of '90, events were happening so fast that the present was blurred. The comment on the time was: "Bismarck said; 'When the world comes to an end, we will all go to Mecklenburg, because everything happens there 100 years later.'" We heard that comment and said, "Okay, what's happening in Mecklenburg?" Indeed, Mecklenburg is a distant province in the North where it is quiet and often behind the times. My ancestors came from Mecklenburg-Vor Pommern.

Q: That being in East Germany?

BINDENAGEL: Yes, it was an East German State. The quote offered us a perspective on time. As demonstrations were taking place in the fall of 1989 we watched those in Leipzig in particular. It was a fast-paced and very exciting time in Leipzig, in Dresden and even in Plauen, a small border town of 50,000 people where some 100,000 demonstrators gathered one night. East Germany was literally exploding with demonstrations. When we looked at Mecklenburg in that period of September-October 1989, we were astonished to see demonstrations had already appeared in Mecklenburg. Recalling the Bismarck quote, we made a little calculation and said, "If two weeks after the big demonstrations in Leipzig, there are demonstrations are in Mecklenburg, then two weeks equals a hundred years. Maybe the world is indeed coming to an end." That was the feeling that we had as we watched the end of the Cold War.

The speed of events was like being on a video, watching yourself on a video stuck on 'fast forward'. Fast forward was stuck for months. When you went to sleep by the time you woke up the next day, your world was totally disorientated. I must have asked myself daily: "Where are we in this movie, where are we in this play?" Each day I needed to find my spot just to know where to hop back on into the movie. The movie kept on moving, all the way through the summer.

All activity was not revolutionary however. On the other hand, in the summer of 1990 we had begun working with George Ward, Embassy Bonn DCM, to structure a new Embassy office in Berlin. We cut some positions and we set up the staffing patterns. Of course I knew that after unification, my position as deputy would be redundant, because obviously the deputy in Bonn would be the deputy for all of Germany. But because there were so many things going on we thought that the unification wouldn't come until January of '91, and that there would be a few administrative things that needed to be dealt with as we tried to put these two missions together. That was a mistake on my part.

I went to California to visit my in-laws, with my family, we came back in late July, early August. In the meantime Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait on August 2nd. Why was that important? It was important because in the GDR all of the Middle Eastern terrorists had bases and were working from GDR. One time after the democratic government was elected, I went to visit the Interior Minister of the GDR, with an official visitor about the East German involvement in the LaBelle Disco bombing in West Berlin. [Interior] Minister Peter-Michael Diestel was sitting across the table and we were talking about terrorists and the LaBelle Disco bombing.

Q: This was the bombing of a nightclub in Berlin by the Libyans, some 10 years before.

BINDENAGEL: Exactly, the bombing was in the mid-1980s and at least one American was killed. We were looking for the information on the Libyans, because they, like the Iraqis, were operating from East Germany. Our conversation about the LaBelle Disco bombing, went well. Later, the Germans worked closely with me to arrest and convicts several people involved in this terrorist act, but that's another story.

Diestel, the Minister, and his East German policemen, who were still part of this Stasi organization, suddenly sat back and said; "I have a report it's an interesting one. You asked about terrorism and we have a more recent, a new one to report." He went to the next room and asked someone to bring him that report. He put down this report in front of me and said: "Since the outbreak of the Golf War we've been getting these reports in here is one of them. This is a report of a Middle Eastern-looking person driving a West German rented car, filming a residence, casing a place. We suspect that he is setting up an assassination." And I replied: "Can I see the report? I would be very interested." I looked at the address, and the address was my house. I asked the minister, Mr. Diestel, "Would you mind if I had a copy of this report? This is where I live!" He said, "Of course not" and gave me a copy. I alerted our security people and at that point my life in East Berlin changed. Under threat our West Berlin colleagues, who had treated us in communist East Germany as second, poor cousins apparently felt some pity on me. For my remaining time in the last few days in the GDR, and gave me a partially armored car to drive around in. We also undertook some other security precautions because timing of the threat was linked to the U.S. invasion of Iraq. My children remember vividly this time because I would no longer say goodbye to them at the front door as I had done even through the revolution. I simply did not want them exposed to danger if an assassination attempt was made as I left the house.

One most rewarding decision taken by the Department of State before the GDR disappeared was the creation of a new consulate in Leipzig. Ambassador Barkley proposed opening a Leipzig consulate right after the fall of the Berlin Wall and before Baker's December 1989 visit to East Berlin. He wanted to take the initiative on several ideas and one of those was opening a Consulate in Leipzig. We suggested opening a Consulate in Leipzig or better said, reopening the consulate we had in Leipzig until 1940. That consulate was started with an American of German descent, Frederick Liszt, who was from Recklingshausen. He had emigrated to the U.S. because of his radical pro-capitalist views. While in the U.S. he learned railroad business from Harriman. And then he came back to Germany with the title of Consul. He wanted to find a job where he would be recognized as U.S. Consul. He tried Berlin, but was rejected. Then he went to Leipzig where his main activity was building the first railroad between Leipzig and Dresden. He became the first American Consul. We thought there was a historical connection, which was nice, but more important, opening the consulate was a way of saying, "Thank you, here are the heroes of 1989 revolution, heroic city of Leipzig." Leipzigers went to the streets in the thousands and hundreds of thousands and brought down the communist system. We wanted to be on record of having said "America stands for those who demand their freedom."

The Department of State decision was not so easy. We had already argued for a decision in November 1989 and had no answer. Luckily a friend of mine, Bill Inglee, from the House of Representatives, where I had been a Congressional Fellow, visited East Berlin in January 1990. This staff member and I were talking and I told him about his proposal for a Consulate in Leipzig. He said, "that's very interesting. We should have that, that's a very good thing." So in February 1990, Secretary Baker was testifying before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Bill had written a question for Mr. Baker, and the question was, "Mr. Secretary, are you opening Consulates in Bratislava, Kiev and Leipzig?" Bratislava had been a major discussion, "Kiev" had also been under discussion for a very long time, but Leipzig was apparently new. The Secretary's response was, "Leipzig?" with a big question mark on it. But since the transcript came out with a period, I got immediately a call from the East German Foreign Office saying "you're opening a Consulate in Leipzig, are you?" They had received the message and they understood immediately why we were doing this, "You are doing this because of the demonstrators!" "Yes, we could do that" was my reply. We had no problem opening a second office in GDR, because in 1974 when we negotiated diplomatic recognition of East Germany, the GDR wanted an office in New York. We conceded that point to get the title to our property on Pariserplatz next to the Brandenburg Gate. This person from the East German Foreign Office told me immediately, "No problem, I understand you have the right to have a Consulate." So we began the process of finding the Consulate, getting the State Department to say "yes," since the Secretary had said "yes," so to speak. The State Department didn't like this idea, and they didn't understand it. They said, "Why are you trying to open a consulate in Leipzig?"

Jim Dobbins came to Germany where I saw him in Bavaria. He was Assistant Secretary by then in the European Bureau. We had this conference and Michael Stürmer, a professor from Ingolstadt, said, "Why are you doing this Consulate in Leipzig, you should be doing it in Dresden, that's the heart of Saxony, heart of Germany as well, that's where all the activity is?" Dobbins turned to me and said "You explain it, it's your idea!" So I explained that we were trying to do it for political statement and that this is a very important one, we had a Consulate there before and wished to send a political message in support of freedom. Dobbins stated that the Department of State would approve this Consulate in Leipzig, but we will review it in six years. Meaning, in administrative parlance that the State Department would close it in six years because Germany will be united and we won't need Consulates any more.

Another highlight that I had was regaining the title for the U.S. property at Pariserplatz. I went over to the East German Foreign Ministry on the request of the State Department administrative side, for a copy of our title to that property. The Director General, Mr. Neumann, came to the Embassy. He had never been to the American Embassy. This was after the elections and I received him in our small visitors' room for his presentation of the title of that property next to the Brandenburg Gate, Pariserplatz 2. He was nervous about his own future and talked of his cabin in the woods where he would retire. He showed me the city plan of Berlin with the surrounding property near Pariserplatz. I was excited because we could rebuild our Embassy in the heart of united Germany, I hope.

Q: Had we been trying to do anything about these terrorists, middle Eastern and other terrorist who had been trained in East Germany? Was that a bone of contention or not? Even prior to all these things?

BINDENAGEL: Prior to the democratic election of March 18, 1990 the GDR would not entertain any discussion with the United States on such matters. We raised the La Belle bombing after the change of government because we attributed the bombing directly to the GDR. We had tried to discuss the issue for years, but they had gone nowhere. What we didn't know was that the West German terrorists, who had killed American soldiers and many leading German politicians and businessmen, were being harbored by the GDR. After unification these terrorists were exposed. Terrorism became a very serious problem for us but we really had very much success.

Q: How do things play out here? We're towards the end of '90?

BINDENAGEL: Right. By end of 1990 we had opened our Consulate in Leipzig (in September 1990). German unification came on the 3rd of October, along with it the pink slips from our own government as East Germany disappeared and the U.S. Embassy closed. I left few weeks later. Ambassador Barkley left almost immediately, because this country had disappeared and he really had no role. And after getting my own pink slip from the head of our Mission in West Berlin, Harry Gilmore, I left shortly thereafter returning to Washington in January. I left in November, took a short leave and reported for duty in January.

Q: What was the general feeling about whither Germany with this East Germany when you left?

BINDENAGEL: There was a lot of optimism that unification would bring prosperity to the former East Germany. There were no regrets at the passing of the communist dictatorship. On the night of German unification there was a huge celebration in downtown Berlin. In Embassy Berlin we had a party ourselves, an awards ceremony for our troops that had delivered so much during the revolution. We had a lot of meritorious honor awards and other awards were given out. And then as the night wore on, the real jubilation was on the other side of the Brandenburg Gate at the Reichstag, where the Chancellor raised the German flag. Jean and I walked from the U.S. Embassy to the GDR after the party through the Brandenburg Gate surrounded by the cheering crowd. I felt a great sense of accomplishment tinged with anger at the clumsy way my own colleagues from West Germany dismissed us in the East, as if we were tainted by serving in a communist country. We sensed that the tremendous satisfaction and hope of unification, and the idea that in a few years West German capital and East German capability would make Germany united, wealthy and rich. Our own treatment foreshadowed the dashing of hope that occurred over the next five years. Revolution swept away the communists, but soon other problems would become very difficult.

Q: During these events was there much interest on the part of Congressmen or in a way had it sort of fallen off the screen and they were looking at sexier places or something? How did you feel about it?

BINDENAGEL: For a brief moment we were in the spotlight. Congressmen came in droves. We must have had 90 Members of the House and 30 or 40 Senators, coming in the period between the fall of the Wall, the 10th of November to March when the East Germans voted. Several of them were very influential and wanted to see for themselves before they decided on own opinions and own conclusions about the revolution, unification and the future of Europe. A couple of them were really fun.

One was on December 2nd, 3rd, 4th 1989, when Senator Pell led a Senate Foreign Relations Committee delegation to Berlin. We met them at the airport, there were a number of Senators. Senator Garn was there; I don't remember them all. We brought them to the Ambassador's residence for a relatively small we had a dinner planned. We could accommodate only a small group including the Senators, two staff members, two people from the Embassy (the Ambassador and myself) in order to maximize the guests from the East German Foreign ministry and many of the revolutionaries that we'd known. Gathering all these people in the same place made for an absolutely delightful time, rather like the round-table government that was taking over the GDR. We lost several of the communist guests, particularly members of the Volkskammer and Politburo who did not come. We were very disappointed that they didn't come, we had counted on them to help us understand the gravity of the revolution. There were other communists and the Foreign Office types, but not the members of the Parliament. What we learned however was that there was a special session of the Central Committee to revise the Constitution, deleting the monopoly of the power of the communist party in the GDR Constitution, as an effort to save the communists. It was a desperate act, doomed to failure. For us we lost our guests, but it was a fascinating time. Congressmen, Senators interacted with the revolutionaries and communists who did come. I joined in a conversation with Senator Garn and Schorlemmer, a radical who regaled us with stories of the revolution.

The next day the Congressional Delegation had a whole set of briefings in West Berlin and then on Saturday night about 11 o'clock Senator Lugar's assistant, Ken Myers called me. I had been unable to accommodate all the staff at the dinner and they were rather upset. In fact, when I announced that we had only two seats for staff at the dinner one of them told me that I would never be confirmed for anything because they would remember for as long as they lived that I had prevented them from attending the Ambassador's dinner. In an effort to make peace, Senator Pell asked that I come and join them on Sunday. Of course I accepted. They were in West Berlin and were going to take a tour of Berlin. I joined them on their tour bus, the ten Senators or so, and we toured a little bit of West Berlin before crossing Checkpoint Charlie. There, as we crossed into East Berlin, the Army major, was giving them a Cold War U.S. Army talk about divided Berlin. The briefing could have been dated in 1965, and had no relevance to anything that had happened in the last few weeks of revolution.

So I took the microphone from her and said; "Would you mind if I continued? I would be delighted to conduct the rest of the tour." While they wanted to go see the house where the capitulation of World War II had been signed, I agreed that that site was interesting. However, I suggested that en route we had to see the sites of the revolution. We had to go to Alexanderplatz, where I told them about demonstrations that took place on Alexanderplatz; how the East Germans marched down the main street, Unter den Linden, past the Parliament VolkskammerPalast der Republik building. As they moved toward Martini church en route to the Brandenburg Gate, the demonstrators heard "To the Gate." I only saw this three times myself, but there were all kinds of demonstrations, where the provocateurs in this crowd, not revolutionaries, would say "To the gate!" I surmised they were provocateurs because the Brandenburg Gate, near our Embassy, was guarded by police who filled trucks waiting for the confrontation. It was a set up, and the police were preparing to confront the demonstrators and brutally take care of them. However, the leaders of the demonstrations, ministers and some demonstrators themselves, were able to force the crowd to stop and turn into the big parking lot, in front of Honecker's office, sit down and light candles.

I wanted the Senators to hear these stories, such as how the Fernsehturm, the TV tower, had for several weeks jammed news reports of the West Berlin radio station of 100.6, whose very conservative news programming angered the GDR. I wanted to take them to the Gethsemane Church, near Schöenhauserallee. There I said; "Here at this church were the Monday night Lutheran vigils for the political prisoners in the GDR who were held as demonstrations continued in Berlin. I recalled the day, October 7, 1989 that Gorbachev had said to Honecker, 'Those who come too late will be punished by history.' After Gorbachev's comment the same evening there was a demonstration at this, the Gethsemane church, with thousands of East Germans. The East German police that had moved against them with clubs, dogs and trucks with snow shovels on the front to disperse them. I wanted the Senators to get a sense of the revolution that breached the Berlin Wall.

We went to a few other places before heading out to the Soviet military district to see the Museum where the Nazis signed the capitulation. As we were driving along Karl Marx Allee, suddenly a policeman stops us, stops all the traffic, and I thought; "What have we done now?" I got out of the bus, went over to the policeman, and I said with a tone of authority; "What's going on here?!" He replied rather sheepishly: "It's not my fault, we didn't do it, we had nothing to do with it." At this point, I saw people coming up from the underground walkways, and lining up to block the street. It dawned on me immediately. Ruth Misselwitz, the wife of the soon-to-be State Secretary in the democratically elected GDR and also pastor at the Pankow Lutheran Church, had told me couple of weeks before that she was helping to organize a 'human chain' of protestors from the northern part of East Germany all the way to the Alps. She said the theme was "Renewal of the GDR."

What we were witnessing as the people poured out of the ground was this human chain. I rushed back to the bus and said, "I'm sorry about the delay, but if you want to see a demonstration, let's go right now. If you come off the bus, we will be able to go talk to these people and see the revolution in progress." I worried only a moment. At that point if it was going to be violent it was going to be violent, but it wasn't. Senators and their staff were engaged with these people and trying to understand. They asked: "Why are you out here, what are you doing?" The demonstrators were lighting their candles, but remained silent, because they are supposed to be silent. Everyone was taking pictures. The human chain began at noon; at 12:15, the demonstrators disappeared; they just went away. It was amazing. All the organizing had been done by the word of mouth, and there were millions of people there that day. Reluctantly, we climbed back on the bus and went to this house of capitulation. The Nazi capitulation was an anticlimax, after seeing the revolution in action.

Q: I'm sure it was.

BINDENAGEL: I redeemed myself with the staff; I guess. [laughter] Those were really the kinds of events that were pouring out all the time.

Q: When you came back to Washington and you check in to European Affairs, what sort of reception did you get? This is a loaded question, so often when people had been in the eye of the hurricane, or whatever you want to say the point of the charge for something, you get back to Washington and there really isn't much effort to debrief people for what they learned. I was wondering if that you experienced that?

BINDENAGEL: It's a story I tell only reluctantly. The European Bureau did not return me to the State Department, they refused orders. I signed a waiver accepting financial responsibility for my shipment while the Department of State sorted out who would pay for my return. I needed to get my family back to enroll my children in school in time to complete a semester without losing a semester. I returned to the State Department and reported to Personnel for duty. They sent me the administrative office of the Economics Bureau, EB/EX.

When I went into the personnel department, they said "Do you have your orders?" I said "No, I don't have any orders." They found the orders in the file and they said, "oh, oh, well, oh." Embarrassingly they said I had been identified for a position they couldn't fill and had assigned me without consultations. They gave me the orders and sent me to see the Director for the European Bureau Executive Office, EB/EX, who took one look at me and said, "You can grieve this assignment, you don't have to accept this." I said, "If in its wisdom the State Department wants me to do this job, I will do it." We're talking about a year assignment and I understood service discipline. Besides I had just had the assignment of my career and there was no way to top it.

The job was an office director for trade with developing countries, as far away from Germany as you can get, far away from everything I had previously experienced. The office was a mess; I could see why people didn't want the job. Nevertheless, I worked diligently for several months, little less than a year, working on getting the developing countries in the NAFTA agreement, particularly Mexico. Doing some other things, it was very fun time.

There was no interest in the European Bureau in debriefing me or even in talking to me. I would describe the time more as an exile from my previous assignments, than an interest. Since I was unassigned for the next summer, I had applied for a training assignment, the senior seminar. There was one position left for and FSO-1, but it was given to chargé d'affaires for Baghdad. Disappointment followed disappointment but eventually I was assigned to an executive exchange program. Apparently I was too senior and there were no positions, however, Deputy Secretary Eagleburger intervened and was assigned to work for Rockwell International for one year.

Q: Would you ascribe this were you on somebody's list or was this just, the Department, you know, if your country goes down the drain essentially, you're just a problem. Looking at this with some, I would hope, maturity and distance, what would you ascribe it to?

BINDENAGEL: Some of the problem was being off cycle (the embassy closed on October 3, 1990) and not being able to be placed, there were not many jobs left. Second is that during the revolution there were a lot of reports that people in Washington did not like what the Embassy in East Berlin was doing. I frankly ignored them because I assumed the grumbling was from envious colleagues. One of them was awarded the Department of State Distinguished Honor award; I received a superior honor award. We kept the Department fully informed and I also spoke almost daily with Jim Holmes, in the Policy Planning staff; I assumed a direct line to S/P caused some consternation in my own bureau. I know that in dealing with the incidents on October 3-4, 1989 with the asylum seekers in the Embassy, when I closed the Embassy that I had angered some people. I don't know why the decision was taken not to return me to the European bureau. I think it was a combination of a lot of things. I know that there was some personal animosity, lack of jobs, availability of hard to fill jobs. In the end the European Bureau had no commitment to its people in East Berlin. That was the hardest thing for me to deal. There was no commitment to placing people who had done, what I thought was a good job.

I was treated as if, we who served in the East were the part of the communist camp, as if we had been the part of the problem, as if we had been on the East German side during the "two plus four" negotiations. We were apparently tainted.

Q: This happens sometimes. Earlier it manifested itself when people were kidnaped or held hostage. There was a great effort on the behalf of the Department to change that attitude because the original attitude was, "Well, you should have gotten yourself taken hostage in the first place." This was very much the case. It's funny, because I ask the question not knowing, but from my many other interviews and the personal experience, I've seen when you come back from the most trying thing, often there just isn't any interest.

BINDENAGEL: I was personally very angry, exceedingly angry for about a year. Not so much that I didn't have a job, but I felt very mistreated and that my family had to bear the brunt of the treatment. On the other hand, coming back last September (1997), after having been a chargé d'affaires in Germany for a year and a half, I also did not have an assignment. I was asked to be a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the European Bureau, but priorities changed and another person was given the job. Promises, promises. In 1997, I felt much better about the treatment. I did learn not to expect the commitment to reward excellence. Excellence is its own reward.

Q: I'm not sure when you say the problem of closing the Embassy in October, you're talking about October 1990?

BINDENAGEL: No, the incident was in 1989. That was when the children, the escapees, the asylum seekers sought refuge in the Embassy and we negotiated their safe emigration from the GDR.

Q: When you were in the Economics Bureau, what did you feel was your major function?

BINDENAGEL: We had several trade issues, there were some questions of general schedule preferences, and we had trade framework agreements that were negotiated with Americans who were in other Latin American countries. We had business with [Alejandro] Foxley, Finance Minister from Chile, basically was working on developing countries, the Caribbean and South American trade problems. It was not particularly rewarding, but the work was very important. The NAFTA agreement negotiations took place that time and we played role in that.

Q: North American Free Trade Agreement.

BINDENAGEL: Right. I played a role in the automotive talks, in some energy talks. It was an interesting time but sort of a sidelight.

Q: Then you went to Rockwell for what?

BINDENAGEL: I spent a year there where we did some strategic marketing with Soviet Union. In fact, the day I arrived the coup d'état attempt had taken place. Soon after that the Soviet Union collapsed. Rockwell had done a lot in aero-space of course and so did the Russians and they had a project for an Ilyushin aircraft transport plane that they needed western engines, they got Pratt and Whitney engines, and they needed avionics, which Rockwell had. That was one project I participated in. There were some other scientific things; science was very good in the Soviet Union. Also worked on some of the relationships that they had with the Germans, with Daimler-Benz, and tried to create some business opportunities there with JPATS joint patrol on training aircraft that they were proposing. How to present it to the US. It was kind of fun. Rockwell didn't win that contract...

Q: You finished up at Rockwell when?

BINDENAGEL: I finished in the fall of 1992. I have to come back to individuals in the State Department that count. Tom Niles had been my office director when I was a desk officer in the Central European Affairs Office before he was Assistant Secretary. He knew me and how I had been treated. What goes around comes around, we also said. Tom Niles asked if I would be a Office Director for Central Europe - Germany, Austria and Switzerland. I said yes, it was a very good way to come out of exile if you will and come back to Foreign Service. I had a chance to do some really good work. President Bush was still there and we had an aviation agreement that was being negotiated, of course we had the American elections that fall. I enjoyed plunging back in and seeing what had happened in the year and a half that I had been away from Germany. Not very long, but nonetheless, a lot had happened.

There were many really very interesting events that took place after January of 1993 when the Clinton Administration was sworn in. I had been working in the fall of 1992 on the return of the Berlin Documents Center records, BDC, which were the party records of the Nazi party captured by U.S. Forces at the end of World War II. Tom Niles, when he was office director in 1980-1981 had negotiated an agreement to microfilm all of the Nazi records in the Berlin Document Center. This project was finished and the National Archives was to receive a complete microfilmed copy. While I was preparing to return these originals documents to German Federal Archives, Richard Holbrooke was named Ambassador to Germany. Shortly afterward, I went to a meeting in Jerusalem on German-American-Israeli relations, and while in Jerusalem New Yorker magazine ran a story about the return of BDC records, including an interview with Ambassador-designate Holbrooke. Of course the story did not come out exactly with the facts as I saw them, but rather ran along the line that the U.S. was giving this American property away and the Nazi records will be lost to us. Consequently, I was faced with the question that scholars would never be able to do research again in these records because of my irresponsible action.

The story was picked up by House of Representatives Member Tom Lantos, who was Hungarian survivor of Nazi concentration camps, and a Congressman from California. He took article's assertion as the truth and denied the State Department comments were truthful. He was saying; "You can't turn the documents, you have to consult the Congress," which we had done over the years. The decision was to implement the agreement from the 1980s. Nevertheless, Lantos called for a Congressional hearing, which included very contentious presentations about what we were doing. I was also called before the Office of the Inspector General to determine whether we were disposing of U.S. Government property properly. Both the hearing and the IG determined we were acting correctly and we returned the records to the German Government.

Q: It sounds like something that should have been taken care of. Was it just a political temper tantrum or something?

BINDENAGEL: Yes, the incident showed the showed tremendous political sensitivity about issues from the Nazi-period. I say this because this historical period keeps returning as an issue for me personally. The other event that occurred in April 1993, the opening of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. I had helped approve a piece of legislation when I was on the desk with Tom Niles and John Kornblum as directors. The legislation in 1983 had created the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council. That lead to grant of land on the Mall and the creation of Holocaust Memorial Museum. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum opening was in April. Just before April, the new Administration had come into office...

Q: We're talking about the Clinton Administration, '93.

BINDENAGEL: ... and Secretary Warren Christopher's first speech in February was on the war in Bosnia. We needed to do something in Bosnia. The whole debate on Bosnia had swirled around about what the UN should do and NATO should do, what the U.S. should do, whether it should be considered an internal or international conflict. Bosnia dominated the early political discussion. At the same time, the German Defense Minister, Volker Rüchke, gave a speech on March 26 in London, calling for NATO expansion for new countries, East-Central Europe. Bosnia and NATO expansion became mixed together, and I started to see in my own work that we were going to deal with them in the context of the Nazi past. We had a very interesting beginning of the Clinton Administration, from the Office of Central-European Affairs.

The opening of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, was an occasion for the Museum to invite more than 20 heads of state, heads of governments to visit, mostly from Central Europe, the Balkans and the Baltics. At the opening ceremony they had planned to have Elie Wiesel, a famous Holocaust survivor, give a speech. The Museum deemed the invitation to the government officials as a private invitation, and the Museum was organizing the opening event without help from the State Department. They insisted their event wasn't an official government meeting in Washington, although the Museum is a government institution. The Clinton Administration was new and Tom Niles, as the assistant secretary was the official responsible for all the countries invited to the Museum. He commented that this is really a Holocaust issue, and it belongs to the Office of Central European Affairs, and assigned me the duty to help deal with this 20 or so East European heads of government, who wanted to see the new president. I assigned David Straub to work closely with the Museum on a program to include a reception at the White House and a group meeting with the President, with a photo opportunity, for the visitors.

At the White House reception, President Clinton in his first days in Office, was gregarious as ever and started having individual conversations with these people. It was raining outside where the reception was held. It was April, cold, rainy, and hot. The reception was supposed to be two hours, three hours into the reception these people hadn't come outside yet. We all wondered what they talked about. They talked about Germany's history, Holocaust, they talked about Russia, they talked about where they sat between these two great powers that had fought over their territories and they pleaded for a seat at the table at NATO. They wanted to be a part of NATO. President Clinton told his National Security Advisor Tony Lake to take this issue on and see what could be done.

Part of the reason the Holocaust and NATO enlargement emerged from the Museum opening was derived from Elie Wiesel's speech at the Holocaust Memorial Museum, particularly since he was a survivor of the Nazi concentration. Wiesel spoke of the Holocaust and said there was another Holocaust beginning in Bosnia. He called on the U.S. and the heads of governments to act. He was telling the new President that he needed to do something. This event presaged my very interesting involvement in NATO enlargement.

Richard Holbrooke was named Ambassador to Germany in June, 1993 and he sought to define a whole set of new issues. He had issues for me to consider: What do we do with Bosnia, what do we do with NATO? What do we do with Central Europeans on our watch?

I had already called the Embassy in Bonn, to ask the political counselor, Don Bandler, about the Rijk's speech to determine whether the Defense Minister's talk on NATO was German policy? Do they really want this expansion, and if they are launching this initiative, what are they going to do about it? The answer back was, "Oh, no, that was just a speech by the Minister." I said, "Well, ask the Chancellor's Office, ask the Foreign Office, ask the Defense Ministry." The answer comes back, "Just a speech." What do you mean, it's just a speech? What is he trying to do? Answers would come later. In June, Senator Lugar gave a speech on NATO enlargement. He, too, had questions about what should we do with the problem in Bosnia. Suddenly we had an unofficial speech of the Defense Minister of Germany and the another from the Republican Senate opposition party, a very senior foreign policy spokesman for the Republican party saying, "NATO enlargement." Meanwhile the fighting in Bosnia continued. We did not have the answer to the question about what to do in Bosnia. We had not defined a role for the U.S.

The Germans don't have an army that could be legitimately deployed in conflict outside Germany. That is, the Bundeswehr had never been used in a conflict. The German domestic political debate is deeply involved in a series of questions on sending their ships or German Navy sailors to participate in sanctions against Serbia in the Adriatic. The debate is also legal and is expected to go to court as the issue develops. Another related issue was whether the FRG could send their crews on AWACS (Airborne Warning aircraft control ships) aircraft to fly over Hungary to monitor the NATO sanctions against Serbia? Hungary was particularly difficult because it was a former communist country and member of the Warsaw Pact. The court did not decide early on the issue; the German Government decided the Luftwaffe could fly such missions, but the F.D.P. coalition member had brought suit in court against the decision. Of course, the Luftwaffe had not been deployed in a combat at time when their defense minister proposed NATO enlargement. These security issues in the post Cold War world was all very confusing and hard to deal with.

Diplomacy is a mixture of policy papers, briefing memos and speeches that lead to decisions. Steve Oxman, the new Clinton Administration Assistant Secretary for Europe gave a speech to the Atlantic Council in August 1993. As Assistant Secretary for European Bureau his speech would be an important step forward in our policy make. Working with Oxman's speech writer, we put in a few questions that Senator Lugar had posed earlier in an attempt to see if the Atlantic Council meeting, which included press, to see if the debate on NATO enlargement was ripe for discussion. We learned that the focus was still on Bosnia, not NATO enlargement. Steve Oxman then went to a North Atlantic Council (NAC) meeting in Brussels, to talk about what kind of U.S. participation should an IFOR, an international force under the UN, have.

Then the action on new security structures shifted in the next few months over to the Pentagon and Frank Wisner, who was Under Secretary of Defense. He was invited for a regular meeting with his counterpart, FRG Defense Ministry State Secretary Jorg Schonbohm. The meeting took place in the German Ministry's Berlin office in the Bendler Block, which had been the headquarters for the Wehrmacht and sight of retribution killings for the failed coup against Hitler in July 1944.

Wisner and Schonbohm met for their annual high-level group consultations and Ambassador Holbrooke went and I also attended. The meeting was also in preparation for the upcoming Travemunde Defense Ministers meeting. The topic was of course Bosnia and the military forces necessary to meet the challenge. The State Secretaries were looking for an initiative for the defense ministers and they came up with the idea of Partnership for Peacekeeping in Bosnia. The meeting was quite remarkable and lasted late into the night. I was the only State Department attendee as the military had its long nearly all-night discussions on Partnership for Peacekeeping initiative. In the meeting agenda for Travemunde with Defense Ministers loomed large. Consequently, the Defense Ministers announced their initiative for Partnership for Peacekeeping as a way to deal with the Southeast and Central Europeans, but not to let them into NATO. Defense was not ready to discuss NATO enlargement, and they thought that this initiative of "Partnership for Peacekeeping" would fix the problem, even as it became Partnership for Peace. Indeed the debate was deflected as questions about framework agreements and work-plans enveloped the players and moved the issues inside in the bureaucracy. The delay was not long, however, the NATO Summit which was slipped from December to January 1994, took up the issue, reaffirmed Article 10 of the Washington Treaty, and started the debate again that NATO certainly could have new members. NATO enlargement did not stop the bureaucracy. From January 1994 almost all my work on security issues was on Bosnia and Partnership for Peace designed to answer questions about engaging more countries in PfP, and about preventing NATO participation in UN mission. Let the IFOR do its job under the UN and keep NATO out of the process; that was the game plan.

The Germans were arguing for a new role for the Bundeswehr. In the Gulf War in 1990/91, they didn't even want to participate. They paid a lot of money in the Gulf War, but now said the FRG would not just pay a lot of money. They argued that they were either in or out. Again the domestic, internal political debate heated up on the issue. As we then moved through the spring into summer, the Germans were still having their back and forth debate, but had reached no decision. The AWACS decision was being tested in the court.

Ambassador Holbrooke arrived in Bonn in October 1993 and remained until July 1994. In October I was chosen as his deputy, however, he told me to stay in Washington and be his deputy there while he made the acting deputy the Embassy Economics Minister his temporary DCM for this eight-month period. This was the ambassador's management style to have several "deputies." It was a very interesting constellation of star FSOs. Personnel management issues were interesting, but the FSOs worked very closely together. The NATO enlargement debate, which had been announced in January was not moving forward. The German political elite weren't playing ball: they wanted Bundeswehr to evolve, but were very nervous about the German army's historical role, especially in the Balkans.

We lived through this debate to June when the planning for President Clinton's visit to Berlin became our main pre-occupation. He was going to meet with the U.S./EU summit leaders and then have a bilateral meeting with Chancellor Kohl in Berlin. In addition, we were going to have a whole series of events, including a major speech and a "Farewell" visit to the Berlin Brigade, because in September their mission to protect divided Berlin would be accomplished. The Berlin Brigade did a super event with the troops, a fly by in helicopters with little parachutes with candy dropped to remember the airlift of 1948.

But more important, was the President's meeting with Chancellor Kohl. They met in the Reichstag and while the meeting was still on going, the German Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe, Germany decided the AWACS issue. Germany could be part of an international military force, the court decided. I received the phone call while we were sitting outside in the ante chamber outside the meeting of principals, wrote a little note saying the court had decided Germany could participate in an alliance to deploy outside of its borders with parliamentary support and gave it to Andrew Friendly who was an assistant to the President. Andrew intercepted the President as he and Kohl were going to the press conference after the U.S./EU summit. They started off the press conference and President Clinton made a reference to the court decision; he was pleased that Germany could be a full partner and he wanted the Germans to be a partner. The first time in my life that I had heard Chancellor Kohl say anything in English came right after that. He said in German at the beginning, "This does not mean..." and then he said in English "...Germans to the front." We were all little taken back, not because of English but because of what he was saying. The answer was that the Germans were partners, but they would not send troops to the front though. That dynamic was clear that we would need a high-level push to success. Ambassador Holbrooke was able to keep the pressure on after that very good visit with the President.

The President walked after that with Chancellor from the Reichstag, one block down the road and turned from the West side of Berlin to the East. He walked under the Brandenburg Gate, into the eastern part of Berlin, up to a podium where he gave a very short, exceedingly short, five-minute speech. In it, he among other things praised the Germans for their civil courage, referring in part to the East German revolution, but more recently to the demonstrators against right wing violence, neo-Nazi violence that had taken some lives. He called on the Germans to maintain their "Civil Courage." He stated that "Alles ist möglich." He assured the Germans there in the heart of reunited Berlin that the U.S. would stand on Germany's side, "Now and Forever." Then we drove through the city. There were people everywhere. The numbers according to crowd control officials were tens of thousands, maybe 80 or 90 thousand people. The whole speech event was very uplifting. The President then went on to the "Rotes Rathaus," the City Hall in East Berlin. None of these places had been visited by a sitting American president since they were in the former East Berlin.

After the Presidential visit, Ambassador Holbrooke come back to preside over a very important initiative in German-American relations, a new emphasis on commerce and culture. I say "we" in sense that as Holbrooke's deputy my job was to be creative and proposed ideas. After we discussed them and he chose what he wanted, the program was certainly his. One of his greatest ideas was a "New Traditions" Conference, recognizing that the military presence was declining rapidly in Germany, therefore and the rising need for Germany to be a partner of the U.S. in commerce and culture. We pushed very much the business and cultural connections with the U.S. Holbrooke's New Traditions Conference brought together 40 or 50 CEOs from the U.S. along with German CEOs, Chancellor Kohl, Secretary of Defense Perry, and Defense Minister [Volker] Ruhe. Holbrooke had a commitment from Vice President Gore to come, however, he tore his Achilles' tendon and we received him on interactive video. The theme of the meeting was new traditions in business and how do we keep the relationship alive and vibrant.

NATO enlargement also played a key role. In Holbrooke's effort to push for NATO enlargement, he had developed close working relationships with two of my friends, Joachim Bitterlich, the National Security Advisor, and Admiral Ulrich Weisser, the head of the FRG Defense Ministry's policy planning. During the summer Chancellor Kohl had come to attend the World Cup soccer opening game in Chicago. I attended with Holbrooke, who used the occasion to discuss with Weisser a line in the Defense Minister's upcoming speech at the New Traditions conference endorsing NATO enlargement. Holbrooke then worked on adding a line in the Vice President's speech as well.

Mr. Gore mentioned NATO enlargement in his remarks. When Secretary Perry spoke to the New Traditions meeting, we had been able to put in a little line in it about talks on NATO enlargement from the January 1994 NATO summit. In Perry's speech he mentioned that it was important to begin NATO enlargement negotiations. As planned, Volker Ruhe, the German Defense Minister said, "That means now." to which Perry said "No." The lines were drawn. From January to September we worked very hard to break this knot. Nevertheless, NATO enlargement as an issue was on the U.S.-German table and it was clear that we wanted to have this debate. We needed understanding of what NATO enlargement meant and who was playing and how important the issue would be for us.

Q: We've been talking about this peculiar thing of DCM but you were also in Washington dealing with NATO enlargement. I would like you to address the next time around how NATO enlargement was being discussed within both the State Department, the NSC, and particularly the Pentagon and also Congress. The other question I'd like to ask would be during this time, which would be from when to when? You took over that job...

BINDENAGEL: I was Office Director from 1992-1994. Although I was assigned as DCM Germany in October 1993, I actually physically moved to Bonn in June, 1994.

Q: So, in this '92-'94 period, how were the events in Yugoslavia seen, particularly through your position? Also, what you were getting from Germany? Not just because of the NATO thing but how we were reacting and the debates that you were observing about what to do there. Also, the reaction, you referred to is somewhat, the Clinton Administration, one had a feeling that early on Clinton was not, his campaign had been focused on economy and he had been a Governor of Arkansas, so this was not an Administration that came in with a high level approach to foreign affairs. Warren Christopher was not a conceptualizer, at least he was more or less the lawyer who dealt with the problem on his plate. So I'd like to get your feelings, but we'll pick these things when we pick it up next time.

Today is June 11, 1998. J.D., we're talking about NATO enlargement, could you give a perspective as you saw it, how State was looking at NATO enlargement, the Pentagon, Congress and the NSC, and note that we are talking about '92-'94, which means that we are straddling Administrations, I mean we're between two. Did these things change during this late Bush early Clinton period?

BINDENAGEL: Actually, if you start a little bit earlier, just before I came back to State from Rockwell International to head the German desk, the key decision dealing with the Germans came with the issue of recognition for Croatia and Slovenia. U.S. policy at the end of the Bush Administration was to treat Yugoslavia as unified country, not encourage its break-up, but encourage the resolution of its internal conflict. At the same time when the fighting broke out, the European debate, especially among Germans, was focused on stopping the fighting. German Foreign Minister Genscher came up with the idea that if you recognized Croatia and Slovenia; that is, made this problem an international problem, then the international community would then act in the way to stop the fighting. In conceptual terms Genscher's idea may have been correct, and you could argue that our position wasn't leading to a resolution of the conflict either, however, by recognizing Croatia and Slovenia, the Europeans only successfully internationalized the problem. They only got half of the issue correct by making the German position the EU one. The first half of the issue was to make it international issue, the second half was to intervene internationally to stop the fighting and they were not prepared to intervene. If the EU was not prepared to intervene and the UN was not able, the result was quite different than the hoped for result from the Genscher policy initiative. The fighting did not stop; it got worse. The fighting and ethnic cleansing spilled across the U.S. debate in 1992-93, when we were looking at that issue as Yugoslavia broke up.

And in terms of NATO, the debate from my vantagepoint was whether our job in Europe was finished and therefore perhaps we could go home. We asked whether we really even needed NATO? That was the debate. The sub-text was whether we could downsize dramatically our Forces in Europe. We had taken our Forces to the Gulf War and rather than bringing them back into Germany after the Gulf War, we re-deployed them to the U.S. The Pentagon set about reconfiguring the U.S. military presence in Europe and considered what force structure was necessary. They debated how to build two divisions, or two divisions (minus), and which bases were necessary and which could be closed. I became the U.S. Embassy negotiator on "residual value" of closed U.S. bases in Germany, a debate over money for military construction or for construction of a new U.S. Embassy in Berlin.

The whole concept of downsizing and eliminating our presence became also a political debate. In September of 1995 this process of U.S. abandonment of Europe was referred to in a speech at a symposium I attended at the Bundestag in the Wasserwerk. A French member of National Assembly spoke against relying on the U.S. by saying, "Look the Americans after the Gulf War re-deployed to the U.S., downsized their forces, they will continue to do that and they will leave Europe and go away." My Wasserwerk speech called for new defense industry partnerships as well as competitive projects to solidify our transatlantic cooperation. The tenor of the debate was the end of NATO and war in Europe for the Europeans to solve; that is, Bosnia was a European problem. Unfortunately the European made the problem worse, while we were downsizing and leaving. At the end of the bush Administration there was very little debate about NATO enlargement, because the issue was really about NATO's role and the continued presence of the Americans in Europe.

Q: I would think that the issue could be, particularly from the Department of State side, would be NATO made sense because it keeps all the military forces in the area under one tent, you know, we were there to keep France and Germany from going at each other again. And that in a way it doesn't look likely but it's still very much a possibility with a change in political leadership. So, it's a good idea to have it. From the Pentagon side, I would think it's something for you military forces to do, it gives employment to your troops. Congress would look the other way and the NSC would be trying to balance it up. Could you talk about this particular '92-94 period?

BINDENAGEL: In the early part of that debate indeed the question for the military was whether returning forces to the U.S. would mean demobilization. In fact, U.S. Forces were being downsized radically and DoD had to decide to keep their forces in the U.S. or in Europe. As DoD downsized in the US, the political pressure in Congress to downsize in Europe instead of the U.S. was much stronger. From where I was sitting the pressure was to maintain some semblance of NATO commitment, but to build the force structure to maintain it at home as well as to keep a minimal structure in NATO. There was also debate in the White House and in the State Department about the Franco-German relationship. We perhaps were convinced by the post war and Cold War experience that the Germans and the French had cooperated for this long period and that it wasn't necessary for us to play a mediator role in Europe any longer. If we didn't need to be there to keep to keep these formerly warring parties apart, they could build their own force structure to deal with the military problem in Bosnia. At the beginning of the process we were encouraged the Europeans to deal with this European problem. However, by the time of Chancellor Kohl's first visit to the new Administration in March 1993, the issue had changed significantly because Europeans were not able to deal with Bosnia. They were unable to bring themselves together; they were unable to bring military force to bear on the problem. Frederick the Great's comment was very applicable. He said, "Diplomacy without weapons is like an orchestra without instruments." The Europeans were playing at diplomacy, but they didn't have any instruments. They couldn't solve the Bosnia problem without us.

At the beginning of the Clinton's Administration, very early part, Christopher's very first speech was on Bosnia, and how we deal with Bosnia. Then Volker Ruhe gave this March speech on NATO expansion, trying to draw the U.S. into using U.S. military force to help NATO deal with Bosnia. That was the beginning of the debate and preparation for Chancellor Kohl's meeting with President Clinton for the first time in March of 1993. The discussion inside the NSC and the State Department was not about NATO enlargement, it was about Bosnia and how do we bring military forces into Bosnia. The debate ran along the lines of: the only forces we had were NATO forces; did we want to use them? No, we didn't. In the end, we decided on a UN mandate and preferred to have the United Nations be the multilateral forum. The UN could bring in not NATO, because NATO had opposing forces in the former Warsaw Pact; deploying NATO troops to former Warsaw Pact countries was not conceivable. But those former Warsaw Pact countries were the very countries that were affected. They couldn't be brought into NATO we thought, and consequently a UN mandate seemed to be a more reasonable approach to deal with the Bosnia problem. As we then moved through the beginning of that period of March to May, June of '93, there was a debate among ourselves, "what did the Germans mean when they talked about NATO expansion? What did Volker Ruhe, the Defense Minister mean? Why did he do this? What was his purpose?" The Germans refused to pronounce themselves openly on what the policy was, in part because they had never used their military since the Wehrmacht in the Second World War. They were very tentative and didn't want to unleash an argument among the Europeans that would bring them back into conflict.

Q: It was also against their constitution at that point, wasn't it still?

BINDENAGEL: The Constitution was the issue: it said they could only use their force in alliance. The government wanted to make its forces available outside of the borders of NATO. A friend, General Bruce Scott, wrote a paper at the National Defense University at the time with the theme "NATO, Out of Area or Out of Business." That theme captured the debate. The Germans had not tested the constitutionality of out-of-area deployments, which a Balkans force would entail. They wanted to have someone else take the leadership on the NATO issue. The Germans' strongest argument for deployment was in NATO; second was UN deployment. Neither had been tested in the court or in public opinion. Ruhe wanted us to take the initiative and present the NATO enlargement and no one in the U.S. was rising to the challenge. The next political event happened not from the White House or the State Department, the NSC on NATO enlargement, but rather from the Congress. That was in June 1993 when Senator Lugar, republican from Indiana, gave a speech in which he endorsed the idea of NATO enlargement. To bring these countries into NATO as a way of encouraging political development in their countries and bringing their military forces under the principals of NATO, such as civilian control of the military, were strong arguments. That was in June of 1993. Then we had the government of Germany and the American opposition on the similar track. But in the U.S. the debate, NATO "expansion" was opposed by senior figures like Paul Nitze and Senator Nunn and other very long term NATO proponents, saying "To change NATO would be to destroy it. It served its purpose well as it was. So why change it?"

Q: From your point of view were they saying "it served its purpose and it serves its purpose well," or were they saying "and it's sort of outrun its time and let's think about it." Was it implied that they were thinking about letting it run its course and eventually move out of NATO you think?

BINDENAGEL: No. Congressional support for NATO was strong, but the circumstances for NATO action had changed. The opponents argued that to change it, was to destroy it and argued for NATO as it was. It was a very reasonable, defensive position when NATO seemed to be under attack for political reasons. In my own view, the problem was that in 1989 when the Berlin Wall came down and we celebrated with great euphoria the end of the Cold War, we also stopped thinking about what life without divided Germany and Europe meant for our policy. We were stuck, but history went on. New conflicts arose, new or old conflicts came back to us, as in the Balkans, the Romanian/Hungarian problems over ethnic conflicts, borders with Poland and Germany, the question of Kaliningrad (Konigsberg) being a part of the Russian Federation. Most such changes, as in the borders, normally led to war in Europe. The peaceful end to the Cold War and its affects on alliances were not factored into our thinking in any strategic way in the early days of 1993.

The thinking evolved throughout the summer of 1993 as the debate moved to the U.S. policy circles, especially about the implications of sending forces to help deal with the Bosnian war. In August of 1993, Steve Oxman, the Assistant Secretary of the European Affairs at the State Department gave a speech at the Atlantic Council. His speechwriter assistant, Bob Litt, and I talked about the Lugar speech and we talked about putting the questions that Lugar and Volker Ruhe had raised into his speech in an academic setting to discuss this issue. That was done, but immediately thereafter attention turned to a NAC meeting, North Atlantic Council, in Brussels where we were negotiating what we would contribute and what we would not contribute in terms of Bosnia. And that was the debate that was happening in the State Department, in the Pentagon and in the NSC over questions such as why and where do we send forces and who should command these forces? It was clear that DOD did not want U.S. Forces commanded by the UN; they should be commanded by the U.S. We also discussed how a multilateral and multinational force could be commanded by NATO. That was the discussion and we tried very hard, and ended up with IFOR, UN forces, without American combat troops.

Q: Did you have the feeling that, I mean the Clinton administration came in with the phrase "Domestic economy is the most important thing" and President Clinton had not had any real foreign affairs experience. You did not have a Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, who had a world outlook. I mean it was basically, maybe I'm not being fair, but seemed to me, a man who was sort of the house lawyer for international affairs. He would deal with the problems, whatever the problems were on hand, he would deal with the, but he wasn't looking for anything. Did you have the feeling that you didn't have an administration that was willing to focus on this at the beginning?

BINDENAGEL: I had no doubt that the focus of the Clinton Administration was Bosnia. The Administration's effort as well as a very sincere effort by Warren Christopher, was to try to understand that Europe after the Cold War was different. We used NATO procedures and felt close to the Europeans through our values. Operationally the U.S. would lead and NATO would take whatever policy prescriptions we laid on the table and go forth. In May of 1993, Warren Christopher went to NATO with stops at several European NATO capitals with a proposal to deal with Bosnia, but nevertheless to have NATO deal with Bosnia. It was called "Lift and Strike." This "Lift and Strike" policy was to lift the arms embargo and strike at warring parties that would violate a ceasefire. Christopher was unlike those Secretaries of State who preceded him in the Cold War, whose message to NATO was: "This is what the United States has in mind; we'd like you to agree." During the Cold War the NATO representatives would argue around the table and then they would agree to the U.S. proposal. Christopher was different. He sought to build a consensus on this "Lift and Strike" policy before actually proposing it.

When he arrived in Brussels for the NATO meeting in May of 1993, he thought that he would have some consensus. However, the opposite, quite shockingly occurred. Despite his forward leaning, new look at the new Europe, by a new post Cold War America by the new administration, the Europeans didn't like this lift and strike idea because it actually meant using military force against the Serbs and other warring parties. So they ganged up on Warren Christopher and attacked him during the meeting and rejected the American policy. Christopher was angry and the rejection became a key event in determining Christopher's orientation towards the Europeans. The Europeans' effort to bring themselves together was only successful in blocking something that the U.S. wanted. It set a tone for our relationship and not a very good tone at all for the relationship that was to follow. Bosnia became the defining issue of our relationship.

So we came up with another idea of the Contact Group, bringing the key countries together to talk in the smaller group, to try and create a consensus and to work the policy through. But Christopher did indeed have a strategic vision at the beginning of the administration, on this issue, on Bosnia and security in Europe, and was torpedoed. And had to go back to the drawing board then and come up with something else. Christopher did not return to Germany again until September 1996.

Q: At this point obviously, you are a European expert at the State Department and you are surrounded by the other European experts. The Europeanists and the Department of State, were they expecting this torpedoing of the plan, what did you think before he went in and when he came out?

BINDENAGEL: Going into the visit, some of us suggested that we have a new approach, and this consultative approach was adopted. Other Europeanists were saying, "No we have to stick with American leadership, and we have to be the hegemon and we have to tell them still." There was a serious conflict in Department. Christopher agreed with the approach that we could create a consensus through consultations because we had common interests in the post Cold War. He believed that we also could achieve consensus on the Balkans. Well, clearly that thinking was premature, not only among some of Americans, but certainly among the Europeans. I think it reflects the real underlying political dynamics that were and still in play now in 1998. What is the new Europe and how do they conduct politics? The old Department of State Europeanists, including me, have years of experience with the old thinking, which reaches only a few years into the new dynamic. It is very uncertain how to consult, encourage and create consensus with the Europeans. As the result, while there is no serious crises to bring us together, there is no serious crisis to split us. Consequently, we fight little battles. This was a little one, which demonstrated that the U.S. is of two minds, and the Europeans were of at least 20 or 30 minds over what should be done.

Q: During this '92-'93 period, what were the developments on the ground, as far as European commitment and UN commitment in Bosnia?

BINDENAGEL: The issue played out in a couple of ways. One, it played out drawing on the historical connections among the British, French and Russians with the Serbs as well as between the Germans with the Croats. These historical connections played a very important role in creating tensions between the UN sending forces and the Bosnian receiving states. UN hat or no UN hat, there was no consensus on the use of force or whether use of force is even legitimate. Only after the bombing that ended the fighting and led to the Dayton Accords was a certain understanding that use of force had a role. The Europeans in Bosnia, under the UN/IFOR mandate, debating incessantly over the use of force. In the German case, the Germans were as you mentioned earlier were having this problem with their constitution and allowable military deployments. They had a constitution that in practice for 45 years had led them to not use their military as a tool of diplomacy. When they had an opportunity to deploy military forces in the Gulf War, they declined. Germany, knowing the agony and the implications of not participating militarily in the Bosnian conflict, although it was outside its own borders, was determined to find the proper role. When it came to Bosnia and especially after the Genscher proposal for recognition of Croatia and Slovenia had failed to end the violence, they were looking for some other way to deal with the issue. The Germans were confronted with incremental steps leading to increasing military action. They had overcome the first, which was their participation in sanctions in the Adriatic? They had sought and won a court ruling that German military could participate. This set the pattern for a process of political and legal steps for greater Bundeswehr participation in out-of-area operations. Next was the decision on Luftwaffe crews flying AWACS missions over Hungary, which is outside of the NATO area. That mission was also acceptable.

Q: AWACS being?

BINDENAGEL: The airborne warning and air control system, a radar system, which we were using to oversee the battlefield in the Balkans and to determine who was violating the no-fly areas. It was not a combat role. The Germans took themselves again to court, to gain court acceptance of the political decision. Then it came to the question of Bundeswehr participation in the IFOR. This debate took them up through the summer of 1994.

In the fall of 1993 and the spring of 1994 the debate was over Partnership for Peace. That was a sideline in the first instance on how to get partners in a multinational peacekeeping force in Bosnia. The State Department was in favor of using these countries but not altering the structure of NATO. The Pentagon preferred not to have them in NATO at all, and not to have them engaged at all, but to have them as a separate organization. So, Partnership for Peace became a partnership, actually from August 1993 when we decided to participate until we came to NATO debate in the summer of 1994, the issue was how do you use the East Central European countries. They were directly effected; we didn't want them to become NATO members.

You may recall that we discussed the bilateral effort to deal with this issue in the fall of 1993, when Frank Wisner, the Under Secretary of Defense for policy met with his counterpart, State Secretary Jörg Schönböhm. They met in Berlin and I was a part of the delegation. Wisner was there to prepare for the Defense Minister's meeting in Travemünde. The issue Partnership for Peacekeeping; we were trying to develop a peacekeeping force that wasn't a part of NATO, that was a part of the UN, where you could draw peacekeeping forces from other countries and send them and deploy them and so on. Frank Wisner and Jörg Schönböhm sat down and came up with a proposal. As State Department official I of course had to oppose any structural change and particularly one that would change the nature of NATO. But in the end they came up with a proposal that they took to the Defense Ministers in Travemünde, where they proposed "Partnership for Peacekeeping." Partnership for Peacekeeping outside of NATO, maybe in a long term step towards NATO, but a separate thing in itself. Of course, the minute they made this proposal, it became entangled in the Bosnia versus NATO debate over structure. An elaborate discussion ensued in the Department of State over work-plans and which countries would be invited to participate. As you can imagine the debate was endless over duties, the terms of reference, rules of engagement and all those normal things that occur in creating a military force. The workplans dominated the debate, not NATO enlargement, for most of the end of 1993 and the beginning of 1994. This was also the case for the German-American relationship as well as the NATO debate between the State Department and the Pentagon.

The other idea that came up at that time was the concept of using of European forces with American resources at NATO on a European-lead operation called the "Combined Joint Task Forces," CJTF. That force was being batted back and forth, but the Europeans didn't move very far with that because they wanted American combat troops.

Q: Where the French at this time playing around with the European brigade, and this concept? It goes back to the '50s or '60s, I guess, European force?

BINDENAGEL: Yes, the idea of European defense force. The Germans and the French had worked together of the Franco-German brigade for a long time, and they had something at least in technical terms that was implemented. The idea was for Germans, indeed to have these brigades, and one of the ideas was to have one Franco-German brigade, one with the Dutch... Eventually, and they do today, to have one with the Poles. Their concept was to work bilaterally as well as multilaterally to develop military to military relationships at the same time they were doing the political-military relationships and the NATO relationships.

Q: What was happening '92 to '94 on the ground, I'm little confused with the time, in Bosnia? There was a period of time when there were particularly French and British troops which were taking casualties and everything else, and were absolutely ineffective, the UN. It will take a long time before anybody will ever want to put their troops under the UN again. Was this happening at that time? We are talking about the siege of Sarajevo, which was on TV every day, showing armored vehicles sort of sitting there while atrocities were being committed.

BINDENAGEL: The UN Force, without the rules of engagement necessary to end the fighting, were absolutely ineffective. There was on going ethnic cleansing and genocide. There was an armed conflict. The UN had placed its forces into stand between the warring factions, but didn't give the commanders the right to shoot. They had the "double key" decision that the local commander would make the decision that he would defend himself and then he would go up to higher command, at the political level to get approval for that. As a result they could not defend themselves. They stood between the warring parties, getting shot by the both sides, taking some severe casualties, and were not stopping the fighting at all. They were being bypassed, and that was the situation in '92-'93 that IFOR faced.

Politically in Germany the other debates were about the German Bundeswehr, the largest military in Europe, which was not allowed to be legally deployed out-of-area. Working towards the summer of 1994, on July 12 1994 I believe, President Clinton came to Berlin and during that meeting, the German Supreme Court in Karlsruhe decided the legal cases about German military deployments. It said that Germany indeed could send its forces as a part of the alliance to other area. President Clinton announced this decision, and the Chancellor of Germany said that doesn't mean "Germans to the front."

Q: These were both sort of spontaneous?

BINDENAGEL: Yes, we did not know what or when the decisions would come and the reactions were very spontaneous. You could see there that the Germans were struggling with their military role as a key component to their role in Europe. Everyone else was looking at them skeptically to determine where they would fit in Europe and how they the Germans would exercise power in the future, including military power.

In the meantime in Bosnia, the Serbs and the Croats and the Bosnians continued their unrestrained fighting. It wasn't until we decided that we have to do more and moved to deploy US troops in SFOR that the situation began to change. We refused to give command to the UN, we wanted the NATO command. We wanted to resolve the Bosnia conflict with the right to use force. The change coincided with the departure of Ambassador Holbrooke from Germany in 1994 and his appointment as Assistant Secretary of European Affairs. He was joined by three key players at the State Department Bob Frasure, at Pentagon Joe Cruz, and at the White House Nelson Drew or Sandy Vershbow. Coordination improved immediately among the three agencies on this issue. The meeting of the minds came with Holbrooke on the ground constantly dealing with the individual players and the Pentagon and the NSC and the State Department. He would focus on the issues. When the Croats made invaded, the US decided not to oppose that invasion. While it was not a "green" light, it was certainly a "yellow" light for the Croats. Holbrooke also knew at that time that force was necessary and decided that we had to stop fighting by use of military force. Bombing the Serbs followed. It was effective, short, but effective. After the fighting stopped, the negotiations began that ended up in the Dayton process.

Q: Was there, during this talking about NATO and Europe doing things on its own, there seemed to be one development that happened really from the beginning of NATO and really not much attention was paid to it. And that is: for projecting force anywhere beyond sort of practically the Wiser Line in the old days, you couldn't do anything without the U.S. lifting the troops, carrying the troops... I mean, today, none of these forces can go anywhere unless the U.S. is taking them there, which means we are in combat, at least in the air or at least our transport... Is that something that was a factor?

BINDENAGEL: Yes, U.S. military transport was absolutely critical to deployments. We agreed to give support services, and in fact not just the transportation services, also communications and intelligence sharing. We could communicate and we had the communications capability for sharing our intelligence. We eventually shared tactical intelligence with former Warsaw Pact countries much to everyone's surprise. We had those two capabilities as well as the fighting forces to complete the mission. In a division of labor, we were providing the communications, intelligence, and the transportation services, and the others are providing the combat troops. Despite the fact that the division of labor was not equal in cost, the fact is that in terms of lives lost direct combat, the U.S. found the cooperation acceptable.

The Bosnia debate ran parallel all the way through this. At the samtime the NATO enlargement debate began...

Q: This was still during the '92-'94 period?

BINDENAGEL: Yes, Bosnia was ever present during this 1992-94 period. After the President's visit in July 1994, as Holbrooke was leaving Bonn, we had the New Traditions Meeting, which we were talking about earlier, where Secretary Perry and Minister Ruhe debated whether to support new members in NATO. After that September meeting, Holbrooke left and we continued the NATO enlargement debate. We already had in January 1994 decision at NATO, in principle to talk about new members. In that September meeting we had the Vice President and the Chancellor as well as Minister Ruhe and Secretary Perry, saying, "Yes, we should start this process." By the beginning of 1995, we were talking about first principles for new members. We re-examined the Washington Treaty for NATO requirement and asked the new aspirants: "These are the principles you have to adhere to, for NATO membership, can you meet them?" We began to see a debate, a very positive debate over criteria among those Eastern European countries that had their own ethnic and other conflicts even as they were hopeful to join NATO. Hungary and Romania had ethnic minorities and conflicts that had traditionally been flash points, which we would not accept as imports into NATO. They had to resolve these issues. We began to talk about these specific things that were necessary to join NATO.

Q: Was there thinking..., I'm sure that within the Pentagon, the professional military, they had been looking into what had been happening in Bosnia under UN command, and in the State and all, was this beyond, I mean there was always the political debate that we don't want to commit American troops under UN command. This is a very political thing. But looking at it from professional side, both State and military, taking one look at what happened there and saying "Hell, no." NATO is not to be used as a peacekeeping instrument with American troops. We had already gone through the Somalia business, or had just finished that. Was this sort of in the thinking?

BINDENAGEL: Certainly we didn't want any UN command structure, particularly after the "dual key" experience. It was not just the fact that UN command of U.S. soldiers did not play well in the U.S.; it just didn't work. We could only be effective if NATO was in command, and we were in charge of NATO. We prevailed to have NATO forces with an American general in charge in Bosnia. He has a subordinate general from Russia, who after his assignment in Bosnia for the American general was actually promoted, which was a good thing for the Russian, but also a sign that it was a good relationship. Symbolically such a U.S. Russian relationship illustrated the changes that were happening. But for us, only an American commander of American forces, in political terms, was acceptable.

Q: Were you noticing any estrangement between either the diplomat or professional military of France, Germany and the US during this time?

BINDENAGEL: What I found was remarkable, in military to military discussions, the American and German military were very close. They had grown up together; they had commanded troops together in Germany with its large American military presence. What was interesting was the comments by military officers that I knew, both German and American, about the French. In this time they had the best relationship that they had ever seen with the French military. This was under Mitterrand, so it was still politically unacceptable.

Q: He was a socialist.

BINDENAGEL: Yes, and although it was not appropriate for the French to think in terms of cooperation and integration, the French military relationship with the other military was very, very good. I was surprised.

Q: I think one of the things, I talked to somebody else who was involved as a political adviser to general Schwarzkopf during the Gulf War, which was only about two years before. When the French sent an expeditionary force and they found they couldn't practically operate because they had been kind of cousins to NATO, but they didn't have the communication, when they went out to bomb they had to send an American plane out to lead them... I mean, they had realized how far away they had drifted from being an effective military force.

BINDENAGEL: That was reflected in the comments that I heard from U.S. and German military officers. After the Gulf War fiasco, the French military wanted to be a part of the Bosnia team. They wanted to be able to be an effective fighting force. And they knew from that experience in the Gulf War that they would not be outside of NATO. And I think probably this led to Jacques Chirac's initial overtures to NATO after he came into office.

Q: You were there, again in this Washington period of time when Holbrooke came?

BINDENAGEL: Right, I was Holbrooke's deputy throughout this period. We did several things. We did some of the things we talked earlier about in the business and economic field. We did other things. One of the Holbrooke's initial discoveries was that the U.S. Embassy in Bonn was very big. And he said, "Why are we doing all this? Who are all these people and what are they doing here?"

Q: You are talking about the Embassy?

BINDENAGEL: We're talking about the Embassy. The U.S. Government presence was huge. It was over 2,000 people when he arrived in the fall of '93. We worked very hard to downsize. The GAO reduced their presence; the Federal Aviation Administration, which had 50 or 60 people also reduced their presence. We worked with the Agriculture Department to consolidate their operations in Hamburg and London into the Consulate in Hamburg. And we even tried downsizing in the Embassy itself. At the same time we proposed, in this whole initial effort of the Clinton Administration to make the government smaller, several ideas for closing Embassies and Consulates.

Well, we also took the opportunity to take the agenda that we had in Germany, which was moving from purely, or overwhelmingly, security focused agenda, to one of business promotion and other issues. Holbrooke determined that we really needed a U.S. Consulate in Dusseldorf. There was one earlier but it had been closed in 1987. We had a small Foreign Commercial Office there, with a couple of people working with a couple of national employees there. Holbrooke wanted to reopen the Consulate and asked the Department for permission. And they said "No." Holbrooke gave me this assignment to reopen the Consulate. I went through the process. I had a great memo with 15 or 20 clearances making a persuasive argument that our business and economic interests were so great in the area, that the Embassy was moving from Bonn to Berlin, and that we really needed a strong economic presence in the most populous State in Germany. The bureaucracy defeated me and when Holbrooke visited Washington, he came into the office, and just stormed into my office. He was furious that his project was rejected and let me know what he thought of my bureaucratic skills. This incident happened after I was appointed his deputy but had not arrived in Germany. He demanded that I go back to the drawing board, and he was inclined toward a more directed approach. Consequently, he engaged directly in a bureaucratic battle of some proportions with the Under Secretary for Management, Richard Moose, who was not on good personal terms with Mr. Holbrooke. After their knock-down, dragged out fight, Moose decided that if Mr. Holbrooke were to be engaged in this that there would never be a Consulate in Dusseldorf.

Holbrooke then left it in my hands, with the instructions to make it happen. I took this idea to the Foreign Commercial Service and asked if they were interested in a deal. Mr. Fort, the acting director general of the Foreign Commercial Service, working with the EUR administrative office, negotiated a MOU, Memorandum of Understanding, between two organizations. We had the approval or at least the framework approval of the Under Secretary of Management, to try this negotiation. We agreed to a per-head cost-sharing basis for shared administrative costs and to assigning a Foreign Commercial Service to the principal officer position. The shared costs concept, and paying on head-count basis, became later a model for cost-sharing in the U.S. State Department, away from the shared administrative services agreement based on hopeless landlord/tenant agreements where the Department of State always lost to agencies with stronger appropriations committee arrangement. Nevertheless, Mr. Moose saw this agreement as favoring Holbrooke, despite its advantages for the Foreign Service, and forbid its approval by his administrative officers.

We went back and redrew it up and negotiated again with some minor changes and presented it to him under the authority that he had given us. I negotiated by authority that he himself had given us. Now he faced a *fait accompli*, and indeed had to recognize that the Memorandum that we had agreed with the Foreign Commercial Service was appropriate. The next thing to do was to notify Congress that we were going to open a new Consulate. We drafted up the notification letter, which Moose refused to sign. I went into a rather difficult debate between the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, who didn't want nor could overrule the Under Secretary of Management. After posing questions, she then agreed to move the memorandum forward, I adjusted the letters to fit the congressional concerns and moved the memo to the Deputy Secretary. At the end of the process, the Memo that only had four clearances, each an Assistant Secretary, and requesting the Acting Secretary to send letters to notify the Congress that we were opening a Consulate in Dusseldorf. Acting Secretary of State, Mr. Talbot, told Mr. Moose to sign. In many ways I had a sense of achievement, of a Pyrric victory perhaps, but it was a victory. Ron Brown, the Secretary of Commerce came out to Dusseldorf in June 1994, to open the Consulate. Lee Bohm, the former Commercial Officer from my days in the U.S. Embassy in East Berlin, became the first FCS Consul General. As Ambassador Holbrooke and Secretary Brown raised the flag to open the office, I was pleased at this very nice victory.

Q: What it shows is that, in diplomatic business most difficult and most innovative negotiations are not with foreigners, they are not even with other departments, but within your department. I mean, this shows what you have to do to achieve something. Do you feel that a lot of this was personality?

BINDENAGEL: No, there was a substantial policy debate here about the changing face of diplomacy; could business interests equal security interests. There was certainly a big element of personality. But the decision to open a business-oriented consulate was also against the policy. The policy was to cut, reduce, eliminate posts. And the policy came up against reality. The reality was we had interest in Germany, we had a valid interest, and then you had a conflict. And the conflict was whether we would defend the interests that you have or are you going to follow through the policy of reducing. And somebody had to make that argument and it included two strong personalities. They both agreed that there was a legitimate argument, but refused to deal with it, and only sought to prevent each side from winning. Once they deadlocked, then it came back to me to try to overcome the Holbrooke versus Dick Moose dual, and to achieve what was best for the U.S. - protection of American interests and an expansion of our role in Germany. We were looking at interests not numbers. We took a minimalist approach with numbers to share costs with Commerce, but sought to actually provide the US government with a very valuable tool, that is the Consulate in the most populous area in Germany, in the largest industrial region in Germany.

Q: One of the charges that has been laid, I've heard it recently and I assume it's been going on for some time, that is: Germany has, since the demise of the Soviet Union, has become more and more taken for granted, that the US is not spending much time, in a way, you feel Germany is beginning to feel the way Canadians feel, we take them for granted, we're not holding their hand, and we are not doing things. Was this a theme that was of concern during this '92-'94 period?

BINDENAGEL: Absolutely. We were withdrawing our forces and were focused on Asia, the Middle East, and Russia. All these places were important to us, anywhere but Germany. Germany was not the focus and the Germans thought that they were still important even when we didn't think so.

Q: Obviously, when one is thinking about this, Germany is the key to the whole bloody European equation, which is the most important equation for us probably in the long run. Was anybody sort of saying, "Let's think about Germany" or how was this going?

BINDENAGEL: Some of us were looking for a spokesman who could define the Berlin Republic. We found one in Holbrooke. Before he went out to be Ambassador we brought together at Meridian House as many experts on Germany as we could to brief him. We had this great discussion. They were private experts, professors, government officials. We proposed this theme: Is the new Germany, just a larger West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany) just writ larger with the addition of the German Democratic Republic, or is it new? The views were all over the map. Holbrooke loved this debate because it showed that politics were in flux and he could shape U.S. German relations.

He set out an agenda with us to protect the strategic military relationship, not to let it continue just to downgrade and degrade. Anyone could see the beginnings a greater role for Germans. Holbrooke really did a very masterful job of laying out the debate. We called it "burden-sharing" or "responsibility-sharing." That's what we were just talking about as we engaged the Germans as they moved through the process of legitimizing and justifying their constitutional role for the military. In Bosnia they moved from talks about participation to deploying troops as part of the Allianz. They used their Tornado aircraft in a combat role at first in 1996, and then deployed troops in full combat role for the first time since the Second World War. They did not deploy many troops, but in terms of politics, it was significant. Of course, a combat deployment to the region needed also a command role.

Minister Ruhe called me to his office to ask that I intervene to help appoint a German general as Chief of Staff to General Crouch. I duly reported the intervention to the Pentagon and naturally General Crouch chose a UK General, who was in line for the appointment. Six months later the Minister called me again and this time I quietly passed the request informally to General Crouch with some personal encouragement that a German to be his second Chief of Staff. After British general rotated General Crouch decided to choose a German, which I considered critical to the development of the political support in Germany for the Bundeswehr. Germans in a command role for Bundeswehr troops in a combat role and deployed outside of Germany under an American general was certainly in U.S. interest. For the first time since World War II Germany and the United States stood together in combat. That was our goal and helped pave the way for NATO enlargement with the German public, although Holbrooke went on to do other things after only nine months as Ambassador.

In the economic field, realizing that we needed an American business presence in eastern Germany to complement U.S. investment in West Germany such as General Motors and Ford, which that had been in Germany since the 1920s, we needed new U.S. investment in the East. We devised a series of investment promotion seminars for American investment in the eastern part of Germany, the former GDR, and over my time in Bonn, we became a largest foreign investor. Some were large investments like Dow-Chemical's four billion-dollar investment, which made it the fourth major chemical company in Germany. Louis Hughes of General Motors Germany had brought CEO from Detroit while I was DCM in East Germany to build a new assembly plant in the city of Eisenach. This billion-dollar investment drew in suppliers as well such as seat manufacturers. Guardian Glass invested in a \$300 million glass factory in Saxony-Anhalt. New technologies such as the AMD computer chip firm built to compete with Intel. This new Pentium technology from Texas brought some three billion dollars to Dresden. However, not all investment were so huge. We had more than 300 and medium size American companies coming and investing. In our business conferences over the five years, one each year in the five new states, we helped create a network of successful American and German businessmen in Germany's new states.

A real delight was to see Chancellor Kohl regularly to keep him apprized of the American interest in the German economy. One of the most delightful events for me was the Annual Meeting of the American Chamber of Commerce in Germany in 1997 in Dusseldorf. I shared the speakers' platform with Dr. Henry Kissinger, Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Ron Sommer of Deutsche Telekom, and Mark Woessner from Bertelsmann AG. The Chancellor said that the presence of the Americans in business in eastern part of Germany is a demonstration of American commitment to Germany as a whole. At lunch Chancellor Kohl referred to a private conversation we had had on the need for a strong equity culture in Germany. Kohl asked Ron Sommer how well the Telekom stock was selling and Ron replied with a quick summary of the price and recent sales. Kohl then turned to Ignatz Bubis, a wealthy real estate broker and head of the Central Committee of German Jews, and asked whether he would consider selling some of his property to buy Ron Sommer's Telekom stock. I had to smile since Ignatz seemed not to understand why Kohl would want him to sell property. Wealth creation had to come from equity growth and not from unearned income from property holdings, I thought to myself. Kohl was trying to provoke a discussion, but with only 4% of the public holding stocks at the time, it was clearly not a mature discussion yet. To return to your original question, whether the eastern Germans thought that we had forgotten them; yes, absolutely. However, when we explained what Americans were doing, we won their support for German-American relations. Now, in 1998, the U.S. and Germany have weathered this concern that the U.S. no longer has a role in Germany.

I recall another meeting morning with Ron Sommer from Deutsche Telekom and the former head of the Federal Communications Commission Reed Hunt. Hunt argued that when we were negotiating the international telecoms agreement, it was the Germans and the Americans that decided its terms. When the Americans withdrew from an earlier proposal and walked away from the table, they were criticized by everyone but the Germans. Later the U.S. came back to the table with the revised international telecommunications agreement proposal, and it was the Germans who were with us to move forward to agreement. That kind of sovereign partnership, even if not equal, demonstrated that we were really achieving the goal we set for ourselves. We have achieved a different kind of relationship, based on the respect for sovereignty. At the same time, we still have a lot of thinking to do to solidify this new relationship, but we made great strides in forging a new dimension to the relationship.

Q: Were you in Washington when Holbrooke came back to be in charge of EUR?

BINDENAGEL: No, I remained in Bonn. I came in June of 1994 to Bonn, for the President's visit and stayed as DCM. I became chargé d'affaires when Holbrooke left in August, through the 1994 German election, and then Charles Redman, who was Ambassador in Sweden came as Ambassador in Germany in October, November 1994.

Q: You were in Bonn from '94 till when?

BINDENAGEL: September 1997.

Q: With this encouragement of business, here in the US we've heard about Germans having become during this period less and less competitive because of the social cost of the social problems and then the high wages and the fact that any German worth his soul gets, I don't know, six weeks of paid vacation, and so forth. They just priced themselves out of the market. I think caution to any American firm trying to do business with them. Did you talk about this?

BINDENAGEL: Certainly those social factors and fringe benefits for labor that you mention are crucial economic factors in the kinds of investment that would come into the country. High wage costs mean that you can't come in with a labor-intensive investment, it would not work. You have to hire people, you hire them for a very long time. Firing them is prohibitively expensive with a rule of thumb of a month's salary for each year of service for severance. New investments in Germany were like a Motorola investment to build cellular phones with less than five-percent labor content. GM built a new engine factory in Russelsheim also with very little labor content. General Motors also built an assembly plant in Eisenach. GM bought the Wartburg company that had 20,000 employees in the GDR times and built a new factory, trained a work force of 1600 to produce two or three times the number of much higher quality cars than in the East Germany. Indeed, if Americans to invest they had to come in with a product in demand that was high quality and low labor cost. If the labor content was low and the product was high quality, Americans could be competitive. That was the strategy.

Q: This is what we were telling people? People came and you were laying it out on the line about if you want to deal with Germany you have to do this and this.

BINDENAGEL: Absolutely. In fact the Embassy offered excellent facilitative assistance to American business negotiations. We tried to help them develop their strategy and to encourage them to see that it could be successful. Hardest to overcome was the initial look as you just said, and the difficulties of doing business would overwhelm new investors, who would just say, "Forget it." However, if the investor could get past the initial obstacles, there were lucrative incentives for investments in eastern Germany and the Germans began to promote them. There were tax holidays, investment discounts and rebates, all kinds of incentives to invest. As these American companies began negotiations with the Federal German Government, they would often come to us and make sure that they were talking to the right people and that their arguments could be heard by decision makers. The embassy played an important role in coordinating and facilitating discussions with the German government, particularly on investment issues. Overall, we were really focused on trying to get American business to come in and be present and give us the strengthened role to be an actor in Germany for the long term.

Q: There was a real political reason, obviously for the U.S. We wanted East Germany not to be restive, to be part of the whole German sovereignty, not to become a weak link. But at the same time, the Soviet Union fall apart, satellites have gone away, and I would have thought that there would have been competition from Poland and from Russia and from the Czech Republic and Hungary for some of the same investment. Did you find yourself as American diplomats on the business angle sort of competing with our Embassy people in those places?

BINDENAGEL: No. The East German experience was really quite different. First, the West Germans, if I can still use those two terms, the Federal German government, began to invest a hundred billion dollars a year in eastern Germany. Some 60 to 70 billion dollars of that money went to direct payments to individuals; transfers for unemployment compensation, retirement and training programs. The rest of it, 30 billion plus dollars, went into German investments. The results were impressive. Eastern Germany soon had better infrastructure such as fiber-optic cables, new railroads, new freeways and new airports. The infrastructure that would normally have hindered or encouraged lower grade investments, were upgraded very quickly. But more important was the fact that they had a policy of trying to equalize the wages. That policy was devised in order not to have a big migration from East Germany to West Germany, but it meant that East German workers were priced out of the market. If you had a project that you wanted in East Germany that would have a higher labor content with lower labor cost than West Germany, at the beginning it was 70% and it has moved steadily up to 100%. And of course, correspondingly, unemployment has gone up in the eastern part of the country as wage equalization happened. The U.S. was not really have much competition for the West Germans.

We did have competition in French investment. The French had some large investments such as Minol, which they bought with it took over a great number of gas stations. This competition made it harder for Esso, BP, British Petroleum, and some others to compete for market share in that sector, but for the most part we didn't have serious competition.

Q: As you were dealing with this did you find that you were up against, American firms by inference your work, up against all habits. What I'm thinking of is the socialist workers. We know the old saying, "We don't pay you well. That's all right, we don't work well." This is the sort of the Soviet system, and also holdovers from the old socialist bureaucracy, which essentially was designed to say "No."

BINDENAGEL: That mentality - the socialist worker problem: "We pretend to work and they pretend to pay us" - is still a problem. Galleries Lafayette, the French retailer, built a store in East Berlin and was forced, after a very short period of time, to fire all of their East German workers and hire French workers, because they didn't have the same customer friendly attitudes needed in capitalist society. That happened. But, it happened along a generational divide. If you were over 50, your professional career had ended at unification. If you were a woman and the market changed from 98% of women in the workforce in the GDR to something closer to what the West Germans had, around 55, or 60%, the market for working women dried up. Unemployment was endemic. For the 30 to 40-year-olds, employment was a mixed picture. Among the workers, some had excellent work attitudes, some were able to integrate, and some were able to retrain. Those twenty-year-olds and under were really a different generation, which was socialized differently. They were being challenged differently; they have ambition and drive needed to succeed. There are really three generations: the lost generation of over 50s, the questionable generation and the new generation. That process will take probably until those 20-year-olds are 50, two more generations, before the new socialization process has a full affect on the economy and the society. But things do change in Germany.

Attitudes are the hardest to change and not just work ethics. One of the saddest reminders of the Second World War was in Dresden. When I was posted in East Germany it was the most vivid scene of remaining destruction and one of the most vivid political discussions I repeatedly had was over the bombing of Dresden.

Q: This is bombing during World War II, and it was bombed at the verend of the war, seemed to be a gratuitous bombing.

BINDENAGEL: The date was February 13, 1945. In the firebombing of Dresden, 30,000 or 40,000 civilians were killed; it was a terrible event. In the center of the city was the Frauenkirche, the Church of our Lady, which was bombed, burnt and a day or so after the bombing collapsed. The church simply imploded on that site and the rubble was left by the GDR, accompanied with a propagandist plaque decrying the "Anglo-American bombing of Dresden caused this destruction." This anti-American propaganda repeatedly spoiled every discussion about Dresden. At the end of my assignment in the GDR in September 1990, we established a Consulate General in Leipzig, with Consul General Todd Becker, an excellent Germanist, who shared my concern about the constant drum beat of Anti-Americanism. Anglo-American bombing destroyed all that was good. Todd and I talked about to do to help change that East German attitude about the role of the United States in the war and about Nazi terror that led to the senseless bombing. One of the things that Todd and I agreed before I left, was reconciliation with the East Germans over the bombing and the GDR propaganda. One of the first things that he did was to arrange a benefit concert by the U.S. Air Force Band in Dresden, for the benefit of reconstruction of the Frauenkirche. The decision to rebuild the church had not been taken at that time and the benefit concert was a very nice gesture. In ensuing years construction began on the church and should be completed in 2006. The fund raising campaign in the mid-1990s was impressive. They sold commemorative watches; I have several and in fact all of my kids have one. In 1994, under Ambassador Holbrooke, a close friend Dan Hamilton who was in Holbrooke's staff, created a fiftieth anniversary commemoration event. Dan met with Mr. Blobel in New York, who had come originally from Dresden and became a wealthy medical researcher in New York. He also met others in Cleveland and together they created a "Friends of Dresden" organization, contributed money, and raised additional funds to make a contribution for the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche. On the 50th anniversary of the bombing we met in Dresden. I was there for this occasion with Mr. Holbrooke, and Minister President Kurt Biedenkopf, who was CDU member actually from Westphalia and had studied at Davidson College in the U.S. Holbrooke and Blobel presented Biedenkopf a 100,000-dollar contribution for the reconstruction of the church. We even shamed the British into participating separately, and they chose to symbolically reconstruct the cross as their contribution. It was after all the British that bombed the city on February 13, 1945, not the U.S. We bombed it before and after, but not on that day; but that's a technical point.

Dealing with Anti-American attitudes, which were very strong among the 40- and 50- year olds and older in the GDR was very important goal for us. We also were honest about our own behavior and confronted our role in the bombing and history of World War II. We tried to also seek reconciliation by participating in the reconstruction.

Q: What about during this three year period in particular, the problem of the right wing, but also, right wing almost isn't the right word for, the skinheads. I mean the unemployed, could you explain, what was seen as the movement and how it developed in East Germany?

BINDENAGEL: It is good that you differentiate between East and West Germany, because right-wing extremisms are really two phenomena. In West Germany it really was a neo-Nazi movement, and it was a movement that had come with a long history, sense of disillusion with what had happened in post war period. In the East the phenomenon was somewhat different, and that is discussion of the fascist Hitler period was forbidden. Therefore it was new, and it was something to protest. Whatever your ideological point of view, you could protest. And you could shave your head, and you could do something. You had a group of alienated, unemployed, particularly youth that had nowhere to go.

Q: Particularly male, too.

BINDENAGEL: Particularly male, too, who obviously wouldn't turn to the communists; they hated them, they had delivered the right wing extremists into this new world. They didn't like the West Germans either and they wanted to protest. There was no better protest than to be Hitler-oriented. The extremists were not necessarily very thoughtful or politically motivated, but they were socially alienated, and found sport in beating up on minorities. The problem was that there weren't any minorities in the East. The only minorities that were in East Germany were the guest workers from Vietnam and Cuba. The Cubans were all sent back and Vietnamese stayed. Consequently, there were a few Vietnamese, but they were less than one percent of the population, there just weren't any number of foreigners in the East.

Q: There weren't any Turkish gastarbeiters? They didn't move there?

BINDENAGEL: No, the Turkish immigrants were in the West. There were no Jews in the East, either. There were a 150 Jews in East Berlin. The extremists did not need real people to have their protest movement. Certainly if you looked out of place, you could be attacked. The potential violence was volatile. In fact an American was attacked in Suhl. He was a bobsledder and his team was practicing in the Thüringian Forest. The team went to a bar and were drinking a beer after working all day when some thugs, these skinheads came in, and ruffed up this American. When a black and a Jewish American intervened they were beaten by the skinheads. The U.S. media covered the incident in detail. NBC news coverage of this incident, and indeed it was a horrible incident, was full of commentary about right wing extremism; it was certainly a disturbing political incident. Its cause was attributed to frustration and alienation that had led to lashing out at foreigners. However, it was very hard to find any foreigners, so you had to find a visitor to fit the stereotype.

The serious neo-Nazi movement, where people were killed, occurred for the most part in West Germany, in M_il_lin, Solingen, and L_ibeck. Those incidents were very serious, in the sense that they were attacks on Turks and on the synagogue in L_ibeck. Those extremists were politically motivated and very serious. If you carry that extremism to today, the most recent election in Saxony-Anhalt, a few months ago in 1998, the Bavarian right wing leader and very rich publicist, Mr. Frey, spent much money in Saxony-Anhalt campaign. Saxony-Anhalt is a very small state with a couple of million population, but with a small, active group of 30 or so people who identified themselves as German People's Union, DVU, Deutsche Volksunion. The DVU was elected to the Parliament and it seems they have more seats than they have people. I think they had about fifteen people in the party and they won more seats in the Parliament. You can see the potential for protest, which has grown out of this social discontent. It is a very serious problem, but it's a hard problem to solve.

Q: What about American influence? I mean people of my generation and even somewhat younger are used to the Amerika H_iuser all over the place, and American studies were popular. Here is a new and a very influential generation coming up. Do you feel we were doing enough for them?

BINDENAGEL: The next generation was not on our screen. In fact, we had 50 America Houses in your time. When I left we had four and with only one in the eastern part of the country and one in Berlin. The whole nature of what we were doing changed from the cultural center of the 1950' Germany, which introduced Germans to many of the international views that they came to endorse to the Amerika H_iuser today where we have a very different cross-cultural exchange of German-American ideas. We have not been able to sustain the kinds of connections that America-Houses had produced in the 1950s and 1960s. On the other hand, with an open media, personal visits and academic exchanges, we had a rich connection to our friends, but not systematically enough for a country that is as important as Germany.

Q: This is one of those sort of neglects, would you say? I mean, taking Germany for granted, cutting there in order to boost up our presence in Belarus or something like that?

BINDENAGEL: That's in fact exactly what we did. When we opened 25 new Embassies at the end of the Cold War, as the Soviet Union broke up, we took all the positions from posts in the European Bureau to reorganize and redirect our energies to Central Asia and the Newly Independent States of the former Soviet Union. Most of the positions came from Germany. That was not all bad, but we needed to have strategy how to prioritize what was important in transatlantic affairs and to continue exchanges, policy debates and cooperation with the younger generation. These new/old priorities were absolutely crucial. Embassy Germany had as many as 100 international visitors grantees each year, young leaders that can be very useful to us, if we keep up with them. But we had to fight every year for that. We had to fight every year for funding for the Congress-Bundestag exchange program for high school students, which linked Congress with the Bundestag for the students who spent one year in the member's district. When I was charged that program reached a total of 10,000 students since it began in 1983 when we established that program. To keep America-Houses themselves, to redirect their interests and activities, to reach out to new people, not just taking care of the old stalwarts who grew up with America-House, was a major effort.

Q: What about Congress? I mean, one of the bete noires of the foreign service is congressional delegations, but at the same times, these are the way you really can sit down and talk to people in Congress, so to sell the importance of your country. And one thing is if congressional delegations are headed off to London and Paris, sort of the flash-spots, but did you find a fall-off coming to Germany and looking at it?

BINDENAGEL: Congressional visits did not "fall-off," they disappeared. We had, in my first two years only Senator Lugar came. He came again a year and a half later. That was it for visits. Lugar was so embarrassed that he called up Senator Kerry and said, "Would you go to Bonn please? We need a Democrat and we only had two visits by Republicans in this year and a half period, and I was both of them." There were a lot of other visits to Germany by Congressmen, but they went directly to U.S. Forces, and then on to Bosnia. We tried very hard, after the 1994 election when the Republicans took over the House, to convince them to spend some time in Germany. There was an aversion to travel, partly because of campaigns. There was an aversion to having a passport, it was sort of a badge of honor not to have the passport, which is a very troubling concept.

Q: There was a sort of a "know nothing" attitude at the very beginning.

BINDENAGEL: Yes, very much so, although we did have a big group of 25 or 30 members from the House, prepared to come in January 1995. We had a wonderful program laid on, the delegation included Ben Gilman, Chairman of the House International Relations Committee and Tom Lantos, accompanied by a large House group, the old ones in particular. Then the House shut down the government.

Q: This is an American shut down of the Government.

BINDENAGEL: Right. They cut us off: the Congress refused to appropriate money to the government, and the government had to shut down. The Congressional Delegation thought it was probably not appropriate that they come, so they canceled the visit, which was even worse. The Germans didn't understand closing down of government at all, and all of our preparations were for naught. The German hosts were lined up and waiting for the Congress Members. They just dropped the visit and did not return for a year.

Q: Oh, God! Really shocking, isn't it?

BINDENAGEL: That cancellation was really disappointing. I was furious and angry and upset but there wasn't much you could do except keep working on a new visit. At the end of that year, in the year and a half that I was charged $\frac{1}{2}$, we did get visitors. And we worked very hard to draw them. There was another consequence of the government shutdown. We could not pay our local employees. The non-payment of employees was simply not acceptable in Europe. I was called into the Foreign Office to explain why the U.S. would not pay its employees, a visit I found quite embarrassing since we would in the end pay.

The government shutdown would also affect the interim election in 1996. After the election, I urged the leader of the Congressional Study Group on German, Bob Wise of West Virginia to visit and he came out with a delegation almost immediately. I was concerned that the over emphasis by Congress on security questions and NATO led to visits to American troops to the neglect of other American interests. I talked to Congressman Wise from West Virginia, I said, "Do you have any German to foreign direct investment in your district?" He said, "Actually we have BASF," which is a chemical company. I said, "That's wonderful. I hope they are doing well, but they are your constituent, and wouldn't you like to see their home office? And I would be glad to try to arrange a meeting with the Chairman." He said, "That is actually a very good idea and I would like to do that."

His five-member delegation came to Bonn and met with politicians. I had called the CEO of BASF, Mr. Strube, and he graciously invited them down on a Friday afternoon in Germany, to see the BASF operation and for a discussion followed by dinner. It was absolutely the right thing to do. Americans and Germans had interest in the same environmental, chemical, and investment issues. BASF had a 600 million-dollar investment in West Virginia, which was not a bad thing. The Congressman found that he could sell West Virginia coal for one-fourth the price of German coal, even landed in Dusseldorf. I was delighted to see this economic definition of interests, which were always there, even when they were not a part of the security debate.

More visitors came. We had John Chafee, who examined the Magnetobahn and the high-speed rail as one of the issues that were part of the congressional transportation bill debate. The political debates in Congress and in Germany were on the same issues. Ben Gilman came with a large delegation. Unfortunately at that point they had passed Helms-Burton legislation against investment in Cuba, and the Members of Congress attacked their hosts in Germany on their relations with Cuba. We had legislation on Iran-Libya sanctions, and some of the Germans quietly left the briefing not wishing to offend the guests. I found this important policy debate on economic sanctions useful, especially with Congressmen who has passed the legislation to defend it. We had some other visits as well.

Q: How long was Charles Redman there?

BINDENAGEL: Charles Redman came in October, November 1994 and left in June of 1996, about 18 months.

Q: What was his approach to running the Embassy, towards the Germans?

BINDENAGEL: Ambassador Redman had been a spokesman for the Department and had been Ambassador in Sweden. He came to Germany with the view that the Ambassador should be the public person for the U.S. So he gave a lot of speeches and appeared in a lot of activities. I was very lucky, in the sense that he delegated a lot of issues to me in running in the Embassy and to participate in the policy debates as well, which was a great opportunity. I'm very thankful for the support Ambassador Redman gave me in preparation for my time as chargé d'affaires after he left. But his view was to present America particularly in the press, speaking locally as well as nationally.

Q: How did it work?

BINDENAGEL: I think it worked well. He was widely recognized and attended many events, and the representational part was very well received. In terms of policy, the policy debate's very hard in Germany, it was very internal German thing and the lines of communication to Washington were very good. So lot of that debate, particularly on the NATO issues were conducted directly.

Q: Between top, top, top levels?

BINDENAGEL: Right. In fact, however, the U.S. Embassy in Germany played an important diplomatic role in winning German support for NATO enlargement. Ambassador Holbrooke's close ties with Minister Rüchhe continued after he returned and became assistant secretary. However, Holbrooke's main priority was ending the fighting in the Balkans through the Dayton Accords. In Bonn, we continued to report German concerns about NATO enlargement, particularly German sensitivities toward Russia. Whenever National Security Advisor Bitterlich traveled to Moscow, the Russians would press them hard to block NATO enlargement.

In the summer of 1996, during a stopover flight in Frankfurt, Deputy Secretary Talbot, who was traveling with Vice President Gore, discussed at length with me strategies for winning German support for NATO enlargement. This led to a cable to him outlining specific steps to be taken. I was delighted to see that many of my ideas had stood the test of the bureaucracy and were included in an instruction cable from the Department. My political-military officer, Nancy McEldowney, kept the reports to Washington flowing; I sent e-mails to Talbot as a backchannel to report my own personal views, especially on the German-Russian dialogue.

In September 1996, Secretary Christopher came to Germany to give a major address on the fiftieth anniversary of his predecessor, James F. Byrnes' 1946 speech of hope, given to set the path for Germany to return to the international community of nations. Christopher met with Chancellor Kohl and on the top of his priority list of issues was NATO enlargement. The Germans seemed nervous about the upcoming NATO summit to welcome new members and were pressing us to delay it. Christopher had language in his speech about scheduling the summit for March, but wanted to check with Kohl to ensure that the Germans would support the proposed date. I called Bitterlich to smooth the way to acceptance; John Kornblum, then assistant secretary, also called to press the point. Bitterlich did not commit Kohl. During the meeting Christopher raised the date and put Bitterlich on the spot. The Chancellor was clearly not pleased with the early date and when pressed stated ambiguously that he could see a properly prepared summit in the spring or summer. On the way to the plane to Stuttgart for the speech Christopher asked me if Kohl's statement was an approval of the date; I told him that he could certainly say spring, but the Chancellor did not agree to March. On the plane Christopher turned to all his aids, noted my comment and asked for theirs. All agreed to the change in the speech. Of course, if the comment drew criticism, they were protected by my comment! The speech was a smashing success. The audience cheered, ignored the NATO enlargement summit date comment and applauded at the Christopher statement regarding working closely with the Russians. Christopher was surprised and pleased.

As an aside, I must tell you about the Christopher speech on climate issues later in the visit at a Stuttgart school. Christopher, whose home may be California now, was really from North Dakota. He was also known as the most dour speaker in the State Department. As he was reading his climate speech I watched closely to see if he would react to the line I added about the temperature experiment the students were conducting. They were reporting on temperatures to help create a database in the U.S. to measure climate change. Sure enough, when Christopher reached the sentence about personally understanding extreme temperatures from his youth when they measured + 40 degrees Celsius to 40 degrees Celsius in his home state of North Dakota, he grinned and chuckled. I considered this a small coup.

But back to NATO, if I may. As the Washington preparations for the summit intensified, so did the concern about the Germans, the Russians and the French. Talbot seemed to have the Russian role well ironed out. However, the French wanted to include the Romanians in the first group of new members. Italy argued that NATO had to take Slovenia to connect NATO territory. Chancellor did not reveal his position. Embassy Bonn continued reporting, but Washington was increasingly nervous. The date for the summit slipped from spring to summer. Chancellor Kohl set a visit to Washington to meet with President Clinton in June. I accompanied Kohl to Washington. We reported on the German position on new members: Kohl would join the consensus. That position made no one happy, especially Deputy Secretary Talbot. I met with Talbot upon my arrival in Washington before the Oval Office meeting and briefed him on the German position to join the consensus. He pressed me to say that they would join our proposal for only three new members, not five. I could not. The meeting with President Clinton went well until the NATO question was popped. Would the Germans join us in supporting three new NATO members Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary? Kohl replied that he would join the consensus. Our team was not happy.

Back in Bonn we kept very close watch on the NATO debate with our friends Wolfgang Ischinger at the Foreign Office, Joachim Bitterlich in the Chancellery, and Admiral Ulrich Weisser at the Defense Ministry. We seemed to be on track until the Romanian President visited Kohl on the Thursday before the Tuesday Madrid summit. At the end of the visit somewhere around midnight the Chancellor's office released a statement. I went to bed blissfully ignorant of the statement, which we would have normally reported the next day anyway. At three in the morning my phone rang and the Deputy Secretary was calling to ask what this Kohl statement meant. Did it mean that the Germans now supported Romanian membership and would do so at the summit? I had to admit that I had not seen the statement, but would check and report immediately. Talbot pressed for my instant assessment. I told him that I thought nothing had changed, that Kohl would support the consensus, and that the consensus would be three. He said; "You better be right. Let me know in the morning what you learn."

Of course I could not sleep. I checked the Internet to find the statement and at five o'clock called the press section, which came in early to prepare the Embassy daily press briefing. They went to work on the statement. Overnight the Department Operations Center was doing the same. We reported the text of the statement and then I went looking for Bitterlich and Ischinger. Ischinger I found at the airport meeting French Foreign Minister [Hubert] Vedrine and asked him point blank whether this statement was a change in German policy. He had not seen the statement, but promised to get back to me. I called Bitterlich. His secretary, Inada Johnson, was very pleasant, but told me he was preparing for his morning meeting with the Chancellor and could I call back. No, I insisted to speak with him; it was urgent. When I asked Joachim about the statement, I was greeted with a snide (but not unfriendly) comment about how well I spoke German and just what did I not understand if the statement's comment that Germany supported Romania's "baldige Eintritt in der NATO (early entry into NATO)." I, in my best diplomatic tone, said, "Just what does 'baldige Eintritt mean?" He replied: "Just what it says." Okay, I knew it was to be difficult, and pressed for an answer about next Tuesday's summit meeting. He repeated himself. I then said tell me if I am wrong to report to Washington that the statement does not mean next Tuesday. He did not reject my statement, leaving the responsibility for interpretation to me.

I thought it best to call Talbot before writing any of this exchange in an official report. I did not have to wait long. At six o'clock Washington time, I was having lunch with an old friend of mine, Fred Kempe, the managing editor of the Wall Street Journal Europe when my cell phone rang. It was Talbot and Sandy Berger. Talbot said: "What did you learn? I told him I had spoken to Bitterlich and stood by my statement that Kohl would stick with the consensus, not adding Romania." Talbot replied that I had better be correct.

By now I was personally worried. Later Ischinger would relate to me the events on the morning of the Madrid Summit. President Clinton came into the room and Chancellor Kohl went over to greet him. Kohl told the President, according to Ischinger, that Germany was with the U.S. on new members. When the meeting started Kohl asked to be recognized first and announced that Germany was supporting three new members for NATO Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary.

I had reason to celebrate. When Polish Ambassador Andrzej Byrt decided to party, I was also invited to join in their NATO membership celebration at his residence in Cologne. Ambassador Byrt had a special event in mind. He had a door hung on a frame in the Garden, emblazoned with the NATO crest. Ambassador Byrt, Wolfgang Ischinger, Admiral Weisser and I marched through together. The photo is one of my fondest memories.

At the end of my tour, Deputy Secretary Talbot offered to nominate me for ambassador to one of the Baltic States. My children, however, were high school age and the country had no high school. I did not want to miss those years, thanked Strobe for the offer, and decided to return to Washington instead.

Q: During this period of time, were there any issues that you haven't covered?

BINDENAGEL: I'm sure that there are: let me just add one comment. There are some rare fun moments. I'd mentioned annual meeting of the American Chamber of Commerce when as chargé d'affaires I shared the podium with Dr. Henry Kissinger (who as Secretary of State had sworn-in my Foreign Service Class) and Chancellor, and was praised by both during the meeting; that event was a high point for me personally. The other was the U.S.-based Wall Street Journal reporter who came into my office in the fall of 1996 and posed a question about Secretary Warren Christopher. He said, "Warren Christopher, Secretary of State proposed that the State Department would be the America's desk, and promote and support American business." And he said, he was there to check up on that proposition. His tone was: "It was a nice pronouncement, but it can't be true. And we are doing an article and we want to really see if embassies are really 'America desks.'" I said that given what I'd been saying about business, I was absolutely delighted that somebody would pay attention to what we were doing and added I was absolutely delighted to talk to him and tell him about what we are doing.

Then he had a secret question, what the Germans call the "Gretchenfrage," the "key question." He said, "Let me ask you one question. You know, getting a driver's license in Germany is very difficult and American business people are having a very difficult time, because the German system is you have to give reciprocity, and they have federal licenses, and we have 50 state licenses. Their American licenses run out after a year and the German one costs a lot of money. American businessmen are very upset, what have you done about it?" I didn't want to laugh or smile too much, I said, "Actually, we've done a lot of things about it. In the last year or so, I've written to all of the governors, and I've engaged with visiting governors. We've worked with the American Chamber of Commerce to propose reciprocal recognition. When we started the process there were one or two states, Utah was one of them because they had several of their missionaries in the country and they cared about them, they worked very quickly, and at that point I think we had eight or nine states that extended reciprocity." He said, "Is that right?" And I said, "Well, let me call the economic officer who's responsible for this and I'll bring down the file, and you can look and see where we stand." The action officer brought down the file and there were actually 18 or 19 states. Greenberger, the journalist, was absolutely flabbergasted. Then he had a whole series of issues. We talked about investment, what we were doing in promoting for business and so on, and he went away. He said that he would continue to do some research. They were doing interviews everywhere to search out the real story.

Right after the American November election of 1996, I got a phone call from the same Wall Street Journal reporter from the U.S. He called up to ask if he could follow me around for a few days. "I guess." I said, "Actually, what you might want to do, we're having this investment conference in Potsdam. Why don't you come a day ahead and a day after, and go with me, and I'll show you what we're doing for business." He showed up, right after the election. The first thing that I had, was a meeting with SPD caucus of the Bundestag, to talk about the election, they wanted to have a political discussion. I said, "Okay, but I have this journalist who is with me." They said, "Fine, bring him along." We started to talk about the U.S. election results when the American journalists starts asking me questions. I said, "Wait a minute, whose meeting is this?" We continued the discussion and had a very good session. Afterward I took him to a meeting of Brandenburg representation office in Bonn, where Minister President Stolpe was expected. Although the Minister President was absent, we had some other discussions about U.S. businesses in Brandenburg.

The next day we were off to Potsdam for more meetings. In Potsdam we met with the U.S. investors, and to the journalists delight, he was having a wonderful time interviewing everybody. The Board meeting of the American Chamber of Commerce in Germany followed. I said to the Chairman, Fred Irwin, "You know, there is a journalist and I'm not inviting him in, but if you don't mind..." Sure enough, the journalist goes into the Board meeting, where the Embassy Commercial Counselor is giving a presentation on the embassy's promotion of American business and the Embassy Economic Minister, Janice Bay is presenting on market opening strategies for electricity, energy and gas. I spoke on our common project in this business conference to make the U.S. the largest foreign investor in the new German States. We went on through the conference for the next day and one-half. I gave a few speeches, participated in panel discussions, and watched our journalist friend depart. This was in November, 1996.

On January 21, 1997 the day after the Second Clinton Administration began, I held our country team meeting in Bonn at the Embassy as usual. Bob Earle, public affairs officer, was sitting in the place next to me. Bob said as I came into the meeting; "Oh, so you like hamburgers?! Did you like what was in the press today?" I was confused and replied: "I don't know what you are talking about. I am not sure whether I like it or not." "Oh, yeah, you should see the article in the Wall Street Journal." Bob handed me the article. The headline reads, "Big Mac Diplomacy, U.S. Embassies Walk Softly, Carry Big Stick for American Business." It notes that a Bonn newspaper picture shows me at a McDonald's Restaurant "chomping" a hamburger in Big Mac Diplomacy. The Wall Street Journal had taken a lead from a picture that I had allowed at a McDonald's 25th anniversary at Bonn, run by two graduates of the Bonn American High School. This hamburger chomping envoy became the lead for a front-page Wall Street Journal article that went on and on, about what we were doing to promote business. It was one of those rare and very pleasant moments to have appeared positively on the front page of a major U.S. newspaper; it was very nice.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover on German side? I'd like to just move, if you don't mind, to what you are doing right now, because, it gives some insight. Could you explain what you are doing, and you mentioned something over the phone that sounded like, showing the European world has changed, but it really hasn't changed. Could you talk about what you're doing? This is work in progress, obviously, you're still doing it.

BINDENAGEL: Thank you for the opportunity. I have now been working for several months with Under Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs, Stuart E. Eizenstat, on a project that he feels very strongly about. He has been working himself on the issue of "Nazi Gold" for two years. That is, gold confiscated by the Nazis and not returned. For Eizenstat the Nazi Gold is a story of how plundered gold helped the Nazi war effort. He asked me if I could join in his effort, because in addition to gold there were other Holocaust era assets that had become the target of discussion. He wanted somebody to convene a conference of 42 countries, several non-governmental organizations, Jewish groups such as the World Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee, World Jewish Restitution Organization, and others. The conference will address, in a historical fashion, what had happened to art and insurance confiscated by the Nazis. It would review efforts for claimants and Holocaust survivors in particular to claim assets restituted or receive compensation.

Frankly, I did not look on this as a great opportunity, but rather as a request and a serious challenge. I was skeptical about such an effort because having developed and nurtured the U.S. political relationships with Europe over the last quarter century, particularly in Germany, I knew that those still unhealed wounds of World War II remained most sensitive. In contrast I had been struck by the euphoria surrounding the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War and shared the optimism offered by the move into the 21st century. Europeans for the first time in a century shared with us the great optimism of Americans when looking to the future. I did not like the idea that there was unfinished business of the Second World War, and that I was supposed to help forced the Europeans to come to terms with it.

Q: Peel the scab off the wound.

BINDENAGEL: Exactly. I struggled with the dilemma of not joining the effort and facing the consequences of deteriorating political relations like we had witnessed in the Swiss-American relationship over dormant bank accounts and Nazi Gold or of joining and failing to stop such a scenario. After several weeks and several opportunities to say "yes," I agreed to do organize such a conference. I concluded that I might even help resolve the issues by supporting or creating alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. I could only hope for the best and in the process I have re-examined what I've done and realize that someone with my own biography must carry out the duty.

I had come a long way from where I started the process just a couple of months ago. We are going to convene this conference in November 1998 to bring historians and archivists, some government officials, some experts in art, insurance and others together in Washington for a discussion. We begin with the Secretary of State, the Under Secretary for Economics, Eizenstat, delegation heads from these governments. We are going to spend a day talking about the history of the Nazis from 1933-1945 and our efforts at restitution after the war to restore art to its rightful owners, to pay claims against insurance companies, and to finish some of the things on gold. We're going to see what was deferred by the Cold War, what was forgotten. After the Cold War has ended we now are going to go back to finish the unfinished business of World War II. Our aims are to make sure that there is a commitment to open archives so that research can continue, to share the research that has been done and to find some ways of addressing claims, especially those with survivors' interests. In my view more important, we will seek to deal with issues of remembrance, research and education. What do we do for the next generation that will come? For the survivors' money is not everything, money is important, but their own memory of the horrible events conveying that memory in a way that is fair and equitable, and honorable to their suffering will be a challenge. Our emphasis is not for the war generation, not for my generation, not the 50-year olds, but is for those who come after. I learned the other day that the X-generation, my children who are not quite out of high school yet, are called the "Millennials." We are doing this for the Millennial generation.

So what are we doing? Let me say that we had a roundtable on Nazi-confiscated art the other day, on Tuesday this week. We brought together representatives of the American Art Museum Directors, Cleveland director Bob Bergman and Earle "Rusty" Powell from the National Gallery among others, we had representatives from art galleries and auction houses -Sotheby's and Christie's.

Q: These are art auction houses, major movers of art around thworld.

BINDENAGEL: We had historians, who had written several books since 1995 and representatives of several Jewish organizations. Several books have been written on the question of Nazi confiscated art and other topics. And as I began my presentation moderating this discussion, I said, that I was struck as I read through the Nicholas' book "The rape of Europa" that I was an Army officer in Würzburg, where Captain Skelton came and built a tarp over the residence of the Prince Bishops of Würzburg and saved the "Tiepolo" fresco ceiling from destruction at the end of the war. Continuing, I found myself remembering that German Foreign Minister Kinkel had invited me as a chargé to a luncheon at the guesthouse at Petersburg, overlooking the Rhine river to pay homage and tribute at an award ceremony for Walter Farmer, a U.S. Army officer from World War II, of the Skelton era, for his effort to return art to his rightful owners. Farmer had acted against the wishes of some in the military that wanted to take art from Germany at the end of the war for the "safekeeping" in the U.S. and had written and signed the "Wiesbaden Manifesto," which set down principles for returning art as the heritage of the country. I recalled that while in the GDR, I had received a letter from the mayor of Quedlinburg about the lost treasures of Quedlinburg that had been taken by an American sergeant and put in a safe deposit box in Texas. The heirs' lawyer, after the sergeant died, and his heirs tried to sell those treasures. However, I had facilitated a contact with the mayor and the lawyer who negotiated the return of Quedlinburg. I noted that Tom Kline, the lawyer, was in the room discussing this issue of Nazi confiscated art with us.

I turned to my left and there was Constantine Akinsha, who has written a book called "Beautiful Loot." As I was reading Constantine's book I was struck that while in GDR I came to know the Politburo member Horst Brasch, who was negotiator as Deputy Cultural Minister for the GDR, with the Soviet Union for the return of "The splendor of Dresden," "The Green Vault" and "The Zwinger" old masters. Suddenly I thought, "maybe I was reluctant to get into this finishing World War II, but maybe there is something that I need to do to finish it."

We will try to find some guidelines to tell the story and to seek alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to help museums fearful of borrowing art from Europe with the consequences of finding themselves in court for having stolen goods from the Nazis. The Museum of Modern Art in New York had a case of Egon Schiele paintings in a court dispute. There aren't many cases but it's a very painful process. We also will deal with the Russians who captured all the German art and the archives and kept them. The Russians also have art that the Nazis captured or stole from Jewish and other private families during the Nazi era. We're going to try to bring them all together in one place and try to discuss the history and try to not reopen too severely the wounds, but, if the wounds are opened to find a way to heal. For instance, the French have 2,000 works of art that our Army collected at the end of the war, gave back to them, that they then were a part of many more thousands of art works that they gave back, but they have 2,000 that they haven't returned, because they can't find anybody to claim them. The owners probably died in Auschwitz. The French were criticized by Hector Feliciano in his book and they are trying to come to terms with the question whether they did enough. At the same time they have not dealt with their Vichy history, collaborating with the Nazis to steal this art is just a small part. Recently the French tried a Vichy official [Maurice] Papon and convicted him of helping the Nazis deport Jews. Such trials question the preferred French history of glorifying the resistance. I am concerned that this is a very troubled historical debate and we are going to be in the middle of it.

The Dutch have the similar thing with art. They have 4,000 pieces of art that they have not returned. They can't find the provenance of those pieces of work and so they are extending their commission, under Rudi Ekkarts, that's looking into this issue for three more years, to do more research. At the end of the war, when they were returning things, the Dutch found that for instance the Goudstekker family story. The family had a gallery which was confiscated by the Nazis and the man died, his wife came back after the war, Dutch, and asked for her paintings and her artwork and her property back. The Dutch government after the war said you can have one or the other but not both. A very hard and harsh decision taken not by the Nazis but by the Dutch officials. The Dutch will have to come to terms with that decision.

The Austrians, having believed and having informally propagated the idea that they were the first victim of Nazi aggression according to a proclamation of the allies in 1943, have also a myth to overcome. I believe the Allies acted in part to keep them from fighting against us, but it has become a major national myth. Changing it, having gone through the Austrian President Waldheim experience, where he was accused of helping the Nazis.

Q: He was a German Army officer, in intelligence work directed against Jews in Yugoslavia.

BINDENAGEL: And in Salonika, which was a Jewish city. It will not be easy for the Austrians, either. Anyway, the Austrians have a case similar to the Dutch case at the end of the war. They gave the Rosenberg family the opportunity to export some of their paintings and to leave others, or get nothing. This entire discussion is creating a current debate, a political debate today, based on historical debate.

What's new for me in the German side is that the Germans have compensated, restituted, indemnified the survivors. They have had a historical debate about their role, sustained over 50 years, they've made the Hitler period the key element of their education system and they are continuing to deal with it. They are not comfortable with it, they do not like it, they do not like to be reminded of it, but they have indeed, if not having come to terms with their history, they have accepted it as a part of their history. The result of that German story is, however, I think, and we will see, is that as the French, Dutch and Austrians will discuss what they did in World War II under new standards of requirements for reconciliation and to compensate that must meet the German standard, and it's very high. And it will be very hard for those countries, 50 years later, to catch up. And therein I think lies, seeds for plenty of debate, if not conflict, if not reopening the wounds.

Our challenge in these few months ahead of us, is to get everybody on a common agenda, and to seek consensus not allowing a divisive debate, but one that should be bringing them together to come to terms with their history. We would not suggest history be put behind them, nor to end it, nor to close it, but to come to terms with history in a positive way. I think the two State Department reports that were done on Nazi gold, where the U.S. made proclamations about what the Europeans did to prolong the war, have probably tested the limits of the American hegemony. There are 16 historical commissions in these countries, all doing their own historical work. We hope to use this conference to bring them together in a way that we can share this historical research, we can share the concepts, we can share the solutions. But there are so many with individual agendas, that we may not be successful.

Q: But what's the agenda that's driving us to do this?

BINDENAGEL: The primary agenda is the sense of justice. We have some post-war institutions that we have to get rid of. The Tri-Partite Gold Commission needs to be closed. In order to close Tri-Partite Gold Commission you have to give back the gold that was collected by the Nazis. Some of it is tainted gold that was taken from victims, either their wedding rings, or their teeth or whatever. That's awful. And so a Nazi Persecutees' Relief Fund has been created out of London Gold meeting. We have a very strong sense that we need to deal with this history. I think as we go through this we will feel even stronger that we can't get to the 21st century, or the NATO new members summit in April, or the G-7 summit in Bonn in the spring, or the U.S. - EU summit in the spring, or the OSCE summit in the spring, or the Germany 50th anniversary of their Constitution in the spring, or the 10th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall in the fall, or the end of the millennium in 1999, without coming to terms with this. My job is to try to get the Secretary and the Under Secretary and the White House and everyone to see that they need to take a position, a role to help this process along. And to get the 42 European and the Israelis and the three Latin American countries that are participating to seize on this task and do something positive with it. And then we can move on. If we don't, we'll be there and we'll find these festering problems will continue to fester. If we can have some sense that we have dealt with them and that we have laid the foundation to build our future through research and education as well as not to be divisive in the compensation and the money issues, then we will have achieved something. The jury is out on the question of our success.

Q: Well, I want to thank you very much.

Explain where we were and what happened here.

BINDENAGEL: I'm delighted to have the opportunity to fill in these last episodes. When I was tapped on my return from Germany in 1997/1998, Stuart E. Eizenstat, the Undersecretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs, wanted to host a conference in Washington on Holocaust assets, following on the Nazi Gold conference that had taken place in December 1997 in London. I was brought into the process to bring together 44 countries to discuss issues such as unpaid insurance claims, in effect to ask countries participating in the conference to explain their wartime histories. The conference itself was opened by Madeleine Albright, who had just revealed to the world that she had Jewish grandparents and that she was willing to accept the responsibility of her history and called on these 44 countries to do the same. The outcome of the conference, which lasted from November 30, to December 3, 1998, was really to focus on the resolution of certain issues, including the insurance policies, the restitution of communal properties, and art.

One of the results of the conference was to create a set of principles concerning Nazi-confiscated art, in which the participants agreed to try to resolve the unclear provenance and to restore art objects to victims or their families. The interesting aspect is that several countries, while they had no legal force, implemented these principles. Over the years, dozens of significant artworks have been identified and returned to victims' families or accommodations have been made to resolve questions of ownership, without litigation. One example is from the North Carolina museum of art, which discovered that it had a Cranach painting that had been confiscated by the Nazis. The museum returned the Cranach to the two surviving sisters in Vienna, who were heirs, who were so pleased with the way this was handled that they sold the painting back to the museum for a nominal fee. In an effort to deal with restoration of communal property, Stuart Eizenstat announced some continued action that he was doing in this area, particularly in Eastern Europe. Larry Eagleburger, the former Secretary of State, was tapped to lead the International Commission on the Holocaust Era Insurance Claims, a mechanism that we supported to resolve insurance policies. Lawsuits against German companies were filed in September 1998 for companies' use of industrial forced labor in World War II. German companies' CEO's approached newly elected Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, and asked if the government would support an effort to try to provide compensation for the surviving laborers. The Chancellor was a member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, which had been persecuted by the Nazis during the National Socialist era. Mr. Schroeder encouraged them to proceed. Some industry leaders, most notably Dr. Manfred Gentz from Daimler Chrysler, Rolf Breuer from Deutsche Bank, and Henning Schulte-Noelle from Allianz Insurance, approached the U.S. government to ask Stuart Eizenstat if the U.S. government would engage with them to try to resolve these court cases and pay the claims. The result was a German industry initiative to create a foundation, which would make payments to surviving, forced laborers. The U.S. government would be asked to intervene to end the lawsuits against Germany arising out of World War II and the National Socialist regime. Stu Eizenstat agreed with this proposal, and negotiations were launched in May of 1999. There was a series of 18 plenary sessions, including members of the German industry initiative who began this process with some 17 leading German companies. To that mix were added the five reconciliation foundations that the Germans had financed in the 1990s for humanitarian purposes with the Ukrainians, the Russians, the Czechs, and the Poles. The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany joined them as the institutions that would actually make the payments to individuals. The State of Israel also joined the process, along with the American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors and the Centre of Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel. Throughout the negotiations dozens of plaintiffs' attorneys who had filed the class-action lawsuits were fully engaged.

We began these negotiations in Bonn. As the government of Germany was moving the capital to Berlin, we were meeting in the old Foreign Office in Bonn. At one count, I saw 125 people in the room negotiating on such topics as eligibility of concentration camp victims for payments versus agricultural workers, who were forced laborers but were not industrial forced laborers and should not be paid by industry. There was a whole host of other historical injustices that had been brought to victims.

Q: I would think that some of this also would have stirred up a group of people, the predatory lawyers. If there is an airplane crash, before the pieces of the wreckage hit the ground, you have lawyers waiting to get the names of the victims. We would call them "ambulance chasers." Was there the equivalent to this there?

BINDENAGEL: In fact, the 1996 class action lawsuits against the Swiss banks had encouraged such action by other plaintiffs' attorneys. In the end, there were more than 100 plaintiffs' attorneys in this case, from some of the most reputable firms to some small-town, small-time individual lawyers trying to engage themselves in this process. We had the whole entire range. They were certainly a formidable group. The argument and the negotiating itself were fascinating because it was no longer a government-to-government negotiation. It was a government-led negotiation the German side first by Bodo Hombach, a special appointee of Chancellor Schroeder, followed by Dr. Otto Graf Lambsdorff, the former economics minister. On the U.S. side, the negotiations were led by Stuart Eizenstat, first in his role as Undersecretary of State and then as Deputy Treasury Secretary. There were NGOs, plaintiffs' attorneys, companies, governments, all at the table negotiating from their own points of view on what was to become an executive agreement between the U.S. and Germany and a joint statement by all the parties in support of that executive agreement.

Q: Why was this type of negotiation chosen? There had been a series of governmental agreements before. Was this the outcome of looking at how other agreements had been reached and we figured this would be the best way to go about it?

BINDENAGEL: That is a very good question. Traditionally, issues of this kind would be resolved in treaty negotiations at the end of a war and be considered reparations. However, Germany had been divided and consequently, compensation and restitution took place in the West under the national laws of West Germany. It did not take place in East Germany. So, when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, there was still unfinished business from the National Socialist regime. By the time Germany was united a year later, there were questions about what was not complete. Who were the victims who didn't receive compensation? We thought in 1990 that Secretary James Baker and Mr. Robert Zoellick and others had resolved this issue by having an exchange of letters between Secretary Baker and German Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher. Mr. Genscher promised to continue the compensation programs of West Germany from the Cold War period into the post-Cold War period and a unified Germany. These programs were extended after 1990. There also were negotiations for an individual, Hugo Princz, which became a global agreement dealing with compensation for Americans who had been caught in concentration camps. And for humanitarian purposes, the Germans financed these five institutions, the foundations in the former Soviet Union and Central Europe, that later became part of our negotiations for forced labor compensation. But we did not negotiate a formal peace treaty in 1990. The "Two + Four" agreement on the unification of Germany was titled the final agreement on the unification of Germany. The reopening of the London Debt Agreement of 1953 to renegotiate reparations was politically unacceptable to the Germans. The German proposal for an Iranian Claims Tribunal-like solution with the U.S. waiving the claims of Holocaust survivors in the U.S. for acts committed during the Nazi regime was not politically acceptable to the United States. Those decisions led to the creation of the multi-party talks, the format was to have all the parties at the table. That format necessitated plenary sessions, coupled with countless bilateral negotiations with each of these groups, which became very heated.

The agreement itself was very straightforward. The German Foundation Initiative proposed a foundation that would make payments to victims according to German law that would create a foundation based on the negotiation. Since waiving the rights of Americans to sue was not acceptable, the U.S. Government would develop, through this negotiation, a commitment to issue "statements of interest" in court asking that the cases against German companies for acts arising out of World War II and the National Socialist era be dismissed not for legal reasons but on any valid legal grounds. More importantly for us, because it was in the U.S. foreign policy interest, this committed the U.S. to make a political statement in court in support of dismissal. That negotiation began in May 1999. By October, the question of how much money was the focus. The amounts started with the plaintiffs' attorneys asking for \$30 billion and the German side looking at \$1-1.5 billion, which was a very large gulf. In October, the first serious proposal from German industry and government was for DM 6 billion, about \$3 billion. Then by December 17, 1999, an agreement was reached when the plaintiffs' attorneys accepted DM 10 billion. In that process, the German companies were joined by the German government to share the DM 10 billion and to create a joint public foundation supported by contributions of DM 5 billion from the German government and DM 5 billion from the German industry. The inclusion of the German Government to create a German public foundation made it possible for the U.S. to engage in an executive agreement. We couldn't make an agreement between the U.S. government and a private party - the Remembrance, Responsibility and Future Foundation - but we could if it were set up as public foundation with the German government. An agreement between the German government and the American government was in the making.

By December 17, 1999 we achieved the first major element of our agreement, a capped amount of money ten billion German Marks. But more important politically was that this was coupled with the statement by German president Johannes Rau. He met in Schloss Bellevue, his residence in Berlin, with victims and in their presence said that Germany recognized what had happened to these people, the suffering they have gone through, and asked their forgiveness for what was done in the name of the German people. It was a very powerful political reaffirmation that gave meaning to the amount of money - a dignified payment - that would be distributed among the people. We were all very happy at that point. We thought we had achieved a tremendous breakthrough and we would soon be paying money.

The next issue was the allocation of that money. There, we began to find that the divisions among Europeans and the emotions stemming from the horrors of the Second World War were still very strong. The deal was struck at DM 10 billion. In the meantime, eight competing entities were looking for money; we had added the International Organization for Migration headed by Brunson McKinley, a former Foreign Service Officer and U.S. Ambassador to Haiti, that would make payments through the International Organization of Migration to the rest of the world. The other foundations would deal with their own constituencies in Eastern Europe or in the Jewish community worldwide. So, the allocation debate began with DM 10 billion on the table.

December 17, 1999, Mr. Eizenstat and Mr. Lambsdorff decided to send me and German Deputy Legal Advisor Michael Geier of the German Foreign Ministry to meet with various parties in Eastern Europe. We met with Eastern Europeans together as they worked out a proportional system themselves and sought to determine what the numbers of beneficiaries based on an earlier accounting that had been done about the numbers of surviving forced laborers. Then the Jewish group, which was made up of the World Jewish Restitution Organization, the Claims Conference, the Jewish Agency, the State of Israel, and two survivor organizations, the American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors as well as the Centre of Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel. The negotiations became very heated. The parties themselves began to discuss not money, but who suffered more. Differentiation between slave and forced labor became a very contentious issue. Slave labor referred to those people who were slated for extermination, mostly Holocaust survivors, but also including the Sinti, Roma and some Polish groups in the eastern part of Poland run by the German occupation forces. By the middle of March, we had been able to achieve an allocation between not only the individual slave laborers, who were to receive a total of DM 8.1 billion, but with the remainder of the money to be spent on insurance, on other personal injuries, on property issues, and set aside DM 700 million for a "future fund," which would be an endowment created to fund programs to fight anti-Semitism and nationalism, hatred, promote the relationship between the Europeans. The Future Fund was a very positive and forward-looking idea that was proposed by the German industry. By the end of March, we had reached basically an agreement. We, the U.S., had a separate fund of relief money that we were giving to various projects and decided that we could help this process along by giving some of that money, \$10 million, to the Polish group that had a category of people who were not covered by the German legal definitions. So, the U.S., separately from the German agreement, made a small contribution to seal the deal. In the end, working with my political assistant, Jody Manning, we had a spreadsheet that we ran repeatedly with various combinations. When we found the division of money between the East Europeans, particularly the Polish numbers, and the Jewish numbers to fit exactly the same DM 1.812 billion each for slave and forced labor we ended the discussion and sealed the deal. It was a dramatic moment.

We then had to deal with insurance issues. Those talks went long into the night. On the insurance side, we decided throughout the negotiations to support the international commission that had been established to deal with unpaid insurance claims from this ermostly those of heirs of Holocaust victims who had died in Auschwitz or other camps who were unable to makes claims or who, when they made claims, did not get paid for their insurance policies.

Q: Just for background, had most of the insurance firms more or less survived under maybe different names and eventually come back?

BINDENAGEL: Indeed, the companies involved were primarily those in Eastern Europe. There were fewer German than Italian firms in Eastern Europe because German firms after World War I were not allowed to issue policies in Central Europe. Primarily, companies like Allianz AG inside Germany, Allianz in particular because its CEO went on to become Adolf Hitler's economics minister, as well as Italian firms like Assicurazioni Generali were caught in the web of non-paying companies. Other companies were in Switzerland Zurich, Basler, Winterthund French companies also didn't honor insurance policies. These companies, like the German companies at the time of the initiative on forced and slave labor, had also come together to make an initiative and signed a memorandum of understanding with the Jewish groups and with the American insurance regulators to try to resolve the unpaid insurance policies. That MOU created the international commission. Former Secretary of State Larry Eagleburger was called to chair that. In the German context, the German companies had asked that they be included in the German foundation settlement. As a result of the negotiations within the International Commission on Holocaust Era Claims (ICHEIC) and the German Foundation negotiators, DM 550 million were set allocated to ICHEIC from the ten billion German Marks for insurance claims. The international commission was asked to make the insurance payments. In the meantime, the companies had evolved; Germans had bought Italian companies. Italian companies bought German companies. French companies bought others. So, it was really very European and it was very difficult to sort out what was a German company versus a French company.

Q: Did you have an agreement on restitution in France?

BINDENAGEL: The French indeed had denied any responsibility for the acts of the Vichy Regime through 1994. President Mitterrand argued as late as 1994 that Vichy was not France and that the real French were in the South of France during the war. In 1995, President Chirac reversed that policy and began an historical effort to understand what rules and regulations the Vichy regime itself issued, versus those issued by the occupying National Socialists. Vichy restitution talks in France were running parallel to the German negotiation the entire time. In that case, since we had established this process throughout Europe, I went from the negotiations in Germany to France where we had an inter-ministerial group for this issue. In France, it was very fascinating. I had begun with the discussion on Nazi confiscated art held in the MNR collection with the French and we created an inter-ministerial working group in the Prime Minister's office, including the Quai d'Orsay, the foreign office, and other ministries. We basically consulted on the historical commissions' in Europe and on the German negotiations. The French explained what they were doing, and what proposals they had for spoliation claims adjudication and for a French Shoah Foundation. We discussed the restitution of Nazi confiscated art and the implementation of the Washington Principles on Nazi-confiscated Art. The French were particularly interested in the German proposals and how the German negotiations proceeded. The French shared their historical research with us. The deputy of the historical commission, the medical doctor Ady Steg, came to visit the U.S., met with the U.S. state treasurers and the Congress. Alan Hevesi, the comptroller of New York City, hosted a monitoring group of U.S. State Treasurers who controlled billions in investments, including in France. Steg explained the progress on French historical research and also met with Representative Jim Leach and explained to Congress what the French were doing. In the end, the French developed a claims commission to deal with claims arising out of Vichy and they created a national foundation for the remembrance of the Shoah, very similar to the German Future Fund.

Going back to the negotiations with the Germans, after having the allocation issue resolved, we then moved to the issue of reparations involving American POWs, and others who felt they might have an issue to raise. We had taken reparations until 1947/48 when the Cold War descended on us and we ended the seizure of Nazi German property to be used for reparations. It was our view, throughout that reparations should not be reopened. We agreed that the U.S. would not raise reparations, although there may be actual claims.

Q: This could not have set well with some veterans groups.

BINDENAGEL: Actually, although there was some discussion, we had strong support for this provision, although I say that today. It has not played much of a role, although there were some efforts to raise the issue.

Then we concluded the negotiations with the Germans on an agreement to end the lawsuits and help achieve legal peace. Legal peace was the essence of the deal for the Germans. They wanted to find a remedy for all claims in order to be able to conduct business in the United States unimpeded by World War II lawsuits. It took from May through October 2000 to deal with legal peace before we were able to craft the statement of interest principles that will be used to dismiss cases against German companies in U.S. courts. Despite the brilliant negotiation of Stu Eizenstat, both with the German companies and the U.S. Department of Justice the talks went to the very last moment of July 17th, 2000, when we met in Berlin to sign the executive agreement, which was signed at the same time the joint statement. That morning was dramatic. Ed Fagan, a plaintiffs' attorney, announced that he would not sign because he had outstanding issues. Actually, he was wired for television and was grandstanding for news special. Stu Eizenstat and Fagan screamed at each other until Fagan relented. Then we gathered with the German delegation and the German industry representative, Manfred Gentz, stated that he knew what he had to do that day - sign the agreement - but he also had some unfinished business to keep on the table. Stu Eizenstat tried to negotiate the issues and the ceremony was delayed. The misunderstanding turned ugly with an exchange - also misunderstood - that the U.S. was dictating the terms of the agreement. This led to a retort that Germans had experience with dictators, not the U.S. In the end the exchange was set aside to be raised later as the delegations moved to the Weltsaal of the Foreign Office to sign the executive agreement.

Q: What is legal peace?

BINDENAGEL: Legal peace in an ideal situation would mean that no more cases could be brought in U.S. courts against German companies for crimes arising out of World War II. In the legal system that we have, the Anglo-Saxon system, we don't waive the rights of citizens to raise cases, but we have intervened to make sure they're dismissed by the courts on any legal grounds. The conflicting legal systems in Europe and the U.S. Civil law and Roman law remained unresolved. Only the dismissal of the cases would end the debate.

The next phase in the implementation of the executive agreement with Germany was to dismiss these cases. On July 17, 2000, through the end of the administration, through the beginning of the next administration, until May 30, 2001 we fought with the courts to resolve these cases. In the end, there were perhaps as many as 100 class action lawsuits that were dismissed. But not without a little drama. The court cases were divided into three kind insurance, banking, and forced labor. Forced labor cases and insurance cases were dismissed in the fall of 2000 by individual judges. The third judge, Judge Shirley Wohl Kram in Manhattan, was not prepared to dismiss the cases against the banks. She asked for a special master to review what we had done. In the meantime the German parliament passed the law creating the new German Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future" which would make payments as soon as the cases were dismissed.

The special master, plaintiffs' attorneys, the defense attorneys, the U.S. government, all asked her to dismiss the cases, and she refused. At that point in the spring of 2001, after the administration had changed and Secretary Powell had asked that I stay on as special envoy, we went back to court. The plaintiffs' attorneys and the U.S. government joined together with the defense attorneys to ask for a writ of mandamus to remove the judge from the case and to have it heard in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

Q: Was the feeling that the judge had a particular point of view or interest in this?

BINDENAGEL: She had had a separate case dealing with Austrians. She was told in that case that the German banks would pay the Austrian claims. When the German banks said, "No," she felt that this case would be the way to force the German banks into the negotiation. At one point, she had a hearing, but the cases were not dismissed.

Normally, a U.S. judge would be represented by the Justice Department in such a mandamus case. However, the U.S. Government had joined in the request for the writ of mandamus and Judge Kram hired David Bois, who was Al Gore's lawyer in Florida, to defend her. David Bois defended her in the Second Circuit, including the decision that she had ordered the German Bundestag to renegotiate the agreement and change the German Foundation law, a decision that had gone far into the President's foreign policy making powers for which she had no right to tread.

Q: How did things come out?

BINDENAGEL: In the end, the Second Circuit of the Court of Appeals ordered the dismissal of the court cases against the German banks. Soon afterward the German Bundestag declared that "adequate" legal peace was achieved and payments should begin. The industry money was transferred to the foundation in stages and with much Sturm und Drang in the Board of Trustees meetings. Nevertheless, within the first year of its operation, some 1,033,000 surviving forced laborers have received the first of two payments, totaling \$1.8 billion.

Q: It must have been difficult. There must have been an awful lot of people who would have had a claim to this who no longer were with us, either they died in the Holocaust or other events dealing with that or just by attrition.

BINDENAGEL: It is a tragedy that so many people died before this effort could reach them. However, our effort did reach those still alive or the heirs of victims who were eligible - all those alive after the German industry announced their foundation initiative on February 19, 1999.

Q: So we're talking about the survivors.

BINDENAGEL: People who were living at the time the German initiative was announced.

Q: Was this a decision that almost had to be done? It was tremendous can of worms.

BINDENAGEL: I think that we owed it to the victims to reach out after the fall of the Berlin Wall to recognize their suffering and it was certainly in our foreign policy interest to promote economic relations with the Europeans by ending the class action suits and establishing the basis for reconciliation among the former belligerents of World War II. We could only reach the living; if we sought heirs probably half of Europe would be heirs. It would not have been possible and would have implied that the suffering of forced workers could be inherited.

Q: What did you do? Give some atmospheric about what your role in this was and your impression of some of the other people and maybe even national or commercial outfits that were pressing in on you.

BINDENAGEL: When Stuart Eizenstat asked me to join his forced and slave labor negotiations after I had successfully managed the Washington Conference on Holocaust Era Assets, he asked for one reason. He asked that I become his diplomatic advisor because of my 25 years of diplomatic experience in Europe. The rest of the American team was made up almost exclusively of lawyers. Stuart Eizenstat is also a lawyer. We had two lawyers from the Legal Adviser's Office, Ronald Bettauer and Eric Rosand and two lawyers from the Justice Department, David Anderson and David Bucholz from the Civil Division. So, on the U.S. side, there was an almost exclusive focus on legal remedies for political problems and moral problems. So, inside our own group, we had a tremendous tension as I defended the principle of the primacy of politics. We tried to even out the issues of political necessity, or what was important politically versus what was feasible in legal terms.

What was really remarkable was the drafting of the elements of the U.S. "statement of interest," which became an issue of major contention between the State and Treasury with Stu Eizenstat on one side and the Justice Department. I recall several meetings with Seth Waxman, the Solicitor General, when he would sit down and look at the efforts by Stu to get strong language to dismiss the cases and say: "But this is not a legal theory. We're not intervening for a legal reason. We're intervening because of foreign policy reasons" - which is exactly what we were trying to do.

The U.S. Military Government began a compensation program for Nazi victims in its zone of West Germany with Occupation Law 59 in 1947. We had, as policy for 50 years, sought compensation for victims, as recently as through the Baker-Genscher exchange of letters in 1990. The government lawyers approached this as a foreign claims settlement issue. If victims had a claim, how much time did they work in the camps? How much money should they receive of this? The plaintiffs' attorneys made that case very strongly that the victims could relate economic value of their forced labor. In the end, my view was that no amount of money could compensate the victims; you couldn't place an economic value on any of their forced labor. The Germans tried to avoid legal responsibility by casting the payments as "humanitarian" and set eligibility along those lines to strengthen their legal case. At one short point in the talks the industry, trying to weigh in on behalf of the victims in Eastern Europe proposed the idea that the payments (to double victims) could be needs based payments. So, in Eastern Europe, you could reach a lot of people, but those in Western Europe and the U.S. shouldn't really get much payment because they didn't need it and that the really needy were those who were behind the Iron Curtain, who had not received any compensation earlier. That proposal was roundly attacked as differentiating suffering among victims and was immediately rejected, in particular, by the Jewish groups, who asked that victims in the two classes - slave and forced laborers - be treated equally in each group as a major principle. That proposal led to a heated debate over the differentiation between those who were slave laborers, getting three times as much as Eastern European forced laborers. This also was a very contentious discussion between the Poles, in particular, and the Jewish groups with the two American and German governments being accused of unleashing historical grievances by these two against each other.

Another facet of the victims' suffering was when Graf Lambsdorff argued against based for agricultural laborers, saying that according to testimonials he had heard, forced labor in agriculture was one of the best times in the lives of people, but the Poles attacked Lambsdorff directly for the Germans prejudice against Poles and for reviving antagonisms that existed in Germany. Although we were seeking reconciliation and trying to find political ways to lay the basis for it, the talks focused almost exclusively on legal issues. My job was to keep the political issues from getting pushed out, to say nothing of the moral issues and human rights. I kept reminding the parties that we were there to seek a measure of justice and asked whether payments for justice can restore people's lives?

Q: That's all you have. The only way you can compensate people can make statements and say "We're sorry," but beyond that, if you're going to do something, it really is money.

BINDENAGEL: That's correct. Money without the apology is too crass and not valuable for reconciliation. President Klestil in Austria followed President Rau's December 17, 1999 statement with his own on the occasion of our signing the Austrian forced labor agreement on October 24, 2000. Also Prime Minister Jospin and his predecessor, Alain Juppe, and Chirac made apologies recognizing what had happened in France. But even there, apology is not enough if the victims are forgotten. We supported the German Future Fund in the German case and the National Foundation for the Remembrance of the Shoah in the French case. Simone Weil, an Auschwitz survivor, heads the French foundation up. In the German case, the Future Fund is part of a foundation that is overseen by a group divided equally between victims and German representatives. So, the agreements that we reached for money and legal peace were clearly not sufficient. Apology is helpful. But really the success is whether or not the memory can be made to do the historical research and whether you can actually prevent such horrors in the future. That's the really frustrating part, whether or not greater understanding can combat the xenophobic nationalism and ethnic cleansing as we saw in Yugoslavia.

Q: Can reconciliation be reached between the Jews and the Poles. Gomulka at one point had played this up during his regime in Poland.

BINDENAGEL: Yes.

Q: You must have been a little bit like the skunk at the wedding. I can see a diplomat sitting with a bunch of lawyers and saying, "Well, look, you've got to look at the political relationships," where lawyers are not trained to think about them at all. They're looking at the bottom line and compensation and this other stuff is superfluous.

BINDENAGEL: That is indeed the role that I had to promote the primacy of politics with a group of highly skilled lawyers. I the diplomat was the odd man out. Nevertheless, our successes are measured in different ways. U.S. policy was stated in filings in court as the policy to seek a course of justice for the victims, but also to find cooperative, non-confrontational solutions outside litigation. By keeping that little phrase, we shifted the emphasis from going to court to make these decisions, and to getting the lawyers to accept that whatever settlement we had, they would have to defend in court, but the settlement would be made at a table, not in the court. It was made in the court in the Swiss case and was very long in coming and the payments were made very late. Four years after the settlement was made in the Swiss case, the payments began.

Q: You must have felt the clock ticking.

BINDENAGEL: Absolutely, constantly. Ten percent of the survivors die each year. Most of the people were over 80 years old. There was a very strong sense of urgency. Justice and urgency were the two themes that we put into the discussion. You couldn't reach justice if you didn't have any survivors.

Q: With this lawyer' group, they're trained to be pugnacious. I would think that it would be hard to get them to concentrate on the real issue, which is time. The basic idea can come across. Yes, there will be payments made. These are the people to whom we're going to be paying. And yet the natural combativeness of people trained in the legal profession would be?

BINDENAGEL: Absolutely. One of the lessons we learned from the Swiss case was to put the allocation process in the negotiation. The Swiss allocation process lasted two or three years. We did it from January to March, three months. Many of the things were done to make sure that the lawyers would not have any basis on which to raise new issues and delay the process. Even then when we did this, the federal judge in New York delayed the process on her own.

Q: One judge can do that. But our role was only one of a number. Was that just keeping us delayed or did it delay the whole process?

BINDENAGEL: The process was interlinked. No money was transferred for the victims until all court cases were dismissed. That was a condition of the deal and the judge had tremendous power to block and delay payments to survivors, which she did. Even after the decision, other efforts were made to reopen the court cases that had been decided, to delay further, and to ask for more money. It was a very difficult process to implement even after the agreement had been made.

Q: How did you find Stu Eizenstat worked with you?

BINDENAGEL: Stu was looking for me to provide the diplomatic connection, to win over the Europeans to support this process. So, what I did was stay on after the negotiation sessions in Germany, to go in advance of the meetings in Germany, meet with the constituents in the German industry, government, and media. I gave interviews; spoke to groups of various kinds, the Industry and Trade Chamber in Munich and newspaper roundtables to try to explain in a public diplomacy way what we were doing. At the same time I met with Bundestag members and with the German government officials to explain the background of the positions that were being taken, particularly by our lawyers. By the time we came into the negotiating room, the discussion could be focused on actual solutions.

Very often, I proposed compromises, but did it in a normal diplomatic way. I proposed the compromises to each side individually. Then when they came up with their own proposal, which was similar, it was theirs, and they were actually able to come to agreements on allocation, on reparations. Those were issues that both sides were adamant about, but you could find ways to recast the discussions. It was not to waive reparations. We weren't going to do that. Could you accept not raising reparations? My role was to try to find alternatives that were not legal, but that would provide a compromise that would get the payments to victims and cases against the companies dismissed.

Q: Were there counterparts to you on the German side?

BINDENAGEL: As it developed, the deputy legal adviser at the German Foreign Ministry, who was doing the legal work for them, became Lambsdorff's deputy. Michael Geier, a Foreign Service officer and Deputy Legal Advisor became my counterpart. I came to find him to be the best sounding board for ideas and to understand what the German industry lawyers were saying and how to craft the responses to official communications between Deputy Secretary Armitage and Graf Lambsdorff. This informal communications with e-mail with documentation allowed us to share papers between the two governments, so that we could understand what positions were being made.

Once the foundation was established, Stuart proposed that I be the U.S. government trustee, so I became one of two American the other American being one of the plaintiffs' attorney on the foundation board of trustees. We then established all the foundation policies, resolved the issues of eligibility such as that of Italian Military Internees who were captured after the Italians switched sides and became prisoners of war in the German Reich. Some of the Italian forces fought with the Hitler forces, but most were forced into labor and many were shot.

My role was really to deal with the Europeans on all the Holocaust issues, not just the labor negotiations. Therefore, I went to Brussels, the European Commission, on a few occasions, and met with the Belgian, Austrian, and Swedish, French historical commissions as well as their governments. The three negotiations that we had with the Germans, Austrians and French were all interlinked. I had to ensure that the agreements would have political support and then public support, particularly public support in German, which sustained the willpower of the industry to complete what they had begun.

Q: Were there other blocs? You had your New York judge. Were there equivalents elsewhere?

BINDENAGEL: The group that was most difficult was the German industry's legal working group, which operated under continental law, seeking principles rather than precedents, and became very difficult. They intervened and blocked the German government from making compromises. They would demand things that weren't possible. They made interventions in court. Anything that passed between the two governments would likely end up in court as an argument on behalf of the companies, even when the points really were not pro-company arguments. For instance, the exchange of letters between President Clinton and Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder were used in court filings in Florida shortly after they were exchanged, although we had not released them. That kind of activity in the tradition of continental lawyers might have been appropriate, but in terms of a diplomatic negotiation, it became very frustrating and difficult.

Q: Did embassies and foreign ministries stay out of the thing?

BINDENAGEL: Yes.

Q: Were you getting any pressure from the State Department?

BINDENAGEL: In the Clinton administration we had great and high level support. Stu Eizenstat, particularly after he moved from the State Department to become Deputy Treasury Secretary, was in Clinton's Chief of Staff John Podesta's staff meeting every day. As a result, we had an advocate inside the White House anytime. The President could be counted on to intervene with the German Chancellor whenever it was appropriate and needed. But when the administration changed, Senator Nelson, a newly elected Democrat from Florida who had been the Insurance Commissioner in Florida and was very aware of Larry Eagleburger's efforts in the insurance business, asked Secretary Powell if he would keep on this special envoy. President Bush had announced that he would abolish all special envoys. Since Stu Eizenstat had left, there would be no one to follow up on these issues. Senator Nelson then also asked Mr. Powell if he was going to keep Mr. Bindenagel as special envoy. I did not ask Senator Nelson to do this. In fact, I had other ideas. But Secretary Powell then told me that he would be delighted if I would stay on and implement this process in the beginning of this administration. Beyond that, he then designated Deputy Secretary Armitage to follow and support his effort in implementation. So, it was a change from an activist, interventionist negotiating position of the Clinton administration. With the agreements signed in July 2000 in the Austrian case, in October 2000 and then in the French case and the Austrian property case, on the last day of the Clinton administration the change then became one of implementation. Deputy Secretary Armitage gave a lengthy speech to the Claims Conference in June 2001 restating the Administration's commitment to fulfill the executive agreements signed in 2000 and 2001.

Q: So, in the final phase, how about payments? When did they start and how was that worked? I keep thinking of these people dying.

BINDENAGEL: Right. The foundations that the Germans had established in the early 1990's after the Baker-Genscher exchange of letters had distributed some 15 billion German Marks throughout Eastern Europe and they brought into the negotiation the data bank of victims' names they had already researched for about 10 years. In the case of the Jewish Claims Conference for 51 years they had been paying Jewish claims and other special payments under "Article II" and "Hardship Fund" and had names of people who would be eligible. Once the money was transferred and the court cases were dismissed on May 30, 2000 the money was transferred in the summer. Within a few weeks, initial payments were made. They really started in September of 2001. By now, one year later, 1,033,000 people have been paid. So, it really has been a success in the German case.

The Austrian case is very similar, although the numbers are much smaller. About 50,000 people have been paid in the first eight or nine months. In the French case, there are even smaller numbers, but they have an open ended process, so they're trying to identify people, interview them, and capture the oral histories of the victims, as well as making payments.

Q: Since this has not ended up in the headlines, I take it that you feel that the whole thing was quite a success. This did not open up all the scars. The wounds will never go away, but it did not reopen them in a major way about how awful things were.

BINDENAGEL: I am encouraged. I think in the sense of the agreement itself, the money to the victims and the legal peace was a fundamentally sound agreement. But in the process, we also obtained commitments through the Washington Conference, where we began our conversation, to open archives. Historical commissions have begun to research in previously closed archives and to publish that research. We created an International Task Force on Holocaust education, which brings together 13-14 countries to teach what happened in World War II in Europe to their own populations, based on historical research. Finally, the French foundation, the National Foundation for the Remembrance of the Shoah, and the German Future Fund will provide educational and other efforts to preserve the memory and to reach out to try to combat these very human hatreds and intolerance and anti-Semitism. So, yes, I'm encouraged.

What is interesting for me is that as the Clinton administration left, Stu Eizenstat asked that we apply for an award to recognize this unique effort. David Gergen had solicited candidates for Harvard University's "Innovations in American Government Award." I applied to Harvard University as the 1,331st application of 1331. The Holocaust Issues Office program was chosen as a semifinalist, one of 17 federal government programs. I understood the "semifinalist" choice as real confirmation of the success we achieved in bringing together NGOs, government officials, lawyers and company executives in negotiation, dealing with human rights issues, corporate citizenship issues, and the courts along with plaintiffs' attorneys and created a way of managing issues that didn't exist before. I think if it proves to be true, then for other issues involving civil society, industry and governments such as the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission or the Rwandans, or conflict diamonds in Sierra Leone may find a way to bring together non-traditional diplomatic actions and deal with some very serious issues in a globalized world where political borders are no longer clear dividing lines for negotiations. In that sense, I think that we were successful. I think we've given some thought to an alternative dispute resolution mechanism that should be examined.

Q: You had the U.S. and the European governments, all of whom had been involved in the creation of this united Europe. But then you have Israel, which sits outside this. How did they play within this?

BINDENAGEL: The government of Israel had delegated to the Claims Conference and the World Jewish Restitution Organization issues of claims. They didn't deal with this as a claimant. In terms of World War II reparations, they had settled with the Germans in Luxembourg early on and had established excellent relations with Germany after the war. They approached this negotiation with an eye on their constituent basic human rights issue of the first order for Holocaust survivors in Israel. The Israeli Holocaust survivors were very active. They were led by Moshe Sanbar, a survivor from Hungary had been the central banker in Israel. Most Eastern European refugees, survivors from Poland in particular, were very active in this process, especially Noach Flug. The State of Israel supported their efforts and the other institutions that were dealing with assets to which the government had delegated authority?

Q: Are you still on this board?

BINDENAGEL: No, I've now completed my job as special envoy for Holocaust issues, with the rank of ambassador. As we say in the Foreign Service, no good deed goes unpunished and I have been asked to develop a policy on conflict diamonds and implement a ban on trade in them through what is called the Kimberly process. The Kimberley diamond mine in South Africa has its name attached to the process of eliminating the scourge of conflict diamonds from the legitimate trade. The Kimberley Process is very similar to the forced labor talks with political negotiations among industry, civil society and governments from around the world. In Interlaken Switzerland on November 5 some 37 countries will agree to ban conflict diamonds in accordance with a political declaration negotiated over the last two years. Tomorrow, I'll be at the White House.

Q: Diamonds have become the tribalism that is no longer the major issue in Africa. It's really oil, diamonds, and timber.

BINDENAGEL: Commodities that are used for financing of legitimate governments or for insurrections. In the short time that I have dealt with this African issue, this has been clearly the case.

Q: What has happened to the diamond market with this tightening of control? One can spend \$2,000 for an average engagement ring. That was because the DeBeers Corporation controlled the diamond market. I would imagine this proliferation of African dictatorship with diamonds sitting within their borders has screwed up the market.

BINDENAGEL: That certainly has made the political part of it very difficult. More important is the new discoveries. Canada has very large deposits that have been opened and are sprouting into the market. In the manufacturing side, the polishing side, the Indians have discovered that they have the capability of taking these very tiny diamonds and marketing them. They have created a whole larger audience or client base for diamonds. The Russians have tremendous deposits. What you have are the traditional Antwerp diamond traders of the High Diamond Council and DeBeers in London controlling much of the South Africa and Botswana market. They are very important, but they're not the only actors. There is some movement, although I think DeBeers still controls the African market.

Q: For all the people involved in diamonds, the whole idea is to keep them rare.

BINDENAGEL: Or to create a bigger market.

Q: Is there anything else we should talk about?

BINDENAGEL: I think we've captured the essence. It is with a great sense of pride that I leave my Foreign Service career. The sense of accomplishment, especially during the 1989 Democratic Revolution in East Germany that led to German unification and the end of divided Europe as well as with the resolution of the victims' issues arising out of the crimes of National Socialism and World War II. Perhaps I can say that I left the world a little better than when I joined the Foreign Service in 1975. Thank you, Stu.

Q: How did you find you were received within the State Department? You were up against all those lawyers.

BINDENAGEL: Bureaucracies of any kind do not like innovation and creativity. They are outside the box. Nevertheless, I have received the highest praise from the State Department, a Distinguished Honor Award. The Deputy Secretary has praised the work that I've done. It has created a new basis for lawyers and diplomats to work that has not yet found a place in diplomacy or in government or in the legal profession. As a result, I am not in the center of regular diplomatic activity, but on the cutting edge of the new diplomacy.

I could end on a note that takes me back to the beginning of my Foreign Service career. Last January, I received a phone call from the Asia Foundation. Having served with you in Korea together in the mid-'70s, I had not returned to Asia since leaving Korea. I was intrigued with the idea that the Asia Foundation would be calling me to talk about something other than German unification. They wanted to know if I would come and give a talk on what the U.S. government had negotiated with the Germans in compensation for World War II forced labor. I told the Asia Foundation that this was a very interesting idea that I in principle would be delighted, but I would of course need to ask the State Department for their views and country clearance. The invitation was issued because Otto Graf Lambsdorff was in Tokyo in February to meet with the regular meeting of the Japanese-German Wise Men Group. The Asia Foundation thought it would be appropriate to make this presentation. I called my friend the DCM Dick Christianson, sent him an e-mail. I said, "Dick, I have this invitation. What do you think?" I contacted the desk, Marlene Sekawe, who used to work for me in Bonn, and said, "I have this invitation. Would you check and see if it's okay?" Positive noises came back from both. I proceeded to say, "Okay, I'd be delighted to come." Then, two weeks before I was to come, I got a note back from Dick Christianson saying, "We've been talking about this presentation on forced labor here and there is some concern that this might interfere with President Bush's trip. The Japanese are concerned that this might be an issue that we as a government would be raising and your visit has highlighted the issue of comfort women and dealing with the Chinese claims and so on." I told Dick that I understood that and that if they chose, no worry, I was a good soldier; I wouldn't come.

Shortly thereafter, Chris LeFleur, the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the East Asia and Pacific Bureau, called me and asked me if I could explain what was going on because they needed to decide what to do. I went down to Chris and told him that, "Lambsdorff is there. They're having this meeting. They were planning to invite about 150 people, including members of the Diet and political parties and government, activists, lawyers, all kinds." I also told him that I had contacted the former Japanese ambassador to Germany, who was a good friend of mine, Tatsuo Arima. Tatsuo was retired and was working for Mitsubishi, which is one of the companies that had been sued former forced laborers employed as World War II victims of the Japanese. I thought it were only appropriate that I understand what the context was before I gave these remarks. Chris thought it would be best if I didn't go. He called the Asia Foundation and found that the Asia Foundation had already extended the invitations. We were faced with the dilemma of what's worse? Going and saying something, or not going and making an issue of it? I went.

It was a delightful time. I arrived in Tokyo, met with the Deputy Chief of Mission, Christianson. Ambassador Howard Baker was traveling, so I didn't see him. Then I went over to see Tatsuo Arima. Ambassador Arima retired and was a Mitsubishi consultant, but he received me in the Japanese Foreign Office in a not modest office, but a rather grand office with three or four employees in his outer office. He had a huge office. I was quite struck with the message that I was getting. Tatsuo explained to me the sensitivity of the San Francisco Treaty that had ended the War with Japan and was not to be reopened by claims of forced labor. I explained to him our steadfast adherence to that treaty, that anyone covered by that treaty was covered and that was the bedrock of our relationship. He expressed some concern about the historical analogy with the Versailles Treaty and what happened in Europe when that treaty was broken. I thought that was a bit overdrawn, but the message was very clear. I explained to him that Mr. Lambsdorff was here and that the speech would be very straightforward. In fact, the U.S. Embassy had reviewed my remarks. I gave him a copy of the remarks, but he already had one.

Then during the conversation, something very reminiscent of my old boss and Arima's friend Mr. Holbrooke occurred. The former ambassador to Germany received a phone call, which was loudly announced in the room, as "This is the Foreign Minister calling for you, Mr. Ambassador." I had only to chuckle. Mr. Arima and Mr. Holbrooke were old friends and they probably learned from each other. The message I got very clearly was, "Don't screw up." The speech went well and we had a very nice meeting. We had about 130 people attending. Two members of the Diet came but no one from the government. I took a few questions about comfort women and so on. In fact, en route to the speech, I had a call from my office saying that one of the plaintiffs' attorneys in Washington who had done the German agreement found out I was in Tokyo and he was the lead attorney for the comfort women. Would I please call him and perhaps help out with their case? I left a message that he should not expect me to return his call. I felt it was a very good speech with lots of questions and a very interesting discussion.

Q: There were no great repercussions.

BINDENAGEL: Three good newspaper articles. I spent a lot of time with one of the journalists explaining what we were doing and I thought it was a very fair discussion with no negative repercussions. Perhaps some thought of opening ideas for the Japanese to consider whatever they choose to do with their problems. The only thing that I noted in this process is that the San Francisco Treaty signatories did not include Korea or China, which could be a problem. That is, one country was not a signatory because it wasn't a country: Korea. Another country is not a signatory to the treaty because there were two of them: China. So, there is an implication for this issue that was settled in bilateral agreements with Korea and China, but it's not one that is taken up by me. Certainly I don't believe the U.S. government is rushing to try to reopen treaties to resolve the comfort women and other cases.

Q: Okay. We'll close. Thank you. THE NIGHT THE BERLIN WALL FELL, NOVEMBER 9, 1989

Ambassador J. D. Bindenagel
Former Deputy U.S. Ambassador to the German Democratic Republic 1998-1990

Throughout the year 1989, dramatic events stirred a new sense of freedom in the world and challenged the cold war. Soviet President Gorbachev began his Glasnost and Perestroika experiment. Students in China demonstrated for democracy on Tiananmen Square and were brutally crushed by communist tanks. In the two Germanys, 2 million soldiers still stood face-to-face across the Berlin Wall ready for war. I was in East Berlin, behind the lines, at the American Embassy to East Germany reporting on a democratic revolution that would bring down the Berlin Wall, help end the Cold War confrontation and create a new order, in which Germany emerged once again united, sovereign and strong. On the night of November 9, 1989, the entire world held its breath waiting for the Soviet tanks to roll and crush the German revolutionaries. This is my story of that night.

The United States throughout the Cold War preached self-determination in an effort to promote democracy movements and stationed millions of American soldiers in West Germany to deter a communist attack. East Europeans had repeatedly tried and failed to find freedom and break the yoke of communist rule. Despite failed attempts in East Germany in 1953, in Hungary in 1956, in Czechoslovakia in 1968, and in Poland in 1980, in the summer of 1989 the Central Europeans tried again.

At the American Embassy in East Berlin, we knew that the Red Army's response with its million Soviet and East German soldier deployed along the German-German border would determine the success or failure of this new democratic revolution. A Washington Post editorial in August that year reminded us that if the Soviet Union intervened anywhere in Europe to protect its interests, it would do so in East Germany. Nevertheless, some East Germans wanted their freedom and sovereignty and were willing to demand some of their rights guaranteed in the Helsinki Final Act signed by their communist leader, Erich Honecker. These brave souls sought freedom to travel and abolishing the East German travel law became the symbolic cry for political freedom during their revolution. They knew the words of President John Kennedy, that free men everywhere would be proud to call themselves Berliners and they knew President Ronald Reagan's challenge to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall. They were testing that strong bond of common destiny in our commitment to the dignity of man, the rule of law, and freedom.

I was a fortunate eyewitness when the Berlin Wall came tumbling down (Ich war dabei) twenty-eight years after the Walter Ulbricht erected this hated symbol of communism and division. Events in the revolution were breathtaking. Tens of thousands of GDR citizens had fled to the West and a million more were seeking to emigrate. Demonstrations in the streets of Leipzig, Dresden and Berlin threatened the government and by October 18 had led to the ouster of Erich Honecker. The new GDR leader, Egon Krenz, desperately needed to establish control of the government and to win support of the people. We knew events could unravel the stability of the Cold War and our embassy reported on November 6 that the GDR Politburo was changing the despised Travel Law and predicted hopefully that if such changes continued, the Berlin Wall would become "irrelevant."

Unknown to us in East Germany, President George Bush was told in his November 9 morning briefing by Brian Quigley, that the GDR had opened possibilities for freer travel for its citizens and that the Berlin Wall might as a result become "irrelevant," the term used by the American Embassy's Political Counselor Jon Greenwald report describing developments in the GDR.

IT BEGAN AS ANY NORMAL DAY IN THE REVOLUTION

Events during the day were calm, President Gorbachev had ended his visit in honor of the fortieth anniversary of East Germany with a warning about the dramatic events saying; "Those who come too late will be punished by history." Little did we now that history was about to overtake us. That same evening in Berlin I attended Aspen Institute Berlin Directory David Anderson's reception with the mayors of East and West Berlin, the Allied Military Commanders, East German spy-swapping lawyer Wolfgang Vogel and many others. We were an unsuspecting group of insiders. What was about to happen at the Berlin Wall later on November 9, 1989, would be a surprise to us all.

At the end of the reception, East German lawyer Wolfgang Vogel asked me for a ride to West Berlin where he had parked his car. Of course I was pleased to offer him a lift and to seek his assessment of the East German reaction to the changes in November 6 GDR Travel Law that had been rejected by thousands of demonstrators throughout the country. Vogel as Honecker's lawyer was most likely to know the GDR's next steps.

A few months earlier when U.S. Ambassador Richard Barkley and I visited Vogel at his modest home on the Titi Lake, he told us that the Hungarians would likely allow several hundred East Germans in Hungary escape to the West. The Hungarians had dramatically cut down the barbed wire fence along their border in May. Indeed, the Hungarian border was viewed as an escape hatch from the communist bloc and cutting down the fence launched a flood of refugees in late summer. The Hungarians were about to honor their new commitment to a UN convention on refugees and to ignore their obligations under the Warsaw Pact to return East Germans to the GDR. Vogel would surely clue me in on Politburo thinking about the revolutionaries' demands for free travel rights.

On our way to the downtown West Berlin's heart on the Ku'Damm, Vogel told me that the GDR attorney's collegium had met November 7-8 and proposed additional changes to the GDR Travel Law. Vogel thought the new changes, not yet announced, would satisfy East Germans' demand for more freedom of travel.

BACK AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY

On my return to East Berlin around seven-thirty, I went directly to the embassy where I found a greatly excited political section. They were stunned by East German government spokesman Guenther Schabowski's statement on television. He had told the world that the Politburo agreed to more changes in the Travel Law and East Germans could get visitor visas quickly (in kurzem) for travel to the West from their local "People's Police" and the GDR would open a new processing center to handle emigration cases immediately.

Although beyond anything we could have imagined, Schabowski's oral statement was open to widely varying interpretation. NBC anchorman, Tom Brokaw, who attended the Schabowski briefing, asked if this meant the Berlin Wall was open; Schabowski reportedly said, "Yes." Apparently the East Germans heard; "Travel to the West is possible immediately." The revolution was spinning out of control.

We sent one embassy political officer, Heather Troutman, directly to Checkpoint Charlie and another, Imre Lipping, to the GDR press center to get the text of the statement. While we were hunting down the travel law text, the first East Germans, attempting to cross without visas, were sent packing by the guards at Checkpoint Charlie who told them to first get visas. It seemed to us that the GDR guards could keep things under control, while the new procedures were being worked out.

With the text of the announced freedom to travel and emigrate in hand, we translated it and cabled it to Washington. I telephoned the White House Situation Room and State Department Operations Center to make sure they had the report and to alert them to the latest developments. Then I called the American Minister in West Berlin Harry Gilmore, and we diplomats shared our quick assessment of the Politburo announcement. We thought the East Germans would get their visas and then head to West Berlin. Little did we know how quickly the East Germans would test the will of the border police to let them leave and return.

After assuring ourselves that we had reporting officers in place to follow events and had reported the latest news, I headed home to the near-in East Berlin suburb of Pankow around 10:00 PM. As I drove up Schönerhauserallee in East Berlin I was surprised to see so many East German, plasticized pressed wood Trabant automobiles seemingly abandoned near the Bornholmerstrasse checkpoint crossing over the S-Bahn train into West Berlin. At the end of the street near the checkpoint, I saw dozens of Germans standing at the barrier and shouting at the guards defending the crossing.

I knew the crossing well. I crossed it regularly; my children crossed there daily to attend the German-American John F. Kennedy Schule in Zehlendorf, West Berlin. Inside the crossing were barracks filled with armed border police. Fire hoses, like those used later at the Brandenburg Gate were carefully laid out in readiness to repel any wall jumpers. Across the checkpoint safely in the West, a TV camera crew, with its light ready to instantaneously transmit pictures of this confrontation at the bridge around the world, was poised on the bridge.

I hurried through the last few blocks to get home quickly. Inside, I turned on the television to see which pictures were being beamed at the East Germans from the camera I had seen. My wife Jean rushed in to the TV room worried I would wake our children. I explained the latest events and how our worry seemed to be turning into excitement as we witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall. I called Ambassador Barkley, Jon Greenwald our political counselor and Harry Gilmore in West Berlin. We knew events would soon envelop us.

THE BERLIN WALL FALLS

Within minutes the Berlin Wall was breached. First, a wave of East Berliners came through the Bornholmerstrasse checkpoint signaling freedom for all East Germans. They streamed across and their pictures were flashed around the world. They were free! But I had a sinking feeling. Did they have visas? What happened to the visa requirement? Who was in charge? [Note: The Spiegel TV crew filming the East Germans great escape only reported the first Germans to flee were free. Steven Aust, editor of Der Spiegel told me in October 1996 that he had sent that crew to film the crossing and had later interviewed the guards who let the people into West Berlin. He confirmed that the first to cross into the West had been expelled by the East German guards.]

A few hours later, around 6:30 A.M., Jean called our colleagues, the Jamison's to determine whether Will and Kelly would go to school with Annamarie, my third-grade daughter. When they arrived at our house I joined them as a "follow" car to the school van as they proceeded to Bornholmerstrasse on their way through the crowd to school in West Berlin. Their van moved into the masses of people now streaming in both directions. Seeing the red diplomatic license plate, the people stepped aside to let the American car through the Gate at Bornholmerstrasse. I stood there watching with some uncertainty of their fate as Annamarie, Will and Kelly disappeared through the masses of people into the West. Our son Carl followed in less than an hour.

Radio DDR Eins announced that visas were required to travel as of 8:00 am on November 10. I stayed at Bornholmerstrasse and as the hour approached the crowd grew larger and pressed against the checkpoint as panic spread among those who had not escaped during the night. The fear of being shut in, of having missed the chance to see West Berlin before the GDR shut the gate was palatable. Shortly before that appointed 8:00 AM hour, that deadline was moved to noon. Later, the noon deadline was revised to Monday. That was the moment authority and legitimacy passed from the Krenz government to the people who had demanded the freedom to travel and won their freedom from communism.

NO-MANS-LAND AND THE DEATH STRIP

We were all caught in the blurring pictures of the revolutionary video stuck on fast-forward. Events in those hours overwhelmed us with a mixture of anxiety, euphoria and hope for the future.

When Annamarie and Carl returned from the John F. Kennedy Schule in West Berlin that Friday afternoon, Jean and I decided that we, too, would test the new openness of the Berlin Wall. Choosing Eberswalderstrasse where the buildings were in the East and the sidewalk was in West Berlin, we ventured down to the Wall.

The "Bausoldaten," soldiers on construction duty were deconstructing the Berlin Wall at Eberwalderstrasse. They had already taken several three-meter tall, one-meter wide sections out of the Wall by the time we arrived. Lined up in front of this gaping hole were hundreds of East Germans dutifully waiting for the East German Volkspolizei to issue them visas in accordance with the November 9 Schabowski statement.

We had our diplomatic identity cards and proceeded to enter the no-mans-land through the new crossing point. As we, accompanied by our dog Willi, stepped into the eerie space between East and West, seven-year-old Carl exclaimed; "There are two walls." Indeed, at the end of the no-mans-land stood towering above us was the whitewashed wall on the western side.

We crossed into West Berlin with numerous East Germans and were greeted with cheering West Berliners and a sense of time suspension. Disoriented we found a playground for our children where they played while Jean and I tried to absorb the strangeness of standing in West Berlin amid so many East Germans. Unification had just happened among the Germans and we were witnessing the mixture of two conflicting systems separated for two generations. Berlin had become an East German city overnight.

After getting our personal bearings we turned back toward East Berlin and stepped back into the death strip on our way home. As we entered the forbidden zone an East German guard who blocked our way and demanded our passports approached us. When we produced our East German Diplomatic identity cards, he rejected them saying that the crossing was only for citizens of the German Democratic Republic. We argued that we, too, lived in East Germany despite the fact that it seemed incredible that any Westerner would voluntarily lived in that communist country. After some heated dialogue, we were allowed to pass. Stepping back into East Berlin was like wandering into the twilight zone, a country made to disappear by a revolution that swept away walls and soon would sweep away the very existence of East Germany itself.

THE END OF EAST GERMANY

I knew East Germany's days were limited. Only intervention by the Soviets could prolong its agony. President Gorbachev risked Perestroika and Glasnost in Russia if he chose to intervene militarily in the GDR; he would lose East Germany if he did not. Nevertheless, we had no idea of the next steps or how the revolution would play out.

While the world was caught up in the euphoria of the pictures at the Brandenburg Gate, President Bush instructed us that there would be no dancing on the Wall. The East Germans had won some freedom, but the revolution had unleashed the forces of history contained by the Cold War.

Meeting with Gorbachev six months later, Gorbachev told President Bush that Germany could decide whether or not to join NATO. In the intervening months the greatest diplomatic venture since World War II was undertaken with the greatest skill. Germany, with the vision and skillful leadership of the American President and Chancellor Kohl, was unified and this millennium may end in peace with Europe whole and free.

POSTSCRIPT

There is a postscript to this story that I would also like to share. I felt there were some unanswered questions about those first wall jumpers at Bornholmerstrasse checkpoint. Did they have visas? Just what did those guards with the hoses and rifles do to defend the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989? A few months after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Jean and I were having coffee with the Uwe Gerson family, friends from our local East German church. Among the guests were East Germans that had been among those at Bornholmerstrasse that night.

As we recounted this story, one of them asked if we knew what actually happened to the first freedom-seekers who burst into the lights of the Spiegel TV cameras and changed the course of history. Of course we did not and were intrigued to hear a first-hand account. Uwe Gerson's brother-in-law took out his GDR identification card, a paper passport with a photograph on one side and his name typed on the other. Across the picture was a GDR exit visa stamp. A stamp that actually invalidated the I.D. card. It hit us. The first people crossing into the lights of the TV camera had been expelled! The GDR had tried to save itself from its discontented citizens by throwing the rascals out of the country. Be gone you revolutionaries, they must have said. The last laugh was on those guards. The television pictures of people held back by a hated system fleeing into freedom were too powerful to resist. The people had taken their fate in their own hands. East Germany fell to the irrepressible human desire for freedom.

The pictures were enough to rouse other East Germans from their sleep and head for the Berlin Wall. The numbers soon overwhelmed the guards and the East German government's implementation of its exit visa requirement was delayed and delayed. Meanwhile the Germans in the GDR continued their revolution and took ownership of their country.

CONCLUSION

American support for German unification allowed the East German's peaceful, democratic revolution success. Soon they would join with the Federal Republic's forty-year-old democracy to create a peaceful, democratic Germany in the heart of Europe. With NATO enlargement, its new members can hope to enjoy some of the same freedom, peace and prosperity found in Germany today. I am proud to say that I was there to serve my country at that exciting time in Germany. JUSTICE, APOLOGY AND RECONCILIATION AND THE GERMAN FOUNDATION "REMEMBRANCE, RESPONSIBILITY, AND THE FUTURE"

Ambassador J. D. Bindenage
Former U.S. Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues

The growing shortage of labour also led to a shift in the function of the SS-run concentration camps... Whereas prior to 1942 they had been run primarily as institutions of 'destruction through work,' with the work performed there having no real economic function, they were thereafter used as sources of additional labour for direct and indirect deployment in armaments production.- Neil Gregor in Daimler-Benz in the Third Reich, Yale University Press, 1998, p. 194.

On orders from my department, I too drove a gas van from Berlin to Minsk. These vans had been constructed with a lockable cargo compartment, like a moving van...I was detailed with the gas van to about twelve convoys of arriving Jews. It was 1942. There were about a thousand Jews in each convoy. With each arrival I made five or six trips with my van. Some of the Jews were shot. I myself never shot a single Jew. I only gassed them...- Erich Gnewuch's personal testimony in *Nazi Murder: Documentary History of the Use of Poison Gas*, edited by E. Kogon, H. Langbein and A. Rueckerl, Yale University Press, 1993, p- 57-59.

It is now therefore even more important that all survivors receive, as soon as possible, the humanitarian payment agreed today. I know that for many it is not really the money that matters. What they want is for their suffering to be recognized as suffering and for the injustice done to them to be named injustice. I pay tribute to all those who were subjected to slave and forced labor under German rule, and, in the name of the German people, beg forgiveness. We will not forget their suffering.-German President Johannes Rau, Statement before Holocaust survivors at Schloss Bellevue in Berlin, December 19, 1999

INTRODUCTION

Sixty years after millions perished in the horrific events of the Holocaust, the Holocaust continues to serve as an ever-present reminder of what can happen when individuals allow racial, ethnic and religious differences to divide a local, regional and even international community. The images of malnourished men, women and children being worked to death in concentration camps in support of the Nazi war effort, being gassed in chambers and burned like rags continue to haunt and remind us of the importance of tolerance and the need to fight xenophobic nationalism. Fortunately, the end of World War II brought an end to National Socialism and the enslavement of more than ten million people who served as forced laborers in nearly every economic sector manufacturing, service industry, agriculture, social services. The U.S. occupation authorities launched the first German restitution and compensation programs in 1947 and sowed the seeds for hopes of reconciliation among those nations whose surviving victims' lives had been shattered. Unfortunately a few short years after the end of the Second World War and after West Germany created its restitution and compensation laws that included payments to Holocaust survivors and support for the State of Israel, new compensation programs that could reach the majority of forced labor survivor Poles, Ukrainians and Russians - were no longer initiated. Reconciliation between perpetrator and victim, particularly victims who were behind the Iron Curtain, was set aside with the onset of the Cold War.

The 1948 Berlin Blockade ended the Second World War Great Powers Alliance and began the division of Germany and Europe into competing ideological camps across the Cold War divide. On 12-13 August 1961, the Berlin Wall was erected to serve as a physical barrier dividing Berlin. East Germans viewed the wall as an encroachment on their freedom and fled the country in secret compartments of cars, inside surfboards, in balloons and makeshift planes. Originally erected with barbed wire and cinder blocks, this symbol of divided Europe was later transformed into a massive structure made of concrete walls, topped with barbed wire and guarded with watch towers, gun emplacements and mines. From the time it was erected until its collapse, the wall had at least three major purposes: as a deterrent to the East German "brain drain," as an "antifascist protection barrier" for the East German government and as an obstacle to restitution efforts in Eastern Europe for surviving Holocaust and forced labor victims. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, hopes of reconciliation were rekindled.

Beginning in 1947 with U.S. Occupation Law 59 and continuing through West German claims processes such as the BEG and Brueg restitution programs as well as Adenauer's Luxembourg Agreement through 1970, U.S. and German governments set about to make compensation and restitution in the West. In addition, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany was established in 1951 and has continued through unification to administer programs for Holocaust victims. As the heir to heirless Jewish property, it sells the property to make compensation or other payments in the memory of the Holocaust.

Continuity in German compensation programs was assured by the Baker-Genscher exchange of letters in 1990 at the time of unification. In these letters, which came as the Cold War ended, the German Government assured the U.S. Government with the 1990 agreement on Germany unification, the Final Treaty on Germany (also known as the 2+4 Treaty) that it would continue its compensation after unification and launched a \$700 million humanitarian effort in the 1990s for victims in Eastern Europe. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and dissolution of the Communist East German regime, the U.S. Government has continued to work with the German Government to engineer significant and successful efforts to bring justice to Holocaust and forced labor survivors. In 1998, the United States, France and the United Kingdom established the International Nazi Persecutee Relief Fund (NPRF) for humanitarian relief. Developed in the midst of legal battles and with contributions from countries that had participated in the Nazi-looted gold Tri-Partite Gold Commission, the NPRF, a \$60 million fund, assisted victims of the Nazi regime in need of financial assistance and who had received little or no compensation in the past. The United States and likeminded leaders in Germany, Austria, France and others in Europe have worked together to restore victims' property and provide humanitarian payments - not reparations' payments - to victims of the Nationalist Socialist regime, although acceptance of responsibility and apology have not always followed.

In addition to compensation programs, the international community has also taken steps in the late 1990s to address the attitudes that foster intolerance, prejudice, and ethnic hatred. Through the work of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, individuals are becoming educated about the past in order to prevent future occurrences of violence and genocide. More than 15 national governments are working to support the work of educators in developing curriculum and relevant materials to teach the enduring lessons of the Holocaust. As a result of these actions taken by the international community, the process of reconciliation has accelerated.

Individuals often consider reconciliation and apology to be synonymous terms. However, defining and achieving reconciliation requires words be accompanied by action. The United States government, along with the international community, collaborated to create a systematic approach to reconciliation for victims of Holocaust injustices: apology, monetary compensation, and preservation of memory. While none of the three alone can adequately address the needs of victims or further reconciliation efforts, together they are capable of facilitating tremendous results. Although this process has been successful in reconciliation for the injustices of the Holocaust, its applicability to other victims of injustices will test its longevity. This is really the challenge facing the politics of reconciliation. This is where this systematic approach to reconciliation for victims of Holocaust injustices: apology, monetary compensation, and preservation of memory will be tested. The critical element is whether payments can reach survivors in their lifetimes and if not, whether the preservation of memory can be the basis for reconciliation.

Over the past few years, leaders in the United States Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic as well as other Central and Eastern European countries and the State of Israel engineered a significant and successful effort to bring an additional measure of justice to Holocaust and forced labor survivors since the early 1950s. Through eighteen months of negotiation culminating in the signing of a U.S.-German Executive Agreement, legislative action in the Bundestag and dismissal of lawsuits against German firms in the United States by U.S. courts, a German Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future" was created to deliver dignified payments to survivors.

An official apology from the President of Germany recognized the victims' suffering and asked forgiveness paving the way for reconciliation among perpetrators and victims of the twentieth century's most horrible crime. The Foundation must distribute the money in the survivors' lifetimes and also establish a program in the Future Fund to preserve the memory of those who died. The Foundation also has helped create legal peace for German companies in the United States for crimes arising from the National Socialist era and World War II.

REMEMBRANCE

Apology cannot come without understanding. Understanding history comes from knowing historical fact. Without the truth history will remain an obstacle to the future. Former German President Richard von Weizsäcker recognized that the unspeakable truth of the Holocaust was, and will remain, part of German history. Nevertheless, in a speech on the fortieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe, May 8, 1985 he said: "There is no such thing as the guilt or innocence of an entire people. Guilt, like innocence, is not collective but individual."

Weizsäcker stressed however, the importance of memory when he said: "All of us, whether guilty or not, whether old or young, must accept the past. We are all affected by its consequences and held responsible for it. Young and old must and can help one another to understand why it is vitally important to keep the memory alive." Weizsäcker noted that for the victims of the Holocaust the desire to forget prolongs their exile, whereas memory is the secret of redemption.

The dimensions of the Holocaust and World War II forced labor require careful examination and recognition that historical identity is not fixed. Neither is historical interpretation of a country's past immutable. History is written as much to shed light on the present as on the past. Our understanding of the past reflects our perceptions and evaluation of the present.

In our search both for justice for survivors and reconciliation between perpetrators and victims, the parties in this process faced daunting twin problems of remembrance and responsibility. Recognition of the horrible suffering of those forced laborers who survived led the United States to two goals: justice for survivors in the form of payments, and making those payments in their lifetimes. The wrongs committed by the Nazis were so horrible in fact, so pervasive in impact, and so injurious to human dignity as to challenge the concept of obtaining justice. The very idea of achieving justice for so many, for such suffering and over such a prolonged period of time was discouraging. Money alone could not compensate the victims for their suffering. It is too crass a commodity of exchange, and, in any event, there is not enough of it. Money could not be the last word on the Holocaust. Survivors insisted that they were not interested in payments alone; there must also be efforts to protect the memory of the Holocaust and the crime of forced and slave labor.

DEVELOPING U.S. POLICY: REMEMBRANCE AND JUSTICE

Remembrance of the Holocaust was not only a concern for Germans. Leading American political figures at the end of the twentieth century also recognized that symbolically, the international community needed to reaffirm its commitment to human dignity and resolve 20th century issues before a new century began. The United States could not rely on earlier programs, which did not reach a majority of the surviving victims.

As the international community revisited the history of World War II and its aftermath a consensus for action was shaped in stages from ignorance to awareness, denial to recognition, evasion to acceptance of responsibility, apology to reconciliation and sometimes forgiveness. At the beginning of this long process, ignorance - willful or not - of a conflict and accompanying wrongs needed to be replaced by facts and truth, with all parties, including victims, perpetrators and bystanders participating in the process. Truth is not easy to come by, even in the best of circumstances.

War and its aftermath obscure, misplace and destroy information. Witnesses, victims and malfeasants are killed or disappear. They grow old and senile. For example, of the two dozen or so senior officials who participated in the January 1942 Berlin Wannsee Conference, in which the participants reached consensus to destroy the Jews of Europe, only a few principal perpetrators survived the War, Adolf Eichmann, being most notable.

Nevertheless, research on the unfinished business of restitution and compensation was made possible after the close of the Cold War when newly available archives opened hope that understanding the facts would lead to historical truth. The issues of delayed justice and reconciliation were stirred by a growing awareness that began slowly, in an unexpected way. Suddenly the end of the Cold War made possible commemorations of the Fiftieth Anniversaries of World War II. Although the Fiftieth Anniversary of the September 1, 1939 invasion of Poland preceded the fall of the Berlin Wall, major battles from Stalingrad to D-Day were commemorated. By 1995, after the last Russian troops had departed Berlin and VE-Day was celebrated, attention turned to unfinished business of understanding the full extent of the history of the Second World War.

Archives opened. Scholarly books began to examine restitution. Lynn Nicholas published *The Rape of Europa* (1994) and revealed that the Nazis had stolen more than 600,000 works of art during World War II. She noted that while the bulk of looted art had been returned after the war, some artworks found their way into museum collections and private hands instead of being returned to the true owners. Other authors wrote of expropriated or unpaid dormant bank accounts and of unpaid insurance claims of Holocaust victims.

Americans also have recognized the need to understand our own treatment of American citizens by the U.S. Government in the Second World War and to consider action to redress historical injustice. The 1990s were a time of apology. In America, we had already examined events in our own history and offered an apology - and sought the victims' acceptance and reconciliation - as well as their offer of forgiveness. In seeking reconciliation with American citizens, Congress in 1988 had passed a law [Public Law No., 100-383] that apologized on behalf of the people of the United States for the evacuation, relocation and internment of United States citizens or permanent residents of Japanese ancestry during World War II. This apology was accompanied by a payment of \$20,000 to each victim. However, good intentions to reach the truth, as Bishop Desmond Tutu observed, are not easy. He said that the truth by itself could sometimes just make people even angrier. With these examples in mind the U.S. negotiators knew from the outset of the negotiations to create the German Foundation that revisiting the history of the Holocaust would prove to be a painful experience, especially for survivors who would relive some of their horrible experiences.

Openness toward historical truth was a first step toward understanding and reconciliation. The 1998 Washington Conference on Holocaust-Era Assets began a new international effort to open archives and research the past, although openness is never as simple and obvious as it sounds. At the Washington Conference, an international consensus was reached on opening archives. During the Washington Conference delegates of the "Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research" issued a declaration about the opening of archives pertaining to the Holocaust. The Conference participants endorsed the concept of full archival openness on the Holocaust. The delegates from around the world were determined that the Holocaust is neither to be forgotten nor distorted, and that healing is a solemn duty of all who cherish freedom and human dignity. U.S. negotiators sought to continue the international debate to help guard against biased research that could promote historical local mythologies, ideologies or politics. A notable example of the success of this approach was the Polish government's acceptance of Polish responsibility of a massacre of Polish Jews by Poles at Jedwabne, as reported by Jan Tomasz Gross in his book *Neighbors* and by the Public Prosecutor Radoslaw J. Ignatiew, of the Polish Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation. Acknowledgment of responsibility helps set the standard for truthfulness, acceptance of responsibility and teaching history. Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski, speaking on July 10, 2001 on the Sixtieth Anniversary of the massacre said: "For this crime we should beg the souls of the dead and their families for forgiveness. This is why today, as the President of the Republic of Poland, I beg pardon. I beg pardon in my own name and in the name of those Poles whose conscience is shattered by that crime."

Historical research was underway throughout the world when the international community gathered in Washington in the fall of 1998. The Vatican offered to open its archives for historical research of the Holocaust in a step toward fulfilling the concept of full archival openness on the Holocaust endorsed at the Washington Conference. The Vatican established a joint research commission, the Jewish-Christian Reconciliation Commission of the Holy See, which was expressly charged to research the Vatican archives for the role of the Catholic Church during World War II. In addition, the Vatican issued a 1998 statement, "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah" in which it acknowledged the role of individuals in the Holocaust and took responsibility for the centuries-long persecution of Jews. However, the statement was not fully accepted as an apology. The Jewish-Christian Reconciliation Commission was fraught with contention and demonstrated the difficulty and emotion involved in the search for reconciliation between the perpetrators and victims. Nevertheless, despite the Vatican's commitment to continued research on this period, which is not in doubt, much more historical research from more open archives is necessary to understand the role of the Church in this critical period and to find reconciliation with victims.

More than 20 countries had established historical commissions to review their own countries' behavior during the Holocaust. The United States' commitment to historical research is manifest in the creation of a Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States, which issued its report early in 2001.

A year after the Washington Conference, the Swedish government hosted the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust in January 2000, inviting the heads of government from European countries, Israel, Argentina and the United States to attend. They declared their commitment to plant the seeds of a better future from the soil of a bitter past. Their commitment was to remember victims who perished, respect the survivors still with us and reaffirm humanity's common aspiration for mutual understanding and justice.

WHY NOW, SO LONG AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR?

Why did many Nazi victims and their families have to wait a half-century to receive the kind of recognition and tangible demonstration of remorse - the apology - that they so deserve? Why so much was left undone in the compensation programs at the end of the Second World War? Did not the compensation programs of the post-war period close that chapter of history?

One fundamental reason that these issues were reopened in Europe in the 1990's was that the Cold War that had divided Europe finally ended. Millions of Nazi victims who were beyond the reach of international compensation or assistance, so-called "double victims" who suffered under both National Socialism and Communism, could now be reached. In Western Europe, compensation programs initiated by the United States government during the occupation of Germany in 1947 and continued with strong U.S. government encouragement and as a pre-condition for Germany to reintegrate into the community of nations were very different; they reached individuals. Survivors of the Nazi terror benefited from serious efforts to return property, as well as special payment and pension plans. West German government compensation programs were quite extensive, and the Germans continue to pay for these programs today. Over 100 billion German Marks, some 70 billion dollars, have been paid out directly to victims.

Memory also played an important role in postwar efforts for reconciliation. The horrible suffering of these people was recognized as such, and through education programs and memorials, successive German governments have pledged themselves to bring meaning to the words, "never again." However, although many programs were implemented in West Europe, survivors in Eastern Europe where most of the survivors lived were not reached as the Cold War division of Europe cut them off from compensation programs. Despite the fact that much effort had gone into compensation between 1947 and 1956, when the "Cold War" was at its most dangerous, new compensation initiatives for material losses ended when the programs were completed in 1970. Nevertheless, Americans and Germans take pride in the knowledge that the early U.S.-led compensation effort from the 1940s continued in West Germany throughout the 1960s and was largely successful, if primarily only in the West.

However, after the Korean War broke out, political priorities changed and multi-national initiatives to return stolen property to Holocaust victims largely ended. While the San Francisco Treaty was signed with Japan and ended compensation and reparations claims against them, Germany remained divided and questions of reparations and other claims remained open. However, the U.S. role in occupied Germany diminished with the end of the High Commissioner on Germany. With West Germany joining us as an ally, we turned our attention from the aftermath of the terrible and destructive Second World War to deter and, if necessary, to defend ourselves in a third world war.

The situation of the double victims in Eastern Europe finally began to change fundamentally with the emergence of the Solidarity movement in Poland in 1980, the flight of young East Germans through Hungary to Austria to freedom in the West, and with the 1989 Democratic Revolution, which brought the fall of the Berlin Wall symbol of divided Europe. The 1989 Democratic Revolution in Europe led to the unification of Germany and to the end of the Soviet Union. Those events made it possible for the international community to return to the unfinished business left behind in the 1950s and to reach out to the "double victims" of the National Socialists who were trapped behind the Iron Curtain. Only after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War could those victims become the center of international attention. Only then could the forgotten victims be recognized by an international community looking for ways to address their suffering.

In the mid-1990s the international public became outraged that so many victims had remained uncompensated for so long after the Second World War. The Swiss case was illustrative. They had developed and believed in the myth that as neutrals they carried no responsibilities for the victims' fate. When asked about possible dormant accounts they responded with an accounting, but denied political or moral responsibility. Consequently, the Swiss banks became the center of an effort to assign responsibility for compensation to Holocaust victims that began to indict other countries. Austria's belief in its own victimhood as the first victim of Nazi aggression came to an end with Chancellor Vranitsky's 1993 declaration that Austria, too, had some responsibilities that it had not met. The floodgates opened with new historical analysis and new lawsuits in the United States against European banks and companies for crimes arising out of World War II.

PROTECTING U.S. INTERESTS

The source for the German Foundation lay in negotiations that began in May 1999. While the political fallout of the Swiss obstructionism was clear to all, the German industry moved to accept responsibility and won support of the new German government to propose the Foundation Initiative of German Enterprises in February 1999.

A key element in the U.S. Government decision to negotiate a new compensation program came after leading German industrialists raised the possibility of negotiations with the newly elected German Government of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. Schröder, who led the Social Democratic Party, which was persecuted by the National Socialists, was very willing to help resolve the forced labor issue with the United States in the fall of 1998. The U.S. Government chose to join the German industry's initiative.

The U.S. actively intervened to advance broad U.S. policy objective of pursuing justice through a number of measures, which included:

First, renewing U.S. sponsorship of justice for victims of National Socialism through a broadly based effort to return property stolen, obtain recognition of suffering, and establish education and social programs in the memory of the victims.

Second, reminding the international community that the evil forces then tearing at Yugoslavia had relatively recent antecedents and must not be ignored.

Third, engaging Eastern European countries to reach out constructively to their individual citizens, and also demonstrate in tangible ways what Western democracies - the standard to which the newly independent states of Eastern Europe aspire - have, at their core, fundamental precepts, most especially the sanctity of human dignity.

Fourth, demonstrating that the international community will hold accountable those who do wrong.

Fifth, creating international solidarity to address issues which go beyond a single nation's responsibility, and touch each country, including our own, that failed in some way or other to do its utmost to bring justice to the victims of Nazi terror.

And sixth, encouraging the developing relationship between Germany and the newly free and democratic nations of Eastern Europe at a time when old wounds were complicating their political relations.

Other forces were at work as well. Plaintiffs' attorneys filed lawsuits in American courts against European businesses operating in the U.S. Some cases were against Swiss banks; other lawsuits alleged that Holocaust victims or surviving forced and slave laborers had not been compensated. More lawsuits were filed against German and Austrian companies in forced labor cases, banking issues, and for unpaid insurance claims.

Public opinion in the United States began to be aroused and brought intervention from U.S. state banking and insurance regulators, as well as state treasurers, who questioned the way foreign companies, doing business in their states, had managed banking and insurance accounts during the Holocaust period.

The growing interest in justice for Nazi victims through lawsuits and statements by the World Jewish Congress posed a serious threat to U.S. national interests and brought the plight of victims into government action once again. Our relations with our most important partner in Europe, Germany, could have been at risk if no action were taken. For example, court judgments, regulatory sanctions, public boycotts against German companies were distinct possibilities. The German and American economies are too closely linked, too mutually dependent, to ignore any potential disruption. German investment in the United States is responsible for more than 600,000 jobs in America. German industrial investments are the key businesses in several regions of the United States. The operations of more than 1,800 American companies in Germany make vitally important contributions to their economy and ours.

This litany of potentially dangerous economic consequences does not even address the effect sanctions, boycotts, and court judgments would have on U.S. political and security interests. We also faced the distinct possibility that public or private actions against Germany or its companies likely would result in retaliation against American firms by the European Union. The U.S. Government began to recognize that in reinvigorating its effort to right old wrongs, the United States could advance both important foreign policy objectives, and also ward off a serious threat to U.S. interests.

It was in this context that in response to German industry and the German government that the United States decided to help untangle the historical injustice of forced labor from the conduct of business in the United States by German firms.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR HISTORICAL INJUSTICE

It did not take long to understand that facts and information alone, essential as they are, are not sufficient to resolve the conflicts that like open sores, continued to fester among the victims because of historical injustice. The next equally important step was recognition and acceptance of responsibility for historical injustice. Individuals, groups and governments need to confront the past honestly, without excuses or evasion. German industry voluntarily accepted the historical responsibility of German business during the Third Reich. This German industry acceptance triggered a painful, complex and anguishing negotiation.

The willingness of German industry, under the leadership of Dr. Manfred Gentz of DaimlerChrysler, Dr. Rolf Breuer of Deutsche Bank and Dr. Henning Schulte-Noelle of Allianz, was quite remarkable. In the fall of 1998 when German businessmen first approached the United States and expressed willingness to accept responsibility for German industry in World War II, even when the individual companies established after the Second World War had no legal predecessors to companies that were complicit in the National Socialist crimes, German industry offered to create a new German foundation to make payments to victims. German industry's February, 1999 announcement of the "Foundation Initiative of German Enterprises" to address forced labor and other claims arising out of the National Socialist period launched negotiations among survivors, industry and governments to find a mutually acceptable solution.

THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR A GERMAN FOUNDATION AND LEGAL PEACE FOR GERMAN COMPANIES IN THE UNITED STATES

The negotiations that led to a U.S.-German Executive Agreement and a Joint Statement of the negotiating parties were not about money and legal peace alone; the United States also sought reconciliation among survivors and the Europeans for injustices arising out of World War II. Holocaust survivors and Eastern European forced laborers, especially Polish, Russian and Ukrainian forced labor survivors who were denied compensation in the Cold War, were joined together in this effort from the start by U.S. efforts to include forced laborers in the negotiations along with Holocaust survivors.

Reconciliation between the perpetrators and victims; that is, between the Germans and the Poles and the Holocaust survivors was a key aspect of the negotiation and it required creative American diplomacy. In the middle of the negotiations President Clinton wrote to German Chancellor Schröder on December 13, 1999 and argued that German-American relations are based on our common commitment to human dignity coming from a shared history of democracy for over fifty years. Clinton praised this unique German initiative to reach out to the victims of this century's most horrible tragedy, and argued that it would convey dramatically to the entire world Germany's commitment to justice and human rights. Clinton stated that the German initiative would allow the United States and Germany to enter the new millennium together determined to protect the inviolability of human dignity. Germany embodied its commitment to human dignity in the first article of the constitution for the Federal Republic of Germany founded in 1949. Chancellor Schröder, when he replied to President Clinton on December 14, 1999, said that "[m]ore than anything else, the understanding reached on the Federal Foundation is a significant humane gesture of our responsibility toward Nazi victims at the close of this century."

The negotiations opened new avenues for communication and mutual understanding among the many involved governments, businesses and interest groups. The U.S. took on a facilitation role that followed an American tradition of mediation of disputes between governments. This role is as old as Theodore Roosevelt's success in ending the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 [when the Russian Foreign Minister was Vladimir Lambsdorff, a distant relative of the German negotiator Graf Lambsdorff]. However, U.S. involvement in private lawsuits, such as those brought by former forced and slave laborers against Nazi industry, was unprecedented and required a unique formulation.

While the negotiations to establish the German Foundation focused on legal issues for the companies and monetary compensation for victims, the preservation of Germany and America's commitment to the inviolability of human dignity remained the political underpinning of the talks; reconciliation was an important goal.

EIGHTEEN MONTHS OF NEGOTIATIONS

Dr. Otto Graf Lambsdorff, Special Representative of the Chancellor, and Stuart E. Eizenstat, U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary, ably led the negotiations. Both sides sought dignified payments for survivors and negotiated U.S. help to achieve the dismissal of the lawsuits against German business. Victims' groups were well represented by U.S. plaintiffs' attorneys, their governments and by foundations and NGO's. For example, the Conference on Material Claims against Germany, the World Jewish Restitution Organization and the American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors and the Israeli Survivors Organization represented Jewish victims with the representatives of the State of Israel. Reconciliation efforts on behalf of the perpetrators fell to German President Rau, who recognized the suffering of forced laborers, which was necessary for reconciliation.

In the negotiation itself the U.S. negotiators faced competing agendas from the participating parties. The large number of players made traditional diplomatic negotiations between governments unworkable. In addition to the government of Germany there were other players in the forced and slave labor negotiations: the numerous companies that employed Nazi victims; international Jewish agencies that had never stopped seeking justice; the governments of countries where most of the unrecognized Nazi victims resided (Eastern Europe and Israel); five non-governmental organizations from Eastern Europe dedicated to assisting victims; and scores of plaintiffs lawyers. There also was the need to consult closely with our own state and local governments; they sought to impose sanctions on German companies or seek divestment by State treasurers of funds invested in Germany. We wanted their actions to advance, not retard, our efforts to reach agreement.

For the forced labor negotiations - the centerpiece of our efforts - we assembled an unusual interagency U.S. Government team of diplomats and lawyers from the Departments of State, Treasury and Justice capable of negotiating, simultaneously, with representatives of several foreign governments, hundreds of European companies, and a score of American class action lawyers, Central and Eastern European reconciliation foundations, a United Nations organization and forced and slave labor survivor groups. We opened and maintained a regular dialogue with Congress and with state-level agencies, such as treasurers, comptroller's offices and pension funds that had a stake in the result. This was a unique organizational and procedural approach to an extremely complex international negotiation.

U.S. negotiators were clear on the criticality of the issues that they faced. They had identified the U.S. national interests at stake and chose a role, however, as a facilitator of negotiations among victims groups, companies's representatives, lawyers and government officials. Since standard diplomatic practices alone, such as government-to-government talks, would not work, we invented new ones to include businesses, lawyers, NGOs, State government officials and foreign foundations. In addition to governments, we worked closely with survivors in Poland and East Europe as well as the Jewish Claims Conference and Holocaust survivor organizations from the United States and the State of Israel. The creative process included a new role for plaintiffs' attorneys and state regulators in diplomacy. It was the state regulators; for example, who formed the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims and in New York created the Holocaust Claims Processing Office.

Agreement was reached in December 1999 on the ten billion German Marks to capitalize the new German Foundation and reconciliation was strengthened by President Johannes Rau's eloquent apology to survivors. In March 2000 agreement was reached on the allocation of the money to the partner organizations, property issues and the Future Fund. However, before we could sign the U.S. - German Executive Agreement in July 2000, issues of legal peace needed to be decided.

LEGAL PEACEThe challenge we faced was how to convert existing class action lawsuits by former slave and forced laborers - which covered only a few thousand plaintiffs and would have dragged on until most of those eligible for benefits had passed away - into elements of a statement of interest in the U.S.-German international negotiation that potentially could benefit over a million surviving victims, and to complete the negotiations within the lifetimes of the survivors. The tension between the class-action lawyers representing the victims and the company representatives seeking legal peace often overshadowed their common goal of reaching out to the victims.

Nevertheless, all sides knew that the key to success and payments for the victims was the resolution of the issue of "legal peace" - dismissal of the lawsuits against companies. European - Swiss, German, Austrian and French - companies wanted assurances that all litigation and other legal action against them would cease and that they would never be sued again. The U.S. Government could not make such absolute guarantees for two reasons. Our legal system does not work that way. And the U.S. Government would not bar Holocaust survivors who were U.S. citizens from having their cases heard in their own courts. However, we were successful in negotiating an agreement that created a new ten billion German Mark (five billion dollar) German Foundation to make payments to victims, while committing the United States, in statements of interest in U.S. courts, to recommend dismissal of all lawsuits arising out of the National Socialist era and World War II against German firms that were pending in U.S. courts as well as any new suits as being in our foreign policy interest.

Here again these negotiations called for not just new techniques and formats for managing a complex negotiation, but new approaches to the substance of the negotiation as well. It was the request that the United States file "statements of interest" recommending the dismissal of pending and future cases that required a unique solution never before used. The U.S. agreed to submit, in each case, a "Statement of Interest," complete with an affidavit by the Secretary of State citing the important foreign policy considerations that led us to the conclusion that the German Foundation should be the exclusive remedy for these wrongs and urging the courts to agree. After the agreement was signed the U.S. Government filed statements of interest in numerous cases and based these filings on U.S. foreign policy interests. After long deliberation, the Europeans concluded such Statements gave them sufficient confidence the cases would be dismissed for them to agree to our proposed settlement. The courts have dismissed all cases.

The eventual agreement was based on a number of disparate, but key elements: The class-action lawsuits brought by American plaintiffs' attorneys on behalf of victims using the 1789 Alien Torts Claims Act as a basis for suing.

The "Foundation Initiative of German Enterprises," which accepted historical responsibility and in February 1999 proposed establishing a German Foundation to make dignified payments to surviving forced laborers; Threats of financial boycotts if the companies did not pay victims were leveled by the World Jewish Congress and the U.S. State Treasurers as well as in public media campaigns against German and Austrian companies.

U.S. government agreement to assist in achieving legal peace for German companies in the United States for crimes arising out of National Socialism and the Second World War. German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder who, in the midst of a severe budget cutting exercise, pledge of full German government financial support for the agreement; and German President Johannes Rau, whose poignant words of apology to the victims in the presence of Holocaust survivors, were so healing and so necessary.

APOLOGY

In the presence of Holocaust survivors, President Rau said:

"It is now therefore even more important that all survivors receive, as soon as possible, the humanitarian payment agreed today. I know that for many it is not really the money that matters. What they want is for their suffering to be recognized as suffering and for the injustice done to them to be named injustice.

I pay tribute to all those who were subjected to slave and forced labor under German rule, and, in the name of the German people, beg forgiveness. We will not forget their suffering."

The perpetrator can and should admit his wrongs and ask forgiveness, but only the victim can complete the process. Only the victim can say, "I accept your apology. I forgive you." Obviously, this is the most difficult act of all. On behalf of the victims Roman Kent spoke after President Rau to explain the pain still suffered by the victims and called for the continued respect for the memory of those who died. Only then when the victims can accept the apology is the process complete.

ACHIEVEMENTS REACHED

After the U.S.-German Executive Agreement and the Joint Statement were signed on July 17, 2000, and in order to release the ten billion German Marks (five billion dollars) to surviving forced and slave laborers, the United States Government engaged in intensive efforts to help secure legal peace for German companies in the U.S. This included successful dismissal of some 65 lawsuits against German companies by three U.S. Courts. During the months-long process two courts dismissed the slave and forced labor lawsuits and the cases against the insurance companies in the fall of 2000; however the banking cases' dismissal was delayed as an unusual step was taken to seek a writ of mandamus to relieve a federal judge of her decision-making authority. The Second Circuit Court of Appeals considered the writ of mandamus request and ordered the dismissal of the suits against German banks in May 2001.

The dismissal of these final cases ended the delay and reaffirmed the power of the executive branch to set foreign policy goals in international agreements; such as in this case to reach Holocaust survivors and surviving forced laborers. Following that court decision, the United States worked closely with Dr. Otto Graf Lambsdorff to ensure that the Bundestag would vote that "adequate legal peace had been achieved" for German companies in the U.S. On May 30, 2001 the Bundestag passed that resolution. German companies then transferred their contributions to the German Foundation, which has begun to make payments to survivors.

In its first year of operation, the Foundation Directors reported that nearly 800,000 survivors had received a total of nearly three billion German Marks. Such a significant amount of money reaching individuals in such a short time is a tribute to the close cooperation among the partner organizations, notably the Foundation for Polish-German Reconciliation and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

These positive results reflect the real work of the German Foundation, although there was continued criticism of opponents who would note the outstanding issues of possible additional interest earned during the fund raising, the ongoing, unsettled negotiations on additional insurance claims process procedures, and money management issues such as the dispute over Zloty exchange rate loss for the Polish allocation. The German Foundation Directors have reported interest earnings that will ensure all commitments to survivors are met. Negotiations are underway between the Foundation and the International Commission for Holocaust Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC) to resolve the remaining insurance claims handling procedures, including publication of policyholder names lists, audits and administrative costs. The DM 550 million insurance allocation from the Foundation will be made available for claims and humanitarian payments as soon as agreement is reached.

RELATED AGREEMENTS REACHED IN EUROPE

The United States, the Federal Republic of Germany, Poland as well as other Eastern European countries, and in other cases Austria, France and Switzerland, have worked in close partnership to establish institutions through international agreements that hold great promise, not only to do justice for past wrongs, but also to advance the cause of justice in public policy into the future. These institutions include the German Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and the Future," the Austrian Reconciliation Fund, the Austrian General Settlement Fund, and the French Banks supplemental fund. Their establishment of these institutions is tangible evidence of the internationalization of these issues, and the promise that the work of justice and remembrance will continue.

In addition, these new institutions will serve to support democracy and freedom in the Central and Eastern European countries as well as to provide benefits to nearly one million of their citizens. One of our most important achievements has been to provide a measure of justice not only to Jewish victims of the Nazi era, but belated recognition and payments to the hundreds of thousands of "double victims" of two of the twentieth century's worst evils: Nazism and Communism. Moreover, by bringing together Germany, Poland, Austria, France, the State of Israel and others in the creation of these institutions, we created a new dimension in international cooperation.

These new institutions represent a fulfillment of the United States' postwar effort to address the concerns of victims and the consequences of the Nazi era. They will contribute substantially to U.S.-European efforts to create a stable and humane international community based on democracy, rule of law, and respect for human rights. This kind of international cooperation among the world's strongest allies is crucial to the foreign policies of our countries and to the promotion of peace and stability in Europe. The very complexity of the negotiations - the number of issues and the number of players - became one of its strengths.

The forced labor U.S.-German Executive Agreement is widely accepted as fair, in large part because so many had a real hand in its resolution. Through efforts by U.S. state government officials, plaintiffs' attorneys, authors, publicists and distinguished political leaders, as well as by leaders of German enterprises and of the governments of Germany, Poland, Austria, France and others, long-delayed justice is being brought to surviving forced and slave laborers, property is being returned, and insurance policies are being paid.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS

The slave and forced labor agreements reached in 2000-2001 sought to address injustices borne of hatred, racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobic nationalism and other grievances that led to World War II. Through diplomacy and political negotiations new legal tools were created and played a larger role in diplomacy. Some of our novel solutions have subsequently sparked controversy. Writing in "Foreign Affairs" magazine, Anne-Marie Slaughter and David Bosco assert, "U.S. courts have become a venue of choice for such [Holocaust survivor] suits because they offer plaintiffs the benefits of procedural mechanisms... not to mention the prospect of unparalleled media coverage and U.S. Government involvement." The authors go on to name this "Plaintiffs' Diplomacy." Indeed, they argue that class-action suits against corporations for violations of international law are likely to complicate diplomatic relations. It will also likely generate pressure on governments from powerful corporations to stop the practice.

Although two decades ago the concept of "Plaintiffs' Diplomacy" was unknown, it has become a new legal theory thrust upon and to some extent accepted by U.S. courts, and state legislatures. Relying to a large degree on the Alien Tort Claims Statute of 1789, three categories of "Plaintiffs' Diplomacy" cases have made their way to U.S. courts. The first category of plaintiffs' diplomacy suits is those suits brought against individuals who have committed grave violations against international law in the name of the government. The second were suits brought against corporations that may have violated international law. Lastly, the third category of suits is of those supported by Congress in an effort to achieve justice for victims of terrorism and oppression and filed against foreign governments.

The use of the 1789 Alien Torts Claims Act to engage U.S. Courts in such political settlements of moral questions arising from National Socialism and World War II was a compelling reason for German industry to make its offer to create a new German foundation to make payments to surviving forced laborers. German industry sought "legal peace" for its companies in the United States for acts arising from National Socialism and World War II. However, the legal peace we achieved is likely to have little effect as a deterrent to new foreign policies of ethnic cleansing, revived hatreds or new economic grievances that lead to new injustice.

Despite success in obtaining legal and compensatory resolutions, the effectiveness and incentive(s) of utilizing the Alien Tort Statute in resolving such suits are still undetermined. Essentially, successful plaintiff's diplomacy suits have relied on governments to negotiate agreements, as was done in the slave and forced labor cases. These governmental agreements, however, have only yielded two outcomes: (1) monetary payments for victims and (2) legal peace for companies. Neither of the two resolves the issues of reconciliation, nor is broad enough to deter future xenophobia, nationalism or anti-Semitism.

The danger is that the narrow scope of legal peace and monetary payments may even facilitate political leaders' failure to recognize injustices, to develop ways to remember transgressions or to apologize to surviving victims or their descendants. Only continued research to determine a fact-based history, such as the reports prepared by historical commissions, which are mandated to determine the truth and to promote political dialog based on accurate histories can act as a barrier to future injustice.

HISTORICAL COMMISSIONS AND REMEMBRANCE

Much has already been done over the past fifty years. German historians have written world-renown histories on the Holocaust and the Third Reich. The new German Foundation also seeks to remember the victims of National Socialism, accepts German responsibility for the Holocaust, and provides "a measure of justice" for survivors and heirs through modest but significant payments for former slave and forced laborers.

Both financial assistance and apology were essential in the German effort. One without the other would have been insufficient. No one believed that several thousand dollars could truly compensate former slave and forced laborers for their suffering and loss, but all could agree that such payments added real meaning to the apology. Moreover, these payments provide valuable assistance especially for Eastern European survivors, all of whom are old and many of whom are poor. But the inability of governments to provide full compensation for the wrongs of the past - to do the impossible - need not prevent governments from doing what is needed and possible. In fact, others are addressing this horrible history of the Twentieth century as well. France has reported on the role of the Vichy regime with great detail in the Matteoli Report. Also, the Austrian historical commission's research is underway and is to be published in the fall of 2002.

In the broadest sense, governments that seek reconciliation have the obligation to resolve conflicts and to restore amicable relationships that facilitate acceptance of an undesirable event or the settlement of a quarrel. The ongoing process of reconciliation - apology, compensation and remembrance - requires the aggressor and victims to make a commitment to teaching the lessons of an atrocity in order to prevent it from occurring again. The success of our effort to achieve justice for slave and forced labor survivors will be determined by the continued commitment of those countries to open their archives on their World War II policies, to research the actions of governments during the war, and to uncover the truth of injustices inflicted in the name of their people. The international Community at the Washington Conference should be held to their declaration about the opening of archives pertaining to the Holocaust. That commitment was to full archival openness on the Holocaust so that the Holocaust was neither to be forgotten nor distorted, and that healing is a solemn duty of all who cherish freedom and human dignity. The Washington Declaration was strengthened by the January 2000 Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, which also pledged nations to strengthen international efforts to promote education, remembrance and research about the Holocaust. Forgetting would continue to be an injustice to the victims.

We have finally found a process to open archives and remove the historical obstacles standing in the way of understanding the past and of a future based on respect for human dignity. Although attempts at reconciliation for Holocaust injustices have enabled us to accomplish tremendous feats, there is still much to be done. Over the longer term, it is our hope that young people in the U.S. and other countries will benefit from education and remembrance of both the Holocaust and other injustices. As such, they will be able to better understand how and why these acts of inhumanity occurred, the scourge of prejudice, what can happen when the rule of law breaks down as well as the importance of promoting reconciliation among racial, religious, and ethnic groups so that the persecution and violence that marred the twentieth century is not repeated. Consequently, the international community's work of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research has also begun to take steps to combat the attitudes that foster intolerance, prejudice, and ethnic hatred, which will help to prevent future occurrences of violence and genocide.

The various historical commissions now engaged in researching and reporting on this history need not only conclude their research and publish their reports; they need to lead the debate and help shape their own domestic as well as their foreign policy to understand the utter destruction these historical policies created and the implications such policies have for the current realities.

APOLOGY, RECONCILIATION, DETERRENCE

The agenda is crowded with new initiatives to remember the horrors of Twentieth Century Europe, to bring a measure of justice to surviving victims and to find reconciliation among perpetrators and victims. The German Foundation's Future Fund, endowed with DM 700 million, invests in the future by devoting resources to prevention of future human transgressions. The German Future Fund will foster projects among the peoples affected by these events that will continue to preserve the memory of the victims of the Nazi terror. The Future Fund will also work intensively for a more stable, peaceful and cooperative region. Through Future Fund projects, the Trustees of the German Foundation are dedicated to fighting the continuing evils of intolerance, hatred, xenophobic nationalism and anti-Semitism that led to the Second World War.

To their credit Austrian and French leaders did not allow the philosophical and practical questions to prevent them from embarking on the long road to reconciliation. France created the Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah; Austria created the Reconciliation Fund and has made a provision for the Salzburg Seminar to teach tolerance. Both of these new efforts will preserve the victims' memory and fight against new hatreds. All three - apology, compensation and remembrance - are essential to Holocaust reconciliation efforts, so should it be for other tragedies. Nothing, even financial restraints, should prevent a country from doing what is necessary or feasible to further reconciliation efforts.

Hopefully, there will never be another war with the destructive impact of the Second World War, nor will nations wait so long to provide justice for the victims of conflict. One lesson of the September Eleven terrorist attack on the United States is that hatred still dominates the policies of aggrieved parties. Hatred can take many forms and the risk of weapons of mass destruction falling into terrorist hands demonstrates the danger we face. Understanding the lessons of the Holocaust is an urgent task. Fighting against hatred and xenophobia today and to preserve the hard-won peace after the Cold War is an important agenda for political, business, civil, opinion and moral leaders.

Donald Kagan in his book *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace* (New York, 1995) argues that modern states, especially those who triumphed in the Cold War, have the greatest interest in preserving peace and are quite different than ancient Greek or Roman cultures that "venerated the military virtues, deprivation and subordination to authority." He adds that barriers of conscience that can be used to preserve peace now stand in the way of acquiring and maintaining power. Consequently, a sustained effort to develop such barriers of conscience is needed to prevent new hatreds from dominating domestic and foreign policy again. The slave and forced labor executive agreements with the United States will have limited deterrence effect unless these values are strengthened by actions such as the Germans, French and Austrians have begun to defeat the scourge of hatred.

While the U.S. will continue to be a leader in what is necessarily an ongoing effort, other nations are taking important and independent action. As long as respect for human dignity will be the guiding principle for respect among nations, as the American President and the German Chancellor agreed, we will fulfill our pledge to give meaning to the words that echo our hope after the Holocaust - "Never Again."

Works cited

Authers, John and Richard Wolffe, *The Victims' Fortune: Inside the Epic Battle over Debts of the Holocaust*, (HarperCollins Publishers, 2002)

Bazyler, Michael, "Nuremberg in America: Litigation of the Holocaust in U.S. Courts" in *University of Richmond Law Review* 34/1 (March 2000)

Baker, James A exchange of letters with Hans-Dietrich Genscher, (1990)

Bindenagel, J.D. (editor), *Proceedings, The Washington Conference on Holocaust-Era Assets*, U.S. Government Printing Office, (Washington, 1999)

Clinton, William J. exchange of letters with Gerhard Schröder, (December 1999)

Gnewuch, Erich, *Nazi Murder: Documentary History of the Use of Poison Gas*, edited by E. Kogon, H. Langbein and A Rueckerl (Yale University Press, 1993) p- 57-59.

Gregor, Neil, *Daimler-Benz in the Third Reich*, (Yale University Press, 1998), p. 194

Gross, Jan Tomasz, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton University Press, 2001)

Kagan, Donald, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace* (New York, 1995)

Kwasniewski, Aleksander, Statement in Jedwabne, Poland, July 10, 2001

Nicholas, Lynn H., *The Rape of Europa: The Fate of Europe's Treasures in the Third Reich and Second World War*, Alfred A. Knopf, (New York, 1995) Petropoulos, Jonathan, *Art as Politics in the Third Reich*, University of North Carolina Press, (Chapel Hill and London, 1996)

Rau, Johannes, Statement before Holocaust survivors at Schlos Bellevue, Berlin, December 19, 1999

Regeringskansliet, Proceedings, The Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, (Stockholm, 2000)

Report of the Presidential Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States, (2001), U.S. Government Printing Office, (Washington, 2001)

Slaughter, Anne-Marie and David Bosco, "Plaintiffs' Diplomacy" *Foreign Affairs*, (September/October 2000)

Von Weizsäcker, Richard, *A Voice From Germany*, Wolf Siedler Verlag GmbH (Berlin, 1985) PROLOGUE TO DIPLOMACY: THE BINDENAGEL FAMILY IN AMERICA- AN ESSAY

Ambassador J.D. Bindenagel

As I reflect on my thirty-year career as an American diplomat, I am struck by the historical and personal connections that flow through the Bindenagel family story. Carl Bindernagel emigrated from Germany to escape the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and pioneered in Dakota Territory. His son Fred established the Bindenagel American identity, which was forged by anti-German feelings during the First World War, and struggled through the Great Depression in the Dust Bowl of the Dakotas. His son Gordon, my father, was a member of the "Greatest Generation" as described by South Dakotan Tom Brokaw in his book of the same title, returned to Germany as an American soldier to help liberate Europe from National Socialism. While Germany was divided following the Second World War and through the 1989 Democratic Revolution and after German unification, I served as an American Army Officer and as an American diplomat in Germany. As Germany struggled to establish democracy from Paul's Kirche in 1848 to the unification of Germany in 1990, the history of the Bindenagel family has run parallel to the history of six Germanys.

A BEGINNING IN GERMANY

As the cannons became silent and the smoke cleared from the battlefield at Kōniggrätz, Bohemia (now the Czech Republic) on July 3, 1866 two historical events had occurred. Politically, Prussian Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck had defeated Austria in the "German War" and had prepared the ground for the revolution of blood and iron. Personally, Pomeranian Musketeer Carl Friedrich Bindernagel had survived one of the bloodiest battles of the nineteenth century and was shortly to emigrate from Germany to America.

Carl Bindernagel was born January 27, 1842, in Pommerania, a North German Prussian principality. At the time there was no single German nation; the nation had ceased to exist in 1806 when Emperor Franz II of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation laid down his crown. A German Confederation was created after the victory over Napoleon during the Congress of Vienna, September 1814 to June 1815. That confederation embodied the hopes of many Germans to create a nation, but the confederation, which replaced the old "Reich," failed in its attempt to establish democracy and became a loose association of individual principalities and states.

The governing body of the confederation was the Bundestag, which was able to act only if Austria and Prussia agreed. Modern economic development began in Prussia at this time, especially heavy industry and machine manufacture. In another revolutionary attempt to establish democracy in 1848, a National Assembly meeting in St. Paul's Cathedral in Frankfurt made when Carl Bindernagel was just 6 years old. Although the National Assembly established a new order, elected an Austrian as Imperial Administrator, drafted a constitution, and offered Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV the hereditary German imperial crown, the king refused the offer of being named "Kaiser" to avoid being responsible to the revolutionaries in Frankfurt. In May 1849 a popular uprising to enforce the constitution failed and in 1850 the confederation was abandoned.

Economic development in Prussia also came with attempts to bring constitutional reform to government by making the king and his Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck follow the wishes of the parliament. The Prussian parliament wanted to change the structure of the army. Bismarck ignored the parliament and engaged in war to silence them.

Carl Bindernagel, at age 22, was conscripted as a soldier in Otto von Bismarck's war against the Danes. This German-Danish War (1864) gained for Prussia and its ally Austria the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, which are still parts of Germany. Bismarck, recognizing that Austria with its Hungarian Empire would not join a German nation, had sought to divide Germany between the Austrians in the South and the Prussians in the North. As the two allies fought the Danes, Bismarck moved toward conflict with Austria.

Carl, then 24 and a musketeer in the 5th Pomeranian Infantry Regiment, joined in the decisive battle at Königgrätz. It was a short war. On June 21, 1866, the Prussian troops crossed the Bohemian border commanded by the Chief of the General Staff, Helmut von Moltke. Three Army groups marched into the Schlachtfeld (field of slaughter) near Koeniggrätz. The Prussian soldiers were well trained and well led. They were outfitted with a new rifle (Zündnadelgewehr) capable of seven shots per minute. Their Austrian opponents' rifles were capable of only two shots per minute.

General von Moltke used railroads to bring his 220,000 troops to battle and coordinated movements with the telegraph. The 215,000 Austrians were less well prepared and were quickly surrounded. The result was horrendous. Austria lost 33,000 soldiers, while Prussia lost only 9,000. It was one of the worst European slaughters of the 19th century. It did not pass the test for battle horror of the Civil War battle where at Gettysburg where some 50,000 were lost.

Germany also lost along with this battle the hope for constitutional democracy. Otto von Bismarck had defeated the parliament and imposed his will on the future, a triumph for an absolutist leader. Democracy in Germany would have to wait.

Carl Bindernagel was awarded a medal for his role as a rifleman in the battle of Königgrätz. A certificate, photocopied for me by Aunt Mildred Maloney, has the following citation (translated from the German): WITH GOD, FOR THE KING AND THE FATHERLAND ON THE ORDER OF HIS MAJESTY OF KINGSDENIED THAT FROM HIS HIGHEST HIMSELF DENIED FROM THE MELTED CAN ON BRONZE FOUNDED AS A REMEMBRANCE CROSS FOR THE COMBATANT THE MUSKETEER CARL BINDERNAGELOF THE 5TH POMERINIAN INFANTRY REGIMENT NUMBER 42 COMPANY FIVE

IN RECOGNITION OF HIS FAITHFUL PARTICIPATION IN THE MILITARY OPERATIONS OF THE YEAR 1866 ESPECIALLY IN THE BATTLE OF KÖNIGGRÄTZ IS GIVEN BY THE UNDERSIGNED REGIMENT COMMANDER 15 MAY 1867

Eberhard Kohler, who lived in Bochum, Germany and corresponded with my grandmother Elsie Bindenagel, wrote that after Carl had survived the German-Danish War and the German-Austrian War, he feared yet another war would break out and would likely cost him his life. Indeed, Otto von Bismarck launched the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 and proved Musketeer Carl's fear was not unfounded. Carl emigrated from Germany to America between 1867 and 1870.

THE FAMILY TREE AND EMIGRATION IN THE LATE 1800s

Emigration in the late 19th Century meant an almost total break with one's family. War, hard economic times and the promise of a brighter future in America combined in Carl to help him make that break. He left behind a family history stretches back hundreds of years.

The earliest record I found of the Bindernagel family history in Germany was from the 1600's in Sachsen-Gotha, near Kassel. This group of Bindernagels reached back from Friedberg (near Frankfurt am Main) where the Bindernagel Buchhandlung bookstore has had a publishing company for over 150 years. One earlier descendent was the mayor of Friedberg and designed the town garden. Friedberg is a delightful small city.

The family bookstore was the center of hectic Christmas shopping in 1984, when the Frankfurt Allgemeine newspaper described its great offerings of books. I discovered the store from that FAZ article and visited the Bindernagel Buchhandlung. The current owner's grandmother was the last Bindernagel and his elderly father still had his family tree and shared the following lineage with me in 1985.

The Friedberg branch of the family tree (Ahnentafel) began with Hans Bindernagel who was born in 1624 in the town of Woelfis in the Grand Duchy of Sachsen-Gotha. Hans died in 1656. Johannes Bindernagel, who was born in 1697 and lived in Kassel, followed him. Johannes was a Kaufmann, a businessman. He died in 1718. Next to come was Johannes Heinrich Bindernagel who was also born in Woelfis in 1719. He died in 1777 in Kassel. He was followed by Johannes Lorenz Bindernagel, who was born in 1750 in Kassel and was a taxman (Steuerschreiber), by profession. He died in Rothheim in 1799. In the 1780s there was a Carl Jakob Bindernagel on one of the side branches of the tree. I was very surprised since our son has the same name! The name Heinrich appears again in Heinrich Carl Bindernagel, who was born in 1775 in Kassel and died in the 1800s in Friedberg.

Other branches of the family can be found in Gelsenkirchen, in Munich, and in Hamburg. Lutz Bindernagel is a journalist for the Hamburg-based German magazine Stern. In Berlin in the 1920' and 1930's there was a well-known Opera singer, Gertrude Bindernagel, who was from the family. In Halle or Dresden and other cities in the former German Democratic Republic there may be other Germans with the Bindernagel name. When we lived in Bremen (1977-1979) we met Juergen and Brunhild Bindernagel, a veterinarian who had emigrated from Halle, East Germany, with his parents. The name itself, according to Juergen Bindernagel, is derived from the 'binding nails' or large wooden pegs used to connect the support beams of thatched-roof houses prevalent in Pommerania. The makers of these nails were probably called Bindernagelmacher.

The "r" in the name was lost sometime between the departure from Germany and the recording of the name of the first settlers in the United States. I suspect a recording clerk, not hearing the almost silent "r," simply left it out when inscribing the name on a birth or citizenship paper. Another variation on the name came to us when my wife Jean and I lived in Korea from 1975 to 1977. A friend translated the name to Chinese, giving it four Chinese characters - Important people, Abundance, Appears, and Excellence. The Bindenagel name translation from Chinese reads: "A distinguished gentleman who appears from the crowd." That saying is more of a standard for us to live by than a comment on where we have come.

Of our branch in Germany, we know that Carl came from Pomerania, which includes the Island of Rügen. My grandmother, Elsie Bindenagel, wrote regularly to the Grandson of Christoph Bindernagel, Eberhard Koehler. Christoph, was a shoemaker in Putbus, Rügen. He kept his own store and died in 1940. During the Third Reich some of these Bindernagels joined the National Socialists' Nazi party, but none rose to positions of prominence.

The Island of Rügen is a rural, farming area on the Baltic Sea. The Lietzow Bay is renown for its sailing and the white chalk cliffs of Sassnitz that rival the white, cliffs of Dover. It is an East German resort today. The family farm on Rügen, according to family legend, was the Bauernhof "Tilzow" and was located between Putbus and the capital, Bergen. Koehler's Uncle Otto Bindernagel lived on Ruegen and after World War II was a guide who wore a marine cap. He retired in 1962 and died in 1963. He was buried with "every possible pomp and honor," according to Koehler, who attended the funeral. With him died the last direct descendent of that branch of our family in Germany with the name the name Bindernagel.

The American branch of the Bindernagel, without the 'r,' family began with Carl's decision to emigrate to America. Carl's brother Christoph Bindernagel, according to Christoph was Koehler's Great Uncle. Koehler wrote to my grandmother that Carl emigrated after he was awarded his medal for the battle of Königgrätz in 1867. The Koehler family in Germany remembered Malte Carl's emigration as a result of war and his decision not to experience (erleben) another war.

Other Bindernagels who are recorded in immigration records included Gottlieb Bindernagel in Philadelphia in 1873 and Amalie Bindernagel in New York in 1883.

Carl's emigration probably began with a train ride to Hamburg or Bremen, the main ports of departure for the United States. Once in Bremerhaven he had to buy a ticket for the voyage on either a sailing ship, which took seven weeks, or on one of the new steamers introduced in 1857. The North German Lloyd was a large Bremen shipping company, which was one of the most renowned shippers. Lloyd operated out of the New Port of Bremen at Bremerhaven and by the 1870s had run the sailing ships out of the emigration business with its steamships.

The city of Bremen, in order to win the emigration business, set standards for food, space and health for the trip to America. The trip could be frightening with North Sea storms and seasickness. After his arrival in New York, he probably traveled by train to Illinois.

LIFE IN ILLINOIS IN THE 1870-1880s

Carl came to Ford county Illinois in the 1870s where he was a tenant farmer on the Illinois great farm, "Burr Oaks." The farm was located in Ford and Livingston counties, embraced exactly sixty-five square miles, over 40,000 acres. M.L. Sullivant purchased it at an average price of \$1.25 per acre. Harper's Weekly Supplement of September 23, 1871 described the Burr Oaks farm.

"The land which is rolling, in some places quite broken, is in the form of a square, and has been crossed by wide avenues hedged on either side with the Osage orange. Three hundred miles of hedge have been set out, six miles of ditching (the ditches are seven feet wide and nearly two feet in depth) have been done to drain the wet places; numerous corn cribs, farm buildings, shops for various work; and a vast amount of work of all descriptions in which a new place abound. He [Sullivant] believes persistent labor, directed by fair judgment, will enable any man to follow Horace Greeley's advice - i.e., move West and prosper."

The regular work of the Burr Oak farm, a corn farm, was breaking virgin prairie, planting, cultivating and harvesting. Oxen were used to break the land with a "breaking-plow" cutting a furrow twenty inches in width turning the sod two-three inches deep. This is done in the early spring, summer and the fall. If done before June 20, corn could be planted and harvested with a yield of twenty bushels to the acre. That paid the interest on the land at Illinois Central Railroad prices as well as the expenses incurred in the work, and even a profit.

A man and a team of oxen could plant twelve and one-half acres. A heavier crop was planted on land when the breaking-plow was followed by a stirring-plow and a furrow cut four inches with the earth thrown back over the sod plowing. This was done in the summer or fall. In the spring this land is harrowed, planted and cultivated in the same manner as old land. Old ground was plowed from the first of April to the 10th of June. With a steel plow and horses or mules, two and one quarter acres could be done in a day.

A man with four yoke of oxen would harrow, with gang harrows, from twenty-five to thirty acres a day. The cultivation was done by machinery and repeated three or four times depending on the condition of the ground. Scattered about were boys with low trucks or wagons with casks of drinking water for the workers.

When the cultivation was finished, the workers returned to breaking ditches and other farm work until harvest. At harvest, the men were organized into squads with a boss, two wagons and four horses. Each squad had two to six gangs. Each gang took five rows of corn and an average of fifty bushels of corn was cribbed for every man's day's work. The cribs, long wooden sheds 64 feet X 12 feet high, were set at convenient points and could hold three thousand bushel each. When grain was shipped east, power Sheller was set to work between cribs. Trains were contracted through to New York to avoid paying two or three commissions as well as elevator risks and charges.

Burr Oaks was a temperance farm. Whiskey was used only for snakebites even though Mr. Sullivant was "doubtful whether the whiskey [would] not injure the man more than the snakebite." There was also fun to be had. Sundays at the close of the day the hands from different farms assembled at the dance hall in the Burr Oaks grove for which the farm was named. Fiddlers and accordion players furnished music. Harper's Weekly reported that the Swedish girls of Burr Oaks were dancers of "no mean rank," if endurance were taken into consideration. Burr Oaks was reputedly a temperance place fighting drunkenness, and other nuisances were seldom occurrences.

It was here that Carl found his first home in America. In the Lyman county agricultural production report from June 1880, Carl was listed as a tenant farmer. He farmed 70 acres of corn, had an additional 15 acres of permanent meadows, pastures or orchard and had 10 acres of unimproved land (old fields). On the land he produced 1400 bushels of Indian corn on 40 acres, 190 bushels of oats on 10 acres, 70 bushels of seed flax and 4 tons of straw on 10 acres, 30 bushels of potatoes on 2 acres, and had one acre planted with apples. He also had two cows, one of which had a calf. He sold one cow and made 200 pounds of butter in 1879. He had two pigs and 40 chickens in June of 1879. The value of the farm in 1880 was listed as \$2500.00 with \$50 in farm implements and machinery and \$200 worth of livestock. His crop for the year 1879, when his son Fred was born was valued at \$500.00. Additionally he had 10 acres of hay and three horses.

His bride-to-be was a daughter of another tenant farmer. There were several Siebrecht [Sebright] names registered in 1880. Charles had 75 acres, Thomas 125 acres, and Ferdanand 70. Carl married Carolina Siebrecht in Paxton, Illinois in 1875. Carl and Carolina had children born in Illinois.

DAKOTA TERRITORY -THE MIDDLE BORDER

Large areas in the Dakota Territory were and remain Indian country. Today there are 9 Indian Reservations - the Pine Ridge, Rosebud, Cheyenne, Standing Rock, Crow Creek, Lower Brule, Yankton, Sisseton and Flandreau. Several tribes preceded these new European immigrant farmers in the life of the territory. The first known were the Mound Builders, who at one time lived in the Ohio Valley and buried their dead in mounds near Sioux Falls. A second tribe was the Arikara, or Ree, Indians, who migrated from Yankton. They built large villages, grew gardens of beans, corn squash and tobacco to supplement their diet of buffalo. They lived there peacefully until 1750 when the invading Teton Sioux drove them up the Missouri River valley. After forty years of war with the Sioux, the Rees were virtually extinct.

The Sioux, or Dakota, Indians were forced out of Wisconsin and Minnesota by the more numerous Ojibways who had also been given firearms by the French. The Sioux migrated west, fought the Rees to extinction, and conquered the land West to the Black Hills. In the 1770s a few white trappers and fur traders encountered the Sioux and established trading posts to trade with the Sioux. Trade flourished with the coming of the Steamboat on the Mississippi.

The Sioux, who were friendly with the British and with whom they had long trading relations, joined forces on the British side in the War of 1812. The British ended the war with the Treaty of Ghent in 1814 and left the Sioux to make their own peace with the Americans. A treaty of peace was signed July 15, 1815 with the Sioux tribes.

By 1862 the tribes in Minnesota engaged the white settlers in a desperate war. The U.S. Army drove these Indian tribes across the border, broke up their villages or herded them into camps - Fort Randall, Fort Lookout, Fort Thompson, Fort George, Fort Pierre, Fort Sully, and Fort Bennett. One, Fort Sisseton, has been restored. Most of the dramatic events in Indian warfare of the last century occurred after the Sioux signed the 1867 treaty and agreed to move to reservations before 1876.

DAKOTA TERRITORY BINDENAGEL HOMESTEAD

With the peace fixed in the West and the Indians moving to the reservations, Carl turned his attention to a new homestead West of Illinois. Free land was a powerful force bringing settlers West. And for Carl, tenant farmer in Illinois, the 1862 Homestead Law, which was signed by President Lincoln, opened a new life for the Bindenagel family in the West.

Malte and his wife Carolina came to Ashton, Dakota Territory in March 1882 from Roberts, in Ford County, Illinois. They filed their homestead claim in Harmony Township, seven miles North East of Frankfurt, which was founded a year later in 1883. There they farmed for twenty years. In 1902 they retired and moved to Frankfurt. Carl died October 20, 1916 in Frankfurt. Carolina lived with their son, Fred, until she died in Huron, South Dakota on November 8, 1932.

Fred married Elsie Vollmer, a 1911 music graduate of Dakota Wesleyan University, on December 10, 1910 in Redfield. Irving Klaus, the local minister stood up for Fred and Fred's sister Emma stood up for Elsie. Reverend Hoffman, whom Fred had met while at Charles City Iowa Business College, presided. Fred was not called for service in the Great War, which America joined in 1917. My grandmother told me how the family ceased to identify with their German heritage during the war, but shared with me the family bible, in Gothic German, which had accompanied the pioneers on the prairie for a generation. Birth and marriage certificates of the immigrants were still published in German until the First World War.

My father, Gordon, was born August 31, 1920 in Frankfurt, South Dakota, and moved to Huron in 1926 when Fred moved from Frankfurt. Fred left the farm to become a businessman, baker, undertaker and retail merchant in that small town on the prairie.

The annals of Huron began with the 1879 claim staked out by John Cain on the Eastern Shore of the James River. Shortly afterwards, a surveying party for the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad camped on the West bank of the James River and Marvin Hughitt, the general manager of the line, chose to make the site his division Headquarters. Marvin and his fellows in Chicago named Huron after the Indian tribe and the Great Lake Huron.

Huron became a bustling boomtown. Buildings shot up to meet the needs of the settlers who kept pouring in to the area. The War Department established a signal station, now the weather bureau. Stores were established. The pioneer druggist Hollard Wheeler built a brick building for his pharmacy. In 1885 a brick building did not a town make! However, on Dakota Avenue Wheeler had the hay cut at "haying time" in front of his store, of course, to improve appearances on the otherwise muddy street.

In the late eighteen eighties, crop failures and a severe recession checked the growth of Huron. In a comeback in 1904 Huron was selected as the site for the State Fair. After World War I, several headquarters were set up for oil, utility and wholesale companies. Fortunes changed again from 1933-35 when drought and dust storms ravaged the crops and crippled the economy. One contemporary observer noted that Huron was harder hit than any other area in the eastern part of the State. As a result many soil conservation projects were launched and the government planted a "shelter belt" of trees. However, not until 1937 did the lakes and rivers fill up with water again.

The dust storms were bad. In 1933 when Grandpa Fred's Uncle George Laxton died, my Uncle Wilbur drove to the funeral. On his way the dirt was so thick that he crashed into the ditch. The funeral had to be postponed. When Wilbur and the group finally arrived, they were black with dust. When they returned, a store window at Fred's grocery store, "Bindy's Market," had been blown out. A scoop shovel was needed to sweep up the dirt. Even by then the river had dried up and water from Lampe's artesian well behind the store was virtually the only thing that kept anyone from thirst. And this was just the first of the many dust storms that followed.

Fred had moved into Huron in 1926 and ran the Hopkins bakery for his first year in town. The market was on the site of the future Huron Theater. Fred then bought the City Meat Market, an old store with a stoop for the "old-timers" to sit and pass the time. Out the back door and across the alley was Robinson's Shoe store, where Dad sampled a pint of booze once, compliments of Robinson's.

After Fred sold City Meat Market, he opened "Bindy's Market" at 256 Wisconsin Avenue. He shared the building with the Farmers' Union Cream Station. The location was ideal. The farmers brought in eggs to Grandpa's store. While Uncle Bill candled the eggs for freshness, the farmers took their cream to the creamery. Grandpa Fred of course, cashed the cream checks and won over many customers. On Saturdays, Dad ground coffee in that gigantic coffee grinder with two huge wheels and a small drawer for the grounds.

Life in Huron was not always harsh and dull. In the 1930s the John Dillinger gang robbed the National Bank of South Dakota at Third Street and Wisconsin Avenue. On that day my grandfather's brother Art, who was my high school teacher Dana Harlow's pet, was in Bindy's market. Dr. Buchanan's office was located upstairs along with several apartments. Well, as John Dillinger drove out of town after robbing the bank, he fired into Bindy's market and Uncle Art ducked behind the counter as the shots ricocheted upstairs.

Now John Dillinger was cold-blooded thug who had shot and killed 10 men during his life of crime. Many Americans who had lost all they had in the Great Depression, had also lost some sense of their strong pioneer values. Many were not only impoverished; they were also embittered. Out of desperation some of them found a skewed sense of justice in bank robbery (in general - not in Huron). John Dillinger became a kind of Robin Hood folk hero by robbing banks. He seemed to them to be robbing from those who had become rich by robbing the poor folks like them.

The wanted poster from the era proclaimed John Dillinger an outlaw, a fugitive from justice and a vicious menace to life and property. Governors of Indiana, Ohio, Minnesota, Michigan, and Illinois offered a \$5,000 reward for Dillinger - Dead or Alive. In the end John Dillinger proved to be no match for J. Edgar Hoover's FBI, after a brothel keeper betrayed him. Public Enemy No.1 Dillinger was confronted and gunned down in front of a Chicago movie theater in July 1934 by a police strike force led by G-man Melvin Purvis.

As these events were unfolding another prominent American moved to Huron. In 1931 the Doland, South Dakota, druggist moved to town and opened Humphrey's Drug Store, one of the first Walgreen agency drug stores. Hubert Humphrey's father called Hubert back from his studies at the University of Minnesota to help run the store in Huron. Hubert the next year was able to go to Denver for an intensive pharmacist's course at Capitol College of Pharmacy.

Back in Huron just as the Depression and the dust storms hit, Hubert learned lessons many Americans were learning. Times were hard and it was not the traditional poor who were rebelling. Those who had once had done well, now had lost much of their possessions, including their farms, and were angry. Hubert described in his autobiography how irate farmers marched down Dakota Avenue to hold a rally in Campbell Park. Although Humphrey's Drug store, like many other businesses, was on the verge of bankruptcy, those farmers looked on the Humphrey's as having survived at their expense. There was real concern that had the marchers become violent; the farmers would have probably turned on those who kept body and soul together in the bad times.

For Hubert the Works Progress Administration (WPA) demonstrated how interrelated the people and political issues really are, how mutually dependent they are, and how government programs never have simple, isolated effects.

Hubert's political fortunes are well known: Senator from Minnesota, Vice President, and Democratic Presidential Candidate. His devotion to others also left a mark on the Bindenagels. Hubert worked hard at the drug store and took off only for three reasons. On Wednesdays he tried to take his future wife dancing; he frequently took off to work for the Beadle County Young Democrats, and on Mondays he devoted time to the Methodist Church Boy Scout Troop 6. As scoutmaster he left a mark on my family. When my dad, Gordon, was 12 or 13 years old, Hubert was his scoutmaster. In addition to Hubert's nickname of "Pinky" for his liberal political views. One unfinished story stands out with Dewey van Dyke, superintendent of Mails, and Hubert as scoutmasters who tried to raise a flagpole at scout camp and caused a scandal. (We are looking for the photo of this event and the rest of the tale.)

When my father was 22 and a college student at Huron College, where his brothers Donald and Wilbur as well as his sister Mildred attended, decided to go off on his own to seek his fortune. After a short time in Long Beach, California, he married my mother Patricia Williams, who followed him from Huron and then was drafted into the U.S. Army.

The young private Bindenagel was assigned to the 104th Infantry Division - the Timberwolf Division - and arrived in Cherbourg, France with the U.S. invasion under the command of General Terry Allen. After fighting their way through Belgium, the 104th charged through Cologne and crossed the Rhine near the Remagen bridgehead at K nigswinter, where the post-war U.S. Embassy to West Germany would be built and I would live for six years.

My father's 414th Infantry Regiment protected the 3d Armored Division in conquering the Ruhr pocket with its 335,000 encircled German Wehrmacht troops. His regiment defeated them at Paderborn on April 1, 1945. For their vital role in the Ruhr the Division Commander recommended his unit for a citation that reads in part:

"The 414th Infantry Regiment is cited for outstanding performance of duties in action against the enemy during the period 25 March 1945 to 1 April 1945, in which extraordinary heroism, determination, and brilliant team action of its individual members contributed greatly to the closing of the Ruhr pocket during the historic drive of the First United States Army from the Rhine to the Elbe River in Germany. During this eight-day period the 414th Regiment ...slashed through enemy defense for more than 200 miles, moving from one center of resistance to another atop tanks. The regiment started the drive in a daring night attack resulting in the taking of the remaining high ground east of the Remagen bridgehead, and the securing of the bridgehead over the Weide River. In a series of hazardous and difficult attacks, one enemy stronghold after another fell to the courageous men of the regiment. ...After hard bitter fighting the objectives of Altenkirchen and Marburg fell, and on 31 March 1945, the regiment was in front of the key city of Paderborn. This was an SS school, heavily defended by SS troops. Although greatly outnumbered the weary but aggressive troops ... once again attacked and on 1 April 1945 Paderborn fell, contact was made with units of the Ninth United States Army, and thus the pocket was closed.The gallantry, devotion and esprit de corps of the officers and men of the 414th Infantry Regiment reflect the highest credit upon themselves and the military service of the United States."

The unit went on to Nordhausen where a huge underground V-bomb factory was discovered and had had some 25,000 slave laborers, who had toiled for months in to produce V-1 and V-2 rockets. The unit also liberated the concentration camp at Nordhausen, a camp for political prisoners, with unspeakable horrors of death among the prisoners. Reports from the medics who sought to save some survivors and to bury the dead read today of man's most inhuman possibilities. Truly in the words of a German proverb: "In time of war the Devil makes more room in hell." My father never spoke of the concentration camps, but in the spring of 2001 as U.S. Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues in the U.S. State Department, I attended a memorial service in the Capitol Rotunda. As we waited for President George Bush to arrive the colors of the units that had liberated the concentration camps entered the hall. As I saw the gray Timberwolf Division flag, I could see the soldiers of my father's unit entering the death camps and was shaken myself. So powerful was the image and so thankful and proud I was that my father had fought to end the National Socialist regime. My father was awarded the Bronze Star for his service.

Back in Huron after the Second World War, my father rejoined the Methodist church choir with his father. The Methodist Church played a significant role in our lives, especially the choir directed by Mrs. Byrne Griffith and accompanied by Harriet Ray on the organ. Fred, Gordon and Gordon's kids all sang in the Methodist Choir. At Easter we sang the "Seven Last Words," and at Christmas we sang Hugo Distler's "The Christmas Story" and the Hallelujah Chorus by Georg Handel. The music at the church was wonderfully inspiring for the community.

The Bindenagel's of Huron have scattered over the years. Mildred married Giles Maloney of Madison and pursued a career with her husband in the FBI. Wilbur became an economist and worked for Cargill Grain, including several years in Switzerland. He died of cancer in 1977. Donald and his wife Mary lived many years in Tucson, Arizona, where they retired. They have two children, Dean and Barbara. Gordon returned to Huron after World War II, raised his family of six children, before moving to Rockford, Illinois in 1965. He and his wife Patricia (Williams) are both retired.

Gordon's family settled in Rockford in the 1960s, except for J.D. Bindenagel, who graduated from the University of Illinois with a BA in political science and an M.A. in public administration. He went on to serve in the U.S. Army Third Infantry Division in Würzburg, Germany and in the U.S. Foreign Service in Seoul, Korea as well as Bremen, Bonn, and Berlin. After serving as acting U.S. Ambassador in Germany, 1996-1997, he was named Ambassador and U.S. Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues. He retired from the U.S. Foreign Service in 2003 and became vice president of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. He and his wife, Jean (Lundfelt) Bindenagel have two children, Annamarie and Carl to continue the story.

Sources Cited

Bindenagel, Patricia, Letter to J.D. Bindenagel, September 23, 1985.

Christoph, Dieter, Facts About Germany, Third edition, LexikotheVerlag GmbH, Guetersloh, 1979, pp.47-66.

This Fabulous Century, 1930-1940, Time-Life Books, New York, 1969, pp.109-111.

Farming in the Great West, Harper's Weekly Supplement, September 23, 1871.

The Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress State of South Dakota, A South Dakota Guide, 1938, pp.22-117.

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Frankfurt West Germany, December 17, 1984, p. 13.

Garlin, Hamlin, Son of the Middle Border

Hoegh, Leo a. and Doyle, Howard J., Timberwolf Tracks, The History of the 104th Infantry Division, 1942-1945, Washington, Infantry Journal Press, 1946, p. 316 and p.329-332.

Humphrey, Hubert, The Education of a Public Man, My Life and Politics, edited by Norman Sherman, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976, pp.46-52.

Kim, il Lan, Name Translation, American Embassy Seoul, Korea, 1976.

Koehler, Eberhard, Letters to Elsie Bindenagel from 463 Dorstenerstrasse 175, Bochum, Germany dated 18 December 1962 and 16 December 1963.

Koehler, Eberhard, Letter a J.D. Bindenagel, June 8, 1974. Schulze,Hagen, in Hartmut Mitten in Europa, Siedler Verlag, 1985, pp. 201-281.

Maloney, Mildred, Letters to J.D. Bindenagel, dated October 3 1978, and November- 12, 1978.

Royal Prussian Certificate of Award to Carl Bindernagel, May 15, 1867.

Riç½lvaag, O.E., Giants in the Earth, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1927.

Sockett, Orville D., Productions of Agriculture in Lyman Township in the County of Ford, State of Illinois, Schedule 2, Enumerated by, June 1-2, 1880.

End of interview