Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR NELSON C. LEDSKY

Interviewed by: Thomas Stern

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[Note: This interview was not edited prior to Mr. Ledsky's death]

Q: Nelson, as we usually do, let's start at the very beginning and work our way up your Foreign Service entrance with emphasis on those activities that might have led you to have an interest in the diplomatic life. Where and when were you born?

LEDSKY: I was born in Cleveland, Ohio on September 30, 192so my mother has told me.

Q: Tell us a little bit about your parents.

LEDSKY: They were both first generation Americans. Both were born in Europe and came to the U.S. as childremy father was about ten and my mother about 8 or 9. They came from different European towns and both ended up in Cleveland, Ohio. My father was the oldest of five children. After being discharged from the Army at the end of WWI, he went to work as an operator for the Pullman Company, which was a sleeping car manufacturer. He became a conductor, covering mostly the Cleveland-New York run, although sometimes he also worked on the Cleveland-Baltimore or Cleveland-Chicago route. He had had one year of college at the University of Michigan, but was then drafted into the Army and never returned to academia. He was gassed during WWI and spent several years in a California hospital after the war. Then he bummed around the country for some years before returning to Cleveland and beginning his work for Pullman. He died in 1951, when I was twenty-one years old.

My mother graduated from a Cleveland high school, just as WWI was ending. She went to normal school to study to be a teacher and in fact was one for a year or two in the Cleveland public school system. She also worked in a downtown department store. She married my father in 1928 and then became a housewife for the rest of her life. She died in 1973, having lived most of her life in Cleveland, although she was in Germany with us for a year in the late 1960s and then again in the early 1970s here in Washington with us just before her death.

Q: Where did you go to elementary school?

LEDSKY: I went to the world famous Myles Standish elementary school on the east side of Cleveland. It was our neighborhood school. When I went there in the 1930s, it was an experimental school. It was all on one floor with each room having a separate exit to the playground. It was a very innovative school, which featured what was called at the time "Major Work Sections" a system which allowed gifted and talented children to progress at their own pace. I was not a member of that club and did not move ahead quickly, but I did manage to graduate from Myles Standish and went on to Empire Junior High, which was three or four blocks from home. I spent three years at that school. Then I went on to Glenville High, which at the time was considered a premier high school in Cleveland. Glenville High had very high academic standards. It was the school which almost all the Jewish "ghetto"(and there was a sort of Jewish "ghetto" at the time) children attended. I graduated from there in 1947.

Q: What were your main interests in high school?

LEDSKY: I was interested in history. I was very good in math, mediocre in foreign languages, although I spent three years studying Latin. I was a good academic student, frankly interested in everything and nothing. I was never sure where I was heading and graduated from high school without any real understanding of where I was heading. In the 1940s, I was caught up in the Zionist movement. I was a leadepresident for a whilof a Zionist youth group in Cleveland; I spent a lot of time on Jewish issues while in high school.

Q: Were there any discussions around the dining room table about world events and issues?

LEDSKY: I think I can say that that almost never happened. Our dinner table was somewhat chaotic. First of all, my father was never there as he was on the road most of the time, so I could hardly say that we had "family dinners" as I was growing up. I never had a feeling that my parents were that interested in the world. They certainly did not share much information on it with their off-spring. I was involved a little with a neighborhood synagogue when I was somewhere around 13-15 years old. My interest in Zionism was stimulated by my friends, not my home.

Q: Did WW II have an impact on your views?

LEDSKY: In retrospect, I would have to say "yes." I was fascinated by the war. I think I had a map in my bedroom dotted with pins and flags marking the movement of allied forces through Europe and the Pacific. I remember that I learned a lot of geography by following the course of the war by using information gathered from the newspapers and the radio. I was a junior air-raid warden in Cleveland, and I was involved in some war preparations that were taking place at the time. These were volunteer activities most often organized by my junior and senior high schools. As I said, I graduated from high school in 194two years after the end of the war, so that much of my secondary education took place during the war. The war was undoubtedly a major factor in bringing the war into my horizons. Essentially, I led a very parochial and insular life. I didn't travel, not leaving Cleveland until I graduated from high school. Therefore, the war did expand my knowledge of the larger world.

Q: You said that when you graduated from high school you had no idea of where you were heading. But you did choose a college?

LEDSKY: I had no inkling about my future. As for the college, I didn't have much choice. I went to Western Reserve Universiton a street car. I paid for my first two years of tuition with funds I had saved from my summer employment and after-school work earnings. I had about three or four thousand dollars in my bank account when I graduated from high school. My parents could not contribute to my education; therefore, my choice of college was greatly narrowed by my financial situation. I had to apply to the university which was closest to home and cheapest to reach by street car. When I was in high school, we took a number of college entrance exams which allowed me to earn a scholarship to a state university. I could therefore have attended Ohio State or any other state university, of which there were about seven or eight at the time, but I could not afford to live away from home. My cousins had attended Ohio State and many of my friends ended up there as well. But Columbus, Ohio, was not within my financial means.

Q: Were you encouraged to attend college?

LEDSKY: I don't think "encouraged" is probably the right word. There was a certain amount of peer pressure, since all of my friends from Glenville High opted to attend undergraduate schools. I had no idea about what I might do if I did not pursue higher education. I had no idea about what I might do in college either, but at least attending college would give me more time to consider my future. I guess my decision to participate in higher education was mostly just to "follow the crowd" rather than a conscious, well-thought-out decision.

Q: You mentioned earning money during the summers and after school? What kind of jobs were these?

LEDSKY: One summer I worked as a mailman at the downtown post office in Cleveland. That was well paid. One summer I worked for a rubber company in a warehouse. That was also well compensated. This was right after the end of the war when the rubber industry was retooling. There were several rubber factories in Cleveland which stopped producing tires and began to manufacture goods like floor mats and motor mounts. The factories went to 18 or 20 hour per day operations. That allowed me to make several thousand dollars during that summer. I also worked in a drug store for one or two summers. As I said, I also worked after school and week-ends. I had a variety of jobs which paid 40-50 cents per hour. Since I lived at home, I was able to put most of my earnings into a savings account. None of the jobs had any connection with or gave me any clues to what I might do with my life. They happened to be available and paid well for a high school student.

Q: Let's move to Case Western Reserve.

LEDSKY: I attended an all male wing of the college called Adelbert College. The women's school was called Flora Stone Mather College. Case Western is a private university in Cleveland which after my graduation amalgamated with Case Institute, an engineering school, becoming Case Western Reserve University.

Q: What did you decide on when it came time to chose a major?

LEDSKY: I think I probably made my choice in the third year of school. I started as a chemistry major, primarily because my best subjects were math and science. I quickly discovered, however, that college level chemistry and physics were not my cup of tea. I remember having great difficulties with lab work. I had very little manual dexterity. I was not a stellar student in woodworking or any other kind of shop work. I had great difficulties with lab work in university. I did take a number of courses at Western Reserve in advanced chemistry; I had no major problems with the text book work, but the physical aspects of these courses were too challenging.

So during my college years, I drifted to the social sciences, beginning with a couple of history and international relations courses that I took almost by accident. I was fascinated by their content and I did extremely well in memorizing material and conceptualizing it; I liked those course. I had one or two rather inspirational teachers who made the material very interesting. So, by the third year, I changed my major to history, working under a professor by the name of Donald Barnes, the chairman of the history department. He was a strange, but fascinating man, who was known for having written a history of the Cornwalls of England. He had come from the West Coast; he was a bachelor. He took a liking to me. I participated in some small classes that he led and he inspired me. I had another professor by the name of Holtz who taught political science. He had been a student of Professor Hans Morgenthau, a leading political science figure in those days. Holtz was a terrific lecturer and a vigorous defender of the real politik school of thought. He was by far the best political science instructor at Western Reserve University. He also took a liking to me and I took three courses from him in my junior and senior years. He, and perhaps the history department as well, managed to get me a scholarship to the Western Reserve graduate school for an additional year of studies.

I took the scholarship, which lasted about a semester and a half. I took another five or six additional history courses during that time. My work was not intended to lead to a master's degree, but allowed me to become more deeply immersed in history; it was a post-baccalaureate work. I graduated in January, 1951 and spent the rest of that year at Western Reserve taking these additional courses. That was a seminal year for me for two reasons: my father died in April and I got married in August.

My new wife and I decided that it was time to leave Cleveland. I was offered a partial scholarship by Columbia University in New York. It was provided to me so that I could begin to work on a Master's Degree starting in the fall of 1951.

Q: Let me briefly return to your interest in Zionism. Did that continue when you began college?

LEDSKY: Yes. During most of my college years, I was involved in the Zionist movement. I joined Habonim, an organization that I believe still exists today. It is the labor Zionist youth organization affiliated with the Ben Gurion party in Israel. For a period, before I dropped out of the organization in 1950 or 1951, I was the president of the Cleveland chapter. Our most intense activity period was between 1946 and 1948, when the state of Israel was established. I spent a lot of time during those two or three years working for Habonim. A number of my friends went to live in Palestine during this period. They went there after a training period in New Jersey. Some still live there; some of them returned to the U.S. I briefly contemplated joining them, but by then I had met Cecile, who was also a member of Habonim for a brief time, and other priorities loomed. She was not interested in moving to Israel. After 1948, my interest in that organization waned slowly until I finally left the organization before graduating from college.

I should mention that Habonim was in part a social organization. I guess that it was not really very effective as part of the Zionist movement. We did publish a weekly newsletter, for which I did some writing. We held some pro-statehood demonstrations in 1946, 1947 and 1948 in front of the British consulate in Cleveland. I was involved in some of them. I think the organization's basic interest was to foster an interest among American Jewry in the establishment of the state of Israel. In some respects, it functioned like a Jewish fraternity or sorority; it was mostly a club for young Jews. There were a number of them in Cleveland and in other parts of the U.S. I mentioned their affiliation with Ben-Gurion's party in Israel. Some were affiliated with Orthodox parties in Palestine, and some were affiliated with the Communist party. Since Cleveland had a very large and traditional Jewish population, there were several chapters of Habonim in Cleveland in the mid and late 1940s reflecting the pro-Zionism bent of that population. A lot of that sentiment was stimulated by a very rabid Zionist Rabbi, Rabbi Silver, who was a leader in the major Zionist movements in the U.S. He was an international leader; he was the Rabbi of the largest synagogue in Cleveland.

Q: Did any of these organizations lobby the U.S. government to support the establishment of Israel?

LEDSKY: I was in the youth wing of the movement; it was not very political, as I have suggested. There were adult organizations, which had some relationship to Habonim, that were heavily engaged in lobbying the U.S. government to, first, twist the Britain's arms to allow immigration into Palestine, and subsequently, to assist the new country in its development. I was engaged in some of those efforts to some extent, but it was certainly was not a major focus for me.

Q: You moved to New York in 1951 to attend Columbia. What program did you enter?

LEDSKY: I joined the program leading to a Master's Degree in international relations. It was given by a separate school, which had its facilities on West 117th Street. The school was staffed by a number of prominent political scientists. I began to concentrate on the Middle East, working with Professor J.C. Horowitz, who was the area specialist at this graduate school.

Q: Why did you decide to go to graduate school?

LEDSKY: I must say that now I am not sure why I reached that decision. I had been turned down by a number of schools, but Columbia offered me a small scholarship. I was interested in international relations, although at that stage, I wasn't at all certain where I was going in life. I was interested in the Middle East and wanted to learn more about it after my interest in Zionism. I was accepted by an institute in Philadelphia which specialized in Jewish studies, particularly history. But I wasn't really ready to specialize to that degree. Furthermore, my new bride wanted to go to New York. We both wanted to leave Cleveland; so we left for New York!

Q: How did you find studying in Columbia?

LEDSKY: In my view, the graduate school seemed rather disorganized and a strange environment. The university was very large and I felt somewhat unattached to it. I couldn't find its essence. Of course, we were away from the main campus in a specialized graduate school. It was a rather new school and suffered from that; it was still trying to get itself organized. We had no friends in New York. Cecile had an aunt who lived on the upper West sida well off widow who sort of adopted us. But I think we were really lost in this humongous city and found it hard to adjust to a whole new life style. I was not very comfortable at Columbia.

I did take a number of fascinating courses, which, however, were attended by a large number of students. The lecture halls would be filled by 200 students; there was very little opportunity to interact with the professor. We would dutifully take notes, but it was not the kind of educational system to which I was accustomed and I found much of the process of little interest. Eventually, after a couple of semesters, I joined a couple of small seminar classes. One was run by Professor Leland Matthew Goodrich, who had written a seminal paper on the UN. I found both the teacher and the subject matter to be very fascinating. He was both smart and nice, although somewhat distant and difficult to approach.

I took one seminar with Phillip Jessup, who was one of the government's leading experts on the UN. He was well known and very nice to me. I took some interesting courses on Middle East affairs. I learned a lot of about Middle East history. I took some courses on Arab affairs, including one fascinating class on Iran, which led me to study Persian for a couple of semesters. I think the material to which I was exposed was interesting, but it never really grabbed me intellectually. I did complete my two years of study. The study was very easy and I did not work very hard. Cecile had a job and I had a part-time job and between the two of us we earned enough money to live in New York. We first lived in a little apartment in Manhattan and then moved to a larger place in Queens. However, overall, it was hard to make ends meet; I think I probably devoted more time to earning a living than to my studies. I was still trying to find my way in life and had not yet focused on any goals.

Q: Tell us a little about your fellow students.

LEDSKY: In the main, the students were interested in going into international business. Most were pursuing graduate work in international economicbusiness, finance, trade, and administration. I did not meet many interesting studentthere were one or two very nice Arab-American students. One was Jeanette Wakim, of Lebanese origin. She spoke Arabic fluently. Her parents had emigrated from Lebanon and she had lived in Lebanon for several years. She was a very nice young woman, who helped me understand a lot about the Arab world. She was a Christian, but she had an excellent feel for the region, which she imparted to me. There was a young man whose father was a moistener in Iran. He was interested in specializing in the Middle East. We became good friends during the two years in Columbia. There was a young lady of Jewish origin, Ms Drew, who had spent sometime in Israel; she spoke Hebrew. She lived in New Jersey. She married in 1953 and that was the last time we ever saw her. So, we did have a small circle of college friends, but I have not maintained any contacts with these people since graduating from Columbia. Some of my classmates entered the Foreign Service and I became better acquainted with them after we all joined the Service.

In the building next to the one we used, there was a Russian institute. Some of the students there joined the Foreign Service and I met some of them. I think Sol Polanski was one of those. Despite my lack of enthusiasm for the graduate school, I did well at Columbia.

I graduated in 1953 and was supposed to enter the Army as a draftee. This was still in the Korean War era and I had almost concluded that I would have to join the military after graduating. I had in the meantime, submitted an application to the Ford Foundation for a fellowship for the 1953-54 academic year. The Foundation very kindly gave me the fellowship to further pursue Middle East studies leading to a Ph.D. I enrolled in the School of Public Law and Government of Columbia University. By this time, I had begun to believe that I might gain a Ph.D. and spend my life in academia. I was hoping to become a teacher at some academic level, although I must say that I wasn't totally enthusiastic about that prospect.

Despite the Ford fellowship, finances were always a challenge and Cecile and I lived from hand to mouth. I was always concerned about our immediate income; the future was not as important as the ability to sustain ourselves in the present.

I began the fellowship. Cecile became pregnant, which would require her to stop working at some stage. She had a very difficult pregnancy, which ended in a still-born birth in 1954. Our financial situation became more and more dire. As I mentioned, the draft board was pursuing me and my deferment ended. Finally, I was drafted in early 1955. I had to give up the fellowship and join the army. This was a very difficult period for us. I had to leave academia; Cecile was depressed after losing her baby. I was not able to be with her adequately to support her in her despondency; my efforts to avoid the draft were coming to an unsuccessful end. So I had to leave New York while she was still in depression.

I was assigned to Fort Dix, New Jersey, where I took basic training. The Korean War had come to an end with a cease fire; nevertheless I fully expected to be sent overseas. Cecile had started working again in New York. At the end of basic training, I was assigned to Fort Bliss, Texas for NIKE missile training. I was there for about two months, when Cecile agreed to join me in Texas. She and her brother drove a car and trailer across country and met me in El Paso. We rented an apartment there. I continued training for another two months, although I must say that I never became a very proficient missile man. I couldn't learn the technical aspects, which really were the key to the training program. I finished the training by the end of 1955.

Somewhat miraculously, I was assigned to Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland, to the U.S. Army Historical Corps, which was headquartered there. I have no idea why this assignment was made. I was told that I had not done well in NIKE training, which led the powers-to-be to decided that I could not become a missile man. When I entered the army, I had taken some tests and had filled out numerous forms which indicated that I had done some work in history. When an opening came up at Edgewood, the director of the institute picked my name out of some list of eligibles. I still don't know how this all happened, but I was transferred to Maryland in late 1955. Cecile was quite upset by this turn of events because she had just started a new teaching job in the El Paso school system, even though she had no teaching certificate. She started work in September; in October I was told that I was going to be transferred. She had already made a difficult adjustment from New York to El Paso; she had just gone through that very unhappy pregnancy; she was not a happy Army wife. She liked the teaching job in a Mexican-American school, which was right on the Rio Grande border. Most of her students were Mexican and she loved teaching third grade.

Nevertheless, she gave up her teaching job. She and I rented a trailer, loaded it with all our worldly possessions and drove to Maryland. On Thanksgiving, we were in Chicago with Cecile's sister. We reached Edgewood Arsenal just after Christmas Day. I started working in the Historical Office of the Chemical Corps. I met a number of terrific people. I was very happy in the Historical Office, even though we were living in a trailer camp outside the city. We stayed there for a couple of months in the middle of a very severe winter. I met a number of people who became life long friends. One was Jim Nelson, who was also a private assigned to the Historical Office. He occupied the desk next to mine. He later joined the Foreign Service. Then there was Harvey Fergusotwo desks awawho also entered the Foreign Service. For unknown reasons, this was a collection of congenial peoplall draftees, of little or no rank.

Furthermore, the civilian historians who worked in the Office were terrific people. The director was a Dr. Brophy who was in his fifties and had been in the Office for about ten years. He had spent much of his life writing books on WWII and then had been hired by the Chemical Corps to write up its WWII history. He was assisted by Dale Birdsell, another professional historian and Gil Wing, who later also joined the Foreign Service. So there were seven or eight of us who worked together and socialized together; we had a great time. I was accepted as a colleague.

Nelson eventually became Consul General in Munich; he was a member of the German "club" in the Foreign Service. He is now retired. His wife at the time was named Helen. He was discharged about six months before I was and immediately joined the Service. He invited us to come to Washington to visit, which we did on a couple of week-ends.

Q: Until 1955, you had no thought about joining the Foreign Service.

LEDSKY: That is correct. I think I took the written exam just before I was drafted while still in New York. I took it because at that stage of my life, I still had not decided what career to pursue. As I said, I graduated from Colombia at the end of 1953. I spent the next academic year on the Ford scholarship. In that period, I began to explore the possibility of government employment and took a number of exams, including the Foreign Service one and some Civil Service ones, including the Junior Management Officer exam. I took a Persian language exam for the CIA, even though I said that my Persian language skills left a lot to be desired. I went to Washington to visit with the CIA; I was interviewed for a job with that agency in an office on Mass Avenue towards the end 1953 or early 1954. The agency was looking for people interested in the Middle East.

None of these exams and interviews led to job offers, so I moved on as I have earlier described. But, while in the army, I was notified that I had passed the written Foreign Service exam. This came when I was in El Paso. At the time, in light of my then current situation, I did not pay much attention to that notice, but I did notify the Department that I was in the army. Then while at Edgewood, I was notified that I could schedule a Foreign Service oral exam. I was given a number of dates for either New York or Washington. This would have been in 1956. I did go to New York on one of the dates given me.

The army gave me a pass and I went to New York and slept at my sister's apartment. The next morning I appeared before an examining panel of three white males for my oral test, in some government building. After completing the test, I was advised that I had passed. I don't remember who the members of the panel were, although later I did run across one or two of them in the course of my Foreign Service assignments. I do remember the exam very well. I was asked a lot of open ended questions. For example, one of them was "What would you say was the single most important event of the 20th Century? Give us your rationale for your answer. " I did not know what to say. When I finally finished thinking about the question, I said: "WWI." Then I had to justify my answer. To my best of my recollections, I gave a twenty minute lecture on how WWI had changed everything and was the cause of WWII, etc. I really astounded myself at the length and the impromptu nature of my reply. I had never really thought about that question or my answer. Since I passed, the panel must also have been impressed. I was also asked a number of questions about Zionism and my interests in the Middle East, as well as what I was working on at Edgewood. I don't remember being greatly impressed by the questions; they were very general and many were related to my academic and service careers. There were a couple of questions, particularly on economics, to which I didn't know the answer, but that didn't seem to bother the panel. I must admit that I felt a little out of my element having been gone from academia for a couple of years. There were a number of questions about world affairs for which I had no answers. I had never been out of the United States and these questions really brought out my inadequacies in some respects. Some of the questions dealt with matters about which I had barely a clue. I thought that I had learned a lot about world geography from my attention to WWII and from my work for the Chemical Corps' History Office, where I worked on the history of the flamethrower in the Pacific theater (I still have the volume that I worked on). I thought I had accumulated considerable knowledge of the Pacific area through those two efforts, but obviously I had a lot of catching up to do about the rest of the world.

Exam day was very interesting. As I said, I was told that I had passed. I returned to my sister's apartment, packed my little suitcase and went back to Edgewood, MD on the train. It was back in the Army. Before leaving the building where I took the exam, I told the staff when I thought I would be discharged from the Army and when I thought I might join the Service. I was very happy to have that dialogue, because for the first time in my life, I had some idea about my future.

Cecile during this time was pregnant. Our first child, Rebecca, was born in November 1956 in Baltimore. Before the oral exam, I had no idea what I would do after being discharged. Her parents were very anxious about my uncertainty; they drove us nuts with questions about how we were going to earn a living. So, on the train ride back to Edgewood, a heavy burden was being lifted from my shoulders. I breathed a sigh of relief. Unfortunately, time passed and I didn't hear anything from the Department. So the anxiety began to set in again. Finally, in January 195two months before my discharge datafter an evening with my mother-in-law, who urged that I take some action, I went to Washington. There I was told that I would just have to be patient; paperwork in the Department proceeded at its own pace. I think I had taken a medical exam while still at Edgewood, so it was probably the security clearance that was holding up the process.

By the end of 1956, we had decided that if the Foreign Service made me an offer, we would accept it. It was the only prospect I had. I had no idea what the Foreign Service was all about or what we could expect once we joined it. But it was a bird-in-hand. The only Foreign Service officer I knew was Jim Nelson and he had joined the Service only a few months earlier.

Sometime around February, I was informed that I would be extended an offer sometime in 1957. I should mention that this was a time in which newspapers were carrying a lot of stories about the Department stepping up its recruitment after several years of staff reductions and very low intakthe Dulles period. The newspapers carried stories about how many new officers were joining the Service. I followed this of course very closely. Sometime in February or March, I visited the Department again; I think I went to see B/EX. I told them I was being discharged in March and that therefore I needed a job. I asked whether I could move from Edgewood to Washington with wife and baby. I pleaded with someone that I needed a job very, very soon. Someone then said that I could be employed as a civil servant doing clerical tasks, while my Foreign Service papers were being processed. I was more than delighted with that offer. I was told to move to Washington after being discharged and that I could start work on April 1.

I didn't have anything at that stage except an oral promise. When I returned to Edgewood, Cecile asked what happened. She wanted to know if I had anything in writing or what job was actually offered. She was quite concerned about the vagueness of the deal. I was discharged on March 7 and we moved to Washington. We rented an apartment and then I went back to the Department and saw the B/EX people again. They assured me that their offer was still good and that they would have a job for me on April 1. So they did. I worked in the Personnel Office which was then located on the corner of 19th and Pennsylvania Avenue, doing clerical worpulling files, etc. Finally, I was sworn into the Foreign Service and started in May, 1957. It was only then that I first began to contemplate living and working overseas.

Q: Did the McCarthy episode have any impact on your decision?

LEDSKY: I was at Columbia during that period. I followed the Army hearings closely. By the time I was ready to join the Foreign Service, McCarthy was a spent force and I never really connected his activities of the early 1950s with my entering the Foreign Service. When McCarthy was in his hay days, I had not contemplated a future in the Foreign Service or even government service, so the two events were never really connected.

Q: You started in the Foreign Service in May, 1957. You began as a student in the A-100 course. What do you remember of that?

LEDSKY: I remember a good number of my colleagues. I worked with several of them in my later assignments. The class consisted of about 25-30 people, almost all males. We did have two or three women officers. We had two or three Jewish officers. I think it is fair to say that alor almost alof my colleagues came from backgrounds entirely different to mine and from each other. We had a very good geographic spread. A number were married and some had children, as I did. The academic backgrounds also varied widelvery few Ivy League. I think the class was all whitno ethnic minorities. It was in this class that I met people who became close friends.

One was Ashley Hewitt, who died a few years ago. He became a Latin American specialist. We kept up a life long friendship. He was from a wealthy family and single in 1957. We even got to work together on the Policy Planning staff in the late 1980s. Then there was Ken Rogers, who was a lawyer, and with whom I maintained contact during our careers.

I liked the course; it was fun. It was six or seven weeks long. It included a course on consular matters, which I liked. It was all new to me and therefore I found it fascinating. We went to Front Royal for a couple of days to get to know each other better. It was a congenial group and we got along quite well. I remember the experience positively. It was run by an African specialist, whose wife I still see from time to time.

Q: Did you begin to develop some ideas about what geographic area you wanted to specialize in? Was the Middle East still your focus?

LEDSKY: Yes. I hoped that I would be assigned there. I think when the preference questionnaire came out, I asked for posts in the Middle East, but someone in the Personnel office hinted that my religion would probably be a serious obstacle to getting an assignment in that area. As I remember it, he was not someone directly involved in personnel assignments, but was in the Personnel office. He told me in a fatherly manner that I had picked the wrong posat the time, I was trying to get an assignment to Iran. Although I don't think he went any further than that, I got the message. This was said to me just before I was assigned to INR to work on Iran and Turkey and Greece. At the time, I don't think the hint really sank in and it didn't bother me because it had no practical consequence then. However, the subject did come up early in my Foreign Service career.

I had had some German language lessons in college and in graduate school and I thought I was pretty good at ieven though I did not pass the FSI's language test; so I think I probably mentioned that as well. As I mentioned, I had some knowledge of Farsi, which I hoped I would be able to use.

Q: Looking at your bio, I have to assume that you did not get assigned to any post that you had listed on your preference questionnaire.

LEDSKY: It is true that my first assignment was to a Washington position. I asked to go overseas and was assigned to INR. This was toward the end of 1957. I don't know why I was chosen for INR; I was never informed.

I became an analyst in the Office of Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs (GTI). I was located in the Department building called SA-1.. I guess that was partly the Middle East. I was perfectly happy with the assignment since it allowed me to live a little longer in Washington, which we had not done. We had rented an apartment on the assumption that it would be a very short term lease; we turned it into a long term one since I was supposed to be in INR for at least two years. Not ever having been overseas, I had no tremendous urge to go; I was happy to stay in Washington.

I had no idea what INR was, nor why I was not going to work in Main State. But that didn't bother me; I was all too new for that. In fact, I liked the assignment very much; I was happy in INR. There were three or four wonderful people in the office. They were primarily civil service. Harrison Symmes, a Foreign Service officer, headed the office. He hated his assignment, since it was viewed as being out of the "main stream." He later became ambassador to Jordan. He was very nice to me and we quickly became friends. One of my colleagues was a man of Turkish origin, Karim Kee, a long time INR staffer. He died recently. Ashley Hewitt was also assigned to this office. We worked together on adjoining desks. Ed Freeman was the Iranian analyst; the Greek analyst was Charles Lakadagos. He served in INR for something like thirty years. Each of the senior analysts had a civil service assistant. The two junior officers were there in addition; we may have been the first junior officers to be assigned to that office. There were a number of us scattered throughout INR. Andy Steigman was one of them. I also first met Bill Lewis there when he worked in INR. He was in the office next to ours working on North Africa.

I was to help the civil servants in their research and to write papers. The civil servants had the reputation of being very good researchers, but not good writers. I spent much of my time editing the papers written by Kee and Lakadagos, to make them desirable products. As time passed, I became interested in Iran. Ed Freeman took me under his wing and helped me to learn about the Iran of the 1950s.

GTI was a bustling office. The three countries it covered were always in the news. We essentially had two tasks: to write quick, short notes for the daily briefing given by an INR officer to the secretary and to the undersecretary, and secondly, to write analytical papers. It was fun. The building was terrible. It was not air conditioned, which made the summers something less than pleasant. The equipment we had to use was very out-dated. However, as I said, I was very content. The work and the atmosphere were not too different from my Edgewood Arsenal experience.

Q: Did you begin to understand how the Department worked?

LEDSKY: Yes, even though we were physically quite removed from the main parts of the Department. I did not relate our physical remoteness to our status in the Department. There were many offices that were not in main State; there were lots of temporary buildings around the Washington Mall which were occupied by one or another State office, so I was not troubled by being away from the main building. It was a little curious to be working on Iran without ever seeing the desk officer face-to-face. It was a big excursion to cross Connecticut Avenue to get to the main building.

I was well treated. I recognized from the start that I was far away from any decision-maker. I also recognized that "serious" Foreign Service officers did not want to be in INR. That was quite obvious. INR was not an assignment that would lead to further promotions. But for me, it was great. I spent two very happy years in that GTI office. I learned a lot about the three countries and particularly Iran. I learned a lot about how to write for senior State officials. Harry Symmes was a terrific boss.

I met a lot of very smart, very nice peoplreally high caliber people. For example, in addition to the people I have already mentioned, I also met Helena Kitchethe wife of Jeff Kitchen, a well known State expert in politico-military affairs. She edited a weekly newsletter about Africa. She was enormously impressivsmart, nice, friendly, competent. I used to go to lunch with a terrific bunch of people; we used to see each other in the coffee shop as well. So I was greatly impressed by the quality of the INR staff. It is true that we didn't mingle much with people from other bureaus; the physical separation was just too great for me to get to know people in Main State, for example.

Within INR, I did meet a lot of people. I met the director, Hugh Cummings, who often attended the morning briefings before going to brief the secretary and other senior State officers. He was impressive if somewhat forbidding. I met Mr. Baum, who was in charge of African affairs and who was very nice to me. Irv Cheslaw was there. As I said, INR was well staffed with talented, personable people. A lot were later "Wristonized" and I would work with them later in my career.

It is true that some Foreign Service officers were quite frustrated by being assigned to INpeople like Harry Symmes. For them, the assignment was demeaning and they worked very hard to be reassigned to the "main" stream, e.g., the regional bureaus. But I was not concerned; I loved what I was doing and I didn't understand the Foreign Service well enough to be bothered. I must say that at that stage of my life, I was lacking in ambition. I really didn't give promotion much thought. I was just happy to be employed in a job that I liked. I didn't aspire to be the secretary of state, or anything else for that matter.

Q: You finished your INR assignment in 1959. At the time, I assume that you were asked what onward assignment you would like. Do you remember what you sought?

LEDSKY: I think I asked for an assignment to Iran, Turkey or Greece. Those were the countries on which I had worked and knew something about. My assignment in 1959 was to Georgetown, Guyana.

First, I had a fight with the Office of Personnel. I was originally assigned to Windsor, Canada, as a vice-consul to work on consular matters. Cecile put her foot down; she was not going to any foreign post which could be reached by the Ohio Turnpike. She didn't want to deal with my mother! So I told Personnel that I would not go to Windsor. I met with someone and asked whether I could not be found a job "overseas." I didn't care where, as long as it was not next door to the U.S. That was not "overseas" as far as Cecile and I were concerned. Going to a suburb of Detroit was not "overseas." I was ready to go anywhere "overseas." I met with someone in the Bureau for European Affairs, which was responsible for Canadian affairs. That person advised me not to turn down the Windsor assignment because Personnel would reek its revenge as it did on most who refused their assignments. I said something along the lines that "nothing could be worse than Windsor, Canada."

After a couple of weeks, I received my assignment orders and they were for Georgetown, Guyana. That post was also under the jurisdiction of EUR and was handled by the same management officer who worked on Canadian matters. Georgetown was a subsidiary post of Trinidad, which was still part of the British Empire. I was still in EUR, even if far removed from Europe. When I received this piece of paper, I did not know how to react. I really didn't know where Guyana was. I had never had an opportunity to learn much about South America or the Caribbean. My mother-in-law didn't know where it was; my mother didn't know where it was. They thought that I had just been reassigned to another Washington office. So, at first, they were delighted and then, when they found out where Guyana was, they were horrified.

Cecile and I weren't horrified. She much preferred Georgetown to Windsor. We did want to distance ourselves from our parents in Cleveland and Georgetown certainly did that. Therefore, we were not unhappy about going to Guyana. The post report did not frighten us, even though it was quite horrendous. Georgetown was quite primitive, to put it diplomatically. I should mention that Jonathan had been born in April 1959. That made it two young children.

We went to Georgetown in two shifts. I went first, while Cecile and the two children stayed in Florida in her parents' house. I was supposed to go first, find suitable accommodations and assistance for the children and then the family would join me. So I went.

Q: Did you have any consular training before you left?

LEDSKY: No. I had a couple of weeks of training during the A-100 course, two years earlier.

Q: What size post was Georgetown?

LEDSKY: When I arrived, it was a two-person post: the principal officer and the vice-consul. I was responsible for all consular matters, all administrative matters, all economic issues and some of the political issues. I covered the waterfront. As I recall, I was quite busalmost too busy. Every morning, there were lines out of the front door of people seeking help from the consular section. I had about six locals working for me in that section and they were busy all the time. During my time, an administrative officer was added to the staff. That officer not only took care of the usual administrative functions, but also supervised the USIS (United States Information Service) library.

We had to find our own living quarters, which was not an easy task. There was a shortage of suitable accommodations. The principal officer had a house which had been passed on from principal officer to principal officer. The vice-consuls scrounged as best they could. I first moved into the apartment that my predecessor had occupied, but he had had no children. I stayed there for a couple of weeks. Eventually, the USAID (United States Agency for International Development) director, a wonderful man, took pity on me and gave me the AID apartment which was large enough for Cecile and the kids and gave us a base to look for more permanent quarters. That took another two months, but eventually we did find a house that met our needs. It was on stilts two blocks from the ocean. It needed to be fixed up; I had to have screens installed and bought lots of mosquitos netting. It was not air conditioned, as was true for the whole city. Electricity was not reliable; we used to have blackouts and brownouts continually. Despite all these shortcomings, the house was cute. It had been built by an Indian. The car was parked underneath between the stilts. The staircase led to the kitchen. The house had three bedrooms, a nice paneled living room and a small dining room.

Q: You mentioned an AID program, a USIA (United States Information Agency) program, so this was more than just a diplomatic mission.

LEDSKY: Yes. Our offices were all in a wooden three story building. The ground floor, which in Guyana was rarely used, was rebuilt and became the USIS library, attended by an American USIA employee assisted by a couple of locals. They conducted programs there. The second floor was taken up by the consular section and the AID mission was on the third floor. When I arrived, the AID mission consisted of three or four people. By the time I left, it had grown to ten or twelve. In fact, the AID mission had expanded so much that it required another building for its program.

As I said, it was a busy post. All sections were well integrated. I often went out with the USIS truck to show films in the countryside. I became a great attraction.

Q: Why did we have a post in Georgetown?

LEDSKY: We had had a post in Georgetown for many years. While I was there, our principal function was to watch a developing communist movement, which was slowly, but surely taking over the colony. Our chief concern was that Cheddi Jagan, who was presumed to be a communist, would lead the colony to independence and into the communist camp. He did win the presidency in 1992.

Q: Jagan has been deemed an interesting personality. Did you have a chance to observe him?

LEDSKY: Sure. Guyana is a very small place. It is essentially a jungle and one city. The coast is essentially the only inhabited area. Georgetown is the only city, although there are a few scattered hamlets. And even Georgetown only had 100-150 thousand inhabitants. The government leaders were all easily accessible. They all lived around the corner. They were seen in town every day and could frequently be heard on radio.

Q; What kind of society did you find in Guyana in the late 1950s and early 1960s?

LEDSKY: It was a British colony, run, I would guess, in much of the same way it had been run during much of the 19th Century. The British held all of the major posts. Self-government was at an embryonic stage. The elected officials had some power, but it was certainly not complete. The British controlled the police force.

The society had a wealthy, white upper-structure, consisting of people whose families had been in the colony for a long, long timmostly British colonialists. The country was actually run by one British companBookers. That company started as a sugar grower and producer. It now also gives out an annual literary prize in Great Britain. When I was in Georgetown, Bookers owned and operated ten sugar plantations, the sole department store in the country and a major grocery store in Georgetown. It ran most of the businesses in the country. It, therefore, was an economically dominant powerhouse. It was run by perhaps a dozen whites, who came from Britain on long-term contracts. They lived in a compound a little way out of the city. We lived two blocks from it and knew all the inhabitants of that compound.

We had some commercial interests in Guyana. Reynolds Metal worked some aluminum mines. There was some other ore extraction operations in the jungle. There were also a couple of other active American companies, such as Alcoa. There were also considerable Canadian economic interests. They had a major ore excavation and smeltering operation run by a company by the name of McKenzie.

Q: Was the consular work related primarily to immigration petitions?

LEDSKY: Despite the fact that Guyana was a small country, the lines for consular services were very long. We had three or four categories of work. First of all, there was considerable tourist and business traffic between Guyana and the U.S., particularly New York City, which had a major Guyana expatriate presence. The Guyanese-American community goes back to an earlier part of the 20th Century. Many moved from Guyana to New York between WWI and WWII. There was considerable intermarriage between Guyanese and American blacks as there was also for people from other parts of the West Indies. Secondly, there were a considerable number of British-trained nurses in Guyanboth blacks and Indians. There was a nursing school in Georgetown, which graduated a lot of nice, able nurses who were in high demand in the U.S. As a result, we had a lot of nurses applying for visas to work in the U.S. It seemed that every graduate of these nursing schools in Guyana and Jamaica would get a job in an American hospital. We had long lines of these applicants. Thirdly, there were many Guyanese who wanted to emigrate. A lot of Indians were among our applicants. There was a Chinese colony in Guyana, which also wanted to leave. As the economic situation deteriorated, the number of applicants for U.S. immigration visas grew rapidly. So we had our hands full in the consular section. In addition to the poor economy, there were many Guyanese who were concerned about Jagan's likely take over of the country, which loomed right over the horizon. He had already been elected to the top position, but did not yet have full power. However, people saw that as just being a matter of time.

This was the period in which Trujillo ran the Dominican Republic. People were fleeing from there, but could only get as far as Guyana or Trinidad or Venezuela. As most of these people wanted to immigrate to the U.S., we had a lot of Dominican citizens applying for immigrant visas from our consular section.

Q: What was your reaction to consular work?

LEDSKY: I liked it, but from the beginning, the rules seemed odious. That made the work very difficult. The law required racial and geographic quotas. If a black Guyanese-born applicant came in for an immigration visa, he would go into a pool from which we could only issue 100 visas per annum. If you looked Asiae.g., Chinesyou were processed as an Asian-Pacific applicant and would fall into the Chinese quota pool. I found that very odious because a lot of the applicants were clearly of Asian origior of mixed background and were treated differently from the black applicants. I did not like such discrimination at all. The oriental-looking applicants had practically no chance of being admitted to the U.S. as immigrants. There were never enough numbers to accommodate them. That practice was very odious to me; it was pure discrimination, which I found very disturbing. This situation was very hard to administer and even harder to explain to applicants, who wanted to know when they might be admitted to the U.S. I often had to tell people that they had no chance of being admitted.

During my tour, there was a conscious effort on the part of the Chinese community to leave Guyana, even though it was quite rich and influential in Georgetown. A number of these people were friends of ours. I remember well, for example, the Pan-American agent, who was of Chinese origin, who tried to help people leave; I had to keep his referrals down. Except for this odious policy, the rest of the work was fun.

Q: You mentioned that you also did some economic work. What did that entail?

LEDSKY: I had to do the annual economic summary, as well as other mandatory reports. Sometime I was able to say, "Does not apply to Guyana" in response to a report request, but I did have to write a couple of lengthy annual reports.

Q: Tell me again what the organizational structure was?

LEDSKY: Our consulate in Georgetown reported to Trinidad, which was our supervisory post. It in turn theoretically reported to our embassy in London, but we didn't have anything to do with the embassy. It was the consul general in Trinidad who wrote our efficiency reports or review statements. Our Washington backstopping desk was the UK desk. While in Georgetown, I met Jerry Goldstein and Ed Moline; they were stationed in Trinidad and we used to see each other either in Georgetown or in Trinidad, which I used to visit at least once a month on a courier run. We used to split the courier function among the American staff of the consulate; we ran a pouch to Trinidad once a week.

Q: Did the State Department or any other agency pay much attention to Guyanese affairs?

LEDSKY: Washington left us pretty much alone. I could not discern any Washington interest in Guyanese affairs. Occasionally, I used to hear from the consular bureau in the department. I used to correspond with some employees of that bureau on specific consular issues which raised some questions in my mind. The desk officer in Washington may have passed through once during my tour, but we really never had much contact with him. We may have sent a periodic report of "doings in Georgetown," but that didn't generate any response.

On the other hand, the White House had an interest in events in Guyana, beginning in 1961, just as I was being reassigned. This was after the Kennedy election. Professor Arthur Schlesinger, who became an advisor to the new president, had an interest in Guyana and its relationship to Cuba. He was interested in efforts being made by Castro to develop an alliance with Jagan, i.e., Cuban penetration of the continent or the spread of communism. When I returned to Washington in 1961, I was invited to meet with Schlesinger in one of the NSC offices. We talked about the Castro-Jagan connection. But in State, there was absolutely (or very little) no interest in any Guyanese matters. Eventually, Schlesinger included the Guyana issue in a couple of his books.

Q: While you were there, were you concerned that Castro might make some inroads in Guyana or that it might fall to communism?

LEDSKY: I was not concerned. I saw no evidence of the "domino" theory working in that part of Latin America. I was much more concerned that the Jagan leadership would result in a disaster for Guyana, as I believe it did. I was concerned that that country, with much charm and attraction, would end up economically devastated. I did not see Guyana A part of a vast international conspiracy, led by Castro or the Soviet Union, even though there were many indications that Cheddi Jagan was a communist who would lead the country in a communist direction. But I did not really focus on that possibility. The British, I think, were alarmed by this prospect. they spent much of the two years I was in Georgetown in devising schemes which would have kept Jagan from taking power. I think they were ready to delay independence until the "Jagan specter" was somehow disposed of or until they could devise some way to manipulate the electoral system, which would guarantee the election of a black leader, rather than an east-Asian one. They spent a lot of time on that scheme.

The Canadians were also concerned. I assume that someone in the Washington bureaucracy was concerned, but we never heard about that if it existed. The Guyanese black community was concerned, which may have also been felt by the Washington black community with which it had some close relations. All these parties were concerned about Guyana's future if Jagan rose to power.

There was racial tension in Guyana, particularly between the blacks and the Indians. It was a unique racial divide. The Chinese were not involved, because they were few in number, but quite influential. Guyana was known as the "land of six people." The six were the Amerindians (the natives), east Indians (from India and Pakistan who had been brought as indentured servants by the British during the 19th Century), the Chinese, the Portuguese (who had also been brought to Guyana in the 19th Century as indentured servants by the British), the whites and the blacks. Those were the distinct racial groups that lived in Guyana. Maps used to show Guyana as "the land of six people." The existence of all these various racial groups was a fundamental problem and remains so today. It is today still the central political problem in that country.

The racial divide had an economic significance. The blacks were all freed from indenture in the 1840s and 1850s. They had all drifted into Georgetown, which made it essentially a black city in the mid-20th Century. The blacks occupied the civil service positions. The city's police force was almost all black. They were the aspiring middle-class. The Portuguese and Chinese were the business community; they controlled manufacturing and tradboth export-import and internal. The Indians were all in the countryside; they managed the rice and sugar plantations. They had immigrated after the liberation of the blacks at the invitation of the British; they lived apart from the blacks. They had become, in the course of the 20th Century, almost half of the populatiolarger by far than any other racial group. Their birthrate was much larger than that of the blacks. The Indians were perceived as the group most likely to take over the whole country and slowly but surely become the predominant political power. The statistics and the perceptions became the source of the racial tensions. Jagan was the first and only Indian leader to really emerge. He was viewed, as I have mentioned, as a dangerous threat because he was a communiseven if not controlled by Moscoand he was an Indian. He was a Hindu. He was the leader of the Indian community. He was a new phenomenon and therefore seen as a threat by the blacks.

The Indians had become the majority community during the 20th Century. Cheddi Jagan's election was a signal that they were ready to lead the country. The fact that he was married to a Jewish woman from Chicago, who was a communist, was just another complicating factor. Her antecedents were not a major factor in the political debate, but they were noted and discussed to some extent. Guyanese politics was essentially about race, creating major tensions among the various communities. The British always felt they were sitting on a keg which would explode when they left Guyana. To some extent, that perception did come true.

Q: Were there any riots while you were in Guyana?

LEDSKY: No. Georgetown was torched about a year after I left, in 1962, I think. We did not feel threatened. We always regarded Georgetown as a wonderful place; we were very happy for the two years we spent there. The kids grew up in a relaxed atmosphere. I had a wonderful job which I enjoyed thoroughly. The Guyanese cultures were not hard to master; the common tongue was English, although other languages or dialects were spoken by various communities. The blacks in Georgetown were warm and friendly, they reached out; they were gregarious. In general, the society was well educated, benefiting from the excellent British educational system and from a smooth functioning bureaucracy. There was some petty thievery and crime, but we felt quite secure. We traveled around the countryside and always felt welcomed and well treated. We had many British, Canadian and Guyanese friends. There was not much of a diplomatic community; there were only three or four consulates in the country. Our integration into local society ran smoothlwithout competition. We lived in a black neighborhood right near the expatriate compound. Georgetown was and still is a very nice place. Its politics may be screwed up, but it is a great place to live.

I don't want to sound too Pollyannaish because there was and is considerable poverty in Guyana, particularly in the city and in the rice farming communities. The Indians who lived on rice farms were raising their standards of living. They focused on the education of their children and looked forward to upward mobility. Many of them did leave the rice farm and improved their conditions considerably. Cheddi Jagan was the son of a rice farmer; he had come to the U.S. for college and an advanced degree. He was a model for his fellow Indians. To watch this upward trend was in some ways quite inspiring. Many of the Indians left for Great Britain, Canada and the U.S., where they established some close knit Guyanese communities. They are well-educated, highly motivated. I found them terrific. I have met, literally, dozens and dozens of these Guyanese in London and New York. Many of them are professionals, civil servants or academics or other professionals. Their stories are inspiring.

This is not to deny that there isn't considerable poverty in Guyana. There is and that is indeed lamentable. The country is waiting to be developed and until there is adequate investment, it will continue to have considerable poverty.

Q: In 1962, you were assigned to Enugu, Nigeria. Did you have any idea where Enugu was?

LEDSKY: By the time I was assigned there, I knew where it was. This assignment also had a history. When I returned from Guyana, I was assigned to FSI for African language and area studies. I was a student in the first course given by FSI devoted to studying Ewe, a Ghanaian language, for four months, then four month of Ibo, spoken in East Nigeria. I was supposed to stay another four months to learn an East African language, but I didn't stay in FSI long enough for that. Sometime at the end of 1961 or early 1962, while in this area and language training program, I was informed that I had been selected to open a consulate in Enugu. By this time, I knew that Enugu was in East Nigeria because I was studying Ibo.

Q: Why did the Department decide to open a post in East Nigeria?

LEDSKY: Sometime in 1961, our embassy in Lagos recommended that posts be opened in the three region of NigeriNorth, East and West. In 1962, the Department approved the recommendation and one post was opened in Ibadan, one in Kaduna and one in Enugu. I think the embassy felt it could not give adequate coverage from Lagos. By the time I reached Enugu, an embassy political officer, Bob Bruce, had already rented office space, living quarters and in general had brought in the supplies necessary to operate a consulate. I got to Enugu a month or six weeks after he did.

The East region, with Enugu as its capital, was beginning to be important because oil had been discovered in the delta and companies were engaged in drilling and extraction work. This was in the area around Port Harcourt. Our commercial interests in the area grew by leaps and bounds. The area was the Ibo center, from which the Nigerian president at the time had come. So the East became one of the two most important regions of Nigeria. Enugu was the capital of the Eastern region.

Shell was the first oil developer, followed by British Petroleum and then EXXON, as well as a couple of other American companies. Most of the oil left Nigeria through Port Harcourt, which was becoming a boom town, where thousands Europeans lived and worked. It had a large Greek-Lebanese community, which had been there for many years, running hotels and shops and automobile dealerships.

Q: When you got to Enugu, what did you find?

LEDSKY: The town was a sleepy, two-road town. A railroad track ran through it. Right outside Enugu were some coal mines. So Enugu had also become one of the leading Nigerian industrial centers. I think one would have to describe it as rather primitive, but it had a European style suburb, which housed a lot of Brits and some other Europeans as well as Israelis. They were prominent members of the Enugu commercial community, running banks and other businesses. The British had been in Enugu for many years, long before it was designated as the capital of East Nigeria in 1960. A couple of airlines, such as KLM, were beginning to provide service. The Israeli presence really grew at about the time of my arrival. They ran retail stores; they built a lot of housing, a big hotel. They invested heavily in Enugu and the surrounding area.

By the time I arrived, the office space had been leased, as well as the house I was to occupy. The consul, who arrived sometime after we did, also had a house leased for him. Bruce leased a third place for a secretary-administrative assistant. By the end of 1962, the post had three American employees. By the time I left, another position for a junior staffer had been added.

My position once again covered the waterfront. I spent most of my time doing economic and commercial reporting. I also served as the AID liaison officer. That agency established a rather large operation in East Nigeria, it had something like 20 officers in Enugu by the time I left. I ran a small USIS library. I became involved in the establishment of an East Nigeria University about twenty miles from Enugu, a job that had been contracted out to Michigan State University by AID. That involved the building of a university community. I issued visas, particularly to students and Nigerian tourists. I did a lot of the administrative work. I even managed to do some political reporting.

Since this was a new post, there were myriads of administrative requirements that mostly fell to me. For example, we only had a one-time pad for sending classified cables. I used to sit in the communication center, coding and decoding messages which we received and sent through the local telegraph office. It took a lot of time to do these basic, routine administrative functions.

It should be said that in the early 1960s, Nigeria was the Kennedy administration's pet African country. We were visited by "Soapy" Williams, the assistant secretary for African Affairs. The ambassador, Joe Palmer, came to see us every two months. The AID director, Joel Bernstein, stationed in Lagos, came often. His deputy, Bill Kontos, also visited every six or eight weeks. All in all, the Eastern region was really taking off economically and commercially. So, we were in Enugu at the beginning of a boom and left just before it collapsed. I saw the best of Nigeria.

Q: Did the embassy kept close track of what you were doing?

LEDSKY: Yes, indeed. I used to visit Lagos periodically. We had a courier run about once a week and the duty fell to me about once a month. We took turns on this run. When in Lagos, I would work with the economic and political sections. We had a consulate in Ibadan, which was only 50-60 miles from Enugu. I used to see our consul general, Gordon, periodically. We became good friends. I used to visit Kaduna, and our staff there used come to Enugu, so we worked closely not only with the embassy but also with our colleagues in other posts in Nigeria.

I also participated in a couple of conferences held outside Nigeria consular conference, an economic conference. I went to all the meetings I could up and down the African coast, so I spent a lot of time on the road, which might seem somewhat odd for someone stationed in Enugu. I enjoyed that because it got me out periodically from a pretty dull place. One had to get some fresh air periodically. I shouldn't suggest that we sat around the house every night and week-ends. There was a pretty lively social life, particularly in the expatriate community, which was of considerable size. It sponsored a lot of activities.

Then there were the dinners and cocktail parties, which were often attended by the leading governmental officials. Enugu had quite a lively social life. I remember a Dr. Para, who had been trained in the U.S. as a physician. His wife was very charming; they had children, one of whom went to school with Rebecca. I knew all the ministers of the Eastern Nigeria. They would come to our house. Some were still rooted in their tribes and had wives who could not speak English and who wouldn't attend. But in general, Africans and expatriates could be found mixing together in the social scene. Interestingly enough, the government hosted several social activities. It used to fund large, ostentatious dinner parties and receptions when high ranking visitors from Lagos, or other African states, appeared in Enugu. For a while during our tour, Eastern Nigeria was considered the progressive part of Nigeria. Therefore, we had lots of African leaders visit Enugu. After the Israelis finished their hotel, many of these official functions were held there. So, we didn't suffer from quiet evenings or week-ends.

Q: Was there any discussion of Eastern Nigeria separating from the rest of the country?

LEDSKY: There was some. Nigeria was a politically teeming country, with many schemes being bandied around. One was the possibility of separating Eastern Nigeria from the rest of the country. It was clear to me from the beginning that Nigeria was a country very divided by language, ethnicity, religion, all the issues that divide people. The people in Enugu were primarily Ibo; they all spoke Ibo and the educated folks also spoke English. Most were Roman Catholics, thanks to considerable missionary work in earlier times. That made the Ibo different from other tribal members in the rest of Nigeria. During my tour, the Ibos were part of the ruling governmental structure in Lagos. As I mentioned, the president was an Ibo. Many of the ministers were Ibo.

When I first arrived in Enugu, I sensed that the Ibo population saw itself as being on top of the world. It had powerful representation in the Nigerian government; its economy was expanding rapidly. So the Ibos thought that they would lead all of Nigeria and the other tribes would fall in behind them. The issue of separation began, really, after the elections in 1964, which were held after I left. It was then that the Ibos lost control of the country, with the Muslim North becoming the predominant political force. The split occurred soon thereafter. It was a tragedy, because most of the senior military officers were Ibos. Many of the educated class were Ibos; they were perceived as the intellectual elites. As it became clear that the elite would be relegated to secondary status, the split came soon thereafter. But this all happened after my departure. When I left, all was well in Eastern Nigeria. I was replaced by two or three people. Then the roof caved in, literally and figuratively. I heard that my house was bombed and completely destroyed. The European conclave near us was completely leveled. The consulate was closed. I was fortunate to have served in Enugu during a brief moment of glory for the region.

Q: While you were there, was there any sign of anti-westernism?

LEDSKY: Absolutely. There definitely was a strain of anti-westernism. It was there when I arrived and I gathered had been there for sometime. Anti-Americanism was not as noticeable as anti-westernism, but it was present. I am not sure that I ever put my finger on the cause. I have a couple of illustrations of this phenomenon.

I was in Enugu when President Kennedy was assassinated. There was a feeling in the community that Lyndon Johnson had been behind that action. Furthermore, the speculation was that the Johnson administration would be a murderous one. This view was not only stated at great length in the media, but I think it was clearly the almost unanimous perception of the African population. The latent anti-Americanism, as well as the anti-westernism, was heightened by the assassination; it became a palpable factor, which remains to today.

There was always an anti-British sentiment stemming from the colonial days. The Ibos and the Yorubas generally felt that they had been oppressed by the British and other Europeans for at least 400 years. Before that, they had been subjected to the mercies of slave traders, who took them from their homes to Europe and the United States. So the hatred of the West and white people has deep roots going back many centuries. This sentiment was not seen in daily overt behavior but was detectable under the surface. Most of the Nigerians I dealt with had been western educated. The army and the whole civil service had been trained by the British. We gave extensive economic and technical assistance from 1960 on until the country fell apart in 1964. We have done a lot for the Nigerians and that still goes on today. We are their major market for their oil and other exports. We have, and continue to have, an extensive visit program, in both directions. But a level of anti-Americanism continueunder the surface; I interpret it as a continuing bitter resentment stemming from the days of slavery and the European colonization.

I should note that Nigeria was colonized in a very bizarre way. It was not like India, nor other British colonies. The British only touched the surface of Nigeria. They were only present on the coast and for a stretch of 150-200 miles inland from the coast. They had only a small presence and influence on the Muslim North, for example. In those areas, schools continued to use the tribal language as the basic teaching tool with English being a somewhat secondary language. There were areas of Nigeria which were left untouched by white people. There, the local languages were only oral; there was nothing written in those languages and therefore people were and are still discovering new attributes of those cultures.

So, Nigeria was both the most sophisticated and the most primitive country in Africa. These differing standards have had to live side by side.

Q: Did the Peace Corps start a program in Nigeria while you were there?

LEDSKY: The Peace Corps started while I was there. We had forty or fifty Peace Corps volunteers in Eastern Nigeria. They were managed somewhat separately from other Peace Corps programs in Nigeria. We had the Peace Corps administrator in Enugu; he worked in our office building. We had a Peace Corps doctor in Enugu to support the volunteers. All the volunteers themselves worked outside of Enugu, mostly in the rural areas. Most of them taught English; some worked on small business development in the villages. All lived in primitive conditions. I have stayed in contact with a number of them. Some joined the Foreign Service.

The program was a tremendous asset to the U.S. I used to visit the volunteers often, in part because they served as an entree to the village world. This was very important because most of the Eastern Nigerians lived outside urban areas, in agricultural villages. When I lived in Eastern Nigeria, there were 15-16 million people in the region. The area was huge and the volunteers were well scattered.

Q: You mentioned your responsibility for managing the USIS library. Did it get used frequently?

LEDSKY: I was in charge of the library at the beginning. Eventually, USIA sent out a director, Gill Kruter. Yes, the facility was well used. We had the advantage of language compatibility; English in Nigeria was the common language spoken by all the educated, even those with a limited education. They could all read English even if they didn't use it for communications purposes on a regular basis. A lot of the Nigerians were trying to leave their country for educational purposes to go to the U.S., to Europe and to Britain, so the library was very heavily used.

As part of my assignment, I was given plenty of opportunities to speak all over the region, particularly at the new University. I traveled regularly, probably one week out of four. The roads were adequate, 1 and ï¿½ lanes paved, and I could travel by car almost everywhere in the region. I went to Port Harcourt to provide consular service to seamen on American flag vessels. I visited Kalibar, which was a non-Ibo city near the Cameroon border. I went to the Cameroons a couple of times in part to visit the hill stations that the British still maintained in the heights over the jungle. As I mentioned, there were AID projects all over the region. We had a chicken project in Abakaliki, run by an African-American who had been there for four or five years. He had developed a lively chicken business. I just mention these examples because I found my assignment far from routine or dull. I traveled a lot and was in the office only rarely.

I did enjoy my two years in Enugu. There were some bad moments, but overall I considered it a good and valuable tour. I used to have some nightmares that the Department would forget me and leave me in Enugu until retirement. This fear was particularly acute before air transportation was initiated and even after that, there were occasional strikes interrupting air flow. There were times when the roads to Lagos were washed out. Then I would worry about ever getting out. I think Cecile shared my concerns at times. But in retrospect, our tour in Enugu was a happy experience. The kids had friends. Rebecca was in the second and third grade; she attended an Anglican school. She did very well in this high discipline, British school. John went to a nursery school. I think the kids enjoyed Enugu. They had a big back yard with swings, a cat, a garden and a banana tree which provided them with food and entertainment.

There were some very primitive aspects to living in Enugu. We had to boil and filter all the water. We had two or three servants, mostly devoted to doing things that in the west would be done by machines. There also were shortages of such items as powdered milk, which made it sometime difficult to feed Jonathan. The house itself was not a model of modernity. We had no washer or dryer, so the clothes had to be hand washed and ironed because when hung on a line outside, they would attract insects which had to be picked off. We were sick quite a bit; I came down with hepatitis, which laid me out for about a month. I was almost evacuated to Frankfurt. Every family member got sick periodically. Fortunately, as I mentioned, the Peace Corps doctor was stationed in Enugu and we used his good services. The doctor and his wife were very nice to the whole American community; I don't know whether the rules of the day would have allowed the doctor to minister to non-Peace Corps patients but he did and for that we were all very grateful. We had a nurse in Lagos, who may have visited us once or twice. She could not have been very useful to our Enugu community. The doctor is the one that saved the day. He recommended that I be evacuated to Frankfurt, but I was very reluctant to leave the family for an extended period of time, so I just stayed in bed and eventually recovered. I think we deserved the 20% hardship pay that we got. Perhaps now things have improved. NDI has a program in Nigeria and that is not deemed to be a hardship. But in the 1960s, all the consulates deserved the hardship pay.

Q: Was there any infrastructure in Enugu to support this influx of westerns?

LEDSKY: The support services were provided by local tradesmen. They were more or less trained. AID had a couple of technicians on its staff to fix plumbing, electrical fixtures, etc., in American employee housing. But, usually, we went to the local availabilities and got ourselves a plumber or an electrician from there. These were Africans with some limited training, who set up their own shops. There was a growing African middle class. I remember the barber we used. He used to come to the house every other Saturday and cut my hair on the back porch. He had all the necessary equipment. He had been in Britain for a couple of weeks of training. So, all the trades were more or less covered by people with some experience. AID was engaged in assisting farmers to develop their businesses. All that added to the growth of a middle class.

I think the AID program was very good. I was very impressed. This was my second post where I worked closely with the assistance program. I was impressed by the caliber of the AID employees. The technicians working on agricultural matters were top notch. The educators, similarly, were very knowledgeable. The assistance program in Eastern Nigeria was run by a political appointee. He was a democratic politician from the Eastern shore of Maryland and had been appointed by the Kennedy administration. He was also very impressive, as were his bosses in Lagos. Bernstein and Kontos were two of AID's best administrators. The assistance program made a lot of sense to me. For example, we were trying to build a rubber industry, which in retrospect may not have been such a great idea, but at the time certainly seemed destined to become part of a vibrant world market. We were trying to build a more modern farming community by increasing the crops that Nigerians might grow, like cotton, cocoa, chickens. I would think that some of AID's efforts have endured. Some may have dropped by the wayside in response to changes in world markets.

I think we got considerable political mileage out of the AID program before Nigeria fell into internal strife sparked by the Biafran war. I speak here primarily of what I could observe in Eastern Nigeria. I can't tell you what parts of our early 1960s efforts have endured. I am sure much fell in the civil war, but I think some may well have survived. For example, the university is still there. At the time, our efforts were certainly appreciated. The Ibos, despite their anti-westernism, were grateful for our assistance efforts and began to see the U.S. in a different light. Many have come to the U.S. I find them in every other taxi cab in Washington and New York. I think the assistance program was a real plus for the U.S.

Q: Is there anything else you want to mention about your Enugu tour?

LEDSKY: You asked me whether I had any inkling about the developments that were to take place soon after my departure. I was one who had always insisted, from my arrival in the place, that Nigeria was not and would not be a "country" in the usual sense of the word. There were too many ethnic and religious divides and a "Nigerian identity" was never likely to develop. I did not think that over a longer run, it would hold together as a country and I still maintain that. I think that the events and trends of the last few years are encouraging, but I think in the end, Nigeria will come apart. It cannot be held together and cannot be governed from a center. It must become a federation, at best. I know that efforts in that direction are being undertaken; the country has been divided not into three parts, but into dozens. It is essentially now a multi-state nation in an effort to recognize each community, which at the same time is dividing the southern part of the country in a way that allows the Muslims to govern the whole country. I don't think this will work over the longer term and I am quite gloomy about Nigerian prospects as a single, independent country. I think many individual parts of what is now known as Nigeria may well prosper as there is adequate human and raw resources to allow them to develop economically, but the efforts to keep Nigeria together are bound to be unsuccessful.

Q: Was there any rhyme or reason for the borders that were drawn to make Nigeria?

LEDSKY: They were completely artificial. There is no reason for the borders as they exist. For example, the Yoruba tribe is splisome live in Dahomey (now Benin), some in Nigeria. The border between Nigeria and the Cameroons is entirely arbitrary. There are perhaps some geographic rationales which provide a natural divide, but there are parts of the Cameroons that are English-speaking and parts which are French-speaking. A referendum was held in 1961 allowing the English-speaking part of the Cameroons to vote on whether they wanted to join Nigeria or join the French-speaking part. They voted for the latter. But that does not, I think, provide any logical support to where the borders were drawn. The same arbitrariness is evident on the northern borders.

Q: We are now in 1964. Did you have a preference for a next assignment?

LEDSKY: I don't really remember. I don't know how or why I was assigned to Germany, but I was. We left Nigeria in August. I took home leave and prepared myself for the assignment to Bonn. I had earlier asked for an assignment to Germany, but I don't know whether that played any role. German was the language with which I had some familiarity; I think I tested something in at 2/3. When I returned to Washington, I was told that I needed to have a tour where I could become more language proficient, after two English speaking posts.

I had no background in German affairs and did not get any area or language training before leaving for Bonn. I was assigned as the junior member of the political section, a third secretary, of the embassy.

Q: Who was your boss? Who was the ambassador? What do you remember about these people?

LEDSKY: George McGhee was the ambassador. Martin Hillenbrand was the DCM, Coburn Kidd was the chief of the political section and Jim Sutterlin was the deputy political counselor.

McGhee was a memorable character. I remember him well. As I said, I was a third secretary in a huge embassy. I wasn't even senior enough to attend the weekly staff meeting, which were huge meetings. Later, I was allowed to attend, but had to sit in the back row in a corner. The meetings were held in a huge room and I could barely see or hear the ambassador or anybody else. However, because of my job, I had an opportunity to meet with McGhee many times.

I never traveled with him, but I would have to take draft cables to him for his approval and sometimes I would be included in meetings with a German political figure as the note-taker. I was also a note-taker at a chiefs-of-mission conference that was held in Bonn sometime during my first year there. I was invited to his house on a couple of occasions, where I met Mrs. McGhee and the children. Occasionally, I was invited to official lunches or dinners at the house. I think I got to know who he was quite well, but I am not sure that he ever knew fully who I was. He often used to mangle my last name; I don't think he ever got my name right. He also had trouble with my first name, sometimes calling me "Norman" or "Mel," sometimes he said "Nelson."

McGhee was a sort of tyrannical figure: very smart and able, interested in everything, versatile, and always wanted to deal with the big picture, never the minutiae.

My second ambassador was Henry Cabot Lodge. I remember him quite vividly, even though his tour in Bonn was quite brief. His attention to German matters was rather superficial; I suspect that he had other fish to fry. He was still engaged in Vietnam and he was also working diligently on his own political future. He was running for president and was seeking the Republican nomination in 1968. He knew nothing about the Berlin and East German issues that were engaging me. He knew how embassies worked, having gone through a couple of years in Saigon.

Lodge had a number of personal quirks. He didn't like to eat with other people. He resisted dining in public. He didn't like to host business lunches or dinners. He was quite friendly in a reserved New England manner. There was an aloofness that was quite evident. He really didn't master the German portfolio; I don't think he ever really tried since he knew that this would be a short-term assignment. He did know a little German, having had, I believe, a German tutor in his childhood days. He didn't ever understand our role in Berlin or our purpose in being there. He did have a very marked anti-military prejudice; he distrusted the U.S. military and its leadership, probably stemming from his Vietnam experiences. I can still remember with some amusement the hard time he used to give the military brass in Heidelberg and Stuttgart. He was not impressed by stars and eagles on people's shoulders. At the same time, he certainly made sure that his position was given due respect. He was intrigued by his own authority in places such as Berlin.

He delegated much authority on political matters to Jock Dean and also to Russ Fessenden, his DCM. Fortunately, as I have said, both were superb officers, well-schooled in German matters and therefore fully capable of conducting business with the West German government. Lodge would listen to these two members of his staff and act according to their recommendations. Since he was clearly in Bonn on a short term assignment, Lodge was adequate, but did not leave much of a mark on U.S.-German relations. I am not sure what he thought about his Bonn assignment before he arrived. He may have thought that he would be there longer than actually turned out. Regardless, I am not sure that he ever really felt obliged to become a German "expert". He was not a workaholic; he liked a short day, at least on German matters.

My job was to handle issues arising from the U.S. role in Berlin and to follow West-East German relations. I had no idea how these functions fell to me. In fact, I didn't even know who my predecessor was. We arrived in Bad Godesberg by train and were met by Jim Sutterlin. I had never met Jim before. He took us from the train station to an apartment in the Plittersdorf area. That is where the American housing complex had been built some years earlier. The next day, I reported to his office and was told that I would be the junior officer working on Berlin matters. I had never been to Berlin; I knew nothing about Berlin and its complicated after-the-war situation. My immediate boss was Bob Davis, who headed a three or four officer section.

Monthly ambassadorial meetings, French, British, Germans and us, were held to deal with Berlin issues. McGhee would normally visit Berlin every month. He did not like to become involved in the details of issues, which meant that I did not have much to say because I spent most of my time on details. But there was no question that McGhee was a good ambassador.

The DCM, Martin Hillenbrand, was an entirely different persona. He was the grand fatherly professorial type. He was much friendlier and personable than George McGhee. He was also very smart and was probably the most senior State Department expert on Germany. I spent a lot of time with Hillenbrand, both in Bonn and during his other assignments, such as assistant secretary for EUR. I regard him as my true mentor. He was interested in all political matters and became involved in many issues, including Berlin, although it was McGhee who would meet with the Foreign Office and his French and British counterparts on Berlin issues. It was the ambassador who traveled to Berlin, sometimes, to meet the Soviet ambassador. So, on the substance of my assignment, I dealt much more frequently with the ambassador, although both Hillenbrand and his successor, Russ Fessenden, were the "German experts" in the State Department.

Q: Tell us a little about Jim Sutterlin.

LEDSKY: As I said, it was Jim who met us at the train station when we first arrived. That started a life-long friendship that endures even today. He was very kind to me, Cecile and my family. He shielded me from Coburn Kidd, who I think was not pleased with my assignment from the start because I had no background in German affairs and my language skills were not well honed. He also was not pleased by my writing skills, which I admit needed development. He even had reason to get rid of me and probably only took me because he was so instructed.

In any case, Jim shielded me first by making me the note taker of the "Bonn Group" and other venues. Jim would take me with him and I would be the note taker. He then worked with me day in and day out until I had mastered the material and became steeped in the Berlin "lore". He sent me to Berlin on several occasions early in my Bonn tour. I would stay for extended periods so that I could learn all the minutiae and the myths of the Berlin saga. He was a mentor and a protector; he brought me along slowly and guided me all the way. We used to have almost daily staff meetings with Kidd and Jim would brief me ahead of time on what I was to saor not to say. He always warned me to be careful in these staff meetings; it would not do to keep silent, nor was it wise to say too much.

Kidd was a formidable bosan old line Foreign Service officer with little sense of humor and very proper. I remember that a couple of weeks after my arrival, he gave me a manual on the use of proper English; he asked me to take it home and study it thoroughly. Fortunately, it was a thin book which is still in use by language stylists. In any case, my assignment was to master the material and then exhibit "lessons learned" in my memoranda. Eventually, Kidd and I also became friends and by the time he left, I think we were quite close and I believe that he thought quite highly of me by that time. We continued our friendship until his death a few years ago.

But Jim was the support system that I needed to survive particularly in the first year or so while I was learning the ropes. I worked with Jim every day. He had been stationed in Berlin in the late 1940s and again in the 1960s. He knew everyone in our mission in Berlin, starting with Arch Calhoun, who was in charge of the State contingent there. They were personal friends. Jim shielded me from other members of the political section, some of whom were old "German hands" suspicious in some ways of completely unschooled newcomers. They knew a lot more of every aspect of the work I was doing and it took me a long time to catch up with theif I ever did, in fact. But day by day, I learned more and more and became increasingly useful to the political section and the embassy. Some of my colleagues were people with whom I stayed in touch even after leaving Germany: Bob Davis, Pete Semler, George Jaeger, Jerry Livingstone, etc. As you can see, the embassy's political section was quite large, larger than one any one might run into today.

Q: Now talk a little about Jock Dean, who became the political counselor toward the end of your tour in Bonn.

LEDSKY: He was a workaholic. He was and is very intelligent. He had spent a lot of time on German matters before his Bonn tour. He had spent a lot of time worrying about security issues. He knew little about the Berlin and East German issues with which I was involved. He ran the political section in a rather authoritarian manner, thereby annoying a lot of people. His style was the direct opposite of Jim Sutterlin and even Coburn Kidd. But he was very smart with quick insight; it didn't take him very long to get to the meat of an issue. I learned a tremendous amount from him and with him. At the beginning, he was very much of a "hands on" manager; no issue was too small for him to dwell into. He wanted to take over the work of the "Bonn group," which I and others had been doing. He wanted to be the spokesman for the U.S. in the "Bonn group." He wanted to be the intermediary with the embassy's "second floor," where the ambassador and the DCM had their offices. That annoyed a number of people in the political section; it didn't bother me particularly since I was at the bottom of the totem pole and I didn't aspire to have a leading role in any embassy matters. So I was happy to work under Jock's guidance. In fact, this new arrangement was useful to my development because Jock didn't like some of my superiors and so he would sometime bypass them and come to me directly. I remember that he and Jack Shaw never saw eye-to-eye; he didn't get along very well with Jerry Livingstone or Peter Semler or George Jaeger. So, as time passed, I was given ever increasing responsibilities by Jock. By the end of the tour, Jock and I became good friends and he allowed me to take on issues that probably no other political counselor would have left to such a low level officeall related to Berlin, of course. Jock let me travel to Brussels to represent the embassy at the "Live Oak" exercises (code name of a planning group for development of military contingency plans). He interceded with the ambassador on my behalf on a number of occasions; he made sure that I was invited to a number of social events that, because of my rank in the embassy, would not have normally included me. So he was very kind to me.

I remember with great fondness one occurrence. It was a Saturday, which for several of us was just another working day. I came in the morning; I knew I had to leave by 3 p.m. because we needed cash and the banks closed then. At about 2 p.m., I took my leave from the embassy and drove to the bank. Then I went home, where Jock Dean found me soon after my arrival. Jock asked Cecile why I thought it had been appropriate to suddenly leave the embassy and disappear even though it was just 2 p.m. Cecile pointed out that it was a Saturday to which Jock replied that it was just one of the seven work days in a week. I had to go back to the embassy late that Saturday afternoon. That was typical Dean; his comments were covered with light heartedness, but underneath one knew that this was a serious issue with him. I have always viewed Jock Dean as a unique gem in the Foreign Service.

He was a prolific writer, but not a stylist. I think he was rather verbose on paper. I did not try to emulate him. His philosophy was that the longer the message to Washington, the less likely anybody in headquarters was likely to read all, thereby keeping the decision making authority in the field. The length of the message would both bore people in Washington while exuding at the same time an aura of "being on top" of the issue. So Jock wrote a lomuch more than necessary or desired. The quality of his work was not necessarily superiosentences might go on for 12 lines. Germanic perhaps but not to be emulated. Jock saw messages as a device to keep decision-making in his own hands. He did that with a gusto unparalleled in the Foreign Service.

I must admit that in retrospect, Jock Dean was enormously effective in Bonn. He was a superb taleninsightful, determined and quite brave. Those are qualities that I do admire, which is one of the main reasons why we have maintained our friendships for 40 years.

Q: I assume you encountered a culture shock after your experiences in Guyana and Nigeria.

LEDSKY: It was a wonderful culture shock. We were placed in a relatively modern and well maintained government-owned apartment, complete with government-issued furniture. All our neighbors complained about the living conditions in Plittersdorf, about the embassy, about the cafeteria, about the secretarial help, about the transportation. There wasn't any aspect of working or living in Bonn that was not subject to one criticism or another. For us, being assigned to Bonn was like going to heaven. Except for the fact that I felt things were way over my head at the office, we were enormously comfortable in Bonn. Our apartment was on the third floor, which meant daily climbs, often carrying groceries or other loads. Of course, not all worked well in the apartment all the time, but for us, we were far ahead of were we had been. We enjoyed it. In fact, soon after our arrival, we were moved to a second floor apartment, making daily climbs easier. This apartment was also closer to the shopping area. The couple of weeks we spent in temporary quarters may have been a little unpleasant, but all in all it was far superior to anything we had ever experienced elsewhere. I didn't have a car during our initial period which made life a little confining, but those were really very minor irritants in a very pleasant environment.

Not only were the living conditions far, far better than what we were accustomed to, but my work was also much more satisfactory because it met my expectations of what I might do as a Foreign Service officer. I had been a jack-of-all-trades, but felt much more comfortable focusing on political issues, although I must admit that periodically I would look back on my Guyana and Nigeria assignments with some fondness since there I was pretty much on my own and master of my own fate. Bonn was a huge hierarchy with every single word that you committed to paper having to be blessed by what seemed to be dozens of people. In Bonn, I was the low man on the totem pole, entirely different from Georgetown and Enugu. Again, though, the Bonn job was also a challenging one, although entirely different from my previous assignments. In any case, we found the American community in Plittersdorf terrific. All of our kids had a wonderful time in school; Karen went to a nursery school, which was set up in the middle of the housing development and Rebecca and Johnny went to the DoD elementary school, which was right by the housing development. The kids just loved Plittersdorf.

Q: Let's now start on substance. First of all, what was the status of Berlin in the middle 1960s?

LEDSKY: In 1964, Berlin was a divided city and also a closed city. It was divided roughly down the middle by a wall that had been erected in 1961. The city was closed because the road network that had tied Berlin to West Germany was almost impenetrable. There had been a series of serious incidents on the autobahns (highways) in 1962 and 1963. In those years, there were palpable anxieties about the potential of WW III which were highlighted by the Kennedy visit to Berlin. By 1964, when I arrived in Bonn, those anxieties had abated, followed by a period of what I would describe as a stalemate, which lasted from that period to the fall of the Wall in 1989. By October 1964, a major crisis had just been overcome, or at least we thought we had overcome such a crisis.

Berlin was physically separated from West Germany. It was an island in the middle of East Germany. It had been administered separately since 1945, when it was divided into four sectorSoviet, British, French and American. For the first few years, these wartime allies worked together in a body called the "Kommandatura." The Soviets left that body in 1948-49, during the Berlin blockade. That left the western allies to operate the "Kommandatura," which managed the non-Soviet part of Berlin, about 2/3 of the city. The three western sectors were really isolated by the Wall on the east and by East Germany on the other sides. By agreement reached in the late 1940s, the only access to West Berlin was through a single road corridor which went from Helmstedt to Berlin and three air corridorfrom Hamburg, Frankfurt and Stuttgaror other airports in southern Germany. The three corridors were very narrow and the planes could not exceed a 10,000 foot ceiling imposed by the Soviets, one never recognized by the western allies. There was a rail net to Berlin, which also started in Helmstedt. There were Soviet checkpoints at Helmstedt for both the roads and the rail system. There was the possibility of using waterways to get to Berlin, but that also had to go through East German and Soviet checkpoints. So, Berlin was essentially isolated from the West and the East with West Berlin being administered by the three western allies. Starting in 1949, limited authority began to be shifted to a German municipal authority, which was headed by locally elected officials.

Much of the work by the embassy's Berlin section was devoted to contingency planning, in case another crisis arose. We were in fact planning for the crisis that had just passed. When I arrived in Bonn, the sectioBob Davis and a couple of colonels from U.S. military headquarterwas working overtime on these plans together with representatives of the British and French embassies. These were relatively detailed plans, which coverage all foreseeable contingencies from convoys being stopped on the autobahn or an airplane being harassed or worse in an air corridor. Much of the planning was based on the assumption that the allies could not add to the forces already in Berlin. So, I would describe 1964 as a period of reduced, but ever-present tensions.

Q: Tell us about the structure of the American presence in Berlithe role of the ambassador and the military commander.

LEDSKY: The administration of the Berlin American sector was peculiar. The chief administrator was a two-star general, the "Kommandant." His deputy, the "minister," was a State Department official. State's representatives in Berlin were under the authority of the general and worked in the military headquarters. The American presence in Berlin was funded by the West German government from an "occupation budget," which had been started at the end of WW II to pay for allied occupation. The budget request and the general supervision of U.S. spending were supervised by the ambassador and the embassy's administrative section.

Both the military and the civilian components of the U.S. Berlin administration reported to the U.S. ambassador, who was the chief of mission in Berlin, as he was in West Germany. As I said earlier, our embassy in Bonn had a section devoted exclusively to Berlin and East Germany matters. It was part of the political section. We worked on a daily basis with our mission in Berlin, both on Berlin-related and East Germany issues. This somewhat unorthodox arrangement continued until Germany reunified.

In Berlin itself, the State contingent worked on a daily basis with their French and British counterparts, as we did in Bonn through an "ambassadorial" group. As a result, we had close liaison with the British and French, both in Berlin and in Bonn. The ambassadors from the three countries usually met on a monthly basis to discuss exclusively Berlin matters. In the early 1960, this group was enlarged to include a leading official from the West German foreign ministry, usually the second or third ranking official in that ministry. So, the Bonn group became a quadripartite group.

Just to add another bureaucratic twist, the arrangements in Bonn were replicated in Washington. There was a Washington ambassadorial group, consisting of the secretary of state and the British, French and German ambassadors. They met quarterly to discuss Berlin matters, as well as issues related to "Germany as a whole" a euphemism for the eventually unified German nation.

As you can see, there were a lot of fingers in the pie. It made it very hard to develop and administers any new policies.

Q: Your time was usually taken up by what kind of issues?

LEDSKY: I think it was a myriad of issues. Every other week, there was a "Bonn group" meeting, attended by representatives, usually the political, or deputy counselors from the British, French and American embassies and the German foreign ministry. Jim Sutterlin was our representative, although when he moved up to being the political counselor we were represented by Jack Shaw. The agenda for these meetings was agreed upon ahead of time. It was that agenda which took much of my attention during a working day.

The first item on the agenda was usually what was called "temporary travel documents." I spent a lot of time on these documents. This was another term for passports, issued by the three western allies to an East German who wanted to travel to the West. Since we did not recognize East Germany as a sovereign state, we could not recognize passports issued by it as valid documents. There were several reasons for this non-recognition, not the least of which was the strong objections of the West German government. So, the three western powers set up an office in West Berlin to issue temporary travel documents, or TTDs, to East Germans, who could cross the Wall to pick up these documents. On these TTDs, visas to specific western European countries and as far as we were concerned, anywhere in the world, were stamped. The allies, including the Soviets, had established criteria for the issuance of these TTDs; they were administered by the three western representatives in West Berlin.

The embassies in Bonn were the "appeal courts" which heard appeals from East Germans who were denied a TTD by one of the Berlin missions. So, every day on my desk, I would find TTD applications that had been turned down by one or another of the three western missions in Berlin. I and my counterparts would review these appeals and make our recommendations to our representative on the "Berlin group," which had the final authority. Most of the TTD applications were adjudicated by our Berlin missions; we usually got the very difficult cases which might involve a prominent East German political figure or some other prominent personage. Those would usually come to Bonn and therefore became the first item on the agenda of the "Bonn group." We would discuss each appeal case and reach some conclusion about the TTD application before us. I must say that some of the applications we reviewed and acted upon had international ramifications. For example, one application might come from an East German cabinet officer who wanted to travel to India on a trade mission. The West Germans would object and we might go along, eliciting a outburst from the Indian embassy. Sometimes, we would approve the application and the West German government would let us know that it was not very happy with our decision. So, we would periodically run into political firestorms. When such outbursts occurreor were anticipatewe would consult with the ambassador, who then might take the issue up in the monthly ambassadorial meeting.

I remember that at one time, we had an application from the East German minister for culture, Klaus Gysi, who wanted to visit his mother in France. The French were ready to admit him, but the West Germans objected. That one reached the ambassadorial level. I might just mention that the minister's son was the leader of the communist party in West Germany. The French finally let him iwith or without a TTD. But there was a furious reaction by the West German government. We were also very unhappy because the French had by-passed the accepted procedures. So, some of these cases took up a lot of time and became serious bones of contentioalthough in retrospect, I can now wonder: why all the fuss? This system was still being used when I left Bonn in 1970; it was abolished soon thereafter, when West German attitudes changed and it began to recognize the validity of East German passports and stopped interfering with the use of those documents.

The second item on the agenda of the "Bonn group" had to do with transportation. This included questions of road convoys, railroad and airline travel. We had established a procedure whereby each of the three western powers would notify the other two when they were to dispatch a military convoy or use of the American special train. Those issues took up a lot of time.

Then there were intra-Berlin issues such as shootings at the Wall, travel between East and West Berlin or problems on the S-Bahn (the subway that ran between East and West). As I said, we exchanged information with our allies on travel plans from West German through East Germany to Berlin. This was intended to put us on notice should any of the travel be interrupted by East Germans or Soviets.

The last item on the agenda was a long-forgotten issue: the prison in Spandau. The four powers, Soviet, British, French and us, operated a prison in Berlin, which at the time of my arrival in Bonn, held three prisoners, but which went down to one, Rudolph Hess by the time I left. This was a huge complex, guarded on a rotating basis by troops from the four powers. The chairman rotated on a monthly basis; we held monthly lunches and even more frequent discussions on the health and safety and visiting rights of the prisoners. We had to confront continuous appeals to parole the prisoners. The West Germans, for reasons that I never understood, were very solicitous of the prisoners' health. So, Spandau showed up on the "Bonn group" agenda every meeting.

Periodically we also used to discuss the issue of contingency planning, which I discussed earlier. When I first got to Bonn, the section was very busy writing these contingency plans for the defense of Berlin and for overcoming any blockades by land, water and air of our access to Berlin from West Germany. It was essentially a tripartite effort with the help of the West Germans. A series of contingency plans were drafted and sent to the "Live Oak" section of NATO, which was only the keeper of the plans, but also the key planner for any military action that a contingency might require. Sometimes, this issue was a matter of daily discussion within our embassy.

The "Bonn group" periodically also used its meetings to exchange information about the situation and events in East Germany. I should mention that East German matters were the responsibility of the Berlin section of the political section; we had one officer who spent his full time on East Germany. That was Peter Semler when I first got to Bonn, then it was Jerry Livingstone. I often got involved in these issues as well because they often spilled over into our responsibilities for West Berlin.

We also discussed the issue of responsibilities assigned to the allies and which were to be turned over to the West Berlin austerities. This was a complicated issue and involved our legal advisor, Joe Von Elbe. Each embassy had a lawyer who devoted his time to Berlin issues. The West German government entered into a series of international agreements; in as many of these as possible, the West Germans sought to include Berlin. But in fact, Berlin could only be covered by these agreements with the approval of the three western powers who had ultimate sovereignty over West Berlin. So, we had to discuss the applicability of these agreements to Berlin and this became a continuing subject of discussion for the "Bonn group." There seemed to have been at least onand sometimes severaagreements at each meeting which needed allied approval. We had criteria which guided the three allies and which sometimes forced us to deny the West Germans' requests. The issues were usually legal, having to do with who controlled certain aspects of the administration of the city.

Q: Were there tensions between the three allies and the West Germans on the status of Berlin?

LEDSKY: Yes. I wouldn't call them tensions necessarily, but we did have our disagreements, usually on legal interpretations. The Federal Republic viewed Berlin as an integral part of its country. The city of Berlin was represented in the Bundesrat and the Bundestag as well, although they had limited voting rights in the latter. The three western allies never agreed that West Berlin was part of the Federal Republic. As far as we were concerned, it was part of Germany, but a distinct and separate entity. This difference in views gave rise to legal disagreements. The three allies tried as much as they could to down-play the legal disagreements. We were willing to agree that Berlin should be part of German society and administered as much as possible to conform with West German law. But, obviously, the fundamental difference on the legal status of Berlin gave rise to occasional disagreements. We had to maintain our legal position to protect our interests in Berlin and our international standing.

Q: Did we foresee the day when Berlin would be integrated with West Germany?

LEDSKY: I think the three western powers felt that as long as they had to maintain a presence in Berlin, they had to uphold the fiction that Berlin was a separate entity from West Germany and that the occupation regime had to continue. I think it is fair to say that the "occupation" became increasingly a "fig leaf" as more and more of the governing authority was being turned over to the West Berlin government. We did try to copy for Berlin as much of the West German legal system as was feasible, but at the same time we had to continue to maintain the position that there had to be some degree of separation between the two entities in order to make our presence in Berlin tenable and defensible. It was our position that we would have to stay in Berlin until German and Berlin unifications were achieved. We felt that these events would occur within the next twenty years; we were much more sanguine on that score than the West Germans were. Our position was based in part on protecting and perhaps even enhancing the possibility of German reunification.

Q: We were more optimistic about the chances of reunification than the Germans were?

LEDSKY: Certainly the Americans were. I don't want to speak for the French or the British. I can sato repeat what I said beforthat we on our part felt that we had to continue the occupation of West Berlin to protect the possibility of reunification. All of the detail work that I and others undertook was essentially based on that concept. These mundane activities were part of a grander strategy, which would eventually lead to the reunification of Berlin and West and East Germany. Everything we did had that goal in mind. If you view our actions within that context, I think we were on the side of the angels, even if not perceived that way at the time when these actions were taken. I think our goal and the policies that flowed from it were well conceived, even though there were times during my tour in Bonn and the later tour in Berlin, when I felt that the goal appeared grandiose and perhaps not achievable. But, at the end of the day, it turned out to be the right goal and the policies intended to support the achievement of the goal were correct and on the mark.

Q: During your Bonn tour, was there any discussion of giving up on that goal?

LEDSKY: Yes. There were some people in the embassy and in Washington, as well as in the British, French and German governments, who felt that unification was too much "pie in the sky" and not worth the cost involved in reaching it. They did not believe that unificatiocertainly of Berliwas achievable and believed that the policy of differentiating West Berlin from West Germany was counter-productive and should be changed. The Germans were in the forefront in this push for revision of goals. During my tour in Bonn, the Germans gave up the Holstein doctrine, the refusal to recognize the existence of East Germany. They eventually came up with a policy of reconciliation with East Germany which was just short of acceding to its sovereignty and continued existence, which by the end of the 1980s came full circle with the West Germans recognizing East Germany as an independent and sovereign nation. In the late 1960s, this new West German attitude was shown by their new attitude toward "Passierschien" or other documents that allowed traffic through "Checkpoint Charlie" and other passes between East and West Berlin. Egon Bahr, one of West Germany's new leaders, insisted that the separation policy made no sense, so the West Germans took the leadership in the reconciliation process.

I think that the Kennedy administration began to show some subtle support for the policy of reconciliation. But after the death of President Kennedy, the Johnson administration retreated from any new initiative and took a firmer stand against any reaching out to the East Germans.

Q: What were the attitudes within the embassy?

LEDSKY: I don't think the U.S. policy toward East Germany was open to debate. There were some, who did not have any Berlin-related work, who never understood what we were trying to achieve in Berlin, or why. While they might have had some questions about our East Germany and Berlin policies, no one who worked on Berlin and East Germany affairs expressed any reservations about what we were doing, or why.

Q: You mentioned that you visited Berlin periodically. Did you get a chance to travel to other parts of West Germany?

LEDSKY: I think I have seen almost every corner of West Germany, mostly on my own and with the family. We visited Munich, Frankfurt, Stuttgarmost of the major cities. We did travel extensively.

Q: Who was the minister in Berlin during your tour?

LEDSKY: The first one was Arch Calhoun, who was succeeded by David Klein.

Q: Did run into any problems with either of them on "turf" issues?

LEDSKY: I think the answer has to be "yes." There were always some tensions between the embassy in Bonn and the mission in Berlin, as there was between the comparable British and French organizations. People in Berlin wanted to be as independent from their embassies as possible. They wanted to make as many decisions locally as possible. I think that should not come as any surprise. The major problem was that the Berlin staffs had very limited contact with West Germany and West Germans. They were quite isolated in a military occupation environment, which was shielding them from the Bonn realities, which nonetheless had to take into account the sensitivities of the West German governmenits views, needs and desires. The embassies brought that element into the decision making process; it was absolutely essential. It was this difference in perspectives that raised some tensions, a situation which lasted until the status of Berlin changed. I ran into the same tensions when I was the minister in Berlin later on. The Berlin missions always sought to be as independent as possible while the embassies felt they needed to be in control, always cognizant of what was going on in Berlin.

There were also some tensions generated by the budget process. As I mentioned, the cost of our presence in Berlin was covered by an "occupation budget," requested and supervised by the embassy's administrative staff. Ambassador McGhee in particular wanted to make sure that the American expenditures could be fully justified. While that process was the source of some tensions, I think that there were some differences in perspectives between Berlin and Bonn on every subject.

Q: Did you have the opportunity to interact with the Soviets during this tour in Bonn?

LEDSKY: I did. It was not regular contact, but there were occasions that required some contact with the Soviets. Occasionally, my visits to Berlin coincided with U.S.-Soviet bilateral ambassadorial meetings. I acted then as note-taker, which gave me the opportunity to meet the Soviet ambassador and some of his staff. Also, on a couple of occasions, I did visit East Berlin with representatives of the East German affairs section of our Berlin mission. We did then meet some Soviets and East German officials. These guys were scary. I had never run into a Soviet official or soldier before. They seemed very strange to mno smiles, all seriousnesscary! I think I took my first trip into East Berlin with Bill Woessner, it was a pretty scary event. We went by U-Bahn; we walked around like tourists. We didn't have any East German currency. We saw a lot of rubble and ruins; it was not a cheery sight except for the Soviet embassy which occupied a brand new buildinornate and uglon the Unter den Linden. I was glad to get back to West Berlin.

Q: Did you detect any changes in Soviet attitudes or policies during your tour?

LEDSKY: I certainly did not detect any change. I saw no evidence of any change in Soviet posture.

Q: Did West German attitudes and policies change after the death of Konrad Adenauer?

LEDSKY: Definitely, it was Adenauer's death that allowed the policies to change, even if ever so slowly. There certainly were noticeable changes when Willy Brandt became foreign minister in the Schroeder government, and subsequently, when he became chancellor.

Q: Did you ever have an opportunity to meet Adenauer or any of the other chancellors?

LEDSKY: I met Schroeder once.

Q: While you were in Bonn, Adenauer died and President Johnson went to the funeral. Do you have any recollections of that visit?

LEDSKY: I was barely involved. I had one little assignment, but otherwise I was not involved.

Q: Were there any particular Soviet threats during your tour?

LEDSKY: There were a number of incidents. We had some problems with Autobahn convoys, and we had some problems with air access. There were a number of shootings along both the Wall and the inter-German border. We received a number of threats from the Soviets. There were periods of heightened tensions all during my tour, as there were before and after.

The tensest period that I remember most vividly occurred in 1969, just before our transfer from Bonn. The West Germans had scheduled a presidential election (in Germany, that is done by parliament) to be held in Berlin. The Soviets told us that this would not be allowed and threatened to shoot down any planes carrying parliamentarians. We, in fact, flew every member of the Bundesversammlung (Federal Convention) to Berlin despite the threats. Nothing ever happened. A few planes were buzzed by Soviet fighters, but there were no shootings.

We had a lot of incidents like that during my five years in Bonn. In retrospect, they don't seem as serious as we perceived them to be at the time. I think that since there were no actualities, they don't seem so serious today. We did face down the Soviets several times in the 1960s as we did in the example I mentioned. The Soviets would tell us not to do something, but we would proceed anyway after extended consultations among the three allies and the West Germans. Convoys were held usome for extended periods. We did discuss whether to affect some contingency plans to probe Soviet and East German intentions. There were incidents that were considered to be quite serious in the 1960s. We delivered many protests. Despite the seriousness of the incidents, I didn't foresee a return to the situation of the late 1940s, i.e., the Berlin airlift. We had contingency plans for an airlift if it was needed, but I didn't really foresee a need to return to some extraordinary measures, even though some of the incidents were very, very serious.

During the Soviet invasion in 1968 of what now is know as the Czech Republic, there was discussion as to whether the overthrow of Dubcek might bring East and West back to the bad old days of the heights of the Cold War. In fact, Jim Sutterlin suggested that I visit Czechoslovakia in 1969, before my return to Washington, just so I could have a feel for a country back under Soviet-style dictatorshiGustav Husï¿½k. I went to Prague for four or five days; it was scary. I think that 1969 was a very tense period in East-West relations. It was not clear to me that we would not have another serious confrontation with the Soviets. It seemed to me quite possible, and it almost came to that on a couple of occasionat least on the diplomatic front.

Q: Did you see an evolution in West Germany's perception of itself in the world?

LEDSKY: Yes. I think as time passed, it became clear that the West Germans were beginning to "feel their oats." They saw themselves increasingly as an independent power with some strength. They increasingly asserted their independence from the western allies. More and more of the foreign office officials took an increasingly nationalistic line. This evolution was perceptible; I think I could chart this West German movement during the 1964-69 period.

Interestingly enough, this feeling of greater independence and assertiveness did not move them forward on the question of reunification. I don't think you can say that as the West Germans increasingly "felt their oats" their hopes for reunification increased. I don't think they thought it would ever happened, until the late 1980s, when it did happen. It was a curious contradiction. The West German assertiveness extended only to the West; it did not increase toward the East Germans or the Soviets. They, in fact, became more conciliatory toward their Eastern "brothers" and, by extension, toward to the Soviets. They much preferred to be conciliatory than confrontational with the East, while they took the exact opposite tack toward their friends: the Americans, the French and the British.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add about your five years in Bonn?

LEDSKY: I could talk about many issues. I do want the record to show that I believe that the years 1964-69 were a very unique period in German history and in German-American relations. I do not believe that the period has been adequately covered by historians and is, as far as I am concerned, less than fully understood. It is perceived to be a period during which German policy was changing, moving from the conservative, stubborn Adenauer to the more flexible, more conciliatory "Ostpolitik" practiced by Willy Brandt and the socialists. The view is also that the American government resisted this transition, in part because we did not understand the change the Germans were undertaking. Furthermore, the period is seen as one of relative calm and absent of tensions, with both the Soviets and West Germans. I think this is an erroneous view. I think we were cognizant of the attitude changes in the Federal Republic and the country; we did not resist that evolution. Furthermore, there were severe stresses between the U.S. and the Soviets, as well as between the West Germans and ourselves. I think these stresses were consciously downplayed by the U.S. government.

As I said, it is a period which I do not believe has been adequately studied by historians. Not much has been written about the international relations of the 1960s as it touches the West Germans. There have been volumes written about Bitburg, the missile crisis of the 1980s, etc., but the period of the 1960s has been sadly neglected. The 1960s in Germany was a strange period; I am not sure that I fully comprehend what went on, even though I was a witness to much of it. It is not clear to me that anyone else has captured the full flavor of that period. We know that major changes were underway, but I don't know that the participants fully understood how seismic these changes really were. The change came, but not as a consequence of any deliberate West German planning or as an intended consequence. Even now, as I look back on the period, I find it very confusing, especially since the words of the statesmen do not match up with events; the evolution proceeded without design or human directions. There were, of course, people in various governments who tried to steer policies in one direction or another to meet their own goals. However, but the consequences of their policies were unintended. I think that even now in the early 21st Century, the full story of East-West German relations, of Soviet-German or Soviet-allies relations, and of West German-allies relations has not been told. Something is missing. One only has to read Henry Kissinger or Egon Bahr to realize that the evolution of policy did not follow their visions or even their predictions of the future. Unfortunately, the participants in this process have not described their perceptions or their view of events.

Q: Do you have an explanation as to why this period has been neglected by historians and even the participants?

LEDSKY: I think people view the 1960s in Germany as uneventful and of little historical significance. I think they are wrong. It was a period of major policy changes which built a base for subsequent events of major significance. Let me give a further example. I mentioned the Bundesversammlung of 1969. That has never really been fully recorded or analyzed. It must be noted that that was the last Bundesversammlung ever held in Berlin. The Germans continued to talk tough about their rights in Berlin, but in fact capitulated to Soviet pressure. They never even tried to hold another session. Instead, they re-wrote their election laws so that the issue would not need to arise again. The allies, although mouthing their positive view of "detente," insisted that the Bundesversammlung be held in Berlin despite Soviet objections and flew all the delegates into Berlin on planes belonging to American or British airlines. The West has often been accused of being "soft" on the East; however, few mention that 1969 episode and the way the west stood up to the Soviets as tome risk. I am not aware that this event in East-West relations has been written up.

After 1969, came "Ostpolitik," with its steady trend towards the recognition of East Germany and other tension-easing measures. In fact, these policy shifts go back to decisions made and actions taken in the 1960s, even though, as I mentioned earlier, each individual action seems minor now in retrospect. It really doesn't seem very important now whether Rudolf Hess was treated adequately or whether he should remain in Spandau prison, but the cumulative effect of each of these minor decisions became trend setters. It is also true that we know little about Soviet actions on transportation disruptions. Were they dictated by Moscow? Were they the actions of a local commander? Were they demanded by the East Germans? We know very little about that as well.

Q: Did you have anything special to do with the Nixon visit of 1969?

LEDSKY: I was still in Bonn when that took place, but I don't remember having had any special duties. I continued to conduct my own business and was not bothered very much by the president's visit. I must say that being the Berlin and East German officer saved me from a lot of involvement in these VIP visits; I wasn't given any special assignments and was able to observe the visits without becoming involved, as so many embassy officers and staff did. I may have had some small assignments, but nothing that bogged me down on these visits for days and weeks before and after. I give much credit to Jock Dean, who tried very hard when these visits took place to shield his officers from being drawn into the morass that one of these visits created. Jock had a philosophy which relegated junior officer to "spear carrier" duties: behind the sceneto be seen, if must, but never to be heard. That was just fine with me and most of my junior colleagues in the political section. The more senior officers may have been somewhat offended by being barred from having any major role in these visits, but it didn't bother me; I was not offended by being protected from doing petty chores.

Q: You left Bonn in the summer of 1969. What happened then?

LEDSKY: I was supposed to leave Bonn in 1968, to go to a military school in Norfolk. I think in part, I was chosen to go there because that is where "Live Oak" had its naval headquarters. Jock Dean took offense that I would be transferred at that time and especially to a military school, so he managed to have my Norfolk assignment canceled and my Bonn tour extended for another year. When I left in 1969, I was assigned as a senior watch officer in the Department's Operation Center.

I started that job in about September 1969. That assignment lasted almost a year, until the early summer of 1970. This was an interesting assignment is some ways. I learned a lot. For example, I learned that the Seventh Floor was chaotically organized and managed. This was a period during which we were beefing up our presence in Vietnam and in Asia in general. Many of the junior officers in the Ops Center were vigorously anti-Vietnam war, which generated some unwelcomed activity among those officers after they had finished their shifts, culminating in a letter to the secretary voicing opposition to the war, including the bombing in Cambodia. Several of my colleagues got into trouble through such activities; they were chastised by the secretary and the deputy secretary. Some resigned; some were transferred; some were reprimanded. The atmosphere on the Seventh Floor was not very pleasant. Having worked on German affairs for five years, I really had little knowledge of what was going on in South-east Asia.

I did learn a lot about Asia while in the Op Center. I also got a good refresher course on the Middle East as well as learnt something about Latin America. A watch officer reads a lot of information, which gives one a pretty good view of world affairs. The job was not particularly challenging and I don't consider that assignment among my happier ones. I did learn a lot about how the department functioned. Once a day, I had to meet with Ted Eliot, the Executive Secretary, and sometimes Bob Brown, his deputy, as welto brief him on most recent events. Sometimes we would then go to brief one of the principals. Depending on the shift I was working oand we would rotatl might also have to write a digest of the latest news. I think I probably met and briefed every one of the department's senior officers that year. That gave me a better appreciation of how the secretary, the deputy secretary and the under secretaries functioned.

During my tour, the Berlin negotiations began. Jim Sutterlin, then the Germany country director, wanted me to join him to run the Berlin section of that directorate. He requested Personnel to transfer me from the Op Center. I don't think he ran into many objections from the OP Center; I was not a star in that firmament. I really was not very excited by the Op Center work; it was fairly routine and didn't leave much room for personal initiative. The hours were very difficult with the continual rotation; I was not sorry to leave. It took several months to dislodge me from the Op Center, but it was finally managed and I ended up in the German office of the Bureau of European Affairs sometime around June 1970. I was happy to go.

Q: The negotiations you mentioned began while you were in Bonn.

LEDSKY: It is a little complicated. The negotiations did not start while I was in Bonn; what we had were "soundings," that is, we tested the Soviets to see whether any negotiations might have any chance of success. All during 1968 through the beginning of 1969, the western allies and the Germans decided to probe to see whether the Soviets might be willing to discuss in a serious manner all of the Berlin issues that had been left unresolved. We all felt that the time had come to put some if not all of the issues to bed. The occupation regime was difficult to maintain. There were a number of very practical problems, including access to the city, which was always a potential tinder-box. The restrictions on the air corridors were increasingly cumbersome because of the arbitrary 10,000 foot ceiling imposed, which was just inadequate for the more modern aircraft. Transportation inside Berlin was crippled because the S-Bahn had been closed. Certain parts of West Berlin had been so cut off as they could only be reached by helicopter. So there were a large number of very practical decisions that had been left hanging for too long. In fact, the whole concept of an occupation was becoming an anachronism. The Wall itself stood as a barrier to any progress to normalcy.

So in 1968, after some slight Soviet give in their rigid positions, e.g. allowing West Germans to go to East Berlin on special occasions, the allies decided that it might just be time to make some efforts to engage the Soviets to see whether serious negotiations had any chance of success. I think we were all agreed that the time had come to get rid of all the cumbersome restrictions, particularly of movement between West Berlin and West Germany and within Berlin itself. It was our assumption that the occupation of Berlin would last many, many more years and that therefore we should try to ease the burdens on all as soon as possible. The new administrative arrangements that we were hoping for had nothing to do with, nor hinged on any larger geopolitical arrangements such as German unification or any other grand scheme. The focus was entirely on Berlin. It is true that long after the negotiations started and were concluded, some began to say that these Berlin negotiations were part of a larger grand scheme. Henry Kissinger has portrayed them as such, i.e., a piece of a much larger end game of East-West tensions.

The allies in Bonn began to probe Soviet reactions through letters and meetings with the Soviet ambassador in East Germany. There may have been some side conversations between the East and West Germans, but I was never told about those, if they did occur. In addition to taking care of practical problems, I think the allies also felt that matters had reached a stalemate. The Soviets were no longer threatening dire consequences in response to our failure to do something or other. An equilibrium had been reached and the time had come to see whether steps toward a more tolerable situation were possible.

The Berlin negotiations are well described in a book that David Klein and Jim Sutterlin have written. They described the setting, the process and the consequences of the Berlin accords quite accurately. Those who have used these negotiations to paint a much larger East-West settlement are factually misleading. The Kissingers and Egon Bahrs of this world who have taken credit for fostering and master-minding these negotiations are plain wrong; they didn't understand, or wanted to understand, the genesis and the limited purposes of the negotiations.

Q: What was your role beginning in 1968?

LEDSKY: As part of the Bonn group, I was involved in the development of this "probing" strategy. We in the embassy sent a series of communications to the Soviets and the East Germans which were signed by the three western allies. I was involved, as were Jock Dean and Russ Fessenden, in the drafting of these documents. Much of the original drafting was done in Bonn and then cleared in the respective western capitals.

Shortly before I left Bonn in the summer of 1969, the Soviets gave out some signals which indicated an interest in pursuing some discussions on the issues that our letters had raiseas well as others. It was an exchange that often seemed to be like ships passing in the night. Often there seemed to be no connection between what we had said and what they replieand perhaps vice-versa as well. But their responses at least continued to imply a willingness to engage in serious discussions. Actual negotiations began with a meeting of the four ambassadors sometime in the summer of 1969. I later attended one or two of the last meetings in this process after I had been in Washington for sometime.

The meetings normally started with a set presentation made by each participant, e.g., the American ambassador read a statement, the French ambassador read a statement, the Soviet did, etc. After the statements were read, the ambassadors shook hands and the meeting was over. The people back in the western capitals then evaluated what the Soviets had said and presumably the experts in Moscow did the same thing for the western allies' statements. I would not consider these meetings as negotiating sessions. They were set pieces, which allowed each participant to state his views, without any engagement.

Before each meeting, a set of papers were prepared by Bonn, which included a strategy statement for the next meeting. It explored the questions like what we want to accomplish, and where we were going over the longer run. The drafter of this strategy paper was usually Jock Dean. It was then sent to Washington to be worked over by many agencies, including the NSC (National Security Council). The drafts would go back and forth between Washington and Bonn in 1968-69. Then we would negotiate with the French and British on the wording of this strategy paper, as well as the West Germans. The objectives were stated in very practical terms. They became the foundation for the ambassadorial statements, all of which, by the way, had to be cleared by the three western capitals because, ever since the Wall was erected in the early 1960s, Berlin issues were high on the foreign policy agenda of every administration in Washington, London, and Paris. That meant that throughout the 1960s, nothing happened on Berlin without the full participation of the bureaucracies in the three capitals, as well as the West Germans. I always thought it interesting that so many minute problems attracted so much high-level attention. It was because the Berlin issue had just become so embedded in the bureaucratic minds in the western capitals that no matter how insignificant a matter was, it became the center of attraction even at the highest levels of the Department and the foreign offices.

I would say that what we were trying to achieve on Berlin matters starting in 1968 was relatively minor. Our objectives, as put forth in these strategy papers, were relatively "small potatoes." Berlin as an entity was very important, but our objectives at the beginning were very modest indeed, almost mundane. Our occupation of Berlin by the late 1960s had become quite routine; our primary efforts were essentially to improve the effectiveness of these routinehow the trucks would go over the Autobahn, etc. They were not issues of high policy; they were essentially administrative matters which in my judgment did not really warrant all the high level attention they attracted. These administrative matters, by the end of the 1960s, were no longer issues that might give rise to tensions or passions; they were strictly mundane day-to-day activities. They might have been potential inflammatory sparks in the early 1960s, especially after the Wall was erected, but 8-9 years later, they were strictly routine and passionless.

There had been negotiations about Berlin at the end of the Eisenhower administrations and the beginning of the Kennedy administratiobefore my time in Bonn. They had not gone anywhere and were followed by a period of tensions. But, by the late 1960s, the situation was calm and all we were trying to do was to improve the working relationships among all the parties involved. I think it may well have been true that Paris and London and the West Germans may have had some different objectives. Ours were quite modest.

It is also true that a large number of American bureaucrats had a stake in Berlin by the end of the 1960s. Many had devoted much of their working career to these issues and felt a personal attachment to the folk-lore that had grown up about Berlin. For example, the contingency network ("Live Oak"), which I mentioned earlier, was in part located in NATO headquarters, and in part in Norfolfor the naval aspects. Another example: Washington had an ambassadorial group which needed support from various parts of the American bureaucracy, not to mention people in the English, West German and French embassies and their counterparts in London, Bonn and Paris. By the end of the 1960s, Berlin was already beyond a "growth industry." It engaged a huge number of people all over the western world, not to mention in Moscow and East Berlin. In Washington, I think, almost every agency had a Berlin section or "experts" on the subject. An agency could not claim importance unless it had something to do with Berlin. The whole issue of Berlin had gotten bureaucratically out of hand.

The bureaucracy had just not caught up with the changing story of Berlin. The change was slow, but the Berlin situation of the late 1960s was far different than that of the early 1960s. It became increasingly less tense, less dangerous. The institutional arrangements did not keep up with the chancing times. As I said, an ambassadorial group (with the EUR assistant secretary representing the U.S.) met starting in the early 1960s to discuss specific issues related to the occupation of Berlin, including periodic crises. By the end of the decade, the group still existed, but much of the work, which by then was primarily routine, was delegated to lower echelon officials, e.g., a desk officer or an embassy political counselor or officer. The names of the principals still remained on the letter-head or other official documents, but the decision making had been delegated down in the bureaucracies. In other words, the shell of the various organizations set up in a crisis atmosphere still existed on paper in Washington, but the functions were really exercised by the bureaucrats. On the other hand, if a problem arose, then all levels of government wanted to be consulted. It was not a very efficient arrangement.

Q: Let's talk about any differences that may have arisen among the allies on the various proposals to simplify the administration of Berlin.

LEDSKY: I think serious negotiations probably started in 1970. The West Germans wanted something entirely different from what we thought might be achievable. They were hoping for an arrangement that would end the occupation with West Germany stepping in to at least begin to have some saand legal authority, if at all possiblover the administration of West Berlin. So the West Germans had different objectives from us. I think we managed to convince the French and the British that our immediate goals should be limited to some specific objectives which were essentially of a procedural or management nature. They agreed to follow our lead in these negotiations with the Soviets. I was never quite clear about what the Soviets wanted; they might have hoped that if they played their cards correctly, they might get the allies to withdraw from Berlior at least minimize their presence and influence.

By the time the negotiations concluded in 1971, we had entered into the detente mode, which started with the advent to power of Willy Brandt and the Nixon administration. The attitude of these two new administrations created a whole new atmosphere for our negotiations. The negotiations, which started in earnest by the end of 1969, lasted throughout 1970 and were concluded in 1971, thereby spanning two American administrations.

Q: Tell us what you did on these negotiations, when you went to work for Jim Sutterlin in EUR?

LEDSKY: Once negotiations began. Once Ken Rush arrived in Germany to succeed Henry Cabot Lodgmid 1969, he became the lead negotiator. He was, of course, ably supported by Jock Dean. Jock drafted most of the documents dealing with the negotiations. I didn't have anything to do with the negotiations while in S/S (Executive Secretariat). I did have lunch periodically with Jim and Alan Thompson, who was on the Berlin desk, just to keep up to date, but I had no involvement in the negotiations while in S/S.

Q: What was the situation when you transferred to EUR to work on the Berlin desk?

LEDSKY: I got there just as the discussions were becoming serious. The probing period, during which each side delivered set speeches, was coming to an end, There was a period in 1969-70, when negotiations seemed to have hit a dead end. The same standard lines were being repeated over and over again by all the participants and there seemed to be no forward movement. I think Rush's arrival seemed to give the negotiations some new impetus. He took the bull by the horn and became a catalyst. He began to talk to Egon Bahr, sometimes behind the back of the British and French. He also opened his own private channel to the White House, where the president knew him personally and well, thereby bypassing the Department of State. He started a series of secret meetings with the Soviets, the Germans and others, which he reported at great length to the Department with messages long in verbiage and short in substance. His meaningful messages went to the White House, from which he then got the instructions he needed and wanted, mostly from Kissinger and Hal Sonnenfeldt.

So the nature of the negotiations took a sharp detour. From a straightforward and open four-power talks, they turned into discussions essentially driven by Ambassador Rush playing his own hand in the hopes of reaching some acceptable accommodations in as brief a time as possible. It was, I think, in the annals of negotiations a somewhat unusual process. Kissinger acknowledges participating in this process in some of the books he has written; his version is, of course, that the whole concept and masterminding came from him. Rush has also taken credit for this sharp turn of events. I think, in fact, that it was Jock Dean, together with Marty Hillenbrand and Jim Sutterlin, who was both the conceptualizer and the driving force behind this new push for reaching some resolution. We on the Berlin desk were generally aware of what was going on in Bonn; I didn't see the communications, nor did I know all of the specifics, but we knew that something was cooking. We usually drafted, or at least were in on the drafting of instructions for each negotiating session. There were a number of these sessions that became public; their convening was announced ahead of time. If there were any press announcements, they would have been rather perfunctory and innocuous. However, the serious negotiations were taking place out of the spotlight. They were managed by Jock Dean, who was assisted by David Anderson in Bonn and David Klein in Berlin. I would be on the phone almost daily to each of them. Our role was primarily to shape the document that eventually was to emerge after a year or a year and a half of negotiations.

I think it is fair to say that the general outline of this document was not too dissimilar from what we had hoped for and sketched out in 1968-69. The Soviets agreed to a set of procedural changes, which made life in Berlin and the travel back and forth much more efficient and much less filled with red tape. The enclave at Steinstuecken was liberated; the wall around it came down so that it could be connected to the rest of West Berlin and could be reached by road instead of just helicopter. The rules which governed access to West Berlin were clarified; the Soviets guaranteed in writing that air and surface access to Berlin would continue. This replaced some military-to-military understandings that had been reached in 1945-48. For the first time, the Soviets stated in writing that the allies had a right of access to Berlin by air and surface.

The creation of such a document by the Soviet had been one of our goals from the beginning. When you read this document, it seems modest enough; it is not a clarion call by any means and is entirely devoid of any mention of the larger Cold War environment. It was packaged by the White House, however, to appear to be part of a much larger, grandiose plan. The document was signed in Helsinki as part of a ceremony, which included the approval of other more grandiose detente agreements. I think, in essence, this agreement enabled us and the allies to bring forth a small set of improvements in West Berlin, as well as a guarantee of access to the city from West Germany. It was not a grandiose declaration of the end of an era; it was never intended as that and it was not. It had modest goals which were achieved. It included a series of compromises both in language and in actions. There were trade-offs between various goals. This document needs to be viewed through our perception that the quadripartite occupation of Berlin would last for many more years moras far as we could tell. If anyone should be interested in learning more about this document, I would refer them to a book that Jim Sutterlin and Dave Klein wrote.

It was our view that the Wall was there to stay, for as far as we could see. At the same time, we felt that the allies would stay in Berlin for many, many more years. We did not see an acceptable exit strategnor were we really looking for one because we wanted to be a force when Berlin's future was to be determined. While I thought that the existing situation would continue for a long time, I and others did believe that eventually it would change, even though we didn't have the slightest idea of when and how. What we were trying to do in 1968-71, was to establish an environment in Berlin which would allow the allies to remain in that city for many years without the daily hassles that had taken place since 1948.

Q: You suggest that there was a difference in views between the NSC and the Department, with the latter being that the agreement was essentially a Berlin issue and the NSC viewing it as part of a much broader policy.

LEDSKY: I don't know how Kissinger viewed the agreement as it was negotiated. After the fact he said that he viewed it as part of a much larger framework. I remember quite vividly when the time would come for an annual report that was viewed as Kissinger's world view. In those reports, it appeared that we had some broad world-wide strategy, of which Berlin was an important cog. I viewed that as sheer "baloney." Even today, Kissinger talks about the Berlin agreement as a key component to his world-wide strategy. He suggests that he was the force that really brought it off, talking to Ambassador Dobrynin and to Bahr on a personal channel, bringing off an agreement that had great significance in his east-west strategy. In fact, I don't believe that Kissinger really believed in detente; the West Germans were the moving force behind it and Kissinger eventually adopted it as his own. But detente was not his idea; he resisted it firmly at the beginning and only later embraced it, eventually adopting in his writings as his own.

On the Berlin negotiations, there was a certain tension between the Department and the NSC. We in the Department knew that there were some secret communications between the ambassador and the NSC, but we didn't know the contents. Jock Dean was very loyal to the ambassador; he never shared what he knew with us. We didn't know what Rush was trying to achieve. We knew there were secret meetings with the Soviets, but didn't know their nature, nor the topics under discussion. Periodically, we would receive an instruction from the NSC or the ambassador took a position which we didn't understanit was usually a position that seemed to make little sense to us. Or, the instructions seemed to be off-track from what we understood to be our policy. In retrospect, I must assume that there were some communications between the Soviets and the West Germans and us, which resulted in negotiations taking a different track from where we thought they were. But these detours in the end didn't really add much to the final document which, as I said, looked very much like what we might have hoped to achieve back in 1968-69.

I read a lot of the secret correspondence during my NSC tour. I had to read them then because Kenneth Rush was trying to get them cleared so that he could use them for a book which he wanted to write. It was a strange turn of fate that I would be the one who would be asked to review the documents then as part of my NSC assignment. Jerry Livingstone also knows the story well because he was pressing for the release of the correspondence. I never expected to be involved again, but one morning the whole lot was dumped on my desk and I was asked to do the staff work. I read them, recommended those which I though might be released and gave them to some one up the chain of command who made the final decision. As I remember, Rush got some of the classified documents released, but not all, by any means. It could be that by now all may have been released because the 25-year rule is in effect.

Q: Was there anything in the process or the substance that surprised you?

LEDSKY: I was surpriseand upsewhen I read the various attacks on the Department that found their way into the media. The flavor of these comments was that the Department had very little to do with the negotiations and that they were in effect led by the NSC. There was a lot of nasty anti-State commentary.

I will say that I did not conclude that the Berlin negotiations were a model to be emulated under any circumstances. I would have handled the process much differently. I would not have relied on the secret Rush-White House channels, which kept the Department in the darmostly. I can't quarrel with the final agreement; as I said, it very much reflected what we had sought at the beginning in 1968-69. The Soviets did try to pull a few "fast ones" during their private dialogue with Kissinger and Bahr. In my judgement, after having read what ideas and views were being suggested in these secret channels, the Soviets were pretending to be the benign stewards of Berlin and therefore puzzled by the allied demands because "all was well" according to the Soviets. In the final analysis, I don't think this under-the-table process made any difference to the substance of the agreement. My distaste was for the process and the NSC's not so subtle effort to keep the Department in the dark. Rush relished working directly with the White House and was not concerned at all with the Department. The Berlin negotiations pattern fitted very nicely with the general effort by the NSC led by Kissinger to bypass Secretary Rogers and the Department on many key issues. I didn't realize how serious this bypass was until I read the documents at the NSC in the 1980s. We knew at the time that we were being bypassed, but had no idea about what nor how much.

The agreement was signed in Berlin by the four ambassadors. I don't remember anyone from Washington going to the ceremony. I don't think that anyone in the Department saw this as a major achievement or a terribly significant event.

Q: Back to your desk tour. Did you get a chance to travel to Berlin during this period?

LEDSKY: More than once. The city was in constant change. It was different from the last time I had visited in 1969. I went to Steinstuecken by road for the first time; it had been by helicopter previously. A public bus route had been initiated. I think the Berliners' morale was raised; they anticipated a day when they would be far freer to move around, as well as to and from West Germany. Economically, the standards of living were obviously improving. It is true that incidents at the Wall continued, as they had been from the time I started working on Berlin in 1964. There were always the shooting of people trying to climb over the Wall or the drowning of people trying to swim to West Berlin. We would invariably proteswith no resulting satisfaction.

I had been going to East Berlin since the beginning of my Bonn tour. I continued that practice while on the Berlin desk in the Department. There were noticeable changes in that part of Berlin as well. When I first visited East Berlin, the center of the city was still a bombed-out rubble. By the early 1970s, reconstruction had begun and the rubble was replaced by Soviet-style buildings. So, visually, the city improved, although the new buildings were hardly a model of modernity. A level of normalcy slowly returned; there were restaurants, state stores (which carried very little merchandise), and the lines of people waiting were getting shorter. So standards were risinslowly and painfully.

Q: Did you meet with some Soviets when you went to East Berlin?

LEDSKY: I always met with some Soviet officials when I went to East Berlin, but not with any East Germans. We met with one or two Soviet embassy officials, who had been designated to be the liaisons with western representatives. Our conversations always revolved around current events in Berlin and on the corridors to and from the city. The Soviets tried to probe our intentions by using personnel below the ambassador. I don't know that I can say that they actually c0hanged their policies in the 1965-71 period. They were always fairly friendly, but I don't think they were ready to move from their oft-stated positions.

Q: Did the question of U.S. recognition of the GDR (German Democratic Republic) come up during this 1971-74 period?

LEDSKY: I don't think the issue was ever forgotten, but I don't remember it becoming a point of serious discussion during that period. There was a major change in German attitudes toward the GDR between 1964 and 1974. It was gradual, but certainly palpable. I think I mentioned before that in 1964, the Holstein doctrine swayed German attitudes. It prohibited any contact between East and West Germany and tried to block others from such contact as well. Slowly, but surely, that doctrine was abandoned, when Willy Brandt first became foreign minister and then chancellor. He pushed, and succeeded in changing West German policy to one of friendly relations with the GDR. Step by steand very slowly at thathe West Germans tried to overcome any communication problems with their eastern neighbors by embracing theworking with the GDR, providing financial support, etc. This gradual move toward normalcy eventually led to the decision to recognize the GDR as a sovereign country, thereby in some ways accepting the existence of a two-Germany situation.

Q: Was there a difference among the western allies on Brandt's new policy and the subsequent evolution of it?

LEDSKY: Yes. I don't know how strong the French and the British felt about it. The French really opposed detente, except in those situations when they were in charge. In fact, the French had close ties to the East Germans, but did not really support closer East-West German ties. The British were with us; they were reluctant to establish any kind of relations with the East Germans. The British and we were indifferent to closer East-West German ties, although I think we did mouth encouraging words supporting such rapprochement. We didn't really want to take the lead in East-West German relations. The French probably would have liked to take the lead. Everyone played their hands very cautiously and carefully; it was a touchy issue.

Q: Did we have a plan which would lead to integration or did we just operate on a day-to-day, case-by-case manner?

LEDSKY: I don't think we really had a good idea where we were going. Today, U.S. foreign and military policy insists that there be an "exit strategy" before you begin a new policy. I view that as a bizarre approacridiculous. We spent forty years in Germany and never had an "exit strategy." We didn't know how the German situation would ever be "normalized" or that it would ever end. We assumed that sometime down the division of Germany would end, but had no idea of how or when. Indeed, I think if we had had an "exit strategy," I would guess that the division of Germany might still be with us today. Our failure to have such a strategy allowed us to stay and continue our presence, which eventually led to success. I did view the 1974 agreement as a step toward normalization, but never as part of an "exit strategy." I think the "wiser" heads like Kissinger and Sonnenfeldt will tell you that they had a vision of how the European scenario would play out, but I didn't see it at the time and have doubts about it today. I think most of my colleagues in the Department shared my skepticism about a "vision" or "exit strategy."

Open negotiation is almost impossible to pull off. As I said, I do have a strong sense that the idea of an "exit" strategi.e. using negotiations to resolve a long standing issuis probably a mistake because we are, as fallible human beings, quite limited in our ability to predict the future course of events. To tie yourself to an "exit" strategy, I think, is a prescription for failure. Logic suggests that a country should have such a strategy, but in fact, it is not required; you can resolve issues without a grand strategy. I must admit that my German experience taught me how to negotiate, which became useful to me in subsequent assignments, such as when I worked on the "Status of Forces" agreement.

Q: Tell us a little about negotiating strategies.

LEDSKY: I do believe that trade-offs among the participants in the bargaining are critical to the success of a negotiation. One has to try to compartmentalize the issues and thereby simplifying the negotiations. I learned how to do that by participating in the Berlin negotiations. I think the American negotiating style is quite acceptable; it incorporates such key elements as trade-offs, the initial tabling of maximum positions from which compromises acceptable to all can be negotiated, etc. This style has proven to be quite effective in reaching satisfactory resolutions.

Q: Did you draw any general lessons from your experiences in Germany and the final agreement?

LEDSKY: For one, I have concluded that the kind of negotiation that we undertook would probably be impossible as conceived in 1968-69. I don't think today we could contemplate a serious negotiation conducted by four or five people sitting around a table. There would need to be a lot of private discussions among two or three of the participants, assisted by considerable prodding from the outside, for it to be successful. Under the circumstances of the early 1970s, I think most of the people working on this issue in the Department had only a very vague idea of how to proceed.

In that sense, the secret negotiating channels, while not recommended because it bypassed a lot of people who could have made very useful contributions, were probably usefugiven the number of players who had to be at the table. Multi-party negotiations are always difficult and may have to take paths that would not normally be useful. I don't think one can expect multilateral negotiations to be successfuas we are now trying in the Far East regarding North Korea. There are just too many disparate goals brought to the table by the different countries for these to be reconciled and for the negotiations to bring forth a consensus. The only possible avenue for success is to have some side deals between two or more of the countries involved. Then, the process might come to a successful conclusion.

Q: Did you have any other duties besides the Berlin agreement in the 1970-71 period?

LEDSKY: Indeed I did. I was in charge of a small section that dealt with East German issues and we had some work to do on that front. We also worked on east-west issues, although they were mostly mundane. After the Berlin agreement was signed, we worked on broader detente issues. We worked on the Helsinki meeting. We evolved from a section primarily focused on Berlin to one that worked on broader issues.

Q: In 1972, you moved up to become the deputy director of the Office of Central European affairs.

LEDSKY: That is correct. That section handled bilateral issues with Austria, Switzerland, and the two Germanies. The head of the section was Scott George. We had about 8 or 9 officers and I spent sometime on management issues. I worked on a variety of issues as they arose, although most of the heavy lifting on political issues was done by George. Because I had had more experience with German issues than anybody else in the section, I spent some of my time helping the office director with those issues.

The only major issue that I remember dealing with was the CSCE (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe) meeting in Helsinki. CSCE was a work in progress; the Helsinki meeting agenda was filled with German issues. Detente was in full bloom, so we worked on some German-Soviet issues, which resulted in lot of consultations on both sides. Then, there was still some work to be done on Berlin. The agreement did not change the nature of the allied presence in West Berlin. So, we had the normal run of the mill issues that arose from that factor. It is true that whatever interest the Seventh Floor had had in Berliwhich wasn't really that much during the negotiationdropped even further after the agreement.

I did get a chance to visit some of the countries for which we were responsibllike Austria and West Germany. I was also in Brussels on a couple of occasions, primarily for "Live Oak" conferences. I also did a certain amount of public speaking in the U.S., which took me around the country. I can't say that this tour was particularly taxing, time wise. It was not one of my more exciting tours.

Q: By this time, you had worked on German affairs for about ten years. Was it getting to be "old hat"?

LEDSKY: No. In 1974, I left German issues kicking and screaming. I wanted to continue to work on those issues. I should say that throughout my career, I did not seek change for change's sake, even though I worked in a system that was built on the idea of continual change. Most often, I was perfectly satisfied with my assignments, but I really was reluctant to change. What made German issues particularly attractive was that they kept changing and evolving; it was hardly ever a static situation. Furthermore, my responsibilities were always expanding.

But in 1974, I was told that I would have to serve my next tour somewhere overseas; I had been in the U.S. long enough. I was not that anxious to leave Washington. The family was well settled; the kids were happily in school and would have loved to stay, but I recognized that I was a member of a Foreign Service and would have to go overseas.

I was first assigned to USEC in Brussels (our mission to the European Community organization) as the political officer. I was supposed to go to French language training first. However, the central Personnel Office objected and said that I had been in Europe too long, or had worked on European affairs too long. This policy had been instigated by Kissinger, who wanted Foreign Service officers to have assignments outside their region of expertise. That was the GLOP program (global outlook and programming). I was looking forward to learning French and to working in Brussels. I had talked to our ambassador about the assignment and had seen the quarters that the Ledsky family were to occupy, they were occupied by George Bardos whom I was to succeed. So I was not a happy camper when Personnel reached its decision.

I then found myself in limbo on my next assignment, while the bureaucracy was trying to decide what to do with me. I continued to work in German affairs. Several possibilities, like consul general in Belfast, Ireland, cropped up. They all fell through for one reason or another. Finally, in the summer, 1974, Art Hartman, the assistant secretary, called me to his office and asked whether I would be interested in becoming the deputy director of the Office of Southern Europe (SE). I did not see that as much of a step forward; it was a lateral move as far as I was concerned. So I really didn't jump with joy, but there were no other options available at that moment. So I agreed.

Q: Before we move to your next assignment, let me ask what your views were about Kissinger's GLOP program? Was it a mistake to move people from region to region just for the sake of "expanding their horizons?" Would the Foreign Service have been better served by continuing its program of specialization?

LEDSKY: I did see some value in expanding horizons and making Foreign Service officers knowledgeable in a variety of regions and functional specialties. I also recognized that with some people, a deep specialization was to the Department's benefit. But in general, I had no objections to the notion that an officer should master two or more regional and/or functional subjects. I understand that the issue of specialization versus wider experience is a real management dilemma. It is difficult to ask an officer to learn a language that might be used only in one or two countries and then ask him or her to work in a region far removed from that country. The Department must have highly specialized personnel. On the other hand, it is not necessarily helpful for either the individual or the system, to keep the officer working his or whole career on one specific country, or even region. Variety in assignments can improve an officer's contribution to the work of the Department, but so can concentration on one country, particularly one with a unique language. So it is a dilemma.

As I said, in my case, I didn't think that my work on Germany for about ten years had limited my value to the Department, because German issues were in such a state of flux that although the general topic might seem the same, the underlying conditions changed so often and so rapidly that the policy challenges were never the same. On paper, I appeared to have worked on Berlin for ten years; in fact, every year the issues were different, so that there was very little relationship between what I was working on in 1964 from that which I worked on in 1974. I think an officer should be able to develop different sets of skills during his or her career, but that can be done either working on one geographic location or functional area or in several. There may be limits if one is assigned to a relatively static area or function, but that was certainly not true for Berlin or Germany. In the latter case, the issues changed so often that it was almost impossible to go "stale." The wider the experience one has, the better the contribution one can make. However, a geographic or functional change is not necessary in all cases to gain that wider experience.

It does, however, extract some personal sacrifice. I was annoyed that the system had so much trouble with this new concept, particularly since I viewed the EC assignment as something entirely different what I had been working on in prior assignments. In the first place, the job focused on many, many other issues besides Germany. Furthermore, although it was designated as "political officer," it would have had an economic content. It would have required the knowledge of French, which I did not have. So I saw the EC assignment as meeting the objectives of GLOP: expanding my knowledge far beyond Germany and political issues. So I had no problem with the concept; only with its administration. As it turned out, I ended up in the same regional bureau, although my work was entirely different from what I had done previously. I think the SE assignment was consistent with the GLOP concept, but it certainly did not fit the criteria that Personnel had established, which blocked my Brussels assignment. Ironically, the SE assignment did fit the GLOP concept because I would be covering Turkey, which had been in a different bureau (NEA), but had recently been moved to EUR because the Seventh Floor had decided that Greece, Turkey and Cyprus should be handled by the same assistant secretary who was responsible for NATO. Had Turkey remained in NEA and had I been assigned to work on it, then my assignment would have met the GLOP criteriout of region. But, because it had just been moved to EUR, one could have said that my assignment to SE was in violation of GLOP, as had been determined that the Brussels assignment was. So, the administration of GLOP became much too mechanical; it looked at surface appearances, such as geographic location, rather than substance. So, I didn't really think very highly of the program's management. I would have much preferred to go to Brussels, particularly compared with what I considered to be a lateral move within the same geographic bureau. But I had no choice and it did extend our Washington tour, which made the family happy.

It should be noted that one of the reasons my assignment to GTI (Office of Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs) went through was because in 1974 Kissinger left his dual-hatted role, NSC and Department, and became full time Secretary of State. One of his management objectives was to start fresh with a new staff in GTI because of events that took place in the summer 1974, which revolved essentially around Cyprus. Those events led to the collapse of the military dictatorship in Greece and the Turkish invasion of Cyprus; the whole area was in an uproar. The timing was particularly unfortunate because this was the period during which Kissinger devoted much attention to the Israel-Palestine conflict and its resolution, as well as to other hot issues.

In retrospect, of course, the SE assignment was a very good one, which started me in some new directions. At the time, however, I thought that the Department was woefully inadequate when it came to managing personnel matters.

Q: Let's talk a little about your SE assignment. What did EUR know about Greece, Turkey and Cyprus?

LEDSKY: Exactly. These were not issues that the EUR assistant secretary had dealt with previously. He got stuck with a hornets' nesas if he didn't already have a full plate. So, both Hartman and his chief deputy, Wells Stabler, were really presented with a challenge. When I joined SE in August, 1974, there was a complete change of personnel. The new office director was Bill Eagleton, who had worked in the Near East. I was the deputy office director, whose knowledge of the three countries went way back when I started in INa long, long time during which many changes had taken place. Our predecessors had had Near East experience and they were reassigned to that area. Tom Boyatt, who had been the Cyprus desk officer was also reassigned because he had tried to bring the Cyprus issue to the attention of the secretary; he predicted an outbreak of hostilities unless the U.S. applied heavy pressure to all sides. He was ignored and was replaced by a new officer.

As I said, 1974 was the year during which Kissinger left the NSC and became full time secretary. Regardless of his physical whereabouts, I think he did try to become the desk officer for Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. He would not pay any attention, not only not to Boyatt, but also not to others in that GTI office. All were predicting dire consequences to the drift that was taking place. As a result, so they were dispatched to other assignments.

Q: So you found yourself in a new office, which had just been transferred to the jurisdiction of a new assistant secretary, and the staff had almost all just arrived. And you had to face issues of war and peace. Was that unusual?

LEDSKY: It was very strange. To make matters even worst, I hardly had time to find my desk, given the continual bombardment of crises to which we were subjected. As I said, my background in Greece, Turkey and Cyprus matters was woefully inadequate and out of date. On the other hand, I was intrigued by the job; it was highly operational with lots of new challenges daily. Despite the predicted crises, neither the EUR front office nor the Seventh Floor paid much attention to what was going on in the area. Even as issues jelled, we were pretty much on our own. Bill Eagleton was very nice to work for and knew a lot about the general area, although he too was on a crash course to learn about Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. I must admit that for several months, I felt like a fish our of water.

As the crises mounted, Art Hartman had to devote an increasing amount of time on our issues, as did Wells Stabler. Kissinger also became much more involved, as did the undersecretary for political affairs, Joe Sisco. Phil Habib also spent much of his time on these issues. So, eventually, we were not lacking high level attention. The problems in the area started while Kissinger was still the NSC advisor. I remember going to the White House on a couple of occasions with Hartman. I started going to the Seventh Floor almost daily. This exposure was brand new to me, and it continued as the Greek Junta government fell and was replaced by Karamanlis and his democratic government. As 1974 went on, the war on Cyprus was winding down with the Turkish army in control of half of the island. That created a major refugee problem. Then our ambassador in Cyprus, Rodger Davies, was assassinated. Bill Crawford, our ambassador in Lebanon, was sent to Nicosia to take over the embassy. It was just one crisis after another.

I had never been to any of the countries I was asked to cover. I had some historical background stemming from my days in the GTI section of INR s I was not an entire neophyte in the area, although I had a lot of catching up to do.

Q: Let's talk about the situation in the area at the time you arrived in SE. You have already mentioned the Turkish invasion of Cyprus and the overthrow of the Junta in Athens. What was happening on Cyprus itself?

LEDSKY: I arrived in SE during the last week or so of the war. We were working on trying to implement a cease-fire to stabilize the situation on the island.

A number of actions had taken or were taking place. Our ambassador, Rodger Davies, and an embassy staff members were shot by a local policeman. He was subsequently arrested and given a very short prison sentence. It took three or four years before the Cypriot government finally even made an arrest and then I think it was only our pressure that forced them to do that. The Cypriots stalled and stalled, I think they knew from the beginning who the perpetrator was. Eventually, we succeed in getting the killer arrested. There was considerable speculation that the government itself may have been involved in the murder, but I have never seen any firm evidence to support that theory. There may have been elements of the ORKA, the Greek resistance force, that was involved; the policeman who shot Davies was a member of that organization. My own guess was that the shooting was an accident; I don't think murder was the intention as it didn't gain them anything and in fact lost them a lot of support. The policemen was shooting into the embassy, perhaps as a warning, but in doing so one of them killed two people.

Archbishop Makarios, the president of Cyprus, was subjected to an assassination attempt during the Turkish invasion. He had managed to escape and fled first to New York and then to Washington. He became one of the first issues in August-September that we had to deal with. Then, we had to deal with the issue of population exchange, a proposal that both sides in Cyprus were discussing.

Many Turks were stuck in the southern part of the island near the British air force base. It was agreed that they could move north in exchange for Greeks who had been caught in the north and who would be permitted to migrate south. A "Green" line was drawn across the island in August, 1974 which still exists today.

There was an effort made at this time to convince the Turkish government to withdraw its troops from the island. In the fall of 1974, there were discussions in the UN aimed at eliminating the division on the islandtalks that continue still, 30 years later. I was involved in each of these crises and negotiations. In addition, I worried about the security of our embassy and its staff, the status and well-being of the refugees. All of these events were occurring in roughly the same time period, making for a lively time. At this time, or perhaps soon thereafter, the Seventh Floor became fully engaged, often on a daily basis. Kissinger was personally involved, as were Sisco and Habib. As I mentioned, Sisco had been involved for several months even before the outbreak of hostilities. In the Spring of 1974, he took a trip to the region trying to contain the situation. He tried to convince the Turks not to invade and the Greeks not to try to impose "enosis," (union) the Greek desire to unite Cyprus with the mainland. This happened after the transfer of responsibilities for Greek, Cypriot and Turkish affairs to EUR, but before I reported to the SE office.

Sisco was sent to the area to see what could be done to lower the tensions. Hartman was in New York with the secretary. Our office drafted papers and talking points. We also tried mightily to get our embassy in Nicosia to function effectively again. We also pressed the Cypriot government to find the ambassador's killers and to deal with them. There was some speculation that the Cypriot police or some of their officers had participated in this heinous crime. We kept pushing the government to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Our major interest in the area was to prevent the Greeks and Turks from starting armed conflict, which in addition to bringing tensions and unforeseeable consequences to NATO, might well have destroyed the island of Cyprus. We also wanted to support the re-establishment of a civilian government in Greece. We were interested in reaching an understanding with Turkey about the future of the island so that it would not interfere with good U.S.-Turkish relationships.

Q: You describe your work as careening from crisis to crisis. Was there an overall U.S. strategy?

LEDSKY: Our job was basically to "put out fires." That job fell to us because the British stepped aside and were not prepared to take an active role. After the war, the U.S. was forced to take all the steps necessary to stabilize the situation. Much of our policy was driven by the political pressure brought to bear on our government by the domestic Greek lobby. When Makarios landed in New York, the American-Greek community was really mobilized to lobby the American government to do something to reverse the Turkish invasion of Cyprus and to restore order on the island.

Q: Did the Greek-American community show much interest in events in Athens?

LEDSKY: That situation quickly resolved itself so that the political pressure really had to do with Cyprus. I think the Cyprus crisis of 1974 mobilized the Greek-American community in a way that it had never been before. In that year and thereafter, it became a major lobbying group, which put considerable pressure on U.S. administrationparticularly on foreign affairs. This was a new development, which continues to this day. Cyprus was the catalyst that drove the political activities of the Greek community in 1974 and for many years thereafter, although in more recent years, it has broadened its focus. There has always been a tinge of anti-Turkism to its positions.

Q: It was in 1974 that you began your work on Cyprus. Did you begin to develop a framework that you found useful in later years?

LEDSKY: Not really. For those who have never been involved in Cypriot affairs, the island is a mystery. It certainly was to me when I started to work on it in 1974. As time passed, it became clearer to me what the dimensions of the problem were. I made my first trip to Cyprus towards the end of 1974. I was then able to personally observe the complexity and the absurdness of the situation.

First of all, I could only get to Cyprus by British military transport. There was no commercial air service to Cyprus at the end of 1974. I had to go London, hop on a British military aircraft which took me to a British base, which was English sovereign territory. When Cyprus became independent, the British had demanded and got two parts of Cyprus over which they retained sovereignty. One of these sections was used as a major military base, including an airport. I was met by the American chargï¿½ and was then driven to Nicosia, 60 or 70 miles away. When we arrived in Nicosia, I saw the "Green" linthe dividing line between the Greek and Turkish parts of the island. I must say that the "line" reminded me quite strongly of the Berlin Wall. The "line" was a crude barbed wire fence with buildings on both sides occupied by armed forces. Nicosia was a divided city, much like Berlin. It is hard to describe the division; one really has to see it to fully comprehend the nature of the Greek-Turkish divide. The "line" stretching out from Nicosia was more an imagined divide; there was no major physical barrier, but a set of watch posts in fields and towns.

The division in 1974 was hard to understand because before the 1974 war, the Turkish minoritless than 20% lived essentially in enclaves in the larger cities and towns. They had no discernible geographic areas which might be called "Turkish." There were some Turkish villages in addition to the enclaves, but no large areas were seen as "Turkish." Before 1974, it would have been accurate to describe Cyprus as a unified island populated by a majority Greek population with a Turkish minority spread out in pockets, and living adjacent to their Greek neighbors.

In 1974, the Turks invaded the island, landing in the north and moving south. As they moved in that direction, the Greek population fled before them, becoming refugees in their own country. The Turks occupied about one-third of the island; when a cease fire was agreed to in the summer of 1974, a line was drawn between the Greek and Turkish parts of the island; that became known as the "Green" line. In most of the country, this line was drawn arbitrarily, forcing troops to retreat behind it. In fact, in Nicosia, the line was just re-established; it had existed there for sometime as the line between the Greek and Turkish sectors of the city. It was a new dividing line for the rest of the country. I think it was very hard, if not nearly impossible, to understand the nature of this fundamental change in 1974 without seeing it with your own eyes. The island was filled with refugees: Turks fleeing the enclaves of the cities and towns going north and the Greeks fleeing their lands in the northern part of the island and going south. An agreement was reached in early fall of 1974 on a population exchange.

The geographic division of 1974 was a new phenomenon for the Cypriots. It had an overwhelming impact on the island and its people, which lasts to this day. It is very hard to imagine re-establishing a society which was destroyed in 1974. It is particularly difficult to imagine a solution if one saw what was happening in 1974.

Q: When you visited Cyprus in late 1974, were there any signs of an eventual settlement?

LEDSKY: There were some ideas being floated in Cyprus, which might have led to a settlement. For example, the Greek Cypriots, quite wisely in retrospect, had brought their refugees south and tried to resettle them in existing Greek communities. They were not placed in refugee camps, as is so often done, e.g., the Palestinians. These refugees from the north were actually resettled.

They were able to retain their voting rights in their former communities, now occupied by the Turks. That allowed the Cypriot parliament to include people who had lived in the north until the 1974 war. Thus, the refugee population were represented in parliament. In this way, the Greek Cypriot government in a sense was preparing the refugees to return home. This move suggests that the Greek Cypriot leadership was looking forward to a return of the pre-1974 situation on the island. That was a plus. On the minus side, the actions taken by the Greek Cypriot government created a certain amount of irredentism among the refugees, even while they were being resettled.

There were other signs that might have led one to believe that one country would be reconstituted and reconstructed. For example, the electricity system on the island was a single system. Even though the generating station was in the south, the north continued to receive its share to meet its demands, all on a gratis basis, a situation that is in existence today. The same was true about the water distribution system. The Greeks continued to share these utilities with the north, based on the assumption, I would guess, that unification would come sooner than later. Therefore, from the beginning, it was apparent that both sides recognized that division could not be eternal and that reunification was bound to come.

The U.S. and the international community also viewed the split on the island as a temporary development, which could be quickly resolved. September, 1974 talks between the Greek, Turkish and the Cypriot sides were initiated in New York. The focus was on the reconstitution of a single nation on Cyprus. Those discussions covered most, if not all, of the contentious issues that led to separation in the first place. The assumption of the negotiators was that the reestablishment of a single nation was achievable in a short time. The Greek-American lobby supported the reunification very strongly, as did Archbishop Makarios and the government in Athens. They all supported the rebuilding of the country, the departure of the Turkish troops, and the restoration of a sovereign and unified Cyprus.

For the first six or seven years after the split, the Turkish government also viewed the division as temporary. It also felt that negotiations could lead to a unified Cypruto something like the pre-1974 situation. The Turkish Cypriots were reluctant to return to a country unified under the 1960 Constitution, which they thought Makarios had violated in 1963 when the first crisis arose and the UN had to intervene militarily. I think they were right in that view.

Until about the end of the 1970s, there were continual negotiations about restoration of a single country on Cyprus. I thinand this is controversial the reasons that negotiations did not succeed was due to the premature death of Makarios in 1977. That terminated the possibility of the Greek Cypriots reaching an understanding with the Turkish Cypriots. Makarios had been a central figure in the negotiations. He came to New York and Washington in 1974, before returning to Cyprus the following year. He was central to the negotiations; he in fact represented the Greek Cypriot community. Glafkos Clerides, who was the acting president in the Archbishop's absence, was not allowed to speak for that community unless his words had been blessed by Makarios. Clerides did not have a free hand in the negotiations. Clerides and Denktash did reach an understanding in the late 1970s, which could have been a basis for further and perhaps even final negotiations had Makarios allowed it.

In 1977, Clark Clifford was sent by President Carter to Nicosia, Athens and Ankara. I was part of his delegation. When we saw Makarios, he agreed to a bizonal and bicommunal settlement of Cyprus. This was a major break-through because for the first time, the Greek Cypriots agreed that the Turkish Cypriot could have an area of their own, which would be autonomous and run by them. It is true that the territory that Makarios agreed could be turned over to the Turkish Cypriots was smal20% of the island; nevertheless this was a major departure from previous Greek Cypriot positions. For the fist time, there was a Greek Cypriot agreement to have a Turkish Cypriot zone, which they could manage on their own.

We believed, and I think rightly so, that this Makarios shift could have been the basis for of a settlement. When Makarios prematurely died of a heart attack in 1977, the government fell, nominally at least, under the control of Clerides. A presidential election was held soon after the Archbishop's death, which was won by Spyros Kyprianou, a hard-liner. That basically ended any chances for a settlement, at least for the rest of the decade.

There were other contributing factors which barred reaching a settlement in the 1970s. For one, the Turkish government was in constant flux, changing leadership several times. Ecevit, who was the prime minister when Turkey invaded Cyprus, was defeated followed by a conservative government headed by Suleyman Demirel. He lasted for a few years, but was beset with domestic issues which detracted their attention from the Cyprus issue. Then in 1980 the military took over the government. That stopped any serious, sustained discussions with the Turks.

There were other factors which really militated against the conclusion of any agreement. I think that, essentially, there should have been a settlement by the late 1970s. A study of the period will clearly show a series of missed opportunities. There was a clash of personalities but I don't think that was an over-riding factor. Makarios was extremely stubborn and hard-headed. Denktash was the same. On the Turkish side, the foreign minister lacked imagination.

I think the key ingredient was the different vision of the future. The Greeks insisted on seeing Cyprus as a single country, unified in all aspects as it used to be. Only Makarios, after a prolonged period, finally came to acknowledge that perhaps a bizonal, bicommunal arrangement would be acceptable. The Turks insisted on a separation of the Turkish population on Cyprus from the Greek one and that the possibility of living side-by-side with the Greeks was just impossible. The Turks had to have their own autonomous area. They had suffered too long as a minority; they had been oppressed for too long and needed their own space. These two conflicting visions were so far apart that no bridge could be built.

I do admit that there were a lot of practical issues that had to be resolved, e.g., the rights of refugees, property rights, and missing persons. None of these were minor; they all would have been difficult to resolve, but without an agreed upon an over-all framework, it was just impossible to reach compromises. The Greeks maintained that the Turks had invaded the island and that the invaders had to leave before any settlement could be reached. The Turks saw themselves as liberators of their ethnic "brothers and sisters" and would only really deal with the Greeks if they perceived some new level of equality between the two communities. These two perceptions of the situation were too high a barrier to overcome.

Q: What was our role? Did we offer any inducements to the two sides?

LEDSKY: We did. As I suggested, the Cyprus negotiations were confused and complex. The UN was the central operational fulcrum. It was UN troops that patrolled the "Green" line. It was the UN which was responsible for convening meetings between the two sides. Only the UN had the moral authority to play this role. As I said, the Turks insisted on scenarios that clearly showed equality between the two Cypriot communities, so they would not accept discussions between the Cypriot government and the Turkish community. The discussions had to be between the two communities.

We played a catalytic role; we offered a number of "carrots" which we hoped would bring the two sides to reach some agreement. For example, Congress appropriated $250 million to be used by the two sides as part of a settlement. Congress appropriated an annual grant of $15 million to be used for communal development projects, an appropriation which continues to be made even today.

We also developed a number of proposals over the years, which were usually tabled through the UN. These ideas were directed to the solution of specific issues. For example, Bill Crawford had a number of ideas which might have led to a step-by-step resolution, e.g., reopening the Nicosia airport, and resettling refugees who were in occupied parts of the island. The U.S. ideas were aimed at facilitating the negotiations one issue at a time. Sometimes, the ideas were accepted by both sides; sometimes they were just UN proposals.

Q: In retrospect, the U.S. invested a lot of time and resources trying to solve the Cyprus puzzle. Was it worth it?

LEDSKY: First of all, I don't accept the basic premise. I don't think that as a government we invested that much time or that many resources. We in fact viewed it as a minor irritant and leadership gave it attention when it had timor had to. We were much more focused on other world issues. I don't think Cyprus attracted much U.S. government attention or emphasis. There was a moment, in 1974, when Cyprus did get a lot of attention, but that was a brief period, which was not repeated. I don't want to suggest that Cyprus was ever forgotten by the Department's Seventh Floor. However, I think it is wrong to suggest that it attracted continued and persistent attention. Most of the time, the U.S. government, when it did become engaged, was responding to Congressional pressure. It was not because someone high in the Department clamored for more action on Cyprus; what we did was react to pressure from the outside and took actions not necessarily to reach a solution, but rather just to show that we were doing somethinanything. I suggest that this was the pattern of our involvement in Cyprus throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. In the Department, Cyprus was the last issue that anyone wanted to hear about; they all wished it would somehow go away. I am sure there were many who hoped that by ignoring it, the Cyprus problem would go away.

It was Congress that was the action-forcing mechanism. It would periodically say to the administration: "Do something! Show some action and progress, if possible." The Department, in its great wisdom, would then respond by doing somethinnever much, but just enough to keep the critics off its back. For example, Congress required that there be a quarterly report on Cyprus on the progress of negotiations. So the Departmenpeople like mdutifully filled a few pages of verbiage, signifying nothing, but enough to keep Congress at bay. The reports had the aura of high level input, suggesting that the Seventh Floor was fully engaged; it was not and would most likely never be. Another example: the Department appointed a special coordinator for Cyprus; it was not a meaningful gesture, but kept Congress at bay for a while longer. The coordinator was seen as working on this issue, reporting directly to the principals; it was all show and no substance.

Q: If you had been in charge of the Department, would you have given Cyprus a higher priority?

LEDSKY: Probably, although I was not aware of all of the other problems that the Seventh Floor had to face. What went on on the island was not that important; what was important was that the continuation of the Cyprus dispute has poisoned the relationship between Greece and Turkey, which had always been somewhat tense; it didn't need this additional fuel. Cyprus kept the antagonism alivan antagonism between two NATO members that in the Cold War period was dangerous and should have been resolved expeditiously. Today, even though the Cold War has ended, the Greek-Turkish antagonism needs to be resolved because it has been festering for so long and could easily lead to another confrontation. There are enough other issues between the Greeks and the Turks that need resolution; they don't need Cyprus in addition. So, Cyprus may not be as important as some other international issues, but it deserved more attention than it has receiveparticularly in the 1980s and 1990s and currently. It is an issue that should be resolved expeditiously, even if the U.S. has to be actively and constantly involved.

We have now essentially turned the issue over to the Europeans. We have decided that Cyprus admittance to the European Union will resolve the problem or will be the basis for a solution. We still have a Cyprus coordinator, who is still looking for solutions, but essentially, we have left the problem to the Europeans and the UN.

Q: Do you still see Cyprus as a potential source of armed conflict?

LEDSKY: Not as much as it was ten or twenty years ago, but it still has the potential and the issues have to be resolved.

Q: In retrospect and for the benefit of historians, what went wrong with our efforts to resolve the Cyprus issues, particularly after Makarios' death?

LEDSKY: I would have to say that too little attention was paid to the problem by the international community. The intransigents on both sides of the "Green line" and in Greece and Turkey were given a free hand to ventilate their prejudices. Cyprus was a domestic political issue in both Greece and Turkey, less now in Athens than in Ankara and less in Ankara than it used to be. However, it is still a domestic political issue. I blame the Cypriot leaders, both Turkish and Greek, for failing to reach a solution, one which should have been reached decades ago and is still within reach. It probably will be reached sometime in the future. We, the U.S., could have done more and could still do more. For example, we never have made it clear enough to the Turkish government that the resolution of the Cyprus problem is important and that it must be resolved pronto. It has been too far down on our priority list in our agenda with the Turks. Cyprus has also been too far down our priority list in dealing with the Cypriots. Therefore, it is not too surprising that the issues are unresolved.

Q: Earlier you discussed earlier the assassination of our station chief in Athens. There were other murders of American officials during your time in SE, perpetrated by a Greek terrorist group, November 17. Were their activities on your radar screen?

LEDSKY: Indeed. Terrorism in Athens was very much on our minds. It was a constant problem. The embassy in Athens was attacked a number of times from 1975-76. There was a strong anti-Kissinger sentiment in Greece. He could not visit the country; he was actually dis-invited on one or two occasions. The Greeks took on a decidedly anti-American view for allowing the Junta to continue in power and for not adequately supporting the pro-democratic forces in Greece. I don't think Cyprus was really a central issue in this anti-Kissinger movement; it may have played a role, but if it did; it was a minor theme. Much more important to the Greeks was their perception that Kissinger had allowed the Junta, who had had some hand in Makarios' assassination attempt to continue in power. Cyprus also played a role among these Greeks because they viewed Kissinger as having allowed the Turkish invasion of Cyprus as not having shown sufficient interest in protecting Makarios.

Q: After the fall of the Junta, what were the developments in Athens?

LEDSKY: There was a long crisis period in 1974-75. We changed ambassadors immediately from Tasca to Kubisch. Monty Stearns was sent out as the DCM. There were many other changes in embassy staffing. We aligned ourselves quickly and smoothly with the new government headed by Constantine Karamanlis. We held some good, tough discussions with the new Greek government about Cyprus. It was very critical of us for not having played a more active role and for not having been sufficiently tough on the Turks after their invasion.

We had some difficult days in 1975-76 with the Greeks. There were several anti-U.S. demonstrations in front of the embassy, but I think we re-established relations quite well with the new government. We re-negotiated a new base agreement, always a political weather vane. Greece withdrew from the military structures of NATO; we spent a lot of time trying to have them re-consider. We wanted them to stay in the alliance; we needed them and I think it was clear that Greece needed NATO. However, in light of our policy toward the Junta, the Karamanlis government was not anxious to accommodate our views; it needed time to re-establish confidence in a U.S.-Greece alliance.

Q: Was there an improvement in our relations in the mid-late 1970s?

LEDSKY: There was. Relations improved, but there was never a close relationship in that time. All negotiations with the Greeks, regardless of issue, were difficult. I was in Athens in 1976, negotiating for another base agreement. That lasted three or four months. It was a difficult negotiation because the Greeks essentially wanted the U.S. military to leave their country. The question of nuclear weapons storage became a major impediment to good relations. The issue of Greek relations to NATO's military commands in Italy and Turkey was also a major subject.

All these issues were very difficult to negotiate with the Greeks because they were very suspicious of us and NATO. They saw membership in NATO to be of minor importance to them, if not an outright negative. They did not perceive any threat from the USSR except for the presence of our bases. They felt they were being used by the U.S. and NATO in an alliance that had no significance for them. Slowly, each of these issues was resolved and we came to a new understanding with the Greeks in every conceivable matter so that by the end of the 1970s, relations were back to normal.

The Greeks were concerned by a perceived potential of an attack from Turkey. There were a number of issues between the two countries that arose in the late 1970s. There was a question of the control of the Aegean Sea and the airspace above it. There was the unresolved issue of the future of Cyprus. On each of these issues, the Greeks saw the Turks as the instigators of the troubled waters, supported by the United States and NATO. The Greeks did not think they had many friends in Europe, only the French and the Italians, perhaps. But in general, they perceived NATO as being anti-Greek and pro-Turkish on all the Greek-Turkish issues.

There were a number of incidents between Greece and Turkey during this period, which were mostly in the Aegean Sea and related to oil exploration. There were some tensions in Thrace, where the Turkish minority was somewhat restless. But the major issue was always Cyprus. The Greeks always viewed us as being intrinsically pro-Turkish on the Cyprus questions. They felt that our relationship to Turkey was more important to us than our relationship to Greece. One always felt, even when it was not expressed outrightly, the constant resentment towards the U.S.

Q: The Aegean question remain unresolved. What is the basic issue?

LEDSKY: The problem is that some islands governed by Greece lie very closely to the Turkish shoreline. They are so close that normal international rules about maritime boundaries are almost impossible to enforce. The Turks view the islands as being part of the mainland; the Greeks see them as part of Greece with their boundaries lying somewhere between the islands and the mainland. The Greeks assert jurisdiction over the islands and a 12 miles of water surrounding the islands. The Turks refuse to accept that determination, in part because the 12 miles, in some cases, would hit their mainland. The Greeks also maintain complete sovereignty of the airspace over their islands in the Aegean Sea; the Turks will not accept that.

The issue becomes more than just a hypothetical one because many feel that there are recoverable oil deposits in the Aegean Sea close to the islands. As a result, drilling questions continue to arise, even if the little drilling that has been done has failed to find any major deposits. Despite the poor drilling record, oil may still lurk in the background as one of the aggravating factors. Originally, the assumption had been that there were major oil reserves under the Aegean Sea, as there are in the Caspian. Both sides were anxious to lay claim to these "unrecovered" deposits. Rationality might have suggested a division of the reserves or a sharing of the finds, but that is too much to hope for in that situation. So, the argument about the Aegean goes on and on, even though no large oil deposits have been found.

The location of the islands is the basic problem. Both sides can make a case for jurisdiction under international law. The history of the islands themselves add complexities. They have been part of Greece for only several decades. Some used to be controlled by the British, some by the Italians. They were turned over to Greece after WWI and WWII. Many were populated by Turks, but they were forced to leave after the Greeks took over. That didn't go over well in Turkey.

Greece, on the other hand, consists of many islands. They therefore see nothing unusual about having jurisdiction over some more even if they are separated widely from the homeland. The Greeks feel that they have the right to fortify them and have a military presence on them. The Turks feel threatened since the islands are so close to their mainland. The Turks have stationed armed forces on their shores opposite these islands, which then became an excuse for the Greeks to further reinforce their forces. The islands have very little strategic value; therefore, the debate about their status is sometimes absurd. It has been suggested that the question of ownership of the islands be referred to the International Court of Justice. The Greeks have periodically shown willingness to do that because they feel that international law is on their side. The Turks are reluctant because they feel that they would be out-voted, as they are in all international courts. They feel beleaguered, not only on these Aegean issues, but in general. They have a complex that the West is against them. Occasionally, we have convinced the Turks to take one issue or another to the Court; sometimes they win, sometimes they lose. However, never have they agreed to be bound by a Court's decision. So, the Greek-Turkish issues continue to fester.

Q: Let me ask you about the Greek-Turkish relationship in this three-year period of 1974-77. Was it tense all the time?

LEDSKY: Yes, indeed. It was tense and intense all the time. We spent a lot of time trying to calm down the ardor on both sides.

Q: Let's talk about what was going on in Turkey during this period. What do you recollect about that situation?

LEDSKY: There are always several elements of our relationship with Turkey. Generally, our military-to-military relationship was good. The issue of Cyprus was a real stumbling block to smooth diplomatic relations. To add to the strain, Congress took some actions which further exacerbated the relationship. For example, an arms embargo was imposed on Turkey in the 1974-75 period because of Congressional perception of Turkish intransigence on the Cyprus issue; no American arms could be sold to them. By 1978, we managed to convince Congress to lift that as being counterproductive. I spent a lot of time in Congressional offices, first opposing the embargo and then working on lifting it. I went to Turkey with Clark Clifford to discuss the arms embargo because there was a direct linkage between Cyprus and the arms embargo. The arms embargo was lifted when we were able to convince Congresor at least those members who felt passionately about the Cyprus issuthat progress was being made on resolving the Cyprus dispute and that our military relationship with Turkey was so important to NATO and our own Cold War efforts that the embargo was really detrimental to our security. Once the embargo was lifted, Turkey was able to purchase advanced aircraft.

Clark Clifford's principal objective in his discussions with the Turks was to get them to agree to a trade off: an easing of the Turkish position on the Cyprus issue in exchange for a lifting of the U.S. arms embargo. Most of the discussions in the 1974-78 period revolved around our aim to keep the close military and diplomatic relationship going despite disagreements about Cyprus. In addition to the Turkish policy impediments, we found our negotiations with the Turks very difficult because of the weaknesses of succeeding, and ever-changing Turkish governments. First came the Ecevit government, followed by a caretaker regime, then came a Demirel government, which was followed by a military government in 1980. Some civilian members of the previous governments were included in the military one; for example, the foreign minister was Melih Esenbel, who had been the Turkish ambassador in Washington and was therefore a familiar personage to us.

I should note that during the period we are discussing and even subsequently, the role of the military in developing Turkish policies has always been a subject of speculation. There are those who maintained that regardless of who headed the government, policies were established by the military through its role on the Turkish national security council. There are those who have questioned the influence of the military. This debate went on then and goes on today. My view is that in the mid-to-late 1970s, the military was very influential, although I can't be more precise than just that. The Ecevit government, a social-democratic regime, was quite strong. I do believe, however, that the invasion of Cyprus was mandated by the military with Ecevit playing the role of a willing accomplice. He may even have encouraged the military in making their demands. Demirel, on the other hand, was a very stubborn man, a conservative whom the military did not like. During his stewardship, the civilians were in charge and the military influence was minimal, particularly in the foreign affairs field. The foreign minister was a well known Turkish politician and very influential in the Demirel government.

In 1980, the Turkish military overthrew Demirel. From that point on, the military obviously had the major voice in determining Turkish policies. It was then that the negotiations on Cyprus completely collapsed. On the other hand, U.S.-Turkish relationships were always better when a military regime was in power in Ankara, although I think during the mid-to-late 1970s, the relationship was generally good, if not warm, except for the Cyprus issue.

Q: Were the Kurds a problem in the late 1970s?

LEDSKY: Yes; they have been a problem for a long time. However, during this period, their clamor for independence, or at least more self-rule, was overshadowed by the challenges from the Greek and Armenian minorities in Istanbul, as well as from the Greek Orthodox Church. Much of it was connected with Cyprus and, therefore, was part of a much larger package. So, the status of the minorities was a problem, but it was overshadowed by the issue of Cyprus.

Q: Let me turn a minute to the Greek-American lobby. This was your first experience with such a political activity. Tell us a little about how it worked and your reactions.

LEDSKY: 1974 was a very important year for the Greek lobby. This was the year in which it really became a power. Before that year, during Junta regime in Athens, there were Greek Americans who supported the military dictatorship and then there were many Greek Americans who were very opposed to that regime. The Greek American community was bitterly divided about what was going on in their country of origin; therefore, they were not able to marshal their political muscle to support one American policy or another. But in 1974, with the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, all the disparate Greek American groups united in a way they had never been able to do before. They had finally found a common cause. So, for the first time, they began to mount a powerful political campaign using their Congressional representatives to pressure the administration.

They were led by Congressman Ben Rosenthal, from New York, whom I knew slightly being members of the same Jewish congregation; he became the intellectual leader of the Greek American group, although obviously was not one of them and in fact had very few in his congressional district. I think that the Turkish invasion just offended his moral compass. He was joined by Congressmen John Brademas, Paul Sarbanes, and another from Pennsylvania, who were members of the Greek American community. These Congressmen demanded that Kissinger testify and that the U.S. take actions to return Cyprus to the unitary state it used to be. I accompanied Kissinger to the Hill on a couple of occasions; I went with Assistant Secretary Art Hartman on a couple of occasions; I went by myself a number of times. So I got to know these Congressmen and their staffs pretty well; I think to this day Brademas and Sarbanes would acknowledge our friendship. They certainly know that I worked on the Cyprus issue for many, many years.

Then Cypriot Americans began to organizprimarily in New York. They affiliated themselves with the Greek American lobby. They would descend on Washington periodically, where they would meet with officials of the Department. As they began to get familiar with the political system, they began to become more and more assertive, particularly in 1974 and 1975. Only when the arms embargo was placed on Turkey, did the pressure ease to some extent. I went to Chicago and Detroit to speak with the Greek American communities there. We did try to work with them and to accommodate their views as much as we could, given our many other national security interests in Southern Europe. For example, the Greek and Cypriot communities were very concerned about the disappearance of some Americans who were living on Cyprus. I took the issue up with the Cypriot and Turkish authorities, as did a number of my State colleagues. We also discussed at considerable length the issue of refugees: what could be done to alleviate their conditions. I think we developed a good working relationship with the Greek American community. They were always angry at Kissinger, whom they viewed as being contemptuous of them, as well as other ethnic lobbies. He did not see them as legitimate players in his stewardship of American foreign policy. On the other hand, I think the Department did its best to maintain a reasonably good relationship with this community.

When Vance succeeded Kissinger, we had a breakfast in the Department with the leaders of the Greek American community. I was sent on several occasions to meet with Greek American groups all around the country. I tried to explain what we were trying to do on the Cyprus issue and other matters of interest to them. Bill Crawford did the same and was very good in making connections. Art Hartman and others also participated in some of the meetings and was well received. I think we benefited from having their views; we benefited from their support and concern for some issues which might otherwise have been neglected by the Department, such as, missing persons and compensation for property losses. On the other hand, I don't think they were of assistance on matters unrelated to Cyprus in which the Department had an interest. Some of the senators and congressmen were helpful in setting up meetings for us in Ankara, Athens, and Nicosia. They introduced us to Greek American philanthropists, who then contributed resources to assist refugees and other relief efforts. They assisted in putting us in touch with some key Cypriot persons beyond governmental leaders and bringing them to the U.S. for consultations. So, in some ways, there was a cooperative effort with all interested American parties contributing what they could.

Q: Tell us a little more about the base negotiations in which you were involved.

LEDSKY: I spent the whole summer of 1976 in Athens on these negations. The working head of the delegation was Monty Stearns, the DCM. The nominal head was probably Jack Kubisch, the U.S. ambassador. Since Monty had to continue in his embassy role, much of the work fell on me. Al Viegerman, who had been a political-military specialist, was a member of the delegation. Don Majors, an Army officer, represented his branch of the military. We had a Navy representative on the delegation, as well as an Air Force officer. Technically, I was in charge of the negotiations for the U.S. side, except for a couple of sessions that the ambassador or the DCM attended. The supervision of the day-to-day work fell to me.

Our status-of-forces agreement with the Greeks expired in early 1976, as did the base agreements. At the time, we had a base at the Athens airport; we used one part of it. We also had several nuclear weapons storage places around the country. We had a naval base in Crete; the one at Souda Bay was used as a port for our 6th fleet. We also had several bases which we used jointly with the Greek military. The base agreements were intended to permit us to continue to use the facilities and the status-of-forces agreement was the basic document governing how we were to operate these bases.

We had several rounds of negotiations. Drafts were exchanged and re-exchanged. I think that basically the Greeks really did not want us in their country any longer. We, on the other hand, found that for military reasons these bases were important to us. In the end, we managed to get Greek approval on agreements covering our continued use of each of the facilities. We also reached an understanding on the long-range use of the facilities. It is true that the Greeks imposed new restrictions on us on how and when we could use the facilities, such as flights per day and number of American troops to be based. Every little detailed became a source of friction and discussion. One agreement also covered the issue of port visits to Athens and other Greek ports. Every possible detail of a ship visit was discussed and spelled out.

The negotiations were interminable. They occupied almost every minute of my day, day after day, for about two months. Each issue raised by one side or another was resolved and became part of the final documents. The number of details were staggering because they not only covered what our military could do during a working day, but also what they could or could not do on their time off. There was no single breakthrough; we just plodded along, one issue at a time, resolving it and them moving on to the next.

Monty Stearns was very good; he was very patient and counseled us to be so as well. He predicted an extended negotiation period; he had been through the process before. He realized that the Greeks were really not interested in prolonging our presence, so counseled patience and continued negotiations. He predicted that we would eventually reach agreement, although he knew that we would pass through many frustrating days. Monty had the advantage of knowing the Greeks quite well; this was his third tour there.

At one stage, I wanted to return to the U.S. to celebrate my twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Although I did return for consultation on a couple of occasions, Monty convinced me that the only way to reach agreement was to stay in Athens and work on the issues day in and day out, until they were resolved. I don't remember a single issue which was the key; each minute item had to hammered out. As I said, we resolved all of them, except perhaps for the nuclear weapons storage problem; I think we eventually had to pull out all or most of our weapons. I must admit that our position on this issue was rather weak. I don't understand why we had these weapons in Greece in the first place; they were all artillery pieces.

Q: Your description suggests that the Greeks were really not too concerned about any threats from the USSR and the Warsaw Pact countries. Why was that?

LEDSKY: One reason was that the most important potential threat came from Yugoslavia, which was then governed by Tito. The Greeks perceived that Tito was not part of the eastern block and therefore not really a threat. We did not necessarily disagree with that view, but were much more concerned about a Soviet threat to Greece through Bulgaria or by using the seas. The Greeks saw Turkey as being the real "enemy"; the Soviets were noparticularly after the Greek government reached some accommodation with the communist insurgents in the north. By 1976, in fact, the Greek communists were really not a threat; they had been pretty well integrated into Greek society. We were not entirely enthusiastic about this accommodation, but had to accept it. I think what was perhaps more important was the fact that the democratic government that succeeded the Junta was basically neutral on East-West confrontation. Also, while they were technically a member of NATO, they never really accepted our view of the Soviet menace. Beyond Turkey, the Greeks focused on the Arab world. They badly wanted close relations with that part of the world. They did not recognize Israein part because they had major business interests in the Arab world. They used to own large parts of Egypt and Lebanon and Syria. However, there were still major Greek minorities in these countries, as well as in other Arab nations.

In fact, it was the assassination of Richard Welch, our station chief in Athens, and shooting of others, including a couple of Israelis at the Athens airport, which alarmed us about terrorists in Greece. We began to apply heavy pressure on the Greek government to fight these terrorist groups. This issue was just illustrative of the ever continuing problems we had with Greece in the late 1970s. The Greeks allowed the Arabs free entry for many years, so they used it as a base. That was also true for Cyprus, because Makarios also allowed the Arabs a free hand in his country.

Q: You mentioned that you had taken several trips during your assignment to SE. Where did you go?

LEDSKY: For some reason, I was very much in motion during my tour on the desk. I've already mentioned my first trip to Cyprus, on a British military aircraft. I did that a couple of times using British facilities because they maintained a military presence on Cyprus. In 1977, I made several trips to Cyprus, starting with a Carter presidential decision to take all necessary steps to remove the Turkish arms embargo. He appointed Clark Clifford the Cyprus coordinator. Clifford, Counselor Matt Nimetz and I made several trips. Nimetz's appointment was to emphasize the importance of lifting the arms embargo.

Our first trip was to Greece, Turkey and then to Cyprus where we met with Makarios. We saw the Greek foreign minister and Karamanlis. We then took a trip to Vienna, where we met with Kurt Waldheim, who was then UN Secretary General and who had assumed charge of resolving the Cyprus crisis. He had met the Turkish and Greek Cypriots first in New York and then in Vienna. We were to spend a couple of weeks in Vienna working with these groups. In fact, the first "high level agreements" as they were callewere reached during our visit in 1977. This was the first understanding between the two Cypriot factions. We then went to Cyprus to see Makarios and obtained his approval. Later that year, Makarios died and I went to the funeral as part of the U.S. delegation, which was headed by a member of the Carter family. After that, I took another tour of the area for a couple of weeks.

I went to NATO meetings in Brussels a couple of times. I accompanied President Carter to his first NATO meeting in London. I went because the major issue for that NATO meeting was Cyprus. We met with the Turkish, Greek and Cypriot leadership. I think it was Clifford and Nimetz who kept Cyprus at the head of the Carter foreign policy agenda. Vance was more interested in a settlement than Kissinger had been. Furthermore, by 1977, it had become clear that our relations with Turkey were faring badly and deteriorating. They wouldn't deal with uthey barely spoke to ubecause of the embargo. We had to find some resolution to the Cyprus problem if we were to re-establish friendly ties with the Turks. So, between early 1977 and mid 1978, a lot of top level attention was being devoted to the Cyprus issue.

Clifford knew a lot about many issues. He claimed that he was instrumental in getting Greece and Turkey into NATO in the 1950s I have no reason not to believe that claim; I know that he knew a lot about Greece and Turkey in 1977. He told us a lot about his activities of the 1950s when he was in the White House working for Truman. There had been a Dean Acheson trip to Cyprus in the 1950s and a trip by George Ball. So the U.S. government had a long history of involvement in Cyprus and Clifford knew it all.

We did have to bring him up to speed on events since 1974 because from then to 1977, he had not been involved in governmental affairs. Nimetz and I used to visit him in his Connecticut Avenue law offices. We spent many hours bringing him up to date on the Greece-Turkey-Cyprus imbroglio. Clifford was a fast study; he was very sharp, even though along in years. He had decided that he was going to solve the Cyprus disputes and he went at it in a serious and persistent manner.

He was a great negotiator, able to pick up the slightest nuance which he could use to move the ball toward his goal. He knew where he was going; he was very good with people. I remember when we were in Nicosia, he decided to talk to some people alone. He asked Matt and me to step out of the room. He was a masterful tactician and developed excellent rapport with people of all sorts and stripes.

Clifford was the nicest and most competent person I ever worked with. He carried the Cyprus burden until the end of the Carter administration. I left him a few months earlier to work on the Olympic games. However, I was also involved with Clark Clifford when I worked in Congressional Relations (H). I traveled with him to NATO meetings and to London during this period because, even though I was organizationally far removed from a geographic bureau, the Cyprus issue remained in my portfolio.

By 1980, Cyprus had taken a back seat in light of the Iran hostage crisis and other hotter events. I must say that the Cyprus experience was somewhat frustrating. As I said earlier, hopes for a settlement were really dashed with the death of Makarios. Until then, we thought that we were possibly on the way to a resolution, which however needed Makarios's approval and active participation. His death dashed all our hopes. After that we did manage to get the embargo lifted by one or two votes; that took a lot of time here in Washington. With Makarios' death, our chance to find common ground between the Cypriots and the Turks was almost completely lost.

Q: Although you were the deputy director of SE, did you work directly with Nimetz? Who was the assistant secretary?

LEDSKY: I worked directly with Nimetz with the approval of George Vest, the assistant secretary. George was involved in Cyprus on occasion. He and I traveled to the island for the Makarios funeral. He and I shared a room in the casino hotel. Wells Stabler, the deputy responsible for SE, was also involved from time to time as was Bob Barber, who replaced Stabler (who was named to be our ambassador to Spain in 1975). But I think I became the Department's expert rather quickly, especially after Eagleton and Hartman went on to overseas assignments. Crawford was in EUR for a while and of course he knew Cyprus and its challenge well. However, I became the one who supported the Seventh Floor principals like Nimetz.

Nimetz and I became friends. He would call me and ask me to join him on his trips. I had not known Nimetz before I began working on Cyprus. Helen, my wife after Cecile's death, worked in that office in the late 1970s. Nimetz was a one-man show; he had a couple of junior assistants, but that was all. When Cyprus became "his" issue, he needed more experienced help and that became me. He worked on other issues like Namibia, but he devoted a lot of time to Cyprus. He was very close to Vance; he had access to the secretary any time he wanted and sometimes I would go along. Vance was particularly interested and knowledgeable about Cyprus because he had worked on the issue before he became secretary. There was no one in the White House who knew much about Cyprus; a couple of the more junior staff followed our efforts particularly since they impinged on good U.S.-Turkish and U.S.-Greek relations.

Q: Am I right in assuming that U.S. government interest in Cyprus was driven primarily by the arms embargo imposed on Turkey?

LEDSKY: I would phrase it a little differently. The main issue was how to keep good relationships with the Turks. If they had ignored the embargo, we still would have had to work on other issues which stood in the way of close relationships. However, the embargo became the issue for the Turks and therefore for us. Lifting the embargo was a means to an end; it was not a goal in itself. The resolution of the Cyprus issue was a means to an end as well. That is the way Clark Clifford saw it. He was very good with the Greek-American lobby and with Congress. He understood the problem and he must be credited for keeping the issue high on the U.S. foreign policy agenda. I don't think the president or anyone else in the White House really cared that much about Cyprus; it was just Clifford who made sure it got the attention he believed it deserved.

Q: Tell us a little about your relations with Bill Macomber, who was then our ambassador in Turkey?

LEDSKY: He had great interest in what Congress was up to because he had been the assistant secretary for congressional relations. He was very much opposed to the arms embargo and wanted it lifted ASAP (as soon as possible). He also had an interest in and knowledge about the Cyprus issue from his previous jobs. Every time I visited Ankara, which was about three times, I stayed at the residence; he was very nice to me, as was his wife, Phyllis. He introduced me to many Turkish politicians in a very smooth way. He was very good with the Turks and had a wide circle of acquaintances. He was very smart and a good negotiator. He was close to the Turkish military and very good at handling politico-military affairs. I found him very helpful on Cyprus, although I don't think he ever fully understood what drove the Greeks on this issue, just as Kubisch, our ambassador to Greece, failed to understand the Turkish position. That is not unusual; many of our ambassadors fail to understand or much less appreciate the position of another countrone to which they are not posted.

I thought he was an excellent ambassador and never saw those parts of his personality which put others off. He was an avid collector of "street" dogs; he would pick these strays up and give them shelter in the residence. He had one three legged dog, who was given a wooden fourth leg. That trait and some others perhaps, made him seem a little odd, but I liked him and thought very highly of his professional efforts.

Q: What about Ambassador Kubisch?

LEDSKY: I liked Jack Kubisch. I consider him a friend. I think he is now in North Carolina. He was always nice to me. I was particularly impressed by the fact that he listened. He listened to his deputy, Monty Stearns, who was an expert on Greece. He listened to Al Viegerman, who had been in Greece when he and I made a trip to Athens. Kubisch listened to his staff and readily admitted that he was not nearly as knowledgeable about Greek issues as they were. As I mentioned, he never fully understood the Cyprus issue nor the Turkish position on il am not sure that anybody really does. I found him an excellent person to work with. He made decisions only after having heard out the "experts." I think I was very fortunate to be working in this period with excellent ambassadors, as well as a top notch Counselor of the Department and others who were involved in the Cyprus issue. All three ambassadors were very different personalities, but they were all very competent and easy to work with. All three were somewhat nervous about Kissingeand rightly so.

Q: We are now in 1977. Toward the end of the year, you were assigned to Congressional Relations (H). How did that assignment come about?

LEDSKY: I am not sure. The State Department moves in mysterious ways, particularly on personnel. Sometime after mid-1977 (a new administration having taken office early in the year) I was called by Peter Tarnoff, who was then the Executive Secretary for Secretary Warren Christopher. I had known Tarnoff for many years, having served with him in Nigeria and in Bonn. H wanted to know whether I would be interested in becoming a deputy assistant secretary in H, supporting Doug Bennett who had just become the assistant secretary. I agreed and Bennett then called me for an interview. He told me that I was on a short list for the job. A few weeks later, sometime in the fall, I was told that I would be assigned to H. I think it was Tarnoff who called me with that news. I went to see George Vest and he told me the same news. I am not sure that he was too sorry to see me go; he encouraged me to take the job. So, in the late fall of 1977, I went to H.

I knew nothing about Congressional Relations. My experience with the Hill was limited to my contacts with members and staff on Greece-Turkey-Cyprus. While I had done that for three years and therefore knew some of the players in Congress, I had no experience with the normal Department-Congress process. I took the job in part because of that. It was an entirely different field from those I had plowed for many years. I was coming up against the "eight year" rule (i.e. no Foreign Service officer should serve more than 8 continuous years in Washington.) and I was anxious to stay in the U.S. Bennett seemed like a good person to work for Brian Atwood, who was the senior deputy, seemed like a nice guy. They seemed to be happy to have me and that made the transition quite easy. Furthermore, I had had about enough of Cyprus and I thought a couple of years away from that issue would be refreshing. Little did I realize that that weight would continue to rest on my shoulders.

The congressional relations work was divided up in a number of ways. Brian covered the House and Doug covered the Senate. Then we split the geographic workload; I was assigned Europe and Africa. There were three deputies: Atwood, Bob Beckel (a political appointee) and me. There were two other officers in the front office: Kurt Cutter, who handled Latin America, and Bob Flatin, who covered the Middle East peace negotiations.

We also split functional responsibilities among the deputies. I was assigned supervision of the staff who worked on consular matters in H, supervision of one staff member who worked on protocol matters and another, Mr. Schnay, who worked as a liaison officer with Congress, and supervision of the correspondence section. I was also the liaison with the Department. So, when H had to be represented on some internal committee or inter-agency task force, I was the H representative. None of my fellow deputies wanted anything to do with that kind of assignment.

The others had similar supervisory responsibilities. Atwood dealt with Speaker Tip O'Neill and his staff and Doug dealt with the Senate Majority Leader and the Senate appropriations committee, where he had served previously.

It was an unusual division of labomore a function of the experience of the senior staff than any rational management scheme. It was somewhat chaotic because the assignments lacked an overall rationale, but it workevery well, I think. In comparison to EUR, for example, H was a small bureau, but it was large enough. We had about 6 Foreign Service officers working there at the time. We usually assigned them to cover the regional bureaus.

Q: In theory, how was the Department's congressional relations process supposed to work?

LEDSKY: During this period, in theory, it was the H staff that went to Congress to deal with all issues that a member of Congress or one of his or her staff might have. This responsibility has at times been assigned to H, and at other times to the geographic and functional bureaus. In the late 1970s, it was H's responsibility to speak for the Department. The Foreign Service officer who had a regional responsibility attended his or her bureau's staff meetings and was supposed to be on top of all issues in his geographic purview. That officer would then accompany Bennett or one of his deputies when we went to Congress to talk about an issue. We did not allow anyone from the geographic bureau to go to Congress without being accompanied by someone from our bureau. I am not sure that all geographic bureaus abided by that formulation; some may well have had unilateral meetings with members or staff.

I must say that during my period in H, when Cyrus Vance was secretary and Warren Christopher was the deputy secretary, they were always very careful to take an H representative with them when they appeared in Congress and they insisted that their assistant secretaries do the same. So H served as it should, being the liaison with Congress. I think it actually worked reasonably well.

Q: Did the members or their staffs try to bypass H?

LEDSKY: Not that I can remember. There were a couple of issues, which were of great interest to many members. One was the Middle East peace negotiation. Then there were the usual trade issues which were not part of my portfolio. Doug Bennett took care of many of those issues. And then there was the Panama Canal Treaty, which attracted a lot of interest. That was handled by another office outside of the one that was responsible for the negotiations.

Q: Did you have any contact with the White House?

LEDSKY: Doug handled that phase of the work. This was time when Madeleine Albright was working for Brzezinski as the national security advisor's Congressional liaison. She used to come to H almost on a daily basis to be briefed. Occasionally, we were invited to attend NSC meetings; that was done by Doug. I had no personal contact with the her or any White House staff member.

I personally spent a lot of time on the issue of the arms embargo on Turkey. In 1978, it became my major burden. I was also heavily involved in the Rhodesia embargo issue and the SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) Treaty negotiations. Those were the three issues that kept me the busiest.

I knew the arms embargo issue pretty well, having worked on it for a couple of years. We finally succeeded in getting the embargo lifted after an enormous effort. I think we discussed the issue with practically every Senator and Congressman. We arranged for some of the key Members to have breakfast with the secretary; that went on for months. We mounted an enormous lobbying effort; Clark Clifford spent much of his time testifying before one Congressional committee or another. I participated in those hearings as well. The administration really went full throttle to get the embargo lifted. It was finally lifted, winning by one or two votes in the House. I think, in the final analysis, it was the full weight of the administration's lobbying effort, particularly with democratic members, that finally brought "victory." Many Democrats were supporters of the embargsome very enthusiastic.

The administration applied pressure to have the embargo lifted because, as I said before, our relationship with Turkey was being badly frayed by it. Turkey was an important ally in a geographic area of great interest to us in our Cold War rivalries. I and many others were convinced that the embargo was jeopardizing our national security. I don't know that we convinced a large bloc of Democrats; we just got the votes from a few, but they were enough to get the embargo lifted. The embargo was supported by the Greek lobby and its representatives in Congress. To some extent, the Jewish lobby also supported the embargo, although in the final analysis, it was Congressional friends of the Jewish lobby who switched votes and put us over the top. As I recall AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) helped us out when it came to a vote in 1978. In looking back, I don't think there was one issue that swung the votes; I think it was just plain hard work on the part of the administration, hammering its position day in and day out to any Congressman who was willing to listen. Clifford was certainly a great help, as was the White House.

For me, it was an education. I visited Congressional offices, which under normal circumstances, I would not have. One of the things I was able to do was to get the Turkish ambassador into some of these offices; he might have had some influence. As I said, our lobbying effort was intense and continuous and many people participated. This lasted until the embargo was finally lifted. It was sometimes very hard to see the Congressmen themselves. We would consider ourselves very lucky if we saw one or two in a day. Fortunately, we had Clark Clifford, the Turkish ambassador, the White House and the NSC with and behind us; that opened a lot of doors that might otherwise been closed to us. I think the administration's effort to get the Turkish arms embargo lifted was well organized.

I think the same kind of effort was put into getting Senate ratification of the Panama Canal Treaty. Each of us in the H leadership was assigned a number of senators whom we had to contact personally to sell them on ratification. I had a number of senators assigned to me. Our efforts, I believe, did in fact change some votes in the Senate and the Treaty was finally ratified, although only by a narrow margin.

Q: Talk a little about the Rhodesia issue? What was it and how was it resolved?

LEDSKY: We had put an embargo on Rhodesian exportmostly mineralto the U.S. We were trying to pressure Ian Smith to liberalize his regime, giving the majoritthe blacka greater voice in the rule of their country. We needed Congressional support to maintain the embargwhich we did obtain. It did not require the same kind of intensive lobbying that the Turkish arms embargo required, but we did need legislation and we succeeded. It was an easy issue for liberals, who in essence controlled the House. So, although it required considerable dialogue with the Hill, the Rhodesia embargo was not a major contentious issue.

Q: What about SALT?

LEDSKY: On SALT, the goal was to get the Soviets to sign a treaty negotiated by representatives of our two countries and then to get U.S. Senate ratification, which of course, required the support of two-thirds of the senators. We arranged a trip to Moscow for twelve key senators. That delegation was led by Abe Ribicoff, the Democratic senator from Connecticut and a Republican senator from Oklahoma. I escorted the group in mid-1978. There were about 27-28 people in the group, when you included wives and staff. The main purpose, as I have suggested, was to sell SALT II, both to the Senators and to the Soviets. We had our own plane, thanks to DoD (Department of Defense). We spent about three weeks in the Soviet Union. The delegation had a lengthy conversation with Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet foreign minister. We went to Leningrad, Minsk and Moscow. It was my first trip to the Soviet Union, which was quite memorable for me. It opened a lot of doors for me, particularly those of the twelve senators on the trip. I used that entree over and over again, when I had issues to take up with Congress.

It was a distinguished group of Senators. In addition to Ribicoff, we had Javits, Stevenson, Nunn and other senior senatorial statesmen. It was this group that eventually formed our base in the Senate in our efforts to get ratification. I don't think the Soviets were sufficiently cooperative and in the final analysis, I think it was that factor which finally led to the failure to ratify. In fact, the treaty was never brought to the floor because the votes were just not there. We spent a lot of time trying to convince individual senators to vote for ratification. The secretary was deeply involved in this effort, which took much of my time in the 1978-79 period.

I can't say that a trip to the Soviet Union in 1978 could be described as "fun." The wives seemed to enjoy it. It was primarily a business trip, which meant a lot of work on the part of many State and embassy people. I think these trips are very useful, not only to expose Congressional members to views that they might not hear otherwise, but also to provide the department's congressional liaison staff contacts that it might not be able to cultivate otherwise. I used to have a meal with a member of the delegation every day. I spent much of each day with these members of Congress, so I got to know them quite well, which served me well when I had to lobby them later on for one issue or another.

One of my other trips of this kind, while in H, was to Golda Meir's funeral. Our delegation included President Carter's mother, Miss Lillian, a number of senators and congressmen. I also attended Makarios' funeral, with another congressional delegation. In all of these trips, my main role was to assure "smooth sailing" and to brief the congressional delegations on the political situation in the country visited and the state of relations between the U.S. and the country involved. We also explained the significance of some of the sites that we were to visit, as well as the religious significance of some of the ceremonies they would be involved in. That was particularly true of the funerals.

Q: Did you find the embassies responsive in meeting the perceived needs of the congressional members?

LEDSKY: Absolutely. I remember how helpful everybody in the our Moscow embassy was. I never had any problems with any embassy; they served the CODELs (Congressional Delegations) well.

Q: Talk a little about your impressions of the relations between congressional staff and members.

LEDSKY: I interacted with a lot of staff members. I found them to be persons of high caliber and quality. I particularly remember two or three, who worked for Senator Kennedy, and two or three who worked for Congressman Brademas, who was the Democratic whip at the time. For example, I became acquainted with Chris Matthews, who was then working for the Speaker of the House. I found many of the staffers to be experts in one subject or another with as much if not more knowledge about a subject than we had. They had great influence because of their abilities. As everywhere, there were exceptions; there were congressmen and senators who were not well served by their staffs, who were more a hindrance than a help. I must say that the staffs of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee were extremely smart, able, and effective. That goes for both the Democratic and Republican staff members. They were the key to the effectiveness of those committees.

I remember mark-up sessions, when the committees would be drafting legislation, often authorization and sometimes even appropriations. It was the staffs which put these pieces of legislation together and which drafted and redrafted them in order to satisfy the majority of the committee members. I used to attend these mark-ups as the State representative, sitting in the second row.

Q: Did you find that talking to the staffs was sometimes as effective as talking to the principals?

LEDSKY: I did indeed. For example, Mike Van Dusen, who was the staff director of the House Foreign Affairs Committee when Lee Hamilton was the chairman, was a very good interlocutor. Talking to him was just as effective as talking to Hamilton. He knew the committee members well and gave me good advice as to what might fly and what might not. When he spoke on an issue, I could count on that position being Hamilton's. I also worked closely with Stanley Roth, who was at the time Steve Solarz's foreign affairs specialist. He later he joined the Department. He was also extremely effective in dealing with his congressman and he also was steeped in the views of the other members of the committee. His advice on who to talk to, who not to talk to, and how an issue might be approached was always "on the money." He was thoroughly acquainted with the workings of the committee and its subcommittees; his counsel was invaluable to me.

There were Hill staffers that I worked with on almost a daily basis. They were essential to our getting anything done in Congress.

Q: Did you sometimes take officers from regional bureaus with you on some of your calls on the Hill? How did that work out?

LEDSKY: In general, I think that most of the people who went with me were reasonably effective and able spokespeople. I don't remember anybody really screwing things up. There may have been one or two who were ineffective when working the staffs or the principals in Congress, but I don't recall any major goofs. If I knew the issue, I usually did not take a regional bureau representative with me. When it came to African issues for example, I could always find an officer in the bureau or in H who was sufficiently conversant with a particular issue to make a useful case with staffers or members. So the participation of officers from other bureaus was never a negative.

Q: Did you spend a lot of time listening to testimony before congressional committees from State officers?

LEDSKY: Yes, I did. I spent a lot of mornings and afternoons sitting behind the State witnesses. In general, I thought we were well represented by these witnesses. There were four or five senior officials whose hearings I would almost always attend. One was Dick Moose, then the assistant secretary for Africa. Another was George Vest, then assistant secretary for EUR. Occasionally, I would attend committee sessions when Wells Stabler, the EUR deputy, was testifying. I found all of these witnesses were very good.

Sometimes, I went with some Seventh Floor principals. I went with Warren Christopher a couple of times, as well as with Joe Sisco, then undersecretary for political affairs. I also went with the secretary on a couple of occasions, as well as with Phil Habib. Not very often did I get a chance to brief these principals face-to-face; most of the briefing was done via memoranda.

I must say that I did come to the conclusion that a tremendous amount of time is wasted through the hearing process. It is very time consuming for all witnesses. State's principals spend far too much time in the hearing rooms or halls of Congress. I understand that it is part of our governmental fabric, but it is often time wasted and non productive. The system, for example, requires that executive branch witnesses quite often appear separately before a House or a Senate committee, only to have to repeat the same presentation to a committee of the other legislative branch. This was pure duplication, which took the time of the principals which might have well been devoted to some higher priorities. However, I understand that that is the way the system works and has worked for many decades.

When I got to the NSC, I noted that the senior members of that staff did not have to testify. They were not called up before one committee or another. They were part of the White House staff and therefore protected by executive privilege. That saved them a lot of time. At the other end of the spectrum, the Secretary of State in my days spent a half a day almost on a daily basis, either testifying or preparing himself or herself for that testimony or reviewing the transcript of some previous testimony, sometimes embellishing the record with views and ideas that came to him or her after the end of the committee hearings. It is not, I believe, the best use of time for the principals. The time costs involved were not justified by results of the hearings. I am sure that this is still the case.

There is no way of avoiding this waste. Congress demands the presence of principals at its hearings, even if it is a repetitious process. There are always appropriations and pieces of legislation that have to be passed, and each congressional committee demands the presence of a principal be present and support the legislation.

On the other hand, there is no denying that in our system of government, the legislative branch plays a vital role. For that, it needs complete and timely information. I just think that Congress could receive much of this information without requiring the presence of an executive branch principal. From my second-row observations, the executive branch principals do an excellent job of imparting information, or at least that information that can be disseminated publicly. But, as I said, the system extracts an enormous penalty by forcing the principals to spend an inordinate amount of time preparing, giving and reviewing testimony. In some cases, the principals would have to bone up on issues which they would never have to confront in their positions in the Department, but because none of them wanted to be accused of not "being on top" of things, they would have to spend inordinate amounts of time preparing and giving testimony. I suppose that this problem is now exacerbated by the existence of C-Span. In my days, the American public did not have an opportunity to watch these hearings on their TV sets; today they do, which just increases the pressure on the executive branch witnesses to be seen as fully responsive. In the 1970s, the press might have covered some of these hearings; but, for the most part, they were never page 1 material and the public really had to work hard to find out what was said by going to the transcripts which would be published after a while by the GPO (General Printing Office).

Q: By the end of your tour in H, what conclusions did you reach about State-Congress relations?

LEDSKY: I found an enormous gulf between the two, a gulf, I might say, which was very hard, if not impossible, to bridge. The two entities viewed the world from such different perspectives that it was very hard to reach a common understanding even on the nature of an issue, much less a resolution. It was very tough slogging. I now work on the legislative process for the National Democratic Institute and I have a much better appreciation of the centrality of congressional oversight, whether through legislation or hearings, to a democratic process. That does not repudiate my conclusions about the inefficiency of the congressional oversight process; it just reinforces the conclusions of others that the democratic process is just inefficient. I still feel that the legislative process is absurd and often redundant; that the relationships between House and Senate is very inefficient and sometimes just pure comedy; that the authorization and appropriation process is not only duplicative but also ineffective. Other democratic countries have far more efficient processes. Our system seems to be designed to impede passage of legislatioor at least insure that no rapid action can be taken. That may serve some great purpose, but I can tell you that in the 1970s when I was working in the process and even now in retrospect, the process is inefficient, time and cost consuming and wasteful and may not serve the country as well as some other system might. In the final analysis, there are very few members of Congress who know fully what they are voting on; most of them have been briefed by one of their staff members and may know something about the key points, but certainly not about the details. Draft legislation is amendeor completely re-written; new items are added along the way so that many pieces are hundreds of pages long. It is just impossible for a member to really understand what he or she is voting on. Many of the amendments that are attached in the dankness of the night are not in the public interest. Some of these provisions are added to try to force the executive branch down one course or another; if these provisions cannot be added as riders, then they show up as part of the committee's report, which becomes an important document to guide both the legislative and judicial branches. It is an extremely disturbing and wasteful process.

Q: You mentioned that you had consular people working for you answering Congressional inquiries. Was that a heavy workload?

LEDSKY: Yes, indeed. The amount of correspondence from the Hill on consular matters is quite heavy. In fact, it grew noticeably during my tour in H. I suspect that it has increased even more since then. Most of the correspondence related to individual cases such as visas, passports, and services to American citizens. Much contained pleadings for special consideration for one case or another. I think Congress believes that constituent services is one of its key functions, which meant interceding with the bureaucracy on behalf of a constituent. This process imposes an extremely heavy burden on the department because a Congressional inquiry requires a prompt and full reply. Again, it is probably an essential burden, which might even in some cases be useful for it keeps the Department, and consular service in particular, on their toes.

There were always deadlines to meeartificial deadlines with no particular purpose, arbitrarily set. This applied to answering congressional letters as well. It was sometimes just impossible to meet the deadline if an acceptable response were to be written. Very often it was impossible to meet the deadline if you wanted to provide a full and justifiable response. There were three or four people who worked solely on congressional mail. While most of the mail concerned the things I've already mentioned, there were some that were policy oriented or raised questions about implementation. Our main problem was to get the cooperation of the regional or functional bureau charged with the issue. We periodically had to raise a fuss to get prompt and meaningful replies. Some bureaus tried their best; others were just plainly non-cooperative. It is true that the more cooperative bureaus worked on more straightforward issues such as consular cases or simple trade issues. The more difficult issues, such as the Israel-Arab situation, were often raised by organized letter writing campaigns from a lobby group for one side or the other. It was a challenge for the Department to keep up with these periodic mail hurricanes. I can't say that such letter campaigns were welcomed anywhere in the Department; there was considerable resentment when they occurred, often generating responses that were either far too late or not germane.

I did not review all the correspondence that went out from H, but I did see a lot of it. It was my responsibility to insure that the letter was as responsive and forthcoming as possible as well as timely. We had an inventory of incoming mail, so that we could track the unanswered mail. It was a time consuming and, sometimes, difficult task to keep up with the mail. The sheer volume was certainly a barrier to moving the mail quickly and efficiently. Then it was always a challenge to answer all letters responsibly. Not enough time was devoted to this workload by senior officers; that meant that serious policy issues raised by a member of Congress would not get the kind of serious, sensitive response that they deserved. I think both lower and higher level officials have just too little time to give thoughtful answers to many congressional inquiries, particularly if the inquiry dealt with a "hot" issue which was consuming all of the waking hours of the desk officer and his or her bosses. Those people were too busy dealing with the minute-by-minute requirements and trying to meet the many burdens put on them. They just gave congressional inquiries a lower priority. Those desk officers, who were not involved in a crisis, had time to give adequate replies, but those involved in a "hot" issue did not have the time necessary to give congressional mail the full attention it required.

Of course, when the congressional letter raised questions about an individual, then the chain became long because the desk would have to write to an embassy, which then would follow its own congressional mail procedure. We had many letters dealing with individual Soviet dissidents. Each required an investigation. We needed to determine whether we needed to take the matter up with the USSR and then to take into account, what the results were, if anif not, why not? All of that was very time consuming, particularly when the people who had the answer were swamped by other demands. So, we have a built-in paradox in the Department's congressional correspondence process. We believe the mail to be important, but on specific issues, we assign the response to an officor an individuawho is swamped by many other demands, many of which will have higher priority. I don't know the answer and I don't think anybody else does either. I don't know what has happened since I left H, but I suspect that the same problem still exists. I don't fault the substantive offices; I think they recognize the importance of congressional mail, but in a crisis situation especially, often lack the time to do a satisfactory job.

At the same time, I must say that some of the congressional inquiries are just plain absurd. The writers raise issues fully knowing that they can't be dealt with, particularly in an unclassified response. Some of that is malicious and intentional; others just come from ignorance. Usually, but not always, these are issues raises by constituents who also may be either mischievous or ill-informed.

Q: Is there anything else about your H tour that you wish to mention?

LEDSKY: I do want to mention the "advice and consent" function, which is sending nominations for Presidential appointments for Senate approval. That was also one of my responsibilities: to get the process started, schedule the hearings, and prepare the necessary papers. This is a bizarre process. It usually turns out to be automatic or idiotic. It is rare that any senator pays any attention to these nominations. The hearings are usually attended by only one or two committee members. On the other hand, some senators use these hearings as a venue to vent their frustrations with the department for being "unresponsive" on one matter or another. In some cases, nominations will be held up until the senator's unhappiness is satisfied. Any senator can put "a hold" on a nomination; it becomes a cudgel used to get something out of the executive branch and usually has nothing to do with the nominee. I think the process has been highjacked so that it is now used for purposes entirely different from those foreseen by the writers of the Constitution.

Senator Helms became a major violator of the original intent of the "advise and consent" process. He started just when I was in H; he really misused the process after my tour. Javits sometimes misused the process, as well as did others. There was nothing that could be done about it; the senators viewed this process as a privilege and are not about to abandon it. It does give one pause about the state of the "advice and consent" process today; I think it is being misuseand was at the time I was in H. If the issue has no connection with the individual nominated, then it should not become part of the process.

Q: We are now in 1980. You became the special assistant to the secretary for the Olympics. Had you had a predecessor?

LEDSKY: As far as I know, I was the first. I think there may have been some officers who were given some responsibilities for previous Olympics, but I don't believe that any single officer was ever previously designated as the Department's focal point. My role in 1980 was a new one for the Department.

In late 1979 or early 1980, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the U.S. looked for actions it could take to express its distaste for Soviet action. I believe that the British and Canadians first suggested that one effective action that could be taken would be for countries to refuse to participate in the Moscow Olympic games, scheduled for the summer of 1980. The Soviets had devoted much time and attention to making these games a shining example of the prowess of its regime. It was the first time that the Soviet Union or its predecessor regimes had ever been awarded the Olympics and it was going to make it the event of the century. It was, I believe, the conclusion of the British and Canadians that little could be done to reverse the invasion, but they believed that a symbolic act of displeasure was in order and that by not participating in the Olympics we could show that displeasure in a meaningful way.

The British essentially sold this idea to President Carter, who was also looking for public actions to express American disapproval of the Afghanistan invasion. We had only come up with such minor irritants, as a wheat embargo which was bitterly opposed by mid-western farmers. Around the turn of the year 1980, there was an exchange among the British, Canadian and U.S. governments which led to their agreeing to a boycott of the Moscow Olympics. The three governments also pledged to try to get other governments to join the boycott. There were a number of letters exchanged by the three governments at the time. The Department was asked by the White HousLloyd Cutler, the legal advisoto coordinate efforts to have other countries join the boycott. The secretary, Cutler and Christopher met and agreed that the Department should take the leadership in coordinating the U.S. government's boycott. This was about January, 1980.

In January, I was called to Christopher's office. I had tentatively been selected to be nominated as our ambassador to Uganda. I had told Dick Moose that I would be interested in an ambassadorial assignment, but not Uganda because of my wife's health condition. Since H knew that I was about to be reassigned, it had selected Walt Cutler, who had been in Iran, to replace me. So I was out on a limb. I any case, Christopher asked me to undertake the Olympic boycott coordinator's role. I said "yes" somewhat reluctantly, since I thought I would be going to an ambassadorial post overseas. Christopher was very understanding; he understood my dilemma and I think appreciated that I agreed to undertake the coordinator's role. We both may have thought that by the end of the summer of 1980, I would find another acceptable assignment and this coordinator role was just a temporary bridge. I think they all thought that Carter would be re-elected and that an ambassadorial position could be found for me.

So I called on Lloyd Cutler, who had assigned Joe Onek of his staff, to this work. I knew nothing about the subject matter. I knew very little about Olympic sport events. I knew nothing about boycotts. Christopher's request came as a bolt out of the clear blue sky. I knew that the Olympics would be held, but that was about the extent of my knowledge of the whole subject.

Eventually, someone reached the decision that my office would be part of the Secretariat. I would be assigned four or five people and my main role would be to co-ordinate with the British and the Canadians to implement the boycott. I don't think anyone in early 1980 knew what had to be done. The job description still had to be written. We quickly discovered that our first task was to convince the U.S. Olympic Coordinating Committee to agree with the government's boycott policy. President Carter did not have the authority to deny American athletes participation in Olympics. We had to convince the Committee that it should support the boycott.

We also had to convince the British and Canadians to bar their athletes from participating in the Olympics. That was also a tough task because the British Olympic Committee was entirely independent, as was its Canadian counterpart, both in a similar way to ours. As we began to work on this facet of the boycott, I soon found out that the opposition was very strong and that our policy was about to fail for lack of support from the athletes. In addition, the Canadian government fell and was replaced by a new one, which had not agreed to join the boycott. The British government, previously headed by Callaghan, fell in late 1979 and had been replaced by the new administration of Margaret Thatcher. So, the trio of countries that had agreed to the boycott, all of a sudden shrank to one by early 1980. The British essentially took the position that its Olympic Committee was independent and not subject to governmental direction. They said that if we wanted to try to convince their Committee we were welcome to come to Great Britain to give it a try. The Thatcher government really did not want to get involved.

The new Canadian government, led by Pierre Trudeau, was completely opposed to the boycott, primarily for commercial reasons, that is the sale of Canadian wheat to the Soviets. So, at the start of 1980, there were considerable doubts about President Carter's policy. Many thought that we should lift the boycott and participate in the Olympics. By this time, the whole issue was in the public domain because the exchange of letters among the three pro-boycott nations had been released to the media.

I spent most of January and February working with Lloyd Cutler and Onek. At some point, Vice President Mondale became involved, so I spent much of my time with White House staffs. No one else in the Department, including Christopher, seemed very anxious to becoming involved. I was essentially left holding the bag. In early 1980, we drew up a work plan. We sent demarches to many countrieto the Europeans, to Latin American countries, and to African countries. We told these countries that we believed that it was very important that the unlawful Soviet invasion of Afghanistan be publicized and we thought that a boycott of the Olympics would do that. We said we hoped that the games would be canceled, or their importance minimized, if enough countries stayed away. The demarches took different forms.

There were some reactions to the demarches that were disturbing. A number of governments said that they would support us. I am not sure that all demarches were welcomed. For example, the Romanians, Liberians and the Chinese said they would join the boycott. The last even pledged to mount a campaign in the Third World to build support; that was not totally welcomed in Washington. The Chinese kept their promise, but were not really very effective. I maintained a dialogue with their embassy in Washington during the spring and summer.

Lloyd Cutler and I took a few trips to Europe in spring and summer of 1980. Our first focus was on Great Britain, where we wanted the Thatcher government to return to the Callaghan policies in support of the boycott. We talked to a number of British sports federations. We spent some time in Geneva talking to the International Olympics Committee, which was most interested in what we were doing. We suggested that the Committee select an alternative venue to Moscow. We also tried to get the Committee or some of the federations to support and participate in the boycott. We were not successful.

In the course of our trips to Europe, we met with a number of delegations, which were affiliated with the IOC. We met with a Korean delegation, which we did convince to join the boycott. We met with the Germans and received Helmut Schmidt's agreement to talk to the German federation to join the boycott. We met with the Egyptians, who then joined the boycott. We conducted these efforts during the spring and summer and we had some successes. By the time the Olympics opened in Moscow, about sixty countries had joined the boycott.

I remember that one of our first fiascos was the dispatch of Mohammed Ali around the world to speak in favor of the boycott. That was not my idea. We got various bureaus involved in preparing for this presidential envoy. We brought Ali to the Seventh floor to explain to him what his trip was all about. That was a challenge in itself because he really wasn't sure where Afghanistan was or why the U.S. government was so upset. We hoped that he would be effective. The trip was supposed to begin in Nigeria and then move on to a few other African countries and then on to Indifour or five places that we had picked which seemed targets of opportunity.

I will not forget what happened in Nigeria. There, Ali, instead of dissuading the Nigerians from participating in the Olympics, was convinced by the Nigerians that Carter's policy was wrong and that the U.S. athletes should go to Moscow. So, it was back to the drawing board. Dick Moose and I got on the phone to talk to Ali's State escort officer. The trip had been well publicized; it would have been very difficult to cancel. So we told the State officer to continue on the trip, but to try to convince Ali before the next stop that the embargo was the right policy. We had to keep going on the trip. On the next stop, Ali met some Chinese diplomats, who turned him around again and convinced him that an embargo was the right course, that the Soviets were the most evil people in the world and that all people of color should stand against the USSR. It was during this period, that not only did the Chinese convince Ali that a boycott was correct, but they also offered to come to Washington to develop a joint plan, which would give the Chinese the leading role in Africa in bringing those countries to join the boycott.

Ali then went to India, where he was again subjected to arguments in favor of participation and was finally won over to that point of vieagain. The Indians convinced Ali that the Moscow Olympics was too important an event to be boycotted, and that furthermore, our stand opposing the invasion of Afghanistan was all wrong. By the time Ali returned to the U.S., he was thoroughly confused. He reported back to us on his trip and then went on his way. We did not use him again! However, I should note that Nigeria and India and some other countries decided in the final analysis not to participate.

Lloyd Cutler and I then began to work on the Olympic Committee, which, by the way, we discovered is made up of a couple of dozen independent fiefdoms, each representing a different sport. The Olympic Committee was really a federation.

We began to mount a media campaign, stressing the importance of the boycott as a strong gesture of our disapproval of the Soviet's actions in Afghanistan. We took our case to the country, trying to marshal as much public support as we could. I spent a lot of time with the media and appeared on TV on a couple of occasions. Lloyd Cutler made a lot of public appearances. I spent some time on the Hill, although I don't remember Congress playing a very active role on this issue. There may have been a couple of resolutions passed, but I don't think they were consequential.

I went to Tennessee to talk to the Track and Field Association. I went to other meetings with several sports federations. We ran into very stiff resistance. I don't remember a single federation which at the beginning of the effort supported the boycott. Every one wanted to participate.

Onek and I flew to Chicago during this period to meet with the Track and Field federation leadership. We also met with the Diving federation and the Swimming group. They all opposed the boycott. Their stand was essentially that the U.S. position was a political ona sign of disapproval of Soviet actions, and that they were in the sports busineswhich had no relationship to sports. Their athletes had been training for four years; some had spent the previous three years in Colorado Springs devoting 100% of their time to training. They felt it was not fair of the U.S. government to ask for such sacrifices from a group of people who had nothing to do with politics. I vividly remember the head of the U.S. field hockey federation coming to see me in Washington to explain that her young women had worked hard for four years to overcome a losing record in international competitions. They were now ready and this was their one chance to correct the record. Our position was that all of these athletes were American citizens first and had to support their president and country in this public display of disapproval of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Slowly but surely, I think, we made some headway with these federations.

We continued our efforts in the U.S. until April or May, 1980, in preparation for a trip that Vice President Mondale, Lloyd Cutler and I took to Colorado Springs to address the U.S. Olympic Committee and to meet with representatives of all American federations. Mondale asked all of the federations not to send their athletes to Moscow. This lobbying effort lasted four or five days with our meeting with each of the many sports federations. Mondale met with Bill Simon, a well known Republican, who was the head of the Olympic Committee. He did not have a very high regard of Carter or any Democrat, for that matter. In the end, we were successful. The Olympic Committee did vote at the time not to send any teams to Moscow. I must say that I was not very confident that we would win that vote. I was pleasantly surprised when the vote went our way. I think it was sheer patriotism that swung the vote.

We flew back in one of the government's small jets. It was a happy trip home. It was a big triumph. Then we discovered, after our return, that the Committee's vote did not bind the individual federations. It was no doubt a significant vote, but there could well have been some slippage in the participation in the Olympics. And in fact, a few U.S. teams did participate surreptitiously, a fact that has been forgotten. So, we did not have a complete boycott. But the vote of the U.S. Olympic Committee allowed us to go back to countries, which up to that time had rejected the boycott notion.

I think, in the final analysis, from our point of view and that of the Soviets, the Olympics were a disaster. NBC withdrew its sponsorship and the Soviets lost $75 million right there. There was no coverage in the U.S. of the Olympics. Those games were not a reflection of the world's athletic prowess because, although many countries participated, most of the ones with the top notch athletes (Japan, Pakistan, Korea, the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, all Arab countries, most German teams, a few British teams, and Romania) did not.. It was not a world competition and therefore became less than significant in the annals of Olympic sports. I must say that the Germans complained bitterly, blaming Carter for all sorts of mischief.

I think that even if we did not get 100% participation in the boycott (and no one thought that we would) our efforts were successful in the international political arena. There was wide condemnation of the Soviet invasion. Even in countries which participated, there was considerable support for our stand.

I should mention that we also became promoters of some sports events in the U.S., in part to allow those athletes that had trained for so long and so hard the opportunity to display their competence. My staff and I became promoters of track and field events, which were held in Philadelphia as the "Liberty Games." This was a deal I worked out with the Track and Field federation, which wanted a venue for their athletes. These games were held in the fall of 1980 and were an international event. We financed the travel of about thirty foreign teams to go to Philadelphia. The Track and Field federation did most of the organizing work, but we were the ones who made the arrangements for the foreign participants.

Then we were involved in an international boxing tournament in Kenya. Some 20-30 countries participated in that. That was our sop to the Kenyans for their participation in the boycott. It was also our payment to the U.S. Boxing federation for its cooperation. So there were some substitute events organized in the fall and winter of 1980 for the Moscow non-participants. By the end of the year, we closed down our operations and my stint as the U.S. Olympics Boycott coordinator came to an end. To this day, I am probably still one of the leaders of the "to be avoided" list of the U.S. Olympic Committee and its sport federations.

Of course, on the negative side, our boycott had no impact on Soviet policy in Afghanistan. They did not withdraw or change their Afghan policy at all. But as I said before, our world-wide efforts and our boycott did highlight the Soviet's nefarious actions. We did get a lot of editorial support, which reflected the mood of the American people after they had a chance to consider the issue. I think that helped the Olympic Committee reach its decision, which, as I said earlier, was really an act of patriotism.

This whole episode has been written up in several books, most of them written by people involved in the Olympic movement. They were mostly negative about our policy and efforts. The conclusion drawn by many of these writers was that American athletes were made to suffer because of the ineptness of the U.S. government in expressing its displeasure with Soviet policy. The athletes were made to suffer because the U.S. government could not stop the invasion of Afghanistan through more traditional means. I, of course, argued that a boycott was a perfectly legitimate and powerful expression of disapproval. I don't think we had many other means in 1980 to show our disapproval of Soviet action. It did send an important signal to the Soviets; it did influence world opinion and turned much of it against the Soviets. I think that embargoes are useful foreign policy tools. I know that many disagree, but I think that in the case of these Olympics, it did have a desired effect. It was a symbolic embargo, different from that which we usually impose, but I think it was a good decision by President Carter. There was a tit-for-tat with the Soviets boycotting the Los Angeles games in 1984, but that didn't have nearly the same effect.

I must admit that I came away with some skepticism about the whole international Olympic movement. It is not an entirely above-board operation, with bureaucratic politics within the movement playing a very large role. I am sorry that we were not totally successful; had it been, it would really have sent a powerful message to the Soviets. That is not to say that what we did accomplish was not noted in Moscow; in fact, the Russians have never forgotten the boycott. I think it did demoralize the Soviet public and brought home to it what the world thought of their government's actions in Afghanistan. The boycott was not totally effectivsome nations participated. At the beginning, we had a number of aspirations: first, that the games be moved from the USSR by the International Olympics Committee (IOC) in response to the Soviet violation of international law. I guess that was aiming too high, although the IOC had the power to do so if it had been sensitive enough to the Soviet transgression; it was not. Mr. Samaranch, who ran the IOC, used to be his country's ambassador to Moscow and we believed was in fact on the Soviets' payroll, as has been exposed in recent times.

Once the IOC decided to proceed with the Olympics in Moscow, we fell back on our second, our backup aspiration to get the world's major countries to join the boycott. There, I would estimate we were 60-70% successful. I never expected that the East Germans would join the boycott and they were an international sports powerhouse. As I mentioned earlier, at the beginning, the British and the Canadians did join the boycott; but, with their change of governments, we lost both of them. That hurt. This shifting scene made our calculations of success a moving target during 1980. We really did not know until the very beginning of the Olympics how successful or unsuccessful we would be. It was clear that a 100% success was not possible and with the loss of the British and Canadians our hopes were lowered.

I think it is fair to say that as a government, we really had no idea what we were getting into at the beginning of 1980. We didn't know much if anything about how the sports world is organized. We learned a lot as we went along. We didn't know what our task was or how we could reach our goal. At the beginning, we worked on the assumption that if a U.S. president said that U.S. Olympic teams did not participate, that would be the end of that. It didn't take us too long to understand that in some matters, such as the Olympics, the U.S. government was impotent to enforce its decisions on a private group or groups. We rapidly faced a situation where the U.S. government had to sell its policies to its citizens, or key groups of its citizens. I certainly learned a lot in those few early months, as I think Lloyd Cutler and Warren Christopher and many others also did.

I should add that when we started in early 1980 to work on the boycott of the summer games in Moscow, we were hosting the Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, New York. We, of course, did not want anything to happen to those games. They had to be successful. That limited the scope of what we could do considerably for several months. We could not do anything which would jeopardize the success of the Lake Placid event.

Another sub-text to this history was the financial consequences of a boycott. That was fully understood in the U.S. government. We knew that missing the Olympics would cost federations considerable financial support from sponsors. I think the U.S. Olympic Committee and its various sponsors probably broke even at the Lake Placid games, or perhaps there was a small loss because winter games can apparently be money losers if they are not well attended and not well organized. We believed that our boycott of the Moscow Olympics would lose considerable income to the Soviets, particularly if we could minimize the number of Western attendees. I believe that in the final analysis, the Soviets did lose a lot of monemillions. They had invested huge amounts in preparing for the Olympicsetting up villages for the visiting athletes, building and refurbishing stadiums, and building media facilitieall of the requirements that are demanded by the IOC (just as the Greeks are doing now for this summer's games). We knew that if we could keep visitors and athletes away from Moscow in 1980, it would be a major financial blow to the Soviets. I think we were successful in meeting that goal.

Q: Did anyone think that a boycott, with all of its negative consequences, would make an impact on Soviet policy?

LEDSKY: Not in the short run, but I think we did believe that we might be able to change long range policies. In fact, we were able to rally the Muslim world against the Soviets. There were a number of senior State officials who felt that that alone was worth our efforts. The invasion of Afghanistan started this anti-Soviet mood in the Muslim world, but our effort to organize a boycott really highlighted Soviet policies and strengthened that mood, so there was a feeling in the Department that the boycott did have some positive political consequences. It may have encouraged the emergence of the mujahideen, which we later supported with arms and money. I don't think anyone thought that the Soviets would withdraw from Afghanistan because of our boycott, but there was a hope that the boycott would have political and financial consequences, and I think it did that. I can't measure the impact, but it was surely there as could be observed from subsequent Soviet bitterness and anger. That was palpable; we really got under their skin.

Through this boycott, we also began to have a better understanding of Soviet vulnerabilities. This was probably the first real dent made in the Soviet empire. I never had any conversations about the boycott with Soviet representatives in Washington, nor did Cutler, as far as I know. However, it was clear that they were not "happy campers." I think the boycott was moderately successful; it cost us very little in financial terms. We did spend a lot of time on the issue, we did cause considerable irritation among the athletes and sports lovers in the U.S. and around the world. But it was politically successful. We didn't have a lot of policy choices in 1980 to publicize our views about the invasion, so our choices were very limited; the boycott was the right one. There were assessments made by a number of people after we closed shop.

I should mention before we close this chapter that I got terrific support from my Departmental colleagues. Each regional bureau assigned one officer to my staff, who worked part-time on this boycott effort. I was given one or two other people who were between assignments. They all turned out to be very good. I had a terrific staff. This included Charlie Reese, who is now a DAS in EUR; Brian Sulser, a former defensive end Washington Redskins football player who joined the Foreign Service; and Ron Maloteek, who was thrown out of Saudi Arabia. It was an interesting group. Most of them were out of a job at the time for one reason or another; the personnel office would send them to me to keep them occupied for a period of time. I always had four or five officers assigned to my office and we were busy writing, traveling, or talking. We were extremely busy for the first half of 1980. It was an assignment unlike any other I had eveor any other Foreign Service officehad ever had. We had no "road map" to follow; everything was improvised. We had very little supervision, certainly from the Department or even from Lloyd Cutler, who was quite busy with his day-time job. We did need high level involvement from time to time, which we did get, as I have mentioned earlier.

I well remember when, after Vance resigned and was succeeded by Senator Muskie, I had to brief the new secretary on what I was doing. I had met him previously while working in H, but I doubt that he remembered much of that. I spent about an hour briefing him; I came away feeling that Muskie thought that we were out of our minds and that we were pursuing an idiotic goal. I think I did convince him that we were working very hard on this boycott, but I don't think he ever fully understood what or why we were doing. Later, Muskie had to chair a number of meetings on the boycott in the Department, including a briefing by a four star general on what was going on in Afghanistan. I don't think he was ever convinced that we were on a wise path. We had a couple of events in the White House for American athletes during which President Carter gave some short sermons about the boycott. Those meetings required us to provide some talking points to both the president and the secretary. We put on a number of breakfasts for Congressional members, as well as for other interested parties. There never was any end to the small details that we had take care of; we worked long and hard. As I suggested, not everyone thought that the boycott was a good idea. It certainly took a lot of time and effort, especially since Carter and Cutler were so deeply involved.

There was considerable discussion of the boycott in the American media, particularly the sports media. My picture, as well as Lloyd Cutler's, appeared in Sports Illustrated. So the sports world knew the issue very well, as did much of the American public.

After the Moscow Olympics, I was invited on several occasions by various groups, particularly the sports federations, to participate in discussions about the use of sports boycotts and their effectiveness. This was especially true in early 1984, when it became clear that the Soviets would not participate in the Los Angeles Olympics. There was a lot of interest in Soviet motivations. Sometimes, Lloyd Cutler would call me and ask me to substitute for him at one discussion or another. I was involved in this issue for a long time and participated in discussions even after my return from my Berlin assignment. There are still some sports federations that are still angry and hold me responsible for the 1980 boycott!

Q: That is the end of a very fascinating and unusual chapter in your Foreign Service career. That takes us to 1981, when you were assigned as Minister to our Berlin Mission. How did come about?

LEDSKY: It had nothing to do with a normal personnel assignment process. It was a combination of my being unemployed, David Anderson leaving Berlin to go to Yugoslavia as ambassador and Germany country director John Kornblum deciding I was the best candidate. I also had a lot of support among the "German hands." I think the assignment was checked out with Larry Eagleburger, who was to become the assistant secretary for EUR, having left Yugoslavia as our ambassador. That is I think how the assignment was arranged to take effect in the summer of 1981.

Q: You mentioned the personnel "system". Up to this time, had you had much contact with that system? Do you have any views on the Department's personnel process?

LEDSKY: As I said, personnel had very little to do with the Berlin assignment. I would say that in general, after my initial junior officer assignments, the Office of Personnel had nothing to do with any of my subsequent assignments, except perhaps to approve them by processing the necessary papers. I think in general, as an officer rises in the ranks, Personnel has less and less to do with assignments. I don't want to pass judgement on the consequences of such practices; I have seen them work well and badly, but I believe that in general, assignments made outside of a regulated process is probably a plus. State's personnel system is not a traditional one in any case. It worked in my time more or less according to whom you knew. The senior officers in the Department practically had a free hand in making assignments. There are those who make the charge that this system is not equitable and that more assignments should be based on a written record and not relationships. I am not sure I agree with that. In a bureaucracy of which much is made up of many, many small components such as embassies and consulates, personal relationships become essential to the effectiveness of an operation. That requires, I believe, less reliance on a cold written file and more on knowledge acquired from personal contacts. That factor militates against a formal personnel process. In fact, I think personnel officers recognize these limitations; when I completed the Olympics boycott assignment, the personnel people told me that I was on my own and would have to find my next assignment. They could not help me.

That was not the only time that the personnel system was of no help. It happened to me when I was finishing my assignment in Policy Planning. It happened to me when my stint in the NSC was over. In fact, I don't think the system helped me at all after the mid-1980s; when it did, I think it was a negative factor. I don't remember anyone in the personnel system ever giving me any help or counseling me. The system is just not devised to be helpful to individual officers. It is too impersonal and has too few professionals in it to serve so many clients. It cannot make informed decisions about assignments; the work-load is just too heavy. The center of the system is in Washington, but its major clientele is many, many miles away. It is just too great a demand on any system. Unless you assume that it doesn't matter whether an officer can meet the requirements of any specific job, then the system just cannot function effectively. Since we don't accept that assumption, then the Department has a deficient personnel system.

Q: In general, have you noticed the system doing damage to individuals or the Service as a whole?

LEDSKY: I think so, both for individuals and the total Service. I think many careers are essentially destroyed through a series of mis-assignments. Many bad assignments result in poor foreign policy execution in the field, doing damage to the Service and the country. When an officer is assigned to a position for which he or she is not qualified in such things as experience or temperamenthe consequences can be horrific. These include poor performances not only by the officer, but the whole post. Sometimes, these assignments are made for reasons entirely unrelated to performance such as personnel policies driven by general policy considerations of gender or racial equality. Those policies are perfectly legitimate and should be pursued, but their application to individual cases must be made very carefully and not in a cavalier fashion. There are too many mis-assignments caused by lack of sensitivity to competence, needs, and career development.

Q: Let's return to your Berlin assignment. Tell us a little bit more about the job, beyond how you described it when we were discussing your Bonn assignment earlier.

LEDSKY: The Berlin job was unique in the Foreign Service. Technically, I was the deputy Commandant, the American general in charge of U.S. forces in Berlin and the American sector in Berlin. I was also a deputy to the U.S. ambassador in Bonn, whom I represented in Berlin. So I was both in military and civilian chains of command.

My task was really three-fold: 1) to provide administrative services in Berlin, which would be required by our "occupation" of Berlin so that it would appear that the U.S. had a major voice in the day-to-day management of Berlin's municipal affairs; and, 2) to advise the U.S. commander on political matters as he exercised his role as manager of the U.S. sector of Berlin. These were matters related to his operational responsibilities, which had to be conducted without an appearance of dictatorialness or lack of consideration of the wishes of the Berlin citizenry. The third task involved reporting to the Department and to the embassy what was going on in the whole city, including the Soviet sector.

Let me just take a few minutes to explain the organization of the mission. It had a political section, headed by an officer who spent considerable time reporting on Soviet-East German activities in Berlin.

This section included a "Senat" liaison officer. This Foreign Service officer practically lived in the Berlin legislature; he had to review all bills passed by the legislature. By the time I arrived, this function had become essentially routine since we had long given up micro-management of the Berlin administration. Nevertheless, we maintained this office in the legislature, which reported on what was going on there. Of course, technically, we could have objected to any piece of legislation and blocked it or substantially changed it. But, as I said, we had really given up any role in the legislative procesin such fields as education, for example. There were areas, such as public safety or governmental authority, where we continued to maintain a keen interest.

Some of the issues were complex. For example, the Berlin government considered itself an integral part of the West Germany governmental structure. It had representatives in the Bundesrat of the Federal Republic. When the government in Bonn would agree to some bilateral or multilateral treaties with other countries, there was always the desire to have those agreements apply to West Berlin. We allowed that in some cases; some we rejected as applicable to West Berlin and continued that debate while I was in Berlin. The treaties that dealt with the status of the city or allied responsibilities, such as aviation, could not in our view apply to West Berlin. So, as I said, we had an officer who followed legislation very carefully to insure that allied rights were not diminished in any way. We could not have our "occupation status" changed by the actions of either the West German nor Berlin governments.

We had a "public safety" officer; he was the liaison with the Berlin minister of the interioi.e. the police and fire departments. He was also responsible for securit"homeland security" matters in our sectomaintaining air raid shelters, the stockpiles of food and medicines, as well as espionage cases. Technically, he supervised the police and fire departments in our sector. We had a lot of "security" issues in the 1980s. We also had an officer in the political section responsible for transportation issues. During much of my tour, he was very busy negotiating with the East Germans about the status of the subway system, much of which was above ground. We had an officer who spent most of his time working with the U.S. military. He followed their activities closely. There was also a protocol officer who worked with the city officials whenever important visitors came to Berlin. That was the political section.

We also had an economic section, which was quite different from those of any other State post. For example, we ran Tempelhof Airport. That required a fully manned fire department and all the other support systems required by a large and busy airport. It was someone from the Commerce Department or FAA who was in charge of the airport. That person was an officer in the economic section.

We had a number of functions that no other State post would have. I met with most of the officers handling these unusual activities regularly. Then of course, we had a consular section with three visa officers, and an administrative section. We had a couple of military officers assigned to us, as well as a CIA staff. I would guess we had about 20-25 American officers and about 100 locals. Then we had drivers for our cars, which were part of the U.S. military establishmenwhich was an unusual situation. The U.S. Mission to Berlin had an odd staffing pattern reflecting the unusual range of responsibilities assigned to it.

Q: You had been away from German affairs for about seven years. What was different in Berlin from the time you last worked on iif anything?

LEDSKY: In those seven years, many things had changed. The most important as well as key difference in that time was that we had established an embassy in East Berlin. That had happened in late 1974. By 1981, our mission to the GDR was fully staffed and functioning, having absorbed many of the functions previously discharged by our mission in West Berlin. In theory, our embassy in East Berlin was representing our interests in the German Democratic Republic, which did not include the Soviet sector of Berlin. It was a very fine distinction because with our embassy being physically located in East Berlii.e. the Soviet sector, it was very hard for it not to cover activities in that sector in its reporting. But we wanted to keep to the original agreement, which specified that Berlin was a separate, independent entity governed by the four powers of Great Britain, France the U.S. and the USSR. The important change in that seven years was the recognition of the GDR by us. While we never formally accepted the existence of the Wall, we in fact recognized that it was there and that we weren't going to do anything about it.

Furthermore, in those seven intervening years, the West German government had come to accepslowly, but surelthe existence and probable permanence of the GDR. It had adjusted to the existence of a functioning East German state much more, I think, than the three western powers, so the West Germans were increasingly inclined not to challenge the GDR or to undermine or oppose it at every turn. Willy Brandt, in particular, led the West Germans in their acceptance of the GDR and in dealing with it as another sovereign state and in helping it to solving its problems, even with the cooperation of the west. That was a fundamental change.

The third change, related in some respects to West German acceptance of the GDR, was the increased interest of the west in the activities of the local Berlin government. That government was encouraged to deal with, accommodate, assist and live with its counterpart in East Berlin. Concurrently, there was a developing view in the West Berlin administration that it really did not need the occupying powers to manage its affairs. There was an increasing resistance in the West Berlin government to what it deemed as intrusions in its affairs by the three western powers. So, by 1981, there was strong resistance to the exercise of our second function outlined earlier. By 1981, as compared to even seven years earlier, the West Berlin government did not appreciate our assistance or suggestions in the administration of city affairs.

Q: What were our views on that score?

LEDSKY: I think, in general, by 1981 we had accepted the West Berliners' views on this issue. We were less enthusiastic and slower to accept this view than were the British and the French. We were the last to establish an embassy in East Germany as we were the last to accept the existence of the GDR. We were the most insistent in maintaining the fiction of allied occupation, although I think we were probably much more willing to accept the financial consequences of the changing nature of the occupation than were the British and the French. The latter two did not really want to give up the financial income that they received as occupying powers; that was not a motivation for us. But we did insist longer and more vigorously than the others that the original rules of the administration of Berlin be continued and remain unchanged. I think we were the country which was the most interested in using the occupation as an avenue for bringing down the Wall and in eventually reuniting Germany. That was still an American objective in the 1980s, even after the British and French had essentially given up that goaas had the West Germans.

Q: Why were we interested in bringing the Wall down?

LEDSKY: I am not sure that we were really that interested. We may have been perhaps more interested than our western allies, but it certainly was not high on our agenda. We of course thought about it; it was, after all, one of the major reasons we were operating in Berlin as we were. Even though we recognized the GDR, Washington recognizeat least subconsciously and quietlthat the GDR was an artificial entity which could never really be independent. It required continual and substantial Soviet support. In light of that, for a long time, we more than anyone else, believed it right to bring down this puppet state. Some American policy makerthose who supported the relaxation of tensions in the 1980were in continual conflict with the more strident Reagan philosophy which strived to have the Wall torn down as part of a major policy reorientation by the USSR. I certainly felt that tension while serving in Berlin in the 1980s.

One of the main issues of the time was whether to deploy medium range missiles in West Germany. That was the main topic of debate during my tour. We had street demonstrations in Berlin, as well as in other German cities, against that policy. It caused a policy rift between the West Germans and ourselves. It was the cause of much anti-Americanism in the Federal Republic.

Q: How did the allied military commands in Berlin react to this proposal?

LEDSKY: I think the British, French and American commandants were united on this issue. They supported the placement of missiles in Germany. The fact is that the three allied militaries, when it came to Berlin or east-west relations, saw the world through the same prisms and were united in their views, as were the civilian governments. In fact, I don't remember the commandants really disagreeing on any east-west issues while I was in Berlin. The French and British militaries in Berlin took real tough stances. Occasionally, they had to be restrained by their civilian foreign offices or their military headquarters, but generally, they took hard-edged positions on east-west issues. For example, while I was in Berlin, we encountered some problems with the Soviets over air access to Berlin. All the military took tough, rigid stances.

Q: During your four years in Berlin, how many different American commandants did you work with? What were your views of the British and French commandants?

LEDSKY: Two American commandants. They rotated every two years. I thought the British and French military, in general, had some top talent in Berlin. It was an assignment widely sought, so that the cream of their military leadership was assigned to Berlin.

Q: Tell us a little about your daily routine as minister?

LEDSKY: We usually started the day with a staff meeting with the political and economic officers. These substantive "teams" were unique to Berlin. I would meet with the commanding generaas I did also at the end of the day. I would, on most days, spend some time with city officialeither the mayor or someone in the legislative branch. Those meetings were most often on specific administrative or legislative issues. We held a monthly meeting with the mayor. I would see my counterpart in East Berlin periodicallthree or four times a month. I would also often meet with a Soviet official in East Berlin. It was my responsibility to deal with the Soviets on matters related to the management of Berlin affairs. As I said before, for historical reasons, that was the responsibility of the Berlin mission and not our embassy in East Berlin. I also often spent time on what I would call "exclusively" State Department business, e.g. consular business. I had some responsibility for a public information program. We had an Amerika House in West Berlin and I had a couple of USIA officers on my staff. We took every opportunity available to explain U.S. positions on a variety of issues. I gave speeches, I hosted lunches, etc. There was a U.S. business group in Berlin, which I would periodically host for lunch. The three ministerFrench, British and Americawould hold a weekly meeting. There were a lot of routine meetings that I had to attend.

Q: In retrospect, how much of your work was a legacy of times gone by, with perhaps little relevance to our interests in the mid-1980s?

LEDSKY: That is very hard to answer because it would be hard to categorize any specific activity in those terms. I would say that about half of our activities were related to what I would describe as the "artificial" nature of the occupation. Thirty to forty percent was real diplomatic worthat is work that would be expected from any State Department post of some importance. But to show you how arbitrary that distinction was, I would put meeting with the U.S. ambassador when he came to Berlin in the first category. I did so because much of his time was devoted to traveling to East Berlin to meet his Soviet counterpart or spending time with the French and British generals and ministers. I would spend a lot of time preparing for these meetings, writing and reviewing briefing papers for these meetings, accompanying the ambassador to these meetings. These were all activities that a normal mission would not engage in.

I spent a lot of time counseling the commandant, who was nominally the senior U.S. representative in Berlin. Although perfectly competent, he was called upon about half of the time to deal with non-military matters. He needed help from a non-military source.

The functions and activities that fell in the first categori.e. the occupation-related onewere not the result of bureaucratic inertia. They were significant in that they were the avenue for our continued occupation presence in Berlin, which in turn satisfied some very important political objectivto protect the status of the city until final negotiations were to take care of the issue. No one knew when those final negotiations would take place, but we certainly did not want any deterioration of our rights and those of the people living in the western sectors until agreements were reached. Therefore, these individual responsibilities, which by themselves might have been seen as picayune, were part and parcel of a much broader and very important objective. Others may disagree with that view, but as far as I was concerned, that was the rationale for maintaining responsibility for all occupation-related matters. So I think it was worthwhile working on what may appear as routine matters, many of which related to city management and appeared far removed from international politics.

I spent much of my time arguing with the mayor of Berlin about what was in his bailiwick and what was in ours. Even though the matter may have seemed trivial, there was a recognition on both sides that much more important matters were at stake. We were actually arguing about how best to protect the status of a Berlin unencumbered by Soviet or East German interference so that when final negotiations took place, certain fundamental rights had been maintained. There were those who accused us of spending time on meaningless or irrelevant matters, but I don't think I ever heard a German or American official responsible for the city's management make such assertions. I think the German leadership understood that we were trying to maintain a linthin at besbetween functions that might have no effect on final agreements and those which could play a significant role. That is not a line which can be drawn easily or one that is immutable and that was the reason for some of our disagreements with the Berlin officialdom.

I well remember one of the major areas of disagreement. It revolved around the question of whether the mayor should be able to call on the president of the GDR, Erich Honecker. That was a big issue in the early 1980s. The mayor thought it was important for him to do so and that there was no reason for allied permissioor even to tell us. We rejected that view; we insisted that the mayor get our permission, which he was not likely to get. It was this kind of issue that periodically gave rise to tension between the allies and the West Berlin government. I think all involved, regardless of their positions, understood the importance of the issue not only on its own merits, but as a part of the larger objective of maintaining the "occupation fig-leaf" to protect the future of the city. The difference arose not over the objective, but in our approaches to it.

Similarly, we had a number of disagreements with the Berlin authorities concerning that fine line between us about who had jurisdiction over a particular endeavor: where their authority ended and ours began. Some of these issues were quite difficult to arbitrate. I received no help or guidance from Washington, because the Department may not have fully understood the issue or the technicalities involved or perhaps may really not have wished to be involved. The Berlin administration, of course, did not agree with us on these issues and refused to take the actions that we suggested or required. Despite these occasional hiccups, I think over-all, we had a good relationship with the Berlin administration since there was agreement, as I said, on the long-range goal.

Q: You just mentioned the role of the Department. Did you have the feeling that the Berlin issue had been around so long that it was losing its luster and people cared less and less about it?

LEDSKY: I think there was very little interest on the Seventh Floor in Berlin issues. It had decreased dramatically from ten years earlier. Berlin was no longer high on the U.S. foreign policy agenda. Germany was still of great interest. It housed, after all, some of our major military bases; it was to be the home of the short range missiles; and, it was part of what we hoped would bsooner rather than latea united Germany. But Berlin faded as an issue of interest to policy makers. It may have had some symbolic significance, but I don't think the Seventh Floor gave it much consideration. There were undoubtedly some parts of the Department that wished Berlin would disappear, or should have disappeared before the 1980s.

I should at the same time say that the German division in EUR was very helpful, we had very good relations with them. The desk always tried to be helpful. I think the assistant secretary was interested in Berlin and followed events there. Both Richard Burt and Rozanne Ridgway recognized the role Berlin played in the broader question of East-West relations.

Q: Did you have many high level American visitors?

LEDSKY: Yes, indeed. As I said, Berlin was a symbol and therefore attracted high-level visitors. It also was a great shopping locality. President Reagan visited during my tour. We had many CODELs. Jesse Jackson came on a visit. Larry Eagleburger came as did George Shultz just prior to taking over as secretary of State. We had some cabinet memberWeinberger and Casey for example. We were never short of high-level visitors.

Some of the visits were quite substantive. I think the most delightful visitor was Ed Koch, who I think at the time was already mayor of New York. It was a sort of sister cities visit. He met with all of the senior city officials. I remember taking him to dinner at the Paris Bar, which was one of the swankier places in West Berlin. We also took him to Checkpoint Charlie, as we did with all visitors. Then we went to a U-Bahn station, which was called Kochstrasse Station. With a twinkle in his eye, he turned to me and thanked me for naming a station after him, even before he had arrived. I thought he was just a very delightful and charming individual and we had a very good time.

I also remember the Weinberger visit. He came with Colin Powell and Lauder, who was his staff aide. We briefed them on our air corridor problems. We had a number of close calls in the air and threats from the Soviets of more to come. The issue usually was the height of the flights; the Soviets were trying to impose an arbitrary ceiling. There also were some other disputes about flight interference. So we had some real concerns that we wanted to go over with Weinberger. He also met with the troops and I think it was a very good visit.

I also recall visits from Congressman Bereuter and Senator Joe Biden. The latter stayed at the ambassador's residence. So we had a continual flow of members of Congress.

Q: In protocol terms, who was the nominal host for these visitthe commandant or you?

LEDSKY: I think we used to divide the visits. The general was the host for Weinberger and his team, as he was for President Reagan. I met others, like George Shultz, and Eagleburger and other State officials at the airport. I probably met most of the CODELs and other civilian groups. The CODELs usually stopped in Bonn first and were therefore taken around West Germany by an embassy officer. These visits were time consuming; the actual visit was really not the time consumer; it was the preparation. Of course, with a presidential visit, the preparation took at least a montwith pre-visits from Michael Deaver and the Secret Service and the White House Communications Office and all the other establishments which play a role in presidential visits. Every movement that the president would make was reviewed over and over again; his words were carefully worked over.

Q: Let's talk about the presidential visit of April, 1982. What was its purpose?

LEDSKY: I think Reagan came to Berlin because every president comes to Berlin if he or she is in Europat least once. He wanted to stand in front of the Wall; he wanted to demonstrate his support for the free city; he wanted to demonstrate his support for close German-American relations. The speech was quite good, although it is not the one for which Reagan will always be remembered which was made in 1987.

I must say that I was not really that involved in the visit. In the first place, the official host was the commandant; I was in the second row. The Chancellor of Germany was there and the Berlin mayor of course played a major role. There really was nothing that I could add to the festivities or the briefings. I did shake his hands a couple of times and I did attend all of the events, but I really had little to do with either the preparation for or the visit itself.

Q: So this was primarily a "show the flag" appearance?

LEDSKY: Right. It was a day in Berlin as part of a visit to Germany.

Q: Was there anything notable about the visit?

LEDSKY: Everything went smoothly. There may have been a slight glitch. Reagan wanted to have a picture taken as he stood in front of Checkpoint Charlie. In order to do so properly, he would have had to walk into "no man's land," which separated West and East Berlin, which was against the rules. There was some concern that this gesture might not be welcomed by the Soviets or the East Germans and that some overly-eager guard might take a shot at the president. In the end, the president just passed Checkpoint Charlie and stood in "mo man's" land, had the picture taken and that was it. This whole routine was actually just sprung on us; we had no clue what Reagan would do at the checkpoint. I thought that it was a most unnecessary risk for just a picture. The presidential party was very proud of how they managed this "feat." I don't know whether anyone else still remembers that episode, but I will not forget it.

The rest of the visit went off without a hitch. I am not sure the president understood the significance of Tempelhof airport. He gave his speech at a new college. I think the visit was quite a success.

Q: During your tour, did there seem to be a decreasing interest in maintaining all the rules that the four allies had developed over the years, which may by the mid-1980s have lost their substantive rationales?

LEDSKY: There had been a steady decline for some years in our role in Berlin. It was noticeable. Much of decline was done consciously, but not necessarily welcomed by us who had been and were working on Berlin matters. We tended to reject changes in the status quo because, as I mentioned before, we were looking forward to the day when Berliand the two Germaniemight be united. We felt that until that day, symbolism was important and should be kept up. But there were still some meetings and contacts that were maintained strictly to keep the status of Berlin in the public eye. These meetings were an important part of the record; we made certain points at these meetings to bolster our position in the city. We stood on principal, even when we knew that our requests would be ignored by the city administration.

Q: Why did you feel that perhaps we were moving too rapidly towards the dismantling of the occupation regime?

LEDSKY: By the mid-1980s, there was very little of that regime left. There were very few things that we were doing that really could be justified by the "occupation" theory. I felt that few of those practices should be continued for they were the last vestiges of a status that had to be maintained until a final resolution of the city's situation. We should not have to watch our rights be whittled away while the Soviets were not giving up any of theirs. We probably were more concerned about this deterioration of our position in Berlin than was Washington or London or Paris.

Included in the last vestiges of our standing in Berlin were such matters as the regime at Spandau prison. Since the 1960s, the prison population had declined from about a half a dozen to onRudolf Hesso a jail was maintained at considerable expense for one prisoner. We had a four-power guard rotation, monthly lunches, maintenance of a large buildinall for one old, sick man who was certainly no threat. The West Germans complained about the costs and the stupidity of our position. In fact, by the mid-1980s, I don't think the world would have cared about where Hess was being held and the Germans repeatedly pointed that out to us. We had held Hess since 1945; by the mid 1980s, it had less and less significance. It was almost entirely symbolic. We had to confront the reality of the situatiomaintaining a jail built for five hundred prisoners which housed only one. We in Berlin persisted in keeping Hess in Spandau because it was one of the few four power functions remaining in the city. It was one of the few issues on which the western allies and the Soviets had a meeting of the mind and a cooperative relationship. The process had become routine and the Soviets were not about to upset that apple cart. They continued to manage the prison every fourth month; they continued to consult on Hess' management regularly. It was the one issue where the Soviets had not tried to change the original four-power arrangements. These continued consultations offered an opportunity to discuss other Berlin issues, which was becoming impossible in other contexts. The Soviets were just interested in carrying on a dialogue about Berlin, but would do so in the context of the Spandau prison.

That is just one example of four-power responsibilities that we were carrying on in the mid-1980s. As I said, over time, these had become fewer and fewer, but I felt it important to continue as many of them as we could in order to preserve the "occupation" theory. Another example of this general theory was the Berlin air center, which was manned by four controllerone from each occupying power. They supervised the air traffic in and out of the city. We believed that it was important to maintain that center for safety reasons, but also because it was one of the few activities in Berlin that was still administered jointly by the four powers. It was another example of a four-power cooperative enterprise and that was important as another symbol of Berlin's status as territory occupied by the four powers. The occupation regime was still in effect and would not pass until a final settlement was agreed upon. As I said, we believed that it was important to hold onto these few remaining vestiges of the occupation to protect negotiations on the final settlement. We were concerned that otherwise these responsibilities would slowly but surely be turned over to the Germans, leaving nothing to be settled at the end. The Soviets would have turned all the remaining responsibilities over to their client statthe GDR. We insisted on continuing them.

There were a number of other areas that should be mentioned. Under the "occupation" arrangements, we were able to send our patrols to all sectors of the city. That right had been challenged during the 1960s when the Wall went up. We thought it important to continue this regime. Every day, we would send U.S. military vehicles into East Berlin. These patrols could not do anything, but it was important to "show the flag" in East Berlin. People began to raise questions about this practice; why use good resources for just driving around one sector of the city? Then the number of patrols were whittled down, but we in Berlin were strongly opposed to ceasing the operation all together. We wanted the theory of a city open to all four powers maintained; we had the right to circulate in all parts of Berlin. In a number of areas we were insisting continuing practices which were meaningless and expensive perhaps in themselves, but had in our eyes important symbolic significance. Our position was not universally applauded, to say the least.

Q: While holding out for these vestiges, were we beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel, i.e., an end to an arrangement that had been in effect for forty years? Could you see any signs that "normalization" was foreseeable?

LEDSKY: It is a hard question. I don't think that in the mid-1980s anyone had any idea how the Berlin situation or the German one in general would be resolved. None of us had any idea when or how the allied responsibilities for Berlin would end and how the functions that we were still controlling might be terminated. I don't think, in fact, that much thought was being given in Berlin, Bonn, Washington, London, or Paris to how to end the occupation. There may be people who today will take credit for having thought and seen the eventual outcome, but if they did in fact exist, we certainly never heard of them.

There were discussions about specific functions. I mentioned Spandau, which was an obvious issue as the prison population decreased from half a dozen to three and then one. Obviously, the idea of closing Spandau was considered at various times. Some worried about what might happen if Hess died: would we continue to maintain the prison, which then would have held no one. So there were discussions about individual functions, but no one that I am aware of was tackling the larger question of a final solution to a divided city and two Germanies. We had no answer to this fundamental issue and that is why I felt very strongly that our vestigial responsibilities had to be maintained, lest our bargaining power be completely or essentially eroded.

I should add that at least on the U.S. side, there was a recognition that change would take place sometime. Nobody knew how to bring the fissure to a close, but we all knew that it would. I thought that the occupation would end at some point and that somehow the Wall would come down. I didn't know when or how; neither did anyone else, but we were certain that major changes would occur. There was no question that the Wall was arbitrary, capricious, and artificial. It was not only inhumane, but it was also clearly a barrier that could not be permanent. It separated a city which historically had been one entity; it was grotesque and a symbol of dictatorial power and would eventually be torn down. No one was sufficiently prescient to even suggest a possible scenario for its demise. I think most people did not see any change in the short and medium time frames; and therefore, no one was planning for that eventuality.

Q: You have mentioned the missile issue on several occasions. Tell us more about that.

LEDSKY: This not a Berlin-centered issue. We were really tangential. The question being debated was whether to place medium-range missiles in the center of Europe, i.e., West Germany. Most Germans were against it. NATO, pushed by the U.S., insisted that it be done. The Americans believed that the missiles would serve as a deterrent, particularly since the Soviets had placed similar weaponry in some Eastern European Warsaw-Pact countries. They were targeted on West Germany. The issue became a major political controversy among the German political parties. It got to be seen as a test of West German adherence to the western alliance because NATpushed by the U.S. wanted it. In the final analysis, the West German government stood by the alliance. I think that in Berlin, the population was overwhelming opposed to it. We had major anti-missile demonstrations while I served in Berlin. It was "Down with the rockets" or "Down with the Americans". The demonstrators were quite vocal about their anti-Americanism. I spent a lot of time on the stump defending our position, as did a number of my staff members.

Q: Did this anti-Americanism become more virulent during your four years in Berlin?

LEDSKY: I would say so. There was an increasing animus during my tour, certainly if compared to earlier periods. It was largely related to the missile issue. It was not sparked by anything we did in Berlin. Berliners, like most West Germans, were just opposed to the deployment of missiles on their territory. They felt that Ronald Reagan was leading the U.S. in the wrong direction. On the other hand, Berlin had been and increasingly became the center of left-wing attitudes. The Berlin Social Democrats were quite far to the left and anti-American. Berlin University was the center of student radicalishad been and was in the mid 1980s.

I should add that although, as I said, anti-Americanism was quite strong during my tour, by the end of it, it began to subside. It reached its peak in the 1982-83 period. During the first Reagan visit, we were very concerned about presidential security and large demonstrations. By the summer of 1985, the missile debate was over; they were going to be deployed onto West German territory. Furthermore, the conservatives had made a major come-back in Berlin; Weizsacker was elected as mayor. The Social Democrats were essentially replaced in office; their influence waned considerably.

I should also mention that the new city administration was instrumental in raising the level of services to the Berliners. When I first arrived, there was a major problem with squatters. While it was never completely solved during my tour, by 1985 it had been alleviated considerably and solutions were being developed.

Q: You saw the Soviet representatives periodically. What were your impressions?

LEDSKY: I was able to establish and maintain a good relationship with the DCM of the Soviet embassy in East Berlin, as well as with one or two others staffers in that embassy. We held as series of meetings between our ambassador, Arthur Burns, and the Soviet ambassador to the GDthere were a couple of them during my tour. The Soviets were much more accommodating by 1985 than they had been in 1981, or since the Berlin blockade. In general, they were very friendly. They did not act menacingly at all; they seemed to be trying their best to be cooperative. They appeared to be almost as concerned about their client state, the GDR, as they were about the west. They showed considerable worry about the nature of the GDR regime; it did not seem to be working up to their expectations. They worried that the East Germans would find the west increasingly appealing. They also indicated a hope that the U.S. and the USSR return to their WW II alliance.

From my vantage point, I think this was a strange period of U.S.-USSR relations. The Soviets were concerned about and strongly opposed to the deployment of the medium-range missiles, but that did not affect my personal relationships with Soviet officials. I think others in Berlin had the same experience. The mid-1980s was a period of increasing U.S.-USSR cooperation, i.e., detente.

Q: How would you describe your relations with the embassy in Bonn?

LEDSKY: Actually, I think our relationship with Bonn was quite good. There were several "Nelson Ledskys" in Bonn, i.e., officers who followed Berlin affairs as I had done seven years earlier. Ambassador Arthur Burns followed Berlin affairs closely, as did DCM Bill Western and the political counselors. Of course, as had been true historically, there was some tension between the embassy and the Berlin mission. Burns had a steep learning curve regarding Berlin. He did know the long history that had preceded his arrival and I am sure was puzzled by some of the practices that had developed or the necessity for keeping them going, as I have discussed earlier. He was very perceptive; his thought processes were direct and unambiguous. That undoubtedly created intellectual problems for him; I am sure that he never fully understood why the allies were continuing practices that he probably viewed as passï¿½. He would challenge me and our staff on many issues; we may not have satisfied him with our answers every time, but we had a good relationship. He was not only a good ambassador; he was also a wonderful person and we got along extremely well. I almost came to enjoy the Saturday morning seminars, which he would hold when he came to Berlin. These were serious sessions with Burns posing a lot of tough issues. He would come about once a month and stay for a few days.

As I said, I don't think he ever fully understood what we were trying to achieve in Berlin. However, he was very interested in his position in the city. When we told him what his functions were in this quadripartite setting, he began to be attached to it. He was anxious to meet with the Soviet ambassador; he wanted to drive around East Berlin; he wanted to host social events in East Berlin, in part to meet GDR representatives. He was not too happy to have an American embassy in East Berlin, even though his jurisdiction did not overlap with that of our ambassador to the GDR. He always defended our Berlin practices and policies in any dispute with our embassy in East Berlin. The concept that he had a role to play in East Berlin appealed to him. There were times when we had to caution him to pull back in disputes with Ambassador Ridgway. In truth, I don't think there was much love lost between the two.

Our relationship with Bonn was actually quite good. I would visit the embassy periodically, seeing the ambassador, the DCM, the political counselor and staff. That was a change from earlier years, when a visit to Bonn by our minister in Berlin was a rare thing. But Burns, for example, wanted me to attend his monthly staff meeting; I could not do that every time, but I did try to get to Bonn at least once every two months and sometimes more frequently than that. I think it is fair to say that I was probably closer to the Bonn embassy than most, if not all, of my predecessors. They did go to the embassy, but not as frequently as I did. As I mentioned before, the mission's expenses, except the salaries of the Americans, were paid by the Germans under an "occupation costs" budget. As a result, my travels were at no cost to the American taxpayers. So, as the embassy's budget became more limited, my travel to Bonn was an obvious way to accomplish a necessary task at no charge to that budget. That principle soon applied also to conferences that were being held around West Germany. The ambassador or the DCM would send me because it saved the embassy money. This whole budget process was one of the many anomalies which had developed after WWII, when the "occupation costs" theory was implemented.

Q: It was the only situation in the world in which an ambassador and the embassy's administrative staff controlled expenditures made by a U.S. military establishment.

Do you have any final thoughts on your tour as U.S. Minister in Berlin?

LEDSKY: Let me say that I instituted a couple of new processes in Berlin, which were unique and unprecedented. For one, I tried to establish and maintain good relations with Berlin's representatives in the Bundestag and the Bundesrat, the two chambers of the German Parliament. These were elected officials and as the 1980s progressed, it became evident that the Berlin representatives were becoming powers in West Germany political circles. That was a new development and spurred me to initiate and maintain good relationships with these people. I think I succeeded in that with members of both parties, the SDP and CDU, during my four years in Berlin.

I think I also established a relationship with Weizsacker, who was the mayor of Berlin when I got to Berlin, and who eventually became the president of the FRG. We got along extremely well, in part because I was willing to stand up to him and in part because he was very pro-American and very much attuned to the Republican party's approaches to policies and politics. The two of us traveled to Washington on a couple of occasions while he was the mayor; we made the rounds of the political arena. I don't think any of my predecessors did that with the mayors who were in office during their tours as ministers.

We established an American businessmen's group in Berlin to promote U.S. investments and business activities in the city. In fact, the American business community had begun to retreat from Berlin starting in the early 1980s. More and more of the American firms had replaced their American leadership with Germans and several of them had left Berlin completely. So, I spent a lot of time working with American businessmen to reverse these trends and to expand their presence in the city. We founded a U.S. business council to assist in these efforts. Many of the members were Germans working for American companies. We worked hard on encouraging further American investments in the city. Ford built new facilities. Gillette, which had had a presence in the early 1960s, renewed and enlarged its presence. I think these efforts had a lasting impact; they made senseconomically for the companies and politically for us. The city cooperated readily with us; it had always had a practice of extending subsidies to foreign companies investing in Berlin. Over time, in some cases, that meant maintaining a minimal company presence in Berlin to take advantage of the subsidy, but to move many of the operations out of the city, where the costs were lower. That is what we tried to reversthat trenso that American companies would stay and expand their operations in Berlin.

That is another example of the challenges that our office in Berlin faced, which would not arise in any other subsidiary post. Berlin was unique. I felt that it was important to keep and, hopefully, enlarge an American economic presence in Berlin to support our position in the city, both from the American business community and the Germans. In fact, it was the American business community, both in the U.S. and in West Germany, that would often take up our cause and defend the U.S. position on Berlin issues.

Q: We are now in 1985, when you were assigned to S/P (Policy Planning Staff) as the senior deputy. How did assignment come about?

LEDSKY: I am not exactly sure. Another mystery! What I do know is that the Office of Personnel had nothing to do with it, except perhaps the paper shuffling. While visiting Washington in 1985, I spent some time looking for another assignment. I got nowhere. I had hoped to be nominated for an ambassadorship, but by this time most of the decisions about who would serve where in the second Reagan administration had already been made. I returned to Berlin after having been told by Personnel that it had nothing for me and that I would probably have to return to Washington unassigned and could then pound the corridors looking for a job. I tried to find out why I was being left out in the cold; I didn't get any satisfaction from those inquiries. Obviously, my stock was not very high after four years in Berlin. I could not find anyone who was willing to go to bat for me to try to find me an assignment while I was packing up to leave Berlin. There were some people in EUR who half-heartedly said they would put me on a number of lists of candidates for ambassadorial positions. But they quickly would add that EUR had no great influence in the final selections. They were right!

I remember having a conversation with Rick Burt, the assistant secretary for EUR. He said he would try, but he wasn't very successful if he did.

During 1985, we had a problem with free transit in the Berlin air corridors. One of the officials who came from Washington to look at the issue on the ground was Fritz Ermarth, a well known official, then with the CIA, but later at the NSC. We struck up a friendship. He was impressed with my understanding of the situation in Europe, the Soviets, and of east-west relations even though I was far from being an expert on them. We began a correspondence about the air corridors which as I mentioned earlier were not well understood in the White House or even in the Department. Fritz was interested in the issue and I was able to explain them to him in a way that he found useful. So, he took an interest in me and I think he recommended me to Peter Rodman, the head of S/P. I had one or two calls from Rodman whom I had never met. He was looking for a deputy. During one of these calls, he asked me whether I would be interested in that job. I said that I was and I was put on a list of candidates. He invited me to come to see him whenever I was next in Washington. I never did get back to Washington, but I was transferred to the S/P job anyway. My guess is that Rodman selected me primarily on Ermarth's recommendation. He may have checked with some others who knew me; I don't know. Eagleburger was the one person on the Seventh Floor whom I knew pretty well, although I had never worked with or for him. So the selection process was a complete mystery to me, but I am glad that I ended up in S/P.

Q: How did Rodman explain the job to you?

LEDSKY: He said it was the senior deputy job, supervising the substantive work of the Policy Planning Staff. Rodman explained to me that he spent much of his time writing speeches for the secretary. He focused on the needs of the Seventh Floor principals, leaving the deputy to be S/P's man with the bureaus, primarily the regional ones. The job sounded good. Furthermore, S/P had the reputation of having an intellectually stimulating atmosphere, even if it had little influence with the rest of the department. I probably would have preferred some others jobs, but this was quite acceptable.

Q: Was S/P the intellectual cauldron that you had expected?

LEDSKY: Yes. The staff was outstanding, consisting of some civil servants, some Foreign Service officers, and some political appointees. They were almost all of a very high caliber. They all had a valuable contribution to make to the policy development process; unfortunately they had little influence. By the time I arrived, the staff was no longer involved in day-to-day operations of any kind. When Kissinger was secretary, S/P had to concur in most important messages and statements; by the mid-1980s that was no longer the case. S/P had become a marginal operation, detached from the day-to-day world.

Nominally, we had officers who worked with each regional bureau. That meant that one S/P officer attended a bureau's staff meetinusually weekly, but they were not integrated into the policy development process. S/P was not a mandatory point of clearance, even on important policy documents. We did have some staff members who, through their own connections, did contribute to a bureau's policy recommendations, but they worked on the basis of personal relationships and not formal bureaucratic arrangements.

Rodman had excellent relations with Secretary Shultz. He was quite influential, particularly though his role as the key speech writer. He was a very good writesometime a little bizarre (all of his sentences started with the word "it"). He has reviewed much, if not all, of Kissinger's writings, e.g. books. He is very bright, but quite shy, which makes him seem distant. He is not warm or friendly, and certainly not a good bureaucrat. His strength was his intelligence and his professional relationship with Shultz. The secretary met with Rodman at least once a day, going over issues and materials. I had nothing to do with speech writing.

When Rodman was replaced by Dick Solomon, the management of S/P changed. Solomon acted both as day-to-day director and as key speech writer, although he was not nearly as skilled as Peter as a writer. Then, some of the writing work-load fell on me and more speech writers were recruited. My role changed during my 18 months in S/P. The role of the director also changed; he became less of a speech writer and more of a director.

We had two or three officers working on economic issues. They wrote speeches for the secretary and other senior State officials, mostly about the impact of "globalization" on economic conditions. I think on this issue, S/P had considerable influence on the secretary and the department. I spent some time on this issue, although I must admit that I was quite cynical about the concept of "globalization."

We were also heavily involved in Middle East issues. Aaron Miller worked in S/P at the time and he was deeply involved in NEA's efforts on Israel-Arab affairs. He was fully trusted by Shultz and therefore was a "heavy hitter" on these issues. Miller gave us participation in Middle East peace issues. This was another area in which S/P had considerable influence.

We also had considerable influence in arms-control matters. Avis Bohlen was our expert in this field. She was well connected and very clever. She was eventually replaced by another officer who I think is still in the Department working on arms control. Avis had a real impact on arms control negotiations. She waand ivery good.

In many other areas, S/P had little or no influence. We did produce some very good papers, which included some excellent proposals and analyses. For example, we produced a very good analysis of the Iran-Iraq war, written by Zalmay Khalilzad (now our ambassador in Afghanistan) and Miller. This was the period when we were pro-Iraq. Khalilzad recently hosted a group from NDI; I am told that he spent the first thirty minutes of the meeting relating how I used to rip through his papers when he worked for me. I used to make him one-page reports, instead of the twenty pages that he would have preferred.

Ashley Hewitt wrote some good papers on Panama which made some very good suggestions on what the U.S. might do to shape the post-Noriega period. There were also some very interesting papers written on African issues, primarily on the American boycott of South Africa. Shultz did show some interest in some of this material and used some of the analysis in his own speeches. There were some good reports written on Sudan and Liberia. Barry Lowenkron worked with me on Polish and Eastern European issues. Some of our ideas did become part of U.S. policies in that part of the world. Robert Kagan was also on our staff; he is now a well known conservative writer.

As I said, I was involved in much of this activity. We had a rather impressive intellectual staff; I was impressed by the caliber of the people in S/P.

Q: Was there a lot of frustration or were the staff happy with their impact?

LEDSKY: There wasn't any frustration. Once you get involved in a project, it demands a lot of your time. It was not possible at the start to gauge how much influence you might have on the outcome. We knew that Secretary Shultz read a lot. Rodman had daily access to him. We attended the morning meeting of the Seventh Floor principals. At these meetings, we could and did alert the secretary about policy papers that were on their way to him; we could briefly outline the issues and our views. The doors were open to us to make our case. As long as we could participate, there was no reason for frustration, even though, in hindsight, I would now admit that we probably had very little influence. Many of the issues were decided outside of the Department or by officials who had a different view than us. While involved in the policy process, we could not foresee the decision and therefore felt that we were making a contribution. We might have been a little more positive had we been involved in the day-to-day policy decisions, but I don't think that that made that much of a difference to the stafcertainly not for me. S/P was a sort of "Ivory Tower," which I found stimulating and interesting.

We were busy all the time. I spent a lot of time on the road on bilateral consultations with many of counterparts in other governments. I participated in a number of conferences all around Europe. I went to Japan, to South Korea, to China, to Italy and to NATO. The world's policy planners had developed a pattern of consultations with each other, so that it was a community that often exchange views often. I think all of the staff would agree that we worked in S/P during a very interesting period in world affairs and that they had good assignments, even if some might have wished to be more operationally involved.

Q: By the time you finished your S/P assignment, did you reach any conclusions about the value of an S/P, that is an organization removed from day-to-day activities concentrating on the long range?

LEDSKY: I think I have reached a number of different conclusions over the years about the role of S/P. I believe that it has a role; there is a need in an organization such as the Department for a group that is removed from the day-to-day bustle, thereby being able to focus on the longer range goals of U.S. foreign policy. The Department needs a group to point the way to the future and to plan for that future. I don't think in fact that there is enough of that planning and certainly what is done is not paid adequate heed or respect by the operating bureaus or the political leadership of the Departmenor the government as a whole. I think the Department has a vital role in considering future goals and objectives and in devising plans to reach them. The Department is a lot better at this than the CIA or the DoD, even though they also have planning divisions which are more influential in their bureaucracies than S/P is in State. I am not that familiar with today's situation in the Department, but I am convinced that a well-staffed S/P can make a valuable contribution to the work of the Department. I include speech-writing as a vital S/P function because speeches by senior Department officials are often policy-setting, or at least trial balloons.

The personnel mix in S/P was pretty good. The staff consisted of civil servants, Foreign Service officers, academics, practitioners and military officers. It included dreamers and schemers; a planning process needs both. It was a good mix, which I hope the Department has maintained.

I think my involvement in this new community was a mind-opener for me. I learned a lot about matters that had never crossed my consciousness before. I really didn't have time to be frustrated.

Q: Do you have any views about how the present and the future might be better linked in the policy development process? How does a regional bureau in its day-to-day activities tie into an S/P which is setting a course for the future or vice-versa?

LEDSKY: I think that a complete separation of those two entities is not satisfactory. In order to think about the future, you better know the present. S/P can only make sense if it has a good feel of what is happening day-to-day. And by that I don't mean that the S/P staff can find out what is going on by reading the media. It must have access to current thinking and plans of the regional and functional bureaus. A complete barrier between today and tomorrow is not going to be useful to it either.

That is not to say that S/P should not exist as a separate entity. It should. However, while it must have some interaction with the operating bureaus, the temptation to get involved in the day-to-day activities cannot be allowed to overwhelm S/P's main role, which is the "Ivory Tower" that allows people time to think and reflect and to put their views on paper without concern about today's political correctness. It should be the place where a Secretary can get ideas "outside the box," the modern expression for far-out views, which may run contrary to prevailing views. The bureaucracy, the day-to-day operators, are bound by what they did yesterday, which they will defend to their last breath. In most cases, the will continue to do todaand perhaps tomorrow as welwhat they did yesterday. That is the nature of a human being; he or she will not admiat least readily or ungrudginglthat a mistake was made yesterday. Yesterday's actions must be rationalized if today's follow-up action is to make any sense. So, if the policy is to change tomorroor at least today's is to be challengethen there must be a place in the bureaucracy, separate from the operators, which can develop policy alternatives.

Q: In your scheme, does the day-to-day operator then revise his course to conform with the long-range program developed by the "Ivory Tower?"

LEDSKY: My thought is that the day-to-day operators must be instructed by the Department's leadership to follow the new paths. The instructions are necessary because you can't expect the operator to do so voluntarily. A desk officer, to change from what he or she did the previous week, must have an order from the boss. I would hope that that boss would have consulted with S/P before changing directions. I don't want to suggest that the operators do not have ideas of their own on where U.S. policy should go; they do, but I think that for an effective change in course, there should be some directioa confirmatiofrom the top. One of the problems today is that the senior Department officials have become the operators themselves. It is the secretary or the deputy secretary or an undersecretary who calls his counterpart in a foreign government to implement a U.S. policy.

It is precisely those officials who may be the hardest to move from a course because they have a personal stake in it, having been involved in yesterday's phone call. They may feel less inclined to change directions because of their previous involvement in a set course. When the top officials become the operators, then you have greatly complicated the change process because these officials have become part of the problem and not the solution. Top officials need to have a more detached view of what is going on so that they can more readily adjust course if necessary. Furthermore, the more top officials become the operators the less time they have for other pressing problems; they become an impediment to an effective organization. The same is true for the president; the more he gets involved in day-to-day activities, the less effective the bureaucracy becomes.

Q: Did S/P operations change when Dick Solomon succeeded Peter Rodman in 1986?

LEDSKY: Peter left S/P to take a job at the NSC, which is the reason why I went there a year later. Dick Solomon, then at the Rand Corporation, was named the new director of S/P. I had never met him. He made some major changes in our operations. He saw himself as the global policy-planner, as well as the Department's main speech writer. Unfortunately, he never gained Shultz's confidence as a speech writer, which meant that the staff had to be increased to accommodate the speech writing work-load. One of these new members was Bob Kagan, the now well-known conservative writer. In fact, there was a major turn-over in S/P's personnel. Our focus also changed and S/P became an entirely different entity than it had been under Rodman's leadership.

Q: We are now in 1987, when you were assigned to the NSC as the senior director for European and Soviet Affairs. How did that come about?

LEDSKY: Fritz Ermarth, whom I mentioned before in connection with my S/P assignment, had moved to the NSC as its Sovietologist to succeed Jack Matlock, who had been appointed our ambassador to Moscow. Fritz was in the NSC when it had to go through major personnel changes after the Iran-Contra affair became public. Fritz suggested to Rodman that efforts should be made to get me to the NSC on loan from the Department for a vacancy. After a few months, my transfer was worked out, as well as that of a couple of other FSOs, to replace CIA personnel as part of the post Iran-Contra shake up.

My first NSC assignment was to be Fritz's deputy. In the middle of 1988, he returned to the Agency and I moved up to take his job as senior deputy for EUR and the Soviet Union. When I first went to the NSC, this section consisted of four or five officers. All of them, I think, were at some stage of departure from the NSC. This was in part because of Iran-Contra and in part because we were reaching the end of the Reagan administration, which was causing people to look for new assignments.

In 1987, Frank Carlucci was the NSC Advisor; his deputy was Colin Powell. I knew neither of them when I went to the NSC. Carlucci left later that year to become Secretary of Defense and was succeeded by Powell. John Negroponte was then chosen as the deputy NSC Advisor. Both Powell and Negroponte had offices in the West Wing of the White House, while the rest of the staff was housed in the old Executive Office building. The European section was housed in a suite on the third floor. It was headed by a senior director, first Fritz and then me. The section was responsible for our relations with all European countries and the Soviet Union. When I took over the section, I did not appoint a deputy, but worked directly with four or five program officers, each responsible for part of Europe. There was one woman who worked on the Soviet Union. Officers who worked on global functional issues were part other NSC directorates such as disarmament and arms control, economics and trade policies, and national security. In essence, the NSC was set up then pretty much like the Department is.

I might just say a word or two about Frank Carlucci, whom, as I said, I did not know. He was a very good professional. He ran a very good operatiosmooth, cooperative, effective. He was demanding and I think all of the staff put in long, long hours every day. We used to start at 7:30 a.m. with a staff meeting. Then came a long day, during which we prepared for meetings that were to take place the following day. There was a lot of paper. We had to read all of them and digest them and often write a brief summary for one principal or another.

The papers covered everything from the sublime to the ridiculous. We worried about Cub Scout tours of the White House; we answered letters to the president from all over the countrmany of them quite outlandish. At the other end of the spectrum were the serious issues facing the government, which more often than not generated different views from the various bureaucracies involved. Many of these issues required inter-agency meetingsometimes on major issues and sometimes on what seemed to me to be rather marginal. As I said, a lot of time was devoted to writing brief memos for the president, the vice-president, the first lady, etc. In retrospect, I must say that we spent a lot of time on rather unimportant matterthe trivia of running a government. What I remember most vividly was the quantity of the papers that crossed your desfar more than one could digest or even glance at. Many of these papers were just filed, unread. We got long studies from CIA for exampl100 to 200 pages long. We could never read them. Even the cables or short papers were often given short shrift. It was very difficult to follow events in specific countries in light of this paper avalanche, even though that was a key part of our charter.

We also had to prepare the principals for visits of foreign dignitaries. That was a constant stream ranging from the routine, i.e., dignitaries with titles but no substantive roles who would come to the White House for a social occasion, to the important foreign-policy makers. They all required briefing papers for the host, which required us to be on top of whatever was going on in the visitor's country. The initial briefing paper would be written in the Department. It was always late, often written by an officer who did not know more about the visitor than we did. I knew from my experiences in the Department how the writing of these briefing papers was assigned. The first available officer was told to write a briefing paper for the president or the vice-president or the first lady for a meeting with a foreign visitor which was to take place in three weeks. That paper then wended its way up the State bureaucracy and then over to the NSC. Somehow or other, the paper was never available to us when needed, so that almost never was it the State paper that went to the White House principal. More often than not, it ended up as an attachment to something that a NSC staffer had written. These State papers were often off target; the talking points were not the ones that we thought were required. They just were another pile of papers to be added to the piles already on our desks.

Q: How did the NSC Advisors see the role of the NSC?

LEDSKY: They saw it, first and foremost, as an entity to support the president and the White House principals as they coped with foreign policy issues. I think they viewed the NSC much as we in the Department looked at S/S (Secretariat Staff). In other words, the NSC was a filter, a manager of paper flow to principals and their staffs. In the 1987-89 period, Howard Baker was the chief of staff. He was the recipient of a lot of the papers. He was viewed as one of the White House principals; he was very influential with the president who had a great interest in foreign affairs. He and his staff were always involved in preparations for visits of foreign dignitaries. So, a lot of our work went to Baker. Our papers to the president went through the chief of staff as well. Both Carlucci and Powell, I think, saw the NSC as a staff to serve the president and other principals, very much, as I said, as S/S served the secretary and the Seventh Floor principals in the Department.

Q: What were the major issues in Europe during your NSC tour?

LEDSKY: They were numerous. It is hard to categorize any of them as "minor." Just in the order they come back to me, let me list Poland and its rise to independence from the Warsaw Pact. I might just generalize from that specific and list the general problem in Eastern Europe as the growth of dissidents from the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet orbit. Then there was the general question of U.S.-European relationNATO, France and Germany primarily. With regard to the latter, we differed on "Ost Politik," i.e., how to deal with East Germany. There were issues with Spain and Portugal and their role in the western world. Then there were a number of long outstanding problems such as the potential sale of military aircraft to Argentina, to which the British objected. Then there was the Cyprus problem. I think the list is probably endless. To my recollection, there wasn't a single over-arching issue. It was just a myriad of issues which had to be managed one by one, and which were essentially unrelated.

Q: Let's talk about the Warsaw Pact and its deterioration.

LEDSKY: In my two years in the NSC, the primary focus was on Poland, although we would periodically be engaged in some issue arising from Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, which was at the beginning of its break-up. Many of the issues required negotiations with the Soviets, the country involved, and the western Europeans, who had an interest in developments just to their east. We did not have a comprehensive policy on how to deal with the Warsaw Pact and its slow demise. Everything was done country by country.

Our main task was to consolidate and digest the information we were receiving from various Departments. Having done that, if there were differences, then we would try to coordinate positions. More often than not, this required inter-agency meetings, usually chaired by Colin Powell, to see whether some agreement could not be reached among the agencies. These meetings, usually preceded by inter-agency working groups of lower levels, took a lot of time. So, in addition to acting like a secretariat, the NSC saw as one of its functions the oversight responsibility to insure that presidential policy decisions were being discharged by all agencies in the same way. Making a vast bureaucracy march to the same tune is not always an easy task.

During my tour, there was considerable emphasis on eliminating any contradictions, which might exist among the policies and implementing actions of various Departments. In part, this effort stemmed from the Iran-Contra fiasco, during which rogue officials carried out their own policies without regard to presidential directions or general administration policies.

Our third function might be described as "policy planning," although much of that was encompassed in preparations for visits from foreign dignitaries. At times, speeches were used to convey new directions or reinforce existing ones. The NSC had a speech-writing team which worked closely with the president's speech writing group. These speeches were often part of a presidential trip. Trips included many, many functions, each of which had to be scripted and stage managed. For example, when the president went to Berlin in 1987, Howard Baker and his staff and the NSC first outlined the objectives of the trip. Having agreed on that, then a general outline of events was developewhere to go, who to see, what would be said. Any of these possible events were opportunities for "policy planning" for it gave the president opportunities to strike in new directions or to emphasize existing policy. This process had one major weakness: it tended to focus on the present and the near term; it was not designed to worry about five years ahead. For the present and the near term, this policy determination process was quite effective for it put the president's personal imprimatur on U.S. policy.

Q: Let us talk a little bit about the status of U.S.-Soviet relations in the late 1980s?

LEDSKY: This was a period during which the U.S. government tried to understand and deal with the new Soviet regime under Gorbachev. During my two years, the major events in this area were two major visits: the first was the Reykjavik summit meeting and the second was Gorbachev's visit to Washington. These were two more illustrations of presidential events driving policy. I was not deeply involved in the preparations for either event because at the time I was only Ermarth's deputy.

As I suggested, my years in the NSC were devoted to an exploration of possible cooperation with the Soviets on a number of issues. The principal issues were disarmament, the cessation of the persecution of Soviet dissidents, Jewish emigration, the emigration of others who were deemed to be anti-Soviet, and finally, Gorbachev's introduction to the new president, George Bush, Sr., on Governor's Island in New York Harbor. It was during these years that the Cold War essentially came to an end, although when I left the White House in 1989, one could not have said that the War had come to an end as the Soviet Union was still intact. However, in the late 1980s, it was clear that the Soviet empire was disintegrating. This was accompanied by a closer U.S.-Soviet relationship. I am not sure that there was anyone who predicted in the late 1980s how the Soviet Union would disintegrate, but we were all surprised by new foreign policy directions that both sides were able to fashion in this period. We obviously were trying to assist the internal changes that were going on in the Warsaw Pact, but the degree of the change and its speed were not completely apparent. Everyone in the White House, starting with the president, was taking credit for these seismic changes that were taking place. I don't think that anyone in January 1989 could foresee the situation as it exists today.

During my period on the NSC, and probably even before that, CIA was turning out information, which suggested that the Soviet Union was getting stronger with its economic conditions improving significantly. The Agency concluded that the Gorbachev regime was increasingly stable. I think the Agency's analysis in the late 1980s was off the mark. The situation in the Soviet Union was not nearly as rosy as it depicted. I can't say that this mis-diagnosis led the U.S. government to take action or actions, which turned out to be ill-advised. The Reagan team was not influenced by the Agency's analyzepartly because many were left unread and partly because they did not conform with administration views. Everybody in the White House and the government as a whole was a self-styled Soviet "expert," who paid little attention to anyone else's views. I vividly remember that the president had his own coterie of outside experts from academia, media, etc., who periodically would have an opportunity to talk to the president and Howard Baker about their own views of the Soviet Union. None of these people worked for the government. When we were planning Reagan's trip to Moscow, a whole spade of these experts was given time with the president to talk about what he should or should not do while in the USSR.

I should add that in my view, the issue of the reliability of CIA estimates is really of a secondary nature. I think CIA's estimates are essentially irrelevant; they are not used by the policy makers and therefore play a very minor role, if one at all, in the decision-making process. Reagan was not known to be an avid reader of intelligence products. I doubt that many people in the White House were reading that material. We did get loads of papers. The president had his intelligence briefinusually dailbut I don't think that mattered much to his decision making.

Q: That leads me to the question of your experiences with President Reagan.

LEDSKY; I was in the Oval Office many, many times. I am not sure that he was ever certain of who I was. He was always personable, polite, and friendly. He always seemed to be engaged in whatever subject was being discussed. However, so many people went into the Oval Office that it is hard to know who Reagan really knew. I think he knew me by sight; he saw me often both in his office and at social events. The other trait that I remember well was that Reagan was always business-like. Rarely did he allow any levity in the Oval Office; the discussions were always substantive and serious.

The United States has a process for newly appointed ambassadors to present their credentials to our president. Each might get five minutes with the president. I almost always accompanied the newly-appointed ambassador to this ceremony, if she or he had come from one of the countries I was covering. These sessions were always enormously friendly; Reagan was always polite and charming. There was always a picture. We would prepare a 3x5 card containing salient points, which the president might use as talking points. The meetings started right on time and would end right on time.

Meetings with foreign dignitaries were more complicated. In the first place, they were lengthier. The talking points were more numerous. Reagan had a knack for making the important points clearly and succinctly. I sat in on a couple of sessions he had with Margaret Thatcher, which went on for hours, and were followed by a social occasioa meal. These sessions were always friendly. The president was usually very receptive to Thatcher's points; he was a good listener and fully understood the context of the dialogue. He followed his script religiously. The NSC staff usually prepared the script, sometimes on the basis of material from various departments and agencies.

There were always four or five American officials in the room with the president. I don't think he ever met anyone alone, at least while I was at the NSC. Howard Baker would usually be one of the attendees, as would Carlucci or Powell. I was there as the note-taker usually. I never heard an unpleasant or angry word from the president. I might say the same for Mrs. Reagan; I never heard an angry word from her during the several times I met with her.

Q: Did you get any sense in these meetings where the president wanted to take the country on an issue which was the subject of the meetings you attended?

LEDSKY: Yes. President Reagan, in the longer meetings or social affairs, would tell jokes, often the same ones in different meetings. He also told stories. I think it was these jokes and stories, as well as the "off-the-record" comments, that gave one the best sense of where Reagan was going. He was firm on his position that communism was evil and that the Soviet Union would fall at some stage. He did have a sort of apocalyptic view of the world, which he expressed, as I said, through his stories and anecdotes. He had enormous faith in a person's innate ability to develop and grow, if given the proper education and other advantages that were offered by the U.S. He was very optimistic about the future. I think he had a very positive approach to life, believing that human beings could always improve their lot, regardless of their circumstancegiven the right chance and as little governmental interference as possible. He was a very upbeat person, full of hope. He saw the U.S. as on a correct course in world affairs and as a country whose destiny was to bring the world along on the same pat"the shining beam."

He always praised Hollywood as the embodiment of an industry that was developed from scratch, which developed as the perfect symbol for the America that could be. Hollywood started from nothing and had become an industry which impacted our way of life and our culture. Much of what he saw from the White House was seen through this Hollywood perspectivfrom nothing to a major industry. He used Hollywood often when, for example, he was talking to Gorbachev or Mitterrand or many other foreign visitorheads of state, prime ministers, etc. that he saw in the Oval Office. His approach was always the same: he was always optimistic with an expansive vision, but his views were also based on his apocalyptic sense of the future. The world would come to an end sometime, which I think was based in part at least on his religious beliefs and faith. World events were pre-ordained by a higher power with each human being playing a pre-determined role in life. So Reagan saw the world in a unique way: full of hope and optimism, but restricted in its future by the wishes of a higher power.

Q: Did Reagan have an appreciation of the different cultures existing on this earth?

LEDSKY: I think he was reasonably sensitive to other cultures. He projected an understanding of where his interlocutors might be coming from. He understood that others, due to their cultural inheritance or personality traits, might not see the world as he did. I do not know if he understood why there were these cultural differencee.g. what made Russians as they were or the French or the Arabs. He probably did not, but that did not detract from his appreciation that others might view the world differently than he did. I suspect that he was not unique in this limitation. I think most if not all American presidents do not have an opportunity to study and comprehend other cultures. Once they assume power, they live in a bubble separate and apart from the real world. When I accompanied Reagan on some of his overseas trips, I think there was practically no time left over in the schedule for opportunities to observe other cultures. The visits were all business and didn't leave any time for interaction with the country being visited and its people.

Q: Let me turn now to Mrs. Reagan and your work for her.

LEDSKY: I saw her only a few times, usually in connection with some visit. I was present at a couple of social events at the White House which were hosted by President and Mrs. Reagan. Some of these were parties or dinners for the White House staff for Christmas, for example. I had an occasion or two to talk to her, but these were much too brief to form any views about her. We dealt mainly through her staff, when it came to official activities. I probably sat in on some meetings that Mrs. Reagan had with some foreign visitors, but again these were too brief for me to get much of an impression. She did make some suggestions on itineraries and events when we were developing them for foreign travels that she and the president were undertaking. Most of the suggestions I think were intended to spotlight the president and his agenda.

Q: Let's talk a little about the presidential trips you went on.

LEDSKY: I must have gone on three of four presidential trips. The most memorable was the trip to Moscow in the May-June of 1988. Reagan held a series of meetings with Gorbachev and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze and President Gromyko. I was present for almost all of these meetings and the note-taker for many of them. I was in the meeting that Reagan held with Soviet dissidents, as well as his sessions with journalists. Most of the meetings took place in the Kremlin. Rudy Perina and I accompanied the president as he took his famous walk around Red Square, where he met Russian citizens for the first time.

I was involved in the plans for this trip. We stayed in a year-old hotel that had been built by Armand Hammer. We visited Danilov Monastery, an old monastery about 40 miles from Moscow.

It was a good trip. The main issue was disarmament (SALT II). Reagan and Gorbachev were on very friendly terms by this time, having met several times before 1988. The U.S. and the USSR signed a number of agreementrelatively unimportant, but significant in the development of better relations as the Cold War was drawing to a close. The meeting with the dissidents was significant; it was the beginning of an emigration process for a number of them.

Q: After the Moscow visit, did you have a better understanding of where Gorbachev wanted to take Russia?

LEDSKY: Personally, I did not. Others may have, but I didn't. I left Moscow feeling that the situation in Russia was quite confused and that the future was quite uncertain. I think there was evidence that glasnost and perestroika were beginning to take hold. There was a greater freedom in Moscow in 1988, than in the previous 60 years or more. But what the future held was a mystery to me. I had no idea what would happen in either the short or long term in the Soviet Union. It was clear that the U.S. and the USSR were moving closer together and that barriers that separated the two might come down, but I had no idea how and when this might happen.

I should mention that I had a number of opportunities to talk to the "man on the street." Perina speaks excellent Russian and we held many conversations with ordinary people while in Moscow. Ermarth was on the trip as well and he spoke good Russian. At one of the Spaso house dinners, I sat next to a Russian dancer, who was a well-known instructor. She described to me her experiences and how things were changing in her country. Perina and I spoke to people who were waiting in the visa line at our embassy, waiting to get in. As we walked along the line, Rudy would ask where they were from and why they were applying for a visa. We had periodic opportunities at the hotel and other places, where we stopped to talk to ordinary citizens. I won't say that these people were necessarily representatives of the majority of Russians; they would not have applied for visas or be in the lobby of our hotel if they had been, but I think we did get a feel for what was on the mind of Moscow's population.

Q: You were satisfied that your policy concerns were addressed at Moscow?

LEDSKY: No doubt about it. I remember that on the way back I was supposed to brief the press on the plane. I did not have any problems in telling the press that the trip had been quite successful and that all meetings were positive and had moved the issues to resolutions quite acceptable to us. I could also tell quite truthfully that the Reagan-Gorbachev relationships were very good, as were our relationships with the Gorbachev retinue. From Foreign Office staff to other Soviet bureaucrats, there had developed a camaraderie which was new in the annals of U.S.-Soviet relations. The arms control talks had gone very well, as had discussions of general relations between the two countries.

This is not to say that I left Moscow with a clear picture of the future of U.S.-Soviet relations. As I said, the atmosphere was excellent, but that was not enough of a clue to give me any insights into the future. I later attended the 1989 Bush-Gorbachev meeting at Governor's Island in New York Harbor, which was also very friendly and positive, but I could not even then make any prediction of future developmentand that is several months after the Moscow meeting. To the extent that I would have predicted anything, I would have guessed that the status qui.e. warm relations between the principals and cooperation at the working levelwould have continued as far as I could then have seen. I would have been dead wrong.

Q: What other trips did you take with President Reagan?

LEDSKY: I went with him to Brussels for a NATO summit. On that trip, I was representing the NSC and therefore attended all meetings, but I was not a note-taker, which meant that I didn't really have much to do.

Q: In light of your experiences on those two trips, what conclusions did you reach about presidential trips?

LEDSKY: I think the trip to the Soviet Union was useful. It contained a lot of public relations and showmanship, but it moved the resolution of issues forward. I think that presidential trips in general are useful and should continue to be part of the American foreign policy "tool kit." I think the president has to see and be seen in overseas scenes. Even presidential trips to the UN are useful; I accompanied Reagan to New York on a couple of occasions.

Q: What other trips did you take during your NSC tour?

LEDSKY: I accompanied Carlucci to London, Bonn and Paris in 1988. It was a small group and we traveled on a small plane. We saw Margaret Thatcher in London and VIPs in other capitals. I enjoyed working for Carlucci. He was very nice to his staff. Powell was also nice to his staff. In both cases, I think the NSC was a very effective organization playing a vital role in support of the president.

Q: What were the major issues when you were at the NSC?

LEDSKY: There were lots of them. One was the issue of Poland and its relationship to the Warsaw Pact. I think this was just one illustration of a major general challenge: how to handle the increasing number of Eastern European countries which were trying to leave the Warsaw Pact and distance themselves from the Soviet Union.

Then we faced some issues in U.S.-European relations, particularly NATO, France and Germany. With the latter, it was a question of "Ost Politik:" how and how fast to increase cooperation between the West and East Germanies. It was clear that seismic changes were taking place in East and West Europe and our challenge was how to adapt to them. So we had a series of issues in Europe, apparently unrelated but each having an impact on other questions.

There were residual problems as well, such as whether we would sell fighter aircraft to Argentina over British objections. The Cyprus issue continued to remain unresolved. There were many issues that had been on our plate for many years, always potentially troublesome, but never quite resolved. Then there were Spain and Portugal and the issue of their integration into Western Europe.

Q: Talk a little about the Warsaw Pact and its disintegration.

LEDSKY: As I remember it, it was Poland that was the major issue in that process. Then there was Hungary, and its drive for independence, as well as the break up of Czechoslovakia. All of these issues required us to deal with the Soviets as well as with the Eastern European countries themselves.

There were some issues with the USSR in which we were involved. For example, we were involved in the release of some prisoners, mostly dissidents. Sharansky, now a minister in Israel's cabinet, was one of these. We had several meetings on the issue of dissidents and we were involved in considerable presidential correspondence with Gorbachev on this subject. Much of the raw materiawho and how mancame from the State Department, which was trying to track these people. Reagan sent many letters about the dissident problem, as well as pleadings for individual dissidents held by the Soviets. We did a lot of work on this subject. I think that Reagan philosophically was interested in the dissidents as individuals; the political benefits that might accrue from his efforts was not the principal motivation. For him, personal freedom was an individual's right; that was a cardinal principle of his philosophy. If people were free to speak their minds or do what they pleased that would unleash new energy in the world for the benefit of all humanity. The potential political benefits of defending dissidents was only a minor consideration. Of course, there was considerable political pressure on the White House to be in the forefront of the movement to let the Soviet dissidents go free.

It is interesting to note that about this time, as we were pressing the Soviets about their dissidents, the Armenian-American community was pressuring the White House to open our borders to Armenian refugees. We had an Armenian-American governor in California and a strong Armenian community there. We heard frequently from this community, which wanted the White House to assist in the emigration of Armenians, preferably to the U.S. The question of emigration from parts of the Soviet Union was a real political question, but I still think that Reagan was moved more by his human rights philosophy than he was by political pressure.

Q: What groups besides Armenians and Jews were interested in emigrating from the Soviet Union?

LEDSKY: There was a Tartar community, as well as all of the Eastern Europeans such as the Ukrainians and the Polish. There were a lot communities interested in this matter. Their American supporters let us know, mostly by mail, that there was considerable interest in the U.S. in the fate of these communities. They had some Congressional support. The governor of California had a relationship with Reagan, so that these groups managed to get their views heard and heeded. We did manage to convince the Soviets to allow some emigration, but obviously not in the numbers that we would have preferred. The Soviets were at least paying attention to our requests. Our mail was being answered. Of course, they had a lot of excuses as to why certain people or groups could not be allowed to emigrate, but I think overall it was a positive dialogue.

Q: Did we have a general policy on the Warsaw Pact or did we use a country-by-country approach?

LEDSKY: We did not have a general policy. Each country issue was sui generis. Our general goal was of course the liberation of these countries from the Warsaw Pact stranglehold, so that democratic, independent, local leadership could rise and lead. This policy had the support of all agencies, so we had no coordination problems. DoD showed the least interest in these matters.

Q: Was disarmament a difficult inter-agency issue?

LEDSKY: Yes. First of all, the subject matter was highly technical, which sometimes made comprehension of all factors quite difficult. At the NSC, there was a separate section that dealt with disarmament and nuclear weapons. It operated quite independently; an effort was made to bring my staff into some of the discussions, but that was hard because we did not have scientific backgrounds. On disarmament, there were disagreements between State and Defense on most nuclear and chemical questions. I think that in fact our policies in this general area was not driven by the leadership, but rather by the technicians and the specialists. Some progress was made on disarmament issues during my two years at the NSC, although I had nothing to do with it.

Q: Were there any noteworthy developments in France's relations with NATO during these two years?

LEDSKY: I don't think it was a major issue for me or my staff. Mitterrand visited Washington and I went to Paris with Carlucci. I think our relations with the French were in pretty good shape during the 1987-1989 period. The French were slowly returning to the western fold. We had no major issue which stood in the way of good relations. There may have been some minor problems arising in part from our efforts to collaborate in Africa but they were taken care of without major uproar. It was a good period in U.S.-France relations, driven in particular by the good relationship that Reagan and Mitterrand developed.

Q: Was anything happening on Cyprus?

LEDSKY: No. It was a very quiet period for the unresolved issue. State was trying to restart negotiations between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots, but that didn't get very far. In 1987, while serving on the NSC, I met the man who was to become the president of Cyprus in 1988. The Greek Cypriots did have an entrï¿½e into the White House and did discuss the Cyprus issue with White House officials. I think that the Cyprus president had a meeting with Reagan, but even that didn't generate any major U.S. effort to bring the two sides together. So, as I said, not much happened on this issue while I was at the NSC. Cyprus had become one of those problems that lingered and lingered and are only mentioned from time to time because Congress demands periodic reports on the situation. These reports, which emanated from the White House, kept the issue alivbut barely.

Q: Did you find your two-year stint at the NSC satisfying?

LEDSKY: It was heady stuff. Not everyone gets a chance to eat in the Navy mess and to be served by the Filipino mess boys, and while eating, seeing many of the Congressional and Executive branch leaders. Not everybody gets a chance to travel in an executive plane with the NSC Advisor or accompany the president of your country on foreign visits. I got to see many of the world's leaders, an opportunity afforded to a few bureaucrats. So it was heady stuff and a lot of fun besides.

You asked me earlier whether I enjoyed working for Carlucci and Powell and I said, "Yes, very much." I should also add that much of that enjoyment came from working in a very efficient organization. It was a small staff that worked well together, knew their jobs and were well qualified. We dealt with a few senior officials, who had direct access to the president. We knew when we made out a 3x5 card filled with appropriate talking points that those suggestions would in most cases be used and would have some impact on the future course of events. It was a heady feeling when you sat in the Oval Office with the president and some foreign officials and heard your words used.

There aren't many jobs in the bureaucracy of which one could say the same. I remember saying to someone that if the 3X5 cards were properly prepared, he would not have any problems after the meeting in writing a summary of it. This fun was enhanced by invitations to official White House social events, even if you had to sit at the end of the table to take notes. You saw the world's leaderan experience not shared by too many others. Not all of this rubbing of elbows with the famous was necessarily serious, but it was good for one's self-esteem.

Q: How about relations with other parts of the Executive Branch?

LEDSKY: No. I think this was due in part to the fact that when I was in the NSC, it was seen as a heavy handed, dictatorial staff. It was viewed as an "honest broker" assembling various views for the president and not interjecting nor insisting on its infallibility. The relationship with Secretary Shultz was quite good, with Carlucci and Powell deferring to him in most cases. We also deferred to Secretary of Defense Weinberger. In my experience, the only problems really arose when Weinberger and Shultz had a disagreemenor members of their staffs did. Fortunately, these were not frequent, so that the process ordinarily worked quite smoothly. Powell is a consummate diplomat; he knew how to deal effectively with Shultz and Weinberger and all of the other egos you find in a cabinet. There was very little friction.

We also had a very good relationship with the chief of staff, Howard Baker. He was followed by Duberstein, who was also a very nice guy and easy to work with. Both chiefs understood the relationship of foreign policy to domestic political imperatives and were able to keep the two in balance. They were very good at their jobat least from my point of view.

We did not have much contact with the vice-president's office. We used to deal with Don Gregg, Bush's foreign policy advisor. I had known Gregg from previous tours, so he was a known quantity. We also dealt with the vice-president's secretary. I didn't see Bush that often, although he attended many meetings on foreign policy issues. We did not draft any papers for him separate from those we did for the president, unless he was going on a trip or seeing someone who did not see the president. I did go to his house on a couple of occasions for meetings, but we did not have very close contact.

Q: Is there anything else about your NSC tour that you wish to add?

LEDSKY: I just want to reiterate that it was a fascinating and heady two years, during which I was exposed to new worlds and aspects of the foreign-policy-making process that were unique. I was impressed by the effectiveness and smoothness of the NSC process, although, as I have suggested, we always had difficulty separating the trivia from the serious aspects of the work. I suppose that must be true of all White House operations. Letters from foreign dignitaries were handled in almost the same manner as were those from ordinary American citizens. That was sometimes frustrating, but it is a small price to pay for democracy, I guess.

Q: You left the NSC in early 1989. Then you were involved in a number of projects.

LEDSKY: The fact is that I really didn't do very much for the first four or five months after returning to the Department, before I was assigned to become the Cyprus coordinator.

I was without an assignment when I left the NSC. There was no job for me. I guess I was dumped on the Department's door steps after the NSC went through a personnel house cleaning after Bush became president. Scowcroft became the National Security Advisor and Blackwill took my job as senior director for Europe and the Soviet Union. My dismissal was curt, but sweet. I was the first to be replaced in the NSC by the new team; other directors stayed on, for varying amounts of time. Blackwill wanted my job and he dismissed almost the whole staff that had worked for me. I was told to report back to the Department, which of course had no plans for mnot even a desk. I sat in a little office near EUR waiting for something to happen. Ed Dillery who was then the head of Management staff in the office of the undersecretary for management began to give me a few assignments.

Then I was sent to the Pentagon as the Department's representative on some study group which was charged with reviewing the education of senior military officers. We looked at CAPSTONE, a program for brigadier generals, as well as other senior training programs. I think Sy Weiss was a member of this group. We used to meet in a building on Route 7 in Fairfax County. The group included someone from Harvard, a couple of officers from the Defense University, and others. We spent a couple of months on this project, working perhaps a couple of days each week on the subject. In between, I had other minor assignments, until I took over the Cyprus portfolio in the spring or early summer of 1989. Essentially, I was unemployed for three of four months in early 1989.

Q: How did the Cyprus job come up?

LEDSKY: Jim Wilkinson was leaving the job of Cyprus coordinator. I think the Department really wanted to abolish the job; it didn't fit its normal organizational pattern. But then Friedman, who was the country director for Greece, Turkey and Cyprus, came to me and said that he didn't want the job abolished but that he had no candidate to fill it. He asked whether I would be interested. I first said that I was most reluctant but he persisted and then after a month or so, I finally gave in and accepted it. During the intervening month, I was looking around for a good assignment, but nothing seemed available. There were a couple of possibilities. George Vest had me on a list of potential ambassadorial candidates for Oman, but that didn't fly. George was then the director general and I talked to him on a couple of occasions. He tried to find me something, but nothing exciting really came up.

Finally, I agreed to become the Cyprus coordinator. I had an interview with Ray Seitz, who was about to become assistant secretary for European affairs. I had known Ray for some years. So he and Friedman went to work to try to get me this job, which was to be part of the Seventh Floor organization. I understood that it took some effort to get me approved. I don't think anyone really wanted me. However since all of the principals were new, none of them knew me or vice-versa. They certainly didn't want the job to continue. My guess is that no one else was interested in the job so that in the end it was minby default if nothing else. White House approval was required, particularly since I would be given ambassadorial rank. However, I was told that pending White House approval, I should start the job.

I got a little office across from Seitz's office. I started in and stayed until I retired in October, 1992. During those three years, I also did a couple of jobs for Seitz unrelated to Cyprus.

Q: Did you finally get an ambassadorial rank?

LEDSKY: Yes. I did have a hearing in the Senate and did get confirmed. I had to pay my respects to Sarbanes and a couple of other senators. The hearing was not entirely smooth because I had to answer questions on Cyprus and my own past record on this thorny issue. In the end, as I said, I was confirmed, but Cyprueven in 198roused some passions. Sarbanes was a friend and that helped; he was pleased that I had been nominated, although he did raise some awkward questions in his usual probing manner. He got me to promise to do certain things, but it all came out alright.

Q: In your role of coordinator, to whom did you report?

LEDSKY: Essentially, nobody. I was appointed by the president and as such, I think I was the president's special coordinator for Cyprus. In practical terms, I worked most closely with the assistant secretary for European affairs. I looked on myself as a deputy to Ray Seitz. I never dealt with the secretary or the deputy secretary, but through and with Ray, we discussed Cyprus with the undersecretary for political affairs, who at the time was Larry Eagleburger. But essentially, I was a lone operator and had very little to do with the Seventh Floor. Most of my contacts were probably with the Greece, Turkey and Cyprus country director.

The political situation on Cyprus was frozen. A new government had been installed, headed by George Vassiliou. The negotiations between the Greek and Turkish sides had completely broken down and there was almost no dialogue at all. Nothing had moved since the negotiations of the mid-1980s, which I described earlier. Those had culminated in meetings in New York with the UN secretary general. Although the meetings did not produce any positive results, an outline of a potential agreement was drafted, which was first initialed by the Turkish Cypriots, but rejected by the Greek Cypriots. When the latter finally decided to also initial the framework agreement, the Turkish Cypriots withdrew their approval, thereby collapsing the whole process. This all happen before Wilkinson was appointed special coordinator. Between 1986 and 1989, there was practically no movement in reaching any kind of agreement between the two sides on the island.

I started almost where I had left off in 1976. Essentially, time had stood still. During the period I was not working on Cyprus, Spyros Kyprianou was the president of Cyprus. His term ended in January 1989. History judged him as a recalcitrant, uninterested in reaching any agreement with the Turkish Cypriots, who were also hardly forthcoming. There was some activity in Cyprus managed by the UN representative but he had had only a modicum of success. There had been some discussions between Denktash, the Turkish leader, and the Greek side, but nothing resulted from them.

Q: What were the issues?

LEDSKY: They had not changed from the mid 1970s, and probably from earlier even. Foremost was the question of security for both populations: what it would be and how it was to be provided. Troops would be required, which raised the question of whose troops would be stationed where on the island. Security questions also encompassed the defense of the island: who would be responsible and how it was to be provided.

The next question concerned the line to be drawn on the island between the two nationalities. That issue raised questions concerning the refugees: how they would be handled and compensated, and which would be allowed to return to their ancestral homes and which would be permanently displaced.

These were the same issues that I worked on in the 1970s. Twenty years later, nothing had changed, and I might add, these are the same issues being confronted today.

Q: Let's start with the defense-security issue. What were the key questions?

LEDSKY: Since 1974, the Turks had stationed a large military force in northern Cyprus. The Greeks had a small contingent on the southern end of the island. The Greek Cypriots had their own armed forces in the south and the Turkish Cypriots had a small army in the north. The British occupied two small parts of Cyprus, where they had bases. The defense of Cyprus was guaranteed in 1960 by a treaty signed by the Greeks, Turks and British, which allowed any of those parties to intervene militarily in the security of Cyprus was threatened. That was and had been the security situation over a thirty year period.

Q: How about the territorial question?

LEDSKY: The Greeks were about 80% of the island's population. During the 1974 invasion, the Turks occupied about 38% of the islana far greater percentage than its population percentage would suggest. Obviously, the Greeks view this as entirely unfair and demand a portion of the Turkish occupied territory be remanded to them.

Q: Compensation?

LEDSKY: The Turks essentially took all of the properties which were in their part of the island. There are a few exceptions to that, tiny pockets of houses still occupied by Greek Cypriots. But essentially, all the Greek Cypriots were ousted from Turkish-occupied territory and became refugees. Conversely, the Greek Cypriots ousted all the Turkish Cypriots who used to live in their part of Cyprus, thereby creating more refugees. The Greeks want to return to their former homes or at least want compensation, and the Turkish Cypriots want compensation for their lost properties in the south.

There are other issues as well. Since 1974, the Turks have brought "settlers" from Turkey to the island. The Greeks want these people sent back to their homeland. That is an added complication to the refugee issue but by no means the only one.

Q: Tell us a little about Greek-Turkish relations as they pertained to the Cyprus problem?

LEDSKY: One has to go back a long way. For a Greek government, Cyprus has always been a burden. The Cyprus nationalist movement developed in the 1950s and 1960s; its objective was and is enosis (union with the motherlanGreece). There are people in Greece who would like to see an annexation of the island. This view was very strong during the 1950s and 1960s. It began to fade after 1974 but today is still an unmentioned undercurrent of Greek Cypriot policies. I think many in Athens view Cyprus even today as a part of Greece. It belongs to the Greek world, in their view.

The Turks, on the other hand, see Cyprus as another island that lies off their shore. They don't see it as necessarily an integral part of Turkey, but certainly not part of Greece either. Cyprus is one of the islands that lie off Turkish shores, which are perceived to be part of Turkey's security system. These islands have been held over centuries by foreign powers who used their off-shore presence as a way to influence Turkish policies. The islands are perceived by the Turks as potential daggers to be used against the mainland. The alleged presence of oil is only a problem in the case of islands in the Aegean Sea and is a separate issue. The basic issue concerning Cyprus and the other off-shore islands is a security one.

This is the problem stated in the most extreme terms. On the one hand, the issue is one of nationalism and on the other, one of security, that is, the islands did not have to be part of Turkey, but had to be in none-threatening hands To satisfy both elements is difficult indeed.

There is another Cyprus issue that needs resolution and that involves the constitution and the governmental structure that flows from it. The question is how to structure a new Cypriot government that is viewed by both sides as fair. The present constitution that was written and approved in 1960; it provided for a very minor version of power-sharing. The Greek Cypriots controlled most matters; that was not enough for them and they tried to change the constitution in 1963, which led to the first Cyprus crisis when the Turkish Cypriots revolted, disrupting the established order. Therefore, the question became how to re-establish an orderly constitutional process. The Greek Cypriots wanted a process based on population while the Turkish Cypriots wanted equality of treatment for both communities. That issue has played out in different ways over the course of the last four decades.

None of the issues have been resolved. Some say that the _____ Plan solves all of the problems. That is not a generally accepted view. It is true that the Plan deals with all four issues and includes some resolutions, but the two sides on Cyprus are still haggling over the details.

Unlike many other parts of the world, religion per se did not play a role in the Greek-Turkish rivalries. It is true that the Greek Orthodox Church plays a major role in the affairs of the island, but the Turks are essentially secular, so that religious fervor does not really play a role.

Q: When you became the coordinator in 1989, what other agencies had any interest in your work?

LEDSKY: None. When I first started on the job, a fellow by the name of Nicks was the chargï¿½. Bob Lamb was eventually was appointed ambassador to Cyprus. DoD had no interest in the Cyprus issue; their interest was focused on using the British air bases and overflight rights. What was happening on the ground outside the bases was of no interest to them.

Congress showed some interest. George Stephanopoulos was Chairman Ed Feighan's aide on this issue. He used to be in contact with me periodically. I always had a good relationship with Feighan, in part because he too was from Cleveland. Senators Brademas and Olympia Snow, and some Congressmen showed some interest, but the rest of the Washington establishments showed no interest in the subject at all. I was on my own. I think by 1989, most of the people who had earlier been interested in Cyprus had pretty much given up any hope of a resolution; as long as matters were quiet on the ground, no one really cared.

I should modify my comment a little. President Bush did show interest in Cyprus and I went to the White House on a couple of occasions when foreign visitors came to see him. Then I would send briefing papers and attend some of the meetings.

Q: Did you feel that during your tour as coordinator, some progress was made?

LEDSKY: I think so. When I took over, the political situation on the island was stalemated. The UN had appointed a very good mediator, who was from Argentina. He began to shuttle between the two sides in 1989 and developed what he called a "Food for Thought" paper, which analyzed the status of the four stumbling blocks in outline form. He used this paper as a device to get both sides to agree on a framework document. He found an ally in the new president of Cyprus, George Vassiliou. I also found him committed to getting the issues resolved. During the course of 1989, the UN representative put this paper together; I helped him formulate the issues and worked with him on drafting the paper. No one took credit for writing it; it had no fingerprints on it.

The paper outlined approaches that might be taken to the four major sticking points. I took the paper to Ankara, in part because it was very difficult physically for the UN representative to get from Cyprus to Turkey. The U.S. government assisted the UN in bringing this paper to the attention of the Turkish foreign office. I made a series of visits to Ankara, starting in 1989. It took repeated efforts, but we slowly began to marshal support for the concepts outlined in the paper in the Turkish foreign ministry. Then in 1989, 1990 and 1991, we tried to convene a series of meetings, which would bring Denktash and Vassiliou together in New York. We finally did bring them together to discuss a document which was based on the "Food for Thought" paper. We called that document "A set of ideas." This document, which was written, rewritten and refined during the 1990-91 period, was submitted to the UN Security Council in the summer of 1992; it was to serve as the basis for negotiations between the two sides.

It was a very intricate process, which is hard to describe in full detail because it was very much a step-by-step process. Full credit for progress made must be given first of all to the UN secretary general, Javier Perez de Cuellar of Peru. He was quite knowledgeable about the Cyprus issues, having been the UN special representative in Cyprus during the 1980s. He knew all the intricacies of the situation, as well as all of the players. He was doggedly determined to bring the two sides to the bargaining table to conclude an agreement. The other hero was the UN special representative, Ambassador _____ and his associates, who worked tirelessly in New York and Nicosia. One of these was Gustave Feissel, who became a close friend. It was the UN group, together with the U.S. teaTony Friedman and myself, who were the movers of the process. Some credit must also be given to a few officials in the Turkish Foreign Office who were committed to getting a peace settlement, but faced formidable obstacles in the form of the foreign minister and Turkish political leaders.

The Security Council approved the document. The UN secretary general met with Vassiliou and Denktash in New York to discuss it. The document subsequently went through further refinements and elaborations, but the solutions proposed in it are the same as are contained in the Annan agreement, which is on the table today. Today's version is more complete, more comprehensive, and improved, but doesn't deviate much from the solutions proposed in the 1992 draft, which was based on a paper put together in 1989. So you can see that the outlines of a settlement were proposed 15 year ago and that in the intervening period, there were refinements and elaborations, but no major substantive revisions.

The current version does not suggest resolutions to all of the issues, but for most of them. The document provides for a weak central government and two constituent strong regional governmentone run by the Greek Cypriots and one by the Turkish Cypriots. There would be a rotating presidency. It includes a complicated formula for choosing the method to construct the central parliament. All the functions of a government are divided between the central and the regional administrations. A map is attached which divides the island between the Greek and Turkish sideit reduces the present Turkish holdings by 4 or 5% and gives that territory to the Greeks. Concerning the settlement issue, the paper provides that there be applications and selection based on certain criteria which are spelled out. It would allow a few Greeks to return to their former homesteads; the rest would be compensated for their losses. There is no mention in the paper of settlerthat is, those who made new shelters after being pushed out of their former homes.

On the military side, the paper provides for security guarantees by Greece, Turkey and Great Britain. It also calls for a reduction of Greek and Turkish forces now stationed on the island to be implemented over a period until both sides have 5 or 7 thousand contingents on the island. As you can see, the paper was quite comprehensive, but managed to suggest remedies for all of the outstanding issues in twenty-five pages, as compared to the present document, which is about 100 pages long. That just shows you what happens when a paper is allowed to be worked on for 12 years!! In any case, we do have a paper, which can be used as the final agreement.

Q: Why wasn't an agreement reached when the paper was first issued?

LEDSKY: As I said, we started with the paper drafted by the UN representative. The Turks denounced it almost immediately, because they said that since they had no participation in the drafting of the document, they couldn't possibly subscribe to it. They objected to the alleged emphasis on security and the reduction of forces on the island. I should note that while the political leadership in Turkey was denouncing the document, their Foreign Office officials were still working on it and showed interest in further negotiations. I think the political leadership did not want to be seen as having anything to do with settlement of the Cyprus issue as long as Denktash was opposed to it. Denktash and his political partners in Ankara were primarily, if not solely, interested in establishing an independent entity in northern Cyprurun for and by the Turks.

It is quite astounding how Denktash has been able to manipulate the Turkish government so that he always has its support. Those governments seem not to have paid any attention to their domestic constituencies. Those governments have never wanted or been able to cross Denktash; what he wants, he gets. There is no doubt that he has a following in Turkey; I don't know how strong it is, but there is no question that he has great influence in Ankara on Cyprus matters. Today there may be some movement away from his policy monopoly, but I can't tell you how far nor how fast that change will be. After all, he has held sway for forty years. However, I think the new government now in Ankara may be taking a different tack, and I am hopeful that some accord can be reached in 2004, something I would never have predicted earlier. Denktash himself may be losing some of his grip on Turkish Cypriot politics; there is a new generation of politicians that may be more forthcoming. The lure of Cyprus joining the European Union has considerable attraction to many Turkish Cypriots and that may be enough to bring a new day to the Cyprus stalemate.

Q: You have met Denktash. How would you describe his views?

LEDSKY: He just doesn't trust the Greeks because he was brought up in an era of strong anti-Greek feeling in Turkey. He will not believe that the Greeks do not have some ulterior design on the island, perhaps even enosis. His sees all of the issues through this prejudiced prism. When I have talked to him, he continually cites what he believes happened in Crete at the end of the 19th century. He will tell you that the Turks at the time held a lot of Crete and were forced by the Greeks to leave the island. It is his version of history, which he will never change. He has no doubt that the Greeks will repeat that history in Cyprus, because he firmly believes that the Greeks want to posses all of the island off their shores. That view blocks Denktash from considering any kind of deal, because he believes that once the Greeks get some agreement, that is the beginning of the "slippery road," which will eventually lead to enosis for the whole island. Every diversion from the status quo is the first step to Greek annexation of Cyprus, in Denktash's view. It is a completely "black and white" view, which leaves no room for any kind of settlemenexcept perhaps an independent entity in northern Cyprus. So Denktash has said "No" to all proposals up to now; he just cannot get over his innate fear of a Greek take-over of Cyprus.

I am giving you a thumbnail sketch of events that took place over a 15 year period. It is a very complex picture and I would not wish to minimize that through my brief summary. There has been movement on both sides, especially the Greek Cypriot one. During my four years as coordinator, Vassiliou moved in the right direction; he and his supporters wanted an end to the issue so that Cyprus could return to normalcy and have an opportunity to develop economically with the return of foreign investments. Economic growth would not occur without political stability. Vassiliou recognized that the Turks were 20% of the population and that therefore had to be given their share of the island and political power. He was not interested in his government running the whole island. He hoped he could deal with someone on the Turkish side, who would be willing to enter into a bargain fair to both sides. Such a bargain would be seen by the world as an end to a continuing crisis, which in return would encourage foreigners to invest in Cyprus, as I said earlier. This was a very pragmatic approach. From my acquaintance with him, I would say that he was not anti-Turkish in any way; he had witnessed an era during which the two sides have lived together amicably and saw no reason why such a period of history could not return. The Greeks were willing to give the Turks their autonomy, just as long as the feud would come to an end.

The Turkish Cypriot population has slowly come around to the view that they must make a deal. Denktash did not win the last electiohe didn't really lose it either. I guess one would describe it as a stalemate. But, in any case, it showed that his influence was diminishing.

Q: Are you now optimistic that an agreement can be reached?

LEDSKY: Not in the short run. In the longer term, I think the two sides will reach some accommodation. I think the feud is coming to an end, but precisely when that will happen I cannot tell you. All the signs are much more positive than they were ten or twenty years ago. The basic paper, from which an agreement will be reached, was begun in 1989, although its seeds go back to even the 1970s. There will be an agreement; Denktash will not be a factor sooner or later and the Turkish Cypriots will come to the table and sign an agreement. I think when that day comes, everybody will blame Denktash for the 40 years of delay and difficulties and the Europeans will take credit for inducing an agreement through their offer of membership in the EU. As often happens in situations of this kind, historians will come up with a variety of rationales for why it took so long to reach an agreement. I believe that it should not have taken so long; the issues should have been resolved by the mid 1970s.

I need to add a caveat to what I just said. I think there will be a negotiated solution. Whether that will also lead to peace on the island, I cannot say. I don't think the agreement now being negotiated will actually work. I don't think the country of Cyprus is a viable entity as it is currently envisaged by the draft agreement. This agreement does not provide for a workable solution; it provides for a solution, which over time will probably not be sustainable. Changes will have to be negotiated or imposed. I think, for example, that the Greek Cypriots will eventually take over the whole island. Denktash's fears may be realized. I think it is possible, perhaps even likely, that the agreement as presently constituted will fall apart, two or three or five years after it has been assigned. The governmental system now being envisaged is intrinsically unworkable.

I think it is possible that the two communities will clash again. Cyprus is a good illustration of an ethnic tension to which there is no good or permanent solution. Human beings can cobble something together; in fact, we have done just that. But that does not guarantee a peaceful future. Stability on the island could last forty or fifty years, but the situation is intrinsically unstable, almost guaranteed to break out in ethnic tensions once again. Cyprus is an example of many similar situations around the world, where ethnic divisions are almost permanent and not subject to long-term settlements. It could be resolved if all the Turks or all the Greeks left the island, but you can't count on anything so drastic occurring. It is just very difficult, if not impossible, to maintain stability and peace when a small piece of territory is occupied by an ethnic majority of 80% and a minority of 20%. There are many comparable situations in the world, such as the Caucuses, Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia, which continue to be unresolved. I don't know whether any of them can be resolved or whether they will continue to fester undeterred by the displeasure of the world community. The most likely solution is that one ethnic group absorbs the other. But that is not foreseen as a solution in Cyprus or anywhere else in the world. It is an issue which needs to be addressed by the world community for it is the source of instability in too many places.

Q: During your tour, did you feel that the U.S. government was as fully engaged in the Cyprus issue as it might have been?

LEDSKY: No, of course not. It did practically nothing. It should have been more active. I think that had it been so, we could have reached a settlement. We had influence on both sides that we did not use. Had I had a free hand, I would have been much more active. I think that description was true even after I left the coordinator job. Whether additional U.S. efforts would have been worth it, is another question. I believe we should have been more active, but I recognize that I had a very narrow view of the world. When you work on a problem, you believe that there is no more important one in the world.

Q: That brings us up to 1991, when you went to work on the problem of the status of U.S. forces in Germany. How did that assignment fall to you?

LEDSKY: I was sitting peacefully in my office one day on the sixth floor. The Berlin Wall was falling, but I was still concentrating on Cyprus. A series of meetings were held at about this time in EUR concerning the end of the division between East and West Germany which would have required an end to the four power occupation rights in Germany. I was invited to some of those discussion. In retrospect, I see that I played my usual dissenting role, the minority view, trying to bring sanity to a chaotic environment. Philip _____, who now is a member of the 9/11 Commission, was a junior officer at the time and involved in these discussions. He was then the junior member of the German desk and was the note taker for these meetings. Eventually, Condi Rice wrote a book on German reunification, based in part on these notes. My name is mentioned in that booas a small footnotfor my frequent and indiscriminate argumentation against the conventional wisdom.

As a result of those discussions, (the four plus two, i.e., Great Britain, the U.S., France, Russia and the two Germanies) negotiations were initiated. They took place in Germany. I had very little do to with them, except occasionally I was permitted to participate in the discussions about what might just have happened or was about to happen in these negotiations. On a couple of occasions, I was invited to go to Europe, to sit in the back row of the conference room and act as an advisor to the American delegation. On a couple of occasions, Ray Seitz was ill and unable to attend; then Jim Dobbins took the chair as the head of the U.S. delegation. I can't say that I had a major role in these negotiations; even the word 'minor' might be overstating the case, but I was present at several international meetings, as well as at meetings of the U.S. side.

In essence, I played a very small role in all of these deliberations. As the talks came to an end, the Germans again raised the question of whether U.S. forces could go into what had been East Germany. This issue had been an element of the four plus two talks, but no conclusions had been reached. The Germans asked that the "Status of Forces" agreement which had established rules for the disposition and behavior of American troops in West Germany be renegotiated. Ray Seitz, at some stage, asked me to go to Bonn to explore with the German government what it had in mind. I did do that. A couple of other State people and I went to the Foreign Ministry, which had requested that a formal negotiation be initiated to amend the existing "Status of Forces" agreement. This was the beginning of a long drawn-out affair. Bob Kimmitt was our ambassador at the time, and we discussed the Germans' request.

So the talks began. Somehow, the Embassy and the Department agreed that a special negotiator be appointed for these discussions. It was agreed that someone who knew Germany was required; that person would have to periodically go to Bonn to participate in what was foreseen as a long, protracted negotiation. Ray asked me whether I would be interested. Cyprus was not really keeping me very busy and I was somewhat bored, so I told him that I would conduct the negotiations. The negotiation actually became a multi-lateral one since it involved the British, the Canadians, the French, the Belgians and the Dutch, all of whom had military forces stationed in West Germany. All of the countries had a special representative, who would come from the capital to participate in the negotiations, which lasted for about a year. We would meet for two or three days and then adjourn for consultations with our governments.

As a result, I took a series of trips to Germany in 1991 and 1992. We covered all the details from whether the U.S. would give up its special car license plates to environmental questions of whether we would take responsibility for any degradation that our people and equipment might have caused during the occupation period such as whether we would stop sending convoys on the Autobahn to training sites in southern Germany. There were dozens of questions of this kind that had to be discussed and settled. Some of the issues were very important, but many were just picayune. Many revolved around the fundamental question of U.S. liability for the consequences of occupation from 1945 to 1990. The Germans wanted us to pay for any damage or perceived degradation that might have occurred. The list was long since we had established bases in many parts of the country and had run military exercises continually.

The negotiations required a lot of travel around West Germany to USAEUR (United States Army Europe) and USAFE (United States Air Forces in Europe) headquarters so that these various issues could have the benefit of our own military's insights. An agreement was finally reached, although I believe a couple of issues were left unresolved at the time I left. A document was drafted, but to the best of my knowledge, it was never ratified, at least by the U.S. Senate. I don't even know whether it actually ever went into effect. I think the Department decided that in fact this was not the kind of agreement that required Senate approval. It was an executive agreement and the legal advisors felt that Congressional approval was not necessary. As far as I know, despite the lack of U.S. Senate ratification, both sides have abided by that agreement.

Q: What were the aims of each side in the negotiations?

LEDSKY: The West Germans clearly wanted to put the foreign forces, particularly ours, in a different status than the one they had enjoyed since the end of WW II. Their objective was to demonstrate to their own constituency that Germany was no longer occupied territory and that foreign forces had very limited, circumscribed roles and perhaps, most importantly, that these forces were subject to German authority in all circumstances. Our forces were in Germany on German sufferancas a partner, but surely on their sufferance.

Our objective was to avoid any new financial liability and to maintain as many of our rights as we could. The military were concerned about their status in Germany. They wanted to maintain as much sovereignty as they could over the facilities that we were occupying. The Germans had suggested that they be permitted to police our facilities and even went as far as maintaining that they had a right to supervise the American schools. Our military were concerned that the Germans would become too intrusive.

My objective was to be seen as "giving ground" without really making any changeor as few as we could get away with. In the end, we did give up some rights, but we basically preserved the status our forces had enjoyed and certainly did not lose any of the rights that were essential to the effective operations of our forces. Our military was reasonably satisfied with the outcome; they had been very nervous throughout the negotiations. They had been represented during the negotiations by a brigadier general and a couple of colonels, but were always afraid that the State Department would sell them out. Before each negotiations session, I would go to Army or Air Force headquarters to meet with the commanding general or his deputy. Sometimes, Ambassador Kimmitt joined these conversations. That just shows the level of concern in the American diplomatic and military circles about these negotiations. Many of the issues, such as school supervision and driver's licenses may have seemed picayune when taken individually, but each had a potential impact on our military position in Germany and the lives of our soldiers and airmen. German laws were entirely different to ours in almost all areas dealing with day-to-day living. This made our internal debates very important. Furthermore, reaching agreement among the Americans was not an easy task.

We had problems with our allies, most of whom were willing to give up all of their rights, because essentially they really didn't care about remaining in Germany. So, they were of little, if any, help. I had a number of disagreements with the Belgians and the Canadians, who were prepared to accept everything the Germans proposed. The number of their forces was so small, they were considered inconsequential; their presence in Germany was not a military necessity. I don't know as a military matter that we would have cared if they had withdrawn from Germany, but they were at the negotiating table and therefore had a voice in the dialogue. I found them very difficult to deal with at times.

The negotiations lasted for a year plus. We would meet every three or four months for several days in Germany. At the beginning, the meetings took place more often, but then they took on a pace of their own. I think the German negotiators came to Washington once or twice; we went to the Pentagon for discussions. It was then that I met Dick Cheney, who was the secretary of defense at the time.

I should mention that I had great cooperation from Don Bandler, who was the political counselor at the embassy. I used to stay with him when I visited Bonn and dealt with him from Washington frequently. He was part of our negotiating team and kept track of all that was going on when I was not in Germany. Although the agreement was not finally agreed to while I was working on the problem, I don't believe that any changes were made after my departure. I think that perhaps the agreement was finally put into effect after I retired from the Foreign Service.

I enjoyed this negotiating experience. I was almost entirely on my own. I had a team that worked with me, on a part-time basis. All of us had other assignments, but that never interfered with our work on this "status of forces" agreement. I shuttled back and forth between Cyprus and Germany. Ray Seitz was great to work for and Jim Dobbins was also a great help.

I don't think that EUR or the Department really cared too much about these negotiations; it was DoD which of course had the greatest interest. The Pentagon kept very close track of me; I would see them before I would go to Germany, and after I returned, and often in between.

Q: One interesting aspect of base and "status of forces" agreements negotiations is that the agency which has essentially nothing at stake, i.e. the Department of State, is in the lead role, whereas the agency which has the most at stake, i.e., the Department of Defense, plays a secondary role.

LEDSKY: That was certainly true in the German negotiations. I was clearly the American delegate who made the negotiating decisions; it was not the U.S. military. I remember a couple of issues where I and the military did not see eye-to-eye. Ambassador Kimmitt and I went to military headquarters to tell them that we just couldn't support their position. The issues, which were then hardest to resolve, dealt with mundane daily living matters such as license plates, car inspections, and driver's licenses. Most of those related to motor transportation, both official and private, including the use of the highways. We used to have our own gasoline stations along the main roads, our own inspection system, and our own licensing system. The Germans wanted to end all of those processes, or rather, they wanted them incorporated into their own system.

Training grounds were also an issue, particularly since the Germans were continually bombarded by noise during exercises and also because these exercises degraded the environment. I think in this general area, our military was reasonably sensitive to these German concerns. They were more concerned that any revision in their practices might suggest that they were responsible for past degradations and therefore liable. They did not want to assume the potential burdens of law suits and wanted protection for indemnity claims based on past activities. This was therefore a very difficult area to find a compromise acceptable to our military and to the Germans; I could not very well argue with their basic goal and we had to find some way out of this dilemma.

I would like to make a final comment about the negotiations. One factor that made them interesting was the careful scrutiny that was given to the negotiations by other countries which have "status of forces" agreements with the Germans. That gave an extra dimension to the negotiations.

I brought to the table previous experience in these kinds of negotiations, i.e., the Greek and Turkish base negotiations. I was therefore familiar with our "status of forces" agreements with Turkey and Greece. The Pentagon was of course even more familiar with this since it had been involved in such negotiations with many countries around the world. There were officials, particularly lawyers, in the Pentagon who had spent most of their careers in such negotiations. There was no comparable expertise in the Department of State. Perhaps that is why I was chosen to head the negotiating delegation and why perhaps I was able to deal with the various issues more effectively than a senior official in EUR or in our embassy in Bonn. Perhaps this is why I was pursued for this assignment.

As I said earlier, I negotiated the "status of forces" agreement while also being the Cyprus coordinator, which was my last assignment in the Department.

Q: Why did you decide to retire in 1992?

LEDSKY: First of all, I was facing the possibility of mandatory retirement because of "time in grade." I had been at my rank for ten years. I had ambassadorial rank with Senate confirmation, which might have avoided the mandatory retirement as long as I was the Cyprus coordinator. I was sent a note in 1991 or 1992 noting my time in grade and the possibility of mandatory retirement. During 1992, several suggestions were made that would have allowed me to continue in the Service such as ambassadorial appointments to either Armenia or Cyprus or Albania or Romania. However, none of these possible assignments worked out. I didn't want to go to Armenia.

Then Brian Atwood, with whom I had worked in H, offered me a job in the National Democratic Institute (NDI), which he headed at the time. I put him off for a couple of months while the ambassadorial possibilities were being worked on. In the summer of 1992, Brian asked me to decide because he wanted to complete the staffing of NDI for a new program in the former states of the Soviet Union. He had asked me to head up this new initiative and was anxious to get started, so he pressed me for an answer. As I said, I stalled as long as I could, but with every day, it became clearer to me that if an ambassadorial job were to be offered to me, it would not be in a place of interest to me. I didn't really trust the Department's bureaucracy and I didn't know if President Bush was going to be re-elected. Furthermore, as I said, the Department reminded me of my "time in grade" problem and suggested that I might want to attend the retirement seminar, so I finally decided to retire in October 1992 and to take the NDI job.

As in most life situations, decisions are murky, not crisp or decisive. One drifts into decisions. I probably could have stayed in the Foreign Service and waited for an assignment of interest to me. In fact, after I retired, the Department asked me to go to the UN in the fall of 1992 to head up a the U.S. delegation to talk to the Cypriots. This was to be a last ditch effort to get a peace agreement. I asked Brian what I should do and he agreed that I could accept the Department's offer. So I went to New York for 7-10 days for these consultations. I probably could have continued that pattern for some time, but fortunately for me and others, the talks broke off in October. Then in January 1993, the Cypriots held elections and a new president was chosen. That gave the Department the opportunity to select a new negotiator, which it did. That was the end of my involvement in Cyprus. I mention this only to show how old ties are hard to break and that even after retirement, one can continue an association with the Department.

Q: Before we discuss NDI, I just wanted to ask you about the long list of awards that you received during your Foreign Service career, including the one that you received from the German government. What thoughts do you have now about the Department's award system.

LEDSKY: Far be it for me to bite the hand that fed me. I did receive a number of performance awards. I have a lot of certificatemore than I can put up on my office walls. I think I even received one or two after I retirepresidential awards signed by George H.W. Bush, which carried a very generous monetary value with them. I believe that in 1993 I was invited to receive an award from Secretary Christopher. It was then that the secretary expressed regrets that I was no longer in the Service. We had worked together, as I earlier related, on the Olympic boycott process when he was the deputy secretary. When he asked me where I was working, I told him NDI. He was quite delighted to hear that, because he was quite familiar with its work since he had always been closely associated with the Democratic National Committee.

Back to the question you raised. I don't think the award system is particularly effective. It has some of the same deficiencies that the assignment and promotion systems have. The Service is too large and diverse; it cannot make these personnel decisions in a rational and effective manner. I think all who have looked at the Department's personnel systems have come to the conclusion that assignments and rewards are based more on whom you know and where one is at a given moment in his or her career; the processes cannot be unbiased and objective because there are just too many people in the system. Someone working in Enugu (Nigeria) - far removed from those who are working these processes, is not likely to be considered for a promotion or an award or a good next assignment because of distance from Washington, even though he or she may be doing a far better job, or one that is much more important to the U.S., than someone who is closer to the personnel decision-makers. The officer in Enugu will find it almost impossible to be recognized or to compete with someone who is pushing papers in the NSC or the Seventh Floor. There is just no way to avoid the importance of proximity to the decision-makers. Washington takes precedence over the field in a Service in which the field should take precedence over Washington. However, current practices skew the personnel system and make it an ineffective and unfair system. I don't want to suggest that I have a better system in mind; I am just sure that the present one is skewed and does not serve the Service as well as it should.

Q: How did the award from the German government come about?

LEDSKY: I am not sure. After I retired, I was called by the DCM of the German embassy one day to tell me that someone in Germany had nominated me for an award, the "Bundesverdienstkreuz," (Federal Cross of Merit) for my work on German reunification, my service in Berlin and in general, for my work to cement U.S.-German relations. I have never found out who made the suggestion or how the German process worked. I have thought that it might have been Herr Weizsacker, who was the German president at the time, but I don't know why he would take the time to do that. In any case, I was completely surprised by the award.

Q: Let me go beyond your Foreign Service career and ask you about the NDI program, which has a close relationship to foreign affairs activities of the U.S. government. First, tell us a little about NDI's work.

LEDSKY: The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs manages programs in certain foreign countries aimed at building democratic infrastructures such as political parties to enhance civil societies in these countries. The efforts are to contribute to the development of pluralistic political systems. Basically, we are in the business of assisting struggling political parties or groups to develop into robust, national institutions. We use training programs and run seminars and courses to teach several things. These include how to manage a democratic organizations in countries which have little or no tradition in a democratic process, and how to compete in a political process which in many cases is not free or fair. We also trained them in how to enlarge membership, how to campaign effectively, and how to develop a message or themes which will resonate with potential voters.

Equally importantly, we are working in many countries to build civil societies which will allow small groups to have their wishes and goals at least examined by the authorities and hopefully accepted by those authorities. We are talking here about desires that are intended to improve the living conditions in these societies, desires for things such as better sanitation, better education, better social services, and better roads. We try to teach these groups how to organize and how to make their desires known to the decision makers. We train them how to positively act on their desires with advocacy techniques, and lobbying tactics. In many countries, we have built civil groups that monitor elections and groups such as the League of Women Voters that urge action on certain demands and educate the society on a variety of issues.

Q: You have now worked ten years on the development of democracessentially a European-American systein parts of the world that are not familiar with such a political system. What are your conclusions about the feasibility of such an endeavor?

LEDSKY: First of all, I don't think we are trying to impose such a system on other cultures. One of the things we have been able to accomplish at NDI has been to work cooperatively with people from other nations in the development and implementation of our programs. We have as many foreigners working for NDI as we have Americans. They come from Europe, Canada, Australia and some even from the Third World. We do not foster the American system as the sole model. We are much more about core values, which are accepted by many cultures. We are about organizing to achieve certain goals in a democratic fashion, i.e., how a political party fosters democratic practices in its own processes as well as how that party supports the concepts of democracy in its own society.

I have come to the conclusion that NDI's goals are very hard to achieve. It is very difficult for a group not part of a culture to assist groups in that culture to develop a political atmosphere which may be entirely foreign to it. In some situations, we are able to make a meaningful contribution. People are able to adopt certain concepts and use them effectively.

In other cases, we have a very difficult time having our ideas and suggestions accepted at all because the local culture is just impervious to outside influences. For example, we have urged the people we work with to adopt the concept of door-to-door campaignina practice well known in the U.S. It has been adopted in some countries; where candidates have accepted the underlying goal, which is to have them appear personally before the constituents. The Soviet system has depended on the issuance of manifestos, which a small group circulates to the voters. We do not believe that such a system is not compatible with democracy and works really only in a Soviet system. There are places where the door-to-door approach has just been rejected by the local culture. We do not know where such a technique will work and where it will not.

I do believe that it is very difficult for any culture to assist another in the development of a new political and social system. It is not impossible, but it is extremely difficult. The chances of success by an organization such as NDI are modest at best. The fact is that we do not know how to transpose democracy from one culture to another. There is nothing to guide us; we have stepped into a new endeavor without precedent. It is a very, very difficult task. I do believe that it is worth trying, even if the chances of success are small. I think the efforts of the various American organizations engaged in this program are well worth the small financial investment made. I do not think that acceptance by a culture of a democratic proceswhere none has been know previouslis that important. Regardless of the eventual outcome, we will have changed attitudes of large segments of the population in that culture. That, in the long run, will make a difference.

Q: Have you found any relationship between economic development and the adoption of a democratic political system?

LEDSKY: There is no direct correlation. There are some societies that adopt democratic practices, which they the use to improve their economic situations. There are some societies which begin with economic development, which eventually leads to the use of democratic practices. I do not believe that there is a formula which relates the two developments in any culture; there is a relationship between the two but we don't know how it works in any particular situation. It is clear that countries can develop economically and never change their political practices and vice-versa. I have not found a correlation between the two.

It is impossible to generalize about political development; each situation is sui generis. We may develop a program to assist a certain culture in adopting democratic practices; we have no idea whether we will be successful. We have no idea what will work. We are not dealing with a science; it is an art form, which we do not fully comprehend. The process leading to democratization is a mystery so far. Thus, we do not have a formula which will lead to a given outcome. I am not even sure that the process in fact does exist or that it can be dissected and understood. For example, Russia has gone through a cycle of changes in the last ten-fifteen years. That society had gone from totalitarianism to some form of democracy and then slowly began to revert back to totalitarianism. During this period, their economic system has undergone major changes unrelated to the changes in the political system. I believe that Russia has now reached a point where economic development is still a major force, while changes in the political system have stagnated and may even be retreating to former practices. I do believe that where corruption is the core driving force in economic development, as in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan or Palestine, major changes in the political system are mandatory if true economic modernization is to be achieved. Corruption is so deeply ingrained in these cultures that it is a block to true economic development; systemic changes are absolutely required. I don't believe that there is a formula which would allow us to understand and predict the outcome of seismic political or economic changes, which could be applied universally. I know that you have cited Korea as an illustration of the inter-relationship of economic and political growth, where the emergence of a middle class alloweindeed demandethe development of a pluralistic society. Undoubtedly, that was true in Korea and Taiwan and may become a key factor in China's development, but I am not sure that because it happened in Korea, it will happen in other societies. As I said, we have no formula for political change that will work in every, or even most, circumstances. Each situation is unique, and all we can do is to keep working to bring about desirable change.

Q: Do you have any hope of eventually finding a universal formula?

LEDSKY: No. There is no one formula. A search for such a formula could well be self-destructive. All of this discussion leads one to the situation in Iraq. There is no formula or key. We don't know what will work in Iraq. It is likely that nothing positive will happen in Iraq because you cannot solve problems in highly divided societies using democratic processes. Furthermore, political problems in oil-rich countries are very hard to resolve. I think Iraq is an impossible case. I base this view on my experiences with divided societies in other oil-rich countries. The problems of divided societies are not solved by the use of election boxes. Those elections will merely mirror the ethnic, social, and religious divides in existence in the society. Democratic political processes will not solve the divisione.g. Cyprus. Elections in those situations will not bring people together; in some circumstances they may even exacerbate the divisions. In Iraq, you have a number of distinct ethnic groups and a number of distinct religious groups. Such a situation does not easily lend itself to a working democratic system. A country like Iraq can only be unified through some kind of autocratic, central system; it will fall apart otherwise.

Q: Which societies have you been involved in, which resemble Iraq?

LEDSKY: I think Cyprus probably comes the closest, but I would hasten to add what I said before: each society is unique and lessons learned about one will not necessarily be applicable to another. Cyprus is the classic example of the points I was trying to make about divided societies. It has two ethnic groups, which have not found a way to live together in a democratic state. We have tried in vain for 30-35 years. Federation might work, but only if they are extremely loose and even then they tend to fall apart, as they did in Yugoslavia. That country was held together only while it was under autocratic control. That is an unfortunate fact, which should be some guide to us in other situations, but we seem not have learned that lesson. We may well learn it through bitter experience in the next couple of years in Iraq.

Q: This leads me to the question of the relationship of NDI to U.S. foreign policy. Does NDI have a role in the formulation and implementation of that policy?

LEDSKY: In the last ten years, organizations like NDand there a number of thehave played a special role in U.S. foreign policy. We have become the means by which the U.S. government carries out one aspect of its foreign policy. President George W. Bush has articulated a foreign policy in which the development of democratic societies plays an increasing role. We are in some respects the agents in the implementation of that policy. The government can do very little in this field.

Q: So NDI sees itself as an agent of U.S. foreign policy?

LEDSKY: Yes, to the extent that U.S. foreign policy is interested in democracy. A U.S. government cannot do much about spreading democracy in foreign countries. It decided in the early 1980s that it would leave that task to the non-governmental sector. So, when it is the U.S. government's policy to bring democracy to other cultures, then organizations such as NDI become the implementers of that policy. I think that over the years we have increasingly become an agent of the U.S. government, even while maintaining that we are independent of the government and have little to do with it. We do get our funds from the government, and in fact work quite closely with it.

Q: Is there any relationship between our policies concerning a specific country and NDI's activities there?

LEDSKY: Sure. There are a couple of instances where there is a very direct relationship. For example, in Uzbekistan the U.S. government has agreed to a series of "understandings" with the Uzbek government covering a wide variety of issues such as security and democratization. One of these agreements pledges the Uzbek government to liberalizing its political and social systems. Consequently, the U.S. government has asked the Uzbek government to allow NDI and its Republican Party counterpart (IRI) to operate in its country. We are registered there and allowed to run our programs. The names of the American organizations were not spelled out in this agreement, but it was obviously drafted and signed with us in mind. Based on that agreement, I opened an office in Tashkent. In the last two months, the Uzbek government has raised questions about NDI's and IRI's registration, claiming that we were involved in matters which were not covered by the agreement. The U.S. government has refuted that argument and maintains that our programs are covered by the agreement. It has made clear to the Uzbeki that any attempt to cut back or interfere with NDI and IRI programs will be viewed as a breach of an agreement. That made us a cause celebre in Uzbekistan. I think that is a perfect illustration of the relationship of NDI and IRI to the U.S. government. We are its agents; it is our sponsor in a very direct and publicly stated way. I should add that this is an unusual circumstance and that such public relationship has not occurred in too many other situations. Usually, the relationship is made known to others in an informal and non-public way.

I hope that the Uzbek matter will not need to be replicated in other situations; we prefer to appear as an independent entity, even though we are obviously agents of a governmental policy. We seek U.S. governmental public support only in those situations like Uzbekistan, where it would have been impossible for us even to get started without a government-to-government agreement.

I see NDI's programs, and other similar ones, to be required and supported by the U.S. government for a long time. We will probably not see a pay-off for many, many years. I must admit that when I started in NDI in 1992 that was not our assumption. We felt then that we would have quick results from our efforts. We thought that the countries which became independent after the break-up of the Soviet Union and those in Eastern Europe would move to a pluralistic political system quickly. We even expected that the developing countries which had depended on the Soviet Union, such as Syria and Ghana, would move reasonably quickly to pluralistic societies. We came to see that changing cultural and societal habits is a very long-range process, which requires continual effort and patience. We cannot expect to see immediate results from our efforts.

Q: It is interesting to note that this lesson may not have been learned by the U.S. government yet, as we see through statements like "we will bring immediate democracy to Iraq".

LEDSKY: The U.S. government's notion is that everybody wants to be free, so that once a tyrant is disposed of, the country will rush to become a democracy and that it is easy to move from a dictatorship to a democracy. In fact, it is very difficult to make that transition and our governmental leaders need to learn that. I have reluctantly reached the conclusion that our whole Middle East policy is based on a faulty assessment of how long it takes societies to change from autocracy to democracy. There are many officials who understand this; some of them are from Germany, Turkey, and France. They have warned us that "quick democratization schemes" will not work.

Q: Very interesting. Let's conclude this interview by giving you a chance to express any final thoughts about your career in the Foreign Service.

LEDSKY: I am very happy that I chose that career. I had some terrific experiences. I would not, however, recommend it to everyone. The Service has declined in importance and interest and increased in risks. It is a far more dangerous life than what we knew, and is less rewarding. I work with a lot of young people, many of whom would like to join the Foreign Service. I caution many of them not to expect a career as interesting or as satisfying as the one I had. People are entering the Service much more cautiously and tentatively than they did when I was starting. Most of them are hedging their futures and are expecting less from participation in the Service than I and my colleagues did. They do not necessarily view the Service as a career, but rather as just another aspect of their liveone which may come to end long before retirement eligibility. When they enter the Service, it is not with a commitment to a life-long service. Many of the entering officers have graduate degrees or are planning to acquire them. This will permit them to undertake other endeavors, which is a wise movement. I think their views have merit because, as I said, I think the Foreign Service is declining in influence, prestige and esteem. It is doing less important work at a time when in fact its input should be required even more. It is becoming less and less relevant at a time when it should be more important. I think it is quite sad to see what has happened to a major institution.

Q: On behalf of the ADST, I want to thank you for giving us so much of your time. Your oral history will provide a lot of food for thought for many and should prove quite useful to those who wish to examine some of the issues that you have been involved in, in greater detail. Many thanks.

End of interview