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

# THEODORE E. RUSSELL

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy*
*Initial Interview date: February 22, 2000*


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## INTERVIEW

*Q: You go by Ted, don't you?*

RUSSELL: Ted.

*Q: Ted, can we start sort of at the beginning? Where were you born and a little about your family.*

RUSSELL: I was born in Madras, India on November 21, 1936. I was named Theodore, which means gift of God, because I was a surprise to my parents. My father was doing public health work with the Rockefeller Foundation. He was in their foreign medical service. His father had been a Baptist minister. My father had been directed towards missionary work from an early age. In fact, he went through surgical training at Bellevue Hospital in New York with the idea of becoming a missionary. He finally decided he was more interested in public health and went into the Rockefeller Foundation public health service and was in India when I was born. My brother was born in Singapore. We were in India until Pearl Harbor, and then we returned to the U.S., where my father volunteered for the Army Medical Corps.

*Q: First of all what was the background of your father? You say his father was a Baptist missionary?*

RUSSELL: His grandfather was a shoemaker living in Nova Scotia. We have some of his shoe molds. His father emigrated to the U.S. and became a citizen in 1895. He was ordained as a Baptist minister in Boston and served as Pastor of several churches in Massachusetts and New York. He also had a little parish up in Owl's Head, Maine. He later became General Secretary of the Evangelistic Association of New England. My mother lived on a farm in South Thomaston, Maine. They met at this little church up in Maine when my Dad's father went up and preached during the summer.

*Q: Your mother, what was her family? Were they Maine farmers?*

RUSSELL: They were Maine people. They were farmers and sea farers and had been in Maine for a long time. My mother was born in Maine. Her father was an art dealer in Boston. Dad was born in Boston. So, Dad, as I say, was going to become a medical missionary. Then he had a falling out with the missionary board, something about the balance between missionary work and curing the sick I think. Then, after his surgical residency, he became fascinated with public health and the advantages of prevention rather than the cure.

*Q: Where did he go?*

RUSSELL: He had his residency at Bellevue Hospital, which was a great honor in those days. After that, he went with the Rockefeller Foundation foreign medical service and actually was doing hookworm and malaria eradication in Georgia in the U.S. south in the early 1920s. Then they assigned him overseas, and he was in Malaya and then the Philippines and then India. I was born in India in 1936. Then right after Pearl Harbor...

*Q: This was December 7, 1941.*

RUSSELL: December 7, 1941. Right after Pearl Harbor, there was a situation where a U.S. auxiliary cruiser, the U.S.S. Wakefield, had delivered, I think, the last contingent of Canadian troops to Singapore a short time before it fell. They took bomb damage somewhere in the ship. The captain left and sailed to Bombay for repairs. He went to our consul in Bombay and said, "Any Americans who want to go back to the States can have free passage. They have two days to get loaded up and get on my ship. Then I am sailing off." I remember vividly the train ride from Madras to Bombay because it seemed to me we always stopped with the very bright station light right outside the window at night. Then we came back on the U.S.S. Wakefield. It was great fun for the kids because the sailors made us little guns that fired elastics. They set up showers and played games with us. The parents had a horrible time because the captain announced that anyone who fell overboard would not be picked up because there was too great a threat from enemy submarines. So, it took about a month to get back around the Cape of Good Hope with worried parents and happy kids. We landed in New York in late February and then we went to Washington. Dad went into the Army Medical Corps. He immediately went back out into the Pacific where he did a study for MacArthur on how to cut down casualties from malaria. He had known MacArthur in the Philippines before the war. We had more casualties from malaria than we did from battlefield fighting. He did that, and then he was assigned to North Africa, and then Italy in 1944. The Germans blew up the Pontine Marsh dikes and malaria came back to that previously malarial area in Italy.

After returning to Washington, I lived there with my mother and older brother, Christopher, during WWII. Then we moved to Pelham Manor, New York, where Dad was in the Rockefeller Foundation home office. He was not happy in New York, as he loved field work, so he got out of that as soon as he could. He was traveling quite a bit. In that period we moved to Falmouth, Massachusetts for a year. The next year, Dad was made head of the Rome office. I went over and lived in Rome as a teenager. That foreign experience was probably one of the things that drew me into Foreign Service.

*Q: When did you go over?*

RUSSELL: I went over to Rome in 1951. So I was there for 10th and 11th grade.

*Q: Well let's talk a little before then. In school, your elementary schools and all that, you were going in Washington and Falmouth?*

RUSSELL: Well, Washington; Pelham Manor, New York; and Falmouth, Massachusetts.

*Q: What sort of subjects were you particularly interested in?*

RUSSELL: I loved science and particularly biology and chemistry. In fact I thought I wanted to be a doctor, which wasn't surprising since my father was a doctor. Chemistry was my hobby. I always had a big chemistry lab which grew bigger and bigger as time went on. I also loved anything to do with wildlife and was interested in geography and countries that I had heard of as a child, like India where I was born. Gradually I became more interested in history, but that started more in Rome in the 10th grade

*Q: Well, just to get an idea a bit about the family life, were there sort of discussions of various things around the dinner table or not? I mean was it a family that discussed issues or did you kind of do your own things?*

RUSSELL: Well, let's see. When I got to the age that I would be discussing that sort of thing, there would be some discussions at home, but Dad was away a great deal. He was gone during the war, and then he was on the road at least half the time, I guess, while we were living in Pelham Manor and Falmouth. We had more discussions of the sort you're talking about when we got to Rome and we were actually together the whole time. He wasn't doing very much traveling at that point. Then we talked a lot about what was going on in Italy and that kind of thing. I became interested in Italian politics for example. They had very heated election campaigns with wonderful election slogans like "Don't vote for the man with the big mustaches" referring to Stalin and a call not to vote Communist. So I became very interested in that, but earlier on, Dad was away so much that I don't remember many discussions of big issues. However, we did have a wonderful library with many science and natural history books which I enjoyed reading.

*Q: I was going to ask about reading.*

RUSSELL: Yes, I did a lot of reading. As I said, we had a huge library on the history of medicine, but also we had wonderful sets of general encyclopedias and encyclopedias of wildlife, and anything to do with science and to some extent history. So I did quite a bit of reading and was interested in that sort of thing. I also started collecting coins. My brother who was eight years older, collected stamps. So Dad would bring home coins for me and stamps for my brother. That got me interested also in foreign countries and what was going on in the world. So that is before we moved to Falmouth where I was in the 9th grade, and then I was a typical teenager and more interested in school dances, making rockets in my chemistry lab and activities with my friends.

*Q: I would say dealing with foreign service people that particularly the guys, the two subjects they seem to major in the most preparing them for the foreign service are sports and girls.*

RUSSELL: Yes.

*Q: When you went to Rome, where did you go to school? St. Stephens, was it there?*

RUSSELL: St. Stephens hadn't appeared. We arrived in Rome in 1951 for my 10th grade year. The Overseas School of Rome had just been set up. I think it was the first year. I think that was the only American school you could go to. So I went to the Overseas School of Rome, and had a ball and did little studying. I published a newspaper. I founded a stamp and coin club. The newspaper described not only what was going on in school but also particularly what was going on in the coin and stamp markets in town. We'd rate the various dealers and talk about things like that. There would be short stories and jokes we'd publish as well. Academically I did very well, but didn't have to study. The whole thing was kind of a lark. Of course being in Rome as a teenager wasn't too unpleasant. There were a lot of interesting people to pal around with. My folks got a bit upset by this. Then Dad was transferred. I think Dad's boss was jealous actually. He decided the Rome office was a luxury so they were going to consolidate in Paris. So, since I had been to a different school almost every year of my life, my folks were reluctant to move me. The American School in Paris was not considered particularly great at that time and the Brothers of Holy Cross had just set up a school in Rome. They had a well deserved no nonsense reputation. So my folks said, "Its okay, if you want to stay in Rome." I had no desire to go to school in Paris or leave friends in Rome. So I was a boarding student at Notre Dame International the first year that was set up. In fact my chemistry lab became the basis for their chemistry lab. We had a villa in Rome and I had a lab in half the top floor. The goings on in that lab were things my folks were better off not knowing about. But in any case I went to Notre Dame International in 11th grade. I worked quite hard; that was good. Yet it was a very mixed experience academically. I didn't get any high school physics. I took a mish mash of academic subjects. But, I became more interested in history and politics. I maintained a great interest in what was going on in Italy. My roommate was someone whose parents were with ARAMCO. A lot of ARAMCO kids were sent up to Rome. So I guess my interests broadened a bit in 11th grade. My folks decided at that point if this kid is going to get into any kind of good college, he has got to really work. So, they sent me back my last year, 12th grade, to Phillips Exeter Academy. I have never worked so hard in my life. I did nothing but work and had little social life, since a one year senior student at a boarding school, where most of the kids had been together there several years, is a bit of a pariah.

*Q: Yes. You haven't had a chance to belong to any clique or group or anything else.*

RUSSELL: You are a pariah. It wasn't that you were badly treated. It meant that you were an outsider. You worked; you went to the library, and went back to your room. You went to class and took part in sports. I played ice hockey and rowed. I didn't feel deprived because intellectually I felt enormously stimulated. That is when intellectually I came most alive because I remember wandering in the stacks in the magnificent library they have at that school, and getting Plutarch's Lives off the book shelf and thinking "this is fascinating." So, intellectually it was great. Socially it was a real pain in the neck. Academically I started with a "D" in math, but I did well in my other courses and pulled

up my math marks enough by the end of the year so that I could get into Yale. I wanted to go to Yale because I had the feeling that it was a school where you could get a really good education. I suppose I went there particularly because my brother had gone there and done very well and worked very hard. He had been a bursary student and had had financial help. In those days, being a bursary student with a very heavy curriculum - I was in the pre med program - was very tough. Dad said, "Okay, I am not going to make you do that." So I did not have a job on the side, and that made it much easier than it had been for my brother, who had to work extremely hard handling both studies and a job.

*Q: What were you pointing, was it pre med?*

RUSSELL: Yes, I went into the pre med program. For two years I was pre med. I did very well the first year. My freshman year mentor said "if you keep this up, you are going to be Phi Beta Kappa." Then I took comparative anatomy and physics. I had never had physics before, and to go into the really tough college physics and zoology courses was hard for me. My brain is more idea oriented than detail oriented, and to remember the articulations of all the bones and that sort of thing and what they looked like from species to species was not my forte. I loved it intellectually, but it wasn't exactly for me, and so I didn't do so well in physics or zoology, although I got good marks in chemistry and genetics. So I said this isn't really what I want to do. Every time I took a liberal arts course like English or Social Psychology, which was my favorite course in my freshman year, whenever I took something that involved analyzing how things work in society, in cultures, human nature, all of that really appealed to me enormously. While I still loved chemistry and biology, I found I was much more drawn to liberal arts, so my junior year I switched, not having had a history course yet, I switched to major in history. I took my entire history major in two years and did well at it and loved it. Getting back to where we were in time, after high school and before going to college, I worked in a restaurant kitchen in Maine where my parents were then retired.

*Q: Where in Maine?*

RUSSELL: North Edgecomb, Maine near Wiscasset, about 50 miles north of Portland. I remember doing pots and pans, and I hated people who had ordered baked stuffed lobster because it is the worst to clean. At any rate, then I worked for U.S. Steel in Gary, Indiana the summer of my sophomore year. I remember there was a steel strike that forced me to leave early and earn money painting houses. The summer of my junior year there was an ad on the board I couldn't believe. It was for the Socony Mobil summer abroad program. So I looked at it, and they said we are looking for people to work in London, Frankfurt, Rome, Madrid, and, I think, in Morocco. I thought "you must be kidding; you get paid money for this?" I applied for it, and because I spoke excellent Italian, I was selected for the Rome job. So they sent me over there; they paid to put me up in a pensione. They gave me a local salary. They gave me a salary back in New York, and they taught me a bit about the oil business. Mainly they had me work in a gas station where I would pump gas for these amazed Italians who would say, "You are German aren't you. You are not Italian." I would say "I am American." They would say, "What's an American doing here?

That's ridiculous." So that was terrific, and because I took the program seriously in the sense I wrote all the reports and all that sort of thing, Mobil...

*Q: Was it Mobil rather than Socony?*

RUSSELL: Socony Mobil Oil was the name of the company then. It later changed to Mobil Oil. Now I guess it is just Exxon Mobil. Then it was Socony Mobil with the big red Pegasus. Anyway, they offered me a job when I graduated. I was torn then between Foreign Service of some kind either for State or a U.S. company doing business overseas.

*Q: Had you heard or had you been aware of the diplomatic corps, the Foreign Service and all as a school kid?*

RUSSELL: Not particularly, no. I am trying to think in Rome did we know any Foreign Service people. I got to meet some of the sons of people at the Embassy when I was working there with Socony Mobil. I was aware that Foreign Service was a possible career as I became more interested as a history major trying to think what I wanted to do next. I thought I wanted to do something in the area of international affairs, either business or something like Foreign Service. Had Socony Mobil not offered me a job, I might have made up my mind earlier to apply for the Foreign Service, but I wanted to try that out. So I went with Socony Mobil to Garden City, Long Island, where again we worked in a kind of a model gas station. We pumped gas and we sold tires and checked people's batteries. There was battery week where you tried to push batteries and tire week where you tried to push tires and that sort of thing. We serviced the cars. I put one poor lady's wheel bearings in backwards by mistake. I wasn't there when she came back complaining of a strange noise in her wheels. People in the area had the idea that this was the premier place to bring their cars. Had they realized, it was the last place you wanted to bring your car for service, because they had junior executives like me in training from Latin America and all over the place. For example, the station had two kinds of car jacks, one with a single lever and one with independent levers for front and back. One of our trainees only pulled one of them thinking he was raising the whole car; but he was only raising the front. He literally tipped it over. Anyway, I worked for Socony Mobil for about nine months as an international marketing trainee. Despite my gas station misadventures, the training in New York and marketing courses were excellent and I thought it was a fine company.

*Q: By the way, you were at Yale from when to when?*

RUSSELL: '54-'58. I graduated in '58. Upon graduation with a couple of college pals, I went over to Europe just bumming around not spending more than a dollar a night for accommodations. We spent ten dollars a day including accommodations, food, and transportation getting around Europe. We traveled around for about a month. Then I came back and went to work for Socony Mobil. They said, "Okay, you have two choices. We are either going to assign you to Latin America or to Africa to sell oil." The more I saw of

the oil business the more I thought it is really interesting but it is not what I want to do. I don't want to spend my time selling oil in either of those places or selling oil period. So I looked at the situation, and this was 1959. You had the draft, and I was deciding I didn't want to stay in the oil business. So I thought if I want to go into the Foreign Service I want to go to grad school and really prepare myself. In order to do that though, I want to satisfy my military obligation, and the best way to do that in 1959, which I would point out, was before Vietnam, was to join the Maine National Guard, which I did. I joined the Maine National Guard and did six months active duty. While I was in basic training, I applied to Fletcher and was accepted by them. I finished my training in time for graduate school in the fall, so it worked out very neatly. I entered Fletcher on a full scholarship. I got the masters degree and then I got the MALD and I was going for the Ph.D. I was doing my thesis on the Italian Communist Party. I met and married a Fletcher student my first year there. We are still happily married. So, then, in order to finish my thesis, I got help from my thesis professor, Marshall Schulman a Professor of Soviet studies at Harvard. He had bid against the Feltrinelli Institute in Milan for the archives of one of the three leaders of the Comintern in the late 1920s. My thesis topic was on relations between the Comintern and the Italian Communist Party in the '20s and early '30s. There was this left wing Italian businessman, Feltrinelli, who was the son of an enormously wealthy timber and publishing magnate. He had outbid Harvard for this archive. Schulman knew exactly where the archive was. So he wrote the director of the Feltrinelli Library in Milan and said, "I have a student who would like to use the Tasca archive. Would that be okay?" He did not say "by the way my student has just passed the U.S. Foreign Service exam" or they never would have let me in the door. So I got a Fulbright scholarship and went over there. I studied in Milan and worked on this absolutely fascinating archive. These were the letters of Angelo Tasca, one of the leaders of the Comintern who was purged in 1929 in Stalin's famous "turn to the left" against the "Bukharinites" after having first "turned to the right" and purged the "Trotskyites." I had a chance to work on that archive. I was just about finished with my research and was about to start writing when I got this letter from the Foreign Service Board of Examiners saying "your time is up. You passed the written; you passed the oral, come in now or forget it. If not, we will just put you at the back of the list and you can start over again." I said, "But I only need six months to finish the thesis." They said, "We don't care." In fact I called one of them and he said, "Actually you know, the track record of people with Ph.D.s in the Foreign Service is worse than for people without Ph.D.s."

*Q: You can understand why. I mean, you get into the research rather than the public affairs.*

RUSSELL: It was a bit bloody-minded of them, and they have changed that policy. However, I understood what they were saying. Having been in the Foreign Service, I know it is true that being a scholar is not what it is about. Nonetheless, it was rather unhelpful and bureaucratic of them given the amount of work I had put into it.

*Q: Oh, yes, particularly considering the subject and all that.*

RUSSELL: Considering the subject and all that, but I didn't want to be quixotic. The point of going to Fletcher was to go into the Foreign Service. So I threw it all over. I came into the Foreign Service in May of 1963.

*Q: I'd like to go back a bit. You took your oral when for the Foreign Service?*

RUSSELL: Well I am trying to think. I took the written in the spring of my first year at Fletcher, so it was the spring of 1960. I got my MA in '60. That is when I think I took the written. It may be even that fall I took the oral exam, I am not sure. I was lucky on the oral because the rumor was that the oral board that was circulating in the Boston areas was flunking everybody. So we were all scared as hell. Then the rumor mill said this board actually had left or had been recalled and there was a new board that was in the area. I don't know whether that's true. Certainly the scuttlebutt was that everybody was being failed. Anyway, a different board came up, and in a few weeks I had my oral scheduled and it went very well.

*Q: Do you recall some of the questions and interests of the board when you did it?*

RUSSELL: Yes. It was very academic.

*Q: Could you tell me about it?*

RUSSELL: Yes, it was a totally different thing from what I understand it is now. Everything I have heard suggests it is more realistic now. But they were asking me about the U.S., about U.S. history, U.S. geography. They were asking me questions, kind of odd questions, if I were overseas and wanted to get in tight with a foreign labor union, how would I go about this. I thought it was the wrong agency interviewing me, but basically how would I develop closer relations with a foreign labor union, that kind of thing. Then they started asking me about history. They said, "Oh, we understand you are a history major." So this one guy on the board said, "What do you think was the significance of the Congress of Vienna and the Treaty of Paris ending the Napoleonic wars?" One area of my Ph.D. orals at Fletcher was European diplomatic history. He didn't know half as much about it as I did. So he was asking me some questions about just what I had been studying. He asked me some geography questions; I think I had Georgia on the Gulf Coast at one point. I didn't do uniformly well, but I really did pretty well. I enjoyed it. I felt I had an immediate rapport with these people because they seemed to like the idea that I really wanted to go into the Foreign Service and had gone to the trouble of going to graduate school to prepare for it, so they seemed sympathetic from the start. I did not feel any hostility or that they were trying to set me up despite all the rumors circulating about giving candidates a cigarette with no ash tray around and similar nonsense. They seemed like very decent, smart people who were trying to be fair and not to trying to trap you. They seemed to appreciate my interest in coming into the service, but some of the questions played to my strengths in ways even more than I had expected. I was called in after the interview and, they said I had done well.

*Q: What is the background of your wife?*

RUSSELL: My wife, okay, two sore points with State at that point. One, the Ph.D. issue. The other thing is that my wife had the same interests and credentials that I did. She got her masters degree, is smarter than I am, and planned to go into Foreign Service of some kind.

*Q: Most of us do that.*

RUSSELL: She got very good marks at Fletcher. I think she was more interested in USIA probably than State, but could have done fine at State. They said no. You can't do that. You can't be married and both be in the Foreign Service. It was extremely unfair, and in those days she said, "Okay dear, I will come with you because I love you very much and I want to be part of your life, but you run with the ball and you pass the exam." It was very unfair. Now, looking back on it, I don't think either of us regrets that that is what happened because she did the lion's share of raising two wonderful sons and was a full part of my diplomatic career. I couldn't have possibly done it without her. She did, just as an example, most of the representational cooking at all of our posts, including when I was in Slovakia. I mean she just threw herself into every job, did volunteer work. And then in order to work, I mean she had a Master's degree in international politics, but because she couldn't use that in the Foreign Service, she did volunteer work for libraries. Then she did paid work for USIA libraries. Then when we came back to the States for seven years, she went to Catholic University and got a Master's degree in Library Science. She volunteered at the school where the kids were going, and then was offered the job to run the library. She ran the library at this quite large school for five years before we were assigned overseas again. So she did make another career, but her main career was being my partner and giving the Foreign Service two for the price of one.

*Q: What was her background? I mean family and where did she come from?*

RUSSELL: She came from Albany, New York. I had been to a different school almost every year of my life. She went to the same school for 13 years. I had traveled all over the place; she had lived her whole time in Albany. For those opposite reasons we were drawn to the Foreign Service. Her father was a lawyer in Albany. Her mother was a Wellesley grad who had done social work before she got married. But they had lived in Albany all their married lives. My wife had a younger sister with a heart defect who her parents knew was not going to survive beyond the age of 20, and yet they brought her up the normal way and sent her to college, sent her to Jackson, the then women's affiliate of Tufts. Sure enough she died at age 20. Sad! So that was a real tragedy in her life. She was very interested in foreign affairs. She majored in history at Smith. However, she started pre med, was pre med for two years. We didn't know each other in college. Then she decided she was more interested in liberal arts, majored in history, spent her junior year in Geneva, and then we met at Fletcher in 1959.

*Q: Well you came into the Foreign Service when?*

RUSSELL: I came into the Foreign Service in May of '63.

*Q: Can you describe the basic officer's course, the A-100 course that you were in, the composition of it and your training?*

RUSSELL: Yes, I think it was about six weeks long. There were about 25 or 26 of us. I remember we were told we were an older group on average than most. I was about 23. I think the oldest was 28 or something like that, Ernie Preeg, who later was Ambassador to Haiti and retired a few years back. We were from all over the place. I think there were only three or four women in the class. But there were more people from the eastern half of the nation. There were people from Maine and New York, and there were some Midwesterners. I remember a couple of people from California. A very bright group, we all got along very well together, a lot of camaraderie. The course was taught by two diametrically different personalities, one was an open shirted, outgoing, friendly guy who had served in places like Nigeria, and was a real extrovert. I mean everyone liked him. The other one was a much more straight-laced, reserved kind of guy who had served in Iceland. Both of them were good instructors; both of them were respected. However, I don't remember the course content being very helpful. I remember we spent two days at Commerce that were particularly obnoxious.

*Q: It seems often to have been, I had the same.*

RUSSELL: It was the worst, a total waste of time. I remember even the class went back to, I wouldn't say sophomoric; I would say high school ways and spit balls were exchanged. It was unbelievable; it brought out the worst in everyone. I didn't think the overall A-100 course we took was very useful. It was a smattering of this and that. I do remember I came in second for the booby prize for the worst onward assignment. I actually got the assignment I wanted because I had just been on the Fulbright in Italy and I wanted now to be in Washington. I had known someone who had been in the Executive Secretariat and who said it is a great introduction to the service. So I asked for that as an assignment and I got it because everyone else wanted to go overseas. That is where I learned about the Department and not in the A-100 course.

*Q: Well you were in the Executive Secretariat when?*

RUSSELL: '63-'65.

*Q: Could you explain how the secretariat operated in those days because this is fairly early on? I recall there had been kind of a secretariat before it was really the Cuban Missile Crisis in '62 that had gotten things going. Is that right or is that what you were hearing?*

RUSSELL: I honestly don't remember. I had the impression I was going in to a pretty well formed organization. I went into a rotational assignment to four different places in the

Secretariat.

*Q: Well the Secretariat went back to George Marshall's time. but it got beefed up quite a bit during the missile crisis.*

RUSSELL: I remember the Op Center part getting constantly beefed up and being initially very understaffed and not having any decent equipment. I had four different assignments in S/S, which was great actually. My first assignment was as Staff Assistant to the Special Assistant for International Business to the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs. Quite a mouthful. This was a guy who was brought in by George Ball to help U.S. businesses who had problems overseas, mainly with nationalizations or effective confiscations of property or extreme prejudicial, discriminatory treatment by foreign governments. This guy was also the Executive Secretary of the Randall Commission in which not Ball but Under Secretary Harriman participated. Clarence Randall, then head of U.S. Steel, chaired it. Harriman sat in on most of the meetings. There you had the big shots from American business who would come in and discuss what the policy should be to deal with some of these situations. So I was this guy's staff assistant. He was an extremely bright American businessman who had a number of brick factories, I think mainly in Canada, but a very successful guy, very dynamic and very outgoing. My job was to help him set up in the Department; help mesh him into the Department's workings. His main purpose was to help individual American businesses who were having problems overseas, but not, for example, the major oil companies with problems at that time in Indonesia; they were too big for that. The Randall Commission would meet on that sort of major issue. My boss was involved more in day to day situations like a moderate sized U.S. company in Nigeria that had just been nationalized. His philosophy was “I'm an experienced international businessman working for Under Secretary Ball and I think I can be helpful in dealing with these situations.” As you know, the Department doesn't work quite that way. People don’t typically make the effort to go to another part of the bureaucracy to ask advice unless they are required to do so. That wasn't my boss’ philosophy. He said, “I don't want to force people to come and see me. I am here to help. If they don't want to come and get my advice they don't have to." And I felt the office withered on the vine. I mean the nature of that bureaucracy is to lift your leg on whatever the policy paper or the telegram is to show that you had a piece of the action, but you don't go out of your way to have someone else get in on the action, even if it is going to be helpful. I think he did a lot of good work, but eventually went on to other things after I left. I was only there for six months. I remember feeling the Department isn't really using this guy to the extent that it should. From there I went on to a fascinating job on the so-called S/S line where all the paperwork for the principals came up from the bureaus. For example, an action or briefing memo for the Secretary or an Under Secretary would come through us and we'd have to make sure it conformed to what had been asked for and also that the format was right, that the proper people had cleared. While most Bureaus only had one staffer, the White House and intelligence community desk needed two people, one a junior officer, so I got that for my second six months in the Foreign Service and had a ball. I was getting involved in all these fascinating issues for Secretary Rusk and others.

Then my third job was as the junior editor in the Op Center. It involved one week on the day shift, one week nights, a horrible schedule, but working with a great guy, Gary Matthews for part of the time. He was senior editor. We would have to read all the traffic coming in and then do the Top Secret Summary for the front office and the White House. We were writing stuff that the Secretary would see and the President would likely get, so it should be as up-to-date as possible. But, they assigned us a low level clerk typist to produce this. This was before the computer, and he couldn't type. So we found that we would have to proofread it repeatedly. For example, there would be two page 3s. We sometimes missed that kind of thing. We found we had to put the TS Summary to bed an extra 15 minutes early thereby missing possibly some important development just because the department couldn't give us someone who could type. Nothing really changes. But that was a great job and working with Gary was a particular pleasure. We just had a good time. We had a booby board for the worst cables, when people would send in something either that was particularly pompous or particularly useless. We did an April fool's version of the morning summary once. That was probably a mistake because we did a take off on Rolling Thunder, something about having killed two water buffalo in a big raid. We got a note back from the Secretary saying this is "not a subject for levity." Then the final interesting job I had in S/S was as Staff Assistant to the Executive Secretary and his two Deputies.

*Q: Who was that?*

RUSSELL: Ben Reed, who was very effective. I have forgotten now the names of his two Deputies. They had it divided. The Executive Secretary and then you had the "thinker" and the "doer", the guy doing short-term stuff and the guy doing long-term planning. I worked for both of them as I remember, just making sure that things were in order and things weren't lost, following up and calling people, that sort of thing. So that was a terrific introduction to the Department. I remember that was during the Congo crisis, the so-called "Dragon" operations.

*Q: Dragon rouge. This was Michael Hoyt who was caught in Stanleyville.*

RUSSELL: Harriman was running that, exactly. I remember our FSO, Michael Hoyt, and then that missionary called Carlson, who was killed. I remember hearing Averill Harriman, who was of course quite deaf, on the phone talking about the Dragon operation. It was so loud I could hear the conversation all the way down the corridor.

*Q: Well now during this time, a couple of things, you were when Kennedy was assassinated. How did that hit the Department from your perspective? You were brand new on the scene.*

RUSSELL: Yes, I remember the immediate sense of shock and sadness rolled into one. That was during the first part of my tour there, my first six months assignment. I mean people couldn't believe it, the horror of the thing.

*Q: How about Vietnam? I mean obviously this was cranking up. Later it got worse, but I mean what were you seeing and all about Vietnam during this period?*

RUSSELL: One thing that kind of amazed me because of course it was drilled into us how sensitive some of this stuff was that we were seeing, was that the information in reports that came in Confidential or Secret would often be in the New York Times the next day. Reports that came in Limited Distribution would take a couple of days. Material that was Exclusive Distribution would take a week. But basically almost everything was coming out in the newspapers. Not just Vietnam but in that particular era we were thinking 'this is so sensitive', but then sure as hell it would be in the papers. I could only conclude that very senior people were talking to the press. I remember I was in favor of the policy in those early years. Later I came to feel that we should have fished or cut bait and made the decisions much earlier. But in those couple of years, although some people were getting concerned about it, I basically felt that it was something we had to do. On the other hand the results of what we were doing didn't seem to be all that great. Like the Rolling Thunder missions. The results seemed very limited in many cases from what I could see. Certainly everything was handled with great caution. Vietnam was a political hot potato even then. I remember one incident where our Ambassador in Laos, who was a protégé of Harriman, sent in a report about an apparent military snafu. He sent in a cable that said 'Tecumseh weeps'. The military went ballistic that an American Ambassador should appear to take the name of that celebrated Shawnee warrior and U.S. Naval Academy totem in vain. I remember Harriman sending out a personal message to our Ambassador saying he was out of line. I remember that as being an internal cause célèbre.

*Q: Well, did you feel that Johnson who was renowned for wading around all over the place, did he ever intrude on your work at all or not, trying to get something up to date?*

RUSSELL: I remember Kennedy would call the State Department desk officers. But as far as Johnson was concerned, I don't recall him doing that. I remember Dean Rusk as being a forceful leader. I heard that George Ball was weighing in on some of the Vietnam discussions; maybe in a devil's advocate way. I didn't have any strong impressions about Vietnam at that time except that was what everyone was worrying about. I did have the impression that we are not good at handling more than one major crisis at a time. Everyone was doing Vietnam, and that was it.

*Q: Well, as '65 rolled around you were ready to go overseas probably. You'd had a chance to take a look at the system. Did you figure you what you wanted to specialize in, area?*

RUSSELL: Yes. I knew that when I came in. I guess I was very much a product of the Cold War, and having studied the Italian Communist Party, having taken a lot of courses in Central Europe and Soviet diplomacy, diplomatic history, that sort of thing, I was very interested in the whole issue of communism in Europe, Soviet relations with their satellites, the role of East European countries, the international Communist movement, all these things that were actually very real. Now it is fashionable to forget them. But it was a

focus of my academic interest and then my professional interest, so I asked specifically to go to either Yugoslavia, which was the most interesting place at that time, or Romania, which was the second hot spot. My third choice was Czechoslovakia, just because it had such an interesting history. They were not normally sending people on the first overseas tour to a Communist country.

*Q: It may have been, but on the other hand I remember about this time I was chief of the consular section in Belgrade, and David Anderson came out on his first tour.*

RUSSELL: At any rate, I had asked for the Executive Secretariat on my first tour. On my second tour I believe they were saying you are not going to get Central Europe or East Europe, so I asked for Italy. They said well since you speak Italian, we can save a buck, so they sent me to Naples as an immigrant visa officer. Now in Naples they issued thousands and thousands of immigrant visas. Southern Italy supplied by far the most immigrant visa applicants, so Consulate General Naples was an immigrant visa mill. I was very fortunate to get assigned to Italy, but I would not have been at all happy spending two years doing immigrant visas because it was very dull and grinding work. While you get a few good stories out of it, it was not something I would have been really happy to do for two years. Interestingly, the Consul General was Homer Byington, sort of a legend, because his grandfather had been Consul in Naples, his father had been Consul General in Naples and he was born in Naples. He went from being Ambassador in Malaya and had requested Naples and actually I think he stayed there for about 11 years.

*Q: It was something like that.*

RUSSELL: It was a long time. His son, Homer Byington III or "Terz" which was his nickname, went in the Foreign Service. Now, he was assigned to a visa mill somewhere, and resigned in disgust and went into banking, and made his father very sad. So the result of that was Homer Byington took pity on some of his junior officers. There were 31 Americans in the Consulate General in Naples in that period, an enormous post. He took pity on some of us and said, "Okay, actually, I think I am going to rotate you around." So after about four or five months he said, "How would you like to be Political Officer, because our assigned Political Officer has left and gone off to Hargeisa in Somalia as Principal Officer?" My colleague actually went off very happily to Hargeisa, but apparently came to dislike it. His wife hated it and he resigned from the service. So the CG was without a Political Officer, and one wasn't due out for six months or so, so he offered me the job. Then he said, "Why don't we rotate you over to USIS as Deputy Branch PAO." The PAO had an awful lot of work and needed some help. That was terrific; I loved it. Finally, the CG put me in charge of the Social Security and Veterans' Benefits program. We had 20,000 pensioners in southern Italy. My wife and I went to every hamlet and village in southern Italy, and I did political reporting on the side, which was perfect and turned out to be a great assignment. It beat doing immigration visas for two years.

*Q: You were there '65-'67.*

RUSSELL: That's right.

*Q: Homer Byington, of course is one of the great characters, you know. Some years later I was Consul General in Naples.*

RUSSELL: Oh, really!

*Q: Yes, so Homer Byington was a big figure. How would you, I mean did you get a feel for his contacts. He was born in Naples actually. His contact to the Neapolitan structure there and how he seemed to operate.*

RUSSELL: He was a real old school Foreign Service officer in that he was the senior officer and his spouse was the "senior wife". Those were the days of the senior wife. Everyone in the Consulate worked for the senior officer and the senior wife. We had one child and one on the way, and then two little kids, and we would get a call and it would be "Sally, Countess so and so has dropped out of my dinner party, could you come in two hours in evening dress for that and Ted could you come at eleven for drinks". We felt it was a hassle, but we didn't feel that it was outrageous. We liked the Byingtons. They were fascinating people. Certainly the CG, or "Chief" as he liked to be called, had been nice to us. But he did have this very paternalistic way of running things. For example my wife was informed at a certain point, although she had two little kids to take care of, that she was going to represent the Consulate in an international cooking competition that the press club was putting on. She put in many hours of preparation and her team won second prize. But it was that kind of a thing. On the other hand he was very generous on inviting staff. He had a series of boats if you remember. There was the Zio Sam (Uncle Sam) I and II. He would upgrade every few years. It was Zio Sam III by the time we got there. Every so often we would get invited out on his boat and anchor off Capri and have "timbalo" of macaroni and lots of red wine. I nearly drowned once when, after a heavy lunch, Mrs. Byington called, "time to get in the water" and I obediently rolled over the side. They were just a very old fashioned couple. But, while they could be quite demanding, they were not unpleasant. In terms of, getting back to your question, he had I thought, very heavily focused relations with the upper crust of Neapolitan society. The counts and countesses and those folks. On the other hand he got around a lot. He was interested in what went on politically. However, I think that the Department of State and Embassy Rome were not sitting around on pins and needles waiting to have the latest political report from Naples. So, it didn't really make a great deal of difference with whom he was talking as long as the Consulate General ran smoothly. He also had relations with the NATO and U.S. military base commanders. He had prickly relations with some of the military. I remember there was a big flap over where he would park in the commissary lot because as a Career Minister he was three star equivalent rank. He felt that should be reflected in his parking place.

*Q: Well, I was just getting this yesterday in an interview I was doing with somebody who was political advisor during the '70s. I was saying...*

RUSSELL: Not Dufour?

*Q: No, he came later. This was Jack Starvard who was saying that his task he was given the job of trying to extricate the admiral from too close relations to the sort of moldy powerless group of elderly aristocrats who seemed to dominate the parties and all of that. How to get him out of sort of the social circle because they, and also that they tended to be pretty rightist, I mean MSI or something like that.*

RUSSELL: Achille Lauro or someone like that if you remember was in power.

*Q: Oh, yes, he was the Mayor and his family. MSI (Italian Social Movement). How did you find the political situation in Naples at the time when you were dealing?*

RUSSELL: Well as I said there was limited interest in it. It was totally unpredictable, but then Italian politics tends to be. Our interest then, this was during Vietnam, was in trying to offset negative publicity from the left wing parties. I remember USIS would work very closely with local journalists. I remember talking to the Mayor and other leaders in the area about the negative statements that were being made and statements that they could make. I remember that the local political situation was pretty chaotic, very much based on personal concerns. I think there was a Christian Democrat Mayor when I was Political Officer. I remember dealing with a Mayor who was not MSI. I remember if you talked to a dozen people about what was going to happen, and they said "we have worked out the following deals" to save the government which otherwise would fall, and you reported that, sure as hell some odd ball thing would happen to throw the whole thing into a cocked hat. I remember once I did literally interview a dozen people on the state of the coalition in Naples. I was told that a deal had been struck; everything was copasetic. Then someone didn't get his award of Cavaliere del Lavoro from the President of the Republic, which was promised him as part of the deal, so he pulled out. As a result the whole thing collapsed. So that's my impression of Neapolitan politics. I remember talking with the Mayor at one point in the grand room of the castle. He described how an early ruler of Naples, tired of all of this nonsense had invited the local barons in for a conciliatory banquet, and then before dessert he withdrew, the archers appeared around the hall and slaughtered the recalcitrant nobility. I thought it was an interesting if outdated approach.

*Q: Well, did you also get the feeling, I was not an Italian hand when I went there, and I watched with a certain amount of wonderment at the fascination in Rome about the minutiae of the political process there of who would do what to whom. It seemed like almost a pointless minuet. Christian Democrats had been there forever, and they would do a little flirtation here or there, but nothing changed. Did you look...?*

RUSSELL: Exactly. No, nothing changed. I didn't find much interest in what was going on either on the part of the Embassy or the Department or indeed visitors. We had a stream of Congressional delegations there. It was such a nice place to come. I remember as a new Political Officer, the first time we had a delegation, I really prepared hard. I had

a fine briefing ready about Neapolitan politics and economics and the situation in southern Italy. The question from the head of the delegation was "how do we get to the cameo factory? Where can we eat lunch?" They didn't want a briefing at all. I did not find that anyone was very much interested in the political situation in Naples, although we were supposed to know what was going on. The main thing, and this was important, was that we were supposed to keep good relationships with the local movers and shakers, present our side of what the U.S. was doing, particularly in Vietnam, and generally convince people in southern Italy that the U.S. was a friendly power which wanted good relations with Italy.

*Q: You had spent all this time at grad school on the Italian Communist Party, the PCI. What was your impression of it in southern Italy at that time?*

RUSSELL: Well in southern Italy it was pretty weak. I mean as you mention, the MSI was very strong in southern Italy and in Sicily. If it wasn't the MSI, it was the Christian Democrats who had it pretty well sewn up through patronage deals and that sort of thing. Where the Italian Communist Party was strong was in those places where poor southerners without good jobs had emigrated to the north, and the Italian Communist Party would have people at the railroad station to meet them and help them find an apartment and do what the Communist Party did very well, try and create an entire cultural bubble around these people so you could live and die within its orbit. You would have friendship, you would have mutual support, and you would have a world view. You would have everything you needed and that was why they were so successful. A founder of the Italian Communist Party, Antonio Gramsci, who died in a Mussolini prison, really had that figured out pretty well. Had he survived, Stalin would have eliminated him in all likelihood as a right winger and Bukharinite. Palmiro Togliatti, Gramsci's disciple, was a more flexible operator. He came around under pressure to do as he was told by Stalin and later even tried to justify the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary which had alienated many European Communist intellectuals. He was very smart, but he was willing to compromise his basic beliefs in order to survive in the Stalinized international Communist movement. Gramsci was more of a philosopher. The Italian Communist Party was very successful particularly in Central Italy, the former Papal States, where there was an anti-religious sentiment to some extent, and in the north, Turin and Milan, where the southerners were welcomed in. In the south the PCI was weak and threatened. They didn't do very well in the south in those years.

*Q: How did you find the relations with our embassy in Rome? Did you observe much there?*

RUSSELL: As a very junior officer I wasn't privy to any problems that Homer Byington may or may not have been having with Rome. I didn't see there was much of a relationship. I am trying to think who the Ambassador was. Was it Frederick Reinhart?

*Q: Could have been.*

RUSSELL: I don't remember many visits from Rome. I remember endless Congressional delegations, but not many visitors coming down from Rome, not too much interaction.

*Q: How about the economy, did you get any feel for the economy in southern Italy?*

RUSSELL: Yes, the economy in southern Italy was extremely poor except in the Bari, Brindisi and Lecce area of our consular district. Lecce with its olive oil and some industry and Bari with a prosperous port were centers of decent prosperity in southern Italy. It was the Catanzaros and Cosenzas that were very poor. Reggio Calabria was more prosperous, but Catanzaro was just...

*Q: Sort of like West Virginia.*

RUSSELL: I guess so – probably a good deal poorer. Cosenza at least had the beautiful Sila Grande range and tourist areas, but Catanzaro city was the pits in those days. In the most backward areas you had either the Christian Democrats or the MSI who were the strongest. The economy was not good. In Naples, of course there were a lot of very rich people, from shipping in particular, but there was a lot of grinding poverty as well. The city administration was extremely corrupt. There was an enormous amount of abusive building, streets collapsing when it rained because people would overbuild, plus the fact that Naples is built on a series of Roman caves.

*Q: And filled in land too. Was that big factory Alfa Romeo Sud set up yet?*

RUSSELL: I remember hearing about it. Whether they were just talking about it or had started to build it, I don't remember.

*Q: Well then you left Naples in '67.*

RUSSELL: '67, that's right.

*Q: Whither?*

RUSSELL: Okay, that was interesting. Bill Lehfeldt, who was the Deputy Principal Officer in Naples most of the time I was there, had been in Personnel thank goodness. It was about a month or so before I was due to transfer. I had applied to go to Yugoslavia, Romania, or Czechoslovakia as my preferences, with appropriate language training preceding those assignments. So when I didn't get any orders at all, I went to Bill and asked for his help. So he called someone in Personnel, and it turned out they had literally lost my file. They finally found it and gave me my third choice, which actually turned out to be very good, and sent me to Czech training. My wife couldn't take it because we had two little kids at that point and the Department provided no child care opportunities. After a year of language training, we arrived in Prague in June of '68.

*Q: Well '67-'68 you were taking language training, Czech. My experience taking Serbian*

*was boy did I learn about how Serbs think because the two teachers were Serb teachers. This was back some time but I think they are still doing it. Did you pick up in the language training much about the Czech way of thinking an all? I mean just not the language but get a feel from the teachers.*

RUSSELL: Yes, and also of course we had area studies, which were well conducted. I have forgotten the names of the people associated with that, but FSI did a good job on area studies. However, the area studies course was probably not as demanding as it should have been. However, the Czech language instructor was a real drill sergeant. In fact the rumor was that he had been a border guard. I mean he was really tough, and was an excellent teacher. I am not a natural linguist. My MLAT language aptitude score was 61 or something like that. So it has to be drilled into me and I have to practice. It has to be semi automatic, because if I stop to think what is rule #3.8 about that case ending, I just won't do well. So this guy drilled us and drilled us. When I came out of there I got a 3, 3+. I spoke pretty good Czech when I went over there, except for practical stuff. My wife still ribs me. We arrived and were put in a hotel. I didn't know half the things on the menu. We hadn't studied menus much; we studied more political and economic language as well as the vocabulary for car repair. So I took Czech for a year and area studies. But FSI in those days, I don't know what they do now, they made no accommodation whatsoever for a spouse to be able to take courses with the FSO. That was a huge disadvantage and something that made the assignment less pleasurable for my wife because she had no time to learn Czech at all.

*Q: I know when I took Serbian, this was in '61-'62, some of our wives, Muriel Eagleburger, Ellen Anderson, and I think Dora Lowenstein and my wife all hired a former Ambassador from the old Serb kingdom of Yugoslavia on 16th street. They went over there and they took it because FSI wouldn't do it.*

RUSSELL: I don’t believe they even offered the spouse the training on a space available system.

*Q: There was one wife; I think Pat Johnston was taking Serbian, Dick Johnston's wife. Well you were in Czechoslovakia from '6...*

RUSSELL: '68-'71.

*Q: What was your job when you went there?*

RUSSELL: Okay, again, just like in Naples, I was still a junior officer, so I was put on a rotational assignment, which was perfect. The first year I was head of the visa section. The second year I was head of the consular section. The third year I was Political Officer. That was the track.

*Q: Who was Ambassador when you arrived?*

RUSSELL: Jake Beam, a splendid, brilliant gentleman. A guy we all liked and admired enormously. In fact, I was in Prague during the revolution later in 1989, and I sent him a message, I guess through the desk, saying a liberty bell now stands on the hill where the statue of Stalin used to stand. They had erected something that looked like a liberty bell. He sent me something shortly before he died. He was a super guy. Then Malcolm Toon came in 1969.

*Q: Two real professionals.*

RUSSELL: Two fabulous professionals, absolutely fabulous.

*Q: Well when you arrived in '68 what was the political situation? When did you arrive in '68? This is rather important.*

RUSSELL: Yes, I arrived in June; that was during the Prague Spring. There was a feeling of great euphoria. It was a situation where in an extremely cynical country, I mean the Czechs are a bit cynical anyway, but under communism they were totally cynical and with reason, there were slogans like "he who doesn't steal from the state steals from his family" and "we pretend to work, and they pretend to pay us", so that in this society, women were actually donating their jewelry to the state because they were so euphoric about what Dubcek and the reformers were trying to do. People were smiling. Charles Bridge had, not exactly happy throngs, but people who normally looked sullen, and later came to look sullen again, were smiling. Of course, Tito was a big hero because he was so independent and supported Dubcek. Ceausescu was also a hero because he was also rather independent vis-à-vis the Soviets. People really thought this was going to work. Both visited Prague in early August. It was a very exciting political climate that we came into.

*Q: Well, when you arrived, the Embassy was relatively small. Even though you were a visa officer you were part of the Embassy staff. What was the feeling at that time, June '68 or so, of the lasting ability of this Dubcek regime and the Soviet menace at that time?*

RUSSELL: As visa officer, a junior officer, I was not privy to small group discussions the Ambassador had with the military attaché or station chief or senior Political Officer as to what was going on. But in the larger staff meetings the impression I got was that it was considered that the chances the Soviets were going to intervene were increasing and were fairly high, certainly better than even. Certainly by July, that was the feeling. Then after a tense four day meeting of Dubcek and Brezhnev, accompanied by many members of the Soviet and Czechoslovak party leadership, at Cierna-nad-Tiso on the border of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the Soviet Union, at the end of July, Brezhnev appeared to have been mollified by Dubcek's reassurances. A Warsaw Pact summit meeting in Bratislava a few days later appeared to confirm that tensions had eased. Actually by then or soon thereafter Brezhnev, with urging from Ulbricht and Gomulka, had probably made the decision to intervene. But after that meeting, the estimate was things have cooled down a little bit, and there isn't quite as great a chance of an invasion. However, the

military attaches continued saying “you don't have half a million soldiers and mechanized units massed on the borders of a state applying all this military pressure unless you are very likely to use it. You just don't keep it ready to pounce for very long before acting.”

*Q: It is expensive.*

RUSSELL: It is expensive, and you don't do it. So the military people I think, certainly felt the chances of an invasion were better than even. Then, as I say, people became a little more optimistic after Cierna-nad-Tiso. There was always the feeling an invasion remained a real possibility. But the timing I think was a real surprise.

*Q: Were you feeling any, being a visa officer, were you getting any feeling about people trying to get out or returning or what have you during this pre invasion time?*

RUSSELL: Yes, the people were much more able to get travel permission during the Prague Spring period, so we had a rise in people trying to go to the States to visit relatives for example. Frankly I bent over backwards to give people visas, so you did have more people going out. What was more interesting and sad was that after the invasion a number of people who had gotten out came back thinking they could leave again. Some of them couldn't. But yes, there was an increase in people leaving the country particularly to visit relatives. We did everything possible to facilitate that.

*Q: What about relations with ordinary Czechs during this early period. Obviously you were there just a short time, but did you find that they were fairly easy?*

RUSSELL: It was clear that the secret police were as active as ever and maybe more so. I think Dubcek did not do anything to suggest to the Soviets that he was going to change alliances or something like that. On the other hand, contacts improved with ordinary Czechs or Czechs at a higher level who before wouldn't accept invitations. At our Fourth of July celebration, for example, we had a huge turnout, so it was clearly easier to have contacts with Czechs during the Prague Spring than before. But the secret police were as active as ever in terms of surveillance and harassment.

*Q: Did you get any feel, we will touch on it. As you went out in this first time, did you get any feel for the Czechs versus the Slovaks and that or were you pretty much in a Czech bastion.*

RUSSELL: It was a Czech bastion but what we saw was that a lot of the reforms under a Slovak, Dubcek, had to do not only with liberalization, censorship rules, and of course the economic liberalization that set a lot of this off, but also with giving more autonomy to Slovakia. In fact that was the only thing that survived for awhile after the invasion. All the other reforms were rolled back. The greater degree of autonomy for Slovakia was an integral part of this whole thing and was what made the Slovaks enthusiastic about the Prague Spring. They were getting a bit more autonomy and that survived the initial crackdown after Dubcek was ousted.

*Q: Let's talk about what was it, August, and just before. What was the atmosphere like?*

RUSSELL: August. The atmosphere, as I say, was threatening from the time we arrived. There was a feeling that the Soviets might come in. Their pronouncements were watched very closely. What the Czechoslovak government was doing was watched very closely. My impression from just reading the local press and some of the cable traffic was that Dubcek, because he did not have a majority in the central committee, was using the media to try and offset that to gain influence with the people. When you started seeing stories about the Katyn Forest massacre in the Czechoslovak media...

*Q: You are talking about the massacre of Polish officers by the...*

RUSSELL: By the Soviets, by the KGB. That made me think the Soviets are not going to like this at all. So, I think that the Soviets must have been getting very upset by the extent to which the Czechoslovak media was getting out of control. I think they thought it was becoming clear that Dubcek didn't have a firm grip. Maybe he didn't even want to have a firm hand in this area, because as I say, the conservatives outnumbered him in the central committee. So it was a feeling of menace. I remember we had close relations both with the Yugoslav and Romanian embassies. There was a certain amount of information sharing and that sort of thing. When Tito came to town in August he was treated like a hero by the Czechs and I'm sure this bugged the Soviets.

*Q: Had a plan been evolved about well if the Russians and others invade, we will do this at the Embassy or something like this? Was that considered a problem, or were you just going to sit tight?*

RUSSELL: Well it was considered a problem how we were going to deal with that in terms of getting Americans out of the country, dealing with the safety of American citizens. We did have very definite plans that had been made as to how we were going to react. We reacted very quickly after the invasion to get American citizens out. My own situation was a little bit difficult at that point because our older son Douglas had gotten a very severe stomach upset about the 14th of August. It was getting worse and worse. We took him a couple of times to children's hospital, and they said give him plenty of soup and liquids. He was getting worse and worse, so on the 20th of August we took him back to the children's hospital. They said, "He has acute appendicitis; we have to operate immediately or it is going to burst." So I called the Embassy, we were still pretty new in town. They said, "Don't even think of it. We'll get him a medevac to the Nuremberg U.S. military hospital." Well the Czechs wouldn't let the helicopter come in. I asked the Czech head surgeon, who was flabbergasted that we were not going to let a pediatric surgeon of the children's hospital do something that he considered urgent, "how many hours do we have?" He said, "You don't have more than three hours." So they sent a medevac helicopter to the border, and we drove like hell out there, and then Sally and Douglas were picked up, thrown on the helicopter, and I drove on after them. That evening we had dinner with the U.S. military surgeon. It is damn lucky we didn't let them do anything in

Prague. He didn't have appendicitis; he had gastroenteritis. He was totally dehydrated. They didn't operate on him, but they pumped a lot of liquid into him. So we had dinner with the American surgeon. He said, "Well, how are things in Prague?" I said, "Things have cooled down a little bit." So the next morning we saw him at breakfast. He said, "Boy you guys are really on top of things. They invaded last night." So then I went back to Prague. We had a convoy going back because all of our supplies came from Nuremberg and there were always some U.S. and Czech employees out there on business. About five cars drove back to Czechoslovakia the next day. My wife and son were left in Nurnberg.

*Q: Well I think this is a good place to stop. I put at the end where we are so when we pick it up. We are going to pick this up the next time, you were returning to Prague the day of the invasion from Nuremberg. So we'll pick it up there.*

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*Today is 13 March 2000. Ted, so let's pick up the tale of the invasion. You were in Nuremberg bringing your son. It was not appendicitis or whatever it was but it was...*

RUSSELL: Yes. He had acute gastroenteritis, which I guess you can confuse with appendicitis, but you don't certainly treat it the same way. You have to rehydrate as soon as possible, so they put an IV into him. I learned about the invasion at breakfast from the surgeon. I had been with him the night before and said it wasn't really clear what was going to happen, but if anything the chances of a Soviet invasion had been reduced after the Dubcek-Brezhnev meeting. Anyway, that day I called the Embassy and they said, "There are several people from the Embassy out in Nuremberg. Why don't you all gather and come back in convoy tomorrow," the day after the invasion. So we formed a five car convoy. I was asked to give a ride to one of the Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs), our chief administrative FSN. So we headed back from Nuremberg; it was about a five-hour drive. We headed out soon after noon and came to the border, got through the border okay. I don't remember seeing any Soviet troops yet at the border. They arrived or showed themselves a bit later. So we started to drive back to Prague. One of the things you noticed was a lot of the street signs were down. In fact the Czechs had taken down street and road signs across the country, particularly in Prague, as a sign of protest against the invasion and to confuse the Soviets, which I suppose it did very briefly. I remember vividly, we came to a village square about half an hour across the border. A column of Soviet, or Warsaw Pact tanks with a broad white stripe painted down the front, which was the only identifying mark they carried in the invasion, came into the square. So our little column waited for them to enter the square and go off on the road to Prague. We fell in behind them. I was the last of the five cars in our little group. What we didn't realize was there was another half of the tank column to come. I ended up with this enormous great thing rumbling behind my bumper, hoping they knew what my diplomatic CD plates meant but knowing that they probably didn't, and they probably didn't give a damn. Anyway, we came back to Prague, and we came back just before dusk. When we arrived the Embassy said we are glad you got here when you did because there is a curfew put on

by the Soviets, so it is nice that you have arrived before dark.

So, at that point, I was the visa officer. I was head of the visa section. I was asked to help, as all of us were, in the evacuation of American citizens from Czechoslovakia. What that involved was getting people out in convoys, leading convoys of tourists who had cars out to the border, principally with West Germany, and then also getting people out by train. I don't think planes were flying west at that point. So I ended up down at the central railway station, and I had a little table. I was registering Americans. We had helped pay for a train that was going to Vienna. I was registering Americans as they came to the station and was telling them which train it was and getting their names. We were sending these names back by cable to Washington of all the Americans we knew the whereabouts of and in particular the fact that they had left, because we were getting flooded with calls from Americans worried about their relatives. I remember we registered a lot of Americans and got them on the train. The train was about to leave and there was a great commotion, and a group of guys all of whom looked like Che Guevara came dashing down the platform. They were Latin American students studying in Prague how to overthrow their respective governments, trying to get the hell out of there because they were concerned. I thought that was pretty amusing. They got on the same train to Vienna.

Our younger son, Richard, who was then about two and a half, had been left behind with friends at the Embassy when we evacuated our older boy, who was about four, with suspected appendicitis. So the question was what we do with the families with young children. Ambassador Beam took the position and the Department agreed that families with young children could evacuate, could be gotten out, husbands in this case staying behind. The spouses with small kids evacuated at their own expense from Prague. Because I had one young son there and one in Nuremberg, I was designated to drive out another embassy family that had two little kids with whom Richard had been staying. That mother and her two little kids and our youngest son and I in an embassy station wagon with three big diplomatic pouches went out to Nuremberg several days after that. We got to the border, and there were two very tall Soviet border guards near the checkpoint. I presented my passport to the Czech authorities and they stamped it and said, "Okay, and you can't come back." I said, "What do you mean I can't come back? I am stationed here. I have a diplomatic passport." They said, "No, you can't come back." I thought, Oh, great, I am being PNGed. So I got across and stopped at Weidhaus, a German town right across the border and called back to the Embassy. I said, "They just the stamped my passport at the border and said I can't come back." So the Embassy said, "Well, we'll lodge a protest and try and straighten it out." So then I drove on to Nuremberg and the family was reunited, and my wife started making plans to go back to the United States. The embassy then called back and said, "Well, you haven't been PNGed, but they are saying you can't come back at that border crossing at least. So the Foreign Ministry doesn't know exactly what is going on. They clearly have told you not to come back, but they informally suggest and we suggest that you try a different border crossing." So I left off everyone in Nuremberg and headed back and came in with no problem at another border crossing to the south. I hadn't ever used that border crossing, and all the street signs were torn down. So, I didn't know exactly how I was going to find

my way back to Prague, but then I noticed they hadn't torn down the right of way signs. I figured just as all roads lead to Rome, all roads in Czechoslovakia lead to Prague. I followed the right of way signs. So I got back to the Embassy. The next thing that happened involved a group of correspondents in the Embassy that we were sheltering.

*Q: Foreign correspondents.*

RUSSELL: U.S. correspondents. I think they were all U.S. citizens. They were sleeping on mattresses. Every evening for a number of days after the invasion, there was firing at night. Tracer bullets were going over our upper garden, which was on a line with the Hradcany Hill. We couldn't figure out what was going on. Military guys thought it was probably the Soviets shooting at each other. You know, they probably thought someone was taking pot shots at them at night and were just shooting back. It seemed very unlikely that any Czechs were shooting at them. Anyway, we at the same time were burning documents like crazy. We did not know what the Soviets were going to do. They had done some fairly belligerent things and postured in front of the Embassy main gate with a half track on one occasion. We really didn't know what the hell was going to happen, so we were burning documents to the extent that the flue heated up and caught the roof on fire. We had a fire in the attic and our roof. One of the correspondents found out our roof was on fire and filed something saying "Soviet shellfire sets fire to American embassy." It was really provocative. So that was squelched. Fortunately we had a fabulous staffer who had been a Seabee and a fireman in civilian life. He led the efforts to put out the fire. After that we had a big hole in the roof which we covered by a big tarp. This attic space that had the hole in the roof was over the restricted area. The Marines a fairly short time thereafter detected an intruder in that area. There weren't that many Marines. I have forgotten how many we had altogether, but it was a small contingent, a half dozen or so. So the younger officers like me were drafted into night duty, were issued a flashlight and a .45 and sent up into the attic to patrol. It is a wonder we didn't kill each other. I had fired a pistol at tin cans in the back yard of our home in Maine, but I had never handled a .45 at that point. Anyway we were patrolling around up there. No one from the Czech side was ever put down there again, and eventually the Embassy fixed the hole in the roof. When I went back in 1988, you could still see traces of the fire up in the attic.

*Q: Well one of the things, I mean initially, of getting the families out and all, what was the concern, because you know, we had embassies in Soviet controlled countries before?*

RUSSELL: The concern was that there was considerable violence connected with the invasion. It was generally not a case of violent resistance by the Czechs because President Svoboda as commander-in-chief immediately urged that people should remain calm and that there should be no armed resistance. There was fierce resistance by students and others downtown who tried to seal off the radio station and protect it by overturning vehicles and lining up busses, so there was some fighting in the sense of the Soviets pushing and shooting their way through. A number of people, particularly students, were killed, but it wasn't hundreds being mowed down or anything like that. By the way, it is fascinating that after the Soviets captured the radio station in Prague, clandestine radio

and even TV stations went into action and remained on the air for about two weeks. There was firing for several nights after the invasion. The people really didn't know what the Soviets were going to do. Their troops seemed very nervous. One pregnant lady was shot down at a bus stop apparently because some guy had his finger on the trigger in a half-track and it went over a bump and he let off a burst and killed this poor woman. He apparently hadn't deliberately shot her; it just was a stupid accident. It was a very nervous time, there had been a lot of violence downtown, a lot of fires and firing and that kind of thing and the bridges had been sealed off. The children's hospital was across the river from the Embassy. Had our son been put in the local hospital, he would have been cut off from us in the children's hospital across the river, not speaking a word of the local language, being operated on for something that he didn't have. So the feeling was it was a dangerous situation with little kids, who might need quick medical attention. The expense of evacuation was not covered. In fact, because our son Douglas was sick for quite awhile my wife finally flew back to the States to be with her parents and took the two kids with her.

*Q: Were you aware around Prague of East German, Polish troops and that sort of thing?*

RUSSELL: No, I was mainly aware of what appeared to be Russian or Soviet troops and equipment. What was interesting was that in the first wave, you had more of the Caucasian Russian troops. They were met with great hostility, and young Czechs screaming at them, "What are you doing, shooting your brother Slavs? It is our country." They were being harassed by the citizenry who were understandably very angry. There was one report we heard that they had been told that the Germans had invaded Czechoslovakia. They were told all kinds of cock and bull stories to explain why they were doing what they were doing. Apparently the first wave became demoralized and was withdrawn and replaced in many cases by Asian Soviet troops. You found different features in the troops that you saw around town. I don't remember seeing people that I thought were Poles or Germans.

*Q: I was just wondering...*

RUSSELL: They came in for sure.

*Q: I know, whether the Soviets were trying to make sure that the Poles and East Germans and all were dragged into the center of Prague so that they could, you know, sort of dissipate a bit of the blame or not?*

RUSSELL: They certainly were involved in invading Czechoslovakia, but I don't remember seeing them in the center of Prague. I think the Soviets wanted to handle that themselves.

*Q: What was the Embassy doing during this, both you, I mean I know we were working with Americans, but while you were doing that, were we able to get out and around?*

RUSSELL: Yes, the Ambassador in the first days right after the invasion said only the military attaches and I think a couple of Political Officers will be allowed to wander around downtown. All the other personnel unless you are assigned to go down to the station and do something, you are not to rubberneck around to see what is going on. There was a certain amount of violence still going on. Then, that was lifted pretty quickly, and we could look around as we wished. Those officers that had the responsibility for reporting on political and military developments were the ones that were assigned to get out there and do it. The rest of us were still trying to keep track of Americans and report back what was going on. We initially had a situation where we were not able to communicate with Nuremberg or the States by calling out. I couldn't call my wife's mother for example to say that my wife and our two kids were planning to come home. However, people could call in from the States. Some woman in upstate New York, my wife's family was from Albany, called us to ask about a relative to see whether he had been evacuated or not. At the end of the conversation, I said, "Could you ask my wife's parents to call their daughter in Nurnberg and say that her husband is coming out bringing their younger son." She very kindly called my wife and gave her the news.

*Q: How about as a visa officer and all, were you able to do anything about Czechs who felt in peril?*

RUSSELL: During the Prague Spring we tried to be liberal in letting people go visit the U.S. because it was the first time they were allowed to. We would follow the rules, but certainly we tried to give very expeditious treatment to people in that situation. What happened after the invasion was a fair number of people came back, which turned out to be a mistake, because then some of them were trapped there. We didn't have a lot of cases of people that I remember applying for U.S. visas where we were granting them visas for political reasons. Anyone who needed to escape that urgently was probably getting over the border into Austria or Germany.

*Q: This was not a parallel of 1956 in Hungary then, I mean as far as you know, in that time there was a tremendous flow of people out of Hungary.*

RUSSELL: Right. In talking about who wanted to go to the U.S. as I say, anyone who wanted to get out that urgently would get out over the border and not worry about trying to get a U.S. visa in Prague. Yes, some people were flowing into Austria, and I guess to a lesser extent into Germany, but we didn't see that in the visa section. It wasn't a huge outflow like in Hungary in 1956.

*Q: Yes, and you didn't have the equivalent of a Cardinal Mindszenty. Had you had people...?*

RUSSELL: No we didn't. Occasionally we would have someone come who would say, I want to get asylum and we would have to say "If you come in to our embassy we can't guarantee how you are going to get to the U.S." The policy was, as you know, give asylum if someone is in imminent peril. If the secret police are chasing someone down the

street and he dodges into your gate, then you shelter him. We did have approaches even from a few other nationals, in one case from an East European security service officer, who wanted help in getting out of Czechoslovakia. We had to advise such people to get themselves out of the country and talk with U.S. Embassy reps in Austria or West Germany. We were being heavily watched and were wary of provocations.

*Q: As things were beginning to settle down after, you were there until when/ When did you leave there?*

RUSSELL: My wife came back after about a month in the U.S. after the invasion. We left Prague on transfer in the summer of '71.

*Q: So you were there a good hunk of time. Can you talk about your impressions about how the Czechs adjusted to this?*

RUSSELL: There was a lot of euphoria, of course, during the Prague Spring, which after the invasion gave way to fear that they were going to lose all of the progress that they had made. However, the crackdown was not immediate, so there was some initial hope that some of these reforms would survive. Immediately after the invasion, for example, there was a secret session of reformist members of the Communist Party in a Prague factory where they continued to pass reformist resolutions. So the crackdown did not come immediately, and people were initially hopeful. However, little by little, toward the end of the year, they started to remove reformists from their positions. There were signs that a lot of reforms were going to be rolled back. The press was silenced pretty quickly. Everything pointed to things deteriorating. That's why early in the new year in '69 you had the student, Jan Palach, burn himself to death. He doused himself with gasoline or kerosene in Wenceslas Square and burned himself to death in protest to what was clearly becoming a crackdown and a rollback of the various reforms. Then people started to really understand how bad things were going to get. But the real crackdown didn't come until later. The end of March of '69 you had a Czechoslovak-Soviet hockey match which everyone in the country was watching. It was a highly political development. The Czechoslovak team won 4-3, and people just went nuts, driving all around town beeping their horns and yelling and dancing and generally celebrating. Probably, the secret police took advantage of this and perhaps even prepositioned loose cobblestones next to the Aeroflot offices in Wenceslas Square, and lo and behold, the rocks were thrown through the window of the Aeroflot office, and the office sacked by demonstrators. The Soviets reacted sharply. By mid April a Slovak hard liner, Gustav Husak, had replaced Dubcek as Party Secretary. Then the crackdown started in earnest. So Husak came in, and then they rolled back virtually all of the political reforms with the exception of some of the changes that had given Slovakia a bit more autonomy. That was not initially rolled back but gradually made moot by the fact that it was emptied of content. Prague was continuing to dictate and the dictator was Gustav Husak, a Slovak but a willing ally of the Soviets in the crack down.

*Q: Was there any reason why Slovaks were in that? Was that a deliberate move in the*

*Communist Party to push Slovaks to be the head of the party? I mean Dubcek was Slovak.*

RUSSELL: Dubcek was Slovak and part of the impetus driving the Dubcek-led reform movement was that Antonin Novotny, who was head of the Communist Party and was a Czech, was an anti-Slovak Czech. He was also an extremely unpleasant fellow. The Slovaks hated his guts, so part of what mobilized Slovaks to join this reform movement was the feeling that they had to get rid of Antonin Novotny. Part of what the Slovaks wanted out of this was more autonomy. The Czechs were interested more in the political and economic reforms, building on the ideas of economists like Ota Sik in the early '60s. Husak was brought in because he was the tough guy. The Russians trusted him. He had been locked up in the period of the purges and actually tortured, but he was a dyed in the wool Communist, a real hard line guy. He was brought in and simply conducted what was then a major purge of the Communist Party. While the general populace was very enthusiastic about the Prague Spring reforms, the ones by definition who are able to drive things were party members who held all the positions of power. So when the crackdown came, Husak and the Soviets said, "We have got to purge this party. This party is sick." So the purge was to get rid of reform Communists. In the Embassy in the last year I was Political Officer and we were trying very hard to keep track of the intensity and breadth of this purge. We were able to do it to a certain extent, and it was very broad. Anyone who did not recant, say they had made a mistake supporting the Prague Spring, say the invasion was justified, sign something to this effect, in other words anyone who had any kind of principles at all and was not willing to sell out totally, was purged, and sent to work as a window washer or furnace stoker and that kind of menial job away from contact with the public.

*Q: Well one always thinks there was the name of a movie that was quite popular, the unbearable lightness of being.*

RUSSELL: That was later.

*Q: But it showed some of the effects of a doctor ended up a window washer. I mean that sort of thing stands. Was that sort of thing happening down in the professions?*

RUSSELL: It was absolutely happening. You had distinguished professors of political science and similar professionals who were in some cases locked up for long periods of time, although many of them might be locked up more briefly and then put to work as window washers and stokers. They were given jobs, which were unpleasant, low paying, unhealthful, and didn't have any contact with the general public. So you had Jiri Dienstbier who after the revolution became Foreign Minister, he was a stoker after he was released from prison. Actually a lot of them said this had a bright side because it gave them time to think and to write.

*Q: Well this was it. In a way you are training a whole class of I mean people who are obviously going to be leaders, and you put them out there for a while and they simmer.*

RUSSELL: They had time to think anyway. The only thing is with the might of the state, the totalitarian state where they obtain control of the police, the army, all the instruments of power, and then once they have gotten over that, they don't need to shoot their opponents to keep the lid on. They got over that in the early ‘50s after Stalin died. They weren't shooting many people. They were locking up some, but you don't really even need to lock them up that often. All you need to do is deprive them of work, deprive their wives and children of work, in the cases of leading dissidents who were primarily men. Rita Klimava was a notable exception. She was the wonderful first Czechoslovak Ambassador to Washington after the Velvet Revolution. But you deprive the family of the means of sustenance, you deprive the kids of a future in terms of any education, you give them menial work and you harass them. You call them in for questioning periodically. There aren't many people who are going to put up with that, who are going to risk that willingly. So the vast majority of the population shut up, hunkered down and did what they were told. A very small minority of dissidents really were the ones who were pushing the resistance.

*Q: Did you, I am really saying the Embassy and all notice a change in the before the Prague Spring and after the end of the Prague Spring in the Czech government? What is spurring the question is Czechoslovakia had the reputation of having one of the nastiest regimes around particularly since it was an educated group of people, and yet they are doing. Also that it along with the East Germans were in the forefront of running secret services abroad, I mean giving terrorists sustenance and being great spies, that whole thing.*

RUSSELL: But this is absolutely understandable and explicable. The Czechs, just talk about the Czechs, but the same is true of the Germans in slightly different ways. The Czech part of Czechoslovakia in the ‘30s was so advanced industrially and culturally across the board, I think it is a correct statistic that if taken separately, Bohemia and Moravia made up the seventh richest area in the world in the 1930s. Czechoslovakia as a whole was highly developed and the whole country was doing really very well under a free market democratic system, although Slovakia lagged economically. So from that two things follow. One, if you are going to turn it into a totalitarian society, you have got more people to stamp out or stamp on. You need a very tough regime to convince these people they are better off under communism, which they did not vote in, particularly in Slovakia where there was even less support for communism and the Communist Party after World War II than there was in the Czech part of the country. So you needed a very vigorous regime to enforce discipline on a highly civilized people who remembered better days and who now had a new, Communist boot on their neck after the Nazi occupation. The other thing was that those who were willing to do anything to get ahead, the ambitious opportunists, had great rewards if they went into the secret police. The Czechoslovak intelligence service was very effective in the ‘30s and ‘40s. They helped, the Czechoslovak government in exile set up the assassination of Heydrich, one of the most closely guarded people in the third Reich. They had a great intelligence tradition which was then built on by KGB mentors who controlled every aspect of the Czechoslovak security apparatus. I remember in graduate school I wrote a paper on the

role of the East European countries in the Soviet effort to gain influence in the third world through trade, aid, and other activities. It was a huge role, and the Czechs played a very big part in this because they had the wherewithal and human capital to do it. Those two things went hand in hand and weren't strange at all. I guess a lot of that was true of East Germany. As far as helping with some of the terrorist groups, certainly they gave them shelter. They would go there to regroup and that sort of thing. There was a famous case in early '68 where the American head of a Jewish relief organization, Jordan was his name, was apparently assassinated by Arab terrorists in Prague and his body thrown in the river. We were pretty certain that the Czechoslovak secret police knew what had happened. Whether they had done it or helped it or just watched it was unclear and I think remains a mystery to this day. That was a huge issue in relations between the two countries for at least a couple of years.

*Q: Well as things developed there during this time up to '71 when you were there, were you able I mean could you go talk to people and all in the government or comment regular people?*

RUSSELL: In dealing with the government say on consular cases, you could talk to people. But in dealing with Czech and Slovak bureaucrats there were two groups. This was particularly true the second time I was there. There were those who were nasty because ideologically they didn't like you or they felt there was opportunity to be nasty to westerners because the governments had bad relations. There was that category. Then there was the pragmatic category trying to get business done. “I don't like your country; your country doesn't like our country. Let's try and get a few practical things done.” Doing consular work if there was an American locked up somewhere or about to be tried for some usually phony charge, I could go and even talk to senior officials. I remember going to central Czechoslovakia; I forget what town now. There had been a U.S. scholar, a young postgraduate type who had been grabbed for some alleged infraction. They didn't say espionage, but implied it. I remember talking to the so-called defense lawyer involved in the case. I said, "Look this young guy hasn't done anything wrong. He is not hurting anybody. You are making a very bad impression on everybody by these absurd charges against him. Why don't you just let him go?” The lawyer replied “Don’t worry, he will be sentenced to a few months and then it will be waived and he will be expelled." So he knew exactly what was going to happen to him well before his trial and would even tell me what was going to happen so I wouldn't be too concerned about it. That is exactly what happened, and we got him on a train and got him out of the country.

*Q: What about just prior, you got there when?*

RUSSELL: I got there in June of '68 and left in June or July of '71.

*Q: Not too long before your arrival, there had been a survey done about pensioners, whether to give checks. I know because I was in Yugoslavia at the same time and we were trying to get the social security administration people to come in and do a survey. The Yugoslavs were pretty unhappy. It was being done in Czechoslovakia, so this must have*

*been around '66 or so, to see if the pensions were actually reaching the people which they were. In a way that had been cleared. But normally we were going out to make sure the people were still alive and that sort of thing. Were you doing much of that?*

RUSSELL: No, but when I was head of the visa section there was another officer in the section who was doing social security and veterans benefits issues. If I remember correctly, social security beneficiaries could get hard currency coupons to exchange for dollars they received. They could use those coupons in the state stores. Actually they could sell them on the black market at a very good rate. So we didn't see that the government was stealing the money from them. They were just absorbing all the dollars and giving them some other kind of currency, but it was still a great benefit to these people. That is the kind of thing you could deal with them on.

You were asking what the relationship with the bureaucracy was. On death cases for example, I would go through all this paper work with the local authorities. They did not try by and large to be bloody-minded. They had the Austro-Hungarian red tape, you know, and when you superimpose communism on Austro-Hungarian red tape you really get a lot of red tape, but they weren't being really obstructionist. You ran into fascinating cases. We had a number of death cases, mainly traffic accidents, that sort of thing. I remember the doctor who also did embalming who was involved with a death case that I dealt with had been one of the people who had been called upon and had seen Jan Masaryk after he had, I think, been pushed out of a fourth floor bathroom window in the Foreign Ministry in 1948 two weeks after the Communist coup. He wouldn't say anything about it obviously, but he let slip at one point that he had been involved. So you ran into fascinating cases like that. You also had an odd category of people, sometimes journalists, sometimes bureaucrats, who professed an interest in contacts with the Americans, professed to be rather nervous about these contacts, professed to have opinions and knowledge about what was going on politically or economically in the country, and were all working for the secret police. They were targeted on members of the Embassy. We always had to make the determination were they marginally worth cultivating knowing that one of the purposes of this contact was their string could always be jerked and you could be PNGed on the grounds that this person had been your contact and you had been a spy. So, you always had to judge whether it was worth talking to these people. There were a couple of people I used to see from time to time who occasionally had marginally interesting stuff to say, but you always knew what they were up to and presumably they knew that you knew. One used to take us fishing and was at least an engaging type. Once he “warned” me that the police were “bugging” our phones and urged that we look for a particular device in them. It turned out that the device was ours and he obviously was trying to find out what it was. The other oddball contact was rather dull and drank a lot of my scotch when he came over to our apartment at night for hours on end. Our wives could not communicate, so my wife had to pull out photo albums and was incredibly patient about it. Once, I was feeling bloody minded and simply refused to ask him anything political all evening. Driving him home, he urgently gave me about a ten minute, unsolicited “dump” of the information he had been allocated for the evening. This was all pretty phony, but it was that kind of a phony world. It was very hard to find

people who were involved in any way, shape or form in political or economic activity that you could talk with openly. About the only people you could talk with openly were in the arts and some of them were absolutely delightful human beings.

*Q: I was going to say this has always been sort of the one area in the Communist world.*

RUSSELL: We knew the photographer of the national gallery well, and various painters and that sort of thing. So we did come to know a circle of people in the cultural world who were uniformly highly cultivated, thoughtful, fine people. That is another thing that I think is important that I am sure you saw in Yugoslavia. What you found in these totalitarian societies was what you find, I guess, in any totalitarian society particularly when the country has known better times and has a rich cultural background. These people revert to an inner life to get away from the grayness or worse of their outer life. You would have people cultivating hobbies, for example, doing miniature trains or owning some particularly difficult to care for purebred dog. Everybody collected wild mushrooms in the beautiful forests outside Prague. That was a big thing, get out in the woods in the fresh air and collect mushrooms or hunt or fish or whatever. People would pursue with a vengeance all of the things that gave them a chance to escape from grayness.

*Q: Also I know in the Soviet society and to some extent in the Yugoslav society there was room for great debates around the kitchen table and all that, not necessarily political but this was the ability to exercise your intellect more than we have in our society.*

RUSSELL: There was much more interest in doing that, although, the first time I was there, people knew that there was a danger they were being bugged almost no matter where they were, so open conversations about politics and that sort of thing were pretty rare. Even discussions about art theory and indeed almost everything was considered political. One of the few places people would talk was at noisy, crowded cocktail parties. This is the only time I've enjoyed such events.

*Q: Did Havel every come across your or the Embassy's gun sight or not?*

RUSSELL: Not the first time I was there. In fact he became engaged in political activities, I think, during the Prague Spring, but I never met him then. However, I certainly came to know him the second time.

*Q: What were we looking at in Czechoslovakia? Were the curtains or shades drawn and we were just marking time, or did we see any opportunity maybe to turn Czechoslovakia around as far as we were concerned or partially to find some opening?*

RUSSELL: I think we were always looking for ways to deal practically on things that made sense, even just a limited amount of cultural exchange. There wasn't much of a relationship. However, there was a desire to eliminate useless areas of controversy. There was the issue of the Czech gold that we held and how that was going to be negotiated, and

the issue of confiscated American properties on the other side, and you know, all those kinds of issues that are a diplomat's job to try to resolve or at least not exacerbate. So we were picking around the edge of what would be a normal international relationship trying to resolve those fairly minor problems that we could. We liked and felt sorry for the Czech and Slovak people, but we detested the guys in power. We felt sorry for the people who had known better times. While we intensely disliked the people in power, who were a miserable bunch of mean spirited opportunists, we did try to work with them on minor practical things on the one hand, and on the other tried to hammer them on individual human rights issues when they would seriously abuse people who dissented in some way. The first time I was there that was something we had zero influence on, particularly after the Soviet invasion and the party purges. By the time I went back in '88, this was a major focus of our activities, trying to do things to help protect dissent and dissidents to the extent that we could. We had some levers to do that. But the first time I was there we had a pretty miserable relationship after the August 21 Soviet-led invasion.

*Q: How about American reporters and all that? Were they able to get in there, and was there a problem? I can't remember if there were any cases during your time.*

RUSSELL: Yes, we had one case I remember vividly. We had the case during my first time there in 1971 where Alan Levy, a journalist in Prague, was doing a manuscript on Czechoslovakia, and the police found out about it. I think they confiscated the manuscript. I remember going down to the station with our USIS chief who had been very friendly with Levy. He was put on the train, I think to Vienna. It was night and the train was unheated. The embassy protested it, but the Czechs in effect said go to Hell. He has violated our law; he had manuscripts. He has had ties with people he shouldn't have. They threw him and his family out of the country. That was the one case I remember of a journalist being chucked out of the country. Certainly there were some other journalists. I remember Lars Nelson who until his death recently worked for one of the New York papers. He was a very acute observer and we had quite frequent conversations. I think he was working for Reuters at the time in Prague. Other journalists would come through quite often and write quite perceptive reports about what was going on. They didn't have a lot of access, but they made a good thing of it. I think Lars for example spoke Russian, which most Czechs also spoke. Alan Levy I think spoke Czech, as he had been there several years.

*Q: What about American citizens. There were quite a number of people there who came over. They were called Bohemians.*

RUSSELL: You mean after the revolution.

*Q: I am talking about before, in other words as a rather large Czech community, Czech-Slovak community in the United States, mainly working types who came to the mills and all at the turn of the century. Did they play any role in our relations I mean through Congress or newspapers or like that?*

RUSSELL: I remember there was a citizenship issue. We had a treaty with Czechoslovakia designed to avoid too many cases of dual nationality and thus establish that you either had one nationality or the other. There was a certain period of years where this applied. It was very complicated and led to some problems. We were trying to work around that because many people after the end of Communism wanted to have both nationalities, and, in fact, you are allowed to do that now. But we did have cases of Czech Americans coming back to visit relatives. They were allowed to do so unless they had some record of speaking out against the regime or something negative in their file. There were some Czech Americans who came back to Prague and the surrounding areas. Some of them would get into trouble because they couldn't comprehend how bloody minded the Communist regime was or how poorly people lived. Some of them did turn into consular problems. You had offbeat types who seemed to arrive in Prague more often than one would expect. You would have people who would arrive and get in trouble because they had mental problems. There was one sad case of a kid whose parents were obviously paying him to stay in Europe and just wander around. He received checks through American Express. He wandered to Prague not realizing there wasn't an American Express in Czechoslovakia. He couldn't get his checks, so he became a consular case and we had to lend him funds to get to Vienna. He was obviously highly disturbed and had with him some scraps of paper with psychiatric records. A fair number of people came in with mental problems. One gigantic fellow, usually dressed in a dirty T shirt and leather jacket, claimed he was 'King of the Goths" and demanded to see our Military Attaché to plan how to defeat the Communists. Another, a Hollywood minor league "producer," went nuts in Wenceslas Square Christmas morning and was arrested for screaming curses at the Russians. I was Embassy Duty Officer. When he was allowed to call the Embassy from the police station, he told me I was his "contact in Network Orange" and started speaking French "so they won't understand." We got him released and out to Vienna ASAP, as even the Czech police recognized him as a mental case. We subsequently got a call from the Duty Officer in Vienna saying someone had called to say they had left "secret documents" in front of our Embassy. The Duty Officer said the papers looked like the contents of a waste basket from a Czech police station.

*Q: I f you didn't have, I mean go back to my Yugoslav experience. We had what was a virulent Croatian community in Chicago. It was not close to being a fascist community, but it had a lot of political. Did you have anything equivalent to that?*

RUSSELL: We are still talking my first tour ending in '71. We didn't really notice that sort of thing. There was a Slovak emigration after WWII to the U.S. and Canada that was highly anti-Communist, including some who had sympathized with the Tiso Clero-Fascist regime during the war, but we did not hear from them much. Of course there was the large number of Czechs and Slovaks who simply fled west because they hated and feared the new totalitarian regime and wanted to live in a democracy as they had before the war. Their flight was our gain and Czechoslovakia's loss. The ordinary Czech or Slovak who had not been targeted by the regime who was curious or had come back to see relatives would tell us they had no real problems. However, sometimes they would get in trouble by insulting a policeman or in other minor ways. For example, one guy from Chicago

came to Prague and yelled at a Czech cop in one of their yellow and white Skodas "you milkman!" He said he had heard in Chicago that Czech police were commonly called that. So the cop beat him up and hauled him off to jail. We got him out of jail and out of the country.

*Q: What was the feeling that you were getting from more of your military colleagues, your own embassy estimate about the Czech military effort in case of a war? We were always concerned about war between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. What was the feeling there?*

RUSSELL: I honestly don't remember much discussion of that. I mean as I say, I was in the consular section for two of the three years. The second year, 1969-1970, when I was head of the section, I attended the country team meetings and again, as Political Officer I would be in on those meetings. I don't remember discussion of what the Czech role in case of war would be. My understanding is that their role would be to be cannon fodder and go over the German border and get shot down and then the Soviets would come in behind. But I don't remember a lot of discussion of that. There was more focus on border incidents, a NATO helicopter getting too close to the border and getting shot down, or what the Czechs were doing on the border. I remember that kind of discussion, but it wasn't about their role in case of war.

*Q: Well, did the border become much more dangerous after the clampdown?*

RUSSELL: Yes, they certainly clamped down along the border more than they had earlier in the 1960s, although it had always been tight. I bought a series of border guard medals in 1989 that had a German Shepard, crossed rifles and "they shall not pass" as a motto. The badges were of first, second and third degree and you had to wonder whether they had to have shot some poor escapee to get a first class medal.

*Q: How about the Czech's neighbors, particularly the Hungarians and all? Was this and the Poles, were they restive or was this a problem or were they all happily in the Warsaw Pact?*

RUSSELL: I think the East German regime, in particular, and the Poles supported the Warsaw Pact invasion. They feared something similar to the Prague Spring happening in their country. They were both very susceptible to that kind of thing, so I think their leadership was perfectly happy to move. The Romanians, of course, refused to go in. The Bulgarians did whatever they were told at that point. During the Prague Spring some of the Hungarian leadership would make statements saying that the Czechs were going too far. I don't remember the Poles speaking out on it that much. The East Germans were very hard over as usual. Frankly we were pretty cut off in Prague, tightly controlled, heavily watched, every contact monitored, it was not that easy to pick up that kind of information in Prague. Cables from other Embassies would have that reporting, but we did not get all of it. We had some very good people there, and the head of the combined political and economic section was a very bright guy.

*Q: Who was that?*

RUSSELL: Mark Garrison, who later went on to teach at Brown. He was head of the Russian Institute there. He was a very bright guy, and he had a good handle on what was going on, but it wasn't easy, and we didn't exactly have that broad visibility. The only good thing is in a totalitarian country like that, if you can see the tip of the iceberg, you can often adumbrate the rest of the iceberg. If you have any information that Husak, for example, feels strongly that something is getting out of hand or that he is planning to move in a certain direction, if that piece of information is true, then that is what is going to happen. Not like Italian politics, for example, where there is lots of information available but often you can't predict from one day to the next what is going to happen.

*Q: What about working with other embassies including the Yugoslav embassy at that time? I would have imagined that there would be an awful lot of exchanging of information and all that.*

RUSSELL: There was very good cooperation among the NATO embassies. There would be meetings with NATO embassy colleagues, and when I was Political Officer, there was a Political Officers club. We were a very tight bunch. In fact some of the folks have kept in touch for years. We would regularly meet in one of the secure rooms of one of our embassies, often ours, to discuss what was going on. That was useful because if someone picked up some tidbit, for example from a well informed source like a Yugoslav journalist, they would share it. The Yugoslavs were particularly good sources of information because, while they were not trusted by the Czechoslovak government, they weren't considered the enemy. You could tell on the numbering system of the diplomatic cars. The Soviets were "00" on their license plate, which I thought was perfect symbolism. We were #20 and began the NATO series and the Yugoslavs were #50, beginning the "neutrals" series.

*Q: They were gaining on Yugoslavia. We were 60.*

RUSSELL: The Russians were 00 on their license plate. We were the bad guys, and that started at 20. 50 was the cutoff. 20 and into the 30s, those were NATO. 50 was Yugoslavia, right in the middle. Above that were the developing countries. The Yugoslavs were seen in that light and often Yugoslav journalists would have good sources and ideas that were pretty perceptive about what was going on, so we would make an effort to cultivate them.

*Q: They were also being used in China as one of the points of contact. I mean they got around a little bit.*

RUSSELL: Really. They got around because they weren't as mistrusted. They weren't trusted, but they weren't seen as enemies, so we did try to have good relations. I mentioned that before and after the invasion we had good relations with the Romanians,

who thought they might be next, and exchanged information with them. But within the NATO community, the Political Officers and Economic Officers got together as well, and that was very useful.

*Q: What was the feeling, obviously it wasn't your beat, but at the same time you were in a small embassy, what was the feeling about the economy of Czechoslovakia because it like East Germany had been essentially advanced economies and turned out after it was all over, after '89 the East German economy was not as fancy as we thought it was. What about Czechoslovakia at that time? Did we feel it was producing some pretty good stuff?*

RUSSELL: I think what happened there was that by the early ‘60s the economy was not doing well. The deal had always been that the Communist government would be in charge of everything and no one would challenge it, and in return people would get a certain social safety net. That would include food at a decent price, clothing and housing, although they never could deliver on housing. But the economy was doing so poorly by the early ‘60s that government economists like Ota Sik were forced to start thinking seriously about how to reform it. As I remember the economic situation by the late ‘60s and early ‘70s was really not good at all. However, the crackdown was such that the people weren't raising their heads to say anything. Our impression of the economy was that it was not doing well, that a fair amount of money was being siphoned off for aid in support of the Soviet diplomatic effort, and some of the arms sales and other transactions with developing countries that were going on were not helping. There was a tremendous housing shortage. People had to wait for years and years to get a house or decent apartment. You also had to wait for a long time to get a car and the cars were wretched and expensive. There were many jokes about that kind of thing. “How do you double the value of a Skoda? Fill the gas tank.” Our impression was that the economy was not in very good shape at all. That said, I don't think that was what brought the system down in Czechoslovakia in 1989. It was a collapse of political will and lack of military support from the Soviets in the face of absolute public rejection of the regime and its incompetent, brutal and uncultured leaders.

*Q: Well then you left there in 1971. Whither?*

RUSSELL: '71. I was very interested in the whole issue of Communist parties and how they rule and how they influence the system both in the east and the west. I had pushed to go from Prague to Rome, since I spoke good Italian, to take the position in the political section that reported on the Italian Communist Party. I thought that would be pretty interesting since that was what I had been writing my thesis on. Personnel agreed. Charlie Stout, my Personnel Counselor, was in favor of that and the Embassy thought it was a good idea. So I was supposed to do that, and then Peter Bridges, who had that job in Rome, extended for a year. I got a call saying, "Look, the job will open in a year. How would you like to go to Trieste as Principal Officer, go there for a year and then move to Rome and do this job?" I said, "Sounds great." As a rather junior officer, I thought it would be a good experience to be Principal Officer and have my own post.

*Q: About a captain.*

RUSSELL: Yes, I was about a captain or a major. Being Principal Officer of any post, even a small consulate with only 9 Foreign Service national employees, was pretty appealing particularly because there was a Minister Counselor, two star equivalent, who was the Principal Officer in Trieste at that point. So I said “fine”. I went to Trieste and then, anticipating a little bit, at the end of the year I was supposed to move to Rome, but then the guy who had become my boss in Prague, Sam Wise was PNGed as an alleged spy. It was nonsense, but anyway he was PNGed. So he went to Rome and took that job. So they said, "How would you like to stay in Trieste for awhile longer and we'll see what we can find for you." I was having a ball in Trieste. The net result of that was I was two and a half years in Trieste, and then I got a call saying “Look, the job analyzing the Christian Democrats, which is an even better job since they are the government, is open, would you like that?” I accepted and went down to Rome for another two and a half years. But back to our arrival in Trieste.

*Q: You were in Trieste from '71 to the end of 1973.*

RUSSELL: I was in Trieste from mid 1971 to November 1973. Then I was in Rome two and a half years, '74, '75 and half of '76.

*Q: Okay. Let's talk about Trieste. We had shut down Venice by that time. Why was Trieste kept open and Venice, which is obviously, a bigger place shut down?*

RUSSELL: I don't know. I couldn't figure out why they shut down Venice when there were so many American tourists who needed consular services, and they gave it to Milan, which was even further away. I think at first they actually gave it to Trieste, but by the time I got there it was in Milan's consular district, so I had Pordenone, Udine, Gorizia and Trieste Provinces.

*Q: I suspect the reason was political. We had put so much effort into keeping Trieste part of Italy.*

RUSSELL: Oh yes, that’s why we kept Trieste open. That is very clear. The Italian government would have had a fit if we had pulled out of there, because at that point they hadn't even settled the border finally. It was a demarcation line, and so the Italians felt very strongly that we should have a consulate, and the Triestini remembered a very warm relationship with the Americans. During the Allied Military Government after World War II we had the military government function and the Brits took over the civilian police. That was the dirty job in a way because there were a lot of riots and problems involving, for example, revanchist forces in Trieste, people who had been kicked out of Istria, were very powerful and had their own political party. So it was a very unstable thing under the military government. Many of the Triestini who worked for the Brits and were the civilian cops who cracked heads, actually emigrated to Australia when Trieste reverted back to Italy. But that's why we kept open Trieste. Every time there was a threat to close

down the Consulate there would be a letter writing campaign and the Mayor and the Senators and Deputies and newspapers would get mobilized, so it was highly political.

*Q: Well then, during this time could you describe what the Consulate was like and then what your occupation was?*

RUSSELL: Yes, it was a wonderful job for a younger officer. It had been, of course, a huge Consulate General with a hundred American staffers at its height. Little by little it had gone down in size as its importance decreased. I replaced an officer who, as I say, was an MC.

*Q: MC being...*

RUSSELL: Minister Counselor rank. He started out with a staff of two or three FSOs, but within a year or so of his leaving he didn't have any U.S. personnel left, so he was very bitter. Rome, he felt, hadn't treated him well. I mean embassies typically don't treat consulates very well in terms of support, and he didn't get along with the Embassy anyway. When I arrived I found about 16 major work orders that had been pending for several years in some cases, major things that needed to be done to the Consulate and residence which were one structure. So my job was to do everything. I had a staff of seven FSNs who did Foreign Service work and two who did USIS work, all of whom were very good. They had been around for a long time and were very senior. They were just a wonderful, highly competent bunch of people. So we were like a little family. I did everything, everything being mainly consular work. We didn't have Venice, and of course there weren't all that many tourists coming, but we had a lot of visas that had to be issued. A lot of Triestini had ties with the U.S. We also had a lot of Americans at Aviano airbase outside Pordenone and they required Consular services. Many of our consular problems stemmed from the fact that there was a border there, so you would have Americans who were broke, mentally disabled or had some other problem, lost passport or whatever, that would bring them up short at the Yugoslav border. Then they would bounce back, and they would come to the Consulate for help. We had a lot of cases like that, and a lot of cases where we had to get funds from the U.S. to repatriate people who were in severe trouble of one kind or another. So the bulk of the work was consular. Graham Martin was our Ambassador in Rome my first year and he was also interested in some political reporting. I didn't have much time for systematic political reporting, but I did do one big report on the Slovene minority in the area. I remember tooling around all over the area trying to find the Slovene minority, particularly in Gorizia Province. I developed relationships with some of the Slovene politicians and leaders of the Slovene minority. The Embassy was very interested since that was still a problem in Italian-Slovene relations. Also, we followed the extent of irredentist feeling, the activities of the Istriani groups and that sort of thing. But my main issues were consular, looking after American citizens, and showing the flag. That was the most fun, of course, because I would regularly go around and visit the Mayors and the Prefects and heads of the Carabinieri and other "Autorita" in the consular district and try to demonstrate U.S. interest in Italy. We had them over to the house. My wife did all of the cooking. She is a fabulous cook.

She helped me with all of the entertaining, did all of the cooking, and simply tried to demonstrate to Italians that Americans did not eat everything out of cans and had some culture, and that there was some reason why it was good for America and Italy to have a warm relationship. But the first two were really universal perceptions, that American food was appalling, and that America didn't really have any American culture to speak of. So what we would typically do is my wife would prepare a fabulous meal and I would get a film from USIS about the luminist painters of the 19th Century or something like that. We would have a cultural evening. Over cocktails we would talk politics and then have a nice dinner, and then we would watch a film on some aspect of American culture. They would go away, we hoped, with a slightly different perception of American culture and cuisine. But the fun part was also showing the flag, and I had a very good relationship with the Autorita, so if an American got into trouble in their area, they would go way out of their way typically to help bail that individual out. In terms of keeping track of what was going on, I had very good contacts and could call on anyone for information. Occasionally there would be things that would happen that Rome would be very interested in. Terrorists blew up part of the oil storage farm in Trieste at one point. There was a fair amount of terrorism and I was told by the Embassy security officer to get a .38 which I kept in my desk drawer, but locked in the bedroom safe at night because we had young kids.

*Q: What kind? What terrorists were these?*

RUSSELL: It was Arab terrorism that was being noticed in various parts of Europe. They never caught them either. I remember I was in Udine, and I was driving back to Trieste and saw a pall of smoke over Trieste. I sent in a report on the situation when I got to the Consulate. That sort of spot reporting was an essential function of any post.

*Q: Did you get any reflection of people slipping across the Yugoslav border seeking asylum and that sort of thing?*

RUSSELL: Yes, we had some of that. We had some people approaching the Consulate, but it wasn't the case of asylum by then. If they got that far, they didn't need asylum. What you had to tell them was “no, I can't put you on the next plane to the U.S. You have to go to the Padriciano refugee camp and be processed.” People didn't like to hear that. I remember there was one guy from Chicago who said he had been a Hungarian freedom fighter in 1956. He wanted to get his sweetheart out of Hungary through Yugoslavia and was asking where he should best cross the border without getting blown up or shot. I said, " I am not about to tell you how to illegally cross the Italian Yugoslav border and risk getting killed. For goodness sakes, she should try to do it legally if she can." It wasn't that difficult to get her out. He said, "Oh no I'm in a rush." But he said, "I understand why you can't give me that information." So next he appeared and he said, "Well, I have smuggled her across. We came through the woods. I want a visa for her to go to the States." I explained to him she had certain legal requirements to fulfill and that I couldn’t just hand her a visa. He said, "No, you don't understand. I need to get back there. We want to get married. But I understand you have to follow your rules." The next thing I get is a letter

from Chicago with a news clipping reporting Congressman so-and-so meets Hungarian freedom fighter and fiancée at airport and gets her admitted at once into the U.S. This guy didn't fool around.

*Q: What was your impression of the political aspect there? Who were the government, the CD?*

RUSSELL: The government was led by the Christian Democrats. They were essentially the government. I think the conservative Liberal party was no longer in the coalition. They had earlier been in a Center Right government with Andreotti. It was then a Center Left government with the Socialists, Social Democrats and Republicans. There was always an issue about what our attitude was towards the MSI neo-Fascist party.

*Q: Movement Sociale Italiano.*

RUSSELL: Yes. There was even a question whether we should call them neo fascists or do we call them extremely conservative. What do we call them exactly? We were focused on who were the up and coming Christian Democrats who have power in the ruling party. What do they think is going on? What are they predicting in terms of the stability of the coalition? What do they think the Italian Communists are likely to do in terms of ever coming to power? Of course, one of the main concerns of the U.S. during the whole post war period was that the Italian Communists not take over or even enter the government. They started out to be a pretty Stalinist bunch and it was never considered in our interest that they get in the government. Of course, a former Italian Communist eventually became Prime Minister. But at that point in time they were obviously very hostile to NATO and to the U.S. So, keeping track of what national level but locally based politicians thought was going on was one of my priorities, and keeping track of the Irredentist movement which was helping to prevent reconciliation between Italy and Yugoslavia as far as the border was concerned, that was another concern. Minority issues, the status of the Slovene minority, were they well integrated, were they being mistreated, was another. All of those things were things we were focused on

*Q: How were the Italians treating their minorities? You know I have seen reports from afar. They weren't very good at this. By God you Slovenes are going to have to learn Italian. You know, I mean there wasn't much give.*

RUSSELL: There wasn't a lot of give. However, there wasn't mistreatment of the Slovene minority when I was there. Under Mussolini it was terrible, and some of these Slovene-Italians I came to know had blood curdling stories of relatives being beaten to death or force fed castor oil and that kind of thing under Mussolini. But when I was there it was more a matter that they just were not liked very much by a number of local Italians, some of whom had been kicked out of Istria and that area. The Slovenes typically weren't economically as well off. They often had more menial jobs, so it was just a typical situation of a minority in a country where there was some hostility based on historical factors. There was some economic discrimination, some language discrimination, but no,

I mean they weren't mistreated in some official way.

*Q: I mean but were there Slovene schools and things like this?*

RUSSELL: I don't remember the exact status. I believe there were some Slovene schools. Certainly there was no problem with using spoken Slovene, but whether you could use it on official documents I don't recall. I would have to check my records.

*Q: My guess is this is the type of, you know the Slovenes are saying we want to have schools in our language and all, and the Italians weren't playing that game.*

RUSSELL: I don't think so. I think they felt that you had to learn Italian. We had one incident, which happened before I arrived thank goodness, during an aircraft carrier visit. These visits were great for public relations, and people loved them. An aircraft carrier had visited, and they had a lot of facilities including a band. So they very kindly offered to give a concert in downtown Trieste. The venue was the Piazza Unita d'Italia, the Unity of Italy main square. So they arrived and were all set up to give a wonderful concert. Normally on any American ship the size of a destroyer, someone is of Italian-American extraction and speaks some Italian. Certainly on an aircraft carrier you would think so, but they couldn't find one. But some bright spark remembered that in Trieste there are also Slovenes, so Slovene might work. So they found a Slovene-speaking American. This Slovene- speaking sailor got up and made a very gracious announcement in Slovene. All hell broke loose. There were diplomatic protests from Rome. It was a diplomatic bomb, in Piazza Unita d'Italia of all places.

*Q: Were you there, there was this bad earthquake in Friuli, were you there at that time?*

RUSSELL: No, that was later. Bob Rachmales was Consul at that time. He did a splendid job on that.

*Q: Well, I thought we might stop at this point and we will pick this up in late '73 when you were off to Rome to be the political DC reporter. You were there from late '73.*

RUSSELL: Two and a half years until the middle of '76.

*Q: '76. We will pick it up then.*

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*Today is 17 April 2000. Ted what was the situation in Italy as you saw it in late 1973 when you got there?*

RUSSELL: In November 1973, and I would have to check my files to recreate the exact political situation, and the situation in the government, but as I recall, it was a Center-Left government with the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats, the Socialists and

the Republicans. The Liberal Party was not in the government at that time. A major interest of the Embassy was in the situation of the Communist Party, which, of course, was considered to be closely linked to Moscow.

*Q: Who was the head of it?*

RUSSELL: The head of it...

*Q: Togliatti was dead by that time?*

RUSSELL: Togliatti had died in 1964. The old leadership had pretty well had died off. Berlinguer, a Togliatti protégé who developed the concept of the "Historic Compromise" with the Christian Democrats, managed to keep up the Italian Communist Party's ability to bring people into the party and create a whole cultural environment for them. The PCI was able to offer people help in finding jobs and provided constant political indoctrination and a whole cultural world in which they could operate.

*Q: It was family.*

RUSSELL: It was creating a society within a society where you could feel comfortable; you would have association; you would have support; you would feel you were part of an important group. So our major preoccupation at the Embassy was the degree to which it was likely that the Communists were actually going to be able to get into the government. We were concerned about that because the Christian Democrat led government was not particularly effective and was plagued with corruption scandals. With the Socialists, corruption was the big problem throughout, as was revealed later.

The symbol of the Christian Democratic Party was a shield with a cross on it, and the shield was against Communism, and the cross implies support of the church. Basically because they represented a shield against Communism, they had managed to stay in government in spite of considerable inefficiency. In the western press very often articles about Italy would say, "Oh the unstable Italian government, they have changed again." I think on the average they changed about every nine months. The fact of the matter is it was incredibly stable. There were the same people rotating in and out of the ministerial chairs. Amintore Fanfani, Mariano Rumor, Aldo Moro, and Giulio Andreotti were examples. So that was our preoccupation. I was fortunate because I had the job of following the Christian Democrats and keeping in touch with the Christian Democratic leaders, which was really fascinating. I also had the Liberal party in my portfolio.

*Q: How removed were they? Who was our Ambassador at the time?*

RUSSELL: Our Ambassador was John Volpe, former governor of Massachusetts, and during the whole time I was in Rome, he was the Ambassador. When I was in Trieste, initially Graham Martin, who had been over in Vietnam, was the Ambassador. He was replaced by John Volpe.

*Q: What was your impression of Volpe both as running the Embassy and dealing with the Italians?*

RUSSELL: I liked John Volpe enormously. He was extremely warm. He was a great politician and it seemed to come naturally to him. He was the kind of guy that even if you were a junior member of his staff and he saw you, even if he was at some important event, he would come over and say "Hi, how are you doing," and shake your hand and go on. He and his wife had parents originally from a little town in Abruzzi called Pescosansonesco. I had a special file on what was going on in Pescosansonesco in the political section. I think he felt that because he was of Italian-American extraction, he understood Italian politics, that somehow it was in his blood. Actually, I don't think anyone really understands Italian politics. He had very close relations with the Christian Democratic and the leaders who had visited him when he was in Massachusetts when he was governor. He would just go and see them by himself without taking an Embassy staffer with him. I think we lost something by that because we then didn't know exactly what had transpired. I think he had an overall understanding of what was going on, but I wouldn't call him a sophisticated analyst of the Italian political situation. Certainly he had the big picture firmly in mind. He understood what our foreign policy objectives were which were to help keep the Italian Communists out of the national government and to try and buck up or encourage reformist trends in the Christian Democratic Party. One of the things that I did was try to get to know and identify up and coming, bright, honest, effective younger Christian Democratic politicians of which there were a number. Some of them were very impressive, but the party as a whole had been corrupted by being in office too long.

*Q: Well, let's talk about your view of the CDU. Was the CDU at all important in Trieste?*

RUSSELL: The Christian Democrats.

*Q: Let's just say CD The transcriber might put CD. I am going back to my German roots.*

RUSSELL: The Trieste government was basically right wing Christian Democrat controlled. That was partly because there was a large émigré community, Italians who had been kicked out of Istria, who were adamantly anti-Yugoslav. Some of them even talked about getting their homes back on the Istrian coast. So they brought the Christian Democrats to the right, but in my consular district there were also left of center Christian Democrats who were very effective and bright and up and coming. I got to know a number of Christian Democratic Deputies in the area.

*Q: Well here in Rome, my only view of the Italian political scene was from Naples when I was Consul General. This was '79-'81. You know this minuet that went on as you say, even up to that time it was still the same damn party, the same people. It seemed that the Embassy was always terribly concerned about changes of government and all when it was down in Naples, people would shrug. You know, what's new? I couldn't see that it*

*made any real difference. To me it seemed like the Embassy is supposed to report on political affairs. You had a great political game which didn't go anywhere at that time. How did you feel about that?*

RUSSELL: I think within the minuet of Italian politics you did have changes that were important and that were worth monitoring. In other words, to the extent that you had the Christian Democrats shifting towards the left influenced by the Moro faction, for example, which favored making deals with the Communists, that was of interest. But it wasn't limited to them. Among the Socialist parties there were some who were more democratic and anti-Communist oriented. There were others more on the left who were willing to contemplate a deal with the PCI. The administration in Washington constantly asked us what is going on. "Are the Communists getting closer to power?" They were really preoccupied with it. Italian election results were reported by immediate cable. I recall just before I left the country, I made a bet with the INR political analyst for Italy, an old friend of mine. I said, "The Italian Communist Party by the ides of March next year, 1977, will be in the area of the government, 'area del governo' is the phrase, and they will be supporting the government. Their support will be crucial to the government." Sure as hell that is what happened. They came closer and closer as the Christian Democrats became more disorganized. Those were developments and trends we were monitoring. It did make a difference.

*Q: Well, of course this was the period when Henry Kissinger, I think, became Secretary of State. He was obsessed, and I am not putting this in a bad term because there was good reason for this obsession, with European communism. He had seen, I mean he had practically written Portugal off after it. I get the impression that Kissinger kind of had the view that this European communism might be the wave of the future. Italy, of course, was a crucial place.*

RUSSELL: I think that is absolutely right. Kissinger put intense pressure on the Embassy to report immediately on internal political developments that might bear on what we could do to help prevent the Communists getting into the government. There was actually rather little we could do about making the CD more effective and the PCI less agile. When Kissinger came over to visit at one point, he was preoccupied with this issue and the Political Section then got a bracing from the DCM about doing more. We were under enormous pressure to report the moves of every political faction. So we had one FSO who was reporting on the Christian Democrats, one who was doing the Socialist parties, and one who was doing the Communists. It was a massive effort.

*Q: Well, when you say there was nothing we could do about it, I mean what were you doing, just going around and talking to people. We must have been imparting something. If you do thus and so, we might do thus and so, or something.*

RUSSELL: What I was doing was more contact work, monitoring, analyzing and reporting. The Christian Democrats didn't need to be told daily by us that we were against the Communists entering the government. We had made that abundantly clear. In

discussions we would show concern if the CD party seemed to be moving toward accepting the notion of bringing in Communist support from the outside. We would make it clear to the Christian Democrats that we were concerned if they seemed to be more open to this. We would make it clear to the Socialists in particular that we found this very dangerous and that it would affect our entire relationship. So, yes there was jawboning going on. We didn't need to jawbone the Christian Democrats as much because the majority of them were not in favor of this kind of development. However, there were CD factions which did contemplate some kind of a deal with the PCI.

*Q: I know you wouldn't have been particularly, you probably weren't clued in, but did you, everyone, I mean it was an accepted fact which in effect wasn't a fact, that in the elections in 1948 we made massive payments to the Christian Democrats as the Soviets had done to their counterparts. But did you have the feeling that our CIA was running a different program or was it, I mean would you kind of stumble across the CIA from time to time?*

RUSSELL: I didn't have the impression that they were running any kind of program that was out of sync with U.S. policy. They didn't seem to be running off doing oddball things.

*Q: I was thinking more of financial support and that sort of thing.*

RUSSELL: I would rather not comment on that.

*Q: No, I was trying to catch the atmosphere because I mean most of this today is not particularly secret. I mean things were happening and there was money flowing around. Some of it was American and some was other.*

RUSSELL: My impression was that the CIA had a very good grasp of what was going on and they had access to all the information that we produced. I had the impression that they were very well informed and well in line with U.S. policy.

*Q: I was wondering whether from time to time you ran across somebody a contact you would be oh let that guy go. We have got him covered elsewhere or something like that.*

RUSSELL: I never ran into that.

*Q: No, this has happened.*

RUSSELL: That was not a problem in Rome that I ever observed. I think we were better organized than that.

*Q: Or much more sophisticated than the third world where this is more likely to happen.*

RUSSELL: I felt that the agency personnel that I ran across over there were very competent. It was never suggested to me that I not see someone because the person was

an agency contact.

*Q: Well now, what would you do? I am trying to capture the life of a Political Officer who is sort of like a captain in the army you know. What would you do? Let's take a typical day.*

RUSSELL: On a typical day, I was trying to figure out what was happening within the Christian Democratic Party, their attitudes toward the kind of government that might be put together after an election or the kind of factional left-right maneuvering that was going on within their party. I was covering domestic politics; I wasn't dealing with foreign policy. We were trying to figure out what was going on within the party; would there be a government crisis? For example, Washington wanted to know if the government was shaky, if the government was about to move left or right or bring in the Liberals or make a further deal with the Socialists, that kind of thing. In order to find out that sort of thing I would simply call up people in the Christian Democratic Party, or the Liberal party which I also covered and I would ask to see them. Either I would go call on them in their office or I would take them to lunch or occasionally I would do something in the evening, have them over to the house. When I would meet with them I would say, "Look I understand that Andreotti's faction is in favor of moving in a particular direction. Is that correct? What do the Fanfani people think of this?" I found that very often I would get a pretty direct response. Obviously it would be a spin from their particular perspective, but there would often be less spin describing activities of others, of other factions as opposed to activities of their own faction. So if I visited people from three or four factions in this large governing party, I could get a pretty clear idea of where they were heading, what they thought, how they thought regional elections were going to come out, what positions they were going to take on some of these issues, some of which affected Italian foreign policy.

*Q: Yes*

RUSSELL: Then I would simply go back and try to report based on conversations with several of these individuals. If I met with some of them, if I met with Forlani, who was Secretary of the Christian Democratic party at one point, if I met with some minister level person or someone who really had a lot of clout, I might do a report just on that. Otherwise, I would very often wait and put a report together based on several conversations. So what I was doing was what a reporter does, using contacts that I had built up. I tried to build up contacts within every faction of the party and seek their views of what was going on and come back to report. That was basically what I was doing.

*Q: I would have thought that would have made you a great resource for people within the Christian Democratic Party. In other words, they'd say what do you hear about... In other words you couldn't help but be a player in the game.*

RUSSELL: Well yes, except I would never repeat what anyone had told me. If anyone asked me what I thought was going on, I could say, "I have the impression that the party

seems to be moving away a little bit from the idea of a “compromesso storico" – a historic compromise with the Communists. Or, “Your relations with the Socialists are sharpening now and that may bring down the government and cause an early election, right?” I’d then ask “Do you think the regional elections in southern Italy will go badly for your party? What are the MSI people doing?” We had no contacts with the MSI neo-fascist party. We had limited contacts with the Communists via one officer in the political section who talked with their foreign policy expert.

*Q: Well was it the MSI that was held to be at this point so far to the right or was it just almost a reflex action?*

RUSSELL: Our attitude had changed over time because going back to when I was in Trieste, I remember reporting something that was going on and calling them “neo fascists”, which they were really at that point in time. I remember sending in a cable. I had to send it down to Rome first. I got back an instruction saying that the Ambassador, Martin in this case, had decided that we are not going to refer to them as “neo fascists”. We should call them the far right or something like that. I think it was appropriate to have an arms length relationship with them. They really were very far to the right in those days. They were not in the government. They didn't have much influence over national policy. Obviously the right now has and the former Communists now have a lot more influence than they did before the collapse of the Christian Democrats. So I think we dealt with the MSI properly, and I think we were also right to have low-key contacts with the Italian Communists. The PCI was a very serious party in terms of discipline and smart tactics. Therefore they were unfortunately very effective in what they were doing. They had a very good organization that was subsidized by the Soviets through contracts between companies in East Europe and Italian Communist controlled companies particularly in the red belt area.

*Q: What were you getting both from your Christian Democratic contacts but also from your fellow officers in the political section about Berlinguer? How was he seen at that time?*

RUSSELL: He was seen as a very smart operator. I don't remember all the details we were reporting. I think he was Sardinian nobility in terms of lineage. He was seen to be a very sophisticated, able, subtle leader, very much in the Togliatti pattern, but one who didn't deviate fundamentally from the people who were keeping him in bread. The Italian Communists always were much better than the French Communists in terms of keeping at a working distance from Moscow. On the other hand, ambitious, intelligent and opportunistic leaders like Togliatti very early concluded where their self interest lay. Togliatti didn't deviate substantially in those years from where the Soviets were despite all the emphasis on “Euro-Communism”. However, many of the real intellectuals in the party in Italy and elsewhere were severely shaken by the 1956 and 1968 events in Hungary and Czechoslovakia and Berlinguer was more inclined to be critical of certain Soviet actions like the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia.

*Q: I don't know how it was at that time, but were the Communists doing an awful lot of demonstrating against the sixth fleet and Gaeta and all that sort of thing? I have the feeling they let NATO alone.*

RUSSELL: In Trieste I don't remember, but of course Trieste was a very center-right oriented region. Friuli Venezia Giulia was center right in the spectrum and the Communist Party was not particularly strong at all. In Rome there were some Communist demonstrations, but I don't even remember what they were about.

*Q: Was corruption a concern? I mean, were we looking at it, reporting on it and concerned about it?*

RUSSELL: We were very concerned at the fact that the Christian Democrats seemed to be a party that showed the moral wear and tear of having been in power too long and one in which, like the Socialist parties, there was a lot of corruption. For example, the government would appropriate funds for earthquake victims, and they would never get it. And there were other scandals. So you knew the public structures were just not working well and that a lot of it was due to corruption. However, I don't remember our being able to identify individual cases of high level corruption like Mr. X is taking money from the mafia or something like that. I don't remember the Embassy our getting into that kind of reporting unless it was a scandal in the press which affected public opinion. We became very concerned that the CD party was getting sclerotic and thus opening the way for more Communist Party influence. So, one of my specific tasks was to try to identify up and coming young, honest, effective Christian Democrat politicians and cultivate them and send them to the U.S. on leadership grants and that sort of thing. We tried to make it clear to them that we favored a more modern approach to government. There were several major factions in the party, and for awhile Forlani, for example, was seen as a more modern, more efficient, perhaps more honest leader than some of the others.

*Q: How about Moro? How was he seen at that time?*

RUSSELL: Moro was seen as a very intellectual but rather unpredictable and a somewhat left-wing CD politician. He first formed a “Center-Left” government in Italy with the Socialists in 1963. His Moroteo faction was identified with the idea of a political compromise that would involve the Communists more in decision making. However, they weren't the only such faction. There was another group that had a similar left of center approach. We had good relations with Moro, as with all Italian government leaders. He was considered to be a very decent human being, but his attitude towards the Communists was seen as naive. It is ironic that he was murdered by Red Brigade left wing terrorists in 1978 despite his more open attitude towards the left. On the other hand, the far left has often seen moderate leftists as their greatest enemies, as in Germany during the rise of Hitler, when the Communists considered the Socialists a greater enemy than the Nazis.

*Q: How about Andreotti?*

RUSSELL: When I was there, Andreotti was seen as he has been seen by many observers, as a very subtle and inscrutable politician, a kind of Renaissance Cardinal type. You never knew exactly what he was up to. I mean he took the position that he was very pro-U.S. and strongly pro-NATO, but I don't think we really ever felt sure exactly where he stood.

*Q: What about the role of the church at this time?*

RUSSELL: Well the church's role earlier on had been very strong. I think people had even been threatened with excommunication if they voted Communist in the '48 election and this was pretty effective. The church was very heavy handed. By the mid-'70s I think the watershed was the divorce referendum if you remember. That was in 1974 when they had a referendum to confirm the 1970 legalization of divorce. It was a very hotly contested vote and the Catholic Church lost. I remember I sat down with a really terrific colleague who was covering the Socialist parties. I don't know if you have ever run across him.

*Q: I know Dufour. A terrific guy.*

RUSSELL: We sat down and together we produced an analysis of the impact of the divorce referendum. I remember the Embassy front office saying, this is too long and no one is going to read it, so redo it as a short telegram. We had done this several page report. We were furious. We had done a number of interviews and spent about a week on this damn thing and thought it was an important piece of analysis. Then we had to condense it into a short telegram. Finally we got permission to send a copy of the full report by mail to the desk.

I think that the divorce referendum marked a watershed. After that I think the church's ability to say thou shalt vote in a particular way and make it stick steadily declined, as did the influence of the more conservative elements in the Christian Democratic Party. Now there is little patience with long Embassy reports, but that was a different era and there was an insatiable demand in Washington for detailed analysis of Italian domestic political developments.

*Q: I mean were there any during this '74-'76, were there any issues that particularly energized the political process in Italy or our concerns?*

RUSSELL: It was a while ago so I am a little bit hazy on the specific domestic political issues we were following then. I remember our interest in Christian Democratic Party and other government party attitudes towards the Communists and the divorce referendum.

*Q: I assume we were taking a real hands off say on the referendum.*

RUSSELL: Oh, yes. We certainly took no position on an issue like that. Our focus was on the overall political situation and keeping Italy as a loyal NATO member. Every election,

local in a major city or provincial or national was seen through this optic. We were very concerned that the Communists were moving closer to having at least an indirect voice in the national government. They had an important national election in 1976 before I left. The Ambassador wanted a rather firm prediction sent in on the election result, although this is pretty risky in Italian politics and the polls were not particularly accurate. So we did a telegram in the political section and predicted that the government would do okay, but that the Communists would gain. The front office literally changed the figure on how well the Communists would do so as not to alarm Washington. We said we don't really think it is going to come out that way. We think the Communists will do better than that. However, we probably did not argue forcefully enough. So a cable went in that was too optimistic as it turned out. The election results really worried Washington quite a bit and with some reason.

*Q: Were the Red Brigades active at this point?*

RUSSELL: Yes they were active. They were knee capping people on the street and kidnaping people. Moro was kidnaped and killed two years after I left, as I mentioned. There was a lot of criticism of the government that they hadn't done enough to free him. Whether that is true or not I really don't know. Yes, the Red Brigades were active, and it was a worry and Embassy security was increasing, although the Red Brigades weren't typically going after Americans.

*Q: Did we feel that the Red Brigades were directed anywhere outside of sort of you know extreme left wing Maoist type things, or did we feel that there was a Soviet hand or another hand behind them at that time?*

RUSSELL: That is a good question. I don't know what the agency people thought about that issue. I think it was felt that just as with some of the Palestinian terrorism that had gone on that the Soviets were not adverse to these activities, including Bader-Meinhof in Germany. I think there was a feeling that the Soviet bloc might be providing some help for these guys. Of course, there is a long tradition of Italian anarchism. The Red Brigades were basically on the anarchist fringe in the old Italian tradition. They were doing a lot of damage, and they were hitting people who typically were on the solidly democratic, modernizer and pro-western track. They were going after some fine people in the Christian Democratic Party; people who were honest reformists, hard headed, and wouldn't finagle too much. They seemed to be after people like that, which was not surprising. They were making a lot of people afraid. I remember talking to some journalists, for example, who were afraid the Red Brigades might do them in and many Christian Democratic politicians were quite concerned for their own safety.

*Q: How did you find the press?*

RUSSELL: Basically every party had its own newspaper, and so every newspaper had to be read knowing what its political source of financing was. There wasn't much of an objective press outside of a few like Corriere della Sera and La Stampa. But Il Tempo in

Rome was always center right or even occasionally pro MSI in some of the things they would run. Il Giorno and some of the others were always on the left. Il Giornale and Il Resto del Carlino were center right. Every publication had its own political perspective. However, top flight papers like Corriere della Sera were generally pretty objective.

*Q: Well then in 1976 you were off. Whither?*

RUSSELL: In '76 I came back to Washington. I was told that having served in Italy twice or actually three times at that point, that I should have a "GLOP" assignment, Global Outlook Program. I said, "Okay, fine." They said, "However, we have a job in Personnel which if you take that we will consider it a GLOP assignment. This was an interesting commentary on personnel work. So I came back and I was Deputy to Sam Fry in the Training and Liaison shop in Personnel. That turned out to be a delightful assignment. Working with Sam was terrific. I was responsible for language training and economic training, mid level type training plus language training and I was responsible for trying to assure that language compliance went up. It was low; it was above 50% but not by a lot. So one of my jobs was to say "No, we object to your assigning Joe Smith to that country unless he can speak the language. Yes the Embassy needs him, but he has got to reach at least a 2/2 or a 3/3. It is a designated language position. We want him to reach that level before he goes." So that was somewhat unpopular, but the office did manage to raise language compliance. The other nice thing about the job was that unlike the counselors and assignments officers, where there are ten applicants for any of the really choice positions, we were more like Santa Claus. We had all kinds of desirable and useful assignments to dole out. It was psychologically satisfying. "You want economic training? That makes sense. We will try and arrange it for you." I enjoyed that aspect. Then I was head of that shop when Sam left, and I helped set up the Pearson program which Sam had started, assigning people out of State to state and local government jobs on "detail." It was an excellent program and our people usually did very well and enjoyed their out-of-Washington U.S. jobs. Then I was executive secretary to the senior training board that made decisions on who was going to get senior training. It was a good assignment.

*Q: You did that from '76 to...*

RUSSELL: '76 to '78.

*Q: How would you characterize in this period the attitude towards training in the State Department?*

RUSSELL: I think Carol Laise was Director General and then Harry Barnes in late 1977. The attitude was that yes, training was important, that on language there was a big push because State had been rightly criticized for sending people out unprepared. So we were giving much more emphasis to language training. As far as Economic training is concerned, there had been criticism that economic officers didn't have enough background. In addition there was criticism that we didn't have enough outreach and so things like the Pearson program were designed to address that. But in terms of springing

people for important shorter-term training in management or negotiations or subjects like that, it was as difficult as ever. So I think that, yes, in a couple of areas we were making a conscious effort to do better in long term training. But there was no change in Office Directors in busy, understaffed offices begrudging someone for going off for a week or two for training.

There was another interesting wrinkle. I chaired I guess you would now call it a "diversity group" mulling over how we could do better on attracting and keeping more minorities and women in the service. One of the issues we discussed was training. Obviously this is how people get ahead if they are trained and can do a better job, so there was a big push to get more women in economic training because the women complained correctly that they were often being relegated to consular work in particular. So we did manage to get more women into economic training for example. And in terms of increased minority training, there was some of that. However, there weren't that many minority officers in the service. We were very short of minority officers at that point as you remember. One of the interesting things though was I remember assigning a number of women to economic training, and hearing from the Director General or from her office that we need them to be more "visible". We can't "spare them" for the training. We want to put them in more visible positions in front offices and that sort of thing. I thought frankly that was perverse.

*Q: Well, I mean, it is always a short time. Speaking of short-term training, when I was in Personnel back in the '60s we ran across the phenomenon known as training officers. These were people in a bureau who invariably were given any short-term training there was because they were probably the most available people. So they would end up with a hell of a lot of training, but they essentially were not people who were destined to go as far as the others.*

RUSSELL: That was true even in senior training. We had an interesting phenomenon with the people at the top of the list for senior training. It was fairly easy to pick the top five or ten percent of the Foreign Service cohort. They just stood out. The next block of 60 or 70% was harder to disaggregate. Very often those at the top of the list would say "No, I have this great offer to be DCM somewhere so I don't want senior training." Many of them opted out of senior training because they felt that it was not as conducive to promotion as a good assignment and they were probably right. You don't want to penalize or coerce people to take it. However, if senior training is to be worthwhile, do you want someone to blow it off? I think the answer is always to tie important training and a good onward assignment together at the outset, but the system did not always work that way.

*Q: Well, I recall running into an old friend of mine, Larry Eagleburger, in an elevator. He said, "What are you doing, Stu?" "I am in Senior Seminar." He said, "That's a waste of time," and really for him it was. Were you able to get a pretty good representation to the war colleges and all?*

RUSSELL: I think so, yes. It was very sought after, and so while we lost some of the highest fliers off the top of the list, there was a lot of competition for war college

assignments if they were in Washington. If they involved say the Air War College down in Montgomery, Alabama, or something like that, it was harder to find people who wanted to do that. The Army War College in Carlisle, to which I later worked hard to get assigned, had a superior reputation of being a very good war college, a terrific location and not that far from Washington. However, that was an exception and it was very hard to get people to go to Montgomery, Alabama, and not all that easy even to get them up to Newport.

*Q: The Naval War College.*

RUSSELL: The Naval War College. But no, I think we were sending good people and I think we also were able to do that because there was an increasing effort made to link that to an onward assignment. However, it sometimes did not work, as DCM assignments, for example, always took a long time to negotiate within the Department. I experienced that later when I went to the National War College and was told I was the European Bureau candidate for DCM Reykjavik. However, it took so long to make the final decision, I took a Deputy Office Director job instead.

*Q: What about, can you talk a bit about the Pearson amendment, the background of it, and how it worked while you were there or was getting ready to work.*

RUSSELL: It was already started. Sam Fry had done the major spadework on that. We already had a handful of people assigned. I don't know the whole background of where it came from, but the idea was that the Foreign Service was a bit parochial, which is true, and that it would be useful for FSOs to get out into the states and at the local government level. Exactly the legislative background I don't recall, but the State Department thought it was a good deal, and they wanted to expand the number of assignments. There were a handful of assignments when I took Sam's job, and we expanded it by about another half dozen. I think we had, if I remember correctly, about a dozen people out in state and local government jobs, but we had to be very careful that they were jobs in which the officer had real responsibility, that they weren't just put in an office someplace for window decoration. I remember one officer was assigned to Governor Thompson's office

*Q: Illinois or Michigan.*

RUSSELL: Illinois. You know, a governor with a national reputation. Gov. Jim Thompson really used this guy. He had a wonderful tour. There were several others who went to governor's offices where they were very well used. I would go and scout the jobs, go visit the perspective employers and ask what are you really going to use the officer for? What are their responsibilities going to be? I went to Albany, New York, once, and they were offering a job in the state government, but it wasn't clear to me what the guy would be doing, so we ultimately didn't accept the job. New York City offered one, where as near as I could figure out they wanted a Foreign Service officer to be responsible for deciding who got turned out on the street from mental institutions. We thought that was a very poor idea politically for the State Department and not a great job for the officer. But,

we did get people out mainly to assignments like governor's offices, and it worked very well, and fulfilled the purposes of the Pearson program

*Q: On the language side, did you find that some languages are difficult to staff?*

RUSSELL: People didn't want to take on a two-year language unless it was really essential to their career interests, like Arabic for an officer wanting to specialize in the Middle East. Also, if it was a language used only in a smaller country, people might hesitate to take a year of training since they would only use it once during their careers. But if someone was going out to work in a non-English speaking country in a job requiring a lot of local contacts they would be willing to take time to learn the local language. Anyone wanting to specialize in an area with a broadly understood language like Spanish, or Russian during the Soviet period would eagerly seek that language training. Many officers moving into senior East European assignments were Russian language officers who had served in Moscow and I recall some of them not wanting to study the local language for fear of "polluting" their Russian. Basically, knowing a foreign language was important to success in your work and thus your long term promotion prospects, but the promotion boards did not credit time spent in training as much as time spent on the job.

*Q: Well we had spent an enormous amount of both money and put personnel into training, officers in Vietnamese, and all of this is essentially gone except for a monitoring place. Were there any efforts at that point to retread these Vietnamese people into some other area or not?*

RUSSELL: Only if they were coming up for assignment to some other country. If we were going to send them to Germany, they would learn German, and they would want to learn German. There was no effort made just because they had been stuck with spending time learning Vietnamese. It just depended on where they were assigned what language training they received. Any officer who had substantive reporting responsibilities usually welcomed the training. If they were going out as admin or consular officers, even though the consular officers really needed it to do an effective job, they were sometimes reluctant to take a language designated position requiring a year of language study because they calculated it really did not advance their next promotion. Also, State always seemed incapable of staffing for the "man in motion" and thus prevent long staffing gaps. Consular supervisors and Ambassadors would scream to have a needed Consular officer sent out even without the necessary training because of the workload.

*Q: What was your impression of the effect of this language program?*

RUSSELL: I thought it was very good, but then the only language I studied at first was Czech. I had good Italian when I came into the service and some French. The Czech instruction was absolutely first rate. The teacher was rumored by bad mouths to have been a border guard. I don't know if that is true or not. But the training was worthy of a border guard. He was very disciplined and you worked like hell, and you learned the

language through drill. I thought it was a very effective program.

*Q: Did you find the Personnel at that time was staffed by officers who were sort of on their way as opposed to, basically upward bound officers or not?*

RUSSELL: My impression is they were average or better than average. I don't think we always got the superstars. I think we got good officers who typically tried hard to do a good job. My impression was that Personnel officers in that period were really committed to helping their people. The counselors when I was there really took personally getting their counselees a good, appropriate assignment. The assignments officers took very seriously getting the bureaus the right people to fill the slots. There would be very tough arguments in panel about the quality of a person or what that person really deserved or was able to do. The counselors would fight for their people. I thought it was a good system. I can't remember all the names of the people that particularly impressed me. The management in the front office of career counseling and development was good. Now obviously all of the mid-level officers who were squirreling away with us resented it when a so-called "bag job" would come down from the seventh floor, and some favored staff assistant would be dropped into some plum position which another officer might have deserved more. That was not as frequent then as now and I really think Personnel went downhill in the 1990s due to major staffing cuts and a growing cynicism. My impression is most counselees did not feel that they were being fought for by their Personnel counselors or that the counselors had time to even get to know them. When Personnel had been better staffed there had been efforts made to project assignments and training out several years, and while it often did not work, there was an effort made. I sense that things are better now under Secretary Powell due to his success in fighting for more resources. State needs leaders who care both about policy and about supporting and improving the institution. It needs leaders who provide downward loyalty as much as they demand upward loyalty. Giving people a realistic sense of how their careers can develop over time is really important and we tried to do this when I was a worker bee in PER.

*Q: I did this. This is back in the late '60s. I charted careers out for I think it was 20 years.*

RUSSELL: But did it work?

*Q: No. I will say this that it did create, when you took the aggregate, you ended up with an idea of how many people we are going to need for this job, that type of job. It gave a feel for how we directed people or maybe we shouldn't be directing people. They should understand. But obviously it fell apart after the first assignment. At least it was a thought process.*

RUSSELL: I think that is exactly right. I think the fact that the counselor had the time and the inclination to make those plans and discuss them with the counselee was extremely valuable. I remember Charlie Stout was my counselor in Personnel. I was leaving Prague I was supposed to be going to the Communist Party-watching job in Rome, and then, as I

told you, I ended up in Trieste in a holding pattern. I had the impression that there was a counselor who was fighting for my interests and someone I could call upon. Charlie had agreed that the political section in Rome was an appropriate position for me to aspire to at that point. And once we both agreed on what my next logical assignment should be he helped me help myself to get it.

*Q: Well in '78, usually one thing about Personnel is it usually means that you have certain hand in your next assignment.*

RUSSELL: That's right.

*Q: And it is one of the great inducements to it which normally would be considered in most bureaucracies to be a staff support job and one to be avoided.*

RUSSELL: Right and even back then Personnel was considered to be a place where you are not going to get a fast promotion, but where you could look for your next assignment. So from Personnel I ended up taking the European Community desk officer job in Regional Political and Economic Affairs (RPE) in the European bureau. That was terrific. I was not an Economic Officer; I was a Political Officer, but I had studied a lot of economics in grad school. So I became the EC desk officer.

*Q: You did this from '78 to...*

RUSSELL: '78 to '80, two years.

*Q: First a little bit on the superstructure in which you were working. Who was head of the European affairs when you took it over?*

RUSSELL: George Vest was Assistant Secretary. Alan Holmes was the Deputy Assistant Secretary we worked most closely with. He was a very effective, decent guy. Rick Burt was EUR Assistant Secretary the second time when I came back to RPE from 1981-83 after senior training and served as Deputy Director of RPE. The Deputy Assistant Secretary to whom RPE reported was Tom Niles. In 1978 George Vest was the EUR Assistant Secretary.

*Q: Well this was during '78 and '80 was the Carter period. What was the status of the European community, the EC, that you are going to be dealing with at that time? Was it fully established?*

RUSSELL: Greece was still to enter the EC in 1981 and Spain and Portugal joined a few years later. Then, of course, there was a further expansion in the 1990s and an additional one planned for a number of former Soviet bloc Central European countries. One issue on which we would occasionally do think pieces was the degree to which the process of European integration and European unity was good for us. Is the EC on balance a good thing? Is further integration on balance a good thing? We came out very solidly that it

was because it gave Europe greater stability and strength, and of course, during the Cold War, it was very crucial that Europe remain strong and prosperous. We had the feeling that a successful EC, despite the problems on the trade side that would occasionally arise, was very helpful to us. As I remember one of the principal things we were dealing with in that period was improving coordination with the EC on political issues, including sanctions on Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Middle East problems.

*Q: It was '79, so it was a bit of a turbulent time. And then we were making all sorts of grain embargo, Olympics and all that. All of which had quite an impact.*

RUSSELL: All of these measures that we took against the Soviets as a result of Afghanistan were things that we were dealing with in RPE, and we were actually trying to coordinate with European allies in the EC what sorts of measures could be taken. One of my principal jobs was to run the political cooperation dialogue with the EC presidency countries. Every six months, of course, this would change. I would go over and visit with the Foreign Ministry personnel in the presidency country either before or immediately upon them taking the presidency and decide how we were going to exchange political information. We would tell them the U.S. position on important issues like Afghanistan and they would give us a detailed series of ideas reflecting the EC position. Not being an economist, my job was more about political cooperation and dialogue with the European Community.

*Q: The original idea of the European Community had been you might say sort of the cornerstone of American policy. Its two purposes, one was to obviously pose a block against the Soviet Union, but basically it was to prevent another European civil war particularly between France and Germany. Had France and Germany reached the point where we no longer even thought about that, and we were more concerned with development as a whole?*

RUSSELL: Yes, I don't remember if the famous saying about NATO being useful to "keep the U.S. in Europe, keep the Russians out and keep the Germans down" was seen as applicable, certainly as far as the last part of the joke is concerned. I think we considered the Europeans were certainly not about to fight with each other again and that our main problem was keeping up trans-Atlantic unity in the face of Soviet pressures, as in Afghanistan.

*Q: Time had passed.*

RUSSELL: Time had passed. We were not worrying about German revanchism. What we were looking at was the degree to which further EC integration, to include Greece for example, would affect our interests. We were looking at the implications of further enlargement of the EC and U.S. national interests. This included the extent to which enlargement stabilized Europe by bringing in new members who, because of internal problems, had taken longer to be accepted and who would therefore benefit most from EC membership.

*Q: Was Spain, Portugal...*

RUSSELL: Spain and Portugal came in after Greece. We were looking at the situation very carefully and trying to figure out, not that we could prevent it or help it that much, but what should our national position be. The conclusion was it was clearly in our interests to see this enlargement succeed. However, we recognized that enlargement would produce additional trade problems and that we could not dismiss these because of the political and security benefits of a more stable Europe. On balance, however, it was clear that the U.S. should continue to support EC integration.

*Q: Did you find that we had problems within the European bureau. As far as the EC was there; it was now a political force, but each nation was also a political force and probably stronger than the EC. Was part of your job making sure that we were all singing out of the same hymn book or something like that?*

RUSSELL: Good question. Part of the job was figuring out what the positions of the individual countries were because the EC Council, then as now, is the key force in the EC, and, while the EC Commission has become more powerful, it is the larger countries, which still carry decisive weight in the Council, that shape the final decisions. We were very much concerned with keeping track of individual country positions. Also we were concerned in terms of bilateral dealings with individual countries within the EC. Some were the more free trade oriented, like Denmark and the UK, for example. We often found that they agreed on certain trade issues, which involved a more liberal approach towards trade than say the French had. So we would talk to people bilaterally and say we hope you oppose this proposed ban on U.S. exports of whatever in the interests of maintaining a liberal trade policy and preventing a trade conflict.

*Q: What was your impression of the role of France within the EC at that time?*

RUSSELL: I don't remember us being preoccupied with France being particularly obstructionist overall. However, they certainly were more protectionist. They were basically mercantilists. They always have been and still are. But it was just that some of the countries, more the southern tier than the northern tier, would take positions that were more protectionist, particularly on agriculture, which was a big concern for us. Countries more dependent on trade and open markets and not as preoccupied with agricultural questions were our natural allies on some of these issues.

*Q: How about Italy? I mean you had just come out of there. What sort of role were they playing in the EC?*

RUSSELL: I don't remember them playing all that active a role. I remember the main thing that would come up would be that Italy did not want to be excluded from decision making. If the U.S. would sit down with the British, French and Germans, the Italians would get annoyed and say “Wait a minute, we are a major power too. We ought to be

included." The so-called "Quad" meetings always upset the Italians a lot. We tried very hard to bring the Italians in if there was an issue where they might be our natural ally.

*Q: Did the Soviet introduction of the SS-20 intermediate range missile, was that an EC problem or...*

RUSSELL: That was later. That was in the early '80s. That was in my next assignment

*Q: Okay. How about the Soviet Union? Were they developing any relations with the European Community at that time?*

RUSSELL: Yes, they were always trying to do that, but they were trying to do it more in the early '80s with the pipeline issue. You remember that. We can get into that when discussing my next assignment. I think our preoccupation was on the invasion of Afghanistan and how are we going to try to penalize the Soviets. I remember we were involved in drawing up lists of sanctions. There was sort of a reflexive response. They have done something that we don't like, and therefore a memo would be done with all the things we would cut off, block, retaliate in and that sort of thing. The main idea was that economic sanctions would be brought to bear vigorously and quickly.

*Q: Well, I mean much of this was coming out of the National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski's office. Did you have the feeling, what was the spirit of those dealing with the EC, that we were trying to drag them, that we find enthusiastic support or that we were trying to drag them into things that they were very reluctant to do or what?*

RUSSELL: It was the latter as always, and as was true in the pipeline issue, that they were always reluctant to go along with some of the sanctions that we proposed for various reasons. If a proposed sanction affected their trade, they were more likely to oppose it. If it would tend to annoy the Soviets more and make them more belligerent, they didn't like that. Yes, by and large, we typically were taking the lead in anything that involved penalizing or pressuring the Soviets. You know, the British would be more favorable or perhaps the Germans would be depending on the issue. The smaller countries were often more reticent.

*Q: Well did you sometimes have the feeling that the directives from above were a little bit excessive?*

RUSSELL: I sometimes had the feeling that it was rather a seat of the pants reaction to draw up a list of sanctions, and so we would sit down and spin out a list. Then it would go up the line and they'd say, yes, this is what we are going to do. I didn't know whether we always fully analyzed the impact or feasibility or the diplomatic ramifications of the sanctions.

*Q: I have talked to other people who were in this. You produce a list of sanctions and it goes up and there is no real analysis. It is just that looks good; let's do that. We want to*

*show we are tough.*

RUSSELL: That's it exactly. There wasn't time to do much analysis, particularly if you had to get a memo up to the seventh floor the next morning on a list of sanctions.

*Q: Well even if you did analysis, politically it probably wouldn't have made much sense when you are dealing with something like the very, I am characterizing and I shouldn't, but posturing national security advisor's staff and all that of say well if we do this it is probably won't work or it is not a good idea, but you end up by doing very little.*

RUSSELL: Afghanistan was so egregious that I think that did not become so apparent. It was felt that we needed to oppose the invasion vigorously even if we couldn't have much impact, even if others wouldn't go along with it, and even though it might involve shooting off a couple of our toes in the process. Where you really got into that was in the pipeline crisis later on.

*Q: Did you feel in working with the Presidency of the EC that a new breed of Europeancrats were being developed, I mean people who were beginning to look at Europe as a whole within the bureaucracies of these various countries as opposed to a bunch of Belgians or Luxemburgers or Germans or French be put together?*

RUSSELL: Yes, I did. I found the European Commission middle level bureaucrats I was talking with, the Director or Deputy Director level, were generally very competent. They were also extremely well paid and really locked into their positions. They lived extremely well as near as I could figure out. They were typically very European minded and pretty serious people. They were in for the long term backed by their own country and by the commission structure. And if the official was smart, he could go far. In negotiations with the U.S. they had the advantage that DOD or Treasury has over State – the continuity of career experts backed up by a large, aggressive bureaucracy. However, they sure had a better economic deal personally than their U.S. counterparts.

*Q: I have seen pictures of the quarters at Strasbourg, you know sort of lackeys with fancy uniforms opening doors for everybody.*

RUSSELL: There was a lot of that. Well, on the other hand it reflects the elitist approach they have inherited from countries like France with their famous schools whose graduates get the plum lifetime career jobs. They see themselves as in these jobs for life and moving steadily up towards higher positions, so they feel they ought to be treated well. But, as I said, most of them were very sharp and doing a pretty darn good job for their particular departments.

*Q: Did you run across any fissures in this between the EC types and the national types?*

RUSSELL: Yes. And the national types, if you talked with a Foreign Ministry official in any one of these countries, they would make it clear the EC Council will decide and not

the EC Commission. France in its wisdom will decide what it wants to do. Britain in its wisdom will decide. So my point is it is sort of like why the State Department gets taken to the cleaners in dealing with the DOD. You have people who have been in jobs for years and years and moved up the ladder and know every nook and cranny on every issue. Some guy in a two year job at State is dealing with these people and has a tough road to hoe in negotiations because they haven't been working the issue that long. There is also the big question of how much support you get from the Seventh floor compared with how much political support your opposite number gets.

*Q: How about the British? Were there reservations did you feel at that time?*

RUSSELL: Reservations?

*Q: On the good of the EC and all that.*

RUSSELL: Yes. I don't remember a lot of details except that my impression was the British people certainly didn't like the idea of the EC telling them, for example, what ingredients could be put into their "bangers" or otherwise micro managing their national customs and habits. They didn't want to be heavily regulated from Brussels and that is understandable. The British were perceived as outsiders and there was still the political residue of the French trying to keep them out.

*Q: How did your various attempts at boycotts go in trying to sell it to the EC over Afghanistan?*

RUSSELL: I honestly don't remember all the details. I remember we just went ahead and implemented various measures designed to make the Soviets pay a price for the invasion. I don't recall that they required others to follow suit. Our initiatives were self-standing.

*Q: Well, in 1980 you changed over.*

RUSSELL: In 1980 I was selected for senior training, and went to the National War College. I was there for an academic year and had a very interesting, productive experience.

*Q: What particularly struck you about the war college? What did you gain from it?*

RUSSELL: I think I gained an appreciation for the American military mind, and values system and way of looking at the world, which I fond attractive. I thought the U.S. military officers were very dedicated people and I admired that. It was very important for Foreign Service officers and their military counterparts to get a better understanding and respect for each other. Many military people, for example, had no idea that we were like them in many ways, such as Presidential Commissions and an up or out promotion system. It was also a big advantage to have an academic year to think about the big picture. The National War College was very much oriented toward studying international

relations and understanding political developments, and had more focus on this than the service war colleges like the Army War College where you had more emphasis on military and service oriented studies. At the National War College there was an excellent travel program. I took the Middle East course with a superb professor, and then went with the group of about 20 classmates to the Middle East in the spring of 1981. We met with Prime Minister Begin and King Hussein and with President Anwar Sadat just six months before he was assassinated. We had an absolutely fabulous exposure to the politics of the area and to the Arab-Israeli issues in particular. So that was a fine course for a year. The rubbing of shoulders among the military and the foreign affairs officers from various agencies was extremely valuable.

*Q: Well after that, whither?*

RUSSELL: After that, I was told by the EUR bureau that I would be their candidate for DCM in Reykjavik. I thought that was great and my wife and I began to study up on Iceland, reading sagas and that sort of thing. But then the selection process dragged out and I was offered the chance to be a Deputy Director in RPE for EC and OECD affairs. That sounded like an even better move. We liked Washington and our kids were happy in school here. Also, it seemed to me that I would get a very broad exposure to major issues in RPE at the Deputy level whereas Reykjavik was fairly limited in that respect. So I took that job instead coming out of the war college.

*Q: You did it from '81...*

RUSSELL: '81 to '83.

*Q: You were mentioning some of the issues that came up. In the first place you came in just with the new Reagan administration. With your foreign service colleagues and all was there a certain amount of apprehension about Ronald Reagan? You know his background but we are talking about coming from the right in the American political spectrum. At that point it seemed like the far right. Could you talk about how this worked from your perspective?*

RUSSELL: I don't remember in detail what the office talk was about Reagan and what he stood for. We were more interested in the new Seventh floor lineup and the new Secretary.

*Q: Haig.*

RUSSELL: Haig came in first, right. So I was there on that job first with Haig and then Schultz in mid-1982. I think probably many Foreign Service officers wondered just how savvy the new President was on foreign affairs. He tended to speak in unsophisticated terms on many things, although the direction seemed clear in his position on dealing with the Soviets. I liked that, and I think a lot of people felt that at least he was very clear and forceful in stating some of these issues. However, I don't think people felt that he

understood the nuances. On the other hand I think they respected the State Department leadership that came in, Haig and Eagleburger as EUR Assistant Secretary and then Under Secretary for Political Affairs and Rick Burt replacing Eagleburger eventually in EUR. Rick Burt came in as Assistant Secretary for European affairs with a very high-powered, aggressive team. He had come from the Political Military (PM) Bureau where he had cleaned house in rather drastic fashion, firing about half the Office Directors as I recall. So everyone in EUR was very concerned about what this would mean. But in the event, he didn't change a lot except maybe the pace of activity, which picked up. We worked very hard, but we had the impression that his team was a very smart and demanding bunch and we got a lot of good work done.

*Q: Well also you were again in the European bureau, having Alexander Haig who had been NATO commander you know said, well here is somebody who has been around the block. He is our boy.*

RUSSELL: With Haig, you would occasionally see or you would often hear about his scribbling emphatic notes on memos that came up to him. He'd have exclamation points and strong comments in the margins and all kinds of things, but people generally liked that. He was up front and said what he felt. He supported his people the way military officers are trained to do and civilians often are not. He was obviously bright. I guess I took part in one or two meetings as Acting RPE Director with Haig, on Soviet pipeline sanctions as I recall. He conducted them very well, and asked very intelligent questions. I also remember a meeting with Eagleburger, Rick Burt and Bob Hormats on the issue and being very impressed with the quality of the discussion. Burt was very new to the job, as I recall, but had his brief down cold and carried the day with his position. It was great fun to be involved working with such really sharp individuals.

*Q: Well, there are two issues that were mentioned before. We might as well pick up on those, the pipeline and the SS-20 business and then there will be others. Let's talk about the pipeline first.*

RUSSELL: The Soviets offer to the Europeans to run a major natural gas pipeline (Urengoy-Uzhgorod) to supply gas to Western Europe was something that bothered us a great deal.

*Q: It was natural gas.*

RUSSELL: It was natural gas. The idea was that this could make the Europeans, particularly Germany, more dependent on the Soviets and that they could turn off the tap when they wanted to try and influence the political situation in Europe. Therefore, prima fascia, that was a bad thing. You have to remember this took place after the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the 1980 declaration of martial law in Poland, so our relations with the Soviets were pretty bad and various trade sanctions were in place. There was a lot of thinking about how we could dissuade the Europeans from going ahead with actually helping to finance this gas pipeline project and how we could hamper them

from going ahead via our economic embargo on pipeline parts. The problem was that you had to strike a balance between alienating key European allies, who had not supported us with most of our earlier sanctions, and trying to prevent something from happening that would give the Soviets a greater hold over Western Europe. There was quite a battle waged on that, with the hawks saying we have to expand our sanctions designed to stop this even at the expense of really angering NATO allies. Others took the position that you don't want to go so far that we alienate allies and, by the way, be unable to stop the pipeline anyway, as actually happened. That was the tug of war that was waged, and people like Tom Niles did a really superb job in working for a sensible outcome on the issue. The European bureau played a pretty major part in trying to see that we went forward in a way that produced some cooperation from our allies in restricting credits to the Soviets but didn't screw up our relations too badly. In the end, the EUR position largely prevailed and the U.S. backed off of extended sanctions. It took an awful lot of effort and some of the other agencies were taking a very tough and unrealistic line on the pipeline issue.

*Q: Well I know. What was your role; what were you working on?*

RUSSELL: RPE was basically doing the position papers for the Secretary on what measures we should adopt and how we could try to convince our allies of our position. The major players in State were EUR and the Economic and Business Affairs Bureau.

*Q: Economic and Business bureau.*

RUSSELL: Economic and Business Bureau. So Bob Hormats in EB and Larry Eagleburger first in EUR and then as Under Secretary for Political Affairs and Rick Burt were leading the policy formulation process in State first under Haig and then under George Shultz. Tom Niles as EUR DAS for Economic affairs and my Office Directors, Sandy Vogelgesang and then John Holmes were very involved in the whole process.

*Q: Did you get involved in seeing what other allies I mean people in the EC where they were? I mean going by and talking to Brits and French and Germans particularly.*

RUSSELL: We were involved constantly with the EC exchanging views on political matters, but big ticket items like the pipeline issue were dealt with bilaterally. If we were talking to the Germans about their attitude that would normally be done by the office of German affairs on a bilateral basis. RPE as the regional political and economic affairs office would be involved in meetings in the Department to discuss the pipeline issue and East-West economic relations in general.

*Q: How did the thing play out, because if I think about it, I can't remember the pipeline ever being done?*

RUSSELL: I would have to really review the history to remember the details of how it came out. How it came out in general, as I remember, was we did not push our really

punitive stand to the point of rupture with the allies on the issue, but on the other hand, they pulled back themselves in terms of issues like extending credits to the Soviets to help build the pipeline. However, the pipeline was eventually completed and increased the Soviet supply of natural gas to Europe by the mid-1980s.

*Q: As I recall, too, we were sitting on some of the key technology weren't we? You know, pipe technology, which was also business for American firms. We had a problem with that.*

RUSSELL: We had a problem in terms there were certain things that we could withhold or tell foreign firms we will not allow them to use that would involve American technology to go ahead with this project. There were certain hammers that we had to try to force the issue. But the feeling was that if we went too far in this we would alienate European allies more than it was worth in the attempt to block this and the pipeline would go ahead in any event.

*Q: Well then going to the SS-20s and intermediate range missiles which the Soviets introduced at this time, and this caused our response to become a matter of great importance. Could you talk about how you were dealing with this?*

RUSSELL: That was more an RPM (Regional Political and Military Affairs) issue and so RPE was not involved. It was a political military issue, an issue within NATO, and it was an issue that we got into in Denmark, which was my next assignment. We got into that on a bilateral basis quite a bit. In terms of what RPE was doing, we were trying to focus on the pipeline issues and the trade issues. We had steel import issues with the EC. We had a major dispute on several agricultural issues. We had the pipeline. We had a whole series of disputes going on with EC in that period.

*Q: So on trade, how much. You say that some of the other things that you were really concerned with was trade with the European Community.*

RUSSELL: Our office followed the EC and the OECD, as well as East-West trade issues. Those were the areas we covered. We covered anything to do with political and economic issues in those two organizations. The major trade issues as I remember involved steel dumping and some multi-billion dollar agricultural issues.

Our main role in RPE as far as the EC was concerned was helping to prepare our Ambassador to the EC in Brussels to go in and raise these various issues. We had a series of very effective Ambassadors over there. We had Dean Hinton and Tom Enders and George Vest as our Ambassadors to the EC in Brussels, I mean really heavy hitters. So our job was to draw up and coordinate position papers on an inter-agency basis to brief them up. We briefed up Tom Enders before he went out. He was one of the brightest guys I ran across in the Foreign Service. We prepared piles of briefing papers for him and when we offered him our oral briefings after he had read them, he would, in effect, brief us very brilliantly and then ask, “Have I got this right?” We would make sure that the

instructions going out to our Ambassador to the EC was fully coordinated within the Washington bureaucracy. The issues typically involved several State Department offices and other agencies like Commerce, USTR and Treasury.

*Q: How did the U.S. trade representative on these trade things? Was this a, was he or she the principal player at that time?*

RUSSELL: On the trade issues, yes, I would say so. The economic bureau had a big voice, as well. But USTR was a heavy hitter player in all of these issues.

*Q: Was it the usual thing that we were seeing, was France considered the major problem or did we find that the EC was presenting a pretty united front?*

RUSSELL: I think very often the French were the most difficult to deal with, but it depended on the issue. On the steel issue for example, British steel was accused of dumping. In that case the British would be supporting their firms. If it were an issue of EC agricultural CAP subsidies being too high or the EC taking other measures really hurting U.S. farmers, we could count on the French and the Germans to be absolutely opposed to us. If it was a generalized free trade issue, opening up markets in general and that sort of thing, then we would go typically to people like the British or the Dutch or the Danes who were traditional free trade advocates and try to get their support. So, yes, the French were French and did their usual narrowly self-interested thing, but it did depend on whose ox was being gored in terms of positions EC countries took on these trade disputes.

*Q: You mentioned that you followed political-economic developments with the OECD as well as the EC. Was the OECD seen as an effective instrument at that time because later particularly in some of its provisions it turned out to be kind of the wedge that helped demolish the Soviet Union some of its things.*

RUSSELL: That was the OSCE.

*Q: OSCE, oh excuse me. The OECD...*

RUSSELL: The OECD was the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. It was an organization very much devoted to keeping open markets, market economies, liberalized trade, and fair practices. That was very much an EB area. Bob Hormats would typically lead our delegations to OECD meetings. I'd represent the EUR Bureau in EB senior staff meetings. Abe Katz was our Ambassador there in Paris for at least part of the time I was in RPE. There were a number of hard economic issues which sometimes would very much affect our interests in terms of East-West economic relations for example. So our role in RPE was to make sure that issues with European allies were factored into our overall position at the OECD. We were feeding in European Bureau economic concerns and making sure that EB was aware that if we knew that the French or Germans had a particular position on something, we would know who our allies would be

on that issue. We also worked on East-West economic relations not only with EC partners, but in the OECD and in NATO.

*Q: Did the Soviet Union, were we watching things in the Soviet Union at that time. I mean how did it reflect on your work and all?*

RUSSELL: In the context of the U.S.-EC political dialog, which RPE was responsible for and which I had run as EC desk officer, we would share our ideas with the EC on issues involving Soviet economic relations in particular. We would share the information with the EC Presidency country, a position that rotated every 6 months and still does. RPE would not get into pol-mil things so much, but rather what the Soviets were up to on trade that might affect European-U.S. relations. If there was something involving the Soviet Union that was of general interest, we would get the information to be shared from INR or the Soviet desk. If the French were in the EC Presidency chair, our Embassy in Paris or someone from RPE there for the purpose would convey that information to the French Foreign Ministry officials responsible for political cooperation and compare notes on that. They would get our information. So while we had many avenues of exchanging information with the Europeans this was an additional one, which frankly was sometimes useful and substantive, and sometimes was a bit pro forma. Really hot issues, of course, were dealt with directly with the EC countries involved or with the EC Commission at a high level.

*Q: It strikes me that we pay due attention to who was in the presidency.*

RUSSELL: Yes we did.

*Q: Why?*

RUSSELL: Because the presidency country was the one that would brief us on what was going on. In other words we could go to them and say how is the EC moving on this political issue. The presidency country knew what was going on in the EC council. So if we went to the Dutch and said, "Okay, which way you are heading on this," they would be in a position to describe to us the way the EC Council and the EC Commission was inclined to move. In addition we could go to them and say, "Look, we need to get fast and accurate information on EC Council decisions. How can we organize that?" We had a very competent officer at the USEC Brussels Mission who would fly to these capitals or wherever the location of the council ministerial was and he would wait around in the lobby or hang around like a reporter and try to nab people and then send in an immediate report of what the Council had decided. This worked very well, primarily because we had a sharp and energetic officer handling this rather delicate work.

*Q: Were you feeling any growing reluctance on the part of the European Community, its apparatus, to deal with the United States, or was there I mean a good solid relationship?*

RUSSELL: I think there was a good solid relationship, but with us seen clearly as an

outsider. We were friendly allied outsiders, but they had their interests and we had ours. So they would share what they wanted to share, and they were willing to set up mechanisms for that sharing. We weren't allowed into their meetings, but many of the delegates would, depending on the bilateral relationship, be more or less frank in telling us what happened.

*Q: I would think considering the composition of this heterogeneous group that we could pretty well get good intelligence on what was happening.*

RUSSELL: We had a good idea of what was going on. We certainly didn't know all the details. There was mainly one younger USEC officer working long, long hours, who was our source at the Council site, plus what we got from our individual Embassies after the EC Council delegates got back to their capitals.

*Q: Who was this?*

RUSSELL: Dean Curran for awhile was doing this. He did a fabulous job. His reporting gave us a good idea of what was going on. On the basis of that we could then make a demarche or make a follow up on issues which emerged from the meeting.

*Q: The president of my organization, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training is Ed Rowel. Ed was Ambassador to Luxembourg at one point and was saying usually this was filled by some political appointee.*

RUSSELL: Yes, it usually was

*Q: Ed was Ambassador to Luxembourg but he was saying it was usually filled by somebody who was a political appointee. But he found that really it could be a key place because the Luxemburgers were delighted to have somebody pay attention to them. He found them extremely astute, and you could get a very solid view of what was happening in the European because they were full members of the European Community. It really is a strategic spot. Of course we usually miss it because we send somebody who isn't interested or knowledgeable.*

RUSSELL: Well I think we do this around the world. I think we miss a great deal by not understanding how important to us what happens even in a small country can be. We blow it off and say "We are a big country and it doesn't make that much difference. We have got to pay off political supporters." We lose a hell of a lot because as you say, if you have a competent, active Ambassador who understands the country, he can get an enormous amount of information on what is going on. And in the small countries, particularly ones that are allied to us or close to us, he can have a real impact on what happens in that country. He can be very clear on how we can support or not support their interests if they support or don't support ours. That can really influence policy. If there is someone there who does not understand the country or who is most interested in partying or both, even if they have a good staff, you lose a great deal because it is the Ambassador

who has access to the top leaders. The host country also loses, since it can't have as meaningful a dialog with the U.S. government via the U.S. Embassy as it could with a respected, competent U.S. Ambassador, either career or non-career.

*Q: Yes, because they don't have the entrees, the staff doesn't have the entree. Well this might be a good place to stop I think. We will pick this up in '83; you are off to Denmark.*

***

*Today is 16 May 2000. Ted Going to Denmark. What wee you going to Denmark to do and how did it come about?*

RUSSELL: I was going to Denmark to be DCM to the new Ambassador, Terry Todman, who had been nominated to Denmark, but hadn't yet gone out there. I was coming from the deputy job in RPE. I had very much wanted to go to Denmark and knew that the DCM position was becoming vacant there. I got in touch with Ambassador Todman and had an interview with him. He was kind enough to ask me to come out and be his DCM.

*Q: Well, in a way when one normally goes to Denmark as DCM it is usually the question is how did you get along with a political appointee. They have ranged very much. Here you are going with a man who has been Ambassador, a very professional Ambassador.*

RUSSELL: Absolutely. It was interesting because I was going out to replace Art Hughes who was DCM to a political Ambassador, Ambassador John Loeb. I was absolutely delighted to have a chance to go out and be DCM to Terry Todman. I had heard a lot about him. I knew he had a very long and distinguished record as an Ambassador. It was interesting how it came about, because I guess it shows the importance of the early bird approach. When I got in touch with Ambassador Todman the first time, I was with my wife up at a fishing camp in northern Maine in July. I called down to the Department. Personnel knew I was interested in the job, but I think there were about 70 or 80 people who had also expressed interest. I called down to see how things were going. I called Tom Niles, my DAS in EUR. By chance, Ambassador Todman had just walked into his office. So Ambassador Todman got on the phone and I said I was very interested in the job. He said, "Yes, your name is on the list." But he said, "I won't really be interviewing until September. You are on vacation in Maine." I said, "I am available any time for an interview." He said, "Well, I will be in New York with the Spanish Prime Minister day after tomorrow. But you don't want to break your fishing vacation up in Maine." I said, "I'll be there. Where can I meet you?" I told him all I had to wear was a fishing shirt smelling of Muskol, but he said "fine" and we agreed to meet in the lobby of the hotel where he was staying. So my wife drove me to Bangor Airport and I got on a plane to New York and met him. We had a beer together for about an hour and at the end of the hour he offered me the job. I had already gotten the impression of a very focused professional guy that I really felt I could work with. He said the only condition was that I had to go out there very quickly to which I agreed. So then he introduced me to his wife who was staying in the hotel and I had a nice chat with Mrs. Todman. Then his older son

was there too, so progressively one beer after another I got to meet some of his family.

I bought a little bottle of champagne and went back to Maine and uncorked it that evening at the fishing camp to celebrate. I told my wife, who was head of the library at the Potomac School in McLean and was completing her master's degree in library science, that I was going to have to go over early. She took it extremely well. She has always taken well service related things that I have pulled on her like that. She completed her degree in record time and joined me three weeks after I got over to Copenhagen.

*Q: Where was she taking it?*

RUSSELL: Catholic University.

*Q: That is a school around here that has...*

RUSSELL: It is a top library science school. My wife and I met at graduate school and both got degrees in international affairs but she wasn't able to go into the Foreign Service because of the discriminatory rules they had then. You couldn't have a couple in the Foreign Service. So anyway she finished her library degree and joined me in Copenhagen. The really marvelous thing was that since Ambassador Todman had just been nominated, he was making his rounds for consultations. He invited me to go with him to all his meetings. So the two of us together went to see all the folks at the various agencies, of course at a pretty high level because he was a high-ranking guy and well respected. That was a fabulous introduction. Of course he needed to get confirmed. I didn't have to wait for that, so I went out before he did. As DCM I would overlap with Ambassador Loeb for awhile. Ambassador Todman said, "Go out and try and get things squared away for me. I'll come out as soon as I can get confirmed." He came out six weeks later. We are still good friends and keep in touch.

*Q: Well tell me what was Terry Todman's style of running an embassy and being an Ambassador?*

RUSSELL: He was so used to running an embassy that his style was ideal for a DCM. He had no complexes or worries about his position and being somehow threatened by any subordinate like a DCM. He told me right off the bat, "Look I am going to be the outside person. I am going to make the big decisions. You are going to be the inside person and you are going to do about 85% of the running of things. You are to keep me informed. You are to bring things to me that I need to know about, and I'll make the big decisions and be the public affairs person. I want you to help run the Embassy for me and I am going to give you a fair amount of latitude." It was absolutely ideal because I was a first time DCM and the Ambassador knew exactly what he wanted. Also, he would always let me know in a friendly way and in private if he wanted me to do something differently. We met every day. My door communicated into his office and he had an open door policy. I could go in there any time and raise things with him. I felt that he backed me 100%. It was a very satisfying working relationship, all the more so because he had real

clout in Washington and was highly respected by the host government.

*Q: Before we move on to relations with Denmark and all that, let's talk a bit about the Embassy. I mean Denmark, Copenhagen is considered a nice place but were you sort of overcrowded with agencies or they tended to be in Brussels or Paris or London or something like that.*

RUSSELL: I don't think we were overcrowded with agencies, although it's true some wanted to come there. Ambassador Todman was very good about saying no, and could make it stick. I think the problem was that although we were a small embassy, we were an embassy to an EC country, a NATO country and a pleasant European country everyone wanted to visit during Congressional breaks. So we were a small Embassy but extremely busy. For example, we received generally the same multiple distribution or collective cables as Paris, London, and Bonn. If they got a message saying go in and talk to your host government and make the following pitch, we'd get the same thing in Copenhagen even if it really didn't concern Denmark very much. We had a tiny operational staff basically and were overstretched. Also, the Danish Foreign Ministry was not that large and we came to the point that the Danes came to us and said "Look, you are constantly coming to us to make a demarche on Friday evenings and weekends. This is nonsense. We don't pay any attention to it unless it is really an emergency. Stop it." So we finally had to urge Washington to cut down on the amount of demarche cables like that which the Danes were ignoring unless the issue was really important. A lot of suggested demarches coming in from various agencies weren't particularly relevant to Denmark, but were being sent to every EC or NATO post. We literally just faxed the minor ones over to the MFA and gave a call and said "Would you read that when you have a chance. Let us know what you think." We were absolutely swamped. Our tiny political and economic sections would typically be asked to make two or three demarches a day to the Foreign Ministry on different issues. We simply didn't have the staff to prepare diplomatic notes and personally deliver them all and do all our other work and the Danes didn't have the time or inclination to receive us constantly. However, anything important we handled very fast and professionally and the Danes responded the same way.

*Q: Looking at this, sometimes it is interesting to be in a place such as you were watching this, and you weren't part of the "Big picture". What was your impression? Was this a real dialogue or was this an awful lot of people in Washington blowing off steam or something like that?*

RUSSELL: There was the normal administrative problem of the small post with just as many requests for action as a larger post. So that was unrealistic because Denmark was a smaller player in a lot of these issues. It was not so useful to go in to the Danes with a demarche when the real problem and real players were the French or the Italians. Aside from that, I thought we had a pretty focused foreign policy approach because we had a series of major trade issues with the EC as well as major security issues with Denmark and Greenland. Denmark depends on trade, they live on trade. Even though they have a government that provides cradle to grave security, they are not statist like the French and

are very entrepreneurial. I think when we were there it was one of the first times in decades that they had a conservative government in power. However, it depended heavily on the opposition not raising too much trouble. This was a situation where Denmark was very much a free trading country and therefore was a natural ally on some of these trade issues with the EC. So we had some very substantive things where we would go to the Danes and say, "Look, this particular EC position, like taxing U.S. exports of fats and oils or restricting our soybean exports into the EC, is really going to hurt our trading relations with Europe. We hope you will not support this. We hope you will speak out against this." And the Danes in some cases would help form a blocking vote against the offending EC proposal. Typically we found that the Danes and Dutch and Brits for example had a more free trade attitude on a whole series of U.S.-EC trade issues. So we had a generally good relationship on economic issues. On defense issues, the Danes were not very good within NATO in the sense that they did not spend much on defense. They had a small military establishment hampered by all kinds of labor rules. Their navy would go out on patrol off of Greenland and come back and have weeks off in compensatory time. On weekends they would be in port. They were not very strong on defense issues. In addition to that and more serious than that, the Social Democrats were very wishy-washy and unhelpful on the whole NATO approach towards the Soviets and were constantly putting in footnotes in NATO. We were constantly lobbying the Danish government and Parliamentarians to urge they avoid doing that.

*Q: Could you explain what a footnote meant.*

RUSSELL: NATO works by consensus. NATO would take a position on how to respond to Soviet aggressive moves and the Danes would put in something saying that Denmark disassociates itself from this position. It would be just a little note saying Denmark demurs. They wouldn't block it, but they would demure. That was extremely dangerous from our perspective because we were trying to answer the SS-20 threat. The Soviets had put in these SS-20 missiles, and we came up with the cruise missiles and the Pershings, extremely effective as it turned out, counter to that. But there was enormous pressure which the Soviets were helping to stir up in Europe against the American missiles coming in despite the fact the Soviets had put in their missiles first. There were also issues such as low Danish defense spending and the whole complex of issues involving maintaining and upgrading our bases in Greenland, including the early warning radar at Thule, and making the Greenlandic population feel they got something out of the presence of these bases. This was a series of defense issues that we raised with the Danes. On the plus side, the Danes were really the cork in the bottle in the Baltic. They played a very important role in terms of being able to monitor Soviet submarines coming in and out and stopping that very quickly in case of conflict. So we had a wide ranging defense debate with the Danes, and we were constantly talking with them, and their very effective diplomats. Although their military was small, it had some very good officers, so our military attaches had an important dialogue with them.

*Q: Well, I would have thought on this NATO thing that it would be difficult to keep from having almost contempt for this Danish thing of almost essentially getting a free ride and*

*able to posture on something that you know, had the Soviets moved in, they would be squashed like a flea. Was it hard sort of to keep a balance to counter, sort of smile and say well the Danes are this way or something?*

RUSSELL: It was a problem. Now we were dealing with a conservative led government, the government of Paul Schluter. The people who were doing NATO affairs, the people in the Danish defense establishment worked very hard to get a pro NATO approach, to keep Denmark in line pretty much with NATO policies. But as I say the Social Democrats, who traditionally ruled Denmark, by far the largest party, had a very Euro-leftist attitude on a lot of these things. The party had a right wing and a left wing and some were more helpful than others, but it was a real problem. Our assessment was that if it came to war, Denmark would be overrun very quickly. If I remember correctly, it was mainly a Polish force that was going to move right in. The Soviets were extremely active in Denmark trying to stir up anti-NATO feeling. They were very active and aggressive on various intelligence and diplomatic activities trying to make Denmark into as weak a partner as possible within NATO. One of the things we ran into, which of course was pretty annoying, was the Danish left's characterization of Denmark as "caught between the superpowers" as if they were not a NATO partner and as if the U.S. and NATO were not defending them against the Warsaw Pact and deterring a war that would destroy them. I don't mean the Communists; they had a hard line Communist Party, but the pro-Marxist left in the Social Democratic party who were rather anti-U.S. and fearful of doing anything to offend the Soviets. I think frankly it is also a matter of the fact that Denmark is a very small, flat country. So in case of war, they would have been very quickly overrun. Opportunistic politicians could make a popular case that they might as well give up the idea of self defense. They had a non-Marxist party that actually proposed a defense policy of one person in the Danish military at the end of the phone who would say "I surrender," if anyone called and made a threat. That party got 15 or 20% of the vote.

*Q: Well, was there any appreciation of what Soviet rule could mean?*

RUSSELL: I think there was. As I say they had a conservative government. Obviously there were a number of voters in Denmark who thought the Soviet system was fairly rotten. There were many moderate Social Democrats who were very opposed to the Soviet system. Even the left wing Social Democrats, unless they were actually corrupted in some fashion, didn't want the Soviet system in Denmark. They just thought that Denmark should not risk offending the Soviets and take any risk of getting trampled. I think that was part of it. Danes have a very strong sense that they are a small group of people and need to stick together and preserve themselves as Danes. They didn't want to get wiped out in a superpower conflict. On the other hand the point we would make is we fully understand your concern, but you are less likely to get wiped out if NATO sticks together and therefore prevents the Soviets from trying anything. That was our argument, which I think was the correct one. So I think there was some very fuzzy thinking going on, particularly on the left side of the political spectrum. But I think there were a lot of Danes who understood the situation very clearly.

*Q: Was there any spillover from Sweden, which maintained a neutral stance. What were the Swedish-Danish ties?*

RUSSELL: There is the Nordic cooperation process that is well known and works pretty well. It is a matter of "we are all Nordics in this together Norwegians, Danes and Swedes and even Finns and we have got to stick together." They did do this diplomatically in many situations, as in the UN. But within that Nordic grouping there is a lot of competitive feeling and history of who did what to whom like when Sweden won back southern Sweden from Danish rule in the 17th century. Also there are revealing jokes. Many Danish jokes portray the Swedes as humorless, hard drinking people. "As drunk as a Swede" is what a Dane might say. The Swedes might say as "drunk as a Finn". It is that kind of thing. Frankly the Swedes in many ways had a tougher position on defense than the Danes. The Swedes spent a lot of money on defense. The Soviets often sent over mini subs into their waters and probed their defenses in other ways. I think in case of war Sweden would have inclined to the NATO side.

*Q: How about the Norwegians during this time? Norwegians were opting out of the European Community.*

RUSSELL: Because of their oil. However, the Norwegians were extremely solid in NATO, very serious. They were a country that was very exposed, but they are not flat. They fought well in WWII, and they would have fought well in the event of a conflict with the Soviets. They had a border with the Soviet Union and they took a strong posture although they were certainly not provocative. They had a somewhat different attitude than the Danes, probably based on geography as well as history.

*Q: How did you find Danish society? You know just living there and making diplomatic contacts and that sort of thing?*

RUSSELL: Denmark was an extremely pleasant and easy place to operate as a U.S. diplomat in that you had excellent access to the Danish government. It was a conservative government, but even if it had been a social democratic government we would have had good entree because of the important defense and economic relationships. So we had excellent access to excellent people. They had a superb diplomatic corps. If you went in and said this is our position on some NATO issue and you explained your position they would say, "Well our position is a little bit different but we can support you up to this point." And they would do it. So you could go back to the Embassy, write a telegram saying the Danes will support us on this but they won't support us on that, and they would deliver. The Danes are very friendly to foreigners, although I think the Danes feel that they know the way to live, and others haven't quite gotten there. Others need to be told where they have fallen down. On the other hand, partly because of their trading relations, they are very open to foreigners. They are basically a delightful people and have a good sense of humor. However, they are sharp negotiators. When we approached the Danes with a demarche, we made a big effort to have a convincing rationale and solid talking points. Sometimes whoever was writing these talking points back in Washington would

give us boiler plate material crafted for a whole range of countries.

*Q: Well, talk about talking points. You get something you are supposed to go in and here are your talking points. Was it the practice to say these are lousy talking points, let's make our own?*

RUSSELL: We would and particularly so with Terry Todman as Ambassador. He didn't take any nonsense from anyone. We had more leeway I think in dealing with Washington than any Embassy I've seen. Yes, we simply would not use poorly done talking points. We would adapt the position and try to make it more relevant and convincing.

*Q: Looking at the time, '83-'87, this was of course, Ronald Reagan. I would have thought particularly in the early days that with a country like Denmark, a Ronald Reagan as president would have made them early on at least uncomfortable. I mean is this a cowboy you know, because Ronald Reagan had quite a record of making speeches that could make you feel uncomfortable later on. How did you deal with this? How did this work in Denmark?*

RUSSELL: Well I think that is right. I think many Danes were worried that Ronald Reagan was going to intensify the Cold War and thus bring them into heightened danger. They did think he was extreme. They believed a lot of the stuff in the U.S. and the European press saying that the guy was a cowboy. But I think that little by little, people found we had a pretty solid approach to dealing with the Soviets and with NATO. However, they certainly didn't always agree with us and there was a lot of visceral anti-American feeling on the left. There was suspicion of Reagan in Denmark, but also in Europe generally. Remember the Le Canard Enchaîné cartoon?

*Q: A French humor magazine.*

RUSSELL: During the 1980 election campaign with Carter and Reagan, they had a cartoon showing cutaways of Carter's head and Reagan's which they said allowed you to tell the difference between the two candidates. Reagan's head was empty and Carter's had a peanut in it.

*Q: How about relations at that point with Germany?*

RUSSELL: I remember there were a lot of problems in terms of getting our missiles into Germany and Italy and some other countries. I remember there were a lot of demonstrations in Germany, as there were in England. However, I don't remember in detail a lot of this history. Certainly the big issues were about NATO defense and U.S.-EC trade problems.

*Q: I was wondering just about the attitude of Danes towards Germans.*

RUSSELL: The Danes were not particularly hostile towards Germans. They had laws

mainly aimed at Germans but applying to all foreigners against buying up their beach properties for example. If they didn't have a law like that they wouldn't have a coast, nothing but German summerhouses ringing Denmark. So they are aware that Germany is big, rich and next-door, but I think they find them a good trading partner. The Danes, because they are a trading people, try and get along with pretty much everyone.

*Q: Talking about the European community, were we showing concerns at the time that the European community might become a bit too enclosed, you know to exclude all products and that sort of thing? Were we looking to Denmark as somebody sitting inside to work for us?*

RUSSELL: We had for years looked at the EC from the point of view that some of the things they were doing, like their Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which is so heavily subsidized, discriminates against U.S. farm exports. We looked askance at a lot of EC protectionist agricultural policies. We always concluded that, despite these trade problems, European integration was very much in our interests. We did approach the EC Commission and also national governments trying to make our case. If a national government had a more free trade stance on something and was less wedded to the CAP, we would certainly also approach them bilaterally. We didn't do it with a view of splitting the EC. There was no thought the EC was bad and we ought to try to split them or weaken them. But if there was a particular issue that involved potentially a free trade versus protectionist approach on something, we would approach countries bilaterally as well. But we certainly didn't see Denmark as a U.S. instrument in the EC. We saw them as a natural free trader, which they were.

*Q: I have talked to people who served like Ed Rowell who was Ambassador to Luxembourg who was saying that he found Luxembourg being a small country they were rather delighted to be able to tell what was going on in the European community in its various forms, where it would be more difficult to get something like that out of Bonn or France or something like that. Did you find that you could use Denmark as a good window onto the inner workings of the European community?*

RUSSELL: This goes back to how we were getting that kind of information in the European Bureau. Of course we were getting reports from all the various embassies. We tried to put it all together. We had excellent cooperation from the Danes when they were in the EC Presidency and got good readouts on how EC Council discussions had come out. However, they were careful about not giving us details on internal disagreements

*Q: Were there any trade issues that sprang up or airline issues or fishing issues or anything of that nature that particularly came up while you were there?*

RUSSELL: We did have a number of trade issues, as I've mentioned, on things like EC proposed restrictions on U.S. soybeans and a tax on fats and oils imported into the EC. We worked closely with the Danes on these issues and got some good support. There were also some fishing issues as I recall. I remember there was an issue within the EC

about Greenland and Greenland fishing rights. The Danes, who are super negotiators, managed to get Greenland all kinds of exclusive fishing rights off their shores.

*Q: What about relations with Iceland? I was wondering how that was working at this time?*

RUSSELL: Denmark and the other Scandinavian countries tended to stick together. They were all very solicitous of Iceland. I don't remember any Icelandic issues ever surfacing except fish. That has always been an issue. I remember there was a serious Iceland-UK row about fishing rights in the 1970s.

*Q: Well the cod wars.*

RUSSELL: The cod wars, yes.

*Q: Remember they were bumping each other's ships. It wasn't friendly.*

RUSSELL: Yes. But I don't remember much involving Iceland coming up while I was in Denmark. Greenland, of course was a big issue. Thule, our phased array early warning radar station, was very important to us. The Soviets challenged that its capabilities exceeded those allowed by the ABM treaty. It could allegedly be used to control missiles as well as detect missiles. We would have to argue that in Denmark and make the case to the Danish government that they were not hosting something which violated this treaty. We managed to successfully prevent any major campaigns starting on that issue. Then there was Sonderstrom, which was also the main civilian airbase in Greenland. There wasn't much pressure from anybody, including the Soviets, to get us out of Sonderstrom. At that point we were still interested in a chain of early warning stations going across the ice from Sonderstrom from east to west. Their technology was becoming passé and I think they were eventually just abandoned. But we, at that point were worried about anything that challenged them on environmental or treaty violation grounds. We had to be constantly safeguarding the position of our bases in Greenland and making the case that they were good for Denmark and also good for the Greenlanders. So I spent a fair amount of my time looking at Greenland issues and trying to figure out ways where we could try and demonstrate to the Greenlanders that the U.S. presence was beneficial to them. They had home rule although they didn't control foreign and defense policy. If the Inuit population for some reason had concluded that the U.S. bases threatened their interests that would have endangered our keeping the bases open. So we got an initiative going working with the Dane who was special representative to the home rule government. He was very bright, a great big bear of a guy with a full black beard, a really impressive, interesting individual. But anyway we worked with him on what can we do to show the Inuits that the American presence helps them economically. Now it turned out that the Inuit hunters had basically killed off the northern musk ox herd in Greenland. This was a key source of meat and hides. We came up with the idea of flying baby musk oxen from the southern herd to replenish the northern herd. I had to sell that to the U.S. Air Force Space Command. I finally did and we got a lot of favorable publicity out of it. The Air

Force were not delighted at having a bunch of evil tempered, smelly, defecating musk ox messing up their airplanes, but finally agreed it was an inexpensive way to gain goodwill. I worked for many months as U.S. Chair of a Greenland working group that negotiated base reduction and reentry rights and a series of modest economic benefits for the Inuits that defused demands for greater U.S. payments and kept the Greenlanders favorable towards the U.S. presence.

*Q: Musk oxen are goats basically.*

RUSSELL: They are very unpleasant creatures, even the little ones. The Air Force was very good about it and flew them up there. We worked very closely with the Danish Foreign Ministry. A Danish Under Secretary for Economic Affairs chaired the Danish side of our Commission.

*Q: How did the rule of Denmark in Greenland, I mean was it complete sort of home rule except for...*

RUSSELL: It was home rule except for defense and foreign policy.

*Q: How about subsidies? Were a lot of the subsidies...?*

RUSSELL: They got a lot of subsidies. It was quite costly for Denmark to support.

*Q: While we were looking at the economies there. Sweden was beginning to have trouble by this time I guess. I am not sure of the exact timing. But were they looking at the Danish social net and all and looking at how viable it was?*

RUSSELL: We weren't looking at that issue in detail because we didn't have the staff. We had very small political and economic sections. We only had one really experienced economic officer and there were enough EC issues that he certainly didn't have time to go into that. But we watched with interest the situation where you did have a conservative government partly brought in because the Danes were rebelling a bit against the extreme form of welfare state that had been created. In Denmark the ideal situation to be in to take full advantage of the situation is to be very poor, work averse, ill and to have a large family. If you have to be in that miserable situation, then you ought to be in Denmark because they will take care of you. You have cradle to grave security. If you quit your job or you are out of work you have a couple of years at a very high percentage of your full pay, then you get retraining and another crack at it. Then you can go back on welfare for a long period of time. If you are a natural born shirker, you can really do pretty well there. However, the Danes typically are hard working people in that they enjoy doing creative things, so you don't have a huge problem with turning into a nation of shirkers just because they could with the welfare system. But it is an extraordinarily expensive system. Their tax rates are very high. The conservatives came in partly because they promised to lower them a bit.

Denmark prospers because its people are very entrepreneurial and they work in a capitalist economy where workers then pay a very high tax rate to pay for social services. Some people make a great deal of money; they pay most of it back to the state. They are allowed to make money, the state doesn't try to regulate the economy, and it just taxes you once you have made the money. Denmark has very strong labor unions, all kinds of social protections and a socialized health care system. But it really didn't work all that well. I mean if you got cancer for example, you might not get operated on for a while because of the waiting list. It was similar I think to the British system or the Canadian system. So what you got was basically free medical care but you might have to wait quite awhile for it, or it might not be all that great when you got it, or if you were old you might be triaged. I came away thinking we don't want to go that route in the States. But I also came away thinking that we could do a lot better in terms of our safety net. Denmark until after WWII was not a wealthy country. These Skansen or outdoor museums you can visit in Denmark show how people lived in the 1800s and into the early part of the last century. A majority of the population apparently was living at a near subsistence level, often in stone floored farmhouses that were cold and damp. The country was not prosperous and there was a large class of people who lived very poorly. So when the Danish population got a chance, they voted for a cradle to grave security system based on the previous experience of poverty.

*Q: Is there anything else we should cover there?*

RUSSELL: I don't think so. As I say it was the pleasure working in a really well run embassy. We had a good team of people. Occasionally there would be some personnel problem as in any embassy, but by and large we had very good people, and they were very highly motivated. Everyone was busy, with a lot of interesting issues. I think our U.S. and Danish staff was proud to have an Ambassador who was highly respected. The Danes I think were extremely curious when an Afro-American came as Ambassador to Denmark. They didn’t know how to take that. The Danish view of America was very much the European left wing stereotype of American racism and American blacks living in poverty. And here they saw a distinguished, successful Afro-American come as U.S. Ambassador. They themselves had a few problems with color that were shown as soon as immigrants started coming in from the Third World. A huge national scandal developed when it turned out that the Justice Minister had been popping people of color coming to Denmark as refugees back on the airplane without refugee processing and sending them back to Sri Lanka for example. But in terms of an American Ambassador, I think Danes found it fascinating, and Ambassador Todman handled it beautifully because he had been born the Virgin Islands.

*Q: I was going to say he had a Danish tie.*

RUSSELL: Denmark sold us the Virgin Islands in 1917. Ambassador Todman would say "But for a few years, I'd be a Dane," and the Danes thought that was great. He was very highly respected and liked there. His wife is delightful and she would have very successful cultural or even commercial events. They were very popular and well received.

*Q: Well, I always hear about the Fourth of July in Denmark.*

RUSSELL: At Rebild over on Jutland. Danish Americans would come over to a traditional Rebild Fourth of July celebration. Our Ambassador would always be there. He would go over and make a speech. The Queen would be there and the Foreign Minister. It was really a big deal. It generated lots of goodwill, good feelings for the U.S. in Denmark

*Q: What was the role of the royal family in Denmark during this period?*

RUSSELL: The royal family had an ideal position in Danish society I think, because the Queen is very much beloved and respected and is very low key and very much the queen of all the Danish people. For example, she would go shopping, you would see her walking down the shopping street and her chauffeur if she had a bag or something would carry it for her, but no protection, no secret service. She designs jewelry and supports all kinds of charities. Danes are extremely egalitarian. They have something called the law of Janta, which is, don't stick your head up and think you are any better than anyone else. I was told by some Danes that although they really didn't have programs for gifted kids in the schools, they had many programs for handicapped kids. This egalitarian streak makes even wealthy Danes make a great effort not to show off with fancy house facades or cars.

*Q: Did you find there was much in the way of young people of college age going to the United States to get degrees in business administration or what have you?*

RUSSELL: Yes. There were many Danish young people coming over to visit or study. The only serious visa problem we had in Denmark was the Au Pair problem because a number of them wanted to go as Au Pair and the visa numbers are severely limited. Sometimes, if they applied for a tourist visa, they would be grilled so much by the Consul on whether they really wanted to do Au Pair work they would complain. The children of more well off Danes would often go to U.S. colleges and we had Danish friends with kids at Harvard and other top schools.

*Q: Well, then by '87, time came around to leave.*

RUSSELL: Unfortunately, yes.

*Q: Sounds like to hell with this. I have got my assignment.*

RUSSELL: Yes, I was delighted to be asked to stay for a fourth year, but I couldn't stay more than four years. When coming to the end of my assignment I began looking around for jobs. I wanted another DCM assignment. I thought that was a good experience and I enjoyed it. Personnel said, "Okay, look, you have just served four years in Denmark. It is time for you to have another hardship post." I had one in Prague for several years. So I said, "Okay, I speak Italian. I can learn Spanish in short order. I would be good at that. I have some French." So I bid on Colombia and Peru DCM jobs. Both were hardship and

danger posts as I recall. So I bid on both of those places, and then I found that the Prague DCM job was coming up. So, I put that in and bid on some other hardship posts as well. They said, "Prague, okay that's fair, it is a tough post." They said, "You don't speak Spanish do you?" I said, “But I could learn Spanish.” These were serious bids and I was seriously starting to read up on Latin America. They said, "But you speak Czech, right?" I knew that a friend of mine who had been DCM was about to leave Prague, but the Ambassador there was staying on. The Ambassador as it turns out was the officer who was defense attaché in '68 when I was first assigned there, Ambassador Jay Niemczyk.

*Q: I have interviewed him, yes.*

RUSSELL: I called Jay. I said "Jay, do you remember me?" We had a little chat. I said, "I understand you are looking for a DCM." He said, "Yes, I will put your name on the list. I encourage you to bid.” So I did that, and that came through. So anyway, I ended up going back to Prague as DCM in '88, which was great. It was fascinating because Gorbachev was in power in the Soviet Union and things were not going well for the Soviet empire in Central Europe. Certainly no one thought it was going to collapse, but it was obviously going to be a very interesting time. We were trying to see whether it was possible to have a better working relationship with some Communist governments in Central Europe while at the same time pressing them on human rights issues. Jay Niemczyk had one more year there as Ambassador. I went over at a fascinating time. The Czechoslovak government was really totally discredited and lacking in popular support. The impact of this wasn’t clear at first. However, there were signs of unrest. For example, on August 21, 1988 you had the first mass anti-government demonstration that you had had since 1969 on the anniversary of the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion. I had been tear gassed in Wenceslas Square in 1969 covering the big demonstration on the first anniversary of the invasion. Then in January 1989 there were major demonstrations in Prague on the anniversary of the death of Jan Palach.

Arriving at that time and working with someone that I knew already and having a really fine embassy staff was really great. The problem was that you had a hard line Communist leadership, although some of them posed as reformers. Czechoslovakia was generally seen as a block of ice politically speaking. We were trying to figure out what changes were going on. We were trying to influence the regime to curb some of the more brutal human rights violations. In some cases dissidents would be so badly treated they died after being released. Havel and other dissidents were periodically arrested and so we were busy pressing the regime on human rights. They were busy lobbying to get most favored nation treatment (MFN). We were trying to see whether there were ways we could have a more normal relationship with the regime. We set up two working groups, one on human rights and one on trade. We explained the barriers to giving them most favored nation treatment in terms of their human rights practices and listened to them plead for us to open up to them on the trade front.

*Q: When you say you started working groups, is this with the Czechs?*

RUSSELL: With the Czechs, and we would meet periodically and talk about trade and business issues on the one hand and human rights issues on the other. We would present each other with an agenda and they would say “you realize we are going to raise your human rights problems." We said, "Fine." So then they raised the case of the Native American man that murdered a couple of FBI agents in 1975.

*Q: Yes, at Wounded Knee or something.*

RUSSELL: Yes, I have forgotten exactly how it happened. He shot dead a couple of U.S. law enforcement agents and was locked up. I remember the Czechs raised the case from their side. Our Human Rights bureau was very good at giving us the background on these cases before our meetings. So the Czechs said "We understand he is being denied the right to practice his religion." They were vague on the details and we were able to point out that he was being denied the use of a tomahawk in his cell. We said, "This is clearly ludicrous. In your wretched prisons, you would not give Vaclav Havel a tomahawk." The main thing is we were trying to work out a more rational exchange of views with the Communist government while at the same time broadening our ties with the dissident community and monitoring that more closely. In fact, these exchanges were sometimes useful in getting a dissident better treatment or setting an environment for getting a consular protection case resolved. The U.S.-Czech humanitarian affairs working group co-chair was a very bright and cultured Office Director from the Foreign Ministry, who always gave me the impression that he was faintly embarrassed by the positions he was required to take.

*Q: You know, for years after the '68 invasion, the Czech government had the reputation of being very hard nosed, very nasty. Were people who had been dealing with them seeing a change in this group? I mean were they so looking over their shoulders at this point?*

RUSSELL: If you are talking about the summer of ‘88 the answer is no. They typically were not killing people anymore as they had in the late ‘40s and early ‘50s. What they would do if someone went against the regime in some public fashion would be to take away their employment. The spouse would also lose employment. The kids would be barred from going on to anything past high school. The individual involved would be given a job as a window washer or furnace stoker; these were the class of jobs, unpleasant and not exposed to other people in society. They were very tough on dissent. They locked up people like the man who became Foreign Minister, Jiri Dienstbier, and they locked up Havel. They locked up a number of these people for periods of time, and then they would let them out. When they arrested younger demonstrators in August 1988 they would often beat them up before jailing them or sending them home. But typically if they picked up dissidents it was unusual that they would really beat them. They would grill them and threaten them and then usually they would lock them up for awhile or dismiss them. I only remember one case toward the end of the Communist period when we heard they had really beat up a leading dissident. He was a very brave guy who actually climbed over a cemetery wall to lay a wreath where President Masaryk was buried in the face of a

police ban on that kind of thing. He did it in such a way that the StB felt it was really in their face, and they beat him badly. So we were trying to mitigate some of their human rights abuses. It was an authoritarian Socialist regime that was very tough, very unyielding, but not Stalinist in its methods. They would just take it out on you, take it out on your family and just make your life so miserable that very few people would risk opposing the regime. But they no longer physically eliminated dissenters as they had in the earlier days after the 1948 Communist coup. They didn't have to in order to maintain control.

*Q: Were the Helsinki accords the formation of the OSCE and particularly the human rights side, was it basket three or whatever it was in, was this something were we deliberately using in our dealings? We are talking about '88.*

RUSSELL: Yes. It was clear that Helsinki codified certain principles on human rights and on economic exchanges. In fact that can be seen as the intellectual basis for having two working groups. I think it had a much greater subversive effect on their totalitarian system than the Soviets understood when they signed it. I think they felt it was opening things up on the economic side and did not understand the power of human rights.

*Q: And also solidifying the borders.*

RUSSELL: And the political side, that was "basket one." But basically what the Soviets thought they got out of it was strengthening their borders, guaranteeing them their empire and opening up the prospect of more trade with the west. What we got on human rights made it clear there was a case for raising human rights issues. It solidified our right to raise those legitimate issues, which they should discuss if they wanted to prove they were living up to Helsinki. Since their whole system was fundamentally anti-human rights, it was very easy for us to make our case against them. Foreign radios raising these issues like Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America and some other stations like German stations and the BBC had a profound effect in questioning the legitimacy of the Communist governments in Central Europe which had been imposed on people who had once experienced a better, freer life. That was particularly true in Czechoslovakia. As we were discussing, the Czechoslovaks had a reputation of having a very repressive regime. In my view, particularly in Bohemia and Moravia, that was due to the fact that in the '30s Bohemia and Moravia, if they had been a country, would have been one of the richest countries in the world. So the Communists I think felt they had to be particularly severe to repress anyone who disagreed with their system based on knowing from their grandparents or their parents that there was a better, democratic, capitalist way to organize a society. I think that is a reason they were so tough there.

*Q: Well, why were they agreeing to these talks on human rights?*

RUSSELL: Because they wanted most favored nation treatment and freer trade with the West. They honestly thought that if we reached a modus vivendi, in other words if the Soviets could keep their empire and the Communist regimes could continue in Central

Europe and they made a few gestures on human rights, we would be willing to open up trading relationships. They had a lot to gain by getting most favored nation treatment. They were hurt by not having it. They couldn't sell their excellent pilsner beer in the U.S., for example, at a price that anyone would want to pay. Czechoslovakia in the '30s was a very powerful trading nation. They manufactured a lot of high quality export goods like machinery, arms and shoes. So they had a big interest in getting into a more open economic relationship with the U.S. The quid pro quo was they had to agree to discuss human rights.

*Q: Well, sort of in your minds, either that or instructions, I would have thought that most favored nations agreement with the Czech regime the way it was in 1988 was just not really in the cards.*

RUSSELL: You are absolutely right. My thought on the proper timing of extending MFN to Communist Czechoslovakia was shortly after hell froze over. I thought there was very little chance they would qualify for that. On the other hand, had they changed their evil ways, they could have. I didn't think they were going to change.

*Q: But that was also going to happen after hell froze over. I mean in one's thinking at that time.*

RUSSELL: That's right. That didn't mean you couldn't chip away at the ice, so I think that is what we felt we were doing. I remember late in the year, actually it was probably early in '89, I remember, skipping ahead a little bit, we even sent in a cable with the subject something like "cracks in the ice". We could see things starting to change. But certainly we had no real thought; I certainly had no real thought that it would make sense to actually give them MFN. Now occasionally you would have that idea advanced. Well if we did that, wouldn't they then move quicker and perhaps solidify the relationship. My very strong view and the preponderance of opinion in Washington was that it would be a very bad idea and we shouldn't do it unless they changed their human rights practices. And that's why we didn't do it.

*Q: How did Ambassador Niemczyk operate using you as DCM?*

RUSSELL: Ambassador Julian Niemczyk. Ambassador Niemczyk operated in a way that I was his Deputy in that I would review things coming to him. In other words I would help organize the political section and its reporting, the economic section and its reporting. I would try to keep the Embassy working in a smooth and effective fashion and he would make the big decisions. It was a typical way an Ambassador operates. We knew each other, so that was a pretty good basis. So it was basically a chief of staff role in the military sense.

*Q: Yes, his background was air force, I think.*

RUSSELL: Yes, he retired as an air force Colonel.

*Q: How did he get along with the Czech government at that time?*

RUSSELL: I think that no one got along with them particularly well; they were not our friends. He had access. Typically the Foreign Ministry would deal with us at the level of Office Director. In other words the Office Director would summon the American Ambassador to come in for a lecture on something the government was upset about. He occasionally would see a Deputy Foreign Minister, but not very often did he get to see the Foreign Minister. The Foreign Minister was dealing with the Soviet bloc countries. The Czech MFA had one deputy Foreign Minister, a heavy set, tall, dark extremely unpleasant guy named Vacek, who was almost threatening. In fact some of the female members of the staff found him physically threatening. He was the one who typically dealt with us. The Ambassador sometimes would see him, but if they had a protest, it would often be the Office Director for American Affairs who would call the Ambassador or DCM in to complain about something like an official statement in Washington they objected to.

*Q: What about moving around? Were you very much followed and were you provoked?*

RUSSELL: It wasn't as heavy as it had been from '68 to '71 when I was there, where they would do things like drive nails in you tires. I remember we went on leave once and they unplugged our freezer with about a month's supply of meat in it, which rotted. There were maggots and blood all over the floor. In various ways they would overtly harass you or overtly follow you. We were bugged to a fare-the-well and kept under surveillance when we were there. However, when I came back as DCM I didn't get overt harassment. I don't remember sabotage against our vehicle or anything like that. On the other hand, our very capable Political Officer, Bob Norman, who maintained very close and effective relations with dissidents, had his headlights smashed and his tires slashed. There was a listening van parked in front of his house. They treated him very badly indeed. So they were capable of that, but when I went back as DCM they were not physically doing things to me, although certainly there was surveillance everywhere.

*Q: How about Americans coming to, was there much tourism there at that time?*

RUSSELL: Not a great deal. In fact the Czechoslovak government had a pretty bad reputation that scared away many American tourists.

Occasionally a tourist would be given a hard time. They would really go through your bags very aggressively, for example.

*Q: This was the border.*

RUSSELL: At the border. People didn't know exactly where they stood or what to expect. It was not as bad as say 20 years before when I was there where the police would actually pick people up and tourists sometimes got into serious difficulties. American tourism was limited, but it was increasing.

*Q: Did you have any contact, did the Embassy have any contact with dissidents at this time?*

RUSSELL: We had very extensive contacts with dissidents. Our dissident officer, Bob Norman at the time, had constant contacts with the dissidents. We were trying to upgrade the level of our contacts with the dissidents, but the Czechoslovak government was saying if you keep this up, we cannot have any decent relationship. Basically we answered "don't make us choose." We would frankly have chosen the dissidents over the government.

*Q: What do you mean by upgrading?*

RUSSELL: In other words if our Ambassador had frequently invited the dissidents over to the Residence, the Czechoslovak government would have reacted in some pretty dramatic way. They kept warning us "you are paying too much attention to these people. They are a tiny minority. You are sticking your thumb in our eye. You say you want a more normal relationship, then knock it off." We didn't pay much attention to that, but we did not go out of our way to stick it to them, since we were interested in encouraging a more normal relationship in order to encourage a less repressive regime. So we had an officer whose main job was to contact the dissidents and keep track of them. If they were in trouble or arrested we could go and protest. Then we upgraded it to the extent that I would have any high level Washington visitors like Deputy Secretary Whitehead, who would come over quite often, or Congressman Solarz over to the DCM residence typically for breakfast with a selection of dissidents for them to talk with so they could get a picture of the situation from the horse's mouth. Havel would often come, as well as others including Jiri Dienstbier, Martin and Radim Palous, Sasha Vondra and Rita Klimova, who would translate. Rita, Sasha and Martin all later served as Czechoslovak and later Czech Ambassador to Washington. So the upgrade was that a lot of these meetings took place in the DCM's house, and occasionally in the Ambassador's residence and not as before mainly at the home of the Political Officer who had this responsibility. So we were upgrading our relationship with the dissidents, and if, for example, one of them would tell us the police had stopped him from coming to a meeting with Deputy Secretary Whitehead, we would formally protest that.

*Q: I mean it sounds like the Czech government at this time wasn't quite sure of how to deal with these dissidents in a way.*

RUSSELL: That's right. I think that they realized and we weren't' the only ones interested in the issue. The British and the Dutch in particular were staunch human rights defenders. These guys were arrested and various Western Embassies protested and it hit the Western press. The Czechoslovak government didn't need that. They didn't want that. In that sense I think we helped protect the dissidents from worse treatment than they otherwise would have received. They weren't treated well, but we helped keep them out of the can to a certain extent.

*Q: Well, were we coordinating say with the British and the Dutch and all that? Would you get together and say you know, we have got this problem, what do we do?*

RUSSELL: We had excellent cooperation. We had a NATO group which would meet regularly. Our Ambassador, or the Brits and I think the Germans all had a secure room where you could actually meet without fear of bugging. The NATO Ambassadors would get together and meet. We also had a DCM club, which would meet and talk about what was going on. The Political Officers would get together. We had very good cooperation with NATO allies keeping track of what was going on. Some were more interested in keeping track than others, but I would say particularly the British and Dutch were very solid on human rights issues. We kept very close ties. We had very good relations also with the Germans and the French to a slightly lesser extent.

The other thing we were doing was to counter the way the Communist government denied any U.S. role in WW II worthy of the name. I mean they just made every effort the way the Soviets did to downplay that. So, since we had liberated western Bohemia, we thought we ought to make that point. Also, our air campaigns had lost a fair number of fliers flying over Czechoslovakia to bomb targets in Poland. So every spring we would set off on a WW II commemoration trip, announced on RFE and VOA in advance. We notified the Foreign Ministry, but never asked for approval. They would urge us not to do this. We would send a note to the Foreign Ministry saying we are going to visit the following towns in the following time frame. We would set off with wreaths to lay at the sites of local monuments to U.S. liberating forces that had been set up and later mostly torn down by the Communists. Then we would go and have a ceremony and lay the wreath. Some of these ceremonies even took place next to a highway laid right over the monument, but then we knew where they were. We had good records of that. We would go and the Ambassador would make a speech, and I'd go off to another site and make a speech and lay a wreath. It was amazing, large crowds would often be there at considerable risk. The StB, secret police, would be there photographing the whole thing. Some of these people would be picked up and risked losing their jobs or worse. They took a big risk. Typically we had quite a crowd, and we passed out little crossed American and Czechoslovak flag pins. They were enormously popular. People would wear them year after year. They would come wearing the pin showing they had been there before. However, we didn’t do a ceremony in Pilsen, a large city, because we figured that was simply too provocative and risked violence.

*Q: Why?*

RUSSELL: Because our monument had been in the middle of Pilsen. In fact in '69, I had driven there with a wreath in the back of the car to lay it on the monument to the U.S. liberation of Pilsen in May of '45. There was still a little monument left at that point. I think they tore it down later. There was a demonstration going on, and the police were closing in. I thought this was not the time to get out and make a speech and lay a wreath. So we didn't do it in Pilsen then or later until after the Velvet Revolution, but we did it

everywhere else, in smaller towns and out in the country. Also, we would drive to Moravia and Slovakia to sites where airmen had been shot down and where townspeople had built little monuments, some of which were still standing. We would lay wreaths there and make speeches and have a good turnout there as well. Then there was the furthest site, in Slovakia, where an OSS mission had gone in during the Slovak national uprising in 1944 and many of its members were captured and tortured and executed at Mathausen. We would climb a small mountain and lay a wreath at this little hut where these poor guys had hidden out. We made a big effort to emphasize the U.S. wartime association with the Czechoslovak people and our role in liberating Europe.

*Q: Now let's sort of talk about in '88 when did you say cracks started, you were seeing cracks in the ice or something in early '89 was it?*

RUSSELL: Yes, in '88 there were some odd things that were going on. For example, I remember going to a movie, called "Five Prague Pieces" I believe, where one of the vignettes was of a Communist movie critic who was discussing a film and progressively getting drunk and talking in Marxist jargon. He was smoking a cigarette and ashes gradually covered his shirt front. By the end he was just babbling. It was very unusual to see a film making fun of Communist jargon and depicting this guy as kind of a clown. Then in about mid-1989, Jakes, the first secretary of the Communist Party made a secret speech to a session of the Central Committee, and someone taped it. I think the StB secret police did it actually. I think there were enough ambitious young Turks in the secret police who saw their country falling increasingly far behind, not making any progress economically and Gorbachev advocating reforms in the Soviet Union. These guys I think felt that the old leadership really should go. I think there was a certain amount of effort in secret police circles to have controlled modernization and reform a la Gorbachev. So this tape was made, with Jakes sounding like the uncultured lout that he was. There was also a place in the speech where he was denouncing Bob Norman, our dissident contact officer, saying it is intolerable that Norman is stirring things up. We figured that was a pretty bad sign that he was being denounced by the First Secretary of the Communist Party and it was not a great surprise when Bob was later PNGed. Anyway the point is someone had taped this and an Embassy Czech employee, who I suspected of working for the StB, handed it to me in the Embassy courtyard one day. Besides this, all kinds of jokes were circulating, more jokes than usual, suggesting that the people thought the leadership was pretty much stupid as well as evil. Then, also, we were getting approaches from government people saying they were really reformers. They said there were reform movements in the Communist Party and didn't we realize this and wouldn't we work with more reform-oriented people. In late October of that year we had a gathering of dissidents to meet a high level visitor. Havel and many of the others were there, and they said "Things are getting worse. The oppression is getting worse. We don't see any light at the end of the tunnel. The situation is really miserable for us; this regime is hopeless." It was true that the Husak-Jakes regime was hopeless, but essentially Gorbachev pulled the plug on them, and because they had no real credibility or popular support in Czechoslovakia, as soon as the Soviet protective shield was lifted by Gorbachev, they crumbled when mass demonstrations broke out.

*Q: Were you following events in, I mean how are we seeing, I am talking about from the Embassy, sort of American diplomats, How were we seeing the Soviet Union during this period, '88 or early '89?*

RUSSELL: We were reading about it in the U.S. and local press, but I don't remember a lot of focus on it in reporting. We weren't getting a lot of cables from Moscow for example. It was clear that Gorbachev was trying to get the message across with perestroika and glasnost and the promise to withdraw some Soviet forces from East Europe. What really caught our attention was when Hungary opened its borders and let East Germans escape into Austria.

*Q: That was when?*

RUSSELL: That was in September 1989. So then a lot more East Germans started coming through Czechoslovakia to get to Hungary. The East German authorities asked the Czechs to stop that, and they did stop it, so all these East Germans were trapped in Czechoslovakia. So they converged on the large back garden compound of the West German embassy right next door to us. We could see from our garden into their garden. They started climbing over the walls into this big park behind the German embassy. There were pictures of the police trying to haul them down off the fence. They made terrible publicity for the Czechoslovak state. Then the West Germans started pressuring the Czechoslovak government to let these refugees out to West Germany. Finally they left on special trains via East Germany to West Germany. At that point you could watch Czechoslovak citizens looking at what was going on, walking by the German compound, looking in. That was an untenable situation for the Czechoslovak regime. You could tell something very strange was going on, but the government was still keeping a lid on its own folks. Then of course, you had the 17th of November come along in Czechoslovakia. The demonstrations that I mentioned in 1988, on the anniversary of the Soviet invasion, did not involve many university students. University students knew that they would be kicked out instantly if they were caught in a demonstration. A university degree was the ticket to a good career. In August 1988 the demonstrators were apprentices, young people, a mixed bag, but not the crème de la crème university students. The 17th of November was different.

*Q: Why the 17th of November?*

RUSSELL: The 17th of November commemorated a date in 1939 when the Nazis who had occupied all of Bohemia and Moravia March 15, 1939, cracked down on university students in Prague and killed one of them named Jan Opletal. That became a big date in the Communist calendar for anti-fascist demonstrations and parades. The Communist government actually struck a coin, which I have, showing the symbol of Charles University, barbed wire and gives the dates 17 November 1939-1989 to commemorate university students subjected to police brutality. They actually issued a beautiful silver commemorative coin celebrating the beginning of their own downfall. The government

authorized a big demonstration by university students. About 30,000 students and others finally joined in. It started smaller than that, and then at one point in the demonstration the cry went out "let's march to Wenceslas Square." This was no longer an anti-fascist demonstration but an anti-government demonstration. So the demonstration changed character and a march was started on the center of town to Wenceslas Square. At this point the police riot squads, which may or may not have known what was going to happen, closed in and beat the hell out of those demonstrators trapped in National Avenue who dared to march on Wenceslas Square, the historic site of anti-government demonstrations. They beat them very brutally and there were a number of concussions and serious injuries. There was a rumor started that a student had actually been killed. No one was killed, but a lot of people were severely beaten, including a half dozen western correspondents. That was the start of the revolution because these university students were the cream of Czechoslovak society. Their parents and brothers and sisters and grandparents saw these university students beaten bloody by the riot police and it just set off a huge protest in Prague and then nationally. The next day, things started moving and people started coming into the streets. Then every night the demonstrations became larger. At first you would have 50,000 then 100,000 then 300,000 taking to the streets. The government just didn't know what to do about it. It gathered steam and within a week it had gotten beyond government control. The reformers, led by Havel, proclaimed a national general strike for November 27 at noon, and they did it very cleverly. They proclaimed it for just two hours during the lunch hour. Sure enough during the lunch hour, whistles went off and people briefly had a national general strike showing great solidarity with minimal economic damage. At that point it became pretty clear that the Communist Party apparatus had lost control. The Communist Party Politburo leadership had already resigned and then other hardliners, including Stepan, the hard line Prague party chief, quit before the general strike.

*Q: What was happening in places like Slovakia, Bratislava, you know elsewhere?*

RUSSELL: In Slovakia you had had a major demonstration the previous year in March. It was a demonstration in Bratislava demanding religious freedom involving peaceful demonstrators with candles. The police broke it up violently, beating the demonstrators with truncheons. When the mass demonstrations broke out in Prague after November 17, 1989, you had similar but smaller demonstrations starting in Bratislava. What happened in Prague was literally that leading dissidents like Havel, supported by theater directors and actors, dissident intelligentsia and university students came together in theaters across the city. Every theater was packed and dissident spokespersons went on the stage to formulate demands, including the end to the leading role of the Communist Party. In Prague, Havel organized Civic Forum the day after the beatings in National Avenue and the next day a group of Slovak artists and intellectuals organized the Public Against Violence movement in Bratislava. Then the university students, as the thing got mobilized, fanned out to factories and got the workers on board. Little by little the movement spread out from Prague to the countryside. The Communist government didn't know how to react.

*Q: Well, at the Embassy what were you all doing and thinking?*

RUSSELL: We were thinking that when you have a hundred thousand, two hundred thousand or three hundred thousand people in the streets, this was a revolution. So all U.S. resources at our Embassy were monitoring what the hell was going on and talking to as many people as we could and trying to figure out if this was for real and if this was for keeps. I think when the general strike succeeded, we figured this is really serious. The government doesn't seem to be able to do anything about it. The reporting we were getting suggested that they had not decided to use force and were debating what to do. The people's militia we thought was more likely to do something violent than the military, but if the military had been ordered to use force, they might have obeyed. Fortunately the leadership lacked the will to put up a fight once the strength of the revolution became clear. We started seeing the reaction of some of the politicians which was very ineffectual. For example in downtown Prague, we watched the tough, relatively young Prague party boss, Stepan, trying to rally factory workers. He had earlier played the reformer and had even gone to New York and spoken to various groups portraying himself as a Communist modernizer in the Gorbachev mold. Actually he was a first class SOB and one of the few Communist leaders eventually locked up after the Revolution. But he got up in front of an audience of factory workers in Prague. He addressed them and said, "Don't let yourselves be led by these children." The workers, and I saw the film of this, the workers were quiet for a second. Then they started chanting “we are not children, we are not children.” They just kept chanting. He looked nonplused, and finally just turned and walked off. The leadership simply could not believe what was happening to it. It was also clear the Soviets were not going to back them up, and they just dissolved like the wicked witch of the west when water was poured on her.

*Q: The timing of this, was this happening at the same time or was East Germany going through it a little later?*

RUSSELL: Hungary had let DDR citizens cross into Austria in September. In response to the surge of East Germans then crossing through Czechoslovakia into Hungary the DDR had then banned visa free travel to Czechoslovakia. As I mentioned, many East Germans took refuge in the West German Embassy garden, but were eventually allowed to leave for the FRG via the DDR in special trains. In early November there was a new surge of thousands of East Germans climbing the fence into the West German Embassy garden. They were soon allowed to leave directly for West Germany. The Berlin Wall came down November 9 before the November 17 Czechoslovak revolution started.

*Q: During this time these demonstrations were going on, were we in consultation with the Department of State trying to figure out what to do or were we just watching it?*

RUSSELL: We were watching. There wasn't anything much we could do, so our reporting was focused on what is happening, how serious is it, how likely is it to lead to a change of regime. I think we reported by early December that this was going to be a change of regime.

*Q: When you are talking about a change of regime, you are taking about a revolutionary change of regime.*

RUSSELL: We are talking about a revolution but not a bloody one. At no point was it bloody. We are talking about the Communist regime collapsing and then, by the end of the year, a non-Communist, democratic government coming in. Dubcek was named head of the National Assembly and Havel was then elected President by the end of December. That was just the final confirmation of success, because by early December it was clear this was for keeps. The leading role of the Communist Party was abolished. The border was opened with Austria. You had a rapid crumbling of Communist power and a non-Communist majority taking over the government on December 10 for the first time since the 1948 Communist coup. President Husak, who had replaced Dubcek in 1969, then resigned.

*Q: Were any of the leaders of the dissidents or maybe people who had been fence sitters before beginning to come and make contact with the Embassy and with the British and other embassies?*

RUSSELL: We were in close contact with the dissidents, had been and continued to be. We knew what the dissidents were doing, although they were so busy we weren't able to see all that much of people like Havel and Father Vaclav Maly who were in the middle of conducting a revolution. We had not been able to keep up contact with Dubcek during his internal exile, but resumed contact when Havel brought him into the leadership of the revolution. But yes, we were talking to dissidents constantly and finding out what was going on. There was one interesting thing that some of us were reminded of as we watched events unfold. One of the top assistants to Deputy Foreign Minister Vacek, in the fall of 1988, after they suppressed the demonstration in Wenceslas Square, was talking with me. I said, "Look, you guys look terrible before the world. First you beat up peaceful religious protesters in Bratislava and then you beat up these young people demonstrating in Prague on the invasion anniversary. You look like a really brutal regime. How can you possibly expect to have decent relationships with the West and certainly with the U.S. if you do this kind of thing? Look at the image you are creating." He said, "As long as there are five or ten or fifteen thousand people involved, we can handle that. Now if it ever got to be a hundred thousand..." We remembered that. That was what actually happened. The size of the demonstrations got way beyond what they could control and they simply folded.

*Q: Did you find members of the Communist regime beginning to almost look for safe haven and sort of coming over and chatting with you all and sort of preparing the way, rats deserting the ship and that kind of thing?*

RUSSELL: It wasn't that we were a safe haven for them, but in the very early stages, before the revolution, before the 17th of November, we were getting some strange approaches from people in the government saying there really are reformers among us

who want better relations with the U.S. We were getting intriguing approaches like that. When the demonstrations had started we began getting funny approaches from people we knew were connected with the secret police saying there are some forces among them who are reform minded and asking how we might react to them. We said essentially "we don't want to talk to them. We don't trust them. Forget it." There wasn't anything we could offer them or would have offered them.

*Q: Then Havel came in; I mean when it collapsed, it collapsed in a hell of a hurry didn't it?*

RUSSELL: The regime collapsed amazingly quickly. By the time of the general strike, it was pretty clear the Communist Party was losing control, although they still had the security apparatus if they decided to use it. Then it was a matter of the reformers increasing the pressure and their demands until the Communist Party leadership was squeezed out of the government and the Communist regime collapsed. It was wonderful mingling with the crowds during the first two weeks after November 17 and watching them react as one person to the speakers. I remember hundreds of thousands of people up on Letna Hill near Prague Castle jangling their keys in unison to signify the "last rights" for the Communists.

*Q: I remember seeing a Czech movie that came out some time later where somebody was having to deal with the secret police and was being given a very rough time. At the end you saw the protagonist in the crowd and looked over and saw the secret policeman sort of smiling at him tickling his keys along with everyone else.*

RUSSELL: I remember my wife and I attended these demonstrations, particularly the one up on the Letna plain. I remember we were being filmed by the secret police still at that time during the middle of the demonstration a week after November 17. The Czech crowd was incredibly disciplined. They are a disciplined people, and particularly in this truly national uprising, people were thinking and acting in unison. You had perhaps 800,000 people. At one point an ambulance had to get through and everyone just opened up and allowed it through the packed crowd. It was like a flight of birds or school of fish would move. The crowd would move as one. It was absolutely peaceful, absolutely disciplined. I remember at one point there was this stir in the crowd and unusual pushing and shoving. A sort of a flying wedge pushed through the crowd trying to move up nearer to the stage. What was going on? It was a flying wedge with Dan Rather pushing his way through with a film crew trying to get up closer to cover this event.

*Q: American television. Did the government shut down? You know, did we have business? What happened during this time?*

RUSSELL: That is a good question. We were so busy I don't remember much normal business being conducted. The embassy was basically trying to keep track of what was going on. We didn't know at first whether the regime would call out the troops to put down the demonstrations. It became pretty clear after a week or two that they were not

going to and there was not likely to be any major violence. So after that we weren't worried so much about evacuating Americans as we had done in 1968. We were basically trying to determine how definitive the changes seemed to be and reporting developments promptly to Washington.

*Q: Was there sort of a professional cadre of civil servants who were there before and were going to be there afterwards and all that.*

RUSSELL: We had the clearest view of what was happening in the Foreign Ministry. As a new government came in, they didn't immediately fire everybody. They couldn't. This was true in most ministries. Even the secret police didn't fold up their tents and disappear right away. Even during the big Christmas and New Year's celebrations we saw signs of some police surveillance. In the Foreign Ministry they went about replacing people fairly gradually. I remember going in and talking to one of the new Deputy Ministers who was in charge of personnel security. He was saying basically that Ministry employees working for the StB and ratting on colleagues were being fired. If, he said, they were working against the West, it is a bit different. He would vet them on a case by case basis, but they are not the ones he really was going to go after. He was going after the ones who were doing internal espionage against their colleagues. The Czechs took a harder line vetting people than the Slovaks and did purge most of the people who had been Communist security functionaries or had worked for the KGB.

*Q: Well, going back really before these events, going back to '88 when you arrived there, were we watching what the Czechs were doing overseas, because my understanding is the Czechs were one, home to terrorists, training terrorists, very effective, and also involved in a security matters in other countries unfriendly to us and all that. Were we monitoring that?*

RUSSELL: We were monitoring that, but that wasn't what the political section was doing, at least not the State Department.

*Q: We are talking about the agency then.*

RUSSELL: We are talking about the agency. I know the agency was monitoring that, but it wasn't something that I was directly involved in. My impression was that the Communist Czechoslovak services were very active in cooperating with other countries against the West, that they had sheltered terrorists, and there were rumors starting to come out about training camps, but they were more terrorist places of refuge at that stage was my impression. I really didn't have the inside scoop on that. I do have the impression foreign terrorists had an ability to stay in Czechoslovakia when they needed to and perhaps get support and supplies like Semtex.

*Q: Semtex being an explosive.*

RUSSELL: Yes, Semtex blew up Pan Am 101 for example. That is another story that I'll

mention.

*Q: I thought we might stop at this point. Let's talk about Pan Am 101 and also talk about what happened really after the government changed and what we did. Let's pick it up there. This is a good place to stop.*

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*Today is May 31, 2000. Ted let's talk about Pan Am 101. What was Pan Am 101 and how did that affect where you were?*

RUSSELL: Well, it affected where we were in the sense that our kids were flying over to be with us in Prague for Christmas vacation in December 1988. So they were scheduled to fly over on Pan Am 102 a couple days after Pan Am 101 went down.

*Q: Could you say what happened on Pan Am 101?*

RUSSELL: Well, Pan Am 101 was blown up by Libyan terrorists in the air over Scotland December 21 on the way to the U.S. A number of Americans and Brits on board, including many students were killed. Our immediate concern was that our kids were arriving two days later on the sister Pan Am flight. When they got over, I remember talking in the master bedroom with my older son Douglas. I said, "I bet it was that damn Czech Semtex that was involved." It was obvious that Pan Am 101 was a terrorist event and I had heard that the Czechs were providing Semtex to terrorists like the Libyans. This was on a Saturday the day after our sons arrived. Within half an hour or so of this statement to my son in the bedroom of our home, I got a call from the Foreign Ministry denying that the Czechoslovak government had anything to do with the downing of Pan Am 101. Talk about real time bugging!

*Q: Actually I think they did find Semtex in it.*

RUSSELL: That's right. So my outburst apparently hit a nerve. They felt compelled to call me on a weekend and make a mini demarche to deny Czechoslovakia had been involved.

*Q: We are talking about now...*

RUSSELL: December of 1988. The Communists were still in power and they watched us very closely at the Embassy. We assumed our houses were bugged, but we hadn't had too many such direct indications of the real time quality of that bugging. Our kids were coming over for Christmas vacation as they always did.

*Q: Well, let's talk about what happened when the change of government came. I mean how did we see things. I think of everybody out there jingling keys and all this, but at a certain point the professionals had to take over in our embassy. What were we seeing?*

RUSSELL: As I recall, what the Embassy reported by early December 1989 was that the revolution was succeeding and the Communists were gradually being forced out of government. In fact on December 10 a new, non-Communist majority government came in and locked in the transition from Communist rule. Then, when Havel came in as president at the end of December 1989, what we saw was a situation, replicated throughout Central Europe, of a total change in our diplomatic opportunities. The dissidents, Havel, Jiri Dienstbier, Radim and Martin Palous, Rita Klimova, Sasha Vondra, Zdenek Urbanek, Jan Urban and other leading figures with whom we had been meeting periodically appreciated the fact that we had supported them very strongly when they were out of power and the Communists were harassing them. So when they came in, we had exceptionally warm relations with President Havel and the new Czechoslovak government. So we saw this as an opportunity and urgent necessity to help these guys succeed. We wanted to see the democratic revolution consolidate itself in Czechoslovakia as elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe. We would ask "how can we help." They said "we want your diplomatic support. We want you to show your interest in what is going on here. Help us consolidate this change." So every section of the Embassy developed a very close working relationship with their new Czechoslovak counterparts. There is one interesting story I'll share where Havel came in as President and yet was surrounded by people wearing the old Communist security guard uniforms. He hated the sight of these uniforms and wanted them changed. We heard that he asked the man who designed the costumes for the film Amadeus to design new Palace Guard uniforms.

*Q: Could you say what Amadeus was.*

RUSSELL: It was the wonderful film about the life of Mozart with fabulous period costumes. The story we heard was that Havel had uniforms, very handsome uniforms for his new presidential guard designed by the Amadeus costume designer. Then there was a problem with getting the proper hats to go with the new uniform. We got this request saying the president or someone on his staff had noticed that our U.S. air force hats, worn by Colonel Ed Motyka, our very effective Defense Attaché, were handsome. He asked if we could urgently get a bunch of those hats which could then have the insignia of the palace guard incorporated. What I understand happened is we actually quickly obtained some U.S. air force hats and turned them over. What I was told was we got this request and filled it. Sure enough these palace guards looked sharper than hell. Then a good friend of President Havel's, Michael Kocab, who was a hard rock musician, was asked to compose a presidential fanfare for use at the palace. He did a wonderful piece of music in just a couple weeks. So President Havel had his guards in handsome new uniforms and this splendid fanfare and there was quite a different atmosphere in the Prague Presidential palace.

*Q: How did Ambassador Black work under these, respond on this?*

RUSSELL: She was very adept at using the very warm contacts she and her staff had established with the dissidents to then carry over into the new government relationship.

She had a very good relationship with President Havel and members of his staff like Sasha Vondra, who later became Czech Ambassador to Washington, and other members of the government. She used that very effectively in terms of making any of our requests or concerns known at a very high level. She would always go to the highest level. Other members of the staff would go to the next appropriate level. For example, I would see people at the Deputy Minister level whenever necessary.

The main thing we were concerned about was how we could help Czechoslovakia succeed. So one of the things the U.S. embassy did was to beef up our own resources to cope with this. We had a very small staff in Prague. We were absolutely overwhelmed at first because we were starting to get normal government to government relations. In the old days we just reported what the Communist government was up to and whether there were any signs of cracks in the ice. Now we were reporting the success of major programs and the results of demarches on all kinds of issues where Czechoslovakia was helping us, as they did in the Gulf War. So we were acutely understaffed.

One of my big jobs as DCM was to try to improve the staffing situation. What I basically was involved in was trying to get TDY support to cover the shortfall. We finally did get an approved 50% increase in positions which were being filled initially with TDYs. So one thing was getting the Embassy cranked up to handle the situation. The other was getting the assistance effort launched. We had a request from AID to set up an AID mission in Prague. The problem is, as you well know, that at every American embassy it is the State staffed administrative section that to some extent services everyone. The administrative section was ably manned but extremely thinly stretched. We had an old, rather decaying facility. I remember when I was there on my first tour 1968-71 a State Department inspector said “this Embassy looks like a Balkan interior ministry.” It was not a modern, well functioning set up. The issue was how to support AID if they came in. Ambassador Black wanted to make damn sure that they didn't come in and overwhelm the staff, and that they followed what she wanted to see done. So we got AID in there on those terms. Actually the American embassy was responsible for launching an initiative with the other OECD member embassies to try and coordinate or at least inform each other on what we were planning to do for Czechoslovakia and to get the host government to tell us what it was they really needed. What programs do you need; what kind of military cooperation programs do you need; what kind of programs involving all sorts of American voluntary organizations do you want? The American Bar Association, for example, did a wonderful job helping provide advice on a new constitution. So there was just a huge range of things that were going on. Above all, we were trying to get from the Czechoslovak government a coherent picture of what they needed, and then try to figure out what we could really provide. A significant problem that I found in Prague was the tendency within the U.S. government to offer Czechoslovakia programs that various bureaucracies in Washington or that NGOs for that matter, wanted to deliver. So you get a bureaucratic tension there which is important to resolve. What we tried to do is emphasize to the Czechs “look, coordinate your assistance request. Make sure you know what you want, and then ask us for it. We will try to meet your requests rather than just offering you things and to be polite you say, okay, I'll take that and that.”

*Q: I'd like to talk a bit about this. I have a little experience and I have talked to other people who have been involved. I was in Kyrgyzstan for a little while. You know they were swamped with people who were adept at writing, I am talking about Americans, writing up grants to push whatever they wanted to push, you know whether it is a better form of toothpaste or something of this nature. Of course a place like Czechoslovakia is rather appealing. It is a nice country. It is not a central Asian country. These people, many are well meaning but also they are the people who write these grants for whatever they are worth and they say let's do this, and it is very hard to say no on the part of the Embassy. Could you talk about dealing with this?*

RUSSELL: Well, that was a problem we were dealing with. Now, obviously I don't want to knock a lot of these excellent charitable foundations, like the Ford foundation and individuals trying to be helpful. A number of different organizations did a really great job. But you have to be a little bit on guard against self promoters. This was particularly true in the area of promoting entrepreneurship, which was one of our biggest priorities. A lot of people, including many Czech and Slovak Americans would come over with warm feelings towards their ancestral homeland, vague feelings of wanting to do good together with wanting to make a buck, combined with maybe not very precise ideas of what they were going to do. Therefore you had the Czechoslovak government coming to us and saying “who is this guy?” and “what is this organization?” Of course the Embassy couldn't say "Well he is probably a crook." You can say “well there are various rating services and we suggest you go and check up on this firm or organization.” But in general terms what we tried to do is facilitate people getting together with the right recipient organization on the Czechoslovak side. So, for example, you would have the very well managed Executive Enterprise Corps linking up with Czechoslovak firms and doing a good job.

*Q: Yes, these are retired executives for the most part who could go out and offer advice and help start up. They are essentially volunteers. As you say it is well managed.*

RUSSELL: Well managed and good people who wanted to do something useful and they are not in it to make a buck. So one of the top managers or the head of that organization would come over and sit down with us at the Embassy and say, "What do they need? Who can I go see?" So our role in case of private donors was to hook them up with the right part of the Czechoslovak government or private sector to see where they could help. In the case of AID it was to try to get them to move a little bit quicker, because one of the problems we found with AID is they are hopelessly snarled by Congressional fiats and mandates with all kinds of requirements that slow down enormously their ability to respond fast to anything. So while the people we got were good and dedicated and trying to set up some good programs, it was like pulling teeth sometimes to get things launched. Basically our job was mediating between the private people who would come over, and trying to get U.S. official programs targeted in the right direction.

We tried especially to stimulate exchange programs and the sort of initiative where you

don't just have a paid consultant from the U.S. coming over, spending a day or a week, lecturing to the locals about how we do things in America and then flying home, business class probably. What you try to do is get Czechs and Slovaks to go over to the U.S. where they have a longer period of time, where they are exposed to how an American company operates, particularly an American company in one of the sectors that they are familiar with, or have some expert come over from the U.S. and really spend a long time. What we also did is help establish American expert positions in some of the ministries. I am talking generally in Czechoslovakia and then in the Czech Republic and then Slovakia. What we tried to do is get advisors to come over longer term where they could really be a resource person for a particular ministry like the Environment Ministry or Finance Ministry.

*Q: Well now, was there anything, I mean here we had been up against probably next to East Germany as hard nosed a regime as one can think about for some time, and we must have had all sorts of things like family unification, property cases. There must have been other things I mean a whole backlog of issues, many of them sort of basically consular cases, but there probably were other issues. How did we work on those?*

RUSSELL: We handled a lot of those, but I don't remember that as something I spent a lot of time with. The consular section was chronically overburdened because suddenly people who previously had been forbidden by their government to travel ran up against U.S. visa laws. The problem they then had was would we let them in. We also had a lot more Americans coming over, which resulted in all kinds of protection and welfare cases and citizenship services, particularly lost passports due to pick pocketing which increased tremendously after the revolution with the massive influx of tourists.

In terms of citizenship cases, we did have some anomalies in our relationship with Czechoslovakia which under Communism was good because they made you either a Czechoslovak or an American. So the Communist authorities couldn't fool around as easily and say they were going to arrest a dual national because he or she is really a Czechoslovak. We would say no, that person is an American citizen. We have a treaty that says he automatically lost his Czechoslovak citizenship when he acquired U.S. citizenship. But after the revolution people liked the idea of keeping their Czechoslovak citizenship along with their American one. So there were some legal citizenship issues we were negotiating.

On the administrative side, there was a huge infrastructure problem that the State Department was very slow to deal with. They were extremely inflexible in responding to situations which involved moving resources around. Particularly as State had meager resources to begin with, reallocating resources was an extremely painful process. One of the major issues dealt with in terms of workload, but also from a foreign policy point of view, was the fact that after the revolution Prague became the Mecca for every Congressman, Senator, and senior administration person that you can imagine. From the end of December, when the revolution was consolidated and Havel was sworn in, we had a Congressional delegation, CODEL or STAFFDEL, and sometimes several in town,

every single day through Easter. We sent a back channel “Official Informal” cable back to Washington after about two months of this, tongue in cheek obviously, saying "Look, we have a deal for you. We are going to have a bus stationed at the airport. It is going to have an extremely polished political and economic analysis of what is going on in Czechoslovakia. It is going to take visiting delegations to Wenceslas Square where they are going to have the opportunity for hourly press conferences. Then they will have the chance to be photographed with Cardinal Tomasek, President Havel and National Assembly Chairman Alexander Dubcek. There will be extremely lifelike mockups of these three individuals in Wenceslas Square under the statue of St. Wenceslas. Then the bus will take the delegation back to the airport." We got a wry reply which basically said “no dice.”

We were totally swamped with these visits. I remember going out to the airport to see off a CODEL on a U.S. air force plane which was taking them out. Another air force plane landed within half an hour with a Congressman who was coming in, and another air force plane landed an hour later with another Congressman. In addition, the Secretary of State and then the President and then the Vice President also all came to visit. I had the pleasure of coordinating all three of these visits which took about four months of my life. These three visits were very useful and very effective in making clear to Czechoslovakia that we really cared about them. Secretary Baker made a major policy speech in the Grand Hall of Charles University where Jan Hus had preached 600 years ago. While the massive security connected with a Presidential visit shocked the Czechoslovak officials, the Bush visit was a huge success and cemented our warm relationship. President and Mrs. Bush were generous in thanking Embassy staff for their efforts and posing for family photos. Vice President Quayle made a good impression during his Prague visit and a trip to Slovakia. His staff was so agreeable that we gave them a pre-wheels up party – a unique honor. In fact a lot of the Congressional visits were very useful too; it is just that it became a bit taxing for our small Embassy staff and Czechoslovak leaders who unfailingly made themselves available despite the demands of their other duties trying to create a democratic Czechoslovakia.

*Q: Were we getting rumblings or mutterings from the Foreign Ministry saying “can’t you do something about this?”*

RUSSELL: Well, the Czechoslovak Government leaders were extremely gracious, particularly President Havel, who had a few other things to do. If humanly possible, he would agree to meetings with CODELs even on a Sunday.

*Q: Well, I assume we were getting the same things from Germany I mean from the European countries too weren't they? Delegations coming over there.*

RUSSELL: Yes, but it wasn't to the degree that we had and the security precautions were certainly not so intrusive. Some of my diplomatic colleagues would say “what else are you doing besides hosting visitors.” It was a flood of high level visitors. It wasn't quite so much from most other countries, although the major European countries were also

anxious to cement good ties with the newly democratic Czechoslovakia.

*Q: Were you up against the phenomenon which probably developed a little later, of American students going over to teach English in Europe. I mean having a wonderful time. I mean this became a Mecca of the wandering year of American students. Had that happened yet while you were there?*

RUSSELL: Yes indeed. But that was very good because a number of U.S. private organizations recognized, and certainly the Czechs and Slovaks recognized, that their first priority to get back into the game should be to learn English. So a number of private organizations organized squads of university age students and older people to go over as volunteer teachers. As you say, Prague is a pretty nice place as is Czechoslovakia in general. So you had literally hundreds of these people coming to Czechoslovakia and by and large doing a lot of good. There were some people who came who were unqualified. The Czechs and Slovaks at various times didn't know exactly what to do with them. An individual town might have someone assigned to it; in effect their new English teacher had arrived. The person might or might not be particularly competent, but by and large they did extremely well, made lots of friends, and were very much appreciated. It was a very good program. I think Havel and others captured the American imagination.

*Q: I remember Havel came to address Congress and I saw them too. Somebody analyzed it, here is Congress, Havel was making his very obscure philosophical statements and all and Congress was getting up and applauding away, and some are saying what the hell does this mean. Did you find that in a way it was difficult to sort of understand some of the things that were coming out of I mean sort of the philosophy and all that?*

RUSSELL: Not really. I think that the initial inclination of the new Czechoslovak government was to do the opposite of whatever had been done before. In the case of the Warsaw Pact, it was to do the opposite of having a military alliance. So the feeling was to let the OSCE handle Czechoslovakia's security concerns. Let's not get locked into another alliance. There was a "let's abolish arms sales" idea that Havel also came up with. There was a general amnesty. A lot of criminals were actually let out. The police force was rather demoralized. However, in overall terms, what Havel did for Czechoslovakia was fabulous. Not only did he get favorable world attention and put the seal on this dramatic change in direction, but I think he motivated his own people and was an inspiration during a very difficult transition. For example, the GDP was going down after the revolution, not up. Many people felt they were better off economically under Communism. But in the context of his very idealistic approach, which I think was very appropriate for that revolutionary period, I think you had some things that were done that were perhaps politically unrealistic.

*Q: I would have thought there would have been two elements to your embassy. They would have been like kids turned loose in he cookie store, one would be the CIA and the other would have been the military. Yes, because here was a bulwark of the Communist thing with equipment and secret police and everything else. How did they act on this?*

RUSSELL: Yes, it was kind of a cookie store in that respect. But you have got to remember the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 so the utility of analyzing what was in a Soviet tank or other piece of equipment diminished somewhat. Yes, obviously all sections of the Embassy, all branches of the U.S. government, suddenly had a totally different relationship with their Czechoslovak counterparts then what they had before. Because we had supported the dissidents so strongly during the Communist period, there was a very warm relationship and requests for help across the board, and we provided it. I think that the U.S. diplomatic and assistance effort after the revolution in Czechoslovakia was very effective. I think we could have devoted more resources to it and acted more quickly. I also think we could probably have been more flexible, but on the whole we did a good job in helping out.

*Q: Did you find yourself, let's take the Foreign Ministry which would have been the place where your professionalism and their professionalism meshed. How did they go through their transition? I mean were we giving them advice on how to run a diplomatic service? They already knew how to do it; it was just changing their attitude.*

RUSSELL: They certainly knew how to run a diplomatic service, but they were short on personnel who weren't compromised under the Communist system. Basically their approach was to purge the people that were intimately associated with the secret police and their efforts to control the domestic population. Those people were fired. But they held over large numbers of people. They had to because they didn't have substitutes. They kept many people who worked as diplomats or military officers under the Communist regime. Our relationship with the Foreign Ministry was a very friendly one. We could go in and be extremely frank about our concerns. There was one case where they were getting ready to sell tanks to a state that we considered sponsored terrorism. We really raised a ruckus about it. We said you really shouldn't do this. That was a fascinating exercise because, as I said, the relationship was extremely warm. They didn't want to do something that would really offend us. On the other hand, they didn't want to pass up needed money from a sale that really wasn't that objectionable from our perspective. It was interesting because my reading on it was there were mixed signals being given from Washington. While the Embassy was being instructed to go in and pound the table and say don't do that, we heard that in Washington there was a certain amount of winking and nodding and downplaying of our concerns going on.

*Q: You can't say what the state was?*

RUSSELL: I'd rather not just because it is still a lively issue in that part of the world, but it was one of the usual suspects. The Czechs were really confused as to what we really wanted. That was an interesting situation because here you had a government that really wanted to work with us, and we as a government were sending somewhat confused signals. However, by and large the relationship was if we had a UN issue or almost anything involving arms sales or cooperation on any given diplomatic issue, we had a superb opportunity to tell them our position and typically get their support. If not, we'd

get a frank explanation of why they couldn't help.

*Q: Were we seeing an exodus, you mentioned Czechoslovakia as sort of a terrorist R&R place, of terrorists and all that. Where were they going? I assume they didn't stay there.*

RUSSELL: I assume they didn't. I know that the Czechoslovak government was aware of the security problem, and wanted to get control of the intelligence service. They wanted to get control of what was going on within their borders. I think the best example of the change in our intelligence relationship on terrorism is their reaction during the Gulf War where they were extremely cooperative and shared helpful intelligence about Iraqi WMD capabilities and other issues with us based on their good contacts.

*Q: Because they had been through the period when the Soviets had been a big supplier of Saddam Hussein's military.*

RUSSELL: Yes, and they had diplomatic representation there and knew where the bodies were buried. But the other thing they did is their security people intercepted a number of suspected terrorists and prevented them from entering the country. So they got pretty good control over their own security apparatus, and were very cooperative in trying to avoid things like terrorist incidents against us in Czechoslovakia. We even had an armored car posted in front of our Embassy.

*Q: Well, was there in the society as you were observing it, how did they treat those who had cooperated with the police and those who didn't? I mean the Czechs have a pretty tight society and they had been working on this for a long time. I would have thought there were an awful lot of people involved.*

RUSSELL: I think almost everybody was involved. I think that Havel for example, recognized that in a speech where he basically said, "we are all guilty including me." Of all the people I can think of he was the least involved, and one of the people who most strongly represented idealistic, consistent dissent even at great personal cost. But he insisted everyone is compromised to some degree and therefore people should not judge each other too severely. He urged everyone to pull together and try to build a democratic society. That was the tack that the dissidents took even during the revolution. Consider their slogan, “No violence." It was a pretty good slogan from a small bunch of unarmed people in a police state. So their attitude in a state where almost everybody had been compromised in one way or another was let's move forward rather than look back. Now they did on and off develop a so-called “lustration” or personnel vetting procedure for people who worked for the Communist security apparatus to make sure they were not going to be employed in sensitive government positions. So they went through a certain amount of purging of people who had very specific secret police and high party affiliations. A very few people were locked up, but they weren't kept in that long. Basically they had been trying for a policy of reconciliation, and the deal when they took over was if you wretches will step out of the way at this point, we are not going to shoot you, hang you or really persecute you. Just get out of the way and let a decent government

come in. That was the deal that was struck. Had the Communist party security apparatus leaders feared for their lives, I think they would have resorted to force rather than simply slinking away.

*Q: Well, you were there until when now?*

RUSSELL: I was there until the summer of 1991.

*Q: The issue became very important to you later on, but were you seeing any fissures between the Czechs and the Slovaks at that time?*

RUSSELL: Not a lot. We were seeing some reports even at that early date that some of the Communist officials were favoring more Slovak autonomy on the grounds that the Czech approach was going to be tougher on them than what they might experience in a more autonomous Slovakia. We had a few scattered reports coming in saying these guys thought they would be better off if they could get further away from the reach of Prague. However, these were really straws in the wind. What we did see is that the Slovaks not surprisingly wanted to get greater autonomy now that they were free of the Communist control. They wanted to go back to what they were trying to get in 1968. Part of the deal in '68 was democracy. Part of it was more autonomy for Slovakia that Dubcek was particularly pushing. So they wanted to follow up on that and get much greater autonomy, but not necessarily independence. We saw that as a possible area for friction, but it was not clear to us that they were going to split.

*Q: Was the dissident movement pretty much a Czech movement?*

RUSSELL: The dissident movement in the sense of charter '77 signatories and people who were involved in starting the '89 revolution was a predominately Czech movement. The Slovak dissidents were more associated with the underground church which kept going in Slovakia. The Communist security apparatus, the StB, actually had intelligence agents infiltrated into the church itself. The underground church was something else. The underground church and some of the environmental movements were more prominent in the dissident movement in Slovakia, whereas in the Czech lands it was more the intellectuals associated with the Charter '77 movement. In Slovakia in general, the Communists had not been perceived as ruling with such a heavy hand. Slovak industrialization occurred under Communism. Czech industrialization occurred more under Austria-Hungary. I remember being driven around by a Slovak regional Communist Party secretary when I went to lay a wreath on a monument to a U.S. OSS mission that was captured in Slovakia during the war. The Communist Mayor was pleased to have us come and make that kind of a gesture. He would support that, as long as there was no public ceremony. So I remember this regional party secretary drove me around in his big black Tatra limousine, and kept commenting “see that car, see that nice little house? We have given the people these benefits. We brought industry to Slovakia. We are responsible and that's why we are popular.” I don't believe they were very popular, but Communism was perceived by many as less onerous in Slovakia. There were a lot of

capital flows from the Czech part to the Slovak part of the country under Communism. So while there were a number of courageous dissidents like Jan Carnogursky in Slovakia, opposition wasn't as pronounced as in the Czech Lands.

*Q: What about our embassy? I mean you must have had an awful lot of people there who had been highly cooperative with the secret police. I mean they wouldn't have gotten their jobs. How did that affect you as our foreign national employees?*

RUSSELL: That is a fascinating question. I am sure it was true throughout the Communist bloc. We knew that the Czech and Slovak employees at the Embassy had to go to meetings with the secret police periodically. I think it may have been weekly, but I am not sure. I know our maid during our first tour appeared to be going to weekly reporting sessions. In fact, when we eventually fired her for letting our kids almost climb out a second floor window, she replied that we could not fire her because she had been assigned to us. The FSNs at the Embassy were a very diverse group; most of whom I think had rather warm feelings for us, as we did for them. When I was in the consular section for example, we had some wonderful people working there. If they did have to go to meetings, I cannot imagine that there were many who gave reports that actually hurt us. After the revolution, we got some information on what had been going on. The information confirmed this impression. However, there were some FSNs who were actually officers in the secret police. I don't know what the highest rank was. I think it was a Colonel. These “professionals” were a sinister lot, but at least I think we had identified most of them.

*Q: You always hear the story of the Colonel as a chauffeur for the Ambassador.*

RUSSELL: As I said, some of them were agents or active cooperators with the secret police. However, most of the FSNs were passive or reluctant cooperators who had to answer questions and who I think probably avoided giving information which they thought might hurt their U.S. colleagues. There were constant efforts at physical penetration of the Embassy, constant efforts using personnel to try to infiltrate the Embassy and efforts to compromise Embassy personnel. I remember a security expert discovered that an extra computer terminal had been set up on our unclassified network. It turned out a line had been run through the wall in the Admin section to the next door Police Station. However, I think the StB was unsuccessful in penetrating classified security areas. Everything that occurred suggested that unless they were actually working for the secret police, most of the FSNs were not out to get us, and were a fine bunch of people. I feel very warmly still towards many of them.

*Q: Well, what happened to the ones that were identified? Did they leave?*

RUSSELL: They weren't always fired as soon as they were identified, as we figured the StB would just stick someone else in. You work with the devil you know. But when they did something really stupid, we would have to sack them. There was this one guy who was a real pain in the neck, who was incompetent at his Embassy job in addition to being

a secret policeman. He put a bug in a packet of curtain samples that were going up to the Defense Attaché's office. Now they didn't let anything unexamined enter the Defense Attaché's office in Communist Czechoslovakia. So naturally it was screened and they found the bug in it and this idiot, who had carried it up there, was fired. This was the same guy who my wife found in our apartment fiddling with our couch which had been turned on its side. She said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I am checking the inventory number." There was a guy named Joe Kaplan, who was above him and was one of the top StB people in the Embassy. We knew who he was and that he was a bad apple. The FSNs knew who he was and when he asked us to let his dog breed with our champion dachshund, an FSN approached me and bad mouthed Joe's dog as having a bad back. We turned down Joe's offer and later found big nails driven into our four snow tires stored in the Embassy garage. I guess he was mixing business with personal motives.

*Q: Were you sort of dangerous to the FSNs both by your own efforts and with them coming and telling you stories you hadn't heard before?*

RUSSELL: No, I didn't ask them. It wasn't my job to delve into that. Others were responsible for these security and Intel issues after the fall of Communism. The FSNs obviously didn't want to talk about it. I didn't want to scratch a wound unnecessarily.

*Q: How about economic relations, did that change?*

RUSSELL: Yes, they changed a lot in the sense that we made a big effort to attract American business into Czechoslovakia. There was a lot of interest. When we managed to get authorization for a 50% increase in the staff, one of the things we fought hardest for was a Department of Commerce guy to come out. Our lone economic officer was suddenly in a major commercial operation and overwhelmed with work. A lot of American firms did come in including some individuals whose proposed deals sometimes hit the press in a negative way, like a gentleman who was reported to be trying to buy the Tatras mountain resorts. By and large, good American firms came in and hired very competent people as their local representatives, often former deputy ministers and people from that level. So all the big firms, GE and others came in very quickly. A lot of American investment poured into Czechoslovakia. And it kept pouring into the Czech portion, but less into Slovakia after the split.

*Q: What about the commercial side? One thinks of Czech guns. I would have thought that guns would be a big thing to sell in the United States, particularly handguns. Was this a problem for us almost morally?*

RUSSELL: I don't remember that problem arising, but we were concerned about Central and Eastern European weapons sales to rogue states. That was what we were focused on. I don't remember the issue of handgun sales in the U.S. coming up. Certainly the Czechs made some very fine quality weapons. My big regret is not buying a Czechoslovak shotgun. I could have purchased a fine quality Czechoslovak shotgun at a reasonable price. I love to hunt. In fact when I was there the first time, I used to go pheasant hunting

and enjoyed it tremendously. Czechs and Slovaks are great hunters and take good care of their woodlands.

*Q: How about while you were there, the Soviets were still Soviets. Were there Soviet troops in the area or what about the Soviet embassy?*

RUSSELL: There was a huge Soviet embassy not far from our Ambassador's residence complex. There was an enormous Soviet presence in a country where they had called the shots since 1948. I got to know their DCM. His Ambassador was one of the few Soviet Ambassadors who denounced the 1991 coup against Gorbachev. He struck me then as a new school kind of guy, as someone who had hopes for a more democratic, open society in Russia. It was interesting to see the change in the Soviet stance and the way they were starting to view the world.

*Q: There weren't Soviet troops...*

RUSSELL: There were Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia after the 1989 Velvet Revolution until June 1991. Michael Kocab, who had been a hard rock musician and composer, became one of the leading members of the new Parliament. He was a big friend of President Havel and a very tough minded, smart guy. He was put in charge of negotiating the withdrawal of the Russian troops. I remember he told me at one point, "well I've gone from hard rock to heavy metal." He negotiated the withdrawal and the Soviet forces did pull out of Czechoslovakia. The Czechs had made it clear they wanted them out of there as quickly as possible. During their stay the Soviets simply dumped bottom of the tanker car gasoline and oil into the sandy areas around their main base and it went straight into the aquifer. When they left they took the plumbing, doors and windows out of buildings. It was a very unfriendly leave taking. They managed to trash everything and caused a huge amount of pollution over time. In Slovakia they made the same environmental mess, but left under different circumstances. Even some of the leaders of the dissident movement like the Christian Democratic Party leader Jan Carnogursky took a much friendlier approach on the Soviet departure. Whereas in the Czech Republic there weren't any bands seeing them off, in the Slovak part of the country, they did have cordial departure ceremonies.

*Q: When you left there in '91 it must have been quite an up beat mood.*

RUSSELL: Very much so. Czechoslovakia had moved from authoritarianism to democracy and the Cold War was over. It had been a fabulous assignment. I left, and came back to Washington. I bid for the job of Director for Eastern Europe, an Office Director position. There were a lot of people bidding for that and I didn't get it. I got a call and was urged to bid for the Deputy Chief of Mission job in Argentina which I would have liked because my old friend Terry Todman was Ambassador there. I have enormous respect for him and would have liked going there. However, I don't speak any Spanish and I don't know anything about Latin America, so I didn't feel I would be any added value there. I also got a call from a friend, Sandy Vogelgesang, who was over on detail at

EPA as Deputy Assistant Administrator for International Activities. The job of Director for International Cooperation was coming up. That appealed to me a lot because it involved environmental clean up efforts in Central Europe, as well as other areas. It also offered the possibility of moving up in a year to Deputy Assistant Administrator and further management experience with a large staff, a big operation and a big budget. So I finally decided not to compete for Argentina and to go on detail to EPA.

*Q: So you were in EPA from what '91 to...*

RUSSELL: I was in EPA from '91 to '93.

*Q: This would have been still under a straddle?*

RUSSELL: It was a straddle, and Bill Riley was the Administrator of EPA the first year I was there and then Carol Browner came in after the 1992 elections. I really liked working with both of those people.

*Q: Were both committed to the environment?*

RUSSELL: Yes, very much so. Riley was a very distinguished environmentalist, and had a very fine record. I can't give you his curriculum any more at this point, but he had a brilliant mind. He was very good at cutting to the heart of issues and then fighting very hard for what he believed in. He didn't have an easy time under the Republican administration in '91 and, I believe, had a difficult relationship with the White House Chief of Staff, John Sununu. Certainly EPA was trying to do some things that didn't get supported as strongly as many of us thought they should have been. I liked working with Riley a lot. Then with the election of the new administration, Carol Browner came in and she is one very smart lady.

*Q: What is her background?*

RUSSELL: She was head of the Florida Environmental Protection Agency, and close to Vice President Gore. She struck me as someone who is very vigorous and dynamic and certainly very committed to what she was doing. I was there first as Director for International Cooperation, then as Deputy Assistant Administrator and finally as Acting Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator. It was terrific.

*Q: On the international side, what were you doing, what were the issues?*

RUSSELL: As Director for International Cooperation I was mainly focused on trying to give an added dimension to EPA's international programs, based on my own diplomatic experience. EPA doesn't have its own money specifically for international programs. EPA gets money from AID to do that kind of thing, and get involved in all kinds of negotiations with foreign governments, with OECD and with UN agencies in Geneva. The reason they liked the idea of having a Senior Foreign Service officer over there was

to give a diplomatic perspective, to help be liaison with the Department of State and help improve the relationship with AID. My purview was basically Europe and then later I was involved in some Asian programs, but the first year my main focus was on Europe and setting up environmental programs with Turkey, and then with various Central European countries, including Lithuania. Then when I moved up to Deputy Assistant Administrator, I was also involved in a program designed to promote U.S. environmental exports to Asia. I was involved in some of our negotiations with Canada and Mexico, the environmental component of the NAFTA agreement.

*Q: North American Free Trade Agreement.*

RUSSELL: North American Free Trade Agreement. I really was involved in a lot of different foreign projects, but the main focus was trying to coordinate with State and AID on those programs. I would then travel with people from EPA to negotiate with a foreign government like the Ukraine, where we set up an environmental relationship and opened the U.S.-Ukrainian environmental center. I met with the Ukrainian environment minister, Scherbak who later was their Ambassador in Washington, and has now gone back to Ukraine.

They wanted me for that kind of diplomatic activity, not because I was an expert on water pollution or air pollution. I would go and represent the EPA at the OECD trying to get OECD to do environmental audits or environmental surveys in Eastern Europe. The OECD was a little bit reluctant to expand its activities in that respect, and so I was involved in negotiations in Paris to get that program launched in OECD. I went over to Lithuania with the head of our EPA Chicago office, a Lithuanian-American named Val Adamkus, who is now president of Lithuania. We went to Lithuania to set up an environmental cooperation program. Val was the environmental specialist, and I was involved in the diplomatic effort. We set up a program with the Lithuanians, and because of Val's long standing previous efforts to help Lithuania and his enormous interest in helping build a new Lithuania, we were on national television for two hours explaining this very minor environmental program on prime time. But because they were anxious to hear him, we got enormous publicity for the effort. Those were the kinds of things I was doing.

*Q: I take it much of our focus at that time was on the former Soviet Union and its allies. Was it a fact the Soviet system had not really done much about the environment?*

RUSSELL: They did a lot about the environment. They ruined it. The Soviet system had been the most environmentally unfriendly system you can imagine. They didn't give a damn about the environment and they didn't protect water or air or any natural resource from primitive exploitation. Western Bohemia, where they had open pit coal mines and burned soft coal in all the industry, looked like a lunar landscape. Forests were dying. I toured some of that area. People were developing emphysema in their 30s. It was an environmental catastrophe. That was a very high priority for the administration, both for the Bush and Clinton administrations, to try to help Central and Eastern Europe on

pressing environmental problems. There were also incredible problems in Turkey. Turkey was extremely helpful during the 1991 Gulf War. We wanted to respond. One of the things that the Turkish government said they had as a high priority was getting Bill Riley to come over to Turkey to sign an environmental agreement with their environment minister and thus highlight Turkish government interest in this issue. Actually many Turkish laws on the environment were fine. The problem was lack of enforcement.

*Q: Were there people arising, we call them greens. Had they been there or did you discover there were greens within these countries, environmentally aware people?*

RUSSELL: Environment right after the Communists fell, when new governments came in, and certainly in the case of Czechoslovakia, received a lot of attention and environment ministers were often high powered. One of the things the Czechoslovaks helped to launch, that Havel was personally interested in, and that EPA liked, was building an environmental program for Central Europe. Havel sponsored a major conference that Riley attended representing the U.S. government not too long after I went to EPA. I was heavily involved in organizing our participation and went with Riley to this conference at Dobris castle in Czechoslovakia. Havel and the Czechoslovak government were pushing this very strongly. Environment was a big ticket item throughout the area, but it flagged fairly quickly. I think the economic pressures that they felt, the drop in GDP, the tremendous shock in losing their eastern markets and the need to reorient their exports, inflation, the rise in unemployment, everything that hit them meant that the government, the Klaus government for example, paid a lot less attention to the environment as time wore on. But, at first they gave it a lot of emphasis. U.S. and European interest in dealing with Central European environmental programs did continue, and I recall going with Carol Browner to the "Environment for Europe" Conference in Lucerne in the spring of 1993 where strategy for dealing with environmental problems in Central and Eastern Europe was endorsed.

*Q: What about the green parties in particularly France and Germany? Were they jumping into this with both feet, or were they pretty much concerned with their own countries?*

RUSSELL: In terms of helping out in Central Europe, I don't remember an awful lot of contributions from France. Germany was active and effective in this area, perhaps because these problems were in their back yard. The Dutch and the UK were also very engaged and effective on these issues. The interesting thing about our program at EPA was it was a very flexible program. However, it was tied to an inflexible, often slow AID way of operating, particularly with respect to negotiating contracts. As I say, I don't blame AID so much because of the myriad regulations they are mired with, but we were trying to respond to urgent demands from Central Europe to clean up the air and water.

In Central Europe we were involved in multi-year kinds of problems and programs which you can't handle quickly. We were supportive, but we didn't want to agree to things in an international forum that would cost us a fortune or make us assume obligations for

handling massive European trans-border air pollution issues for example. So EPA was able to respond to very specific requests from these Central European governments, and we were able to supply help from people in the agency who were experts on water and air and pesticides, but whose main job was obviously U.S. focused. EPA has a domestic mandate.

*Q: That is not what they are designed to do.*

RUSSELL: That is not what they are designed to do, so these EPA experts used funds from AID to do extremely good work in many places including Central and Eastern Europe, advising these countries on how to deal with some of their horrendous pollution problems. In some cases we placed advisors in an environment ministry. It was a very cost effective program.

*Q: Well now, how did you find, I assume that one of the byproducts of this is quite an industry of producing scrubbers and various environmental equipment to clean up things. Was this part of our stable that you were dealing with?*

RUSSELL: It was a considerable part of our interest to find opportunities for the American environmental industry, for companies producing things like scrubbers and other environmental technology to sell abroad. The problem is that some of this technology is fairly expensive. We found, for example, that Asia was a very good prospective market for this, and one of the things I was involved in was trying to promote sales of American environmental products in Asia. I remember, for example, the Environment Minister from Taiwan came and had a meeting with Administrator Browner. He amazed people around the room by talking about the tens of billions of dollars Taiwan planned to spend on buying environmental equipment, some of which EPA helped direct to U.S. exporters. But the Central European countries were not in a position to spend huge amounts of money. They are still interested in the environment, but it has been slow. One of the biggest things we ran into was even once you get the good environmental legislation in place, even once you get people trained and get good people in an Environment Ministry, the biggest problem is enforcement. You could talk a good game; you could have wonderful laws on the books, but if you don't enforce them it's just not doing much good.

*Q: Were you picking up any problems within the agency which is essentially a domestic agency about enforcement things within the United States? I mean was this...*

RUSSELL: I wasn't involved in that at all. What I did do sometimes would be to speak to environmental NGOs about some of the things we were doing. What was interesting to me was that some of them, like environmental equity groups protesting against placement of polluting industries in poorer sections of U.S. communities, were opposed to any EPA activity outside U.S. borders. Talking to some of those groups was a real revelation because I would be explaining what a great job EPA is doing along the Mexican border or in Eastern Europe and a hand would go up, "excuse me, you shouldn't be doing any of

that. You should be doing it at home, damn it. Why are you spending a nickel to help these foreigners?" It was a very interesting reaction. I tried to explain some of the benefits to the U.S. of these efforts, but without much success. There isn't universal support for our assistance efforts overseas, as you are well aware.

*Q: What about Mexico? Tremendous pressure on trying to get with the North American Free Trade Agreement, this is a highly political thing which crossed party lines. Both Bush and Clinton supported it, but you had unions. There are a lot of factors. One of the great charges was well these Mexicans are going to pollute the hell out of everything, and they shouldn't be given any assistance.*

RUSSELL: We were working with Mexico to figure out how we could mitigate some of the pollution along the border, particularly in the area right across the border. You would have things going on, which would not have been legal in U.S. manufacturing facilities, which were polluting heavily. There was an effort to figure out how that problem could be dealt with, how they could be regulated more effectively, how you could reduce pollution across the border. There was no easy answer to it. The feeling was the amount of additional industry and the jobs and additional prosperity being generated by these cross-border operations would eventually make it possible to do more on the environment. The idea was that if Mexico had more money; they could afford more effective environmental regulations. There is no magic bullet there.

*Q: How did you find the Mexicans on negotiations?*

RUSSELL: I was only involved in setting up one major conference in Washington in which they participated. It was actually a trilateral conference of Environment Ministers from the U.S., Canada and Mexico in 1992 at Blair House. It was designed to organize North American environmental cooperation and encourage support for NAFTA. I remember being very impressed with the quality of the Mexican negotiators. I don't remember the name now, but their Environment Minister, if I am not mistaken, was later assassinated. He was extremely effective and members of his team were also effective and tough negotiators. They presented very strong cases and made it clear that Mexico was going to decide what it was capable of doing and what it wanted to do. There was obviously a high degree of national pride involved. The Canadians were tough as well, but the Conference was very productive in the end.

*Q: What about, here you are in EPA, and you are used to the Department of State. How did you find working within the bureaucracy of essentially a domestic agency?*

RUSSELL: To have the reviewing statement on your annual appraisal written by the head of an agency is unusual. The State Department system doesn't always reward going on detail, but in this case I was helped by it. But I think what people don't realize is when you go to another agency you are there because they want your skills and value your State Department diplomatic experience. So you have access at a higher level than you probably would in the State Department at any given grade. I would regularly go to the

EPA Administrator, when I was Deputy Assistant Administrator. I would regularly be dealing with the Deputy Administrator of EPA or the Administrator, who has cabinet rank, going to her staff meetings or accompanying her to international conferences or going with Bill Riley to Turkey. That is absolutely terrific, because you have access at the highest levels of an agency, and you often have a chance to deal with the major issues in the area, in this case the international issues the agency is handling. You see the relations of that agency at the highest level. As Deputy Assistant Administrator I had a 20 million dollar budget and supervised 75 professional staff.

*Q: Well now, there is always Washington politics being Washington politics, Carol Browner is given a very difficult time on her international trips if I recall. Am I correct on that?*

RUSSELL: She didn't take that many foreign trips when I was there. I went with her to a conference in Lucerne on the Environment for Central Europe which was highly successful. I never heard of her being criticized for those few trips.

*Q: Maybe it was domestic trips; I don't know. I mean this is just vague; I did not pay much attention.*

RUSSELL: I did not remember her taking that many international tips. We were constantly urging her to take international trips. She realized she was heading a domestic agency. I don't remember that being a problem.

*Q: How did you feel since you sampled it, was there a pretty solid commitment from the Bush and Clinton administrations for your time in serving in an environmental agency for their work?*

RUSSELL: Yes, I think so. Bill Riley, as I said, I think sometimes felt a little frustrated at not being supported on some of EPA's initiatives by people around the White House Chief of Staff. That is my personal opinion.

*Q: I think Sununu came out of New Hampshire and had been governor of New Hampshire which was very much against tree huggers and everything else and sort of...*

RUSSELL: The 1992 UN Rio Conference on Environment and Development was not one of his favorite issues, let's put it that way. I think Bill Riley had a tough time on some of those things, but by and large I think there was good support for our international programs in Europe, Asia and North America. Certainly EPA under Riley seemed to run very well. He himself was extremely effective. I was with him at this June 1991 meeting at Dobris castle in Czechoslovakia. He blew away some of the other ministers just in terms of force of personality, culture and depth of knowledge. He really understood the issues and presented them extremely well. I felt I was working for an agency which had a lot of very bright and committed people. Now, it is a civil service agency like most of the government and thus is a mixed bag. You run into some people who try to milk the Civil

Service system and its protections, but by and large EPA has very good people. Certainly the people who I went with on overseas trips to UN and OECD meetings were excellent. They knew their stuff, were technically accomplished and very dedicated.

*Q: Well, were issues such as ozone layer and all this, I mean there really aren't a lot of environmental issues that are on a world wide basis. Was this an issue at the time?*

RUSSELL: Certainly the ozone layer, global warming, all of the global issues were issues with which EPA was involved, but I was not dealing with them.

*Q: We mentioned Mexico, what about Canada? When you were there, did Canada come across on your radar or were things pretty...*

RUSSELL: We have a vast array of issues with Canada on the environment. That was not really something that I got into all that much partly because the issues are dealt with in some of the EPA regional offices like the Middle West region which was involved in Great Lakes issues for example. Also, as I recall, the able Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator, Alan Hecht, had particular responsibility for Canadian issues while I was at EPA. We have a huge range of issues like cross border air pollution, something the Canadians feel strongly about, and Great Lakes water pollution issues.

*Q: Well, then you left there in '93. What happened?*

RUSSELL: I left there in mid summer 1993. My name was proposed by State to the White House to be Ambassador to Slovakia. So I was working at EPA and then the announcement was made in July or early August that I had been nominated. So State suggested terminating my detail to EPA and starting to consult and get ready for my Senate confirmation hearing and onward assignment.

*Q: I think this is probably a good place to stop. I think it is better to concentrate on your Slovakian experience in a full session. We have been going at it for some time now. So we will pick it up next time in '93, you have been nominated and left this, and want to pick up how you get ready to go and all that. Then we will talk about time in Slovakia.*

***

*Today is 11 July 2000. Ted you were nominated to go where?*

RUSSELL: Slovakia. My name was sent over by the Department to the White House I think in February of '93. What I was hearing was there was some thought the White House might want to send a political Ambassador instead.

*Q: I assume a political of Slovakian ancestry.*

RUSSELL: Yes, with some Slovak tie. I knew of at least one political nominee who was

interested in it, a rather high ranking and respected staff person from the Congress. So that went on for awhile. Finally the White House announced me, I think in July or early August. Then I was able to start to get ready, but as you know the Congressional Affairs Bureau is very careful about what you do before you are actually confirmed, so my preparation to go to Slovakia was mainly limited to the Department and other foreign affairs agencies. I was not supposed to run around and talk to American businesses and that sort of thing outside the Executive Branch.

So I was announced in mid summer and started to read in on the situation. I would go around and talk to people in the Department. I knew something about Bratislava because I had been in Prague when we first reopened the Consulate in Bratislava in 1990. Of course Slovakia became independent January 1, 1993, so our little consulate there became an embassy. I started going around the Department trying to find out exactly where we stood. That was a rude awakening, because actually we had done almost nothing there. We had a skeleton staff. We had not really done anything on the administrative side. We didn't have a regular admin officer there for the first seven months or so of the existence of the Embassy. They would have TDY people come in. The Department basically did nothing to get Slovakia spun up from an administrative point of view. You had AID going in gradually building up a mission and getting good office space and nice housing for the staff. They were well ensconced by the time I started reading in. USIA had an officer out there as well. She had enough funds to set up a decent office and get a nice apartment. But still the Department had done almost nothing by way of administrative support for its own staff and basic Embassy functions like communications and security.

*Q: Was this just oversight or did you feel there was a certain amount of being almost miffed that Czechoslovakia had split up and to hell with that?*

RUSSELL: You have captured it exactly. I know some of the personalities involved. I know some of the things that happened early on even when there was only a consulate there. There was literally a sense of "Don't those people understand we are being stretched thin on resources." I assisted Ambassador Black in building up the staff to credible proportions in Prague to handle the emergence of a new, democratic Czechoslovakia. We were under great pressure to get the staff up to an adequate level in Prague. We worked hard and succeeded, but the Prague staff certainly had no fat. Then the Department said, in effect "Who are these people splitting and suddenly making us staff yet another embassy." So the reaction from Embassy Prague or even more back in Washington was "we can't afford this. We will take a few people from Prague, very reluctantly surrendered, and send them to Bratislava." That was it. So we had no classified communications by cable or telephone. If people in Bratislava wanted to send a telegram about this newly independent country, with a Prime Minister we didn't trust in power and in an area where we had major policy concerns, the reaction was Embassy officers could drive to Vienna to send any cable. The Embassy reporting officer had to drive to Vienna, which could take at least an hour if there was no traffic, to send anything that was classified because the Department refused to pay to set up classified communications. The second thing that I learned was that even if we received classified

communications capability, there was no place to prepare them. We didn't have a safe shielded room nor did we have machines that you could use to type classified reports in the Embassy. The Department refused funding for that. We did not have an assistant Administrative officer or "GSO" to help an Admin officer, who unfortunately was not up to the job.

*Q: Sounds like this is the whole syndrome, you know. Here is someone, let's get them over there.*

RUSSELL: So we were in a situation where it was an administrative nightmare. What I was being told in Washington was "Yes, we know the admin situation at the post is awful. We know you do not have someone who is able to do the admin job there. But that's the way it is."

*Q: This is interesting because it is not quite a parallel, I interviewed Alan Wendt who was in Slovenia. Alan was saying there were a lot like Larry Eagleburger these old Yugoslav hands, at that point they were saying well Slovenia started this whole disintegration and screw you. I mean there he was going out as an Ambassador to a country which had a bunch of people who were being rather piggish and nasty just because it was inconvenient.*

RUSSELL: It was inconvenient to have to staff these new posts. I think there were several things at work here. The Department went into this in a situation where, as I understand it, there were all the new posts having to be opened in the former Soviet Union yet the decision was made not to ask for extra money.

*Q: This was Jim Baker.*

RUSSELL: That was a Baker decision as I understand it. I don't know exactly how that worked with respect to Slovakia because Slovakia didn't go independent at that time. It went independent a little later than that. But certainly we were in a pinched situation with respect to resources, really very badly pinched. But the problem was that there was no relation that I could see in the Department at the top between policy and resources. Top policy people, who were very smart, had all kinds of wonderful ideas and wanted an extremely activist approach. I had a visit from a senior policy official out there who said, "Well how are you spending your time?" I said, "I am spending about 70% of my time on admin. I have inadequate communications, my people are still living in hotels and I have totally inadequate admin support. It is something that I am trying to rectify, and at the Department's request, I spend a lot of time on that. I'd appreciate your help." He said, "Oh that is terrible. You ought to spend almost all your time on public diplomacy, on lobbying for our political objectives." I said, "I would be much happier believe me, doing exactly that. Right now we are working in administrative chaos." There was an absolute lack of communication as far as I could tell between the 7th floor resources people, who were totally unsympathetic, and the policy people. The policy folks well understood our political interests in Slovakia but did not force the reallocation of resources to help

achieve them, so I felt whipsawed between them.

*Q: I was saying you really have to point the finger at Secretary of State Warren Christopher. I mean having his predecessor, Jim Baker, say not to use any money, and then Warren Christopher is basically a lawyer and had no sort of administrative experience or interest. You know, they just didn't get their act together.*

RUSSELL: I think it is something that the Department has suffered from for a long time that resources and policy have not been particularly well matched. I think they have also suffered from inability to reallocate resources. That doesn't mean they are not able to cut things, but what we saw in Slovakia was that big cuts were being made in big posts in Europe in Paris, in Rome and other posts. The European bureau was being whacked at very hard. I don't know how many dozen officer positions they were being required to cut. But the point is if you have a post that is just starting, it isn't staffed, and you have either across the board cuts or a situation where the new post says we need additional positions in order to be able to function, the resource people are going to say "when we are cutting Ambassador Harriman's Paris Embassy, we are certainly not going to give you additional positions." So there was a disconnect between the big policy issues which we had there, which were understood by policy people at the top in the Department and the resource shortfalls where the top resource people in the Department were totally unsupportive. European Bureau administrative support staff were caught in the middle. They tried to be helpful. I got a GSO finally in 1994 after months of demoralizing administrative vacuum, but we were in a situation where admin issues were absolutely fundamental because they hadn't been addressed when the post was set up. When I arrived at the post in December, Bratislava had been operating as an Embassy for 11 months and still was an administrative mess.

*Q: Were you the first Ambassador?*

RUSSELL: I was the first Ambassador. Bratislava was set up as a consulate in 1991 and this tiny consular operation suddenly became an embassy. AID and USIA got their acts together relatively fast, State did not. So you were asking what did I do when I was reading in. What I spent most of my time doing was going pillar to post within the State Department and the Washington bureaucracy trying to get people focused on the serious administrative problems at post involving lack of adequate U.S. or trained FSN administrative support, lack of classified telegraphic or telephone facilities, lack of adequate housing, lack of Embassy and Residence security and myriad other resource problems. We had only one American staffer on the administrative side. I was hearing in Washington, and this was confirmed after my arrival, that the individual was not up to what was admittedly a daunting task. An officer, who became my Deputy, was sent out in mid 1993 to replace Paul Hacker as Chargé until I was confirmed. Paul had done good work as Consul in Bratislava prior to the split and then held the fort pending nomination of an Ambassador. My future Deputy, sent out as Charge, worked hard to improve the very unsatisfactory administrative situation and to get up to speed on the dicey political situation.

*Q: Who was that?*

RUSSELL: Eleanor Sutter, a very bright and energetic officer. I said, "Look, Ellie, why not get together with admin. and send in a cable describing what you are facing out there so we will have something on the record." All I was seeing were records of telephone calls saying nothing is working. So we got the most pitiable message in. It was as if someone had typed it on an old fashioned typewriter and it had come over the airwaves in this kind of scrambled, garbled form, this pitiable lament about how nothing worked, there wasn't enough money, everyone was upset and morale was low. Things were a total mess from an administrative point of view. So armed with this document, I went around to the administrative folks and said, “Look, we really have got to do something about this.” EUR/EX was obviously interested in seeing that this post worked. Many working level people in the Department were helpful, but there simply wasn't any money being allocated and additional staff was not being approved. When I had a chance to meet Secretary Christopher briefly for a photo op at a group lunch for outgoing Ambassadors, he asked “how are things in Bratislava” I said “other than lack of staff, housing and communications, fine.” His answer was “good luck.” So what I finally did was approach another agency on the communications issue. At that point there were expressions of horror from the folks at State who had maintained there was no money for classified communications for Bratislava. Suddenly, communications money became available, and we received enough to set up a little khaki colored tent in the attic in which our communicator could sit and actually type one classified telegram at a time on a little box. I had to fight like hell to get that. Then I got a little bit more money for a few more FSN positions. We had very few FSNs, and they weren't trained. A lot of them didn't know what they were supposed to be doing. They didn't actually have anyone to train them. And then I talked with people about how we could coordinate better with Vienna. The people in Vienna under Ambassador Hunt were really great, and they were our support for many services. Anyway, to make a long story short, I spent most of my time trying to get more admin. support. EUR/EX finally, reluctantly because they were hard pressed, said, “Okay, we will try to get you a GSO sometime next year,” and they did. Really that was the single most important thing because we got a superb GSO, David Newell, who came out in late spring of 1994. Anyway, I got out there after I was sworn in in December. It had been a particularly long process from when I was announced in mid summer, to when I went out in December because we had some controversial people in my group of Ambassadors up for confirmation by the Senate. One of them was the ill famed Larry Lawrence. I remember Ambassador Dennis Kux on behalf of AFSA, blasting Lawrence’s appointment in appropriately strong language.

*Q: He was going to Switzerland.*

RUSSELL: He was going to Switzerland, exactly. So that was one of the reasons why our whole group was held up, why it took me so long to get out there. When I got there it was clear there were an awful lot of serious political issues that we needed to report. But, at the same time, there were overwhelming administrative problems. That was the dynamic

of much of my tour I would say, trying to work with those two sets of problems, one fascinating, challenging and a great deal of fun, and the other extraordinarily frustrating, but satisfying when you could make a breakthrough. I arrived, got very speedy access to the Slovak President and presented my credentials.

*Q: Who was the president?*

RUSSELL: President Kovac. He was very friendly from the start. It was an interesting dynamic because he didn't get along with Prime Minister Meciar. In fact, they came to hate each other. Meciar was a strong authoritarian type who was for the second time Prime Minister of Slovakia when I first arrived. I got to see Meciar very quickly and had a long and cordial initial conversation. I had been warned about him by briefers in Washington. He was very manipulative and I was briefed that he used various techniques to throw you off balance when you were talking to him. He had been a boxer at one point in his life. Supposedly, he would stare at you just above your nose as he was speaking. That was supposed to be disconcerting. I don't know whether that would be disconcerting or not, but he didn't do it with me, and we actually had a good conversation.

At one point I said "We want a good relationship with Slovakia. We want to help you. Your government has asked for our support in a number of different areas in moving forward to establish a working free market and democracy. How do you see our relationship?" He answered, "Well, you won the cold war. It looks like we should be with you." That was his succinct reading of the international situation. No ideas about "democracy vs. totalitarianism." At another point, we were talking about political philosophy. I said, "One American president I have always admired a lot was Teddy Roosevelt. He had this philosophy of 'speak softly but carry a big stick'." By the way, Stu, I still think this should be America's foreign policy in a nutshell. Meciar responded, "That sounds pretty good, but really the Romans understood politics the best. You remember the Romans said 'Divide et Impera'. That is really what it is all about." That encapsulated Meciar's approach to everything. That was a clear statement of how he maneuvered during his political career by pitting competitors against each other, creating a constant atmosphere of tension.

*Q: When you went out there and you weren't doing the administrative side, what was the reading you were getting from your colleagues in the Department about why Czechoslovakia had broken into these two parts, and how did we feel, we or the United States government feel about it?*

RUSSELL: I had gotten that reading back when I was in Prague and had followed Czechoslovak events since that time. We knew for certain that Slovakia was going to demand more autonomy as soon as they got the chance. It was predictable and not a bad thing. I guess in the summer of 1992 I started talking to Personnel and said, "I want to be considered for Ambassador to Slovakia." They said, "There isn't a Slovakia." I replied "Yes, but there will be." It was clear to me already by then that things were moving in a direction where there might very well be a Slovakia, because I knew from having dealt

with him in Prague that Vaclav Klaus, the Czechoslovak Prime Minister from July 1992, was not going to do anything that would compromise the Czech part of the economy and his planned reforms. He would make any deal with Meciar, who was the Slovak Prime Minister, short of one that would compromise the economy. What Meciar essentially wanted was a loose federation, not a split. He was not demanding an independent Slovakia. He wanted everything short of that because among other things there were substantial economic benefits to remaining linked to the more prosperous Bohemia and Moravia. Meciar simply demanded more than Klaus was willing to give. I think Meciar was surprised when Klaus refused and felt he had been pushed into a definitive split rather than having chosen it himself. But Meciar then accepted the split and took great pride in characterizing himself as the father of Slovak independence. I remember Havel was extremely upset by this notion of splitting and was very much against it. But Klaus and Meciar declined to hold a national referendum on it. Polls showed that a large majority of Czechs and Slovaks would have voted against splitting at that point.

I was convinced well before the split that this was going to happen. The way the U.S. looked on it was that it was not good for the Slovak economy in particular. The feeling was that this was not a good thing for either side because they were only a country of fifteen million splitting into ten and five. Slovakia had a large Hungarian minority population and a weaker economy and the situation in the Ukraine made it a risky neighborhood. On the other hand, it was not our call. Our position was "Do it democratically and peacefully and good luck." After the split, we immediately recognized them both and asked "What can we do to help?"

*Q: How did you find by the time you got out there, you know taking on being a nation. How was that taking hold?*

RUSSELL: I think that once they split, gradually you had a growing majority accepting the notion of Slovak independence and supporting it. Many Slovaks felt that the Czechs had always treated them like little brother. There is certainly a big majority which wouldn't want to go back but would rather be independent.

*Q: Were things kind of working?*

RUSSELL: No, not really. The Slovak economy took a bigger hit after the collapse of the Soviet Union, because they depended a lot on their heavy military industry. They had a lot of tank and APC factories in Slovakia and produced more than half of Communist Czechoslovakia's huge output of military equipment, most of it sold to the Middle East and South Asia. Czechoslovakia was one of the top ten arms producers in the world. These heavy defense industries were mainly in eastern Slovakia where the Soviets wanted them so they were further behind the lines. Some had been moved there before World War II. They were doing very well under Communism.

As I mentioned to you talking about my service in Prague, the fact of the matter is the Slovaks had industrialized under Communism. The Czechs had industrialized under

Austria Hungary. The Slovaks got a chicken in every pot and a car in most garages mainly under Communism. Some of them actually got that under the Slovak Clero-Fascist state during WW II when they did fairly well as kind of a granary for the Reich, until the Slovak national uprising in 1944. So you had a situation where the loss of the Soviet market for Czechoslovak exports with the collapse of the Soviet Union in '91 really hit the Slovak economy very hard. Also, the heavy arms industry, which had already started to decline in the 1980s, was gradually squeezed down in Slovakia as they lost their traditional customers and state subsidies. So their economy was not doing well. The GDP dropped and unemployment rose. This was true of most of the former Soviet bloc countries in the area after the fall of Communism. Inflation was high, around 24-25% at one point. The hope was that they could attract foreign business and they could privatize and this would make things move forward. Indeed the Slovak economy by about '94 started to turn around to some extent. They had a very smart economist at the head of the central bank, a brilliant guy, who I think, helped them with their international credibility, and helped start the economy back. Actually Slovak economic statistics during 1994-'96 were pretty good. Slovaks, particularly the younger generation, are very entrepreneurial and Slovakia is strategically located in terms of exports. However, they didn't get much foreign investment under Meciar. He scared a lot of foreign investors away and privatized a lot of state properties to his cronies who ran them into the ground.

*Q: I was looking at the map and you have got the Ukraine which essentially you had while it was part of the Soviet Union had grabbed a bit of Czechoslovakia.*

RUSSELL: The Soviet Union had grabbed a corridor. They wanted to connect with Czechoslovakia so they would have a corridor, and they just seized Trans-Carpathian Ukraine.

*Q: Well, Ukraine was going and still is going through a lot of bad times economically. How did that impact on Slovakia?*

RUSSELL: Not a lot. The loss of the Soviet Union market, which would include the Ukraine, hurt Slovakia. But like the other countries in the area, they gradually reoriented their trade and fairly quickly most of it was going to the West, the EU, particularly to Germany and to Austria and the Czech Republic. Those are still their biggest trading partners.

*Q: We are still on the economic side. What did these tank factories turn into or do?*

RUSSELL: Well they went from about 90% capacity or more down to about 10% capacity, and a lot of people were laid off. When I was there, there was still a concern about Slovak shipments of heavy weapons if not to pariah countries, then to countries that we didn't want them to ship to like Syria. So they were still making some of them, but it was a much lower production rate.

*Q: Well, were they finding other things to produce?*

RUSSELL: Yes, but they weren't doing particularly well at it. They were making some low end electronics. They had some agricultural exports. I mean they weren't doing an awful lot. They were doing fairly well on some of the foreign investments that had come in. Volkswagen set up a very successful plant in Bratislava, so they were exporting cars from that. Whirlpool had a very successful plant up north. They had some machinery exports, electronics exports, that kind of thing, but it wasn't a very prosperous economy.

*Q: How about agriculture?*

RUSSELL: Agriculture had once been the backbone of the Slovak economy, but by the time the Soviet influence was removed, agriculture wasn't a big factor.

*Q: Well, then did the Czechs do much about Slovakia? Was there still much connection between the two?*

RUSSELL: That is a very good question because the answer is that at first people were shocked by the split. A lot of Slovaks were married to Czechs. So there was initial shock, and then there was a funny reaction. It was almost as if the Czechs reacted by saying "Well okay, they wanted that, to heck with it, because they caused this split and they were the ones who benefitted most economically from being with us. If that is what they really want, let them have it." There was some of that kind of bitterness in the initial Czech reaction. The Slovak reaction became "That's too bad. We don't dislike the Czechs, but we are glad to have our independence; now let's see what we can do." There were mixed reactions to it. However, the Visegrad countries, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, are now working very closely together to help each other get into the EU and to help Slovakia get into NATO because Slovakia leaves a big geographic hole in the area. This has brought the Czechs and Slovaks back closer together. They have settled virtually all of their outstanding problems stemming from the split. There was the problem of how to divide the national wealth. There was the question of Slovak gold being held by the Czechs and how much they should pay to get it back and small border adjustments that under Meciar couldn't get solved because he always took such a tough approach to things. Now these transition problems have virtually all been solved and the relationship is fast improving. That's where it is right now. (Note: the Czech Republic had already joined NATO in March 1999, while Slovakia, held back by the Meciar period, did not enter until March 2004. Both joined the EU in May 2004. Relations between them are excellent, the Slovak economy is doing well and foreign investment has greatly increased since the Dzurinda government came into office in 1998.)

*Q: How did you find the government there? I mean what sort of role were we playing with the government that was there when you were there?*

RUSSELL: It was very interesting. We recognized Slovakia immediately when they became independent. The basis was they declared "We want to become a democratic country with an open market economy and we'd like your help in moving in this

direction." That was the stated basis of the relationship when I arrived. Meciar's natural predilection was to look more towards Eastern ways of doing business economically and politically. He was gradually realizing that Slovakia's future lay in the West, but he didn't trust the West to accept the way he wanted to run Slovakia and to accept him personally. He basically wanted to have Western acceptance without giving up his autocratic ways. He also appeared anxious to play a bridging role between the U.S. and EU and Russia.

We didn't trust Meciar, but we were willing to work with him and judge him by his actions. Basically what I was instructed to say was "We want to work with you; we want Slovakia to succeed; we want a good relationship, but that will depend on your policies. If you are moving in a democratic, free market kind of way, we will totally support that. If you are not, we won't. But we want a good relationship and we want Slovakia to succeed in joining Euro-Atlantic institutions which is your government's stated goal." So we had a cautious relationship. The problem was you couldn't trust Meciar. He dominated the government. He had the charisma and force of will and the intelligence to succeed. He was a good political tactician, but could not escape his desire to control others and his propensity for confrontation.

Our job was to persuade Meciar that it was in his interest to maintain good relations with the U.S. and other Western countries by not pushing the envelope on authoritarian solutions. Yet you couldn't trust him to do that, even if he said he would. For example, in our first meeting he said U.S. – Slovak relations were great and there were no bilateral problems in his view. Then within a week or two we learned he was getting ready to break the contract which allowed Radio Free Europe to operate in Slovakia. I went to him late one Saturday afternoon, as I recall, and said, "Prime Minister, what is this? What is going on? You are meeting President Clinton in a summit in Prague in a few weeks and that is going to sour things if you force Radio Free Europe out of Slovakia by breaking a legitimate contract." "Oh, no," Meciar said, "We wouldn't do that. I can assure you we will roll that right back. That was a terrible mistake. How could my minister have done that?" Although it seemed likely Meciar himself was behind the decision, I decided to take him at his word and press for its revocation. I therefore called about every third day to his office or the Foreign Ministry to urge the matter be rectified. I had a call the day of the summit where he was to meet with President Clinton in which he again gave assurances the measure would be rolled back. Clinton did not raise the matter and the game went on until I got a letter from the Foreign Minister the day before the contract was due to be revoked saying the government had rescinded the order. Meciar repeatedly showed himself untrustworthy and did not seem to realize that he was creating an increasingly negative impression on the U.S. and Western European countries that would be deciding whether to let Slovakia into NATO and the EU.

*Q: Was there a Parliament?*

RUSSELL: There was a parliament in which Meciar had really lost the majority. It was a situation where he started out with a majority, and then because of this "divide and conquer" mentality combined with an extremely confrontational way of doing business,

he gradually alienated his leading allies. He was a bit like a shark that needs to keep swimming to breathe. He seemed to need constant conflict to function. Because of that he had gradually alienated enough people from his own party that they split and formed another party. He literally created an entire party, former friends of Meciar, whom he hated, and who hated him.

As Meciar gradually alienated people, opposition built in the parliament. He lost his majority, and in mid March 1994, his opponents combined together and voted him out. He knew what was going on. Meciar was an intelligence freak, loved anything to do with intelligence and intrigue. I was seeing him regularly. "Well, Mr. Prime Minister, what is going on?" "Well, they are plotting against me. They are going to throw me out. But I will come back. You watch; you just mark my words," and he would tell me about all these plots some of which I heard about from others. He just loved to show how much he knew. Sure enough, his opponents got together and got him out. But, I kept in touch with Meciar. When he was in power, he was interested in having decent relations with the Embassy. When he was out of power, he really wanted good relations with the Embassy. He and his people would go out of their way to keep up good contacts. Once I went to call on him, he said, "Well, the new government people think they are in power, but I control the civil service so they are going to find out who really is in charge around here."

The new Center Left reformist government under Prime Minister Jozef Moravcik came in with high hopes but didn't have time to accomplish that much. A majority agreed in parliament that, having thrown the Prime Minister out by a Parliamentary no confidence vote, early elections were required in the fall. Well, the Moravcik government made a number of significant reform moves and gained a lot of international good will. However, they were lousy campaigners. They didn't understand the first thing about campaigning, and they had very few charismatic candidates to put forward. Meciar had more charisma in his thumb than some of them had. So he put on a really vigorous campaign, allegedly with electoral advice from Berlusconi's party in Italy, brought some actors and stage personalities into the campaign and promised money to everybody. It was a really rip roaring campaign, and Meciar won.

Government leaders were predicting to me that even if they got a majority, if the majority was based on the participation of the Hungarian Party they would not be able to form a new government. The Hungarian Party during the election campaign was really short sighted because they played the Hungarian ethnic card so vigorously that they alienated supporters of the other pro-government parties. For example, there was one TV ad which showed Slovakia with the band of territory where the majority of Hungarians live in the south along the Hungarian border in Hungarian national colors instead of Slovak red, white and blue. Now if that didn't annoy Slovaks, what would? So I was hearing from the government leaders that there is no way we can work with the Hungarian Party so we are just not going to be able to govern any more.

Meciar came roaring back in. He was really angry and was going to get back at those, including Moravcik, who had defected from his own party, the HZDS, and who had

maneuvered the no confidence vote in March that had ousted him. If there is anything that pleases Meciar more than conflict, it's revenge. Parliament, which Meciar now controlled, pushed through a whole series of measures excluding the opposition from key committees, and putting all the opposition leaders on the environment committee and excluding them from any role in oversight of the secret police and privatization decisions. Many people termed this episode the "night of the long knives." Things then went from bad to worse.

In reaction to Meciar's authoritarian moves, the U.S. adopted a very consistent policy. We wanted Slovakia to succeed as a democracy. We had spent trillions of dollars in the Cold War to achieve a free and democratic Central Europe. We therefore said to Meciar "we will judge you by your actions; we will help you in any way we can to move Slovakia towards democracy and a free market economy, but we will not support backsliding, including some recent actions against the opposition." Now, if we had gone to Meciar and said, "Look we don't give a damn what you do domestically. If you want to use the security services to intimidate people, if you want to whack the opposition while they are out of power, be our guest. Just give lots of contracts to American companies and support us in UN votes," he would have happily said "I agree." But that obviously wasn't our policy.

*Q: No, it was not our policy. So he was kicked out originally while you were there.*

RUSSELL: He was kicked out in March 1994 after being Prime Minister for the second time. He was the Slovak Prime Minister 1990-91 after the velvet revolution in the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic (CSFR) as it was known officially after December 1990. He was kicked out for about a year from mid 1991-92 in a Parliamentary "coup" engineered by the Christian Democrats. He came back as Prime Minister for the second time from mid 1992 until March 1994. The reform parties led by Prime Minister Moravcik were in charge from March until Meciar formed a government in mid December 1994. The elections were late September, but then it took a long time to form a government. He finally formed it with the right wing extreme nationalist party and a far left "know nothing" party led by a real dummy who was appointed deputy head of Parliament. I had to pay a courtesy call on this man. He spent most of the time trying to explain to me why barter was the most effective means of international trade. So anyway, Meciar had this awful coalition with the far right and the far left. We sent in a cable after the elections titled "coalition from hell." So Meciar put together this anti-reform coalition with people that he didn't even like, but who gave him adequate support in parliament to squash the reformist opposition.

*Q: Well, it sounds like fun for a political reporter.*

RUSSELL: Exactly. Political and economic reporting, policy development and public diplomacy were really very satisfying. I think the U.S. had an extremely effective policy there. We had an AID policy for example, where we were trying to help Slovakia particularly on the economic side because we figured that if they can get it right

economically that would buttress the Moravcik government's reform efforts. We put a lot of money into helping them figure out the value of companies they were trying to privatize. But when Meciar came back in power, he didn't care about their value. He wanted to sell them cheaply to his cronies. So we concluded that this was a waste of money. We were paying hundreds of thousands of dollars to firms like Deloitte and Touche, which were doing very good work, carefully evaluating companies to be privatized. Then Meciar would just privatize them for political purposes. So we shifted the funds to helping the NGOs, the non-governmental organizations. We thus shifted the focus towards democratization. That was far more effective. I worked very closely with all my European colleagues. When you are an American Ambassador in an Embassy now you don't belong to the local EU club, often the most active group in town. I consulted very closely with the EU Ambassadors, particularly the ones whose countries were really interested in Central Europe and with the Ambassador representing the EU Commission. We shared information; we consulted and kept each other informed on impending demarches we were going to make and the results of those demarches. It took about two years, 1993-1994, to get the new Embassy on its feet administratively. Then, after that, we had an administrative platform that could support these policy initiatives, which I think were well conceived from the start. It was just that we didn't have the wherewithal in terms of staff and funding to carry them forward without extreme stress on the small staff. The staff at post has now doubled and is still extremely busy from what I hear.

*Q: You were there from '93...*

RUSSELL: I was there from late 1993 to the end of March 1996.

*Q: Did the Slovak population of the United States play much of a role?*

RUSSELL: No.

*Q: Because you know the Latvian Americans did and Lithuania and Polish Americans, but this was not a...*

RUSSELL: No, but you would have Slovak Americans come over to Slovakia for business or family reasons. Some of the business interests were productive while others were dubious.

*Q: Yes!!!*

RUSSELL: Slovak Americans.

*Q: Well, I take it I think of the Slovak Americans mainly heading to the mines in Pennsylvania or something.*

RUSSELL: Yes, the immigration.

*Q: You never hear very much about them being a major political force.*

RUSSELL: They are not, just as the Czech Americans are not a significant lobbying group. There are more Czech Americans who are better known. Eugene Cernan, for example, is a famous "Czech American" astronaut. However, while his mother was Czech, his father was Slovak. The Slovak Americans have never been as well organized politically as have groups like the Polish Americans, the Greek Americans or even the Lithuanian Americans. And while certainly a few leaders of some of the Slovak American fraternal groups would come and pay a call and I would chat with them, they didn't really have any significant impact on the situation.

*Q: Sometimes this is handy.*

RUSSELL: Well, yes. I wish they had had more impact, because they might have come over when Meciar was in power and said, "Hey look, you are getting a bad press in the U.S. because of some of the things you are doing." Meciar constantly complained that his government was getting a bad press because they were misunderstood. He blamed the U.S. Embassy, in particular, and the Western press corps for "unfair" reporting. If more visiting Slovak Americans had said "Look, you really need to get your act together to attract foreign investment. You need to try and strengthen your relations with the U.S. You need to stop trying to control the electronic media, kicking opponents out of parliament and using police strong arm tactics to intimidate people." That might have made a small dent, but that really didn't happen as far as I could see. However, I don't know whether that was a realistic possibility.

*Q: That whole area was a great source of integration during the turn of the last century, and had played quite a role in, I mean obviously Italian Americans, Greek Americans with the Croatian Americans, all had a hand in changing policy.*

RUSSELL: Yes, but Czech and Slovak Americans typically have not been a similar political force.

*Q: Well, what about sort of under the general rubric of human rights? I mean were you running around making human rights demarches? Were people being thrown in jail and that sort of thing?*

RUSSELL: We paid a lot of attention to human rights. We spent a lot of time on the yearly human rights reports which for a very small embassy took an awful lot of the time available. However, Meciar was not involved in locking up a lot of people or regularly having opponents beaten up or otherwise physically intimidated as under Communism. He preferred misuse of economic power in the privatization process to gain support and punish opponents, the wielding of his majority in Parliament to emasculate the opposition and a systematic effort to dominate the electronic media. While there were not blatant human rights abuses in Slovakia, there were some exceptions. A nasty exception was the case of the abduction and brutalization of President Kovac's son and the murder of a

secret service agent involved in the case who was about to turn state's evidence. The chief of the intelligence service under Meciar was certainly directly involved in the affair. In any case, the President's son had a bottle of liquor poured down his throat, was thrown in the trunk of a car and dumped over the border into Austria. The idea was to embarrass Kovac because his son had a pending legal charge against him in Austria for some commercial deal he had been involved in. Well, that is a pretty interesting way to go about embarrassing the president.

*Q: It sounds really subtle.*

RUSSELL: Yes, really subtle. The people who thought that one up were not particularly subtle people. It was pretty clear from the outset that this was something the regime was directly involved in. That kind of thing really made people upset in Slovakia, in the EU and in Washington, including in the Congress. That was probably the most repugnant incident the Meciar regime was involved in. That was something that made people across the board come to the conclusion that Meciar simply didn't accept the constraints of democratic government.

*Q: Sounds like a big city American political boss.*

RUSSELL: Yes, it was something like "boss politics." I remember I had a conversation with Meciar at a private dinner organized by a Central European Ambassador. I could have very frank and even cordial conversations with him as long as I was not making a formal demarche that would become public. I said, "You know, we have a cherished concept in the United States of avoiding tyranny of the majority. We have a tradition of our Congressional majority not using its majority position to suppress the opposition and strip them of their rights." He shot back "The concept doesn't exist." It was clear that he thought tyranny of the majority was what politics is all about. It was a very revealing conversation.

*Q: How about the media? Did you, get a Washington Post, New York Times correspondent coming in once every six months or something like that? Did you get much coverage there?*

RUSSELL: It was a bit more often than that. Meciar and his colleagues would always complain they were getting a raw deal in the Western press. I always used to argue with them that they were getting bad press primarily because of what they were doing. However, I would admit that they were also getting a raw deal because too frequently the reporters would be based in Vienna or Prague or occasionally Budapest and would only make the trip to Slovakia when something bad happened. In Vienna they would tend to cover any interesting stories whereas when they came to Slovakia it was typically something unpleasant. If it was not about Meciar's authoritarian course, it was usually about something like desecration of tombstones in a Jewish cemetery or a Roma having been beaten up by skinheads.

I guess I talked with journalists about every two or three months. They were typically well informed and had a pretty good general sense of what was going on, wanted to be fair about it, and were very reliable about observing any ground rules that we set up. I was never double crossed by a U.S. or British journalist while I was in Slovakia. As a result, I was always very frank with them and would tell then exactly what I thought was happening, although often I would speak on background only. The other group of observers I talked with rather often involved friendly Ambassadors from Prague who did not have an Embassy in Slovakia but were accredited there and wanted to know just what was going on. I was very frank with them as well. Then we had a fairly decent flow of American visitors. One of our priorities was to try and get more high level official U.S. visitors. I could go in myself at any time and talk with the Foreign Minister, but if you had an Under Secretary coming through, that would make a much bigger impact, or, of course Secretary Albright, who came a couple of times. So, we had a good number of visitors. Then, of course, a lot of U.S. business men also visited Slovakia, but they got very little out of the Meciar government.

*Q: I take it Prague was sort of among the young folks of the United States, the place to be during much of this time. I mean a lot of kids were going over there and teaching English and sort of congregating at that time. So the Czech Republic was getting attention this way. Did you get any reflection of this American exodus to Slovakia, Ex-pats and...*

RUSSELL: Not much, no. But I used to talk with the Slovak tourist bureau and people in government urging they make a major effort to get tourists visiting the usual trio of Budapest, Vienna, and Prague to include Bratislava. As far as young people becoming involved, there weren't many coming to Slovakia. There were some younger Slovak Americans visiting relatives but not many tourists. What you did have though were wonderful Peace Corps people. We typically had 45, 50, 60 Peace Corps people in the country, and they ranged in age from early 20s to mid-70s as I recall. They were terrific. They were teaching English, business practices or environmental techniques. They were really a dedicated and effective group and made a good impression in Slovakia.

*Q: Well, what about the military side? Were the Slovaks doing anything on the military side, or, had whatever forces they had sort of been demobilized?*

RUSSELL: They Czechs and Slovaks divided up the military establishment based roughly on a two to one split according to population. It was a lot of work and a little bit rough, but it worked out fairly well. The Slovak military was trying very hard to modernize. After the summit in Prague with President Clinton, where the Partnership for Peace initiative was launched, the Slovaks quickly announced their intention to join. They worked very hard to get all their planning documents in order. They were one of the first ones to join the Partnership for Peace. They became more interested in getting into NATO. Even Meciar insisted Slovakia wanted to get into NATO. What he meant was getting into NATO on his own terms. He didn't want to join any organization that would put curbs on his ability to do pretty much what he wanted domestically. While saying he wanted to enter NATO, he did nothing to advance that. Indeed he sabotaged a May 1997

referendum, which should have been about direct election of the President, by inserting three negatively loaded questions about NATO membership.

*Q: Was it a referendum on NATO membership?*

RUSSELL: It was supposed to be a referendum, desired by the anti-Meciar opposition parties, on direct election of the President. The opposition was afraid Prime Minister Meciar would accumulate Presidential powers once President Kovac's term was up by delaying the choice of a new President. Meciar's Parliamentary majority pushed through additional referendum questions on whether Slovakia should join NATO. These included loaded questions about locating nuclear weapons and foreign military bases on Slovak soil. Meciar's Interior Minister illegally removed the question of direct election of the President from the ballot and the referendum, in which only about 10% of the electorate participated, was declared invalid. The U.S. and EU both protested Meciar's actions and became more convinced than ever that Slovakia under Meciar should neither get into NATO nor the EU. Throughout this maneuvering the Slovak military played it cool. Their leadership made clear that they were ready and willing for a serious NATO bid once the politicians decided to pursue it.

*Q: Of course.*

RUSSELL: I had a good relationship with the leadership in the Slovak military, including the Defense Minister and the Chief of the General Staff. It was very clear to me that the Chief of the General Staff was acting in good faith trying to prepare the Slovak military to go into NATO if the politicians decided that is what they really wanted to do. He could not force that decision, but he could try to get the military in better shape for eventual membership. I don't think Meciar's Defense Minister, who was a decent guy, was against going in, but his far right, nationalist party was.

*Q: Well, at that time, if you were the defense minister of Slovakia looking at a very unruly neighborhood, would you see a military threat?*

RUSSELL: I don't think so. The only security threat I think they faced was severe political unrest in Ukraine or Belarus, for example, or a natural disaster like an earthquake. They were concerned about an event that might create a wave of refugees or a mass casualty situation of some sort. There was no concern really that another state might attack them militarily. However, the problem was that Meciar had too often played the Hungarian card, and so you literally had the sense that he thought Slovakia ought to be militarily prepared to deal with potential Hungarian aggression. Now Slovakia belonged to Hungary for 900 years, had suffered enforced Magyarization in the late 1800s, and in World War II had seen Hungary annex a broad strip of territory including its second largest city, Kosice. However, it was really absurd with the Central European states all trying to join NATO to see a military threat from Hungary and I don't think many people outside the far right nationalists and probably some of Meciar's people did. So the answer is no, Slovakia did not then and, of course, now does not face the threat of military attack

from its neighbors. Given this situation, it has devoted considerable resources to peacekeeping initiatives in the Balkans and Middle East. However, it has understandably been developing a small but effective military to deal with any contingencies in its unsettled neighborhood.

*Q: It hasn't been a very stable area.*

RUSSELL: It is not a stable area, and therefore it makes sense for them to have a highly competent small military, and that is what they are trying to develop. As I say, that costs money and is a real organizational problem. We tried to help them in every way to develop a modern, NATO compatible military. We spent a lot of money on that. When I was there initially we had a Military Attaché, Colonel John Miller, stationed in Vienna. We didn't have one in Slovakia, which was a problem; although our Military Attaché based in Vienna was superb. We finally got a fine Military Attaché of our own, Lieutenant Colonel Jim Spears., who was kept extremely busy. At the same time we had a small military liaison team (MLT) which would take Slovaks to view U.S. military units in training of various kinds and bring U.S. military units into Slovakia for the same purpose. It was a small but reasonably effective effort and we had good relations with the Defense Ministry even under Meciar.

*Q: You know, during this '93 to '96 period, Yugoslavia was undergoing all sorts of problems. Did this impact, after all the Slovaks are Slavs and all even though they are settling from the area by the Hungarians who aren't.*

RUSSELL: Well it impacted in the sense that we wanted Slovakia to take a helpful attitude on issues involving the problems in Bosnia. It wasn't anything Slovakia was directly involved in. Meciar was interested in those problems and sometimes was anxious to share his ideas on how they might be solved. These usually weren't ideas that were compatible with ours. But there wasn't a direct Slovak involvement. There was certainly an indirect one however.

In December 1995, we got a request from Washington and from U.S. Army Europe to get the Slovaks immediately to approve the transit of trains and trucks bearing U.S. supplies and forces to bases in Hungary for jumping off into Bosnia. We didn't have a status of forces or similar agreement with Slovakia to build upon. We had absolutely nothing to go on and I had recently made a stiff demarche to Meciar that had him literally red faced with anger. That was a major effort for our small post and my Deputy, our Military Attaché and his NCO assistant and our Political Officer, Tom Yazdgerdi, did a fantastic job in helping me work the problem. When it was over, we had over 200 trains and truck convoys pass through carrying U.S. military supplies. Meciar was out of the country when the request came in, but his Chief of Defense was very supportive. The Foreign Minister was also very helpful and Meciar finally approved the transit and, in fact, the Parliament had to approve it as well. But that was a case where the Embassy lobbied effectively and got a very quick turnaround on a rather tough request when you consider our relations at that time with the Slovak government. It was a huge effort. The Czechs were equally

helpful, but interestingly the Austrians were not.

*Q: This is when we were putting our troops into Bosnia.*

RUSSELL: Yes, our troops were heading to bases in Hungary.

*Q: In sort of looking at it, I wonder why Slovakia?*

RUSSELL: I think the Czech-Slovak route was really required because Austria took a very long time to approve such a transit if they did at all, I'm not sure. The Czechs and Slovaks both had to approve it obviously for it to work. Both of them reacted in a very positive and expeditious manner. The Slovaks put together an operations team working 24 hours a day to push the thing through and coordinate among their police and railroad officials and the Foreign and Defense Ministries. This Slovak team and the U.S. officials sent in from U.S. Army Europe and our own Embassy team worked very hard to pull this off.

*Q: What about the summit that took place in Prague? When was it?*

RUSSELL: January 1994

*Q: Now, you were a brand new arrival?*

RUSSELL: That's right, yes. I had arrived in December 1993.

*Q: Did you get involved in that?*

RUSSELL: Yes. I helped provide inputs on the situation in Slovakia for the President's briefing papers and for the Secretary. I participated in all the meetings involving the Slovak delegation. The Slovak delegation included Prime Minister Meciar, President Kovac and the Slovak Foreign Minister. It was a very successful summit and a good meeting with the Slovaks. However, Meciar was very angry because he felt that President Kovac, who he hated, did far too much talking. He was also annoyed because he had tried to keep Kovac's Foreign Policy Adviser, Pavol Demes, out of the room but failed to do so. I had to personally escort him into the meeting. The President did a great job in presenting our position on the Partnership for Peace and affirming U.S. support for Slovakia's democratization.

*Q: President Clinton.*

RUSSELL: Clinton, yes. The Slovaks were very interested in joining and were actually one of the first Central European states to join as I mentioned earlier.

*Q: Well, was there any jealousy on the Slovak side about Havel being a world figure, you know, and sort of the glitterati and sort of everyone else. I am not denigrating because*

*Havel is a genuine hero. Not only was he a hero but he also was the focal point of an awful lot of very favorable attention. Did this cause problems?*

RUSSELL: Well, Meciar didn't like Havel one bit and people in his party didn't like Havel. Are you asking did it cause problems at the Summit?

*Q: I am looking at it in general.*

RUSSELL: There were people in Slovakia in Meciar's court who did not like Havel at all and this complicated the relationship with the Czechs. However, at the summit it wasn't a problem. The meeting was in Prague, but I don't think that bothered the Slovaks. The Poles were coming there and the Hungarians; everything was done very smoothly.

*Q: Did you see a change in relations between the Czechs and the Slovaks. I am talking a sort of intellectually bureaucratic side. Did one look down on the other? Were there problems there?*

RUSSELL: A change after when?

*Q: A change while you were there. Did you see a gradual sort of getting back together taking this not when the split came it must have been quite difficult.*

RUSSELL: Well after the split, I had the impression that some Czechs were saying "well if that's the way the Slovaks want it, let them go their own way." Some Slovaks on the other hand were probably saying now "the Czechs aren't going to boss us around or act like big brother anymore." But it was a totally peaceful split. It wasn't unfriendly. The Slovaks and the Czechs don't dislike each other. They are pretty close culturally and linguistically. Their languages are mutually intelligible. They were together from the end of World War I, with the sad hiatus of the Clero-Fascist Slovak State during World War II, until the end of 1992. They are pulling closer together now and I think there is a feeling of shared interests in Central Europe now that is very positive, including particularly between the Czechs and Slovaks.

*Q: What about you mentioned you were on good terms with other Ambassadors. Was there a sense that the EU was beginning to, that there really was an EU as opposed to before where it was sort of an idea and customs are down, but as a unified group were you...*

RUSSELL: Yes, there was an EU presence in Bratislava and it was significant and effective. The difference between an American Ambassador in Prague at the end of the Communist period with the dawn of democracy and an American Ambassador in a post Communist country was that the most important exchange of information in Prague took place in the NATO club. The most useful exchange of information in Slovakia took place in the EU club. However the EU was just as worried about what Meciar was up to as we were. I had friendly and productive relations with all of the major EU Ambassadors. I saw

them all regularly. I was therefore sometimes invited to important EU lunches and EU meetings, even by the very effective and subtle French Ambassador. We would share assessments of the situation and exchange information on forthcoming plans for visits and demarches. So we had an extremely useful relationship which I worked very hard to develop and which they appreciated and reciprocated.

*Q: Was the OSCE, the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, a significant organization at that time?*

RUSSELL: It was significant. They met in Vienna, and occasionally Slovakia would be on the agenda for something Meciar had done. The U.S. would have to determine what position it would take and how to coordinate that position with other members to be most effective. Sometimes OSCE discussions irritated the Meciar government, but I can't say it was a principal forum influencing our bilateral relations.

*Q: Were we keeping a watching brief on Germany and its influence in the area particularly the matter of trade, but trade means lots of other things, because this has all been sort of the traditional partner and all of a sudden you have a new Germany which has united. Its natural hunting ground is right where you were.*

RUSSELL: We were not looking at it through that optic. I had very close relations with the German Ambassador. She was very effective. They were just about as concerned as we were about what was going on. We frequently exchanged information and views on what was likely to happen next and how our governments should react. We shared information on planned visits, as Meciar was anxious to get an invitation to Bonn and to Washington. We thought it was healthy that they were developing a strong economic influence in the area, because we thought that would be good for the Slovak economy. Now if it came to a German company versus an American company, and I don't remember that issue arising while I was there, we would obviously lobby for the U.S. firm. However, the German businessmen were closer geographically, spent more time developing contacts, invited Slovak labor and management people to Germany and generally did better than we did in cultivating business ties.

*Q: This may have been early days, but were we seeing a leakage out of the EU which is developing this whole mess of regulations often sort of with a socialist tinge which yeah build up the social net and build up the price of everything. Hell you get the same work done that you would be doing in France or Germany and get it done in Slovakia at a third of the price.*

RUSSELL: Yes. That's why Whirlpool went in there.

*Q: Were you seeing, was that beginning to happen?*

RUSSELL: It was. It wasn't happening quickly enough because Meciar scared away foreign investors. However, a number of firms had come into post Communist

Czechoslovakia and set up plants or offices in Slovakia and they were doing well because Slovak workers are generally well educated and hard working and salary levels and social overhead are a lot less onerous than in France or Germany.

*Q: You don't have that horrible social cost.*

RUSSELL: You don't have the very high wages, the short work weeks, the long vacations and all the other factors that make the unemployment rate in Germany about double the U.S. rate.

*Q: How about did you find once you had gotten your administrative side straightened out, did you find you were pretty much in accord with Washington? Did we have a pretty strong direction on how to deal with Central Europe or not?*

RUSSELL: I think we were very much on the same wavelength. When I would go back on consultations, I would talk with people at the NSC and 7th floor in the Department about the situation in Slovakia and find no differences in our political approach. I didn't see any daylight there. I never found myself at variance with what Washington was suggesting and Washington typically would accept what the Embassy recommended in terms of tactics to implement the President's overall strategy of support to Slovak democracy. We would submit our Mission Program Plan and would eventually get it approved with little change to the substantive content but little help on the resources side. Now, of course, one of the things that was going on was that everyone then was focused on Bosnia, so the foreign policy relationship between the United States and Slovakia was handled day to day by a very competent desk officer who agreed with the Embassy on what we ought to be doing. The NSC had some very sharp folks like Dan Fried who were following this and had been to Slovakia and were helping keep our policy on a strongly pro-democracy track.

*Q: Were you getting any sense of frustration or maybe some other type of emotion or feelings about how the Bosnia thing was going on because you know, there were a couple of years where you had the UN in there and then you had a European force, and it was abysmal. They were just prolonging the agony rather than acting. How did that hit you all and maybe your colleagues you were talking to, Slovak foreign Ambassadors?*

RUSSELL: It did not hit us that much. Yes, we were following it, but we weren't getting all the telegraph traffic. We were involved sometimes because Meciar had his own ideas on the subject which he would occasionally communicate to us, but I am not aware that they had any particular impact on our planning. In terms of our relations with Slovakia, it did not have a major direct impact on our relations. However, as I mentioned, there were particular issues, like the convoy movements into Hungary in December 1995 that were a big deal for us. Also, the issue of trying to keep Slovak-Hungarian relations from deteriorating was of particular importance because of the Bosnian situation and the desire to prevent the spread of tension in the region. I spent a lot of time lobbying the Slovak government to improve relations with Hungary and to refrain from steps exacerbating

relations with Slovakia's Hungarian minority. We spent most of the time trying to curb Meciar's authoritarian tendencies and strengthen Slovak civil society by working with NGOs, seeking Slovak support on joining a post-COCOM non-proliferation regime, helping U.S. businesses with various legal and administrative problems and generally conducting a vigorous public diplomacy campaign to convince Slovaks that the U.S. cared about their success. One business problem I recall was a proposed Slovak law adopting a French approach to limiting the import of foreign films into Slovakia.

*Q: They had a quota system did they?*

RUSSELL: I have forgotten all the details, but I remember we worked like hell to get it shot down and did. I got a nice letter from the head of the motion picture association. So it was that kind of issue we were very active on, but we weren't focused on Bosnia.

*Q: Well, you left there in March, '96.*

RUSSELL: The end of March and then came back to the States and I took a State Department position as Deputy Commandant for International Affairs at the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. This is what I had lobbied for.

*Q: Okay and you did that from when to when?*

RUSSELL: I did that from 1996 to '99.

*Q: I take it that was the end.*

RUSSELL: 1999 was the end, yes. It was the end of my very satisfying Foreign Service career. I retired September 30, 1999, after 36 years of service.

*Q: What was your impression at this time? You had experiences before. Was this a new military attitude and all that?*

RUSSELL: When I went to Carlisle or still in Slovakia?

*Q: Yes, Carlisle. I mean did you find that this was, how did you find the military at this time?*

RUSSELL: I found the military saying "We now have the strongest military in the world." We are not going to have a peer competitor probably for the next 10 or 15 years. Until 2015 or 2020, no one is going to be able to really threaten us militarily. We need to use this time to develop the kind of military that we are going to need for the threats of the future. We need to use this time to get much more high tech, to be able essentially to strike any enemy that moves anywhere on the earth with precision, move in troops with great speed and accuracy to anyplace on earth, figure out ways that we can deal with limited warfare, urban warfare, and of course international terrorist threats. I found it a

fairly realistic understanding. We are on top of the heap militarily, but it is not going to stay that way without our adaptation. We have got to think about how we are going to develop our military, how we are going to adapt to this new world and become more flexible and quick reacting and train people to do that.

*Q: Well, I must say this sounds like a time where somebody like yourself, I mean there would be a very favorable melding of sort of foreign service experience with military experience as you try to figure out what the hell is going to happen. It is a time of war games, but the war games had to figure out what happens of Mongolia goes or something like this. Did you find that this was the time where your knowledge and the military knowledge, I mean yours and other people like yourself were being well melded and all?*

RUSSELL: Yes, the military is often very good about this. I was received extremely warmly, as were my Senior FSO colleagues from the Department. People were constantly coming and asking for advice or help on a project or for me to speak to their students or a visiting group or take part in a War Game. I was considered part of the Command Group and took part in all the Commandant's policy and planning meetings. I also had a lead role in dealing with the 40 foreign officers from Lieutenant Colonel to General officer rank we had at Carlisle every year. It was a very satisfying experience to be included so fully in the work of a great institution.

*Q: I would think so, because I can't think of a more important time, and you are really gearing up for the next quarter of a century or so, and that was sad because we are really talking about a world scene.*

RUSSELL: So anyway, I had a ball up there. I had been interested in the job. I knew about Carlisle because at one point I had been in charge of assignments to senior training. I had been executive secretary to the senior training board. Secretary Perry came for a visit toward the end of my tour in Bratislava.

*Q: He was Secretary of Defense.*

RUSSELL: Secretary of Defense Perry. A two star officer on his staff knew the then Commandant of the War College and sent him a note about me. One thing led to another, and so I ended up there as I had hoped.

*Q: Well, just to end this, what have you been doing in the year since?*

RUSSELL: Since I retired, I've been doing consulting work for a defense contractor as a Subject Matter Expert working with the U.S. Army's Battle Command Training Program of military exercises. I've also done some work for a Washington area public TV network that broadcasts foreign news and cultural material. It has about twenty different foreign news programs.

I've also worked on Slovak issues as an Adjunct Fellow affiliated with the Center for

Strategic and International Studies. I've been involved in setting up an Action Commission on Slovakia like the ones CSIS established for Poland and Romania and have participated in Roundtables on Slovak topics. I'm Founding Chairman of a non-profit organization called Friends of Slovakia which is designed to improve U.S.-Slovak relations.

*Q: Defense news didn't get on TV last night.*

RUSSELL: Well, I will have to tell my boss at the network.

*Q: They had the rainbow on there or something.*

RUSSELL: It is probably the cable company's fault. In any case, I'm enjoying my pro bono and consulting work, taking vacation trips with my wife of 41 years and spending more time with our two boys and their families. So I am having a satisfying and busy retirement.

*Q: Okay, well we will stop at this point.*

*End of interview*