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

AMBASSADOR MORTON I. ABRAMOWITZ

Interviewed by: Thomas Stern
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INTERVIEW

Q: First of all, on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, let me express our appreciation to you for giving us time to add to our collection what I believe will be a very valuable contribution. Let me start with some questions about your beginnings. When and where were you born?

ABRAMOWITZ: I was born in 1933 in Lakewood, New Jersey. I was the last of seven children. The oldest, 20 was already a junior in college.

Both my father and mother immigrated to the U.S. from Lithuania – Russia in those days. They had come from a small Jewish village.

My father was a ritual slaughterer – one who was qualified to slaughter animals according to Orthodox Jewish practices. My mother was a home maker. Neither of my

parents spoke English when they landed in the U.S. in 1915. They both learned it – my father much better than my mother. She understood English, but she never really learned how to speak it well. We spoke Yiddish at the house, although all the children who were still at home when I became old enough to talk, spoke English. I spoke to my father in English and in Yiddish to my mother.

I went to school in Lakewood – elementary through high school. Lakewood, at the time, was a small town – no more than 4,000 inhabitants. It had a sizeable Jewish population, mostly orthodox.

All my brothers have died from heart attacks as did my father. One of my sisters is still living although she suffers from Alzheimer's, which my mother also had. So both heart disease and Alzheimer runs in the family.

Q: Do you remember any particular subject that caught your attention?

ABRAMOWITZ: Baseball was my first passion starting in third grade. I knew all the statistics. I did become interested in foreign affairs quite early – the first year of high school probably. I had the usual subjects – history, geography, etc. – which all increased my interest in foreign affairs. The second war certainly added to it. I remember becoming quite interested in events in Czechoslovakia, particularly when Jan Masaryk was thrown out of the window of his office in 1948 at the beginning of the Communist take over. That night in particular grabbed me.

I studied a good deal of history in the 11th and 12th grades. I am not completely sure how my interest in foreign affairs developed, but it did. I followed contemporary affairs; and read many newspapers and magazines. I started with the sports pages, and went on to the front pages and more substantive matters. I think for a kid I was well acquainted with world affairs.

We had some heavy debates among my friends who followed current events. Some of them were very informed, which made for lively discussions. My family was also interested in what was going on, particularly in Europe. All of my siblings were well educated. My parents spent almost all their money on the education of their children. It paid off for my brothers. They all became successful in their careers and made plenty of money. I was the exception.

Q: You graduated from Lakewood High School in 1950.

ABRAMOWITZ: Right. Graduation day was about a week before the North Korean tanks crossed the border into South Korea.

I knew that I would go to college and major in history or political science. I don't think that international relations was then recognized a separate major, but I certainly intended to focus on that area.

I applied to a number of colleges – Yale, Tufts and Stanford. I was not accepted by Yale, but Stanford offered me a full scholarship, which paid for almost all of my college expenses. That was very important because I needed all the financial help I could get. I had never seen Stanford, but it had a sort of romantic appeal. My brother-in-law got his PhD in Physics from Stanford and he was very enthusiastic about the school. I had never visited the campus, but for some reason, Stanford seemed to be the right place for me besides the financial inducements. I thought it was the right time to get away from home although I admit that sitting in Lakewood, NJ, Stanford felt as far away as an American university could be.

Q: What did you find when you arrived at Stanford?

ABRAMOWITZ: I am afraid that I did use my undergraduate years very well. I was a "nerd" – I studied all the time. I doubled up on courses. That allowed me to graduate in three years, but I did miss a lot campus life by being so book-bound. I spent little time on parties, even though at the time, Stanford was know as "a party school". I made up for this neglect when I went to graduate school where I spent a lot of time away from books. So you can see, I did things backward. I should have partied more as an undergraduate and been more serious in graduate school.

I majored in history and economics at Stanford. I really liked most of my professors. I was particularly fond of H. Steward Hughes, the son of Charles Evans Hughes. He taught courses on European history, with an emphasis on European intellectual history. Later he taught at Harvard, he became a very liberal Democrat, and ran unsuccessfully for governor of Massachusetts. I took two independent reading courses from Hughes – in political philosophy and theory. Those were probably my most stimulating courses at Stanford thanks in great part to Hughes – a great intellectual and a very gracious man.

At Stanford, I started taking courses in Chinese. They were mostly a waste of time because Chinese is not something one picks up just by taking a college course here and there of three hours a week. It requires full immersion. If I were learning Chinese again, I would have gone directly to Taiwan – we could not go to China – to spend a year or more studying Chinese and completely immersed in a Chinese culture and life-style. Learning Chinese at Stanford and later at Harvard – in retrospect, was a poor use of time with little return.

By my sophomore year at Stanford, I had decided that the U.S. was not paying enough attention to China. There was, of course, considerable debate about such political issues as "who lost China", but that was hardly a fundamental question on China's future. I thought that we were not paying sufficient attention to that future, even though it was clear that this huge country was likely to become a major player in the world. I thought that China would require major attention and would eventually loom large in world affairs. But it was still a subject that had barely been touched in academia. I didn't start with much interest in the rest of East Asia, but as I progressed in my academic studies, I became increasingly convinced that the whole area would be of increasing importance to the U.S. and a good focus in career terms. These academic interests fit well with my

increasing interest in joining the Foreign Service. My professors were more interested in my attending graduate school, and they all urged me to follow my pursuits of China. Regrettably, I was not a good language student; I never could speak Chinese well, but I did become quite comfortable reading Chinese.

I took more and more courses on East Asia and although my major was still history, my emphasis was unmistakably the Far East as it was the known. I took a lot of courses from Professor Arthur Wright who was a distinguished historian of China and a real source of encouragement. Mrs. Wright was the curator of the Chinese collection at the Hoover Institute. Both urged me to attend Harvard after my undergraduate days at Stanford.

Q: You finished undergraduate school in three years. What degree did you earn?

ABRAMOWITZ: I got a BA in history and economics. A large portion of my course work was on East Asia, but I also took courses in European history, American history, economics and philosophy. I was certainly not an academic economist. The theoretical aspects just didn't really interest me and probably escaped me. I was interested in institutional economics – business, labor – the history of economic development. I took a number of courses in those areas – the minimum in theory – enough to qualify me for a degree in economics as well as history.

As I said, at the urging of some professors, I went to graduate school. I would have gone even without the urgings because Harvard, at the time, was becoming the center for Chinese studies in the U.S. John Fairbanks was, of course, the leading light in that development. He built up a center at Harvard which also offered for the first time a degree (MA) in regional studies.

At this time, the Ford Foundation had become very interested in East Asia studies. McGeorge Bundy was developing programs for the study of the USSR and China. So I got a fellowship from Ford to pursue my studies; I think it was a generous $2,500 which pretty much covered my graduate school expenses.

Q: At either Stanford or Harvard did you meet any members of the Foreign Service which might have stimulated your interest in the Foreign Service?

ABRAMOWITZ: I do remember one senior Foreign Service officer who came to Harvard to get graduate students interested in the Foreign Service. I don't remember what he said, but I was impressed both by the officer and his presentation. There were about twenty of us at that lecture. I was in my first year at Harvard and still debating whether I should pursue a PhD or go to work after receiving my Master's. In any case, some graduate work was good preparation for the Foreign Service, which, as I said earlier, was always my first career choice. I don't know precisely when I reached that conclusion, but it followed logically from my interests in world affairs. It was a very active period in world affairs – lots of exciting things were happening. It was a choice that I made without much input or influence from outside forces – e.g., faculty, Foreign Service officers, family, etc. Indeed, some of my family thought I was crazy.

My time at Harvard also led me to the conclusion that a life of an academic was simply not for me nor did I feel particularly talented for it. I completed my course work, chose my thesis topic – China's first modern bank – which I found so boring that eventually I lost interest and never completed my dissertation. I took the general exam for the PhD, passed it, but never wrote the thesis.

I spent three years at Harvard. My major decisions while there, as I said earlier, were to confirm that the academy was not for me, even in Chinese studies and that I did want to join the U.S. government, specifically the Foreign Service. At that time – very different from today – entering government service was viewed positively – by your peers, and society. That has not been the situation for a decade or more, I am sorry to say. The Foreign Service had a great intellectual attraction as well a real sense of purpose and of service. The Cold War was still in its early stages and that surely had an effect on the country's view of the Foreign Service. I am not sure I could make the same claim today.

My professors, although expressing their interest in pursuing an academic career, were certainly supportive of my F.S. interests. We used to have a weekly afternoon social discussing contemporary affairs at John Fairbank's house. Sometimes Teddy White would be there; sometimes John Stewart Service would be there. The McCarthy "hunts" were in the headlines at the time, and the 1954 hearings deeply engaged everyone. Conversation at the Fairbanks would always be lively and stimulating. Despite the beating the State Department was taking, and particularly the loss of the "China hands", my interest in the Foreign Service did not wane.

Q: When did you take the Foreign Service exam?

ABRAMOWITZ: In 1957, in Washington, DC. I passed it. Marshall Brement, who also entered the Foreign Service, was sitting next to me. I took it in Washington because that is where I was at the time. I passed the oral in 1958. After leaving Harvard, and having no job, I took a management intern appointment at the Labor Department. I knew when I accepted that position that I would not stay at Labor very long, but I needed the income. This appointment also required passing an exam – the junior management intern exam – which allowed various departments to offer special jobs to those who had passed. It was the sought-after way into the government for recent college graduates. I took Labor's offer for a position in its international affairs division. An additional complication was the fact that I knew that I would be called soon for military duty.

Just as I was about to be drafted, the government opened a new program which allowed people to serve in the active forces for six months and then in a reserve status for seven years. I had been accepted for naval officer training at Newport, although I must say that I had a hard time imagining myself in that role. Then this new program opened, I opted for it, a week before I was to report to Newport. I left Labor after six months and joined the Army.

I was first assigned to Fort Dix for two months of basic training and then to Fort Chaffe

in Arkansas for six months as a clerk-typist, during which time I managed to catch pneumonia. I still don't understand how I managed to last that long, much less being nominated as "soldier of the month" at Fort Chaffee. My friends and I chuckled at this. I was still a clerk-typist when I joined the Reserves. (Ironically, when I took a Presidential appointment – as a FSO – I was automatically discharged from the Reserves. So I was on active duty for six months and in the Reserves for eighteen months.

When I was discharged from active duty, a position in ICA (AID's predecessor) opened up and I took it. I also took the oral exams for the Foreign Service in 1958, but State stopped hiring new FSOs in that year. I did not get appointed as a Foreign Service officer for two years, I spent one year at ICA's headquarters in Washington in 1958 and then one year with the ICA mission in Taiwan in 1958 as an assistant program officer. In 1960, I was finally appointed an FSO and moved across the street, so to speak, from the ICA mission to the embassy.

In ICA I started in the Office of Chinese Affairs – i.e., working on Taiwan. I stayed in Washington for one year, participating also in a training program. Most of my time was spent working on the "desk." I learned a good bit about the operations of the Washington foreign affairs bureaucracy.

My boss at ICA was a wonderful woman, Laura Hughes, who taught me a lot about operating in the USG. She devoted considerable amount of time to my training and development – she even asked for my views on occasions. It was a small office – only three of us. I was really an add-on to the regular staff; that is there was no formal position for me.

In ICA Taiwan, I became responsible for the management of the commodity import program, which was a large part of our assistance effort to that country. I analyzed Taiwan's needs, proposed which commodities to finance, and worked with the Taiwan government to make sure all came to pass. I also prepared that portion of the mission's annual AID request.

The Taiwan program was a large one. We must have had about 1.000 employees in ICA headed by Wes Haraldson an FSO and a very good and determined AID director.

I liked the Taiwan assignment, one I had prepared for. It was sort of the "Promised Land." I was finally in a Chinese environment, learning the language and culture and traveling around the island. I had the opportunity to put my academic training to use, which was not always relevant. I met with many Chinese officials, learned a lot about doing business with bureaucracies in Taiwan and the U.S. It was my first overseas experience. Many of Taiwan's officials of course were refugees from the mainland; in fact, they made Taiwan the economic success it became. They were outstanding technocrats and their consistent contributions provided the essential spark to Taiwan's economic success story.

The principal aim of the assistance program was to reduce the rate of inflation. It was a

real economic challenge. The economy had been running out of control because of huge defense expenditures. This was the main justification for the commodity import program; i.e., importing goods at low prices would drive down the price of all commodities, thereby dampening inflation. The commodities covered the whole range of economic activity, but especially agricultural products. In addition ICA helped develop and finance Taiwan's new infrastructure and expanded farm production. On the whole, our assistance program was well thought out, executed with skill, and instrumental in starting Taiwan on its way to become one of East Asia's "tigers" – like South Korea and Singapore. The Taiwanese economy far outpaced economic development efforts in most countries.

Q: You seem to credit the Taiwanese officials for much of the economic success.

ABRAMOWITZ: Absolutely. The top ones were honest, smart, and dedicated to making things happen. Most, but not all, came from the mainland. One of the principal institutions involved in this economic development process was the JCRR (The Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction). That was run by a very prominent Chinese intellectual, but was a joint U.S-Taiwan organization which managed a nation wide agricultural development program which turned out to be very successful and often held up as a model for other countries. It was actually started on the mainland but fell a foul of the Chinese civil war.

I am not suggesting that economic development by itself produced political growth. When I was there Taiwan was a very authoritative country run by the KMT (Kuomintang). There was a huge divide between the native Taiwanese and the "mainlanders" who followed Chiang Kai-shek from the mainland after the Communist take-over in 1949. That divide still remains but has been significantly reduced by Taiwan's overall development and the very significant rise in incomes of the whole population.

I arrived in Taiwan after a terrible incident in 1957 when a number of Taiwanese were killed by the Nationalist forces. Chiang Kai-shek ran the country from the day he landed until 1975 when he died. The military which had followed him from the mainland were his enforcement mechanism. On the other hand, the economy grew and grew. The U.S. tried to encourage more democratic approaches to political development on the island but not very aggressively. We treaded carefully in the political landscape. As Embassy officials we were instructed to be careful with whom we talked publicly. Some of our contacts had to be "out of sight." We could not be viewed as encouraging a Taiwanese political identity. Such activity was frowned upon by the Nationalists and by our own ambassador, Everett Drumright. In my perhaps unfair view he had a strong case of "clientitis." It was not simply a matter of caution. I think he felt the nationalists would one day return to the mainland.

The ICA-Embassy relationship was very good, conducted mostly at higher levels than mine. We far outnumbered the Embassy and our building was much larger. The embassy Political Section had four or five officers. Same for the Economic Section. Perhaps more importantly, ICA had the resources to dole out which made us key players for the

government. The Embassy, of course, had an important role in the AID program; it had to approve the level and composition of the assistance program and at times requested changes. I don't remember much friction between the two organizations; they seemed to work cooperatively and present a united front to the KMT government.

Q: How was the social life?

ABRAMOWITZ: We were young and just married and all was interesting. Sheppie and I were engaged before I left the States. Sheppie, however, didn't join me until after our marriage. Three months after I arrived in Taiwan, our embassy in Burma requested that an economic officer be sent to Rangoon to conduct an economic survey of the country. I was asked whether I would be interested in this assignment. I said sure and took off to Burma in the summer of 1959. I stayed for three months and worked up the annual country economic report for Burma which was required as a justification for an assistance program.

I essentially made up most of the economic data as best I could; much was just not available in Burma, as it was not in many underdeveloped countries. I covered about ten years both retroactively and prospectively. I developed GNP figures and the supporting data. It took me about two months to complete this report and then I was given permission to travel around the country. That was enormously interesting, but not entirely a happy experience. On returning from Mandalay on a train I got quite sick with a terrible toothache. I got to the Strand Hotel which was a marvelous relic left over from the days of the British. By sheer luck, the manager of the hotel was a Stanford graduate. In fact, one summer he and I had driven across the States from Stanford to the East Coast. Small world!!! I don't know which of us was more surprised when we met. I called him at 2:00 in the morning and told him I was in very bad shape and needed help. He immediately got me in touch with a friend of his – a practicing physician at the local university hospital. He took me to that hospital at 3:00 a.m. where I was examined. I had an abscess in one tooth. He prescribed a pain killer and told me to see a dentist as soon as possible. My friend recommended a dentist who gave me some more drugs and told me to seen an oral surgeon as soon as I returned. A few days before this incident, Sheppie and I had decided to get married; so I returned not to Taiwan but to the U.S. We got married in September 1959 while I was undergoing drug treatment. As a matter of fact, the day after our marriage, I went to see the dentist. That was the beginning of a long and continuing marriage. Eventually, I lost that tooth but only after all the drama. Fidel Castro was in town that day and we went to Lafayette Park to hear him.

I returned to Taiwan soon after the wedding and was joined by Sheppie. We spent a lot of time with our American and Taiwanese colleagues and a number of Chinese friends. There were a number of American academics working in Taipei with whom we became friendly. Through them, we met a lot of Chinese scholars. We traveled extensively throughout the island. So we learned a lot and made many Chinese friends. Although this was the first time in the Far East for both of us, we did not find it difficult to adjust to a different society and culture. We had a good time.

When I went to Taichung for language training, I wrote my first public article. It was on the Taiwan economy and its progress. Although I had it cleared by the Department, I used a fictitious name, Sheppard Glass, which was Sheppie's maiden name. It was published in a new Journal – The China Quarterly – and was well received.

Q: When did you decide to move to the State Department?

ABRAMOWITZ: As I mentioned, I waited for two years to get my security clearance and more importantly, for State to find the funds to hire me. I kept getting letters from the Department telling me that I was still very much on their minds, but that they wouldn't be able to hire me in 1959. Finally, in 1960, I got a letter that the Department was ready to embrace me and that I could join the A-100 course (the introductory course offered to incoming officers) when I returned to Washington. I was appointed as an FSO-7 rather than FSO-8. I was given credit for my previous employment as well as my graduate school work.

I was sworn in as a new Foreign Service Officer in Taipei and assigned to the consular section of the Embassy. It was supposedly part of a rotational training program, starting with consular work and then being assigned to other sections of the embassy.

Many new officers, including myself, viewed an assignment to the consular section with some skepticism. In fact, I found that time in the consular section to be of enormous help. For one, I wrote a number of messages to Washington on our concerns regarding visa problems we were encountering in Taiwan. At the time, these messages received considerable attention; I don't know if they would today.

My second fortuitous circumstance came because my boss knew how to write and taught me what he knew. He was a very smart Foreign Service officer, but not an ambitious one. He really didn't care much about his career; he just wanted to reach retirement age having enjoyed what he had done regardless whether he had accomplished much or won any recognition. He had been a political officer but somewhere along the line had drifted into the consular business. His name was Tom Dehart and he had been the head of the embassy's consular section for a few years. We became friends and he really helped me immensely to sharpen my writing – systematic organization, clarity of thought, etc. I think his talent was wasted, but he preferred a sort of easier life. I have always owed him a real debt for his tutoring.

The consular section was a very busy one due primarily to some very serious visa fraud problems. Chinese students would get a short-term student visa and never return to the island. I must say that I had great sympathy for them – jobs in Taiwan were hard to come by then. Nevertheless they were clearly in violation of U.S. law. I was a very lenient visa officer! I must say that no one complained about my actions or attitude. Whether others were in sympathy with my views or whether there was little oversight, I don't know, probably both. In any case, my generosity seemed to be acceptable. I never violated U.S. laws, but where I had some leeway, I was lenient.

It was not my visa issuance work that attracted the embassy's attention, but rather my writings in that section. I focused on broader policy issues which individual or groups of visa applications raised. For example, one dispatch was on the pervasive problem of visa fraud in Taiwan. A lot of people on that island made money from the visa issuance process. It was these think pieces, plus my background in economics, which eventually led to my early reassignment to the economic section. That had been part of the original rotation plan which allowed me to use my economic background.

Of course, at the time, even though the economy was obviously beginning to grow, the "grass seemed greener" on the other side of the fence. Now of course, the trend seems to have been reversed. Many, probably most, U.S. trained Chinese return to Taiwan to seek their fortune.

Q: What did you do in the economic section?

ABRAMOWITZ: I had a good time. I talked to all sorts of people, high and low. I didn't talk to the president or his son, but I talked to many senior government officials. I had a pretty free hand in selecting subjects I wanted to focus on. I covered financial issues – one of the major disputes between Washington and the embassy concerned inflation. Louis Marks was the Department's expert on the subject – a very smart guy. He was convinced that Taiwan had licked inflation and he was right. Many in Taiwan and the U.S. did not agree with that analysis. I wrote a number of pieces on the subject, one, I remember, when the Taiwanese introduced a 100 Taiwan dollar bill the previous highest note was 10 Taiwan dollars. That was an indicator used by many to show that inflation was really creeping in; it was not the case.

My boss was Paul Storm an very interesting and unusual fellow. He pretty much left me to my own devices and I picked what I thought was important. There were some mandatory reports, such as the weekly economic report, to which we all had to contribute. We also in those days had something called CERP (Comprehensive Economic Reporting Program) was required periodically with listed reports. But in general, I was pretty much able to pursue economic issues which were timely and of real interest to me. There were four officers in the section. Two of us were junior officers, Herb Horowitz and me. We divided up the reporting.

Taiwan was a very interesting economic post and had enormous activity and dynamism. The place was changing into a modern economy. You could see the change right in front of your eyes. You didn't have to watch the grass grow; it boomed.

The political progress, to the extent that it existed, was not noticeable from the outside. The KMT and the President ran the place. But improvement in education and a growing economy was creating intellectual and psychological change in Taiwan.

For me good governance, dedicated people, and free-market oriented policies were the driving sources of the expanding economy. I would particularly give credit for this phenomenon to the effective and determined governance. It turned out to be a key to

changing society. The ability of people to run their own affairs and to make things happen impressed me tremendously; that impression of a superb economic team has stayed with me for these many years.

Taiwan had an excellent intellectual and physical infrastructure. Most other countries at a similar stage of development did not have such an infrastructure. The Japanese provided Taiwan an effective agricultural system, and good transportation. Many of the mainlanders who fled to Taiwan were highly educated and the school system was quite modern for its time and place. So Taiwan had the good fortune to be a "new" country with a reasonably effective economic structure. Too many other "new countries" started with a low-base and were forced to deal simultaneously with major political problem (or problems) and economies that were barely functioning. Taiwan could develop its economic base and it had an established if authoritarian political system. In retrospect, I think the Taiwanese managed their entrance into the family of successful countries pretty well.

Political development was gradual. It was a dictatorship. The expansion of democracy came slowly but it came. The economic dynamism, the benefits of rising incomes helped expand the middle class, which stimulated a growing interest in political issues. The improving educational system – education was widely respected as it is in much of East Asia – contributed enormously. All this provided a basis for a remarkable change in the KMT, which continued and accelerated after I left. Eventually, the KMT turned itself into a democratic party. Many hope that will be repeated on the mainland.

Q: Did the rise of a middle class have any impact on the development of a democratic political system?

ABRAMOWITZ: Yes, as I said it was beginning to expand. There were many middle-class people who had come from the mainland. The Taiwanese themselves had something of a middle-class primarily in rural parts of the country, where agriculture had been developed by the Japanese. By the time I arrived, whatever devastation had been created by the war had pretty much become history, so that the native population was able to partake in the economic boom. I think the economic expansion started in the early fifties. By the time I arrived, one could see clear evidence of an "economic success story." And that visible improvement continued while I was there and vastly enhanced the middle class with ensuing political benefits. That was one benefit of serving in Taiwan. Many of my Foreign Service colleagues would go to a country for two or three years and see no change in the economic situation.

On the political side what we mostly watched was the growth of a communist state on the mainland, (then) in bad economic shape. That further increased the division between Taiwan and the mainland. The mainland was a one-party country, but one which fought and won a civil war.

While I was there we witnessed the last gasp of Taiwan's "return to the mainland" policy. That of course was Chiang Kai-shek's dream. In 1962, in light of the serious problems

Beijing was encountering in the country especially in the agricultural sector and the policy squabbles in Washington about our China policy, Chiang Kai-shek decided or wanted to convey the notion that he was preparing to attack the mainland. Our Station Chief, Ray Cline, was very supportive. Finally, Washington told Cline to shut up and conveyed to Taiwan the need for caution. I don't think anyone thought that Chiang Kai-shek would actually do what he threatened, but we were concerned enough to throttle it. We didn't want any trouble in the Straits or in the area for that matter. We supported Taiwan's economic development program, but not its stated ambitions to return to the mainland. We would not publicly state such policy, but I don't think the Taiwan government had any doubts about what the U.S. would support and what it wouldn't. In retrospect, it might have been Chiang's effort to muster a stronger U.S. commitment to Taiwan.

I should mention here that my relationship with the CIA station was essentially social. I had very few, if any, business contacts with agency personnel. I made friends with a few of them; I knew Cline slightly – I got to know him better later in my career when I introduced him to Elliot Richardson to be considered for the INR directorship.

After Drumright left the ambassadorship, we had two chargés for a long time – first Joe Yager and then Ralph Clough. It was good to work for both of them. They carried out policy, but were open-minded enough to listen to the staff and discuss the issues. The most contentious probably being the Embassy's relations with the Taiwanese community.

I mentioned the bitter disputes in Washington about our China policy. I was not much aware of the battles in Washington between various agencies except with the CIA in 1962. In Taiwan, although various agencies and people had different positions and perspectives, no one, as far as I can tell, "free-lanced" or took any intra-mission debates public. At least, that is what I observed from my vantage point which was that of a junior officer in a large U.S. establishment.

Q: Did developments in Vietnam have any impact on our China policy?

ABRAMOWITZ: Our involvement in that war had not begun while I was in Taiwan. We were concerned by developments there – but Vietnam did not rank high on our working agenda; that changed by the time I got to Hong Kong. Then it became a big deal indeed.

Q: Did the issue of the UN seat come up during your tour?

ABRAMOWITZ: Indeed it did. The embassy strongly supported Taiwan's desire to keep the "China" seat at the UN. The issue arose annually and the embassy took the same position year after year. There wasn't any opposition within the embassy to our position. Had we taken a different view, and had it been approved by Washington, that would have had a corrosive impact on our relations with Taiwan.

In 1958 Bob Scalapino wrote what became known as the "Scanlon Report." Scanlon was a private consulting firm. He essentially concluded that a future foreign policy course

should be to support a "one Taiwan" policy with its claim to the mainland. Not surprisingly that report was created considerable furor on the island. Today, Taiwan would warmly support that conclusion in a minute. I mention this because the future status of Taiwan was, and will continue to be a major foreign policy issue for the U.S.

Given that context, the question of Taiwan giving up its UN seat was just not an issue ripe for serious discussion in Taipei. The politics of the situation also barred any serious discussion in either Taiwan or in the United States of any changes in the current practice or any alternatives to the *status quo*. As far as I was concerned, the UN seat issue at that time was not an issue meriting much consideration. That would change with President Nixon.

Q: Did you have many contacts with Washington during your Taiwan tour?

ABRAMOWITZ: A few. I did return to Washington to take the A-100 course during my home leave in 1961. That was a rather unique experience, because by this time, I had been in the government overseas for a couple of years, unlike most my colleagues who were brand new to the Foreign Service.

It was during this time that I became more closely acquainted with some of the Washington heavy weights on China – people like Lew Marks and Joe Yager, who had been the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) and the chargé in Taiwan and then assigned to Washington to run the Taiwan desk. In Taiwan, most of my contacts with Washington were via correspondence on specific issues.

Q: How would you summarize your tour in Taiwan?

ABRAMOWITZ: I refer you to a lecture I recently gave at Harvard which covers this point. I said: "For me it was an exciting period, not only because Taiwan was my first time living in Asia, but also because there was still a deep exhilaration in public service – the sense, at least in East Asia, you were contributing to building something and you could see results. I was also the first generation of FSOs after the bloodletting of the State Department's China experts – John Paton Davies, John Stewart Service, Oliver Edmund Clubb among others – and the focus on security during the Dulles years. There were enhanced security tests in general and a cautious atmosphere on anything to do with China. The atmosphere had eased somewhat when I joined the Department in 1960. In Taiwan you could pretty much speak your mind in private, but one had to be careful: we called Taiwan "China" and China "the Mainland"; public criticism of the Nationalist government was to be avoided, and consorting too much with the nascent and harassed Taiwan nationalist movement was "verboten." It is remarkable to remember now Bob Scalapino then writing the famous "Scanlon report" – which advocated for "one China" and "One Taiwan." Because it denied KMT sovereignty over China, it was pillories in Taiwan. Taiwan would love that situation today."

Q: Let's talk briefly about the A-100 Course. How long were you in it and who were your colleagues?

ABRAMOWITZ: I was in the course for two months. My colleagues were all white; I don't remember any minority representation. We did have three or four women in the class. Winston Lord was in the class and we have been long time friends. I have been asked on several occasions whether being Jewish made any difference to my career in the Service. I can honestly say that I never perceived an issue or problem for me in the Foreign Service. As far as I remember, it rarely crossed my mind.

The course was not particularly interesting for me since I had already been overseas and was acquainted with many of the aspects covered by the lecturers. The trips that the class took – to the UN, etc. were useful.

Q: Where had you taken your oral entrance examination?

ABRAMOWITZ: In Washington in 1958. I don't remember who was on the board that examined me, but I do recollect some of the questions that were asked. One was whether I liked to "go out with the boys." I answered that I preferred to go out with the girls. This was an insidious question. You have to remember that this time homosexualism was a key issue in the Department. Scott McLeod was the head of security and was in the headlines for his "hard line" stance. In any case, the board passed me and I was so informed a few minutes after the end of the examination.

Q: Then you returned to the economic section of the embassy in Taiwan.

ABRAMOWITZ: That is correct. I stayed in Taipei until the middle of 1962, when I went to Taichung to our language school there. I got out the following year, having passed the course, although, as I said, I am not a great student. I don't have a "good ear" which is particularly challenging when you are trying to learn a tonal language. I could read well; I never mastered writing. In any case, for the work that we were being trained for in Hong Kong, reading was the essential skill. In Hong Kong, I read Chinese newspapers all the time for my work.

Of course, there were people like Stapleton Roy. He and his brother David had been brought up in China and were almost bi-lingual. David taught at Harvard and later at Chicago. Stape, of course, became one the Department's top experts on China and a superb FSO. The Gleysteen brothers were of the same background; sons of missionaries who were mostly bilingual. In fact, before the McCarthy era, it was the sons of American missionaries in China who were the backbone of the Department's China expertise. After McCarthy, the Department still had some of this talent, but less and with a much lower profile.

The school tried to immerse you in Chinese. We were supposed to speak only Mandarin, but lapses were inevitable given the composition of the student body. I must say that the course was infinitely better that anything that I had taken at Harvard or Stanford, but it was not total immersion.

We studies Mandarin Chinese, the language used for official purposes. Mandarin has been so widely taught over the last 40 years, that one can get along in China using Mandarin exclusively. People still speak Cantonese or other Chinese languages, but most everyone except perhaps senior citizens, now communicate in Mandarin. At the time I took language training, that was not the case.

Mandarin then was not spoken widely on Taiwan. There Taiwanese, was mostly spoken; we could not use Mandarin and be understood by many.

Q: Your next assignment, after language training, was to the American Consulate General (CG) in Hong Kong. I think you were first assigned to the passport section.

ABRAMOWITZ: That is right. I was not very happy to be assigned to consular work again, but it was the only position open in the Consulate at the time I was available. I was told that as soon as vacancies occurred in the economic or political sections, I would be considered. That assuaged my unhappiness to some degree.

My consular job was primarily devoted to Chinese fraud cases. I did spend a little time on issuing passports to American children born overseas or other straightforward requests, but my principal focus was on fraud cases. These were generated by Chinese who would make an application swearing that they had been born in the U.S., who had been brought back to China by his or her parents; however all records to verify these stories had been usually lost or destroyed, mostly in the great San Francisco fire. Applicants would show some documentary evidence which usually had little relationship to their application.

Q: Did you have the opportunity, as you did in Taiwan, to discuss substantive issues with your "clients"?

ABRAMOWITZ: I would try to engage some applicants, particularly those that had recently come from mainland China and explore their views on conditions in the PRC. This was not a systematic process; it was a matter of opportunity primarily and I did not file regular reports, unless there was something unusual. Most of the applicants came from four small districts in Kwangtung Province. Most of the Cantonese-born Chinese now in the U.S. came from these districts. I would guess that at least half – if not much more – of the applications were fraudulent.

Since these applicants spoke Cantonese, I did not have much opportunity to use my Mandarin; I had an interpreter for interviews. I did however pursue my Mandarin studies with a tutor provided by the Consulate General. I read mainland China newspapers. In the evenings, we often tried to mingle with Chinese and then the Mandarin was somewhat helpful since Cantonese was mostly spoken. You have to remember that we were in Hong Kong only 18 years after the end of the Japanese occupation and only 14 years after Chiang Kai-shek's retreat from the mainland.

I can't say that the time in the Consular Section was very useful; it did little for career development or learning. After six months, I moved to the Political Section.

This Political Section of the CG was devoted entirely to mainland China matters. It covered both economic and political affairs in the PRC. I worked on economic issues. I liked the job. I found the economic situation in the mainland fascinating and often the subject of great debate. I was given wide discretion and allowed to pick and choose issues to focus on. I spent much time on the PRC's foreign trade especially as it impacted on Hong Kong's foreign trade and was the biggest source of Beijing's foreign exchange earnings at that time. I spent a lot of time tracking down visitors from the PRC to talk to them about economic conditions in their country. That was the most interesting part of the job.

The Political Section included both economic and political officers and was headed by John Holdridge. The chief of the economic section was Bill Gleysteen. I worked primarily for Bill which was a delight and an excellent experience. I developed a high regard for Bill's intellectual ability, his honesty and his dispassionate approach to the issues that we were analyzing. Bill was a serious, dedicated man.

John had worked on China for a long time. He was an easy man to get along with and left me pretty much to my own devices, even though he was always interested in my reports and activities. I respected his competence. The first Consul General I worked for was Marshall Green who was in Hong Kong for only a brief period after my arrival. He was replaced by Ed Rice, who was an old "China hand." I got acquainted with both of these senior officers and liked and respected both. I came to know Marshall much better during later assignments. I did not see Rich much after I left Hong Kong. He was quiet, very knowledgeable, very accessible, and very serious. I learned a lot about China from him.

We had an agricultural attaché and we spent a lot of time together studying the effects of the "Great Leap Forward" on China. Famine was a hot topic of the PRC – we made estimates of the numbers who probably died. The famine raised the question of the durability of the Chinese Communist regime.

Hong Kong was a great post, and an interesting place to live, in part because we were in effect the U.S. embassy to the PRC. I was in HK during the escalation of the Vietnam war. That raised the fundamental issue of PRC support for North Vietnam which became a major issue for our analysis. In addition, in 1964, the Chinese set off their first nuclear test which was of a course a major issue. The PRC kept us all very busy.

Q: What were your basic sources for analysis?

ABRAMOWITZ: Our key source was the Chinese mainland press. That was enhanced by the efforts of one of our officers to purchase all written mainland material that might be available in HK. Much of that material was smuggled out from the mainland – i.e., secret newspapers not publicly available to the Consulate. I would have to say that in the overall analysis scheme these materials were not a major contributor to our analysis. Some of my colleagues might disagree.

We also kept in close contact with representatives of other countries that had establishments in Hong Kong. That provided us periodically some interesting information. CIA also contributed to our knowledge, although it too was a limited source. There was also a considerable number of Chinese visitors – businessmen, diplomats, etc. from Beijing or Shanghai. We were voracious in our efforts to contact these people and to talk to them about what was going on in the PRC.

I was in my early thirties during my time in HK. It was a very satisfying tour because the issues I was involved in were of great interest to me and to our government. The work was intellectually challenging because we were working on a closed society which required a lot of "tea leaves" reading. China was potentially very important, an enemy of the U.S., and ranked high on the U.S. interest list.

We were putting together a mosaic – taking little bits of information gleaned from many sources and trying to fit into the larger picture, such as portrayed by the Chinese press. You also had to read between the lines and be able to understand the code words that the Chinese used. The press was particularly important as the Chinese moved from the "Great Leap Forward" to Mao's increasing efforts to start a new "socialist education" program. You could follow the supposed changes in the government's programs step by step by reading the Chinese press from 1963 onward.

In general, we believe that we did figure out the broad mosaic, although there were a lot of surprises. For example, all of a sudden, a famous leader is set aside. The day I left in August, 1966 the mayor of Beijing, a very prominent party leader, was fired. We knew that something major was going on, but I think we were all continually surprised by the extraordinary actions taken by the government. It was the early days of the Cultural Revolution. We understood that whatever machinations were being undertaken were at Mao's behest – or approval, at least. This was a long process which lasted ten calamitous years.

The focus of our intelligence collection and analysis was usually some big issue, for example, the stability of the regime. We were deeply interested in Sino-Soviet relations and focused on the developments of the split. We were eager to fathom's the PRC's attitude towards Vietnam and the war and what a role it might play. Finally, we spent a lot of time working on the Taiwan issue – e.g., the PRC's views of the situation in the Straits.

Minutia was interesting but we had our eyes on the bigger issues. The CG in Hong Kong was one of the principal contributors to this government-wide effort of determining the PRC's views on major issues. We were the principal source of public information and "tea leaves" reading. We also had loads of visitors from the States who came for up-to-date briefings on the PRC. We spent perhaps an hour each day – it obviously varied from day to day – briefing the American official and unofficial visitors, including an endless procession of the media. This role I think heightened even higher the intellectual excitement that our work brought to us. People were clearly interested in what we were up to. We were the main contact for the large American press in Hong Kong. We had

numerous CODELs (Congressional Delegations) interested in the PRC. That role was a major contributor to Consulate morale because people had many interlocutors deeply interested in our work.

Q: Did you feel that the CG made an impact on your visitors – the press, the CODELs, etc?

ABRAMOWITZ: Absolutely. The press came to us all the time. This included some of America's best journalists on East Asia. I have no doubt that we had an impact, on many others to whom they talked. They have often told me so because so many have been life-long friends. The journalists were professional; they did not just accept our analysis and assertations, but often – not always – came to the similar conclusions after doing their own further work. It was a fruitful endeavor for us as well. They spent lots of time with us and I am convinced that the Consulate General helped shape the American public's perception of the PRC. It was time consuming – on everyone's part – but it was well spent.

Of course, the process was assisted by the lively social life in Hong Kong. We would meet loads of people on that circuit and were able to make our views known to those we met there, some of whom were VIPs (very important people).

Adding to the intellectual ferment was the fact that many reporters would go from Hong Kong to Vietnam to report on the situation there. On returning to Hong Kong they would pass along their more unvarnished observations. That added considerably to our knowledge and kept our intellectual juices fermenting.

As I said in my Harvard "Neuhauser" lecture: "We were an intimate part of the media, particularly in Hong Kong, where all of us searched for every scrap of information about China and waylaid anyone who came down from China or who had escaped. In fact, the Hong Kong consulate, the de facto American Embassy in China, to a great extent shaped public reporting on China in the fifties and sixties. I don't mean top reporters like Stan Karnow, Joe Lelyveld, Seymour Topping, Bernie Kalb, Jerry Schecter and others just wrote what we told them. They certainly did not. But the Consulate because of its resources and the quality of its people was an indispensable stop for reporters. It was nice to get our views of China into the newspapers. Such efforts occupy much of my time today, but they are no longer as much fun."

Q: How was the Consulate General's relationship with the Department?

ABRAMOWITZ: We had vigorous exchanges. We often disagreed particularly about Chinese intentions in Vietnam. There were occasionally public spats between the staff in Hong Kong and Washington. Alan Whiting, for example, who was the head of the INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research) section dealing with East Asia. The exchanges were vigorous but mostly unpolitical.

I describe some of these exchanges again in the spiel I delivered at Harvard. In it, I said:

"Interesting battles raged in Washington over a China we perceived dimly. One, similar to our problem today with Iran and with many of the same considerations, focused on what to do about China becoming a nuclear weapon power as we watched it proceed to its first test in 1964. Significant internal pressures to attack China's nuclear facilities were rebuffed by President Johnson. A second was a real debate in 1964-65 over how China would respond to the vast buildup of American forces in Vietnam and the bombing of the North. Washington feared that the Chinese might come in a la Korea in 1950 and 1951 if we seriously escalated. The opposing views on the Hong Kong Consulate and Allan Whiting in INR became very public. Whiting, who helped George Ball argue against increased deployments and of course wrote the Book China Crosses the Yalu would spell out to Max Frankel in Washington why China was likely to come in in a big way. In Hong Kong we would talk with the New York Times bureau chief, Seymour Topping, and give our perspective on why the Chinese would not do so. The CG won that argument.

It was, of course, hard to evaluate in our policy deliberations the extent of China's domestic turmoil and its impact on Chinese policy of those extraordinary two decades in China. The Cultural Revolution mostly produced shakings of the head in Washington and elsewhere. Despite what government specialists were long telling their masters about the depth of Sino-Soviet differences, there was also a skepticism on more pertinent domestic political concerns that hindered trying to take advantage of the dispute. The Democrats had become gun shy on anything Chinese from the damaging "who lost China" debate. The depth of Sino-Soviet animosity became clear even to Washington in 1969 with the incidents along the Sino-Soviet border. In the end the change in administrations from the Democrats to Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, the American difficulties in Vietnam, and China's troubles with the Soviets all continued to lead to what most China watchers had long and devoutly hoped for, even if we were surprised and captivated by Kissinger's secret diplomacy."

Q: In your area of responsibility – the economic scene – what were you observing?

ABRAMOWITZ: The big question was whether and to what extent the PRC was recovering from the "Great Leap Forward." What were the indicators of farm production and what did they suggest? Was China expanding its foreign trade? Were Chinese goods finding a market outside its borders? What was happening to their military forces?

The CG funded a trip that I took to look at the question of Chinese exports in Southeast Asia. I visited six countries meeting with host government officials, local leaders, and visiting Chinese department stores to analyze the size and vigor of a Chinese export drive. The assumption was that if the export sector was recovering, then it was likely that the Chinese domestic economy was also getting back on its feet. That was an issue of great interest to Washington. Hong Kong itself was of course an excellent market for cheap Chinese goods.

The agricultural economy in China was, of course, most important because it was the key to political and economic stability. China had gone through exceedingly difficult times

(1959-62) with the "Great Leap Forward." It had wreaked havoc on Chinese agriculture with the resulting death of something close to 30 million Chinese – that was the experts' best guess, but no one has ever known for sure. Regardless of the number, it was a devastating blow to China which made it important to make some educated guesses about the state of Chinese agriculture because that would have a major impact on political stability. I think that by 1963, we had reached the conclusion that China had essentially recovered from its "experiment" and that the economy had hit bottom and was slowly beginning to recover. There were still problems of agricultural production – e.g., lack of sufficient fertilizer (we watched fertilizer imports very closely). But I think by 1963, the sense of crisis was beginning to fade; by 1966, the "Great Leap Forward" was history, replaced by another extraordinary Communist event, the Cultural Revolution.

The Chinese government had embarked on a "socialist education" campaign from 1963 which led us to focus on the stability of the Communist party and its potential impact on agricultural production. Starting in 1965, we began to notice certain trends in the press which suggested to us that a shake-up in the party was in the making. By the time I left in 1966, we were certain that something real big was going on in the party, but we didn't know exactly what. Even though these intra-party upheavals and power-plays were not part of my portfolio, we all had to be up-to-date on this process because of its very likely spill over effect into political and economic areas of the PRC.

Finally, we were interested in the state of the Communist party. Was it still peddling old ideology? For that analysis, we depended primarily on printed material – newspapers, books, etc.

Q: Did you have any idea what organizational level of the Department was reading the CG's reports?

ABRAMOWITZ: Our reports went to the country director and the deputy assistant secretary for the region. A few went directly – or were sent by the East Asia bureau – to the Seventh Floor. Most of my own reports would not have gone to the Seventh Floor; my views might have been included in some summary reports on such general matters as Chinese agricultural output and conditions. But I don't think that as a routine matter, the CG's reports were read on the Seventh Floor, except for some staffers. But, as I noted before, our exchanges with Washington were mostly high level in substantive content with the office director being our main interlocutor and the Assistant Secretary that of the Consul General.

Q: Did you note any changes in PRC attitudes or policies as our involvement in Vietnam grew?

ABRAMOWITZ: By 1965, we had a considerable presence in Vietnam. The Chinese were supplying arms and other materiel to North Vietnam and thus to the Viet-Cong. In the CG we wrestled with the issue of Chinese intentions toward the war. On this issue we and Washington did not see eye-to-eye generating some major debates. As I previously indicated the CG thought that China would provide significant assistance including

perhaps even some man-power, but we never expected the Chinese to enter the fray full bore – as they did in Korea. This is a very broad brush description of our general view; it had some more nuanced aspects. But Washington, particularly George Ball and Whiting, took a much more grave view about Chinese intentions. Although I can not prove it, I think Ball and Whiting in part took this dire view of likely Chinese intervention because they were basically opposed to the Vietnam War, they wanted to limit our exposure, and expressed deep concern as the U.S. increased its involvement. My speculation may be unfair; I wasn't in Washington and privy to their deliberations, but it was what I was hearing. There was certainly no question the CG and parts of the Washington bureaucracy did not see eye-to-eye on the question of Chinese support for North Vietnam. That was a vigorous debate which became public, as I previously mentioned.

We did not have a "Vietnam Hand" on the staff. I did a small amount of reporting on Vietnam as did some of my colleagues. The CIA station spent a lot of time on that issue. We also got plenty of visitors who had great interest in Vietnam – e.g., Dan Ellsberg, Henry Kissinger. All were trying to find new approaches to a difficult situation. Most of these "thinkers" visits were officially sponsored.

We had, of course, a large number of visits from Vietnam-stationed personnel in Hong Kong for R&R. I talked to some of them, particularly the ones with whom I had a personal connection – classmates, colleagues from previous assignments, etc. We got a fairly wide range of information both from these personal contacts and from reading the correspondence between Saigon and Washington, copies of which were sent to the CG.

Q: Talk a little about Sino-Soviet relations during this period you were in Hong Kong?

ABRAMOWITZ: That of course was very high on our priority list of topics to follow. We already had indications – secret speeches, newspaper articles, talks with diplomats, etc. – that bilateral relations were deteriorating. These policy differences were strictly downplayed but the public exchange of letters between the two sides was increasingly tough. Moreover Soviet technicians had already been withdrawn from China. We had to consider whether the Sino-Soviet Axis was irreparably broken and we were witnessing a change in the geo-strategic picture.

Our analysis focused on the severity of the tensions – an issue that was not easily answered from our vantage point. We were also faced with the question of what the U.S. might do to help move the "splitting" process along. Much of Washington was still quite skeptical about the nature and depth of this "split." I also don't remember much thought being given in Washington to how the U.S. might take advantage of this potential divide. Adequate attention was not paid to this huge foreign policy development until military incidents along the Sino-Soviet border in Siberia took place in 1969. At that point the U.S. government finally acknowledged that the Sino-Soviet split was real and would impact on many important issues. A consensus began to build in the U.S.G. that this development cried for U.S. activism and eventually resulted in President Nixon's efforts to normalize relations with the PRC. This continuing development was one of those defining moment in history.

When I left Hong King in 1966 Washington was still in a cautious and skeptical mood, not certain that the Sino-Soviet Axis was dead and required new U.S. foreign policy initiatives.

Q: What do you remember about your living conditions in Hong Kong?

ABRAMOWITZ: We were fortunate. We had the house on the very top of Hong Kong. It looked over a great swath of the island. The house had been occupied by Mark Pratt, another Foreign Service officer, who was unexpectedly reassigned from Hong Kong to Laos because he had violated local regulations concerning use of water on private lawns. Hong Kong was in the middle of one of its periodic droughts. So the house became available. In addition to the vista, it had beautiful large rooms with 40 feet ceilings. We had numerous parties – primarily official ones – impossible without our excellent Chinese cook. This was the life of one of the junior members of the staff and it was bracing.
Our guests for the most part, were associated with our work. Hong Kong was a great assignment for a young FSO; it combined very interesting substantive work with a high standard of living that few junior officers had the opportunity to live. Our contacts, whether American, Chinese, British or other Europeans, were on the whole interesting, stimulating, and forthcoming. We worked hard, but there were off-setting benefits. Hong Kong was no hardship post, but an intellectually stimulating hard-working one. Now, However, I have little desire to go back to the island.

Q: In 1966, you were transferred to the Department.

ABRAMOWITZ: Bob Barnett, then a deputy assistant secretary in EA (East Asia) tried to get me assigned to the EA bureau. He had seen my work and was apparently favorably impressed. He failed but managed to get a new position established in EA and then assured me that I would be assigned to it. It was a job as special assistant to Ed Fried, a deputy assistant secretary in the bureau. Tony Solomon was then the assistant secretary.

I worked for Fried for 12-18 months. It was not a demanding job. I learned a lot particularly about negotiations of commodity agreements, then a very active business. During my tour, the most important commodity agreements being negotiated concerned coffee and cocoa. I spent most of my time actually working for and with the director of the office of commodity affairs.

Ed Fried, however, was a great boss. He was very smart and I learned a lot sitting in on his meetings or just shooting the breeze with him. George Jacobs, the office director, was also very open and available. I spent more time with him than with Fried because I was part of the commodity agreement teams. Jacobs became the acting DAS (Deputy Assistant Secretary) when Fried left for an NSC (National Security Council) assignment.

Q: What did you, in these 18 months, learn about how the Department works. This was your first Department assignment.

ABRAMOWITZ: My assignment was a highly compartmentalized one. Participation in commodity agreements was hardly of wide interest; it was specialized work that did not really engage the day-to-day interests of a regional bureau or senior staff unless countries like Brazil were involved. There were a small number of offices deeply involved; occasionally, the EA assistant secretary had to get involved and on rare occasions the Secretary had to be brought into the process. For example, Dean Rusk had to approve when we should seek ratification of a coffee agreement, which would undoubtedly become a matter for public discussion and a domestic political issue. He did some missionary work trying to get, for example, the coffee agreement to the Hill.

Commodity agreements were relatively rarely subjected to scrutiny of bureaucratic politics – strong fights among regional bureaus or between regional and functional bureaus stemming from conflicting interests and approaches. The other bureaus were of course kept up to date on our negotiations; that seem to suffice, the less they were bothered, the happier they were. The EA bureau was expected to take into consideration what the positions of the regional bureaus' clients were – e.g., Brazil and Uganda and other large coffee growers in the case of the coffee agreement.

Working on commodity agreements introduced me to U.S. pressure groups. The lobbies for the domestic producers and consumers were very active. They participated in many of our meetings and frequently did business with us over nice lunches and dinners. The coffee industry particularly paid close attention to what we were doing. Someone from General Foods and other coffee companies were always part of our delegation to the negotiations. Congress, on the other hand, only became involved if a member was particularly interested in an issue; its involvement became more active as we were preparing to seek ratification. Congress was not a daily player.

The coffee growers were in foreign countries. Our relationships with their representatives were mostly during the negotiations; or in visits to Washington. We had little contact with them at other times, although occasionally the ambassador from a coffee growing country would seek a meeting or we would seek a session with him. Sometimes a foreign minister of a coffee producing company would show up. Our relationship with the coffee growers community was mostly through diplomatic channels, even during trade negotiations. Much of our information came through an embassy's CERP (Comprehensive Economic Reporting Program) the periodic reports filed by all of our embassies on economic issues. These reports often included commentaries on the status of coffee growing efforts in the host country.

We were sensitive to the needs of our domestic coffee manufacturers and tried to satisfy their concerns. In the main, I think they were satisfied with our negotiating efforts; periodically, they might pound the table, but I don't remember ever being involved in a prolonged, essentially unresolvable dispute, between them and us. We worked hard to balance their interests and those of our consumers. We also were sensitive to the needs of foreign growers, many from poor countries where coffee was the major crop.

I had a special project of my own to create a coffee diversification fund to be financed by special contributions from each bag of coffee sold. At that time, there was a large coffee glut which held prices way down. I was to push for countries to move out of coffee growing and into more profitable agricultural production. In many meetings over the year, I urged the inclusion of some provision for a diversification fund in our coffee agreement. Sometimes, the head of our negotiating team made the same pitch to other chief delegates in plenary sessions. I often consulted our aid agency to see whether it had any ideas for agricultural programs to reduce coffee production and increase production of other commodities.

I liked working on erecting the fund. It was my baby and my first time in multilateral negotiations. It allowed me to travel a lot to places such as London which I visited almost monthly working on the coffee agreements. London was the seat of the International Coffee Organization. I also worked for people whom I regarded highly – Fried, Jacobs, and Tony Solomon.

In retrospect, I am still not sure how useful that job was. It introduced me to an entirely different aspect of the State Department's work. It was not a subject in which I had a great interest, but it was more interesting than I had expected, even though I did not feel overly challenged by my responsibilities. Commodity agreements were not an area in which I felt I could make a real contribution. It certainly enhanced my experience in dealing with a wide variety of people. I was not sorry to leave.

Q: When you left E, you were assigned to the Senior Interdepartmental Group (SIG). How did that come about?

ABRAMOWITZ: That was probably the biggest break in my career. Sometime before I left E, this SIG had been established in the office of the undersecretary (later deputy secretary). It was an interdepartmental group consisting of all the deputy secretaries of those governmental departments and agencies working in the foreign affairs field. It was intended to oversee the coordination and implementation of policies decided by the president – not the development of policies although it was sometimes difficult to separate the two functions. The group was part of the National Security Council apparatus.

Nick Katzenbach was undersecretary at the time. He appointed as staff director Art Hartman, who had a lot of both intra and inter-departmental experience. He was an outstanding officer. Art got Claus Ruser to be his principal assistant; he was a GS employee with very good academic credentials as an economist. He had a wide ranging mind, who delved with gusto into many issues. He was like a vacuum cleaner. Claus and I had met sometime before and had chatted about a variety of subjects. When it came to filling out the SIG staff, Claus mentioned my name to Hartman, who then called me. This was probably early in 1968. We talked and Art subsequently offered me the job. For me, it was an unexpected gift; it opened up new vistas – Seventh Floor, interdepartmental issues, major policy initiatives involving the leadership of the Department and other governmental departments and agencies.

My job title was staff member of the Senior Interdepartmental Group, part of the undersecretary's office. One of my principal tasks was to participate in an interdepartmental study of our military relationship with South Korea. There was then increasing unhappiness in the USG with Park Chung Hee and his government. The working group was chaired by the DoD representative, Earl Ravenel, a deputy assistant secretary in the Office of System Analysis in the Pentagon. The work of this group became particularly important after the *Pueblo* incident. Our study started with an examination of DoD's requirements for the defense of South Korea. Somehow, I became involved in a study of naval requirements, particularly mine-clearing efforts. This allowed me to travel to a number of military bases in the U.S., looking at what clearing capabilities were available and thinking on the issue. I also got involved in an examination of economic issues relating to South Korea as well as beginning the study of North Korea.

My sub-group eventually got combined with that of another working group created because of the *Pueblo* incident. The administration, in light of that event, undertook a study of the general American defense posture toward South Korea. Joe Yager became the chairman of this working group which consisted of about five members from DoD and State. I had known Joe since he was the DCM in Taiwan. I think that this was the first high level review of our relationship with South Korea for more than a decade. The questions posed were basic policy ones which was the reason it was under Seventh Floor supervision.

We finished our report in the spring of 1968 – I think. This was a time when our vision of Asia was essentially Vietnam. It permeated the Seventh Floor. We also had two divisions in South Korea and there was great concern about the potential for conflict on the Korean peninsula. The *Pueblo* episode was brought to an end when Cy Vance went to the Far East and sort of apologized for the "incursion" while leaving the ship in the hands of the North Koreans but getting the crew. Our report outlined and recommended consideration of a program for the withdrawal of our ground troops from South Korea over a five year period – no gentle policy. There were considerable differences over our recommendations, but I felt that the group had to issue a report which said something and caught the attention of senior policy makers to make them face up to the hard realities then existing on the peninsula, even if they did not accept the broad recommendation.

I spent full time with this working group for five to six months. As might well have been expected, the report went nowhere in great part because it ran into election season. It provided fodder for a lot of discussion; it was praised in various quarters, but the bureaucracy was certainly not going to do anything about it, particularly since it was the end of the administration. It was partly resurrected by the Nixon administration when it tackled the Korean issue as part of a NISM study. It may well have contributed to the development and implementation of the "Nixon doctrine," whose biggest manifestation was the removal of one division from South Korea. The work of this group came in handy later on for me, when I attended the Institute for Strategic Studies (ISS) in London on a sabbatical, where I wrote an Adelphi paper urging South Korea to start negotiations

with the North on normalizing relations between the two countries. I felt such a move toward dialogue would inhibit a U.S. effort to remove all U.S. troops while negotiations were ongoing – my theory being that the U.S. would not wish to undermine the discussions by withdrawing the troops making the South Koreans anxious about their future. I felt further removal of troops beyond the Seventh Division – much discussed at the time – was very dangerous.

Regardless whether our Korea report went anywhere, the process of writing it forced people to look at the situation in Korea, especially in light of a terrible incident – the *Pueblo* – which could have generated a war. Furthermore, our policy needed review in light of the sizeable Korean contribution to the war in Vietnam. It was likely the view of the undersecretary that the issues were likely to be considered from a fresher perspective than might happened if the study was under the control of the regional bureau. I think in general that is the proper approach to issues that have been dormant, frozen, or unreviewed for prolonged periods. I doubt that people who have to deal with these issues daily can easily step back and analyze a situation with fresh eyes.

When not dealing with the Korean review, I spent my time dealing with minor policy issues which arose in the under secretaries' committee. The staff would review it and submit some recommendations to Art first and then to the Deputy Under Secretary. I don't believe that I worked on any really major issues during this assignment. Indeed, I felt somewhat underemployed initially, until the Korean study was launched. The undersecretaries' committee agenda was not filled with challenging items. Much was routine. Part of the reasons for that was that the U.S. government was falling apart at the time. Rusk was hardly talking to Katzenbach. Vietnam was absorbing everyone's time with much effort being devoted to defending one's views and attacking others'. The country was in ferment over the Vietnam War. The students were in a rage. It was somewhat akin to the recent atmosphere on Iraq. The exception today is that our military is highly regarded and respected unlike the situation in the late 1960's.

Q: How did you like working for Katzenbach?

ABRAMOWITZ: I did not see the undersecretary much until after the 1968 elections. After the elections, Larry Eagleburger, who was then Katzenbach's special assistant, and highly influential, was assigned as the Department's liaison to Henry Kissinger. When Larry left, Art Hartman recommenced that I take his job for some uncertain time. (While a SIG staff member, I had an office on the Sixth Floor). I was happy to do that. I spent the last two months or so of Katzenbach term as his special assistant. Of course, I did not have Larry's cache during the ensuing two months, but I did what I could and had an opportunity to begin to get to know many of the senior officers in the Department and learn about some new issues. Since it was the end of an administration, it was not a very busy period; not much was happening. Indeed, the Seventh Floor was pretty dead.

My view of Katzenbach is limited. I don't know what role he played in the Department. But it was widely believed that he and Secretary Rusk had a difficult relationship, stemming from disagreement of what to do about Vietnam. Personally, I found him

interesting, very smart, quite thoughtful, and a very nice fellow. I learned from just watching him operate even in this gloomy atmosphere. Since the Department was essentially dormant at the end of 1968, I could not observe his skills as a manager and generator. He had managed the *Pueblo* incident at the beginning of the year, but I was then not close enough to see how he did that. By the time I became his special assistant, the main role for the undersecretary seemed to be to insure that the transition team and members of the incoming administration got all the support that they needed.

Q: Did you find that your perspective of the Department changed when you moved to the Seventh floor?

ABRAMOWITZ: Absolutely. It was a different world in at least two ways: first, I began to look at issues in a much broader context, rather than the narrow confines of my previous job. I learned to neglect the unimportant side issues which often take up so much time and effort by a bureaucracy. I learned to focus on the key matters and what was needed in presenting an issue to the undersecretary and how best to get information and analysis.

Second, I learned how to operate and maneuver among the Seventh and Sixth Floor principals as I tried to help obtain some consensus among them on what needed to be done and how to do it. That was also necessary for my own position because the quality of my presentations was important if I were to be taken seriously. For any Seventh Floor senior assistant, that was essential if you were to be of any value to your own principal; furthermore, it helped to build a cache for future assignment considerations. Sitting in Katzenbach's office for a relatively undistinguished and less than challenging two months was really the stimulus for my Foreign Service career.

Katzenbach was succeeded by Elliot Richardson, who decided to keep me in the position. I knew Jonathan Moore, Richardson's senior assistant to some extent – from my Hong Kong days – when he passed through (he was then Marshall Green's special assistant). We became friends. When Richardson was appointed undersecretary, he didn't know many people in the Department. So he offered me the job as his special assistant. He added that he only had one incentive plan. "One mistake and you are out!" He laughed; I must have smiled – weakly. But it was this opportunity that changed my whole career. It was purely fortuitous – completely unplanned and unforeseen. Others could have done what I did, but I got the chance and they didn't.

Q: Tell us a little about the staffing of Elliot Richardson's office?

ABRAMOWITZ: Richardson brought with him three people who worked for him for much of his time in Washington. Jonathan Moore, his executive assistant, was the main cog in the machinery; he was involved in all issues brought to the undersecretary; his forte was his ability to foresee the domestic political ramifications particularly as they pertained to Richardson's position in Washington, but his contributions to policy development went far beyond that. Jonathan was a very able officer, who had plenty of political experience and was able to interact effectively at high levels in and out of the

Department.

Will Hastings, a lawyer, who worked for Richardson when he was the Massachusetts attorney general. He was brought in on many issues, but his major focus for the first year was on senior appointments – career and non-career as well as the undersecretary's relationship with the Legal Advisor. He also, like Moore, took great care that Richardson's reputation not be damaged.

Then there was a secretary, Cetta Leonardi, who was much more than that. She really managed his schedule and was a constant source of frank advice and counsel. She was his "protector" and knew him very well having been with him for many years. She knew his habits, his foibles, his moods, and served Richardson very well and was an integral part of his operation. She was totally dedicated to him.

I was the special assistant charged with culling out and presenting State Department issues to the undersecretary. I was to make sure that he was prepared for meetings and knew what was gong on in the Department. I followed up on assignments that had been given to various offices, to assure that the assigned work was being done in a timely fashion and was satisfactory. I helped manage the undersecretary's schedule. All of these were functions that all special assistants normally perform. I had a Foreign Service Officer, John Stempel, as a staff assistant who reviewed much of the paperwork.

Richardson also hired a speech writer, Frank Seidner, who had been with the Department. Richardson used to give quite a number of speeches and remarks. Frank used to draft the first version, which Richardson would then edit to fit his style, and made all of his comments very much his own. He spent a good bit of time on is speeches.

This team worked together for all of his Richardson's tenure at State for 18 months which ended when he became HEW (Health, Education and Welfare) Secretary. He had been an assistant secretary there during the Eisenhower administration and knew well both the substance and operations of the Department.

Q: In your role of special assistant, were you involved in deciding what issues were to be referred to the undersecretary?

ABRAMOWITZ: Richardson became sort of the super-manager of the Department. Secretary Rogers was quite laid back – some even said "lazy". That left a vast amount of territory for Richardson to cover. Most issues ended up on his desk both because of Rogers' management style and his "Henry" problem. Richardson and Henry Kissinger had developed a close relationship, although it turned out that the relationship was not quite as close as Richardson had viewed it. Richardson was very active in generating consideration of issues and got to know a good bit of the working level of the Department.

He became involved in almost every issue. Alexis Johnson, the deputy undersecretary for political affairs, handled most of the day-to-day issues that needed Seventh Floor

attention, although Richardson was at least briefed on those as well and was in constant touch with Johnson's assistants. As chairman of the under secretaries committee – part of the NSC system – Richardson was involved in inter-agency matters related to implementation of policy decisions reached by the NSC. In this regard, the one committee action that received most attention were the first steps which eventually led to the establishment of U.S.-Sino relations. I am referring here to the removal of restrictions on American foreign subsidiaries including with China and other actions of that nature. I remember this effort particularly because I drafted the memorandum which eventually went to the president for his approval of these confidence building measures on China. It was just by accident that we were moving in the same direction as the White House in changing China Policy, although, as far as I know, no one in the Department had any idea what Nixon and Kissinger were up to.

Richardson was also responsible for the Department's nominations to the White House for presidential appointments. He interviewed every one of the Department's final recommendations particularly the non-career, many of who were not known to him. A number of candidates who had deep pockets were seeking a presidential appointment after having made sizeable contributions to the Nixon campaign. Richardson examined them very carefully to make sure that they would not at least embarrass the administration in their new positions. He also played an important role in moving some career officers up the ladder.

Richardson got heavily involved in major issues such as Vietnam (of course, everyone was involved in Vietnam). He even hired a special assistant whose sole role was to follow Vietnam developments. That was Charlie Cook, whom Jonathan Moore had found in the Pentagon. That was a full-time job which assured Richardson of being current on fast moving developments.

One of the more effective channels in the government to get things done as well as to smooth ruffled feathers was Richardson's relationship with Kissinger. If there were any problems between the Department and the NSC or if some action needed to be taken quickly by one of those organizations, Richardson would invariably take it up with Kissinger and vice versa. From my vantage point, I never saw Rogers as a very effective Secretary of State – either as a policy developer or a manager. He was, however, a good judge of the American public and its receptivity to American foreign policy initiatives. He was an excellent advisor on how to get public approval, but in the policy development field – either as a creator, implementer, or defender – he was just not in same league as Kissinger. That became a real impediment to a good Kissinger-Rogers relationship, because it put Rogers in a second echelon which created resentment and anger on his part. Rogers was very much concerned about his personal status and his stature in the public's eye. I think you have probably discerned by now that I did not hold him in high regard, although I want to repeat and stress that Rogers had a better feel for the public's mood and views and how to handle issues publicly than probably anyone else in the government's national security apparatus.

Q: Would Richardson take actions on issues that might not have been on his agenda?

ABRAMOWITZ: Sometimes. A lot of this took place during his bi-weekly staff meetings to which all deputy undersecretaries and assistant secretaries were invited. Richardson used these meetings to discuss and assign actions on some issues which arose, which may not have been brought to his attention through formal channels. It was an opportunity particularly for the assistant secretaries to seek advice from their superiors and their colleagues and to bring the principals up to date on issues that were of current concern to them. I think these meetings were very useful to all participants. They allowed the assistant secretaries to raise issues that they might not have been able to get to the undersecretary's attention in the normal course of events. And it allowed Richardson to measure the competence of the senior staff. As I saw it, the assistant secretaries respected Richardson and frequently asked for his help.

Richardson also had a great interest in the workings of the Department, quite similar to those exhibited later by George Shultz. He was anxious to make sure that the institution worked, that the morale and excitement were maintained. His staff meetings were one of the management tools that Elliot used to monitor the workings of the Department. He was interested in effective process. That management interest also raised his curiosity about the Foreign Service. He liked most of the officers with whom he had contact. He was always on the look-out for the rising "stars"; he talked to many members of the Service and had a good feel for how it operated. This was a period of "reform" led by Bill Macomber, the deputy undersecretary for management. He established a number of task forces which together wrote a management-reform blueprint called "Diplomacy for the '70s." Richardson was very supportive of this effort. His notion was that the challenges of the 1970s required a smarter approach to diplomacy given the world's complexities. It required a U.S. State Department with very capable practitioners increasingly able to operate in much more complex settings. He was very interested in Macomber's efforts to build a better Foreign Service.

One matter in which the office was deeply involved was a huge passport problem. Americans were complaining bitterly, and rightly so, that they had to wait for months and months to get their documentation. Richardson was charged with resolving the issue. I suggested, and he accepted, that a commission be formed to quickly recommend solutions. It did so and the backlogs soon disappeared.

Richardson, of course, had a first class mind. He understood most issues quickly and would easily grasp the major details. He did not have a dominant personality and therefore would not always push very hard for resolution in many instances. He was always highly rational with a justification for all of his actions – especially when he was not inclined to getting involved. For example, he tried to stay out of issues that he knew were of particular interest to the secretary. He was very loyal to the secretary, and, as far as I could tell, never tried to up-stage or bad-mouth Rogers. Within the State building, Richardson was far more respected than Rogers, in part because he was always ready to listen to the assistant secretaries or the deputy undersecretaries. Rogers often mentioned how proud he was to have brought Richardson to Washington, but I suspect that he was also a little jealous of Elliot's prominence on foreign policy matters, and his stature in the

Department.

This is not to say that Rogers and Richardson were on different wavelengths. They consulted frequently and I never saw any indication that Richardson tried to undermine the secretary. Rogers was the boss and the final arbiter. Richardson's relationships with the deputy secretaries – Alexis Johnson, Nat Samuels and Bill Macomber – were excellent. He and Macomber had been friends for some time and were very close. I liked Macomber a lot; he was forthright and even when he seemed to be out-of-step or off on a tangent, I respected him. I also liked Idar Rimestad, Macomber's often reviled predecessor, who was entirely different from Macomber. In those days, the deputy under secretary for management "owned" the Department's budget because starting with Bill Crockett, they were the creatures of Congressman John Rooney (D-New York), who was the chairman of the sub-committee that handled State's budget. Rooney's wishes were invariably followed; the Department spent a lot of time and effort to keep him happy. So one of the deputy under secretary for management's high priorities was to keep Rooney and Wayne Hays happy (Hays controlled the Foreign Buildings Operations' budget). Rimestad was sly, engaging, and exceedingly practical.

Q: Were the perspectives from the Seventh Floor so different from the Sixth?

ABRAMOWITZ: It varied. I felt I had close cooperation from the bureaucracy, by and large. There were occasional clashes between the Seventh and Sixth floors, but I found people like Marshall Green, Joe Sisco and other people we worked with, invariably helpful. Joe had a very dominating personality and was effective in getting his way. My relationships with the assistant secretaries were almost always pretty friendly. They were always accessible to me, in part because we knew that somewhere along the line they would ask for a favor – e.g., for me to intervene on their behalf with Richardson when they didn't want to take the issue up themselves.

I believe that during the period we are discussing, Richardson was a crucial cog in the machinery. He was the person with whom the assistant secretaries could raise issues and get help if necessary. He was aware of all of the key issues facing the Department. There were certain matters that were mostly raised with the secretary, but even on those, he had an input to Rogers more often than not. There were times, of course, when he was traveling; then deliberations proceeded without him. Yet even in those circumstances, we obviously kept him informed. I think that the secretary himself may have brought Elliot up to date on certain matters, but I could not vouch for that. I recollect that the two saw each other frequently during the day.

Richardson's interest in personnel matters stemmed from his curiosity about the institution with which he is working. George Shultz had a similar approach, even though their operating styles were quite different. Both Richardson and Shultz were unique; it is rare for the secretary or the undersecretary – deputy secretary – to take such interest in personnel issues, and administration, and the Foreign Service. Most secretaries ignore that aspect of the Department; they generally do not engage in those issues – much to the loss of the Department.

The job of special assistant was both challenging and fun. I had great affection and respect for Richardson. Secondly, he gave me a lot of responsibility. I can only remember one time when he got upset with me. I had argued with him on something and he told me in no uncertain terms that I was wrong. That was unusual; he would rarely shut off discussion. I suspect that the exception occurred on a day he was preoccupied with some issues and just didn't have time for my comments. But, as I said, that was the rare exception.

The job also involved me in numerous issues I was unfamiliar with. I knew most of the issues in Asia, but almost all other matters were foreign to me in detail. So I had a major learning experience which makes the job attractive. In retrospect, I probably should have focused on a few issues and become the office's expert on those, but I became involved in all sorts of issues. I might have specialized and found a better balance of time, but at the start, I naturally focused on the undersecretary's needs which spread me quite thin. That meant that on many issues my contributions were limited.

There is one episode that I should mention. As you know, Richardson was promoted to be secretary of HEW. Before leaving, he asked me what I wanted to do on my next assignment. I said that at least for the time being I could probably be most helpful by staying in my special assistant job and help the next undersecretary get underway and then leave for another assignment. Bill Rogers had become very angry with the way the public was seeing him. He felt that the media was making him a caricature. The public was being led to believe that Rogers was just a figurehead and that foreign policy was entirely under the control of Henry Kissinger. In any case, the secretary came to believe that Department staff was leaking negative stories about him to the media. For some reason, according to Bill Macomber, I became one of his major targets. When John Irwin took over as undersecretary, Rogers allegedly told him that I was a bad apple and should be transferred to another office. Rogers' concern was erroneous. I am sure I belittled him to a few Foreign Service officers, but not to the media. I did periodically at Richardson's request have contacts with the media, but I never discussed Bill Rogers. The secretary was right in his assessment of the situation, but had the wrong suspect. I did not feel any particular loyalty to him and did express my views of his leadership to a number of people. My views were shared by many, probably most in the Department. The negative views of him could have come from many sources in the Department.

It was a difficult period for the Department. Richardson was the luminary; even Rogers publicly stated how proud he was that he had chosen Elliot to be his deputy. But I am sure that the situation was uncomfortable for Rogers. Despite the secretary's situation, I think the Department ran pretty well during this period since we had a number of competent leaders who actually ran the show. The rest of us did the "grunt" work and between the two groups, the process worked reasonably well. But it was a White House dominated process.

As I said, I was told all of this confidentially by Macomber. Beyond telling Macomber that the secretary was all wrong, I didn't do anything further. I am not sure that

Macomber believed me; he may well have agreed with Rogers. After Richardson left and before Irwin arrived, Macomber asked me what I wanted to do next. I had already talked with Irwin who seemed to be a very decent man. I told Macomber that I thought that given the situation it might be time for me take some time off from the daily work grind and spend it in some kind of academic-research institution. I mentioned the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. This was a stretch for someone at my grade level, but having been the special assistant to the undersecretary certainly made it possible.

I wanted to go to London. I wanted to join a prestigious and small institution, which IISS really was. I had met a few members and fellows and was impressed by their caliber. I was familiar with the IISS publications which I think were highly regarded. And so it was off to London and a very good eight months at IISS.

I must say that Macomber was more than solicitous as far as I was concerned. I hope it was because he was impressed by the work I had done for Richardson. In any event he backed me in any way he could. He was extremely helpful.

IISS was very happy to have me, particularly since I came at no cost to them, except for some office space. This situation allowed me to choose whatever issues I wanted to explore further; I had complete freedom to do what I wanted.

I wrote a paper in 1972 while at IISS which generated quite a stir and may have had some influence on policy makers. It was entitled “Moving the Glacier”. Not surprisingly it got plenty of attention in Korea. The U.S. had just pulled out the Seventh Division from South Korea as part of the Nixon doctrine which called for more self-reliance on part of our allies. I noted that the long-range answer to the tensions on the peninsula – however remote – was a North-South dialogue leading eventually to a peace agreement and unification. I took the position that the withdrawal of our troops was inimical to the achievement of that long-range goal because it reduced any incentive the North might have in coming to the negotiating table. I mentioned this paper earlier while discussing my role as a member of the SIG review calling for a withdrawal of U.S. troops over an extended period of time in part on grounds that our participation in the Vietnam war had so soured the American public that it would probably not support any further American military involvement overseas and particularly in Asia.

But when I got to IISS, I took another look at the situation and came to a different conclusion, namely, that the presence of American troops in Korea was essential to the maintenance of stability on the Korean Peninsula and the achievement of long range goals of peace and eventually unification. Part of the reason for my change of view was that the U.S. domestic situation had changed. Furthermore, as the junior member of the SIG working group, I went along with the views of my seniors, who felt stronger then me; since 1968 I had gained considerable experience and knowledge and could strike out on my own. I also came to the conclusion that some sort of détente on the Korean peninsula and ultimately negotiations between South and North was essential. In fact, the two agreed to start talks in 1972.

I had been in Korea only once on one of my trips to the area. But as I said, I had learned a lot working in the undersecretary's office. My paper was published by IISS after I had left and, as I said, was widely read in Korea. Three years later, I think when I accompanied Secretary Schlesinger to Korea for an annual Security Consultative Meeting, President Park Chung Hee congratulated me for it. I also got a new Korean watch from him – as did all the other members of the Schlesinger delegation; the Koreans had just started a watch manufacturing enterprise. It stopped after a month.

The year at IISS brought me into contact with a wide variety of people. My office roommate was a senior Japanese Foreign Office official, with whom I have stayed in contact over the years, Yoshio Hatano, who became Japan's UN representative. Percy Cradock, who at the time was head of the UK Foreign Office's policy planning staff and later became chief advisor to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and chief intelligence advisor. These people and others became an informal advisory committee for me as I wrote the paper on Korea. The informal group met three times and was enormously helpful. I am still very proud of that paper. It said something.

During the period immediately following the end of my special assistant assignment and before leaving for London, I wrote a small book with Dick Moorsteen then at the Rand Corporation, called "Remaking China Policy" which was published in 1972. I was essentially on my own with the Department, which let me do what I wanted before I went to IISS. I went back and forth to California to work with Dick on this book. He had been a special assistant to Katzenbach when he was undersecretary, working primarily on Vietnam, although he was really a China expert. We finished this book in two months; I am also proud of that work because it was written clearly and in simple declarative terms, and also said something. It was indeed perhaps more a long paper than a book. In it, a reader will find the outline of what was to become the "Shanghai Communiqué" – after the Nixon visit. The essence of our proposal was "One China, but not now" which became the administration's position. That was one of the few favorite phrases I have coined; the other one was "From dominos to dynamos."

Of course, we were not the only ones that were urging the U.S. government to take the position that it eventually took in the "Shanghai Communiqué." Paul Kreisberg of the Department had come to the same conclusion.

The book covered China associated issues of the time – Indochina, Sino-Soviet-U.S.-relations, Taiwan. It was an effort to have people focus on what a dialogue with the PRC might cover and what policy decisions would have to be reached before such a dialogue could take place – e.g., the position of Taiwan. Harvard Press published the book, although Rand had already published it as a "Rand Volume." When I left for London, the draft had been completed. At the request of Harvard Press, which wanted a longer document, Moorsteen then picked a number of documents which accompanied our analysis and became part of the published book. The book got excellent reviews in academic journals. The New York Times reviewer was a woman whom I had dated at Harvard, who had become a "radical left winger" and had joined "The Committee of

Concerned Asian Scholars", a pro-Maoist group antagonistic to the Vietnam War. She wrote that the book had a fundamental flaw in that it did not deal with the "destructive war" that the U.S. was waging in Vietnam. She was right, our book was not about Vietnam; it was about China and that was damming to her. So The New York Times commentary became the exception to the generally favorable attitude of other reviewers. Of course, our date may have worse than I thought. She became a prominent scholar.

Q: In retrospect, was your "time out" useful?

ABRAMOWITZ: It was. It helped me decompress which I needed after my tour in the undersecretary's office, which was "14 hour" days, often seven days per week. I don't complain about the work-load; in fact, I enjoyed it a lot. But I needed a change of pace, just to return to a "normal" family life. We had a lot of fun in London.

I can't say that my period at IISS was a "serious" one. But it helped me intellectually in becoming more thoroughly acquainted with an issue which has bedeviled the foreign policies of many countries over decades – and is still unresolved today. I still write about it. I also met many foreign policy officials and academics whom I would not have engaged otherwise. So I am a supporter of an academic assignment for all officers sometime during their careers. I think that an assignment to an institution such as IISS may even be better than a tour at a war college or other governmental institutions – even those academically oriented – because it enables one to escape the bureaucratic environment. These assignments do not seem to have much attraction in today's Foreign Service.

As I mentioned, I shared an office suite with a Japanese foreign ministry official. He eventually became the Foreign Ministry's spokesman as well as ambassador to the UN. We became close friends. He introduced me to a number of his friends and acquaintances, which was the beginning for me of a long relationship with the Japanese Foreign Ministry. That was very useful when I became the POLAD to CINCPAC and later deputy assistant secretary for East Asia in DoD/ISA. IISS, now a larger impressive institution, even than had a good representation of people from all over the world. It made sure that non-Britishers were well represented. The deputy director was a German, Chris Bertram. I invited Bertram to participate in a program while I was president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He was a prominent journalist as well as head of a "think tank." He spent a year with us at Carnegie. So used some associations into life-long friendships.

Q: In 1972, you were assigned to the Inspection Corps. How did that come about?

ABRAMOWITZ: I was there for less than 6 months. I wanted to return home and the choice of vacancies coming up was pretty thin and this seemed potentially interesting. Tom McElhiney was then heading up the Inspection Corps. I thought that some, if not most, of the Inspection Corps's work might begin to review U.S. policies and examining our approach to major policy problems that a bureau or office might be confronting. The Inspection Corps had just been reorganized and I had the impression that policy questions

would become an important focus of my work. I was not too excited by McElhiney's objectives for the IG; I didn't think that his approach would make much of a dent in the Department. I quickly came to the conclusion that a full tour in the IG would be a waste of time for me. This was the only assignment I positively disliked.

After a few months in the Inspection Corps, I was approached by Paul Popple, then the director of the East Asia division of INR. He asked whether I would be interested in becoming his deputy. I readily accepted; it was an opportunity to return to East Asia issues and permitted me to quickly leave the Inspection Corps.

Q: So at some stage, Paul Popple called you. Had you known him before?

ABRAMOWITZ: Only slightly. But he knew my background and had read my writings on China and Korea, and was acquainted with my views and style. I was certainly ready to get out of the IG. Paul was a very fine man; and I liked him a lot. He was a man of great probity, not reluctant to give his opinion even if it didn't fit the "prevailing winds." I also liked that he mostly let me run the division, that is to direct the research efforts of INR's East Asia division. I should note this was my first "managerial" job.

The director of INR was George Denny, who at the time was actually "acting" director. INR at the time had six or seven divisions in it – mostly mirroring the regional bureaus' organization. We had a China office, a Japan office, a south-east Asia office, etc. This was my first opportunity to become better acquainted with south-east Asia; I had focused previously on north-east Asia (China, Korea, Taiwan) although some of my analytical work in Hong Kong on PRC's foreign policy brought me into contact with issues in other Asian countries.

This new job was a learning experience. I briefed Marshall Green, the East Asia assistant secretary, on a daily basis. I got to know him even better and we had a very good substantive relationship. He always asked for my thoughts on major issues – not policy recommendations, but my thoughts on the significance of the intelligence. I also got to know the bureau staff well; and worked closely with them.

The assignment worked out well. I got managerial experience. My understanding of East Asia grew exponentially and lastly, I became well acquainted with both the leadership and the staff of the East Asia bureau as well as those in other agencies working on East Asia. Broadly speaking, our – INR's – responsibility was to provide good analysis of major events and trends in East Asia and to estimate the potential eventual impact of these events and trends on U.S. policy in the region. We were not an intelligence gathering agency; we were the recipient of intelligence gathered by other parts of the U.S. government; our people tried to "connect the dots", as it is described today, based on the information received as well as their own knowledge of the area and its history. The mix of Foreign Service and senior Civil Service officers provided a unique set of skills which was not available to other agencies. My view of that was further reinforced when I became assistant secretary of INR several years later. The mixture of the field experience of a Foreign Service officer combined with the long term attention that a Civil Servant

had devoted to a particular subject made for a formidable analytical team. This mixture of skills and knowledge provided a useful support to the policy maker.

We were able to respond in crisis situations with instant analyses – briefings, short papers, longer term analysis, etc. – since we were almost always up-to-date on events and currents in the part of the world for which we were responsible. We provided daily both information analysis which we felt would be useful to policy makers; many of the Foreign Service officers had been in policy making positions and the Civil Service officers had been close enough to that process for long periods so that they had an understanding of the needs of senior officials. My period in INR-EA was another useful learning experience which came in quite handy when I became the Assistant Secretary.

I am not a dispassionate observer of the policy making process for the East Asia area. I believed then and do so today that INR-EA could usefully contribute to policy making. There is the mantra of the purists who insist that a sharp line should be drawn between intelligence estimates and policy making. This has always been a problem which became much more acute for me when I was INR assistant secretary. In contrast to my INR-EA period, by the time I became assistant secretary, I had long been involved in policy making and that made the maintenance of this "Holy Grail" of separation much more difficult to maintain. While working in EA/INR, I was still in the early stages of my career and although my work in the undersecretary's office obviously brought me into contact with policy making at the highest level, I had not yet begun that part of my career and therefore trying to maintain some separation between intelligence analysis and policy making – artificial as it might seem – was not a major challenge. I wasn't shaping our EA policy; I was trying to support those responsible for policy making. I must say that despite some outside skepticism, I always found INR tried to maintain the distinction scrupulously.

I had about 20-25 people working for me. It was a big office, particularly by State standards. We did a lot of useful work, some not so useful. I think we generated a lot of ideas which were analyzed by others and some were even accepted by the intelligence community. We had considerable attention for our work and a good number of kudos.

That assignment also brought me into Vietnam, an area which had never been at the top of my agenda. No one had ever asked me to get involved either in Washington or in Vietnam itself. I was seen primarily as a "China expert".

I am not sure what level I had reached in the Service at the time. I think I was probably an FSO-3 – perhaps even a 2. In any case, I was quite young for the position which had been offered, regardless of grade. That was never an issue either with my staff or my bosses.

I think my approach to management was viewed positively by my staff. I encouraged them to write and to express their views directly. I wanted them to take initiatives both with me and with the people they worked with. I wanted them to propose what issues I should take up with my superiors and "clients". I tried to develop a vigorous intellectual

atmosphere and I enjoyed it when the discussion became so. I had some very good people working for me. For example, Evelyn Colbert, a wonderful woman, was a legend in the Department for very good reasons. There were countless others. Evelyn was a civil service officer and therefore a permanent fixture in INR. The Foreign Service officers who used to spend only a tour in INR, were also very good, as I remember them., particularly those working on Vietnam, most of whom had been there. There may have been an exception or two, but in general, I found the FSO's to be capable and interested. In those days the Bureau had an opportunity to screen potential assignees. I would review their background, talk to people who worked with the candidate, and try to assure myself that the FSO would fit in well in a Bureau whose work was different than that of regional bureaus. We would also try to entice people to work in INR.

Paul and I worked well together. He never said that he was the boss; he never worried about his prerogatives. He did not stand on ceremony. He focused entirely on the substance of issues. Whenever I needed help, he was always there to help. He was very smart but not particularly a creative man. He had high standards which he expected others to meet. He allowed his staff to do its work without interference, encouraged them in their efforts, and listened carefully to their views.

My experience in INR was quite positive. I came away from that assignment with respect for the institution and its people. I thought the bureau made a very significant contribution to understanding. I think that Marshall Green, who was my most important "client", shared my views. He always wanted his INR briefing; he always wanted to discuss issues with us. He gave us plenty of his time, which is a precious commodity for a regional assistant secretary. He would always ask for further analyses and information, particularly on Vietnam. He may have been somewhat unique in the Department because a lot of FSOs, particularly those in regional bureaus, often did not view INR as useful. They would look at us as "rivals" with sometimes differing views from them, which would require them to justify their views. As long as INR agreed with their views of the scene, they really didn't mind having us around. But when we disagreed, that, of course, raised tensions and generated requests from these regional bureau officers to "mind our own business." We got a considerable amount of resistance from some regional bureau officers, particularly office directors. But Marshall always stood by us and continued his practice of seeking our views and work. I shouldn't make this rivalry sound like a war; much of it was good natured. It was not personal – most of the time.

I should mention at this stage the INR relationship with other agencies. I had had some experience with the CIA in Hong Kong and Taiwan. But the INR job required broader exposure to the total intelligence community – CIA, NSA and DIA especially. We had to work together to produce "community products." (NIEs, for example which at the time were viewed with a reverence that they probably did not deserve.) We spent a lot of time working on those documents. I found this experience "eye opening." I began to understand the collection capabilities of other agencies. I also began to understand some of the institutional biases which all bureaucracies have. My main focus was on intelligence analysis; I did not for example have a need to know much about covert actions. I can't remember if I ever had any contacts with the Deputy Director for

Operations in the CIA. But in my first real exposure to the totality of the intelligence collection apparatus of the USG, I was fairly impressed by the magnitude of our efforts.

Helen Louise Hunter – my wife's classmate at Bryn Mawr and a superb CIA employee of long standing – introduced me to a small group of her fellow analysts – 8-10 people – in the Special Project Office. That group did the best long-term intelligence analysis in the U.S. government that I witnessed. Most of the work was on such issues as Sino-Soviet tensions, North Korea internal scene, the Indonesian coup and other major concerns. They selected the issues of the day which seemed to lack information and understanding and tried to deal with them exhaustively. The analyses have been declassified allowing Hunter to write a book on the work that she did for the group on Indonesia and North Korea. Working with the Special Projects Office showed me a few talented people with insights working together with unfettered access to the widest possible range of all available information, allowed free range unhindered by a requirement to "clear" their views with the bureaucracy, could produce. Once that group had finished its work – all done within the office – it was published for the rest of the government. Kissinger became a consumer of this work; I witnessed that while flying on his airplane with him back from London. For reasons that I never understood, Jim Schlesinger, when he became head of CIA, abolished this unit. It was a mistake. This office's analysis usually dealt with the future, although, as in the 1965 Indonesian coup, the analysis was of past events in an obvious effort to learn lessons from history.

I don't know whether any of the reports reached Rogers; I know that Richardson read some of them – particularly the ones that dealt with Vietnam. The only comparable efforts today that use the special projects unit's approach are the IG's reports which are not exactly intelligence reports, but use information widely scattered in the bureaucracy – and some outside of it – and try to put it together in a meaningful publication. The quality of those reports are very much like those issued by the Special Projects Office. I believe the U.S. government would be well served by the re-establishment of such an effort, if it hasn't already been done so. It might have been helpful on Iraq.

Q: *Isn't it vital for the senior policy makers to have read these analyses?*

ABRAMOWITZ: Sure it would be nice, but realistically not likely. The leadership does not have to read the analyses. Someone on their staffs – particularly their immediate staffs – can become familiar with them. The key action is that there be at least a briefing and dialogue between a member of the personal staff of the senior officer and a senior member of a bureau. It is important that the personal staffs be up-to-date so that they can provide their principal news of recent developments. Of course, I am assuming that these personal staffs are top-notch; they had to have the confidence not only of the senior official, but the bureaucracy as well.

Q: That raises the question of whether you were satisfied that the appropriate people were getting your analysis (besides Marshall Green, whom you have already described as an avid consumer)?

ABRAMOWITZ: All of our analyses went to the offices of the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary and the Under Secretaries. I don't know who read the reports, probably one or more of the staffers concerned with the area. On occasions, I would call the attention of the personal staffs to particular analysis and findings. I couldn't get to Rogers, but I knew Herb Okun, who then worked for the Secretary, for example and I would alert him to specific papers. I did the same with Nick Veliotes who then was working for Deputy Secretary John Irwin. They were friends from my days with Richardson. I probably could have gotten access to Irwin, who knew me. I didn't need to do that because I knew so many of the Seventh Floor staffers from my days with Richardson.

I can not recall ever getting any feed-back from the principals. Some papers might come back marked "Many thanks" or "Good report" or occasionally even with a question. But I don't remember any report becoming the subject of a dialogue between a principal and INR. Our best customers probably was S/P with whom we collaborated on a number of analyses.

Q: Let's talk about some specific issues. What work did INR do on Vietnam?

ABRAMOWITZ: I began in INR/EA just as the negotiations on a peace agreement in Vietnam were beginning. Our work was mostly concentrated on events on the ground – i.e., the fighting, its political significance, the impact on the government in Saigon, etc. We also focused on what North Vietnamese intentions seemed to be and what they would likely do. We were quite comprehensive in our scope of work. These analyses were also forwarded to our negotiating team. I remember that after one major military engagement, we wrote a paper entitled "Have we turned the corner?" I would describe our efforts as a continual watch of and interpretation of events unfolding in Vietnam – both north and south. The Paris talks were on-going and we tried to provide our negotiators with information and analysis we thought would be useful in their work.

We knew nothing of Kissinger's dealings with China before the general election. We were surprised by the visit, as was most of the country. But even before and certainly after the trip, we were writing papers for Secretary Rogers and Marshall Green, who were part of Nixon's delegation. We, of course, spent a lot of time on Sino-American relations, the subject of a small book that I mentioned earlier. The subject was of great interest to me which may have also contributed to the amount of time we spent on it.

I was deeply impressed by Kissinger's initiative. It was a real achievement. I would call it "A Great Leap Forward" – to use a familiar Chinese phrase. I had always been on the side of those who wanted to change our China policy. The first step in making a change occurred while working for Elliot Richardson. We allowed American subsidiaries abroad to do business with the PRC. I was surprised by the giant step that the Nixon administration took. I as well as many others saw the potential benefit of our change in China policy as a step toward resolving the Vietnam conflict changing the Soviet orientation. So the initiative was deeply relevant to our country's most vexing foreign policy problems at the time.

At this point it might be useful to quote again from the paper I delivered at Harvard in 2006. It summarizes my views on Sino-American relations over the years including in the Foreign Service and repeats some of the previous discussion. "China was very much part of my various jobs. During my graduate days in Cambridge professors and students including me sneered at Professor Dixie Walker's perverse views of China communism during its early rule. Walker supposedly had gone way overboard in his criticism of communist rule in his book China Under Communism: The First Five Years. Well he was right on what was going on in China, and we at Harvard and most other universities were wrong. That came home in spades, except to the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, in the incredible human catastrophes of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution."

"Cataclysmic events in China coupled with our extreme limited access and knowledge often prompted fierce interagency debates, almost always between the State Department and the CIA. The Great Leap Forward produced a huge argument over whether China would fall apart because of the severity of the food situation, "the downward spiral" as Joe Alsop called it in the China Quarterly. The outside community provided little insight on China's actual situation with the exception of the famous Father Ladany in Hong Kong. In the end the State Department was proved right in its more optimistic view of China's ability to get by the terrible shortages, although it lowballed the number of deaths. Parenthetically, such fights over ignorance have continued to this day about countries we are isolated from, including North Korea and most vividly, Iraq."

"China's potential for breakdown and our internal debate converged at other times. One interesting episode that I followed closely in Taiwan in 1962 was when the Nationalist government publicly started planning to "counterattack" the mainland and levying all sorts of taxes to support an invasion. A brief effort to rally U.S. support for the KMT was led by Defense and the CIA, particularly the station chief in Taiwan, a Harvard PhD and former junior fellow – Ray Cline. The Kennedy administration told Chiang Kai-shek to forget about it. It was the last gasp of Chiang's return to the mainland ideology. The excising of the myth contributed to greater openness on Taiwan."

"Other interesting battles raged in Washington over a China we perceived dimly. One, similar to our problem today with Iran and with many of the same considerations, focused on what to do about China's becoming a nuclear power as we watched it proceed to its first test in 1964. Significant pressure to attack China's nuclear facilities were rebuffed by President Johnson. A second was the debate in 1964-65 over how China would respond to the vast build up of American forces in Vietnam and the bombing of the North" which I discussed previously.

"It was, of course, hard to evaluate in our deliberations the extent of China's domestic turmoil and its impact on Chinese policy of those extraordinary two decades in China. The Cultural Revolution mostly produced shakings of heads in Washington."

Back to my employment history. Richardson was appointed Secretary of Defense in mid-1973. I went to work for Defense in the fall. So I was in INR for about one year.

Q: Did you have an opportunity to interact with the NSC staff?

ABRAMOWITZ: I had meetings and conversations with NSC staffers working on East Asia, particularly on China. My experience in East Asia plus my tour with Richardson had given me a wide range of contacts which grew while in INR. I think by the time I had finished my INR assignment, I knew and had access to most, if not all, the EA players. I felt at ease in bringing issues to their attention – issues which they might not have focused on in a normal day, given their schedules.

I remember that after the Vietnam peace settlement, Bill Sullivan called a number of us together to talk about implementation. That was an unusual role for an INR member because it involved us in operational matters.

I liked my time in INR. As I mentioned earlier, I enjoyed being a manager. For the first time in my career, I gave out assignments and focused the staff on common objectives. I had to chart that course and see that it got done. It was a liberating experience. I also learned to lead a group of very disparate staff members, all sorts of different types. I learned how to better extract the good work from people and in the process, how to produce the best I could from myself. I came to the conclusion that to motivate your staff, you had to earn its respect. In this case the response to leadership was the ability both to add some important insight and knowledge to the analytical process and to have access to important policy makers.

Q: *In 1972, you went to DoD to be a special assistant to Secretary Elliot Richardson. How did that come about?*

ABRAMOWITZ: Richardson had always asked for my advice on personnel matters, particularly on Foreign Service officers, when I worked for him. He didn't necessarily follow my advice, but he asked. He must have appreciated whatever contributions I might have made because one day, while I was working in INR, he called me and asked me whether I would be interested in moving to his DoD office to help him find and recruit top people – especially the presidential appointments. I readily agreed. What he wanted me to do was going to be interesting in itself, but it was also not a job that would last for too long. I thought it would lead to an established DoD policy position. I also would again be working for a man I greatly liked and respected. I should mention that when Richardson called me he was still Secretary of HEW, but knew that after the new administration would take over in 1973, he would be nominated to be Secretary of Defense (SecDef).

A few weeks later, I reported for duty in the SecDef office, although Richardson had not yet moved from HEW. In fact, I had two bosses: one was Richardson and the other was the new deputy secretary, William P. Clements, Jr. – a Nixon choice, not Richardson's. Clements had been the CEO of a large Texas firm and a big contributor to the Republican Party. He later became governor of Texas. They were entirely different personalities with often varying views. Richardson wanted Clements in the personnel process so I had to

please two people, which was not always easy. Richardson was a liberal, open-minded eastern Republican and Clements was a narrow minded, conservative southern Republican. Clements was also very shrewd and knew what chains to pull to get things done. He exuded a command presence. In fact, we became friends and he later relied on me when I became deputy assistant secretary in the Office of International Security Affairs (ISA).

I consulted frequently with Jonathan Moore who had been Richardson's principal assistant for many years, including at State and did the same with Richardson at DoD. Jonathan had Richardson's full confidence and was the secretary's eyes and ears, and players in a large range of topics. Jonathan had called me after Richardson's offer and urged me to accept it. He had moved to the Pentagon before Richardson did and was the principal advance man.

Richardson had also recruited two other people to work in his office; one was Dick Darman, who subsequently became a key member of the administration and later OMB head under Reagan. The other was J.T. Smith who later became a prominent lawyer in Washington.

I was given an office and told to go to work to propose suitable people to fill the large number of presidential appointments in the Pentagon, including jobs in the office of the secretary, the service secretaries, and their under- and assistant secretaries. I would work up a list with my recommendation which were vetted by Richardson and Clements. Eventually, their choice would be sent to the White House for approval and processing and submission to the Senate for confirmation. Among my "finds" were such people as Bill Perry, Malcolm Currie who became director of defense engineering, and Frank Shrontz who eventually became president of Boeing. Not all my recommendations survived – the White House after had its own candidates.

The one position that gave me considerable trouble was the assistant secretary for ISA. I had talked to numerous people about candidates; it was also a position with which I was quite familiar with, the DoD counterpart in great measure to the politico-military office in State. I finally put together a list of recommendations for the secretary. But all my work went for naught because the White House chose the person and it was Bob Hill. I found that out from Richardson when he told me that he was seeing Hill that afternoon. I should add that such White House involvements were not unusual; periodically, the political side of the president's office has a "supporter" it had to place. I don't remember the White House turning down one of Richardson's recommendations and substituting their candidate.

I also enjoyed this job. It brought me into contact with a huge range of people who later became associates in government and friends. Invariably everyone was certainly willing to discuss other people, both positively and negatively. I found no shortage of opinions and no lack of volubility. It is not a job that I would have found interesting for a long period; I did it for five months and that was just fine. It ended when Richardson became Attorney General; he was in DoD for about four months.

That change came at a very bad time for me. I was interested in becoming a special assistant to the secretary of defense. That job had a wide range of responsibilities, including defense strategy, politico-military issues, etc. With Richardson's departure, my chances for that job of course decreased substantially. Jim Schlesinger became the next secretary. Before his taking over, I went to see him. I had known him slightly, and he had known of me through a number of mutual acquaintances. Our conversation was mostly about the people he would inherit. I told him of my interest in the special assistant position, which he said he would consider. But in the final analysis, he chose someone else who he viewed as having had far more experience in defense matters. That left me essentially unemployed. I guess I could have stayed in DoD, but none of the vacant positions to which I could reasonably aspire seemed that attractive. There were some other positions that were interesting, but they were already filled.

I might say at this juncture that I liked working in DoD. I enjoyed my first tour which I just described and then later on I enjoyed my four year stint as a deputy assistant secretary in ISA. I was attracted by the straight forward operational style. The discussions were very much open with each participant calling the situation as he or she saw it. There were, of course, some private negotiations on the side, but forthrightness was usually the coin of the realm. The Pentagon was more open than the State Department where the basic operational mode was for each bureau to keep issues to itself as much as possible and where sharing of information and views not always prevailed. In State, an objective sometimes was to keep other bureaus out of issues; in the Pentagon, inclusiveness was usually one of the operating goals.

Having said that, I should note that my experiences in the Pentagon were limited to a rather small group, which could react quickly and had direct access to the secretary. In both of my DoD jobs – special assistant and then deputy assistant secretary – I had direct access to the secretary. So essentially, when I was a DAS, I would consult with the secretary and then inform the assistant secretary of what had taken place. That obviously made my working life easier. I worked often with the uniformed personnel in the Pentagon; whom I usually found direct, and candid. That is not to say that they didn't play "games" and have their own machinations, but in the end, I usually knew where they stood on an issue and could discuss differences openly and directly. Of course, I ran into the usual human problem of people maneuvering for certain assignments; this was particularly true on the civilian side in OSD. On the military side, in fact, I think I did more lobbying to get certain people assigned than people lobbied me. I had a vacancy in my office – director of East Asian region – which had always been filled by a naval officer. General Jones, then the Chief of Staff, talked to me about that job and persuaded me – unfortunately – to take an Air Force brigadier general. That assignment was not a great success and I wished I had stuck to the naval officer precedent. One of my real recruitment successes was Bill Crowe, who was my deputy in ISA for two years and did a superb job. A number of us called on the CNO to urge Crowe be given a naval command, which he did get and his career zoomed.

In my assignment as Richardson's aide on personnel I was lobbied frequently during that

period by people maneuvering for a specific assignment. These jobs were mostly below the assistant secretary level and really out of my area of jurisdiction. I was viewed as an "influential" person when it came to personnel assignments – mostly civilian jobs. I wasn't necessarily successful, but it helped to widen my circle of acquaintances in the Pentagon.

The "lobbying" continued even when I was in CINCPAC and in ISA. But the issues were essentially substantive and not personnel related. I was in DoD, including CINCPAC, for five and half years.

Q: Did you, while working for Richardson, encounter the issue of assigning military officers to civilian positions, as seems to be the modus operandi of the Bush II administration?

ABRAMOWITZ: I personally did not encounter much interest in assigning uniformed personnel, either on active duty or retired, to normally civilian jobs. This was true even in the intelligence responsibilities of DoD. We had at the time an assistant secretary for intelligence who was always a civilian. The use of retired military officers in what had been civilian positions started, I believe, mostly with the Reagan administration. Of course, over a period of time, new jobs were added to the Pentagon roster which were often filled by active duty or retired military officers. For example, while I was in the Pentagon, we had no undersecretary for policy or other jobs above the assistant secretary level in OSD. Those jobs were created in the Reagan administration.

As I said before, Richardson was a very fine man who reached out to people, sought their input and was obviously and sincerely interested in them. He generated a collegiate atmosphere. His brief stewardship was a healthy one for both the civilian and military staffs of the Pentagon. I thought that perhaps he went "overboard" in trying to reach to certain senior military officers; I didn't think a few of them deserved his attention. But he tended to like everybody or at least treated all well. I attended Richardson's staff meetings and found him always attentive and deeply engaged with the military leaders. He tried hard to make the military feel part of the "team." These meetings, which I think took place twice a week included the service secretaries, the Joint Chiefs and other senior leaders of DoD. The participants in DoD, by and large, were quite forthcoming and provided information and insights freely and without reservations. Perhaps that is the result of the different nature of many of the issues that faced the Pentagon and State. DoD had major issues dealing with weapon systems, troop deployments, etc. – issues which were far more precise than the policy dilemmas often facing State. I found in general, the SecDef's staff meetings were more productive than SecState's ones.

By sheer accident the Political Advisor to the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Command (POLAD-CINCPAC) job came open. There were a number of candidates, but the job seemed attractive that I used whatever influence I could muster, such as with SecDef to get the job. I had the necessary interview with Admiral Gayler and he subsequently offered me the job, which was a State Department billet. It was a very desirable assignment at that point with lots of senior FSO's vying for it. It was until then always

filled by an FSO-1 – the highest level in grade levels existing at the time. I was only an FSO-3 but got the job.

It was, I felt, an important job because CINCPAC was deeply involved in the tensions on the Korean peninsula, and in numerous other Far East issues, less so in Vietnam. In the early 1970's CINCPAC was an important player in the policy process – much more than I believe is today. When he traveled to foreign countries, he could see any foreign official he wanted. He was a major official representing the U.S. That is less true today. The 1970's were the "hay-days" for CINCPAC. That is of course one reason the POLAD job was so attractive.

In any case, that POLAD job was the best I could find in State or DoD for which I could be a candidate. I am sure I antagonized some more senior FSO's who looked on me as a junior intruder. I think that Schlesinger put in a good word for me with Admiral Gayler and eventually I was appointed as POLAD-CINCPAC with State bowing to Gayler's wishes. Fortunately, all worked out well. I liked working for Gayler and he relied on me to a great extent. I was useful to him because by this time, I had worked up a large network of contacts in the Pentagon. I knew all the civilian and military movers and shakers. Since CINCPAC effectiveness depended to a considerable extent on his ability to get the DoD bureaucracy to support him and to take appropriate actions to promote his programs and activities, I was of real assistance. I was also a good intelligence agent. All that is not normally a POLAD's job, but I was picked for the job in part because of my Pentagon connections. Gayler would send me back to Washington at times to try to resolve a problem that had arisen between the Pentagon and CINCPAC. These issues usually related to our relations with Korea or Japan.

In the CINCPAC's pecking order, the POLAD was the third ranking officer – even though I was much more junior than the grade of the job. That also gave me considerable access. The standard role of a POLAD is to provide the CINC advice and recommendations concerning the political aspects of the command's undertakings. That included host country problems for our military of the impact of U.S. forces on specific Far East countries, both those which hosted U.S. military elements and those who watched U.S. activities in the Pacific area, those in effect and those which were just being planned. As POLAD, I went with the CINC on all his visits to other countries, which often elicited my suggestions on the problems that would arise during these trips and how to handle them. I was also the liaison to the Department of State, which had real interest in the admiral's activities. I also did a lot of liaison work for the admiral, particularly with the OSD (office of the secretary of defense).

There might have been some who resented my relationships with OSD, but they pretty much kept their resentment to themselves. I had established something of a reputation and people knew that I had many good contacts who would be helpful to me and my boss. I had access to almost all of the Pentagon's leadership. Gayler understood that and used me it. I also had good access in State, although not with William Rogers, then the secretary – whom I didn't particularly want to see anyway and vice-versa. My access in State was good enough to get done what needed to be accomplished.

My POLAD staff consisted of a deputy (an FSO) and two secretaries. I had as much access to the Admiral as anyone on the CINC staff. He really used me as a sounding board, tossing out ideas and getting my reactions. That relationship acquainted me with issues that went far beyond the POLAD's charter. This was also the first time I got to Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

The Cambodian situation was deteriorating rapidly. We worked hard on the issue of keeping the Mekong River open for our traffic. I did not contribute much except to comment on political aspects, if any, of any military operation, but I did learn a lot about such efforts. Gayler had some, not great influence, on the conduct of the war in Vietnam and Cambodia. He was the titular head of our armed forces in the Far East. He was probably more influential on Cambodia than he was on Vietnam; on Vietnam issues, General Abrams called the shots.

In Korea, there were great tensions between Admiral Gayler and General Stilwell. The latter disliked Gayler. He didn't believe that a naval officer had much to contribute to what would be mostly a land-war. He also trumpeted the fact that he was a U.N. commander and not solely a U.S. representative. One of my tasks was to try to ameliorate this tension. I worked with Ambassador Dick Sneider, who also was not on Stilwell's "favorite peoples" list. But Dick and I conspired to find some way to maneuver to keep the peace and get some useful work done.

The major issue in the Korea peninsula was in some ways a personal one between the two U.S. military leaders. Their antipathy was evident when we went to work on a new war plan for Korea. The new plan added a massive use of firepower – both ground and air – to try to destroy the North Koreans in the first few days of any conflict. This approach was a major addition to the existing war plan. It was not a plan that assumed that a new war would be like the old one with its slow but sure move south by the North Korean troops. The new plan was to take advantage of allied fire power superiority. Throughout the discussions of this new approach, there were real tensions. Eventually, both commanders agreed on the plan, but it was rough road. According to standard DoD rules, it was CINCPAC's responsibility to plan for war contingencies. That means that every American war plan in the Far East had to be approved by CINCPAC before it could be forwarded to DoD for final approval. That was a bitter pill for Stilwell to swallow; he preferred to deal directly with Washington and often used his U.N. hat to do so.

Japan also loomed large on our "client" list. We visited Japan frequently, often in connection with a trip to Korea. Our main objective in Japan was to try to convince the Japanese to increase their military capabilities and to minimize, if not entirely eliminate, the ever recurring politically sensitive issues arising from our bases. I was among the first U.S officials to push for Japanese assumption of our base costs. This was a multi-year push which finally came to a successful culmination during my tour in ISA after CINCPAC.

We held an annual meeting between American and Japanese leaders. CINCPAC was one

of the designated participants. I didn't go to the meetings but I would go to Japan with the CINC which gave me the opportunity to sort of rub elbows with principal staffers.

In my year at CINCPAC, the two major issues I got deeply involved in were the base issues in Japan and the defense of South Korea. In general, we pushed hard, as I said, for increases in Japanese military capability and for a continuation and strengthening of U.S.-Japan military relationships. In the mid 1970's, unlike today, the U.S.-Japan alliance was not taken for granted. There was still a huge animosity against our policies. Americans disliked Japanese pacifism. Today, few question the need or the desirability of a U.S.-Japan alliance. But in 1970's, there were many issues, large and small, which were aggravating and often raised by the Japanese left just to "keep the pot boiling." These issues like noise pollution managed to keep the tension levels at times between the two countries at a high level. We spent considerable time massaging our relations with Japan, dampening down the tensions rising from these incidents and at the same time encouraging the Japanese to increase their defense capabilities.

We spent a lot of time on the Philippines because of our bases there. That is when I first met Ferdinand Marcos. We also visited Thailand frequently because our bases there were instrumental in fighting the war in Indochina. I remember vividly in 1974 when we visited Thailand at the same time as the student uprising. Ambassador Len Unger was hosting a large party for the CINCPAC delegation, to which all of the Thai "brass" and civilian leadership had been invited. We arrived, but none of the Thai guests did. The student uprising had in fact started that evening and led to the overthrow of the military leaders. They fled to Singapore that evening. It was particularly fascinating to me because I wandered around looking at the demonstrations more or less unhindered. The students were by and large proceeding freely and were not harassed. The police were mostly gone. They overthrew the military leadership with great enthusiasm. That was my second experience in Thailand, and the vitality and joy of the students was impressive.

In Cambodia, CINCPAC did have a particular mission toward the end of the war to keep the Mekong River open for supplying Phnom Penh. The country was going downhill in a hurry – economically and politically. In December, 1974 it was deeply depressing watching the chief of the Cambodian Navy – with his ten or twelve small boats – trying to keep the Mekong open. He told us he would never leave his country under any circumstance. He and others were sure that the U.S. would come to their rescue. It never happened. Cambodia soon fell to the Khmer Rouge. He was hanged, I am told, the day after the city was captured.

In the early 1970s we knew very little about the Khmer Rouge. Our intelligence was lousy. I had access to most if not all of the intelligence available to the CINC. There may well have been some military intelligence that was given to Gayler privately, but I tried to do my best to see all that State had. CIA was not as major a player in Cambodia, but the station chief in Hawaii was helpful in getting some information. We didn't know for sure if there was a man by the name of Pol Pot; if he did exist, use other names? The whole Cambodian scene was confusing. By the time I arrived as POLAD the situation in Cambodia was clearly going downhill.

I was most interested in embassy NO-DIS traffic; usually the most important for policy purposes and very helpful to the CINC's planning operation. I think that most NO-DIS messages had CINCPAC/POLAD on distribution; on occasions, a message would not make any sense because it referred to a previous one which we might not have received. I would then get on the phone to find the message that we had not received.

I think I spent six months of the year I was there traveling with the admiral. I had the opportunity to meet all the "movers and shakers" in much of East Asia. These contacts stood me in good stead for almost twenty years. Even after leaving my POLAD job, I could see most of them. The fact that there were so many doors open to me became quite important in my next job as Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asia in DoD-ISA. Those relationships built up were invaluable. The only one still active is Lee Kuan Yew and I have not seen him since 1997.

Q: Let me ask you a generic questions about POLADs. Are they a useful adjunct to a military command?

ABRAMOWITZ: I thought I was. If a POLAD is accepted by the CINC, he or she is useful in injecting a new or different perspective on many very important issues. I could easily insert myself. I think in general POLADs serve as a useful bridge between DoD and State. In my case, I also served as a bridge between the CINC and DoD, but that was probably a unique situation. Certainly, any POLAD can facilitate communications between the CINC and State and between State and DoD. The opportunity to inject State views on issues confronting the CINC can also be very helpful; a good POLAD can effectively reduce the bureaucratic tensions between State and DoD and State and the CINC. It is helpful when all participants in the decision-making process understand the views of all concerned.

State was quite supportive. I worked primarily with the East Asia bureau and with the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs, which was my nominal "home base." I was in Hawaii for one year from August 1973 to 1974. The Vietnam War was ending. The initial peace agreement had been reached in 1972 and there were intermittent negotiations subsequently. I think we had a pretty good grasp of what was going on in Vietnam. It was essential that CINCPAC be up-to-date if only because it was indispensable if withdrawal was required. In reality by 1973 CINCPAC was not a big player on Vietnam. Between what we were getting from DoD and from State, the CINC was kept quite knowledgeable.

I liked the POLAD job, but did not want to stay too long. I was an adjunct. I thought I contributed to the effectiveness of CINCPAC. I had a very close relationship with Admiral Gayler and made many friends both in the American military and among foreign leaders. What I experienced proved enormously helpful in future assignments. I became will acquainted with the American military which I respect, by and large. They have good ethical standards; most are highly dedicated, on the whole they tend to be more conservative than I am, but, as I have said before, they rarely left you in doubt on where

they stand. Because of their attitude, I generally – not always – trusted senior military. I might have questioned their logic or positions at times. The views were occasionally distorted by the number of stripes or stars one wore on his uniform. Senior officers tended to talk about their troops and equipment as "mine"; it is easy to skew perspective when you are saluted all the time. I felt that I established in general a good rapport with a generation of senior officers.

I can only remember one time when due to my rigidity and stupidity, I managed to anger a senior military officer. This happened in Thailand, during my tour as ambassador when the embassy was going through one of the government's periodic reductions-in-force. The embassy team was quite large and I was instructed to cut it. I also thought I could improve its effectiveness with fewer people. I didn't fight my instructions from Washington and went through the staffing of every section of the embassy. I came to the conclusion that both CIA and the Defense Attaché's offices could well stand some pruning. For example, we had two naval attachés to worry about the Thai Navy which was hardly an imposing or important force. Of course, the military assistance office also had a naval component. I thought that the naval presence was overstated and recommended that one of the naval attaché's positions be eliminated. CINCPAC was extraordinarily unhappy with my view and gave me a lengthy paper on why I was wrong. At the end, the CINC (Admiral Mickey Weisner) called me and asked that I do him a personal favor and withdraw my recommendation. In a moment of insanity, I rejected his CINC's plea; I was dumb. I should have kept the position in light of the CINC's personal intervention. But I stood on "principle"; it was a bad error. I made a permanent enemy of the CINC who went on to be CNO (Chief of Naval Operations). He never forgot or forgave. It was a bad decision on my part for no important matter.

In Thailand, we spent a considerable amount of time "holding hands." It was one of our principal duties. The United States loomed large in South-East Asia at the time, the 800 pound gorilla in the room. We had a huge military presence in the region and got involved in all sorts of issues. So we had to spend a lot of time soothing the leadership of these countries – "hand holding". Thailand and Australia were major targets of our efforts. The Australians were important contributors to our Vietnam War efforts. In addition, Australia was our favorite R&R country. We were on our best behavior when we visited Australia.

Q: What conclusions did you reach about military-to-military relationships?

ABRAMOWITZ: I don't think I would generalize. But this was a military dominated period. The relationships varied from situation to situation. In some countries, that relationship was particularly important and usually close because the indigenous military were in control of the country – e.g., Indonesia, Thailand, Korea, Taiwan. In those cases, every effort was made to maintain their strong support; we worked hard to gain their confidence and to show our support for their concerns. In those cases, the military-to-military relations were very close, perhaps too close. But we were at war and we had important programs and projects in most of those countries. Whether our support benefited the host country is another issue. We were not unmindful of the possible

negative effect that our programs might have on political development of the host country, but our main task was our national military objectives. By and large, as a general observation, I think the military-to-military relationships were probably better than the diplomatic relationships as long as we maintained our commitments to the foreign country, which in all cases consisted in great part of delivery of military hardware. We were important both because we could deliver these goods and because we were a barrier against Chinese and Russian efforts in the region. We were obviously not on the same political philosophy wave length with the military leadership in many countries; it was a "marriage of convenience" based on our mutual interest in maintaining the independence of these countries and in preventing Soviet and Chinese encroachment.

Relationships were more difficult with the civilian leadership in these countries because they were politicians and the U.S. was not always publicly liked. They had to please multiple audiences and deal with numerous projects not liked by the civilian community. In such countries our presence was often a more difficult problem militarily. Fortunately, the Japanese government, for example, always seemed to find some solution to meet its domestic political requirements and our military operational needs. This is just one example of an issue which, although stemming from a stated military requirement, moved to the political arena.

In the period we are discussing, and in light of the leadership in most of South-East Asia, our military were often more important than our civilian representation. There was a professional kinship among military irrespective of national uniform. Secondly, our military had much-sought-after hardware to give or sell to the foreign military. Thirdly, and quite importantly, there was probably a greater degree of candor and openness among the military, even if in different uniforms. For these reasons CINCPAC was an important part of American foreign policy in the region.

I summarized my experiences in the Far East through my POLAD assignment in the paper I delivered at Harvard in 2006, I said: "In the fifties and sixties our alliances were in place and the biggest focus for me was America's role as nation builder to use a contemporary term: to establish states that could be self-sustaining, contribute to their own defense, and resist communism. Included were Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Burma, and the states of Indochina. In Taiwan and a little in Korea I was most involved in the heavy aid emphasis; building physical infrastructure, providing commodity imports to offset large domestic expenditures, vast military assistance programs, encouragement of the private sector, and more effective public administration. AID (then ICA) counted for something and the U.S. year after year, put impressive amounts of money and capable people to the task of helping build those states. Unlike today we had in most countries few internal security worries, and while the foreign publics were envious of our power and wealth, they were grateful for our presence and for the military protection. Our efforts benefited enormously from having superb economic officials in most countries I worked on, often American PhDs in most of the arena, and their cultures honored hard work.

"We danced with dictators – from Marshall Sarit in Thailand to Pak Chung Hee in South

Korea. Our demarches were quiet and democracy promotion was a more peripheral consideration – certainly not preached with today's emphasis. As the U.S. moved toward militarily involvement in Vietnam, we increasingly emphasized political stability and each country's support for the war. For example, we wanted sizeable South Korean forces for Vietnam, and this consideration dominated our attitude toward military control of the South. While governments were not always stable – indeed incessant military coups occurred in Thailand, continuing when I was ambassador in 1980 and even to my surprise till today – the systems, except for Indochina, changed little, and officialdom was permeated with a strong anti-communism animus, which added determination to their efforts. Finally corruption permeated almost all of these countries, but it did not prevent rapid development so often asserted for today's less developed countries. One last politically incorrect, perhaps erroneous reflection: today Taiwan and South Korea are vibrant democracies, causing American governments no little pain, but I doubt that these countries would have prospered so quickly under democratic governments. Chiang Ching-kuo and Pak rank high in the pantheon of economic developers."

Before closing this chapter of my career, I should elaborate on an incident I previously mentioned but have never forgotten. I had accompanied Admiral Gayler in the late autumn of 1974 to Cambodia – my first visit. He wanted to find ways to keep the Mekong River open; and supplies reaching Phnom Penh. We spent three days in Cambodia. The issue was essentially a military one, but I went along. I accompanied Gayler when he met with the chief of the Cambodian navy, Admiral Vong Sarendy. After lunch, he and I walked along the river and got into a discussion on the future of Cambodia. He said that there would be more warfare, that his country was in mortal danger, but even if his country fell he was prepared to die in its defense. He believed his life depended on preventing the Khmer Rouge from taking Phnom Penh. It was the kind of conversation that grabs one's attention and arouses much anguish. I expected that we would eventually stop our support of Cambodia; I didn't say so, but I was hearing at least one voice who we might well abandon and I never forgot that conversation. He was hanged immediately after the Khmer Rouge took over.

Q: Did you have some reservation about us withdrawing from South East Asia?

ABRAMOWITZ: Sure, but I knew it was over. We were facing a situation which was bound to end in many tragedies. Our withdrawal could not have a happy ending. The American people were withdrawing their support of our policy; Vietnam was collapsing; Cambodia was a true mess. I became involved in South East Asia when our position there was badly deteriorating. I watched both from CINCPAC and my subsequent assignment in DoD the end of a decade of war for the U.S. The question that was always posed for me was whether the deterioration could be somehow arrested. Ultimately, we ran out of political options. That became depressingly clear to me when I accompanied Deputy Secretary Bill Clements to Saigon in December, 1974. At that time, he assured President Thieu that we were prepared to provide all the funds and tools he needed to keep his country's independence. It wasn't that easy and Clements knew it. I could understand why the deputy secretary took that line; he could not tell him the truth. At this time, I am not sure the consensus of the U.S. staff working in and on Vietnam was that the war was

lost; I thought so in December, but I may well have been a minority at that time. Secretary Schlesinger, by the end of 1974, was deeply concerned that the war was being lost, but I am not sure he had yet reached my conclusion. Clements was probably more positive. In any case, the deputy secretary could not deliver such bad news. The government could have fallen even quicker. We talked briefly about it after his meeting with Thieu. He was not about to further undermine the morale of the Vietnam government

Q: In 1974, you became the deputy assistant secretary for East Asia and Inter-American Affairs in the office of the Secretary of Defense-International Security Affairs (ISA). How did that assignment come about?

ABRAMOWITZ: The offer came out of the blue and I was surprised. I was in Honolulu and expected to finish a two year tour as POLAD. But I must say that after one year, I felt I had pretty well grasped the major issues and had met most if not all of the important players in the region, and felt the need for greater responsibility. Secretary Schlesinger, who knew me to some extent, called in July, 1974 and told me that Dennis Dooker was leaving the deputy assistant secretary job and he wanted me to take over. It didn't take me long to agree; like immediately. I was delighted. Schlesinger was familiar with my book on China; I saw him once or twice when I accompanied the CINC back to Washington and I had met him on another couple of occasions.

Q: Tell us a little about ISA's organizational structure.

ABRAMOWITZ: ISA at that time was basically the foreign policy and defense center in the office of the secretary of defense. It was organized regionally plus the military assistance. Most of the daily interagency exchanges on foreign issues, including intelligence matters, and all relationships with foreign countries went through ISA. There were of course interchanges between Pentagon officials, civilian and military, with foreign officials, but these contacts were limited and some were vetted by ISA. I focused on broad issues of policy and strategy. I was particularly interested in pursuing how to maximize our security interests and those of our East Asia allies in the post-Vietnam era.

One of my earliest efforts to get a better feel for issues of national security in East Asia was to convene a standing Defense study group to look at our strategy there. The results of our efforts were provided from time to time to other U.S. agencies.

The first issue I had to confront after assuming the DAS job was, of course, Vietnam. By then the situation was pretty grim. While first and foremost a military matter, ISA had many interests of its own in the whole issue besides military ones. We were concerned about the accuracy of the reporting from Saigon. This was a question both of coverage and understanding. Were the reports from Saigon providing sufficient coverage of what was going in South Vietnam or was it skewed by perceptions developed Saigon? Was it candid and a decent reflection of reality? I sent a number of my staff to South Vietnam to quietly examine the situation and get a broad range view of what was going on. I did not have a particular policy bent, but I did think that it was important for decision-makers to

have as good and as objective view of the situation as possible. I had full confidence that the people I sent provided their candid views of the scene as best they could. I had of course had been aware of the Vietnam situation when I was the POLAD in Hawaii, but my duties were more those of an advisor; in ISA, I had operational responsibilities toward the Secretary which required me to be as knowledgeable as possible about the Vietnam situation.

In ISA, I had some fortuitous circumstances, which prevailed with all three secretaries I worked for – Schlesinger, Rumsfeld and Harold Brown. My immediate boss, the ISA assistant secretary, allowed me to pursue a personal relationship with each secretary. I did not have to go through the assistant secretary to meet with the secretary. That lasted through three assistant secretaries – Gene McAuliff, Bob Ellsworth and David McGiffert. I talked to the secretary frequently, but I always immediately kept the assistant secretary fully informed of conversations and of any work generated by these exchanges. I didn't leave my boss in the dark. I didn't always forewarn them of upcoming issues; I couldn't because I never knew when the secretary might want to talk to me. But I did make sure that after any conversation, the assistant secretary was briefed in some detail. It was for me an excellent arrangement; I don't recall what arrangements my other DAS colleagues had, but it made life much easier for me. In part, I think the assistant secretaries allowed me that freedom because none of them had any particular background or perhaps even great interest in Asia. They were Euro-centric in the main.

I had 25-30 people working for me – half civilian and half military. My first deputy was a rear admiral, Tom Bagley, a fine officer who greatly helped me settle in to my new job. His successor was Bill Crowe, who was the closest officer I worked with. Working directly for Crowe was a team of eight or nine people concentrating on Vietnam. That team, mostly military officers, was quite good; they had good contacts throughout the building, obviously in the JCS. I myself worked hard to establish a relationship with all the service chiefs as well as the senior officers working on J-3 and directly for the chairman. Many of our conversations focused on broader questions dealing with our position in East Asia, what we could do to bolster it, the military assistance programs, etc. In the DoD bureaucracy, military assistance was the responsibility of ISA. One of the largest sections of ISA was the Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA).

As for military assistance it was at times and in some countries the coin of the realm. It was vital for countries like South Korea and almost everywhere in the Pacific made life politically easier or much harder in its absence.

One of our joint (ISA/EA and DSAA) efforts in Vietnam was to gather a team (of which Rich Armitage, later deputy secretary of state, was a member) which was charged with rescuing from Vietnam as much military equipment as it could, to keep it out of the hands of the North Vietnamese. Armitage had been a Navy Seal and was instrumental in removing a lot of naval equipment, including ships, from South Vietnam. Most of it was consigned to the junk heap. Some of the last acts of members of this team concerned the evacuation of both Americans and Vietnamese from Saigon. The key was to find sufficient number of helicopters which was a very serious challenge. Ambassador

Graham Martin, to his credit, wanted to evacuate as many Vietnamese as he could get aboard. He just wanted the helicopters to keep coming; he tried to delay the final departure, but we were not able, in the end, to meet his desires. Schlesinger had to finally put an end to the evacuation, leaving behind undoubtedly a number of deserving South Vietnamese. Time just ran out, and the last days were nerve-wrecking with the Viet Cong at the outskirts of Saigon and during the evacuation helicopters arriving later than anticipated. I spent those last days in the MCC (Military Command Center) along with everybody else. It was a dark time.

I recall another trying moment related to our last days in Cambodia. I remember vividly John Gunther Dean, our ambassador in Phnom Penh, calling me at 4 a.m. begging for help to save the city. He wanted assistance to forestall that outcome. I promised Dean that I would do what I could, but I knew in my own mind that we had reached the end of the road in Cambodia. I knew that Dean would be calling everyone in Washington, both because he did need help badly, he also wanted to make sure that the record clearly reflected the depth of the problem and his last ditch efforts to save the situation; another very dark occasion.

I did not know Rumsfeld or Brown when they became Secretary of Defense. But I was able to develop the same personal relationship with them that I had had with Schlesinger. The three of them were totally different – incredibly so. I liked working for all three.

When I first started in ISA, the issue was Vietnam. So my first effort to become educated was to go to Saigon. As a DAS, I was viewed by the military as the equivalent of a three or four star general. Sort of ridiculous in terms of the number of people who worked for me. I was given a plane to travel around the country. I saw most senior Vietnamese and American leaders.. There was one event on that trip I shall never forget. In Saigon, I stayed with Marshall Bremen, our PAO in Saigon. We had taken the Foreign Service entrance examination at the same time and remained close friends ever since. Marshall hosted a party for me which was attended by our ambassador to Vietnam, Graham Martin – a legendary figure at State in his own right. I had first met Martin when I worked for Elliot Richardson. Graham was one of those who "walk the halls" of the Department of State, to get a feel for what was going to get the latest news, and advance whatever cause he had. He was an unusual man, well known for his determination and his deviousness.

At the party he and I had a furious argument about the situation in Vietnam. He took the opportunity to attack all "doubters," focusing in on Ted Kennedy. Somehow or other, even though I was working for a Republican president, I found myself defending Kennedy. All the guests were left open-mouthed at the vigor of the argument, particularly since Martin was an ambassador not to be trifled wit. I don't think they had ever seen anyone talk to Martin as I did. The next day, I was at the air base leaving Vietnam, and Martin's assistant came to see me. He had with him the book that I had written with Dick Moorsteen on China. He asked me to autograph the book for the ambassador, which I was glad to do. It was Martin at his best; he was making an overture, although I was at best a small mover or shaker in Washington. But Martin didn't want me to leave Saigon with a bitter taste in my mouth; so he made his "peace overture" so that I wouldn't inject

my views based on a personal bias. That was Graham Martin. He also never feared to take unpopular stances.

I started at ISA in August 1974, just as Nixon was going down. His resignation added to an already over-complicated dangerous foreign policy situation. The American military were in great disarray. The Pentagon, military and civilian, was sinking into deep depression. Many, not all, thought that our days in Vietnam were numbered and that the end would be bitter with far reaching consequences. Morale was at an obvious nadir. Until April, 1975, I spent most of my time working on Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

Again, as I said in my lecture at Harvard: "The end of the Ford years and the early Carter years were marked by defeat in Vietnam and the first recession in the overwhelming American dominance in East Asia. It was a difficult period for the U.S. and for me personally at DoD. It was bizarre to be the chief Senate witness for military assistance outlays when communist forces were mounting their final offensive against Saigon; it was terrible to be in the National Military Command Center listening to the evacuation of our Embassy from Saigon and the demands for more helicopters to move (evacuate) those Vietnamese who were close to us; and they were simply not there. It was painful to be called in the middle of the night by our ambassador in Cambodia begging for assistance as the Khmer Rouge approached Phnom Penh. It was disheartening in most of my years in the Pentagon to watch the incredible deterioration of the U.S. army, though that trend began to be reversed in great part by General Abrams and ultimately by the all-volunteer force."

Q: How did you interact with the NSC process when working on an East Asia issue?

ABRAMOWITZ: I was in constant touch with NSC East Asian staffers. I would accompany Schlesinger whenever he attended an NSC system meeting on an East Asia issue. Since Vietnam was in the highest priority category, which meant that I went with the secretary frequently. I would sit in back of him in the Situation Room. The conversation between Schlesinger and Kissinger was usually very spirited and more intellectual than most conversations in general. Not all meetings were at the White House. Toward the end of our involvement, more meetings were focused on refugee issues and post Vietnam issues.

I had frequent meetings with State Department officials like Marshall Green and Phil Habib who served also as Assistant Secretary. There was much focus on our military assistance program, particularly in an effort to provide the South Vietnamese with as much equipment as we could and similarly with South Korea when we considered removing all our ground forces there. The mood at meetings was very bad, particularly among our military who were completely demoralized by events.

I would have to add at this point that I thought that the policy process to deal with South East Asian issues was a day-to-day affair, and invariable *ad hoc*. The sole objective was to keep the war going until a situation was hopefully created which would make the end of our involvement as palatable as possible. Eventually, after a series of battles, the

general conclusion came to be that the end was in sight. By "general conclusion", I refer to the sentiment both of the civilian and the military components of the Pentagon, although there was little tension between these two groups when it came to the issue of ending our engagement in Vietnam. Toward the end of that engagement in April, Schlesinger sent General Fred Wiant to review the whole military picture. The secretary asked for an honest, straightforward report. Wiant told him that the war was over and that there was no chance of the South Vietnamese regaining their lost territory. After that analysis, our attention turned to evacuation efforts, both of our military and civilian presence as well as those for those South Vietnamese that had been helpful to us.

For me, this period was the last hurrah. No further military assistance could be expected to turn the tide. I am telling you now some of what I remember of those days, but without any documentation in front of me, I can't vouch for the accuracy of my recollections.

Q: So the first few months of your tour in ISA were devoted to South East Asia. That ended around April, 1975. Then what did you focus on?

ABRAMOWITZ: Before I could move on, in May, 1975, we had to confront the *USS Mayaguez* incident. The ship was captured off the coast of Cambodia. We were not certain for a period of time of what was going on and worked furiously to try to find out to where the ship and crew had been taken. I had to testify on what we knew and I was DoD's lead witness on this issue for much of the episode. In a later session, I testified along with Phil Habib, then State's EA assistant secretary. These sessions were primarily for briefing purposes to share with the committees what we knew, which was precious little at the beginning, and what our plans were. There was general agreement in Washington that we had to get the ship and its crew back. Unfortunately, as I recall, our military were having difficulty getting its operational act together. So a number of us took the issue directly to the secretary and then we worked directly with the White House.

We agreed on a rescue mission, during which, as you may recall, one of our large helicopters crashed for mechanical reasons with the ensuing loss of some 53 lives. The rescue operation lasted for several days and eventually managed to free the ship and crew. The effort was belittled by a lot of observers, but it worked. There is a famous picture of an elated Ford, Scowcroft and Rumsfeld in the Oval Office when the *USS Mayaguez* was released; it was a victory for our side which badly needed some good news.

The Mayaguez affair had one real benefit. It vastly improved the mood and morale of the Department of Defense. Obtaining the release of the *Mayaguez*, however small, was the first positive step that the U.S. military had taken for a long time. I don't want to over-stress this aspect, there was a sigh of relief in the Pentagon. We had won one.

What followed the Vietnam War was the successful effort to create an all-volunteer army, a turning point for our military, and for the nation. The move from a draft to an all-volunteer force, which enabled General Abrams to turn a highly demoralized army into

one that has performed outstandingly since the early 1980s. This revitalization had another interesting result; whereas soldiers returning from Vietnam were treated shabbily by their countrymen and the military institution was viewed with disdain by the American public, those who today return from Iraq and Afghanistan are greeted with open arms and the military has a high standing in the American public. Today, every politician praises the military, even while most condemn the war. During Vietnam, both the war and the military were "bad." The all volunteer force has also permitted us to fight for some seven years. That wound not have been possible if a draft still existed.

As the Vietnam War was coming to a conclusion, my focus shifted to the issue of how to preserve American influence in East Asia. What should be our posture in the post-Vietnam era? What role would the Chinese military now play in the region, not only as a result of our withdrawal from Vietnam, but also in light of the Sino-Soviet split. How should we react to China? How do we better preserve the peace in Korea? These were probably the core East Asia issues that the administration focused in its last year. Our attention to East Asia was heightened by Sam Nunn's legislative efforts to reduce our military presence and bases in the area. Secretaries Schlesinger and Rumsfeld thought that Nunn's initiative was the wrong approach. I certainly shared their negativism. I thought the failure in Vietnam called for the maintenance of a strong military presence in the area; it was not – so soon after Vietnam – to further diminish our posture in East Asia. We were concerned that our failure would embolden communist efforts in Southeast Asia and we needed to show our strength and dedication to our allies.

I was assigned to develop a response to Nunn's efforts. I took the position that in the interest of preserving our position in Asia (and most of our facilities), we had to make some offer to reduce our presence somewhere in the area. In 1975-76, we undertook a major base structure study that was requested by Nunn. At the end, we made only minor changes, which satisfied the "withdrawal crowd" without damaging our military posture. My view was that we should continue to maintain robust forces in Thailand, Japan, Korea, Okinawa and the Philippines. As I said, we made some minor adjustments in our total presence as well as closing or reducing some bases. This gesture satisfied our immediate political requirements, both domestic and foreign, and permitted us to preserve our essential base structure.

My second goal was to try to enhance our military position in South Korea. This was a major issue because influential senators like Sam Nunn were supporting a withdrawal strategy or a minimum realignment policy. Nunn, whom I became friendly with, wanted to move the 2nd Division away from the DMZ to the south where it would not be so exposed to a North Korean attack. We thought that was really bizarre and significantly reduced deterrence. We resisted his views with vigor. We felt that our alliances in East Asia had been negatively impacted by our retreat from Vietnam and that any additional diminution in our position with our allies – particularly Japan and South Korea – would further reduce their confidence in the United States and our influence. Our prestige had already taken a major hit; we strongly believed that any further actions would be negatively perceived and would not be in our interest. Most Asian nations deeply feared further American retreat. As a general goal, we not only wanted to maintain our alliances,

but strengthen them where we could. We were concerned that any perceived weakening of American resolve might be used by some East Asian governments as an excuse to accept possible communist encroachment into the area.

Our concern for the potential of communist encroachment in East Asia, gave me the opportunity in 1975after Vietnam fell to convene a group to come up with a U.S. strategy for Asia in the post Vietnam era. Our major recommendation actually was to slowly improve our relationships with China including development of a military-to-military relationship. When the study was completed we briefed other agencies in Washington. I think it was well received. It was not a roadmap, but more of a strategy piece intended to begin creation of a framework for inter-agency discussions about what specific steps might be taken to improve our position in Asia. We needed to explore what more could be done to strengthen our relations with China, as part of our effort to contain the Soviet Union in Asia. In any case, our views were heard around town; I don't know how much influence we had, but I think it gave some help to those pressing for an easing of tensions with the PRC.

It also widely felt that Sino-Soviet tensions might ease if the Chinese came to believe that we were not a reliable player in the region. This view carried over into the Carter administration where it was challenged by some members of that administration. In any case, much of my time in 1975 was devoted to trying to restore East Asian views of the United States as a reliable and dependable ally.

I remember appearing on the "McNeil-Lehrer News Hour" –it was my first, appearance on that program – with Ed Reischauer and someone else. I was the lone defender of maintaining ground forces in Korea.

In 1976, we had to deal with another major incident on the Korean Peninsula: the famous – infamous – ax murders that took place in the DMZ when a company of North Korean soldiers attacked a U.S. army detachment, which was engaged in pruning the limbs of a tree which had obscured our observers' sight in the zone. They axed to death two of our officers. Rumsfeld was then the secretary of defense following Schlesinger's dismissal in November 1975. General Stillwell, our CINC – and the top UN commander in South Korea – was given responsibility for handling this matter. We did keep an open telephone line from the Pentagon to the command in Korea. Our military cut down the offending tree while North Korean forces watched.

Early in my tenure in ISA, I became involved in the issue of financial compensation by the Japanese for our military bases in their country. I am pleased that we managed to get the Japanese to begin to bear some of the costs of our presence. The Japanese had recovered quite well from the war, at least in economic terms. I felt it was time for them to assist in maintaining our military facilities in Japan, which to a considerable degree where required for Japan's defense as well as Korea's. We negotiated the first labor costs sharing agreement in which the Japanese became responsible for the payment of a significant portion of the local labor costs involved in the management of the bases. The negotiations were actually conducted by our embassy and military establishment in

Japan, but we provided the initiative, guidance and back-stopping. Eventually, this small step led to a major Japanese investment in our bases; today the Japanese pay the lion share of the costs. This was a concrete and measurable achievement. Our focus on reaching this agreement was in part stimulated by our interest in showing Congress that we had vibrant allies in East Asia who were willing to share the defense burden.

Q: I would like to ask you to clarify your relationship with DSAA (Defense Security Assistance Agency). As the ISA deputy for East Asia and Latin America, did you get involved in military assistance programs?

ABRAMOWITZ: Often, since most of my countries were large recipients. There were times when DSAA and the Bureau for Politico-Military Affairs in the State Department would seek my advice or I would simply put my two cents in. My involvement in this program grew considerably during the Carter administration when I was asked to focus on enhancing our military assistance program for Korea to help offset the proposed American troop withdrawal. I led an inter-agency task force on this issue, consisting primarily of the logistic component of JCS, DSAA and the State Department. We produced a report despite the fact all members of the group were opposed to troop withdrawal. In fact, the only person I knew who continuously favored the proposal was President Carter. Our task force proposed a massive military assistance program to South Korea as an offset to U.S. troop withdrawal.

I tried but never succeeded in finding out who helped persuade Carter during the 1976 campaign to advocate removing U.S. ground forces from Korea. All suspects resolutely deny it, and I never asked the President, who, of course, may well have decided on his own. I do know that I got tarred with it, in great part because I was the point man for pulling the Defense side together, defending it before a skeptical military, and making the case for withdrawal on the Hill. The Reagan Republicans never forgave me until George Shultz came along. In fact, I was totally against the withdrawal and early on made my opposition known to my new boss at Defense – Harold Brown who had replaced Don Rumsfeld. My first run-in with the new administration on Korea, a month after inauguration, was on a plane to Tokyo with VP Mondale to "consult" with Japan – not South Korea – on our troop removal. In the briefing session I blurted out to Mondale "You can't do this; we have at least to consult with the Koreans." Mondale, a wonderful man, smiled and said "You know, Mort, there has been an election in our country."

The withdrawal was a campaign promise, and Carter, unlike many other presidents, was determined to carry it out over the strong opposition of the bureaucracy and many senior Democrats including some in the Cabinet. At the first meeting of senior officials to discuss plans for withdrawal, Treasury Secretary Blumenthal, at the end of the meeting, got up and said "Why in hell are we doing this?"

Korea was a disaster for the President from the start. The White House initially told the departments it wanted all ground forces out in one year and the State Department as good soldiers tried to carry it out. But it produced a large uproar and after much negotiation, we got the withdrawal "back loaded" – a regiment in the first two years and the balance

in 1982, after another Presidential election. At Defense, as I mentioned, we came up with a big military assistance program to help improve Korean forces. In the end, Carter abandoned the project supposedly because CIA discovered – rather conveniently – that the intelligence community had badly underestimated the size of North Korean forces by several hundred thousands. The withdrawal effort had one major unintended consequence. It consumed South Korea and undermined President Park politically – he had lost the all important American mantle – and ultimately, I believe, led to his assassination by his KCIA chief, although personal reasons were also involved."

This discussion reminds me of a comment that Jim Schlesinger made when I received an AFSA award. He said: "Mort and I went to Korea during my tour as secretary of defense. We had gotten some intelligence that indicated that the Koreans were working on the development of a nuclear weapon. I was charged with telling President Park Chung Hee that if such a program existed, it better be terminated immediately. And the South Koreans did. Now guess who has nuclear weapons on the peninsula? That was a wry commentary on history.

In connection with nukes, Schlesinger was the first cabinet officer to warn the South Koreans not to try to build nuclear weapons. The South's efforts were not terminated immediately, but over a period of time. One other episode that I remember from the Schlesinger trip dealt with human rights questions. We were still in the pre-Carter days. We were sitting in Chosun Hotel discussing the issues he would take up with President Park. I suggested that the human rights issue be raised. It was clear that Congress led by Congressman Don Fraser was becoming increasingly restive about the Korean government's repressive tactics against its opponents. Koreagate also was just beginning to percolate; Kim Dae Jung had been kidnaped from Japan and was threatened with a death sentence. Schlesinger was reluctant to take up the issue. He did not in principle at that time believe that the U.S. should pontificate to other governments on their behavior, particularly on issues which were essentially domestic political ones in a still turbulent country. I told him that nevertheless I thought that he had to raise the issue if only for our domestic political reasons. He was still very reluctant. I told him that the first question that would be raised by American reporters at his press conference scheduled after his meeting with Park was going to be about human rights. Then he would either have to say that it was not raised or he would have to lie, neither was palatable. When I made that comment, Schlesinger got annoyed – he did not like to dissimulate – but he raised the issue with Park. The first question at the press conference indeed dealt with human rights. Schlesinger didn't talk to me for three days after that! And he has never forgotten that episode. He has said that the only person who was more to the right of him on pontificating on human rights at that time was Henry Kissinger.

I felt that the human rights issue had to be raised in part because South Korea's standing in the U.S. was rapid deteriorating. We had to make a showing on it if we were not to seriously jeopardize our ability to maintain our military posture on the peninsula. For a senior American government not to raise the issue could have had serious unintended consequences.

In the next year Carter was elected and human rights became a central rhetorical focus of U.S. foreign policy. It must have been part of the presidential desire to withdraw our troops from South Korea. We received a directive to start the troop withdrawal planning immediately. From Secretary Harold Brown down, we all thought this was a very poor idea. The first meeting on this issue was chaired by Bill Gleysteen, then the deputy assistant secretary for EA in State – later our ambassador to Korea. He said that we had to draw up plans to get the Army division out of South Korea within a year. I told him that the Pentagon could not go along with such a time-table. We mustered a counter-attack which eventually was successful; the time table was stretched out considerably and as I noted before, the withdrawal was back loaded – that is, much of the combat capabilities would be the last to go (after the end of Carter's four years in office).

As word of our intense planning got around, a growing swell of outside opposition emerged. Sam Nunn, a powerful Senator on defense matters, questioned Carter's objective. Hubert Humphrey began to have concerns about the wisdom of withdrawal. When secretaries Vance and Brown appeared before Congressional committees to explain the administration's policy, they ran into lots of opposition. In Brown's case, as I knew, his job as a witness was made harder by the fact that he personally did not agree with Carter's decision. He was not the only one who had that problem. I also had to defend the Carter position on the Hill, even though I didn't agree with it. That was true for other Defense witnesses. It was very awkward. In my case, the fact that I appeared to defend the withdrawal decision made me very unpopular among many military. I remember at one hearing Senator Jesse Helms saying: "Mr. Abramowitz, do you really believe what you are saying?" I ducked the question.

This withdrawal issue was a major bone of contention in the U.S. government. General Singlaub who was the chief of staff of the U.S. commander in Korea was recalled after being in Korea for only a few months because he publicly opposed Carter's decision. Of course, he was reflecting the views of all the senior military officers in the Pentagon, as well as those of the UN Command in Korea under General Vessey. In the Pentagon, we began a rear guard action – delay it, water it down, mitigate the decision as much as possible. Brown knew what the staff was doing and never interfered. Eventually, over the next year, even State came to oppose the withdrawal. I am sure that many will have somewhat different recollections about the sequence and nature of events, but I think it is fair to say that eventually the bureaucracy came together to oppose the withdrawal decision.

My main objection to the decision was that it was premature. The stability on the peninsula was still too dependent on our military presence. Human rights did not enter into my calculations. I felt that our withdrawal significantly enhanced the possibility of Northern intervention, particularly coming after our failure in Vietnam. Carter's decision was imprudent. It was clear that we could not reverse it, but we did manage to develop a time frame for withdrawal which made it more acceptable. In the meantime, we could bolster South Korea's defense capability by providing a wide range of modern weaponry. As I said earlier, the withdrawal decision was finally rescinded when CIA's analysis came to the conclusion that the North Korea's military capabilities were far greater than

had been thought. I think that perhaps one regiment was withdrawn; that was the total result of Carter's decision – and that was made primarily to save the president's face.

I don't have any view about CIA's findings. I do believe that such analyses need considerable scrutiny because they are indeed, at best, good guesswork. How many Vietcong were there in South Vietnam? How large were the North Korean forces? These have to be educated guesses; precision can not be the judgement standard. I suspect that CIA's analysis was probably correct that the North's forces were larger than we had anticipated; how much larger I would not vouch for. In any case, the analysis was very useful for the anti-withdrawal forces in Washington. It undermined one of Carter's assumption upon which he based his decision.

For me personally, it was no longer a consuming issue because I was preparing to go to Thailand. On the other hand, the whole withdrawal affair became personally damaging because there were people like General Dick Stillwell and others who held me responsible for being the principal architect of the withdrawal decision. I think they misunderstood my role as "public defender" – in Congressional appearances, for example – of the policy; they thought that I personally believed in it. Once I was invited to speak to the Naval War College in Newport, RI, at its annual convocation which always attracted a large military audience. I defended the policy at great length, and I was met, so I surprisingly, with great skepticism by the overwhelming majority of the audience. Stillwell had become personally very antagonistic to me since my service as CINCPAC's Polad; he hated Gayler with a passion. So my Congressional appearances and my Newport speech gave Stillwell plenty of opportunities to poison the Pentagon atmosphere against me, even after I had left for Thailand and notably when the Republicans returned to power.

Eventually, I was asked in 1981 by Dick Kennedy, the State Department's undersecretary for management, who said Secretary Haig was interested in my becoming the assistant secretary for EA. I said I was very interested, but asked whether the incumbent, John Holdridge, had been informed of the decision to replace him. Kennedy said "No." So that left it to me to tell John, who was a personal friend. When the word got around, Stillwell and others raised hell and eventually managed to scuttle my nomination. We were now in the Reagan administration and Stillwell had been made as a civilian Undersecretary of Defense for Policy. He not only criticized me for our policy in South Korea, but also for the work I had done on the Philippines bases and other issues. This comment is out-of-time sequence, but I mention it now to illustrate how my position was damaged by the Carter decision to withdraw the combat division for South Korea. I was also undermined by criticisms made by my station chief in Bangkok, Dan Arnold. In 1981, in the first year of the Reagan administration, I was offered three different assignments and all were withdrawn.

In summary, I think it is fair to say that by and large, the bureaucracy gradually came to oppose President Carter's decision to withdraw the 2nd Division from South Korea. I think NSC advisor Brzezinski supported the decision; his attitude seemed to me that this was a decision that the president had made, it was his responsibility to see it

implemented, and he probably did not foresee any catastrophic consequences from it; so he did what he was supposed to do. There were some voices in Congress who supported the decision, but in general I don't think there was much support for troop withdrawal anywhere in Congress or else in the country, except for the academe. The East Asia bureau began as a strong supporter, as did Secretary Vance. But, that enthusiasm at State waned and in the later stages of the drama, State came to share our point of view.

Carter was not unaware of the opposition that was being mounted by the bureaucracy. I assume he was upset and angry. But he never tried to punish those who opposed him except in the case of Singlaub's public attack.

Q: Before we finish the discussion on Korea, let me ask you about the Security Consultative Meetings (SCM) that were started when you were in ISA. What was your view on meetings of this kind?

ABRAMOWITZ: I was very positive about having the SCM, particularly the first few meetings because they were crucial to explain to the Koreans our position in Vietnam and the Far East in general. It was very welcome to the Korean Government, it made them feel more like a read ally. We thought it would help resolve some problems in convincing the Koreans that we were not diminishing our interest in their independence and defense despite our withdrawal from Vietnam. We had to convince them that the two issues were not related and that we continued to be their staunch allies to prevent and repel any North Korea intrusion. The SCMs were essentially DoD-ROK Defense Department talks, although State had a representative on our team. The meetings were at Cabinet level and I think they were useful to both sides. We had similar annual meetings with Japan, although in that case, the U.S. participants were CINCPAC and our ambassador to Japan who led the U.S. delegation. The meetings continue to this day.

Q: Did you also favor in the 1970's the annual military exercises that we conducted with the South Koreans?

ABRAMOWITZ: Yes. These were important in making our joint military efforts more effective as well as training the South Koreans. I saw it also as a continual warning to North Korea that the U.S-ROK alliance was well and working. During this post-Vietnam period, there was real concern in the U.S. and the ROK for the North Korean threat. There were periodic shooting incidents across the DMZ; President Park's wife was killed by a North Korean commando team; there were discoveries of North Korean tunnels being dug under the DMZ; and the "tree cutting incident" that I mentioned earlier occurred. The tensions were real and palpable in the 1970's. Those don't exist today and probably haven't for some years, the South Korean military have improved significantly. The situation on the peninsula is far different today than it was in the 1970's. I should note that joint exercises were not unique to South Korea; we held them with the Thais, the Filipinos, and the Australians. In the 1970's they were certainly warranted by the existing tense situation on the Korean peninsula.

The Korean saga was only one of the major foreign policy initiatives of the Carter

administration. There were others which generated the same reaction in many officials as the Korean troop withdrawal decision. We felt that some of the ideas from the White House were weakening our alliances with the Japanese, the Koreans, the Filipinos, etc. as well as building impediments to improving relations with China. We were afraid that the Asian countries would view our actions – or inactions – as an indication that we were reducing our interests in Asia; that might have serious consequences for our posture in the area as well as our national security. We felt that the initial general gesture of the Carter administration would be interpreted in Asia as the continuation of retreat from the area and reinforce the fears of the countries in the region from our withdrawal from Vietnam. This skepticism of administration's policies and initiatives in East Asia were felt most deeply by Mike Armacost at the NSC, Dick Holbrooke, the State assistant secretary for EA, and myself.

We asked for a meeting with Brzezinski to voice our concerns. He gave us about an hour and listened patiently. At least from the outside, he didn't indicate any agreement with our positions; he was Carter's NSC advisor and always defended the president's policies. As far as I recall, he never gave an inch on Korea during the lengthy evolution of that process. He may not have had his heart in following the president's wishes, but he certainly did not fail to push Carter's agenda. Zbig always referred to this meeting as having "met with the three Cassandras." I don't recall this meeting changing any of the administration's initiatives, but we believe that our intervention might have raised some flags in Brzezinski's mind which may have subsequently affected his thinking. I can't be sure of that, but he certainly listened to our concerns and understood them.

Q: Let me now turn to the Philippines. What were the major issues you had to deal with as deputy assistant secretary (ISA) in DoD?

ABRAMOWITZ: Early in the Carter administration, Secretary Vance called me over and said he wanted me to come back to the Department to become Dick Holbrooke's deputy in EA. I said no. During that meeting he suggested that perhaps the time had come for us to withdraw from the Philippines – or at least to get out of Clark Air Base. At about this time, the national security process had produced – or was about to produce – a couple of National Security Memoranda (NSIM), which were instructions to the bureaucracy to come with some answers to specific policy questions. One dealt with Korea; the second related to the possible elimination of our military bases at Clark and Subic in the Philippines.

The first one State had the lead, the second DoD. I was appointed as chairman of the inter-agency working group to draft the response to the Philippine NSIM. The principal issue was a strategic one, whether we should withdraw from our bases, long a basic part of our defense structure in the area. Unlike Korea, our posture in the Philippines was a decision the president had not made. We produced a paper which discussed the pros and cons; it was not, to the best of my recollection, a source for serious inter-agency dispute, unlike the Korean paper. It was a unanimous view that we should not withdraw from Subic naval base. Clark was a more debatable proposition with people holding differing views about the importance of that air base. My recollection is that the final draft

suggested that the decision on Clark be postponed and then be reviewed again in a year or so. There was general agreement among the agencies that there were already enough action already underway that would reduce our presence in Asia, after our defeat in Vietnam, that this was not the right time to consider major reductions in our presence in the Philippines. I think that all agencies shared the concerns over Asian perceptions if we continued to reduce and reduce our presence in the area.

All of the administration's efforts also have to be viewed within the context of its desire to normalize relations with China. This was a difficult issue in light of all its wide impact. I personally favored the direction the administration was taking toward finally carrying out normalization. But I was also quite cognizant of the number of difficulties that such a policy would create. The administration's considerations culminated in Brzezinski's trip to Beijing in the summer of 1978 during which he told the Chinese that the U.S. had made the decision to normalize by the end of the year.

While China policy was moving ahead the USG was also focused on specific issues such as troop withdrawal and base closings. China policy of course raised the question of our relations with Taiwan which in fact had been under review since the Ford administration. We received a presidential directive to develop a withdrawal plan for our military presence on Taiwan, which ISA did. To further complicate our Asian situation, the State Department was negotiating with Vietnam to re-establish relations and they had gone very far. Given growing China-Vietnam animosity the White House did not want to rock the China boat. Holbrooke's negotiations with Vietnam ran into White House "buzz saw". The two efforts – normalization of our relations with China and the establishment of relations with Vietnam – became conflicting objectives as there was a bureaucratic battle. Vietnam lost out. The normalization of relations had to wait a long time with Vietnam.

This dilemma was not a problem for us in the Pentagon, but I closely followed developments. I supported the draw-down of our troops in Taiwan. I also supported the normalization of relations with Vietnam. DoD as an institution took no position on these policy issues.

I mention these various policy development strands to illustrate the dilemmas Carter – and Ford before him – faced in Asia before and after our withdrawal from Vietnam. I was in the Pentagon for the first couple of years of the Ford administration and watched the strains close up. There was no question that Asia and our future there was very much on Carter's agenda. In the final analysis, it was our efforts to improve relations with China that was certain and will be most remembered by history.

As I suggested before, there was an informal network in Washington among people dealing with Asia. It consisted of a variety of offices in State, the NSC, and ISA. Holbrooke, Armacost, and I were in frequent contact. We had a high degree of intellectual camaraderie; we didn't necessarily always agree on every issue (e.g. troop withdrawal from Korea), but we had intense and valuable discussions on each issue. We worked together closely and were close personal friends. These colleagues understood

my position and even if not agreeing with me, at least respected my views – unlike people like Stillwell who never took the time to try to understand or even be factually correct.

Q: You mentioned earlier the efforts to have the Japanese pay in part for our presence in their country. What else did you work on with the Japanese?

ABRAMOWITZ: In my last year in ISA (1977-78), the Japanese appointed a new defense minister, whose name was Sakata. We became close and he was also deeply interested in working with SecDef and other senior DoD officials to strengthen our defense relations. He and I began to work on a paper which would establish guidelines for the development of our defense relations. This became ultimately a key document which was worked on for years after I left the Pentagon. It was the basis for the enhancement and improvement of our defense relationships and the beginning of an expanded Japanese role in the defense of their country. This expanded role was in my mind one of the key ingredients in our post-Vietnam military posture in the Far East. As I said before, my goals were to try to prevent any weakening of that posture; to try to strengthen our relations with Japan and Korea; and thirdly, to help accelerate the enhancement of our relations with China, in great part, as a counter-balance to the Soviets. In the case of the third goal, I must admit that the improvement of military-to-military relations moved very slightly because we really had no platform from which to operate. It is true that Brzezinski wanted DoD representation on the team he took to Beijing both for cosmetic reasons – so that the world would know the deepening of our relations – and to actually begin a relationship between the two militaries and defense cooperation. I became the personification of the "cosmetic reason"; specifically, I was charged with briefing Chinese officials on Soviet involvement in Asia. I did make a presentation which took about an hour and showed them pictures of Soviet deployments, but I must admit that I don't think it was a very satisfactory meeting because the Chinese refused to engage in any exchange of views; they listened to us carefully, but were not prepared for a dialogue. They did have some questions about some specific issues raised in my presentation, but there was no real exchange of views. The Chinese were not ready to become seriously involved in major issues such as Soviet activity in Asia. The briefing served the purpose of breaking the ice, a necessary first step. The Chinese had an opportunity to have new facts and intelligence brought to their attention; that in itself was useful. I had hoped that my presentation would have been the start of a serious discussion; in fact, that would take more time. The Brzezinski visit was a crucial step in the development of Sino-American relations, and a fascinating first experience for me in mainland China.

We have discussed our efforts in Northeast Asia. We did not neglect Southeast Asia at ISA. We created considerable *angst* in the region with the withdrawal from Vietnam and our efforts to enhance Sino-U.S. relations. You have to remember that our Vietnam involvement spread far beyond the borders of that country into Laos and Cambodia and even into Thailand where we had five major military bases. By the way, when I was ambassador to Thailand, I had an opportunity to talk with McNamara who by then was the head of the World Bank. He was very proud of the construction of those bases,

pointing out that our military efforts had important unintended consequences. The establishment of bases had required the improvement – indeed the development – of a huge road network linking these facilities. In addition to enhancing our military capabilities, these roads opened vast parts of Thailand to agricultural production. The farmers could now deliver their products to profitable markets. These bases changed the nature of agriculture in Thailand.

Thailand saw Vietnam as its principal enemy and they were also fighting a domestic communist insurgency. ISA wrestled with two principal issues with Thailand: 1) what to do with our sizeable number of bases or perhaps more broadly, what should be our military presence be in that country and 2) how do we reassure the Thais that we were still pledged by treaty to assist them in maintaining their security and independence, particularly against Vietnam. Both of these issues required much interaction with the Thais to give them confidence in our commitments. They of course were concerned that our military reductions would detract from our interest in Thailand; we tried to give them as much military assistance as we could to offset the closing of the bases and help with their insurgency in the north. Military assistance to Thailand was a useful tool not only to improve Thai military capabilities but also to give visible meaning to our verbal assurances of continuing support.

I spent much time trying to increase military assistance programs to East Asia countries, not only to the countries I have already discussed, but also to countries like Indonesia. In Jakarta I made friends with the second most important military official in the country, General Murdani, and traveled throughout Indonesia with him to places like Borneo learning how the Indonesian military was pursuing communist guerrilla insurgents. I did help increase our military assistance program to Indonesia as I did for Korea and Thailand. I had a lot of support from Erich von Marbod and General Howard Fish who were the chief *honcho*s in DSAA. I mention the Indonesian program specifically because it will arise later in my career – in an unfavorable way – after my tour in Thailand, but we can get to that later. While in ISA, I felt that Indonesia deserved our assistance because it was the biggest and ultimately the most important country in Southeast Asia. We were more than ten years removed from the massacres that occurred in 1965. We had just withdrawn from Vietnam and the Indonesians, as all South-East Asia people, were concerned by our policy in the area. Could they count on our presence and our support?

Indonesia was not only the biggest country in the area, it was key to the creation of ASEAN in 1967, and the development of regional cooperation; it was important to maintain close relations with it.

You have to remember the ethos of that day. We were still in an era where we feared communistic expansion; Vietnam and China expanding their influence throughout Southeast Asia. Henry Kissinger, at the first ANZUS meeting after the Vietnam War spoke of his great fear of communism expansion into Southeast Asia. The region had guerrilla movements and insurgents. So Washington still had much capital in South-east Asia, even though we had certainly receded in importance from our Vietnam-involvement days. I felt that it remained an important area which the U.S. should not

neglect. Many of my colleagues in the Pentagon and State had bigger fish to fry; that is, Vietnam was the past and there were matters of greater urgency occurring in other parts of the world.

Before you turn to my next assignment, I should say a word or two about Cambodia and Laos. We had turned a page; the U.S. had more or less opted out of Indochina after our withdrawal from Vietnam. The general sentiment in Washington was that little could be done in and for those countries. There wasn't much thought given to the consequences of political instability in both countries. Eventually, the ever increasing flow of refugees into neighboring countries brought Cambodia and Laos back into the limelight. The refugees bore witness to the catastrophes developing in both countries. The instability in the area became evident to all and its human consequences became a world-wide issue. By the time I arrived in Bangkok, the refugee issue was a deep seeded humanitarian challenge. It took us some time before we really became engaged. There was a period right after the end of the Vietnam War when we were mostly observers of a steadily declining human situation.

In 1977, Deputy Secretary of Defense Charles Duncan called me and asked me to assume responsibility for our posture and activities in Latin America, as I had been doing for the Far East. This came somewhat as a surprise; the two areas had little in common, but for economy purposes he had decided to eliminate the DAS for Latin America. So I saluted and began to look into Latin American affairs, which regrettable I knew little. I used some of the savings to take a trip to the area. I visited Colonel Lucas in Guatemala, General Pinochet in Chile, General Viola in Argentina, Admiral Ortega in Brazil. My task in those countries was to get them to stop their massive human rights abuses. I basically told them that they had to do this or we would distance ourselves from them and provide no assistance to them. Before I went on this trip, one relatively senior official strongly opposed to our military relationships with these dictators, but more broadly felt that we should not only break with them but end our military to military ties which he considered dangerous to democracy. It was difficult to incorporate his message with my responsibilities as a DoD official, but his intervention alerted me to the sensitivity that existed about some of our ties to Latin America.

I did indeed deliver the message to all of the dictators, but I saw no subsequent impact on their policies. Our military at the time did not have "human rights" very high on its agenda. I did emphasize our policy to the defense attachés and MAAG chiefs I met on the trip to make sure they understood where the Carter administration was coming from. They had specific tasks to accomplish; what they thought of the host government was not usually a factor in their duties. My focus was to clear any doubts in the host government's mind; there was a connection between their human rights policies and our support. I don't think they trembled at my words. It did further my education on dealing with senior foreign officials in an adversarial way.

We did also try to be helpful on some specific issues such as the long-standing border dispute between Peru and Chile. I don't think any of these efforts did much good in the year I had responsibility for Latin America. I learned a considerable amount about an

area new to me. It may have been an unfortunate period for learning because most of the Latin American countries during the 1970's were going through some hard times and dictatorship was rampant. Guatemala was particularly awful. In light of my other responsibilities, I really didn't devote that much attention to Latin America; but focused mostly on what I considered major issues. I left my deputy who spent full time on Latin American issues to do most of the daily work. I had confidence in him. He would brief me daily on new developments, which we would then discuss and agree on whether any action was warranted.

Q: One final question about your tour in ISA. You obviously had no problem getting to issues which you felt warranted secretarial or deputy secretarial level attention. Was that a unique situation or did all the deputy ISA secretaries have the same kind of access?

ABRAMOWITZ: I don't know. It varied. All the three secretaries I worked for were interested in ISA. I think the fact that I had permission to deal with the secretary directly may have been unusual. I was fortunate that the assistant secretaries I worked for were really interested in issues pertaining to other areas of the world – Europe and the Middle East. They showed enough confidence to allow me to work on Asian matters without too much guidance as long as I kept them informed. Occasionally, they might get slightly annoyed because I had, in their eyes, strayed from what they might have done, but by and large, I was pretty much left to my own devices. It was the best job I had to date. There is no question that my work for Elliot Richardson had made my name known in DoD and that proved helpful. Furthermore, I spent considerable time working with senior military officials. I might not always agree with their stands, but I could talk to most of them frankly.

Q: *Do you think that some of the issues you managed to raise to the secretary's level would have risen to that level in any case or were raised to there because of your personal relationship with each of the Secretaries of Defense?*

ABRAMOWITZ: Certainly many of them would have gotten there anyway. A number of issues I generated to a higher level were labor cost shaving in jargon. I do believe that my approach worked pretty well and enabled us to get many things done. It is also true, as I said earlier, that my direct bosses, the assistant secretaries, were personally more engaged in other parts of the world, leaving the deputies for those regions more closely supervised than I was. The secretary and the deputy secretary became accustomed to calling me first if they had any questions about East Asia.

Before I end my recollections of my tour as DAS in ISA I should make a few comments about Philippine base negotiations. The Filipinos were always uncertain about whether to open fresh negotiations on bases; they felt a critical need to do so, but they were concerned about American reactions. I am now talking about the period after our withdrawal from Vietnam. Finally, negotiations did begin; at one stage the U.S. delegation was chaired by deputy secretary of Defense Bill Clements. These initial discussions were primarily designed to see what Manila wanted from negotiations. Much of their agenda, not all of it, not surprisingly dealt with increases of assistance as well as

greater symbolic manifestations of Philippine control over the leases. Money was the coin of the realm.

For much of the time, the negotiations were very informal. The meetings were mostly held at embassy counselor levels in Manila. They had many ups and downs with various items periodically becoming the foci. There was an important meeting on base negotiations in 1976, just before the end of the Ford administration, in New York. Bill Clements and I attended to meet with the defense minister; our principal purpose was to agree on what needed to be decided. There were a lot of rumors about the negotiations and the Philippine positions, and we felt we needed clarification in order to proceed with our internal work. I think this was probably the first meeting after a number of years and we got a full expression of Philippine needs and wants.

I think a State representative was with us as well, but I don't remember who it was. I kept State fully informed about these base negotiations and Defense's position on various issues. Being an FSO made the coordination easier and I think that Defense and State worked on these base negotiations as an effective team, even though we might have had disagreements on some of the issues. In light of what I viewed as a very effective process, I proposed to Holbrooke, and he himself may have before, concluded to have an informal weekly meeting attended by the senior officials around Washington who were working on EA matters. Dick was an excellent chairman and I think the meeting made all of our efforts much more effective and made coordination among agencies easier. It was a mechanism that I think still exists.

Later, during 1977-78 period, after I had chaired the interagency working group that I mentioned earlier, the success of base negotiations began to be tied to the Philippine human rights behavior. Patt Derian, the assistant secretary of State for human rights, became involved thereby generating a major disagreement between her and Holbrooke, on how to deal with Marcos. We had some heated discussions in Washington about the importance of the bases. As the interagency group had recommended, we pursued negotiations with the objective of continuing our base arrangements despite Marcos' sorry human rights record. This decision was made at Cabinet level. In the summer 1978, higher level negotiations were resumed. Holbrooke and I met with Marcos during this period to discuss the issues. We didn't reach any agreement at that time, but it was the beginning of a new high level negotiations process over the bases; the first in many years.

I well remember the setting in Marcos' office. The defense minister was on one side of a long table in his conference room and Holbrooke and I were sitting on the opposite side. Marcos sat at the head of the table, as if acting as the mediator between his defense minister and ourselves. After the meeting, we joke about Marcos' fairness. Before negotiations really got serious, I dropped out to go to Thailand.

As for Japan, I mentioned that we had some successful negotiations concerning Japanese financing of our military presence in that country. By "we", I mean the whole American team, our military in Japan, our embassy, and ISA of State. We had first of all to collect a lot of detailed information – financial and otherwise – about our operations, which our

military supplied. Our senior Air Force officer in Japan, who had been the secretary's military aide and whom I knew well, was deeply involved and did the lion's share of the negotiations. The Washington team which I headed discussed the general principals and the U.S. objectives with the Japanese foreign office and defense officials, but the nitty-gritty was left to the Air Force general and his staff. Our discussions lasted a year and produced concrete results, ultimately leading to billions of dollars of savings each year.

The Philippine and Japan base negotiations illustrate two common problems that have held true for almost, if not all, base issues, at least two decades ago. First of all were problems associated with the American presence – drunken behavior, inadvertent accidents, noise generated by our planes, etc. Such problems are not solely connected with bases; naval port calls often generate the same kind of negative behavioral actions. We in ISA, usually in connection with the Joint Staff of the Chiefs of Staffs, spent a lot of time negotiating such issues. The second problem was the status of forces agreements and all the negotiations which had to be undertaken in order to preserve the judicial position of U.S. military on foreign soil. This was always a major issue, and was always on our desks.

The "status-of-forces" agreements were generally a challenge. We had to protect our men and women from arbitrary actions by the host country while it had a responsibility to its citizens to protect them from a wayward American soldier or sailor. The signing of an agreement was only the beginning; the daily workload was frequently generated by activity on the ground which required an interpretation of the agreement. Some of the incidents had the potential of developing into serious political friction and we obviously did our best to try to avoid such escalations. But the process to handle these incidents was time consuming as were the inter-and intra-agency deliberations leading up to and including these instances and the broader international negotiations. An office in ISA/DoD was charged with conducting status-of-forces agreements. Phil Barringer headed that office where he had worked on these issues for at least 25 years. U.S. policy on both sets of issues was set by an inter-agency group with this ISA office being the chief implementer.

Personally, my involvement with base negotiations was limited to the Philippines and Japan and later Turkey, where we also held a number of discussions about our base structure in that country.

I should not end the discussion of base negotiations and status-of-forces agreements without tipping my hat to our embassies in the countries with which we were negotiating. They were of vast help.

Q: In 1978, you were appointed as U.S. Ambassador to Thailand. How did that come about?

ABRAMOWITZ: There was a question of whether I would be assigned to Thailand or the Philippines. During my tour in ISA, I had developed a very close relationship with Phil Habib, first when he was the assistant secretary for EA and then when he became the

undersecretary for political affairs. We were essentially on the same wave length. He was a unique, wonderful character, almost universally liked and respected. We always got along quite well most of the time. Of course, Phil was one of the Department's experts not only on Korea, but also on South East Asia. I kept him posted on what we were doing in Defense; I testified with him before Congressional committees. He was a superb witness. He used to say: "Senator (or Congressman), that is an extraordinary important question. You have obviously great insights." He could go on in this vein question after question; I could never do that, but I certainly admired his touch. He was much respected on the Hill.

When it was time to move on from DoD, Phil was very helpful. He wanted to make sure that I would get an embassy. Holbrooke was also very supportive and basically made it happen. The first opportunity arose in the Philippines, but Phil thought that since this would be my first ambassadorial assignment, that a smaller post, one less in the limelight, might be more appropriate. He thought Thailand would do. That was fine with me especially since I knew most of the Thai leaders – as I did in the Philippines as well. So the Department nominated me for Thailand.

I had not served in the Department or in an embassy for five-six years. Of course, both as POLAD and as deputy assistant secretary for ISA, I had maintained continual contact with State and especially the EA bureau. So it wasn't as if I had been on a different planet for all those years; I just wasn't physically in the State building or an embassy. I was familiar with all of the EA issues and knew the bureau well. Even though I had maintained this close contact, going from second secretary to an ambassador was a little unusual. I had not taken the usual route – embassy counselor (or deputy assistant secretary in State) to DCM to ambassador.

There were four aspects that helped prepare me to become an ambassador in the area. One was the opportunity to become acquainted with all the major political figures in East Asia. The Thai prime minister, who had been at my house for dinner, was very happy with my appointment. Two, I had spent at least six years working on East Asia – a year in INR, a year as POLAD and four years in ISA. I knew the area well. Three, I had a regional view and could fit our relationships with any particular country into a regional framework. Fourth, I had worked at sufficiently high levels for several years to understand how to influence policy development and which issues would be of most interest to the highest levels of our government.

Q: What about managerial experience?

ABRAMOWITZ: If the truth be known, very few State Department employees have an opportunity to acquire the kind of broad experience that one needs to manage a large embassy. I think my career experiences were fairly unique: I had managed two sizeable organizations – the EA section of ISA (25-30 employees) and the EA division in INR (also 25-30 employees). Was that enough to run an embassy? Probably not, but then as I said I don't think any State employees have much opportunity to have sufficiently broad assignments to prepare him or her for a major ambassadorial assignment. I wasn't even

able to attend the ambassadorial training course that FSI sponsors because it did not exist in 1978. I did have eighteen years of Foreign Service experience, much of which was with other agencies, so that in some ways I was better prepared than many other ambassadorial appointees.

Q: How were your confirmation hearings?

ABRAMOWITZ: They went very smoothly, like most ambassadorial hearings. There were a couple of amusing stories surrounding the hearings. Vice-President Mondale had taken me with him when he visited South East Asia. He felt that the U.S. was not paying enough attention to the area, despite its many problems. We went to Thailand and as is customary, a formal dinner was given Mondale by the King. I was pretty tired by this time. It came time for Mondale to propose a toast and I could barely move – in fact, I might well have been dozing. The Thai official who sat next to me – who later became a good friend and foreign minister – physically lifted me to my feet and put a glass in my hand so that I could join the toast.

Mondale swore me as ambassador in a White House ceremony. During his comments, Mondale said: "I took Abramowitz to South East Asia. He was so very interested – like hell!", referring to my catnap in Bangkok. He knew what had happened and he took the swearing in occasion to comment at some length about my "attention span" and "my devotion."

I arrived in August 1978, in Bangkok, about a month after my confirmation. Of course, I had been working on Thai issues for five years and was familiar with most of them. I had much to learn about Thailand: the local politics, the country itself, etc. In general my break-in period went smoothly – much different from what I encountered later when I went to Turkey. Before leaving the U.S. I called on the senior Thai officials in the U.S. – the ambassador, the UN delegation, etc. I even gave a speech using the little Thai I had learned at a dinner given by the ambassador for me.

Q: Were you surprised by anything you had to do as ambassador which was different from what you anticipated?

ABRAMOWITZ: Not really. In some respects, the job was less intellectually challenging than my ISA one or some of my other previous assignments. But it was challenging getting to understand where our hosts were coming from.

Our embassy in Thailand was among the largest in the world (700 or so American employees). We had a number of regional offices headquartered in Bangkok which although not requiring much attention, were nevertheless under my jurisdiction. We had a large CIA component. I liked the job immensely, largely because I became involved in one of the major refugee crises of our time. I also enjoyed being in Turkey, which became immensely challenging, particularly when the Gulf War began.

Q: How did you decide what you expected from your DCM?

ABRAMOWITZ: I had two DCM's in Bangkok: Dan O'Donohue who had been put in Bangkok by Habib before my arrival and who was with me for about six or seven months. He was enormously helpful. He was very smart, dedicated and honest. He could be a stickler. Dan was succeeded by Burt Levin, also very capable and had great personal skills. The two men were very different. I had asked that Burt be assigned to Bangkok, after Dan was transferred. He had wide experience and knew Thailand and the embassy quite well. He was also an excellent Chinese speaker. He had lots of knowledge that I didn't have and we were a good team. I put great trust in both men.

To some degree, I took care of external relations – with the government and other embassies – and the DCM worried about the management of the U.S. embassy. I emphasize "to some degree" because not all issues fall neatly in such compartmentalization. I always made an effort to get to know our staff – I used to walk to all the sections frequently – but in general, I left the management of the building to the DCMs. I think there was no question that because of my contacts, I was better informed about such issues as the Thai domestic politics than my deputies were. I have always operated with a "hands-on" philosophy; I liked to get information directly from the people who knew.

I remember one major management issue that fell in my lap soon after my arrival in Bangkok. The Department was going through one of its periodic "reduction in size of embassies" exercises. Bangkok was focused on, quite rightly because I thought it was too big. I mentioned the CIA component earlier; its scope had been reduced over a period of years but the size of the staff never reflected the decrease on work-load. The management of a reduction in force is difficult in the best of circumstances; it was difficult in Bangkok in light of the number of agencies that had representatives there as well as their staff sizes. I had a prolonged debate with the Agency about the size of its component; I mentioned earlier the obstinate position I took on one of the military attachés that made Admiral Weisner an opponent for the rest of my career. Reluctantly, I cut some of the AID staff. We made no cuts in the staffing of the group assisting refugees. The State contingent itself had to take some reductions. In any case, I spent a lot of time negotiating with the heads of the embassy sections and the other agencies. It is very hard to be responsive to a Washington directive of this sort, even if you agree with it, without engendering some hostility and hard feelings.

Q: Talk a little about your relationships with Washington while ambassador to Thailand?

ABRAMOWITZ: First of all, it should be noted that I went to a country with which I was somewhat familiar with. I also had the advantage of having had an opportunity to meet most of the senior Thai officials. In fact, the Thai prime minister had been my guest at a dinner. The assignment involved managing the continuing change in the relationship between the two countries, which stemmed in part from our withdrawal from Vietnam and in part from a Thai insurgency, and in part because Thailand was growing. I did not foresee a huge refugee problem. I was struck by the difficult situation in Cambodia, which was not news to me, but was escalating without much American attention.

I was also fortunate in my relationship with Washington because I knew well the leadership of State and Defense as well as the NSC. I knew CINCPAC quite well from my tour of duty there a few years earlier. It didn't hurt that some of my personal close friends were in senior positions dealing with EA matters – Holbrooke, Oakley, Negroponte, Armacost, Platt. Not only did we know each other well, but we had worked together for extended periods. Communications were easy. I spent a lot of time on the telephone. Sometimes it was just to pick up the latest news – "gossip" – but most of the time the discussion was on issues of immediate concern to me. Of course, we used the more formal method of communications – cables – when an issue was ripe for decision and detailed discussion was necessary. Telephone was far better for informal dialogues and for providing a better sense of the scene. I also found that in most cases, I would get prompter action as result of a telephone call than from a cable. I particularly used the phone to get action when time was not on our side. There is no question that having people whom you know and in whom you have confidence at the other end of a telephone call not only enhanced effectiveness but was extremely useful when a situation changed radically. That was true even in those rare cases where we had a serious difference of opinion.

I made it a habit to return to Washington at least every three months. This was primarily because I had issues, particularly those that related to the refugee problems in Thailand, that needed face-to-face dialogues to get expedited. I followed the same travel pattern when I was ambassador to Turkey. As a general principle, I think every ambassador who is dealing with complex issues, should return to Washington periodically. I am now referring to important and difficult issues which require continuing ambassadorial attention. In the late 1970's, Thailand was a "major" post; it may well have receded in importance now, but then, particularly in light of the refugee issues, and the fear of communist expansion, it was considered a very important country. Today the issues seem more of a commercial nature, more routine than what we faced at the end of the 1970's. It is a good way also to keep your problems high on the agenda of Washington agencies.

Both the phone calls and these periodic trips helped to short-cut the bureaucratic process. That process on important matters is a mixture of the formal and informal. If it were just a matter of writing a memo and sending it up the chain of command, not much would likely get done quickly. Informal efforts helped move the ball, even such issues of high importance. I was also in a fortunate situation because Holbrooke and a few others involved in EA issues were sufficiently influential that it was not necessary for me to communicate with the Secretary or the deputy secretary. I knew that if Dick got involved in an issue, I would get action from Washington. On the Pentagon side, my old boss was Harold Brown, then SecDef, whom I could contact if necessary. It was also true that during my Washington assignment, I had an opportunity to become acquainted with Vice President Mondale, Jim Johnson, people on Mrs. Carter's staff, etc. Henry Owen, then an ambassador-at-large, was extremely helpful when the Cambodian crisis arose. This range of personal contacts were simply indispensable.

I also had that head start because of my acquaintance with senior South East Asia

leadership. For example, I could talk straight forwardly to Lee Kuan Yew and deliver views in blunt terms. In my Bangkok assignment, I was reaping the fruits of previous incarnations. The proximity to power provides access, which then should develop an atmosphere of mutual confidence and trust which tends to grow over time. I could not replicate that situation today. All the leadership I knew is either dead or in retirement. When I travel to the area today, I often meet old friends whose influence has waned considerably, if not vanished completely.

I think in general it is fair to say that we in Bangkok established a solid relationship with Washington. We had their confidence. It was also important that the people in Washington who handled EA issues were influential in their own agencies and in the broad bureaucracy. That continued in the first six months I was there in the Reagan administration.

Q: *Let me ask an unfair question, which you may not be able to answer. Do you believe that the time senior officials in State spent on Thai issues because you brought them to their attention might have been used for higher priorities issues in other parts of the world?*

ABRAMOWITZ: The Secretary of State has problems raised with him from many quarters. There are times such as today, when one issue – today it is Iraq – drives most other matters off the Secretary's agenda or at least lowers them in priority. There is always a problem between the immediate and the important. When I went to Bangkok, I was surprised, as I mentioned earlier, by the fierce competition among Vietnam, China, and Thailand. We reported extensively on those tensions trying to portray as best we could the case each side was putting forth. The Khmer Rouge was behaving very badly on the Vietnam-Cambodia border. The Vietnamese became very upset which was not helped by China siding with Cambodia; the Thai to some degree also supported the Cambodians. These tensions became very acute after my arrival in Bangkok. It could be argued that we really didn't have "a dog in this fight," but we were at that point trying to normalize relationships with both China and Vietnam and our friend Thailand was deeply worried. Did senior officials need to know about it? Sure. There were many other important or more important issues. Id did what I had to do.

The Thai position in South East Asia raised a number of policy issues for us. First of all, we didn't know how they would respond to the Vietnamese approaching their borders. I thought they would do nothing but I could not be sure. The prime minister warned me that if the Vietnamese crossed the border – or even came too close – there would be war. I don't think he meant this literally, but he probably made that comment to me to motivate us to take some action to prevent Vietnamese military movements. Secondly, we wanted to keep Thailand stable, internally so that the government could deal with the refugee problem without having to worry about its domestic position. Furthermore, we wanted stability so that the government could deal with a Vietnamese threat, although we did not see that as a likely scenario. We were concerned with the possibility of the Vietnamese taking action against some of the refugee camps. There were occasional shellings, which raised our level of anxiety, but nothing more happened. Our ability to

assist the refugees depended a great deal on Thailand internal stability which in part depended on the actions of its neighbors. That is one reason we were so insistent on the Vietnamese leaving Cambodia after their invasion.

We tried to assist Thailand in maintaining stability by increasing our assistance programs. We provided funds – mostly for food – to assist those Thais who might have been impacted by the refugee problem. We increased our military assistance program to give the Thai military greater confidence in its ability to defend their country. I spent a lot of time on this whole set of issues. I had long conversations with our governmental leaders about increasing, for example, the Thai tank fleet. I am not sure that they really needed them, but the Thai military thought they were essential; so I threw my full support behind their request for more general reasons.

Of greatest importance perhaps were our efforts to mobilize ASEAN support against the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and to encourage the nations in that grouping to take counter-measures to get the Vietnamese to return to their own territory. I had, I thought, a significant conversation on this issue with Lee Kwan Yew about two weeks after the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia – he was visiting Bangkok. I made the point that leadership was lacking in the region and that it was time for ASEAN, at Lee Kwan Yew's urging, to step up, write their views, and take some vigorous action. I said that a regional approach was absolutely essential if stability in the area were to be maintained. There were a number of pressures on ASEAN, which did in fact motivate it to take a strong posture against Vietnam. Numerous ministerial meetings which the U.S. attended took place. Ultimately, these actions helped stimulate Cambodian resistance to the Vietnamese invasion, particularly in the border areas. The ASEAN reaction was also important because for the first time in my memory, it galvanized the regional grouping to act as one on a security issue, thereby setting the basis, hopefully, for future action.

The Vietnamese invasion spurred a closer U.S.-Thai relationship. We provided increased assistance – political, economic, military. We mobilized ASEAN to give the Thais regional support in its efforts to stabilize the region as well as massively assisting with refugees. It was certainly not a one-way street; we used their territory to house over a million people.

I think I should note here that the Thais intensely disliked and feared the Vietnamese. The Chinese also disliked the Vietnamese. So the obvious occurred; the Thais and the Chinese met – secretly – two weeks after the Vietnamese invasion. From that meeting, which we learned about from intelligence sources, came Chinese military assistance to the Khmer Rouge which flowed through Thailand. This program raised doubts in some minds. It also raised a moral conflict. I was personally opposed to any assistance to the Khmer Rouge, except for humanitarian aid to their dependents. The Khmer Rouge were murderers and butchers. For political and moral reasons it was unwise to give them any armed assistance, regardless of the purpose. I urged the Thais not to get involved in this Chinese program. Holbrooke took the same line. There had been no presidential directive on our position toward this program, but at least in State there was general agreement that the Thais should not assist the Khmer Rouge. I suggested to the prime minister that he

stop the flow of arms to the Khmer Rouge. I had the opportunity to discuss this issue with Carter and Mondale making my case for opposing assistance to the Khmer Rouge. I thought we should be very careful about supporting them, regardless of what the Vietnamese were doing in Cambodia. This got kicked around a lot.

During 1979, the Thai prime minister and his delegation visited Washington. They had a meeting with Brzezinski who told the Thai to go ahead and support the Khmer Rouge. The Thais were receiving mixed messages and had to figure out whom to believe. I had not doubt whose advice they would follow. The Thais, regardless of what we said, were going to proceed with the arms supply program. They felt that participation was in their own self-interest. In the final analysis, I don't think that the Thais' involvement had any effect on our standing in the region – nor am I sure it was of much help to the Khmer Rouge. At the time, this issue was of great concern to all of us for another reason; we were preparing to assist the non-communist resistance in Cambodia, but not the Khmer Rouge. I had the first meeting with the leadership of the non-communist resistance; it didn't have any concrete results, but it was an important gesture of support on our part. When I left Thailand, the Vietnamese still had control of the border areas and soon thereafter we gave non military support to the non Khmer Rouge resistance and they got military aid from other countries.

Going back before war began, we had considerable arguments. First, would Vietnam invade Cambodia and second, what would China do under those circumstances? What impact would war have on other countries in the area, including Thailand, as well as regional groupings such as ASEAN? There was a major difference of views between the embassy and the CIA. The embassy believed that the Vietnamese would invade Cambodia. I don't believe that we predicted that the Vietnamese would march toward Thailand and occupy all of Cambodia. CIA was less sure. In either case, the U.S. had to be a bystander; there wasn't much we could do about the Vietnamese.

I discussed briefly the moral dilemma on aiding the Khmer Rouge. A second part was the interrelated one of the Cambodian issue in the UN – i.e., should the U.S. allow the Khmer Rouge regime to participate in the UN and thereby not sanctify the Vietnamese invasion. Real politik and morality collided here too. As these developments became a matter of interest to the American public. It may not have been as high on our foreign policy agenda as events in the Soviet Union or the Middle East but it attracted a lot of public interest. The Cambodia issue also brought South East Asia to the attention of the public, and it was not long after my arrival in Bangkok that Thailand also began to be seen once in a while on Page 1 of American newspapers. Thailand was pictured as a "front line" state in our battle with communism.

In Thailand and its neighbors, the instability in Indochina had serious consequences. Most important, there was an increasing flow of refugees across the border. The Cambodian war changed that situation dramatically. The refugee flow increased exponentially. Cambodia's agriculture production plummeted thereby making the situation in Cambodia even more dire than it had been. Compounding the humanitarian problem was an increasing flow of Vietnamese fleeing their country by boats and vast

numbers of Lao and Hmong from Laos. The Chinese incursion into Vietnam just further aggravated the refugee problems with more people fleeing their homes in the hopes of finding safety in a nearby country. Although the U.S. was aware of a refugee problem in the late part of 1978, it became my major pre-occupation in 1979.

Q: Did you spend considerable time while in Bangkok briefing reporters on Thai issues? Did you get good coverage?

ABRAMOWITZ: I spent considerable time talking to reporters, almost anyone I would talk to about the refugee situation. As I mentioned before, our issues became front page material in the American press, particularly after the refugee crisis really began. Many reporters came from the U.S. just to look at refugee camps and to learn about the crisis. It was a veritable flood.

Not only did reporters seek information about the crises in South-east Asia, but so did members of Congress. I think that during my three years in Bangkok, we had about 300 senators and representatives visit Thailand. Most of them were focused on the refugee issue, a few on inspecting the military post office. President Carter paroled into the U.S. about 164,000 refugees during a two year period, part of an influx into the U.S. of some million and a half Indochinese. Carter's was an extraordinary action, one unparalleled in our history. The problem became so gripping that the embassy was the subject of a CBS special TV program. Secretary Vance called me and said that he had suggested that our embassy be the subject of a program that CBS was developing on what an embassy does day in and day out. He asked me whether I would be willing to be the subject of such a program. I, of course, readily agreed. Ours was a unique situation, but in general we received very extensive coverage by the American media. Ed Bradley spent time with us on the CBS special. I made it a practice to try to have any media visitor eat breakfast or lunch with me. In any case most of the reporters wanted to spend time with me. We were the "point" on the refugee problem.

Let me talk a little about the war itself. It had several aspects: first of all, the vast destruction that the fighting caused in Cambodia was largely responsible for the great exodus and a concomitant severe decline in agricultural production. That became a challenge for the world because we had to find ways to feed the Cambodians. Secondly, refugees were fleeing not only into Thailand, but also to Malaysia, Indonesia and other countries creating political tensions and accelerating calls for international action. Two international meetings were called to focus on the Indochinese refugee problem.

Then there was the challenge of how the U.S. and other interested countries would respond to the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. This issue and the refugee problem were separate but obviously related; they both involved Thailand deeply and became central to the efforts of our mission.

The refugee problem started long before I reached Bangkok. But it was a trickle before the war. We were allowing some – not many – into the U.S. But over a period of time, there was a steady growth until we reached flood stage. After the war began refugees

from all over Indochina and headed to Thailand. The first challenge was to make sure that the Thais would let them into their country. This was not a one time negotiation; the issue of "open" borders was a continuing and ever-present concern, which was constantly discussed with the Thai government.

Once the refugees were in Thailand, we had to come up with an assistance program for them. They could not be absorbed into the Thai community; there were just too many and how long they would stay was uncertain – something that truly disturbed the Thai. Few refugees were willing to return home – with the Khmer Rouge and a war going on. So these were seen as "permanent" re-settlers so to speak.

So we wanted Thailand to allow the refugees into their country and then assist in their support; two, we needed to feed the people who remained in Cambodia; and three, we wanted longer term actions to help stabilize the area. The embassy took the lead on all three issues. We pushed the Thais to let the refugees into their country and to provide some hospitality; we started a massive feeding program for the people living in western Cambodia, using Thailand as a base of operations; we were instrumental in starting a massive resettlement program, including opening our borders to more Indochinese refugees.

Q: Why were we so interested in the refugee problem?

ABRAMOWITZ: In part, I think we had some feeling of guilt stemming from dumping Vietnam and helping create a vast human tragedy. It was all apparent and could not be hidden like in North Korea. In part, it was also because the U.S. is a country of refugees and has usually been quite forthcoming in opening our borders to people in dire straits who have lost everything. The American people had plenty of first hand evidence from the media of the tragedy occurring in South-east Asia. We were interested in helping refugees also for political reasons – the stability of Thailand and the whole area. There were a lot of reasons for our involvement, but basically, our historical humanitarian instincts have often come to the rescue of people in deep trouble around the world. Jimmy Carter was also a dedicated humanitarian.

Moreover, it was clear that we would not return into Cambodia with any military or any other force to reverse the Khmer Rouge coup. A military response was simply politically impossible. But assisting refugees, particularly since we were part of the cause for the human tragedy, was.

When I arrived in Bangkok, we may have had 10-15 thousand refugees in country. The embassy had a refugee office and we were processing some applications for entrance into the U.S. Lionel Rosenblatt, who is one of the real heroes of this story, was relentless in trying to protect those refugees. But in 1978, the program was not large.

It became a massive program during my tour. The war created about 600-700 thousand Cambodian refugees. Then there was the outflow from Vietnam too, which probably ranged in the 200-300 or perhaps even more. There was the outflow from Laos of perhaps

200,000. During the period I was in Bangkok, I would estimate that approximately 1 million people of Indochina became refugees, and countless numbers were displaced in their own country. We conducted negotiations with all the countries involved; we tried to get the pertinent UN agencies more deeply involved; we organized or prodded others to hold international conferences on this human tragedy. We made sure that all relevant U.S. agencies were kept informed of events on the ground through our continual reporting; one huge stimulus was Mrs. Carter's trip to Thailand for a first hand view of the situation in November, 1979. We had asked for a visible major response from Washington and they decided that a visit by the First Lady would have a maximum impact. It was a difficult moment for Mrs. Carter because her trip started soon after the Iranian hostage crisis began and she was deeply worried. Her visit to Thailand was a transforming event, which helped immeasurably in making the U.S. and the world understand the depth of the crisis, and forcing attention to it and encouraging the world to respond. She was enormously helpful, there and subsequently.

We thought up many schemes to get food into Cambodia, including via air drops. We got full support from Washington. Henry Owen, then on the NSC staff, was a bulldozer and would call me frequently to see whether we needed anything. I could not have asked for better back-stopping from Washington. The international agencies unfortunately were not as forthcoming. We had major battles with some of them; they were slow on the draw and initially inadequate for the task. At one stage, I was going to have a press conference to denounce the UNHCR for its desultory behavior, but my staff talked me out of it. As far as I could tell, there were no policy impediments to more active UN participation; it was bureaucratic inertia. I would make one exception to this generalization: the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) was enormously energetic and helpful and the embassy built a good relationship with it.

Many, many NGO's also set up shop in Thailand, most of which were useful. The IRC (International Rescue Committee) created a Citizens' Commission on Indochinese refugees; it sponsored a march to the Cambodian border to highlight the refugees' plight; and sponsored trips to refugee camps by Joan Baez and Winston Churchill, Jr. So the plight was increasingly dramatized and that further heightened the world's concern for these refugees.

One of the many highlights of this story was the establishment of the first refugee camp under the management of the UNHCR at Sakeo. The first UNHCR camp leader was Mark Malloy Brown, who went on to much greater things. Unlike some of his colleagues he was a dynamo and only 26 or so. When the Khmer Rouge fled before the Vietnam attack we established a camp for the dependents of the Khmer Rouge, who were arriving in Thailand half starving, and in terrible shape. This was the camp that Mrs. Carter visited, the only one then around. She spent the day there and, as I said, helped transform the American view of the refugee problem. The visit itself was prepared in two or three days. I got a call on a Thursday, I think, telling me that Mrs. Carter wanted to come and visit refugees. She arrived in Thailand on Sunday, I think.

The Sakeo refugees were truly in terrible shape and thus aroused enormous sympathy.

They had left their homes without anything and depended for survival on the bits that others gave them. They had few friends.

The NGOs represented many national and international efforts and were enormously helpful. This is the kind of challenge for which NGOs are created – large disasters requiring major assistance. One of the NGOs established a feeding station from which Cambodian farmers would come from as much as 50-60 miles to get seeds as well as some food. The embassy helped enlarge this project because it was obviously serving at least two good goals. Numerous other NGO activities could be cited. The embassy had an excellent, dedicated, staff working on refugee problems; it can be proud of its accomplishment. We had a large processing unit for those wanting to come to the U.S. and a sizeable refugee protection unit.

Lionel Rosenblatt, who led the refugee section was incredible, a real dynamo on this disaster. He would call me from a remote area to report that one refugee was being mistreated, or being pushed back; he wanted me to call the foreign minister immediately to correct the situation. Lionel devoted his life and soul to these refugees. He had that unique ability to care as much for one as for a thousand.

There were constant debates on the number of refugees that might be coming. We consistently tried to estimate that population, but the ever changing refugee flow made it hard. My attitude was to err on side of over-estimation both in providing basic goods and preparing for them in Thailand. If it didn't turn out to be so big, then we might have some surplus food; on the other hand, under-estimation could be a major human disaster.

I was pleased with the embassy performance. There may a few "snipers" who might have had some minor disagreements with our efforts, but I think by and large the embassy helped save a huge population. I was personally criticized for a number of things; for example, of undermining the new Vietnamese created Cambodian government because our assistance went directly to the refugees near the border, and not through the new Cambodian puppet government in Phnom Penh. Father Ted Hesburgh of Notre Dame denounced me for conducting a "covert" war using humanitarian means to undermine another government. The British press was led by John Pilcher, often negative, and saw our efforts as trying to re-fight the Vietnam War. I had on my staff an employee, who was accused of being the leader of a covert action under the disguise of a humanitarian program. On the other hand, I received much more support, which drowned out the negative comments.

The refugee challenge for two years became the concern of all embassy sections. My wife spent a huge amount of time with refugees on the border and mobilizing the American community in Bangkok. She had good rapport with the NGOs, many of which were familiar to her through her work with the IRC. All of the embassy sections pitched in and it became the basic core of our effort. There was some criticism, particularly from the American business community, which felt that I was paying too much attention to the refugees and not enough to their problems. They felt that our other interests in Thailand were being neglected because of the refugee problem. I thought that I was giving the

other issues adequate time, but obviously not as much as some people would have liked.

Many of our officers got personally involved trying to assist refugees. It was the only way our efforts could be successful. I felt some moral compulsion, but even more importantly it was clear that without the ambassador's personal imprimatur the efforts could not have been as successful as they had to be. There may have been other ways to organize our effort, but I chose one which called for much of my personal time and attention.

By the time I left the post, we had an effective refugee program. The refugee numbers had stabilized. There were always problems related to re-settlement, but the U.S. had taken major steps to ameliorate those. One of my major internal embassy problems was with INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service), which was responsible for processing applicants for entrance into the U.S. INS was turning down large numbers of Khmer applicants. Under the parole program, applicants would be processed by INS in Bangkok and then if approved their papers were sent to Washington. INS was finding all sorts of reasons to turn down applicants. So one day, I went to the processing unit and spent the day processing some cases devoting my time mostly to those applicants who had been rejected by INS. The more I talked to these refugees, the more upset I became. I thought INS was way off base and rigid in their approach to determining who was a refugee and who was an economic migrant. I sent a cable to the State Department and the Attorney General asking that the guidelines given INS processors be changed to allow for more flexibility. On my next trip to Washington, I had a meeting with the Attorney General, Smith; he was very helpful. I also had a meeting with the associate attorney general, Rudy Giuliani, who also was very concerned. He was actually the No.3 man in the Justice Department responsible for some of the more politically sensitive programs of that department. We got changes in the guidance to the INS field operators, which opened the doors for a greater number of approvals. The local INS representative was not pleased with my activities.

Fortunately, I had a great staff, totally committed to help the Indochinese refugees as best they can. Our political section was also a very good one, as later confirmed by the fact that almost that entire staff became ambassadors. The economic section was not quite on the same level, but it performed adequately.

When I left Thailand, the refugee problem was still large and much more had to be done. But I was satisfied that the embassy had made a big difference.

Q: I am interested in your view that even after our withdrawal from Vietnam, we still had considerable influence in South-east Asia. Could you expand on that?

ABRAMOWITZ: After conquering South Vietnam, Hanoi did not try to expand its influence beyond their borders, at least in the period following our withdrawal. The predictions of the "dominos falling" just didn't happen; the Vietnamese did not try to spread their communism in the area except in support of the Thai communist insurgents. Secondly, we were in continual touch with the Chinese, who, as I said earlier, were quite

wary of the Vietnamese. China also cut back on its support of insurgents. Third, the countries in the area adjusted well to the new situation – e.g., the Thais normalized relations with the Chinese, which have boomed ever since. At the same time, we drew closer to Thailand with the expansion of our assistance programs, new defense programs, and our massive resettlement efforts. We tried through our diplomatic efforts to make clear as best we could that our withdrawal from Vietnam did not signal a diminution of our interest in the region. Certainly our deep involvement in the refugee situation was a significant boost to our influence.

Perhaps the major reason we did not lose much influence in the area was that Southeast Asia countries did not notice much difference in the political situation in the region even after we left Vietnam. Both China and Vietnam were internally absorbed after Vietnam fell. They concluded that the United States was still a major power with resources and capabilities that were of interest to them. In fact, thanks to the Chinese-Vietnamese split, the Thais managed to get rid of their own communist insurgents. So what little did change that did occur was mostly positive for the Thais particularly. Moreover, the Vietnam legacy and tremendous American expenditures contributed to rapid growth in the whole area. The "gloom and doom" predictions about the consequences of our withdrawal from Vietnam were flatly wrong.

This is not to say that were not occasions when a Thai official would mention our Vietnam experience. But by the time I arrived in Bangkok, three years had passed since our withdrawal. Although the Thais wanted our assistance especially against the Vietnamese incursions from Cambodia, they were careful to maintain good relations with us and their neighbors, particularly China. We had a cozy relationship with the Thai military for many years, paying with military assistance. By the late 1970's that exchange was no longer adequate. We still had a good relationship, but a new foundation had to be developed. Both the Thais and we had moved on. We both had also normalized relations with China, the Thai much more quickly.

It is true that the Thais, when I reached Bangkok, were encouraging us to be more proactive in getting the Vietnamese out of the areas they had occupied close to their borders. We were focused on the refugee problem and the involvement of ASEAN in assisting the refugees, and most important for Thailand, reversing Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia. They still viewed us as <u>the</u> power in the area and I guess the American ambassador continued to be seen by many Thais as the man who pulled the levers behind the scenes. This perception was facilitated in part to the uneasiness of the Thai Foreign Ministry in the late 1970's until some major personnel changes occurred.

In 1992, Peter Tarnoff, Dick Holbrooke, and I visited Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand. We engaged senior officials on the question of the Khmer Rouge and what might be done about getting rid of them. I was rather strident on it. One senior Thai Foreign Ministry official turned tome and said: "Mort, things have changed in this region. There are no more American pro-consuls here." He was right; life had changed since my days in Thailand and the countries of the region were far more independent than they had been in my days. The relationship between Thailand and the U.S. has moved far beyond the

1960's and 1970's and even the 1990's. That is all to the good.

Q*: You mentioned that Mrs. Carter came to Thailand . Did you have a lot of visitors who wanted to see the refugee camps*?

ABRAMOWITZ: As I mentioned earlier, I think we hosted about 300 members of Congress during the three years I was ambassador. The refugee situation attracted wide Congressional attention and involvement. It was a big deal – the starving Cambodians, the Vietnamese boat people, the Lao Hmong who were our allies, etc. It was also a fertile area for some good media reporting. All this helped produce wide support in Congress and among the American population in general for the Indochina refugee program.

I rarely met a member of Congress who did not strongly support American efforts. We received adequate financial support for our refugee assistance and re-settlement programs. President Carter's opening the doors to the U.S. for 164,000 refugees for two years – a total of 328,000 was un-precedent and it is still a high-water mark in our refugee admission programs. He didn't have any major opposition in Congress for the unique program.

Our earliest visitors were Senators Danforth, Baucus and Sasser. We took them to the border and let them see the concentration of Cambodians. We showed them where we wanted to provide assistance. They returned to Washington and became real advocates for our requests. I remember Danforth saying to me that, besides his marriage, his efforts in behalf of Indochinese refugees was the most important thing he had done in his public life. As an ordained minister, he was overwhelmed by the desperation of the humans huddled together in camps on the Thai border.

In fact the outpouring of pro-refugee sentiment attracted many visitors to Thailand. I became sort of a tour guide for American officials and private citizens. If it was a small group, they stayed in my guest house; the larger groups had to stay in hotels. But I went with most of them to the border; I always briefed them on the Thai situation. I spent a lot of time with visitors. When I would return to Washington, I would call on some of them, particularly those who were so helpful to us. One of those was Congressman Steve Solarz, who remained actively involved. Another was Senator Barbara Mikulski. And there were numerous others. I appreciated all of the help we got.

I mentioned earlier that CBS wanted to film a special report on what an American embassy did day in and day out. Secretary Vance decided that the embassy in Bangkok would be a fine example. Ed Bradley and his crew spent about two weeks with us. They went to the border and held interviews with the refugees and the NGOs working there. The show was televised on a Saturday night at 10:00 p.m. – not a time to attract many viewers regardless of the subject. It did not get high ratings, although I was told that it was still seen by some 4 million people.

There is one other story about my tour that maybe of interest. After the election of Ronald Reagan, I was invited to participate in a conference in Ditchley, England in

November 1980. One the way there, my wife and I stopped in Athens to see Bob McCloskey, then our ambassador to Greece. We stayed with him. The day after we arrived – or two days – Sheppie and I walked to buy a copy of The Harald Tribune (European edition). On the front page, there was a big headline: "Two envoys to be removed by new administration." The story was that Bill Gleysteen, then in Korea, and I were targeted for replacement. The information apparently came from Ray Cline who allegedly was representing the incoming administration on East Asia and had given an interview while in Singapore. He may also have visited Bangkok before giving the interview, but I am not certain about that. Needless to say, The Herald Tribune story came as a bolt out of the blue, particularly since, as I have mentioned, I had recommended Ray to Elliot Richardson when he was looking for an INR director. It brought back all the trouble I had over the Korean troop withdrawal.

Q: Let me ask you about the internal Thai political situation. Was the country politically stable during your tour?

ABRAMOWITZ: Thailand had had a communist insurgency for a number of years, but by the time I arrived it was fading – I might even say that it had faded. The Vietnam War was over which was a major factor, because there had always been a debate whether the insurgency in Thailand was a purely domestic affair or whether the Vietnamese or the Chinese had inspired it. Moreover Sino-Vietnamese tensions erupted. Whatever the origins, the support of either of these two countries became minimal by 1978. By 1980, the Thai communist insurgency was over.

Thailand did have a problem with its Muslim population. It was not a major issue then, but more like a thorn in the side. There was a small liberation movement, in the three southern provinces getting some support from Malaysia. There was an occasional murder and infrequent violence. At that point the Thai considered it more a nuisance than a real problem. It should have been viewed as a portent of a more powerful movement if the situation in the late 1970s and 1980s were not dealt with adequately. Today, the Muslim independence movement is a very serious challenge with thousands of lives lost. During my tour, the Muslims were seen by the Thai as a matter to be monitored but not of great concern. I discussed the issue with the Thai government occasionally to encourage it to take steps to minimize the Muslims' unrest. I visited the area both to show our interest in the issue to deal with the question of Thai attacks on fleeing Vietnamese boat people, but we never took any action. The Thais unfortunately did neglect the rising tide of anger, which now has turned into almost a tidal wave. The Thais were very shortsighted on this issue and still don't know how to deal with this insurgency.

As for the political situation, I arrived soon after a coup had taken place. A military-led government had taken power. Eventually, there were elections and a new constitution was written. The prime minister when I arrived was General Kriangsak. He tried to run a government, while finding ways to satisfy the various competing factions in the military as well as pleasing the palace. There was no question that the military ran the government despite some gestures toward democracy, such as civilizing the prime minister. It was still a civilian government dominated by the military. The constitution was written to

assure that the military had a major say over policy, for example, a certain number of seats in the parliament was reserved for military officers. The King was a major player, behind the curtains; he provided a calming conservative view. He tried to insure that there would be no violence among the military. Stability was his principal concern.

The push for "democracy" was not central to U.S. foreign policy as today. I did a small amount of preaching with a variety of Thais and occasionally the prime minister. I think it is fair to say that despite the military-run government, the Thais were inching their way to a more open society. The government did focus on important issues such as economic development, agricultural improvement, etc. They had a long way to go, but they were starting to move in the right direction and the country was beginning to take off. The regime was not oppressive; it lacked a process which would allow the voice of the people to be heard by the policy makers. The newspapers were fairly free; there were elections; there was a constitution. I would describe it as a relaxed, somewhat authoritarian government. There had been so many coups in Thailand. While we opposed the military did what they wanted. We were concerned in minimizing violence and in being able to continue to provide refugee assistance to Thailand. Like many others, we were also interested in maintaining a stable South East Asia, urging regional cooperation primarily through ASEAN. As I said before, the biggest boost for an expanded ASEAN regional role was the Cambodian war.

The U.S. government wanted to see more democratic development but it was not a major concern because 1) there had been a war in a neighboring country and 2) the region was still not stable particularly when the refugee flow became a flood, nor was Thailand a totalitarian country. The region needed a stable Thailand, sympathetic to the plight of the Indochinese refugees and willing to assist in a humanitarian effort.

Many Thai officers had been trained in the United States or by Americans in Thailand. One of the interesting aspects of Thailand is the quality of its civilian government officials. Half of them had PhDs from American universities; they had a higher level of competence in some areas than would be found in many other governments including ours. The extent of the influence of American education was the presence of some 200,000 graduates of U.S, higher education facilities in the Thai work force in the late 1970's. Thailand placed a priority on higher level education. For a child to go to the U.S. to attend universities and colleges was the goal of every Thai parent. Our long relationship with the Thai military fit their need. The U.S. trained them, we were there when needed, they joined us in Vietnam. A close relationship developed between the two military institutions, which was slightly damaged by our withdrawal from Vietnam and our subsequent relinquishment of almost all of our bases in Thailand. But none of our actions in South East Asia had changed fundamentally the military-to-military relationship in my time.

Let me finish my discussion about our relationships with the Thai military during my time there. They wanted us for three reasons: 1) to provide insurance for Thai independence; 2) to provide American military equipment; and 3) to preserve ties between members of our two military forces, forged during training in the U.S. as well by

service by U.S. officers in Thailand. Our relationships with the Thai military were thus close, but so close that we could be and were charged with interfering in Thai politics.

There were close ties between the military and the king. Mrs. Carter came to Thailand to emphasize our concern for Indochinese refugees. The prime minister assigned the Army's commander-in-chief to be her escort while she was in Thailand. We visited several camps along the Thai-Cambodian border. Mrs. Carter stopped periodically to talk to the refugees. The general became quite nervous because the most important assignment to him was to insure that Mrs. Carter not be late for her appointment with the King. That was all he cared about. He kept urging me: "We got to move! We got to move!" Mrs. Carter was most interested in getting a feel for the situation and the condition of the refugees. I use this vignette just to make the point that the commander-in-chief of the Army, as well as most of his colleagues and staff were devote royalists. The King is, of course, highly revered in the country.

Q: Tell us a little about our military assistance program to Thailand and the challenges it created for you?

ABRAMOWITZ: The Thai military focused on one issue after the Vietnamese approached the border of Thailand. They constantly stated their fear of a Vietnamese invasion. The Thai prime minister asked me to come to see him early on and to convey to Washington how seriously the Thai viewed the situation; he said if the Vietnamese forces continued moving towards the border, the Thais would invade Cambodia. I was skeptical about that threat; I don't know that the Thais had an adequate force ready for such an undertaking, but I warned Washington of the prime minister's threat. I tried to calm the Thais down lest they proceed with actions for which they might be severely hurt. The Vietnamese continued to occasionally bomb some refugee groups but stopped their advance toward Thailand. An invasion of Thailand was not on the Vietnamese agenda. I understood the Thais' concerns and might have had the same attitude if I had been in their situation, but objectively, I could not envisage a Vietnamese invasion of Thailand.

In part to bolster Thais military confidence and to assure continued unfettered U.S. access to the border and refugee areas, I was always trying to find ways to increase our military assistance program. General Prem, the commander in chief of the Army, was determined to get more tanks for his soldiers. I was willing to go along as long as our requirements were met and General Prem was key. I made a major effort to get these tanks. After a couple of months of nothing, I finally sent a cable to Mike Armacost, who was in the Pentagon in my old job. I told Mike that I had an appointment with the General to discuss a variety of matters, but that I knew that the first question he would have would be the status of his request for tanks. I asked Mike what I should say. Do I stick to our usual line that they "were on their way", or do I tell him the truth. I ended the message by insisting that they be shipped <u>immediately</u>. The message was a little sterner than what I have described here, but in any event, it produced results and I could tell the General truthfully that the tanks were to be loaded on a ship and sent on their way.

Getting "surplus" hardware from the American military was almost always a struggle.

The tanks that the Thais wanted were not surplus and came directly out of our inventory. The army was unhappy. I ran into a similar situation when I was involved in the issue of sending "Stingers" to the Afghan mujahideen in 1986-87. Our military objected because the transfer of these weapons to the Afghan would reduce our stock of "Stingers" below the numbers determined to be needed for our own defensive purposes. That issue created a major policy dispute which was resolved by Fred Iklé's intervention at DoD. In the late 1970's, the military had established a level of tank requirements which it was reluctant to diminish.

The tanks did arrive in two or three shipments. Every time one of the shipments was unloaded, we held a public celebration. We may have in fact held ceremonies both at dock-side and when they were officially turned over to the Thais. We milked the public relations potential of these shipments until the milk ran dry.

I frequently asked for military hardware. We had a small MAAG unit which was helpful in getting the hardware. I must say that I felt several times that I was not clear what the MAAG – and the CIA – were up to. AID was no problem in this respect; I knew their program well and it was totally transparent. The economic assistance program was small; I tried to get it increased partly because the king would on occasions ask for help for his agricultural activities. I viewed our economic assistance program not as a major force in the Thai economic development, but as a stimulant for some specific economic efforts which I felt were useful for the country. The total economic assistance program was just not large enough to be a major factor, about $25 million. I don't think we could have made a good case for a sizeable increase.

Both economic and military assistance were for me at this time essentially functional tools for other purposes. The Thai military initially had a perception problem; they saw threats that were not evident to me or to most outside observers. They did have a legitimate concern about the Vietnamese massed on their borders; that could be viewed as a threat. The economic assistance program in certain regions allowed us to have some impact on economic development of that region. But I also viewed it more as a tool to influence Thai actions on other matters of real concern to the U.S.

The aid programs helped achieve some broad policy goals. Both programs had inherent merits, but they were important but not essential for either Thai military or economic development; they were important to us reaching our objectives.

I should mention that my relationship with the CIA station chief and headquarters ultimately came back to haunt me. But that happened after I left Thailand. Dan Arnold was the station chief in Bangkok. I accepted his appointment even though I had been advised by Dick Sneider to shun him. Sneider, for whom Arnold had worked in Korea, had had a lot of trouble with Arnold. I really didn't know Arnold and despite his reputation, I decided to accept his assignment because I don't like to reject people I don't know personally. I thought Arnold did a decent job in Thailand; we seemed to work well together and he consulted with me frequently. I thought I knew what the station was involved in, but I could never be sure; there may well have been some activities in

Cambodia with the Khmer Rouge about which I was never informed. As Arnold was due for reassignment, he asked for my assistance; his reputation in Washington was poor and he was concerned about his next job. I did try to help him, but he did not get the job at headquarters that he wanted. After his departure from post, I read in an intelligence report that Arnold was returning to Bangkok to be an advisor to the Thai government on intelligence matters. That blew my mind; I thought it was outrageous, not to mention very risky for our own intelligence efforts. As it turned out, the Arnold role was greatly overstated in the intelligence report. He did come to see me to describe his duties. Nevertheless, I was quite negative about the whole situation and said so in plain English. My attitude probably poisoned our relationship.

I returned to Washington about a month after a military coup in Thailand. I might parenthetically add that the embassy handled that coup well. I had left Bangkok for Hong Kong and returned immediately. Some military officers tried to overthrow Prime Minister Prem. In a quiet way we helped the Prem government and the coup was quickly resolved. Since as happens periodically officers were unhappy about their promotions, etc, it was not a difficult matter to resolve. General Prem returned to power and most of the rancor dissipated, at least overtly.

I have an amusing story on this coup. The general leading the coup had returned from Burma and was pardoned. I was at a party and talked to the supreme commander, General Saiyut and the Korean military attache. I asked the attaché, with some malice, whether the Korean military, under similar circumstances, would allow a coup leader to return to Korea a free man. The answer was direct: we would hang him if he returned. I then asked General Saiyut what his views were of the Korean approach. He smiled and said, "Mort, It doesn't snow in Thailand." I used that phrase as a heading for a piece for Newsweek magazine on another coup in Thailand in 1992.

Let me go back to the Arnold story. When I returned from Thailand, I thought I had a pretty good reputation as someone who could handle crises. But I knew that the conservatives in Washington were after my scalp, primarily stimulated by Arnold and another one of my detractors; Dick Stillwell, who, as I mentioned, thought I was responsible for the Carter decision to withdraw our troops from Korea and who also mistrusted me because I had worked for Admiral Gayler, whom he detested. When I returned in 1981, six months after the new administration had taken power, I did not know what my next assignment might be. Dick Kennedy, then the Undersecretary of State for Management, told me that Secretary Haig wanted me to be his Assistant Secretary for East Asia. I readily agreed; it was a job I really wanted. I had met Haig briefly at a chief of mission conference, which was in part devoted to griping about the "Troika" (Meese, Deaver and Baker) who were interfering in foreign affairs. I had also known Haig slightly when I was working for Richardson and he was at the NSC as Kissinger's main aide.

I warned Kennedy that my nomination might be an uphill battle because there were some people in town who were after my scalp. He told me not to worry; the Secretary wanted me. I thought that in light of my previous connections with Haig, brief as they may been,

we would get along fine and I could serve him well. I also asked Kennedy whether Holdridge, the then assistant secretary, had been informed. The answer was: "No." John was a good friend and I thought that he should know what was being discussed. So I told John about my conversation with Kennedy; he was shocked. In any case, about two weeks later, Kennedy called me to tell me that there was opposition to my nomination and that the Secretary had decided not to move forward with it. I would be offered another job. I wasn't surprised by that turn of events; I knew here was considerable animus against the nomination in some parts of the new administration.

I was then offered the ambassadorship to the Philippines, while Mike Armacost was chosen for Indonesia. A few weeks later, I was told that some high level people at Defense objected to my assignment to Manila. DoD of course had a deep interest in the Philippine job because of its major base structure in that country. The main objector was the undersecretary for political affairs in DoD – namely Dick Stillwell. So someone came up with the bright idea of just switching Mike and me for the two jobs. Bill Clark, Haig's deputy secretary, called me to tell me about this new development. I was still upset with the whole business. I thought the way they treated me was a disgrace and that view lingers still.

So I went off to study Indonesian for two months. Ed Masters, our ambassador in Djakarta, was instructed to tell – informally – the Indonesians of my appointment. My name was not unfamiliar to the Indonesians. My work in Thailand and the area in general, including my tour in CINCPAC and in the Pentagon, had given me an acquaintance with many senior officials. I had worked with the Indonesians on a number of projects for them, especially after Vietnam fell. The Indonesians were quite wary of the Vietnamese, seeing them as a threat to their own security, which we tried to ease to some extent with some increase in military assistance.

Masters carried out his instructions, but later reported that the feedback he had gotten from the Indonesians was primarily negative. Suharto didn't want me. I could not understand that. After that news from Djakarta, I was ready to call it quits. One close Indonesian friend, Benny Murdani, the head of Indonesian intelligence and at that time, probably carried more influence with Suharto than any other Indonesian official, told me not to be overly concerned and that he would change the president's mind. I never heard from him, but after two months or so the Department went ahead and asked for *agrément*. There was no answer to that either. I finally told Haig's office that I just couldn't hang around the Department without an assignment. So Haig called the Indonesian Foreign Minister, who told him "the well had been poisoned."

We finally found out what the block was. Suharto had been given a memorandum drafted by Ed Meese on White House stationery, which I subsequently saw courtesy of Jack Anderson. The Indonesians confirmed to me that such a letter had been delivered to Suharto. The memo was in essence an objection to my appointment as ambassador – or perhaps any job in the Reagan administration. The old chestnut of my urging withdrawal from Korea was included; it also mentioned that Sheppie had worked for a democrat, Ed Muskie, and held me responsible for a long list of other iniquities. That memo had been

given to Suharto, allegedly by someone who had his eyes on the ambassadorship to Indonesia. Obviously, the memo gave Suharto much pause; why should he accept an ambassador when it appeared the White House had so many doubts about him. Suharto did not know me. He was relying entirely on members of our government. I certainly understood Suharto's negative reaction.

I learned about all of this after the *agrément* had been withdrawn and the Department sought a new assignment for me. It was clear to me that I was the victim of a backroom conspiracy that succeeded. I learned later that the man who gave Suharto the letter was subsequently proposed as ambassador to Indonesia. The Foreign Service, led by Marshall Green, rose in indignation, partly because he was not a Foreign Service officer, but more importantly because he had served in Indonesia in the CIA, was a big friend of the president, and took care of his son while he was in the U.S. Marshall was well aware of the man's activities in Indonesia and thought the appointment was a serious mistake. In any case, the Arnolds and Stillwells of this world did me in and blocked my assignment to Indonesia. As I said earlier, I learned much about this from Jack Anderson; he just sent me the memo after telling me on the phone that he had something which might interest me. I didn't know Anderson, so I never filled out the whole story for him. When he called me about the memo, it was the first time I had ever talked to him.

I should note that these travails took about six months. I returned from Thailand in August 1981. I was supposed to be in EA till February 1982. Soon after that, I received the copy of the memo from Anderson. So I was in limbo for that whole period, not a happy time.

In light of all this, I went to Rand for six months to do some writing. After the mess that had been created in those six months, the Department was simply ready to let me do anything I wanted. I was still considering retirement from the Foreign Service. I may have discussed my situation with Haig once or twice; Walt Stoessel, the then deputy secretary, was no help. Nor were other Seventh floor principals. The sole exception was Bill Clark, Stoessel's predecessor. He apparently did try to find a suitable post. I think Haig was embarrassed by the whole sequence of mishandled actions. I found the Seventh floor lack of support disappointing. I was also frustrated by their subsequent description of events; they distorted what had happened. I had become something of a pariah. Having made some real contribution in Bangkok and then offered a variety of jobs which never materialized, left me amazed.

I read a lot in Rand's Washington office and wrote a couple of papers. One was on Cambodia which after having read, I decided not to publish it. I didn't believe that it added much to the already known situation in Cambodia and its neighbors.

I used the time at Rand to begin conversations with various people about jobs in private industry. A couple of oil companies approached me, but nothing concrete was ever settled. It was a very unproductive year between the time I left Thailand and my next assignment. The period at Rand let me look at my situation from a more dispassionate point of view.

At about this time, something else happened which made me even more disappointed with the Department. I was asked by an office in the Department to give a speech as part of a USIA program, but then subsequently informed that the agency had in effect "blacklisted" me. I was on a list of people who should not be part of any USIA sponsored program in a foreign country. I, a senior State Department official, was not to represent the U.S. government in any way or shape. Scott Thompson, the deputy director of USIA and a friend, told me all this. It apparently all went back to the Meese memo. From being considered for assistant secretary to being unemployed – and unemployable – was quite a plunge. Fortunately, I still got paid.

Soon after Shultz became Secretary of State in mid-1982, he asked me to come to his office. I assumed that some people in whom he had confidence had suggested that he talk to me. I didn't know Shultz at all. We talked about China mainly; the meeting took about 45 minutes during which he listened carefully and made a few comments; there was never any discussion about another assignment. In this period our relationship with China was still rocky. Although I had not published anything recently on China, I had continued to follow events closely.

Sometime in this period, I talked to a number of people about China, including Paul Wolfowitz, then in DoD. I think Paul may have talked to Shultz about me. However there seemed to be very little movement in trying to find a job for me. Rick Burt, the assistant secretary for EUR, called me to tell me that he would like to nominate me to be our ambassador to Spain. That sounded pretty good to me at the time, even though I knew precious little about Spain.

Then, in a complete surprise to a lot of people, the administration fired all the leadership of our arms control efforts, the chief U.S. delegation to the START talks, the head of ACDA, and the chief of the delegation to MBFR. In one fell swoop, all the leading figures on arms control were eliminated. Ken Adelman became the head of ACDA. Max Kampelman became the chief of our START delegation. Before all this was announced, Shultz called me and asked me to head up our delegation to the MBFR negotiations.

I told the Secretary that I thought I was under consideration for the ambassadorship to Spain. He said that Spain was no longer available. That left me little choice and I told Shultz that I needed to talk to my wife first. I said I would call him the next day. The choice was really MBFR or retirement. In truth, I knew a little about MBFR – from my days in the Pentagon when the negotiations began – and furthermore, I never much liked long drawn out multi-lateral negotiations. Sheppie urged me to accept the Secretary's offer and after further reflection I accepted the assignment. I also discussed the offer with some friends. I knew that the talks had become a ritualistic exercise and the possibility of reaching some acceptable agreement was remote. Everybody encouraged me to take it.

Q: Any idea how the Secretary came to his decision?

ABRAMOWITZ: I didn't know, probably that I was available and had, except in the

White House, a pretty decent reputation. I am sure there were people around him urging him to give me another ambassadorial assignment. I also suspect that MBFR did not rank very high on the Seventh Floor agenda. There was very little movement in the negotiations, but increased enormously the Department's paper flow. Our delegation sent volumes of cables back to Washington. I can't say that I looked at the assignment with relish. In fact, later when I was the head of INR, I issued instructions to my staff assistants that I wanted to see important material on all subjects except: MBFR and Cyprus. Ironically, I subsequently became ambassador to Turkey where I had to become quite familiar with the Cyprus problem, which has also produced endless reams of paper.

I guess I viewed the MBFR offer as the last opportunity to stay in the Foreign Service, which I had until then enjoyed, and I decided to accept the appointment. Had Sheppie advised against it, I probably would not have taken the job. So in 1983, I became the head of the U.S. delegation to the MBFR with the rank of ambassador. In retrospect, I am glad I stayed in the Service, although I quit after a year.

Q: You said you resigned from the MBFR assignment after a year. Why so soon?

ABRAMOWITZ: The work was boring and left me quite distressed. When I took the assignment, I knew about the difficulties of making progress and the lack of interest in both the U.S. and Russian governments. Nevertheless, I was determined to take the whole issue seriously, I quickly immersed myself in the present and past situations and got up to date. The subject matter was not of great interest to me; it was not one to which I could have devoted my career. But I did learn as much about it as I could.

Q: Do you remember what you did in preparation for that tour?

ABRAMOWITZ: It was a new field for me and I took the assignment very seriously. I tried to learn all of the arcane truth and myths surrounding the negotiations; I read voluminous correspondence and lengthy treatises on the subject. If I had a choice of assignments, I don't think I would have spent more than two minutes on the choice. I studied hard and talked to many.

One day, I went to Rick Burt to talk about some of the issues facing MBFR. Before I got very far, he said: "Mort, you know more about this stuff than anyone else here." It was a big educational job on an arcane subject.

When I landed in Vienna, the negotiations had long been frozen. Meetings were held which were ritualistic recitals of the various positions each side had maintained for years. Basically we insisted the basis of the negotiations be on counting manpower and the Soviets insisting on counting armaments. We never could reach agreement on that basic difference. It appeared to me that this could be a lifetime job.

During my tour, the situation did change somewhat. Our delegation developed a proposal which gave something to the Soviets in the hopes of enticing them to agree to a very small interim deal to advance the negotiations. Our proposal led to two NSC meetings,

both chaired by Ronald Reagan. I was the chief briefer. State supported the proposal (State loves agreements by nature); DoD opposed it, because essentially it was opposed to reaching any agreement with the Soviets. The Pentagon was perfectly happy to carry on negotiations leading nowhere. I thought our proposals protected our basic interests, while paying obeisance to the situation, and making a small step forward.

In the final analysis, the talks made no progress while I was the head of the U.S. delegation. The process revolved around "rounds" which lasted for about eight weeks. Each week started with a plenary session. Then we would consult with our allies to prepare our positions for the next plenary. After each eight week period, there was a hiatus of about four weeks, theoretically for each government to review what had happened and to formulate its plans for the next round. I used the four weeks quite fruitfully; Sheppie and I traveled through many countries of central Europe. We managed to see a lot of Europe and to learn about a continent with which I was not as familiar as Asia or even Latin America.

One night during our effort to mount a new proposal, Sheppie and I went to the Vienna opera. In the middle of the performance, I got a call from Ken Dam, the deputy secretary of state. Or rather, Dam called the embassy who sent the duty officer to the opera house to get me out. I called Dam from the opera house pay phone; he wanted to me to come back immediately to Washington to discuss our new proposal.

During the sessions, we were busy with "make-work." I consulted with our allies, I consulted with the Soviets. There was constant social interaction. I spent a lot of time just meeting with Austrian officials and foreign diplomats stationed in Vienna and with visitors. I did learn one important thing about the Soviet delegation. I was struck by their extraordinary feeling of inferiority when they compared themselves to us and our perceived capabilities. They at least saw us as "seven feet" tall, incredible omnipotent. That was a revelation.

I never saw any hope of the MBFR negotiations coming to a successful resolution or even a partial agreement. It would have taken a *deus ex machina* to change the environment. I didn't see that happening, but in fact, it did later on, and that was the end of the Soviet Union. Incidentally we changed our position on conventional forces in Europe when the Berlin wall came down and the Soviet Union became Russia. Both sides wanted an agreement and we adapted armaments on the basis of the agreement.

I developed some close friendships with members of the allied delegations, some of which have continued to this day. Since the numbers of people working on MBFR was rather limited, we were a small fraternity pretty much left to its own devices, and we developed a close camaraderie. In the end, for me it was a wasted year. As I mentioned earlier, after a year, I simply told the Department I was leaving. I didn't ask for the Secretary's permission; I just told them I was through with MBFR. That produced a certain amount of consternation in Washington.

My year in Vienna was a turbulent period for me intellectually and emotionally because I

didn't see that I was doing much of any use.

Q: So in 1984 you told the Secretary and the Department that you were leaving the MBFR delegation. What happened next?

ABRAMOWITZ: My friends were not pleased with my decision and I knew that Shultz was upset with me. I wanted to return to Asian affairs. I talked to Rich Armitage who was then Assistant Secretary for ISA in DoD. I told him that I wanted to make a survey of the region on his behalf to describe the changes I found and the policy challenges the U.S. faced. Rich was an old friend, as was Paul Wolfowitz, who was then the assistant secretary for the region. Rich found DoD funds to pay for my travels. That enabled me to dig into something that I wanted to do as well as serving their needs. It was freedom getting back to East Asia.

I traveled for about three weeks in December 1984 to Korea, Japan, China, Thailand, Philippines. I didn't go to Indonesia because I was still upset with Suharto and his entourage for their rejection. In the Philippines, I stayed with our ambassador, Steve Bosworth, as I did in all the countries I visited, I talked to numerous people – many of whom I had known from previous assignments and who were still influential with their governments and some of the newer political and business leaders. My most important finding from the trip was that Marcos was finished in the Philippines, his administration was totally venal, and that our task was to find a way to ease him out of the country with minimal disruption. It took another eighteen months before the actual ouster, but I thought it was important to start looking at accelerating it. I did not predict an immediate coup, but it was clear to me that Marcos' end was in sight and that we'd better plan for it. My recommendation was not received with great enthusiasm, even from those whom I knew well – e.g., Armacost, Wolfowitz, Armitage or Bosworth. They thought it was premature and that situation was not as critical as I suggested. They were certainly worried about Marcos' roll, but none of them thought that one could see the light at the end of the tunnel yet. It is true that I had been in the Philippines for three days, which hardly buttressed by radical views. I did manage to talk to a lot of people which led to my conclusions. Of course, my part – the prediction – was the easy part; the difficult part was to develop a transition plan. I could see why people tended to downplay my prediction. It faced them with a serious challenge. It is not easy to screw around in a friend's situation.

Q: After making your report, then what happened?

ABRAMOWITZ: Mike Armacost had come to the conclusion that I would be of real help in Intelligence and research (INR). He also wanted to help me. He persuaded Shultz that my background and experience would be very useful in heading up that bureau. In February, 1985 I became the director of INR (the job was given an assistant secretary designation later that year.) Since it was not yet an assistant secretary position, I did not have to go through Senate confirmation. When the job was upgraded to the assistant secretary level, then I had to go through Senate confirmation. I should mention that the up-grading had been in the works long before I reported to INR; so that I was the beneficiary of someone else's good work. The new designation did not make much

difference to my day-to-day operating responsibilities. But it was a useful step for the Department because it gave the bureau comparable standing in the bureaucratic scheme with regional and other bureaus. It may have given prospective job seekers just a little more interest in the bureau. The Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs was, I believe, upgraded at the same time.

I mentioned previously that I thought INR had an excellent combination of civil servants who had been in the bureau for a long time and a constant in-flow of Foreign Service officers. The civil servants were, for the most part, very capable and thoroughly familiar with the subject matters they handled. A few were institutions. The Foreign Service officers added a field perspective and many also added a good policy perspective and where intelligence analysis could be helpful. This combination produced intelligence findings which were better suited, in terms of substance and presentation, for a policy maker than the commentaries from most other intelligence agencies, whose staffs had never been in policy development positions and frequently never overseas. I think INR had a blend of staff talents and experience unmatched by most other intelligence agencies. That does not mean that other agencies did not have capabilities that INR could not match – e.g., technical competence in weapons systems – but in terms of analysis and of making judgments on the impact of events on policy, I thought that INR was ahead of other agencies. That is not a parochial finding; others have reached similar conclusions.

In 1985, I was again impressed with the competence of some of the civil servants. For example, Eliza Van Hollen (Chris' wife), worked on Afghanistan. I spent a lot of time with her. She was absolutely indispensable to my understanding of events and trends in Afghanistan. I thought she was the most knowledgeable and insightful person on this subject in Washington. I was always seeking her input and she came through every time. She was a gem.

Recruiting Foreign Service officers for INR was a difficult task. By and large, INR was viewed as a "dead end." It was not, from their point of view, a place from which one could influence policies and actions and get noticed. So I spent a lot of time trying to overcome this perception. During my earlier tour, the Foreign Service officers who worked for me had been there when I took over the division; most were very good. But as head of the bureau, I had to keep the influx of Foreign Service officers going. I can't say that I was always successful, particularly in having certain officers assigned to INR, but we made some progress.

In both of my INR assignments, I found that the analysts had one permanent approach to their tasks: they were honest. They called the situations as they saw them, regardless of extraneous factors. There were a few times when I had to take into consideration certain pressures that might somewhat skew the inter-agency process, but that was never true of the analysts; they called the shots as they saw them.

I had very good deputies. I was fortunate in that respect. Dick Clark was one of them; he was a great briefer and an excellent analyst. He was also a good manager with real

concern for his staff. He has had a truly impressive career as a civil servant. My principal deputies were first Frank McNeil followed by Curt Kamman, both of whom I could count on. Jay Taylor, the last of my deputies, was not always popular because he had idiosyncratic views, but he had great creativity and curiosity. Mark Lowenthal, who later became an assistant director in the CIA, was a stellar performer. The *esprit de corps* of the bureau was high. We had good access to the senior officers in the Department. Of course, I had a close relationship with Armacost and I would guess that at least half of our work was to support Armacost in his role in leading the Department's efforts in Afghanistan and the Philippines – both subjects of great interest to me as well. Mike and I discussed those issues – often daily. He would send me memoranda that he had received for my comments or would ask one of his staff to call me for my or INR input.

We also spent considerable time trying to backstop the Secretary. He and Armacost were our main customers, although we also did some work for deputy secretary John Whitehead. INR had always produced a "Morning Summary" which capsulated events that had taken place during the night. It was a widely read document; it was brief and to the point and tailor-made for busy senior policy makers. Sometimes, we were even irreverent. One time, Secretary Baker indicated we might have gone too far when we headlined one of our articles "Who flung Deng?"

Shultz used our products. That access was useful also for enhancing INR standing in the bureaucracy. When I took the INR job, I asked the Secretary for three things: 1) access to him on matters which I considered important; 2) copies of the daily schedules of all the Seventh Floor principals so that I could know what issues they were likely to face each day; and 3) standing invitation to participate in his staff meetings. These accesses differentiated INR from other intelligence agencies; we were part of a policy development agency. In that way our input could be more relevant to the policy maker since we generally knew what was on his mind and where he was coming from. This is not to diminish the importance of CIA's input, for example. It covered most of the issues that INR did, but its input was rarely as timely as ours. Sometimes of course, another agency might have information that we had not yet gotten or its analysis might have been better that ours, but we were better able to tailor our product to the daily needs of the policy maker.

Q: I think there has been a prevailing view in the Department that a bureau's influence depended in great part on the assistant secretary's access to the Secretary and his chief deputies. Do you share that view?

ABRAMOWITZ: That is of course a very important factor, particularly for a bureau with no policy responsibility. It was a determinant of the cogency of our analysis and the morale of our staff. INR's influence on the rest of the Department certainly was in part determined by the relationships that the director had with the Secretary – e.g., Bill Hyland with Henry Kissinger. Of course, Bill's charter went beyond that of a normal INR director because he was also one of his key advisors on Soviet affairs. Hal Saunders was an influential INR director in part because of his expertise on Middle East affairs. Ray Cline, on the other hand, had very little influence either on the Seventh Floor or in the

rest of the Department.

So access to the Secretary was critical. As you suggested, that is a principle of management that governed the operations of the Department. But I think we must add that access was not enough; the bureau had to have a product or ideas that were well thought out and had a logic to it, that it had something useful to say; dumb ideas usually did not get very far regardless of a bureau chief's access. Of course, there were bureaus that had very good products or ideas which would not be adopted for many reasons, not only perfunctory access to the Secretary.

There is however another side to this picture to which I can speak from personal experience. For example, if there was an issue related to terrorism. INR was well situated to know quickly what terrorists were doing, primarily from intercepts of their communications. As quickly as possible we would write a briefing memo to pass on what we had learned and put the information into a current policy context. Our ability to put information together briefly and quickly helped improve INR's reputation on the Seventh Floor. No other bureau in the building could provide a package so quickly which combined intelligence information with thoughtful analysis relevant to a current policy issue. We often had such analysis on a principal's desk within an hour or two of having received it.

Not only were these analyses valuable to the decision makers, but particularly in the case of Armacost and sometimes Shultz, they would return the memos with their notations which gave us useful insights in their interests and policy approaches and suggested further analysis. The staff appreciated these notes because it made them feel that they were producing something beyond papers; they were actually contributing something to policy development at the highest level of the Department.

I have mentioned the desirability of access to the principals. This is not to say that their staffs were not also tremendously useful. As I mentioned during my description of my earlier tour in INR/EA, a principal's staff can be enormously helpful to resolving one issue or another. As director of INR, I did not use them as often as previously because I had so many more contacts with the principals. But the personal staffs were still very important to us and we would save a lot of time using them to pass on questions or views to their principals rather than trying to deal directly with the Secretary or an undersecretary. In addition, these personal staffs knew that we welcomed their participation and would come to our offices for briefings or discussions on subjects in which they were currently involved. So, although I personally may not have dealt with them as often as I did when I was INR/EA, they were very useful and INR maintained close contacts with them. In fact, Marc Grossman was the Deputy Secretary's special assistant; that is how I got to know him and subsequently asked him to be DCM in Turkey – even though he was far too junior for the position according to the Department's organizational charts.

Let me just briefly talk a little about what I considered to be a major problem of the Reagan administration – which I believe exists in the Bush II administration. I am

referring to the adequacy of intelligence collection and analysis and the perceived politicalization of intelligence. It was a fact in the Reagan days, particularly in the CIA. It may not have been as dire as some claim, but politicization certainly did go on particularly under Bill Casey. Casey was action-oriented and he wanted to destroy the Soviet Union. He was a very interesting man; I liked dealing with him because he had ideas and dedication to doing things. He may at times have been out of step with reality, particularly toward the end of his life, but he gave issues considerable thought. Shultz became very unhappy with Casey as time went by. He thought that CIA's output on some issues was more political propaganda than basic analysis. Its product was criticized more and more as time passed. He lost a lot of trust in Casey and I think legitimately so. In addition, there was a feeling that the agency's covert activities were limiting the leadership's time for focusing on improving intelligence analysis. In Bush II this concern seemed very prominent, but I am no longer close to the subject.

As many historians have written, covert actions were often driven not by CIA but by our political leadership. Dwight Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy, all apparently felt that if there was a "bad" government in some foreign country, let's get rid of it! That point of view, I think, became and remained the agency's major concern for a long time. The political leadership's demand on the agency was far greater than could be delivered. In my period, it was the Iran-Contra operation that resulted from a push from the "top." The only significant difference from operations previously dictated by the political leadership was that in the 1980's, the agency was led by a willing co-conspirator, Bill Casey.

I might also mention that the director of INR is the Department's point man to prepare the principals to participate in the USG's "covert action" committee which must pass on all covert action proposals. I was not the Department's representative on this committee but I went with our principal to help him as needed. Most of the meetings were at the undersecretary level where Mike Armacost represented State. The Secretary and Deputies and Armacost and one of my staff, perhaps a regional assistant secretary and I were the only people in State with access to covert action plans and programs. One of my deputies was in charge of the day-to-day activities as well as for relationships with other intelligence agencies. There were specific issues, such as transfer of Stinger weapons to the mujahideen, in which the relevant regional bureau was heavily involved. Although knowledge of covert actions was known by a number of people in the Department, it was obviously not a widely discussed activity. On rare occasions, INR would receive extremely sensitive information which I would personally take to Armacost leaving to them the decision of whether they wanted other people informed. There were occasions during the Iran-Contra process, when a Seventh Floor principal might be briefed by NSA Director Bill Odom, but I would not. Iran-Contra was handled outside the normal governmental processes; I was not made aware of the activity until I was reading FBIS and learning of McFarland's ties to Iran. Iran-Contra was as far as I know the sole exception to the normal processes in my experience. The standard procedure was that INR would prepare the Department's principal for his meeting of the "covert actions" committee usually in cooperation with the relevant regional bureau.

INR thus served both as the intelligence information transmission belt from and to intelligence agencies and the lead bureau in the Department to represent the Secretary's views on specific covert action proposals. That, some purists would say, gave INR a role, limited as it might have been, in the policy development process of the USG. It did.

During my time, Afghanistan was the major issue giving INR a voice in policy making. I became not an insignificant player in a huge bureaucratic battle in Washington. Much of the bureaucratic battle is described in George Crile's book Charlie Wilson's War and in a Kennedy School memorandum. The issue was how to help the Afghan resistance to the Soviet invasion.

Shultz used to have weekly meetings of senior officials-assistant secretary of State, DoD and NSC every other Saturday morning. It was effectively something of an inter-agency bull session. During the summer of 1985, the Secretary convened a meeting on Afghanistan. I started the discussion with a briefing which was very pessimistic about the likely outcome of the fight against the Soviets. The Soviets had introduced new arms and new forces which would decimate the insurgents as well as the local population. They were making progress against the mujahideen. When I heard that Rich Armitage, the deputy secretary, was going to Pakistan, I asked whether I could join his group. He said "Sure." This was an opportunity to get into Pakistan without fanfare and to roam around relatively unfettered to meet Pakistan intelligence which was running the war and CIA and the leading Afghan insurgents.

I took the trip to Pakistan because I was concerned that the mujahideen were losing their war in Afghanistan. It was clear that Soviet air superiority, particularly introduction of Speznaz and more helicopters, was taking its toll, and that is the main reason I supported the transfer of the Stingers to the mujahideen. Some counter measures were absolutely essential if the Soviets were ever to withdraw from Afghanistan. That was the U.S. government's objective which I fully supported.

I mentioned earlier about the debate within the government about providing the Stingers to the insurgents. The debate was not whether we wanted the Soviets out of Afghanistan; everyone in Washington agreed with that. The issue was whether the Stinger was the right weapon system and whether the U.S. military could afford to transfer some of those weapons.

I spent two or three days there. I talked to some mujahideen, I talked to the our station chief, I talked to the Paks. I was trying to get some first hand information about the progress of the insurgency. I was particularly interested in the CIA's views about the mujahideen's needs for better weapons, particularly ground-to-air missiles to offset Soviet air power. I had tentatively reached the conclusion that more of these anti-aircraft weapons were needed, but I was looking for confirmation. While the mujahideen had British blowpipes, they had limited effect against higher flying aircraft. My conversations and briefings reinforced my view that "Stinger" missiles were desperately needed and had to be supplied or the "Muj" would be severely hurt. The station chief told me that "Washington" was reluctant to provide these weapons. The alleged concern was that the

mujahideen's use of these weapons would identify the U.S. as directly providing weapons to the insurgents. That was indeed a case made in parts of State and CIA. I though this was a spurious argument since by this time, the Soviets were well aware of our growing massive support for the mujahideen. Other objectors pointed to Pakistan taking opposition.

In any case, I became a proponent of taking action. I felt that we had to do something to help the mujahideen against Russian airpower. I must admit that my stance did obliterate the distinction between intelligence collection and analysis and policy making. It was undoubtedly unusual for the director of INR to become so deeply involved in a debate on policy. In part, I was placed in this position because I was the principal State representative on covert action programs. I became involved in part because my job in fact demanded it.

There were two people in particular whom were equally supportive of Stingers in the Pentagon: Fred Iklé and Mike Pillsbury, who had long been urging it. Senator Hatch was the most influential proponent on the Hill for supplying Stingers. Congressman Wilson was also a strong supporter, but on this issue played a lesser role than he had earlier on other issues dealing with Afghanistan, particularly raising the level of assistance.

The issue of providing Stingers became a bureaucratic battle with State/NEA and CIA opposing the transfer of the weapon system. Bill Casey didn't seem particularly involved, but I always thought he objected because his staff was opposed to the transfer, but I was never sure why Casey's position left me particularly puzzled since he would support any action against the Soviets. The U.S. military was opposed because it did not want to release any Stingers from its inventory. Armacost and I supported the transfer as did some parts of Iklé and Pillsbury.

We had meeting after meeting trying to resolve our differences. This went on for months during which more parts of State came to our point of view. Then someone threw in another monkey wrench: the story was that President Zia was opposed to the transfer of Stingers to the mujahideen. Pillsbury convinced Hatch that it would be very helpful if the senator would take a trip to the area to make his own assessment. I went on that trip. During his visit to Pakistan, Hatch of course had a meeting with Zia during which he raised the rumor that the Pakistani president was opposed to the transfer of Stingers. Zia refuted that quickly and decisively; he said if course his government was in support of such transfer since it would help the insurgents. That was the decisive psychological turn. The opposition had run out of ammunition; the military was over-ruled and finally they supplied Stingers from its inventory.

There is no question that the transfer had an impact. We used to get reports of the number of helicopters that had been shot down; they were not exactly reliable, but there was no question that the Soviets faced a radical change to the situation on the battlefield. Not only Stingers, but far more assistance was being given to the resistance. I can't say that the Stingers were the determinant factor in the Soviet decision to leave Afghanistan; I don't know, but there was no doubt that it was a factor in Soviet calculation of the costs

of their venture. I won't go as far as the recent book and movie Charlie Wilson's War has gone in its finding that the Stingers were responsible for the Soviet retreat, but I think there is no question that they contributed to Soviet policy development. The reports of their accuracy I found a little incredulous.

Just a footnote here: when I was the president of the Carnegie Endowment, I saw Shevardnadze when I went to Moscow to begin creating the Endowment's Moscow center. I went with Strobe Talbott and Dimitri Simes. I said to Shevardnadze that I just had to ask him how important the supplying of Stingers was to the Soviet withdrawal decision. He got visible angry and said in no uncertain terms that the Stinger had nothing to do with the decision to withdraw. He would not acknowledge in any way that the Stingers played any role. The Soviets, they withdraw for their own reasons. Despite Shevardnadze disclaimer, I still believe they contributed to the Soviet decision to withdraw. There is no question that the provision of the anti-aircraft missiles gave the insurgents renewed vigor and passion and greater world-wide publicity. At the time, no one had ever heard of Osama Bin Laden, although we were very aware of the questionable attitude and nature of the mujahideen. Unfortunately, the Pakistani really controlled arms supplies to the various insurgent groups.

The trip to Pakistan took place in January, 1986. On the way back, I got off in the Philippines. I stayed just a few days, but had an opportunity just to talk to a wide variety of people – politicians and non-politicians. The presidential elections were in full swing. I went to some of the rallies which were as enthusiastic as I have seen in a political setting. There was excitement in the air; people sensed that Marcos was coming to an end and that Aquino would win. Aquino was a very nice woman; not particularly impressive but very congenial, very dedicated, and very honest. At the first Secretary's staff meeting after my trip, Shultz asked me for my view of the Philippine situation. I told him that I was very surprised by the vigor and enthusiasm I had observed in the Philippines in the campaign. I thought Cory's meetings were more of a revival meeting than a political rally. It was an extraordinary movement in which people at all levels of society were participating.

A little while after the staff meeting, the Secretary called me and asked me to come to his office. He told me that he wanted to apologize for having criticized me at a meeting that was held right after the staff meeting. He thought that my analytical intelligence judgment had been colored by my seeming effort to become involved in a policy debate. He repeated what he had told me before: intelligence analysis and policy making were two distinct processes that should never be mixed. After thinking about my views, the Secretary had come to the conclusion that he had been wrong about discussing me before the others and therefore wanted to express his regret. He said that I should have been present when he spoke those negative comments about me. I told him that I appreciated his comments – I was impressed – particularly since the Secretary was the first to tell me about that meeting; no one else had said anything to me. He did re-emphasize his view that my role as director of INR barred me from becoming involved in policy development; the separation of intelligence and policy was an important management goal which he intended to pursue.

I said that I understood his concern and was taking steps to insure that the separation of the two functions was being maintained. But I also told the Secretary that the goal depended essentially on the self-imposed discipline of an intelligence analyst; there were no rules that could be developed that would absolutely insure the separation – whether he was a State employee or CIA or a member of any of the intelligence agencies around town. Education was essential but not sufficient. Furthermore, I told him that in my view it was essential for any good analyst to understand the policy making process if his or her work were to be of use. That knowledge would enhance the utility, as well as dispassion of the work. I felt therefore that it was important for analysts to be involved in meetings so that at least they could get a feel for perspectives on the relevant issues and could contribute their knowledge and insights to the policy making process. In the end the result depended on the honesty of the analyst and his/her dedication to the truth as he/she saw it. The management goal of separating analysis from policy making as well as the role of intelligence agencies in policy making, including INR and perhaps particularly me, was something of a caricature, but there would be a continuing tension during my period as director of INR as to whether we were abiding by it. I suspect that it has been a periodic source of bureaucratic disputes before and after my time in INR. I did not remind Shultz of my role in the Stinger.

In addition to the difficulty of total separation of the analytical process from policy making, the achievement of the goal was made harder by my role as the State representative of the covert action committee. The convergence of policy making and intelligence analysis is almost impossible to stop when you are faced with the question of providing Stingers to the mujahideen in Afghanistan or when one of our planes was hijacked in Cairo. I suggested in a meeting with the Secretary that it should be brought down. That was certainly a policy making decision. No one expressed any objections to my participation in those policy development sessions, although I was only supposed to provide "the facts." That story appears in Shultz' book, in a somewhat different way. Although I don't have any basic issue with Shultz' management objective, it is not as easy to carry out as he might have thought. If it were it would have diminished the utility of intelligence analysis. In any event analysts read about policy daily n the papers.

INR, in my prejudiced thinking, did a superb job in the 1985-89 period. INR had plenty of opportunities to produce very important analyses. We were right on our analysis and predictions on the Philippines, for example. Nevertheless, the tensions over intelligence analysis that I described earlier existed; it was in part at least fueled by Bill Casey who distrusted his own agency's work. His view of the agency skewing of its Soviet analysis had an effect on Shultz as well. I think that despite the Secretary's somewhat optimistic view of the possibility of walling off entirely intelligence from policy, his concern for the problem was very commendable. As I said, I had no problem with the Secretary's goal, but in the end the effectiveness of achieving the objective depended primarily on the discipline of the analyst or his or her boss; it would not come about by shutting people out of discussion of policy issues.

Q: Let me move on to events in the Balkans in the 1985-89 period. Do you remember

what role you might have played as the U.S. faced the break-up of Yugoslavia?

ABRAMOWITZ: I didn't play any real role, the most was when the Secretary asked me in 1987 for an analysis of what might happen in Yugoslavia, particularly after the huge demonstration in Belgrade and other cities in 1987. I was asked to go there to look at the situation. I did that along with my chief analyst for the region. We spent a week in Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. We submitted a brief report, the first draft of which was written by the analyst. We basically concluded that there was a race between the forces of nationalism and economic integration. We were not sure which would come out on top. My analyst felt that nationalism would win out; he was right. I was not that certain about that conclusion and equivocated to some degree. But we did conclude that the future looked quite grim and a break up of Yugoslavia was quite likely. My analyst was certain of the break up; I was not so certain and we left some wiggle room in our report.

I did a lot of traveling as assistant secretary. I don't know if my travel schedule was heavier than those of my predecessors, but my role in the covert action process added to the normal schedule that an assistant secretary might have. I got involved in Panama because of that role; I got involved in Pakistan because of that role; I got involved in El Salvador and Nicaragua because of that role. I thought it was essential that I see with my own eyes what the local situation was which allowed me to give my bosses some informed recommendations. I visited East Asia and spent a week or so in Russia looking at Gorbachev phenomenon. I attended meetings abroad with some of my foreign counterparts; I met several times with my British counterparts and intelligence people. I built up a close relationship with the German intelligence network. We had an annual exchange with Israel. It was a collegiate atmosphere with CIA and INR meeting both overseas and in Washington with the leadership of the foreign intelligence networks. I was on the road for considerable periods.

Q: *What did you focus on while you were in charge of INR?*

ABRAMOWITZ: As I said, I had excellent deputies which enabled me to delegate a lot of the responsibilities (Dick Clark, Mark Blumenthal, Frank McNeil, Jay Taylor). They could do whatever they saw necessary but they obviously had to keep me informed. They also knew my concerns. They all had strong personalities and were by and large quite aggressive in the pursuit of excellent output. I viewed my job as monitoring them, tasking them, assuring myself that the right issues were being analyzed, etc. I personally tried to focus on those issues to which I thought INR could make a real contribution and were of concern to Seventh Floor principals. I also chose issues which were "down INR's alley"; i.e., we had analysts that had over many years developed deep and thorough knowledge of difficult issues or issues which were so data-inadequate that we in INR could be useful even with limited information. In fact, the issues I chose were at the ends of a spectrum – either we knew a lot about them or we knew something which could add to situations which were basically a mystery to the Department in general. Examples of the issues on which I concentrated were Afghanistan, which I described earlier; and terrorism, which was beginning to be recognized as a real challenge to the U.S. Shultz was an early real bear on the subject. I spent a lot of my personal time on the Philippines not only because

of my personal interest in that country, but also because we had a very good analyst in INR who was widely respected for her knowledge. China got a considerable amount of my personal time, because it had engaged my attention for many years and we here too had a very good group of analysts. And finally, I spent a lot of time following all covert actions, because I was the primary staff person for the State representative on the "covert action" committee. This took a lot of my time because in the Reagan years, there was lots of covert action.

Since we were the first bureau in the Department to see intelligence reports from other agencies, we were able, as I described earlier, to quickly alert a Seventh Floor principal to the significance of an event or developing situation. I had some very good terrorist analysts which allowed us to make valuable contributions.

In general, we had an open field to focus on whatever issues we wanted. As I said before, we were also tasked by Armacost on an almost daily basis to do some work on specific issues that he was interested in. This would more often involve not only an analysis, but also attendance in meetings on the subject during which we were asked to present our perspective. Our view was not always consistent with that of other bureaus, which periodically created some tensions. This was particularly true for EA then headed by Paul Wolfowitz like on selling Taiwan weapons; there were times when their insights were better than ours. I do not want to leave the impression that INR was always right in its analysis; sometimes we were certainly not. One specific instance in which our forecast was erroneous was on the periodic sale of weapons to Taiwan; in some cases we expected a stronger response from China which never came as the regional bureau had predicted.

Q: What other issues do you remember getting involved in?

ABRAMOWITZ: I made it a practice to pursue issues which had important new wrinkles to them. For example, I became very interested in the Gorbachev accession. I went to the Soviet Union about six months after his assumption of power. The question was whether this new man brought some new perspectives to the Soviet Union or was he just repackaging old approaches. When I returned, I consulted with my analysts and wrote a number of papers on my views of the situation. I had come to the conclusion that Gorbachev was indeed a new phenomenon, which would bring major changes to the policies and attitudes of the Soviet Union. Ultimately, Shultz through his meetings with Soviet leaders and reflecting the views of much of the Department, came to the same conclusion. He saw that there were major changes going on in the Soviet Union, which gave the U.S. opportunities for establishing a more stable relationship with the Soviet Union. I should note that the CIA was often vigorously opposed to Shultz' conclusions. We had major arguments with the agency on this issue; the agency saw the changes in the Soviet Union as cosmetic and Casey himself was very negative on taking initiatives to try to establish better relationship with the USSR. On one occasion, he voiced his concern to me during a meeting we were having over Shultz' dealings with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze.

Another issue which I thought required additional attention and I became deeply involved

was Panama. It began when the U.S. attorney in Florida sought and got an indictment against Noriega. That forced a change in our whole approach to him and his regime. The issue became "How do we get Noriega out of Panama?" This turned out to be one of the most interesting and depressing episodes that I witnessed during my career in the Foreign Service. In my view, the U.S. government really debased itself and tied itself in bureaucratic knots in the pursuit of this objective.

I thought it was important for Noriega to be removed from power as rapidly as possible – peacefully! – whether or not this meant that he had to leave Panama. Bill Webster had just taken over the leadership of CIA which was still recovering from the toll that Iran-Contra had inflicted on it. The agency was very skittish at this moment about taking major risks such as trying to mobilize major opposition in Panama against Noriega. It wanted life to settle down. The ARA bureau, led by Elliott Abrams and Mike Kozak, were determined to try to depose Noriega. I certainly supported that effort. I visited Panama several times and talked to opposition leaders and many others to get some feel for the situation. I tried to find those willing to take more robust – covert and public – action against Noriega. I sent some of my analysts to follow up on my trip to survey the scene in detail.

The Pentagon, which could have played a major role, was by and large antagonistic toward Abrams. It was virtually impossible to get a coordinated U.S. government-wide program to deal with Noriega. In the end, it was negotiations led by Mike Kozak, with Noriega which became the principal avenue to seek his departure. Of course, as happens periodically, this negotiation effort became involved in the U.S. presidential campaign. The White House wanted no part of negotiating efforts; they didn't want to be seen making any obeisance toward Noriega. Prior to a meeting in Russia Shultz told Kozak – presumably reflecting White House anxieties – that he had to get agreement on the negotiations before his trip; otherwise all efforts would have to be suspended. The negotiations just ran out of time and ultimately led to the U.S. using military action to remove Noriega. I must say that this option had never entered into my calculations; I didn't think that that was the way to remove him unless there were much greater provocations. The fighting happened after my departure from INR. The whole U.S. government approach was dysfunctional – it lacked cohesion, lacked unity, lacked determination. We looked silly. I told my brother-in-law, the composer Phil Glass, who was always writing operas about major figures, to do a comic opera – Noriega – he did not take my advice.

My recollection is a little vague on the kind of other issues we brought to the attention of the Seventh Floor. We certainly did a lot of work on all the issues I have discussed. I don't now remember clearly the many other issues we focused on either because they were of interest to a Seventh Floor principal or because we in INR felt they deserved analysis and attention in the building. I really would need to see our output for the period 1985-89 to be sure.

All in all, my four years in INR were active and interesting. I was able to pursue issues that had been of interest to me for many years. I was involved in some very sensitive

policy developments. But I regretted often being mostly a bystander.

Q: This brings us to 1989 when you were appointed as our ambassador to Turkey. How did that come about?

ABRAMOWITZ: I had been in INR for four years and it was time to move on. Secretary Baker agreed to appoint me to an ambassadorship. There were a number of openings that were discussed with me, but I finally focused on Turkey.

I wanted the ambassadorship to Korea, but that was well filled. I thought that China was then beyond "my reach." (I was offered it in the Clinton administration.) So I looked around for an important and interesting post and came up with the idea of Turkey. I didn't know much about Turkey, but I thought it was an important post not getting adequate attention and the ambassador would be very important.

It is fair to say that James Baker, when he became Secretary of State, wanted to put his own people in the positions occupied by Shultz' appointees. He talked to us; I briefed him on what I thought were the major issues facing the U.S. and the intelligence role. After he was officially sworn in, he called me on the phone and asked me what I wanted to do on my next assignment. I had been giving that question some thought; I would like to have become a regional assistant secretary but I knew they were not available. I did consider retiring, but thought I would give it one more shot. So I told Baker that I would like to be assigned to Turkey. That afternoon to my astonishment Baker called and said he had talked to the President and cleared my name, a total contrast to my experience in the Reagan administration.

I had, during my INR incarnations paid some attention to Turkey and NATO, and Turkey and the Kurds, etc. I had insisted that we blame Iraq publicly for its use of chemical weapons against the Kurds. So I wasn't a total stranger to Turkish issues, but I did not have the background which I had had for Thailand. I certainly had no feel for the people, their culture, or their history. So I spent about two months trying to reduce my gaps of knowledge, including learning some every elemental aspects of the language. I left for Ankara in the summer of 1989.

Turkey attracted me because it was a member of NATO and a player in the Muslim and Central Asian worlds. It was an important U.S. ally with whom we had to maintain good relations. In 1989, I had no idea of what would happen in the Middle East in1990 and 1991.

In fact, once I got to Ankara, I found it very difficult to gain the attention of the Seventh Floor, not to mention the White House, to Turkish issues. I couldn't even entice an assistant secretary to visit Turkey. The Turks had gained a reputation for always asking for assistance; Washington senior officials did not want to be the target for such requests. The Turks were not viewed too favorably in Washington outside the Pentagon. We did have a number of DoD officials visit, but their visits were driven by our military presence in Turkey, particularly the Air Force. Richard Perle was a strong supporter of funding and

was the dominant figure in town until the Iraq war.

During my second year in Ankara, that situation changed totally. That was due to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and Secretary Baker's frequent visits to Turkey. Baker was all business; he would arrive, talk to the president and a few other Turkish leaders and then leave. He did that on three of the four occasions he visited Ankara. Before his last visit, I went to see the president to tell him that Baker would like to come again to see him. Ozal said that was fine with him, but that Baker had to stay long enough to have dinner with him. So Baker did have dinner with the president and enjoyed it. You never know what problems will confront you as an ambassador! In any case, the second year of my tour was much easier in terms of Washington support.

Q: In discussing Turkey with other officers who served there, one gets the feeling that our relationships with Turkey were filled with day-to-day problems, one after another, thereby minimizing the opportunity to build an overall framework for the relations between the two countries. Did you have that feeling?

ABRAMOWITZ: That point of view is accurate – up to a point. That there were always problems is accurate because we had such extensive relations with Turkey. We had military bases on their territory; we had a large military assistance program; there were frequent NATO issues. Then there was the Greek-Turkish animosity continuously fueled in large part by Cyprus. So there were always challenges that required discussion with the prime minister, the president, foreign minister or his staff. Marc Grossman, our DCM, was very helpful in this connection and handled many of these matters very well indeed. My recruitment of Grossman was one my best ideas even though the personnel establishment – and others – were upset since he was grade-wise too junior for the DCM position; I got the Seventh Floor to agree. As you know, he later became ambassador to Turkey and Under-Secretary for Political Affairs. Going back to your point, the nature of an overall framework for relations was the Cold War and the alliance. The problem of another framework became important after the end of the Soviet Union.

Despite daily problems, one distinct difference between Greece and Turkey was the reactions of American officers. I have never met an American Foreign Service person who did not enjoy serving in Turkey. On the other hand, most of those I knew who served in Greece ended up celebrating their last day there. I did not experience Greece. Life was apparently much more difficult in Greece for American officials than it was in Turkey. The Turks are always hospitable and accommodating which allowed us to get past the daily problems and establish good personal relations, even though we come from different cultures. Turks clearly do not now like America – all the polls show that – but I have not experienced that animosity in personal relations. The only departure from that was a calculated show of hostility toward visiting Defense Secretary Cheney over the Greek DECA.

Turkish officials could be difficult. That often happens in dependent relationships such as we had at that time with Turkey. With the end of the Cold War, the situation began to change and that dependency has mostly evaporated. Turkey increasingly marches to its

own drummer. During the Cold War, our presence in Turkey was a major security concern for the Turks; we provided a shield for its defense and huge amounts of defense assistance. The principal goal of Turkish foreign policy was to maintain our strong military alliance.

Q: We had a number of situations in the world where we were looked upon as "lord protector" or "big brother". How did you feel about being in that position?

ABRAMOWITZ: Thailand was far more that type of situation, where I was often viewed – wrongly regrettably – as being able to move mountains. That was much less true in Turkey. In any case, my personality does really not fit the role of "viceroy." I don't wave the flag, make all sorts of public appearances, and give orders. That is not my style. I am not entirely comfortable as being occasionally viewed as a savior; when that happens, I find it quite troublesome and certainly overstated.

I sometimes got annoyed with the Turks, in part because they would question our assurances or because they would raise problems of such minor nature that they weren't really worthy of discussion at senior levels. They could be very bureaucratic, particularly during negotiations. But by and large, I very much enjoyed my tour in Ankara and met a lot of Turks whom I became very fond of. I found and still find Turkey endlessly fascinating; so much so that I have maintained a continuing relationship to a far greater extent than any of the other countries in which I served. I still keep up with the Turkish English press. Back to the point, the role of the American embassy is important but it has declined because Turkey has become a different country.

Q: What was the situation at the end of the 1980 decade with Turkey's participation in the EU?

ABRAMOWITZ: The issue was just beginning to bubble up. Historically, the Turks made a serious mistake by letting the Greeks precede them in getting EU membership. The Turks should have insisted on simultaneous admission; they had the opportunity to do so, but let it pass. Ozal made the decision to join the EU in 1987, but there really wasn't any progress made while I was in Turkey. During the Gulf War I tried to move the progress along by getting the USG to issue the first statement during the Gulf War supporting Turkey's efforts to get into the EU, not only because I thought it was the right policy, but also to show the Turks that we were interested in helping them achieve their goals. By 1995, long after I was gone, finally a customs union was agreed to which was followed later by the EU accepting Turkey as a candidate for membership. Turkey still has a long way to go.

The two major issues during my tour were the Armenian "genocide" and the Gulf War. There were, as I mentioned, a number of other issues, many of which were operational in nature – e.g., use of bases. There were some questions concerning Bulgaria-Turkey relations, some economic issues, the Soviet threat, which was often a NATO issue than just a bilateral problem.

Q: Were you surprised by anything you encountered after your arrival in Turkey?

ABRAMOWITZ: Right from the start unexpected things happened: a) Turkey suddenly had a huge refugee problem – fleeing Bulgarian-Turks. I saw this as an opportunity for the U.S. to be helpful both to refugees and to the host country. It was a humanitarian issue with which I had had some familiarity from my Thailand tour. I was aware of tensions between Bulgarians and this Turkish population, but neither I nor the Turks had any expectation that some 300,000 people would flee to Turkey. Once I grasped the magnitude and its causes the embassy went to work in publicizing the issue and particularly in finding assistance for the Turkish Bulgarians.

Friction between the Turks and the Bulgarians was of course not new. It centered on discrimination against the Turkish minority living in Bulgaria, most recently for me on their surnames. But the embassy and Washington were surprised by the rather sudden and very large flight from Bulgaria. I spent some time with President Ozal on this problem which helped me in establishing a good relationship with him. I think that my immediate reaction and our offer of assistance was a positive introduction to the president and the foreign office and to Turkey in general.

The American embassy has always been an important institution in Turkey. The American ambassador was an important figure covered thoroughly by the Turkish press. American presidents rarely spoke to the Turkish president – it was a different relationship than he had with leaders of other NATO countries. During my tour, no Assistant Secretary for EUR visited Turkey. It is somewhat stunning to remember how we left so much distance from Turkey prior to 1990, even though we used its territory for bases and saw Turkey as an integral part of NATO. Assistant Secretaries disliked meeting with Turks because they always seemed to be asking for something. They were tired of Turkish complaints and "demands." None visited on their own when I was there. George Shultz did make an effort to maintain good relations with the Turks; he liked and respected his counterpart.

In the late 1980's I would describe our relationships with Turkey despite its ups and downs as "okay." I think it is fair to say at that time that the major player in Washington in determining our policy toward Turkey seemed to be Richard Perle, then Assistant Secretary for ISA in DoD. He was viewed both in Washington and in Ankara sort of as "Mr. Turkey."

The Turks used to complain long and hard about what is known as the 7-10 ratio, which governed the allocation of U.S. assistance between Turkey and Greece. They were unhappy with what they saw as their military requirements were tied to Greece and they also perceived a bias in favor of Greece on the Cyprus issue. Days when we didn't have some tensions about one issue or another were few.

The major source of tension during my first year was the Armenian genocide resolution. I became deeply involved in this problem in 1990. It was a long difficult issue; loaded with enormous emotions on both sides. I didn't think that the Turks have really yet come to

grips with their past. While I had some sympathy for the resolution, I was opposed to it being introduced in the Senate. The Senate was not a proper forum for making decisions about Turkish history, one which was strongly disputed by the Turkish government. But even more importantly for American interests, I also had strategic concerns. By early 1990, it was clear to me that we would likely be going to war against Iraq. We would need Turkish assistance and support to mount an attack to drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait. We did not want to imperil that.

I returned to Washington and spent two or three weeks primarily going from senator to senator, lobbying against the resolution. I must have seen some 60 senators. I did this because the Bush administration was reluctant to becoming publicly involved in the debate; they did not want their fingerprints on any debate about the resolution for domestic political reasons. While opposed to the resolution, the administration was reluctant to be seen taking any highly public actions which might alienate the Armenian-American community. That left the lobbying burden mostly to me.

Senator Robert Byrd played the key role. He mobilized Senate opposition to the resolution. There was a remarkable – and poorly covered – debate that lasted for two days on the genocide resolution. Two of the Senate's leading figures opposed each other on the floor for several hours daily. Bob Dole supported the resolution; Bob Byrd opposed it. The two days were filled with eloquence, which received very little media attention. I thought it was a remarkable event. You don't often see two Titans of the Senate debating an important issue on the floor in a great personal contest. The final vote was very close with Byrd's side winning by a narrow margin.

I had talked to President Ozal at length about the resolution. He was annoyed with it all. It got in his way to do other things with the U.S. He did not like the resolution but simply wanted it out of the way. But he could not publicly take the position of pass the damn thing and let's move on, as he once said to me, his bureaucracy and public vehemently denied any Turkish participation in a genocide. Nevertheless, the conclusion of Senate debate took the issue off the agenda; it came up annually but not in a major way until late in this decade.

We avoided a major confrontation with Turkey in 1990 when the resolution was not passed. The history is a very sensitive issue and all U.S. governments understand that. The Turks resent having their ancestors branded as committing genocide. Perhaps even more important, the Turks believe that if a resolution on genocide is approved, it will be followed by an avalanche of demands from the Armenians for restitutions and reparations. The Armenians deny that they would pursue such a course, but that does not assuage the Turkish concern.

The Armenians are determined to have a genocide resolution passed by the Congress. They have pursued it for more then thirty years. Such a resolution was passed in the French parliament and some other legislatures. But the U.S. Congress is really their target. There are a million or so Armenian-Americans, concentrated in California – a key state in any primary or general election. Pressure will always be mounted again when a

new administration comes to power in Washington. The Armenian-Americans had great hopes for passage in the Congress in 2008; after all, one of their key representatives is now Speaker Pelosi. She was supported by George Miller, also from California; in fact they did come very close with 218 representatives prepared to vote in favor of the resolution. But at the last minute, Pelosi barred the resolution from coming to the floor of the House. The Turks made their position very clear including threats of retaliatory actions and there was great concern that they would deny the U.S. the use of Turkish basis for Iraq. This motivated the administration to put on a full court press which finally forced Pelosi to avoid a vote. There is no question in my mind that the passage of such a resolution will be costly to us. I have told Turks that they have lost the battle of history; that concerned Americans, regardless of Turkish views of the confused wartime situation, most concerned Americans believe that genocide did take place; that point of view will not likely change. Only a clear exposition of the potential costs to national security can prevent ultimate passage of such a resolution.

When Saddam invaded Kuwait in August, President Ozal supported us immediately, but not the bulk of Turks. They were opposed and did not want to get involved. I cannot say that his support would not have been given regardless of the outcome of the Senate action on the genocide resolution. But Ozal hated Saddam Hussein, and resented the Iraqis controlling oil prices; their hold on prices would have increased substantially had they been able to keep Kuwait and control that country's oil production. Turkey had taken a major economic blow in the late 1970's when the Middle East oil producers reduced their output; indeed, it went into a deep recession. Ozal was very sensitive to Iraqi behavior. He fully supported all that Turkey could do to help us, that was important to our war effort. But we dodged a bullet by the defeat of the genocide resolution.

Dealings with top leaders was very important. James Baker, much to his credit, did something that Colin Powell as Secretary had never done in the run up to the Iraq war in 2003. Powell never visited Turkey. Baker came four times in eight months. That was very important. The presence of Ozal made the biggest difference; he was very much pro-American, hated Saddam Hussein – he was on the same wave length with us.

Q: *I would like to ask now about the book you edited Turkey's Transformation and American Policy for which you wrote a chapter on "The Complexities of American Policymaking on Turkey". First of all, I want to focus on Cyprus. Did it play a major role during your tour?*

ABRAMOWITZ: There were two major episodes during my period about Cyprus. One was Baker's difficult encounter with Cyprus. We of course during my time kept pushing for a resolution of the Cyprus issue. Ozal was indeed interested in reaching such a resolution. I had a meeting with the Greek prime minister in Ankara during which I was grilled about Turkish intentions in reaching a settlement. I told him that there were a wide range of views in Ankara with the military and some politicians taking a very hard line while Ozal was very interested in reaching a compromise. During the Iraq war, James Baker came to believe that he could bring the parties together to reach a settlement. I though he was over-optimistic; and minimized the political difficulties a compromise

faced at least in Turkey. Furthermore, his timing, I thought, was very poor; our war with Iraq was not popular in Turkey, despite Ozal's support, and any efforts the U.S. might make on Cyprus would be viewed with deep skepticism by the Turks. I told the Secretary that he should not push for a settlement and I personally did little to pursue the issue with the Turks.

Most of my communications on Cyprus were with the EUR country director; from time to time I raised the issue with the office director at State, Towny Friedman. Towny was a very smart and sensible person. He was also sometimes too secretive. He basically agreed with my skepticism on the Cyprus issue. Baker became quite upset with me, blaming me for building an antagonistic atmosphere for a solution of the Cyprus issue. I thought that was not a fair charge; I always told the Secretary that his timing was wrong, but I did not vent my skepticism with Ozal and other Turkish officials. The Secretary's efforts were in vain. No progress was made on a resolution of the Cyprus dispute. A decade had to pass before there was progress. But that failed largely because of the Greek Cypriots

After the end of the Iraq war, President Bush visited Turkey. He was warmly greeted, despite popular distaste for the war, not as vociferous as in the 2003 war. Bush was very gracious. After all, he had won the war. Cyprus was on the list of issues to be discussed by the two presidents. To the best of my recollection, Bush suggested that he convene a trilateral meeting – Turkey, Greece and Cyprus – to see whether the leaders of those countries could not reach some broad agreement. Unfortunately Turkey had just gotten a new prime minister who broke with Ozal – unlike his predecessor who marched to Ozal's tune all the time. The new prime minister was not interested in such a conference because he was concerned that he would be up-staged by Ozal. He wanted to be seen as his own master and one who was in charge in Ankara, not Ozal. So the Bush proposal – an interesting one – went nowhere and the U.S. held the Turkish prime minister responsible for its demise.

In late June, 1990, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney visited Ankara. Tensions on the Kuwait-Iraq border were already rising. Shortly before the SecDef's arrival, the U.S. and Greece announced that they had concluded a defense agreement. I knew nothing about it; I didn't even know that negotiations were taking place. As you can well understand, I was not a happy camper; I was mad as hell. I learned subsequently that I had been intentionally left out of the loop by our country director because he was concerned that we might object to some of provision or other and might try to sabotage his efforts to reach an agreement. In fact, it was not a bad agreement and I think his concerns were unwarranted. It did include some rhetorical language which could have been misinterpreted. That might have been changed. The Turks, however, became incensed by some of the language in the agreement. So when Cheney arrived, he became a target for the Turks who surprisingly ranted to him.

The normally very hospitable Turks treated Cheney almost as if he were a leper. Very few senior people came to the reception the embassy gave for him. I had a conversation with him about the whole business and told him that what he had gone through was "a tempest in a tea-pot". The agreement posed no threat to Turkey. I asked him to go back to

talk to the President and try to convince him to call Ozal to calm things down and dispel any misconceptions that we had just signed on to an anti-Turkish agreement. Cheney did that. Bush made that call and asked Ozal whether he wanted the White House to issue a statement clarifying the agreement and assuring the world that it was not in any way harmful to Turkey. Ozal liked that idea and Bush did make the statement. That calmed the waters in Turkey. Perhaps even more important, this episode established a very close relationship between Bush and Ozal which paid major dividends to us during the Gulf War. I believe that Bush probably consulted with Ozal by phone more often than with any other leader except John Major before the war and during the war period. There were fifty or sixty calls in that 12 month period. Fortunately, Nick Burns at the NSC would brief me after each call, which allowed me to make suggestions for the next call. This president to president exchange became a very valuable tool. So an episode which had such a disastrous beginning ended up in a very positive manner. The law of unintended consequences at work again.

The Turks used the Cheney visit as a means to express their anger and frustration. Not only were the Turks concerned by some of the wording in the Greek-U.S. agreement, but they also resented not having been informed beforehand on a matter they considered to be of vital interest. They might have valid reasons for their displeasure at the Secretary, but I think they also vastly inflated the matter.

Q: The use of Turkish facilities for our military presence in the Middle East plays a major role in our relationships with Turkey. Did they cause you any special challenges?

ABRAMOWITZ: There were always problems with the bases. They were mostly small problems: e.g., the need to remove certain individuals from Turkey for transgressions, the use of bases for special activities, etc. They arose continually and took a lot of our time to resolve.

The major issue arose with the Gulf War and the use of Turkish bases to fight that war. I mentioned that President Ozal hated Saddam and viewed him as a real threat to Turkey's stability. So we had an ally in spirit even before we sought Turkish assistance. At our request, Ozal moved very quickly to shut down the pipeline that carried oil from Iraq to the Mediterranean, even though it was an income earner for the Turks.

Our requests to Turkey included: 1) using their bases for military strikes, 2) moving Turkish troops to the Iraq border as a potential threat to Iraq thereby forcing Saddam to keep Iraq troops on this border rather than moving them south to fight us, and 3) sending some troops to Saudi Arabia to be part of the anti-Saddam coalition. At this time the Turkish military were not on good terms with Ozal because they were unhappy with how he managed national security concerns, which to them was in a free-wheeling manner. By and large, they did not support that war against Iraq.

In any case, Ozal approved our requests for the use of the bases although he delayed all decisions until we actually initiated military actions against the Iraqis. He was not interested in our expanded use of the bases unless actual hostilities broke out; he did not

want to have made an unnecessary decision which would have left him politically exposed. Ozal had the implementing legislation immediately approved after we had started bombing; it was done in one day. He called me that day and asked: "Are you satisfied now?"

We had no problem getting the Turks to send troops to the border. On the other hand, the Turkish military refused to send any forces to Saudi Arabia. I don't think I ever fully understood their rationale other than they did not want a direct participation. Ozal was not in a position to really push his military since he already had a somewhat tense relationship with them and didn't want to take on another fight. The Turkish chief of staff at around this time did something which was quite unusual. Instead of leading a coup – as well might have happened in earlier times – he resigned in protest against Ozal's policies and management although he did not publicly put it that way.

We of course were primarily interested in the expanded use of the bases, and were able to use them as needed throughout the war.

Let me go for a minute to one aspect of the Kurdish problem in Turkey. Turkey had had a long tumultuous relationship with its Kurds. Many Turkish citizens living close to the Iraq border are Kurds. Ankara hadn't – and still hasn't – found a way to maintain a peaceful and fruitful relationship with the south-east part of its country. The Turkish military dominated the area and ruled it as if martial law had been declared. In 1988, the Turks, after Saddam's use of chemical weapons against the Iraqi Kurds, accepted about 60,000 refugees. They did that in part at American urging. This humanitarian gesture caused a lot of commotion in Turkey, who did not want refugees, and, as long as Saddam ruled Iraq, there was little chance for those refugees to return home. It also raised tensions between us and the Turkish government. In the final analysis, the Turks allowed the refugees to enter Turkey and let them stay.

Another major Turkish concern had was the PKK, the insurgent Kurd forces operating in bases in northern Iraq. They were not nearly the threat from Iraq that they became later, but it was an irritant to the Turkish military. Turkey had an understanding with Iraq which allowed its forces to move across the border if necessary in pursuit of PKK insurgents.

The major development in this history occurred during the Gulf War and has shaped events since its occurrence. We had called on the Kurds and the Shiites to raise up against Saddam. There was some response, particularly from the Kurds. Saddam came down hard on Kurdish insurgency causing a very large flow of Kurds to the Turkish border, reaching eventually about half a million refugees. Another million Kurdish refugees fled to the Iranian border. Much of this outflow occurred after the end of the war. Ozal felt it was politically impossible to allow these Iraqi Kurdish refugees to enter. The Kurds on the Turkish border was a major political headache for Ozal.

It was of course a major humanitarian problem. Regardless of where they were, it was obvious that these refugees needed continuous assistance. Furthermore, the Kurds could

not stay in their mountain shelters too much longer because summer was coming and potentially serious health problems because of a lack of water. It was a depressing situation. We pressured the Turks as much as we could to provide assistance to these Kurdish refugees. They provided some, but it was insufficient. I kept insisting to Washington that we take more aggressive action to help the refugees. Washington wanted to send John Bolton who was then the Assistant Secretary for International Organizations. I said we needed higher than that. Suddenly Secretary Baker came; he helicoptered to a site which had Kurds strung along one mountainside. He made some comments, but more importantly, even in that brief period, he saw the desperate nature of the situation. It was a decisive moment. He convinced the President to get the Pentagon involved and the military joined immediately the assistance effort. It was costly, but it made a major difference. It was a turning point in dealing with the Kurdish refugee situation in northern Iraq. Even the Turks, who in general were not happy with the situation welcomed the assistance.

Such assistance was only a short term fix. The fundamental problem of a permanent home for the Iraqi Kurds was unresolved. After many discussions among Bush, Ozal and John Major and sometimes with my involvement with Ozal, it was decided that the Kurdish refugees would be settled in the area many lived in northern Iraq and protected from Saddam. This required some U.S. forces on the ground at least initially to accompany them home, but for the longer term the Kurds would be protected by an allied air monitoring program from Turkish bases. We had to persuade the Kurds to agree to this arrangement; they obviously wanted assurances that they would be sufficiently protected and eventually they agreed to move to the protected area.

It took about six weeks to move the half-million Kurds to their new grounds. The Kurds who had fled to Iran witnessed this migration and came to the conclusion that they should join their fellow Kurds in Iraq. Another million Kurds moved back to northern Iraq. The "protected" zone was created from which Saddam and his minions were excluded – any violation would have had severe military consequences. Ozal was pleased and relieved with this resolution. On the other hand, many Turks were very unhappy because they believed that the creation of this "protected" zone would become the embryo for an independent Iraqi Kurdish state. Such a creation, they felt, would have had a major impact on Turkey's own Kurds. This new scheme had to be approved by the Turkish legislature – every six months. The first legislative approval was very difficult to obtain, but Ozal managed to squeeze out the necessary votes. Thereafter, for an extended period, this legislative approval became the primary focus of U.S. policy toward Turkey.

The law of "unintended consequences" again followed. I assured all concerned that we could be fully trusted and that we would faithfully maintain watch over the territories occupied by the Kurds and it took assurances from many parts of the U.S. government to have the Kurds and others believe us. The Turks, as I indicated before, were not that enthusiastic about our program. We took special pains to try to reassure them that no independent Kurdish state was contemplated and that after Saddam's eventual downfall, there would be no more serious concerns about an independent Kurdish state. In fact, our assessments turned out wrong because of another totally unexpected Iraq war. Iraq did

disintegrate after our invasion in 2003 which led to the creation of almost a de facto Kurdish state. This semi-independent area in northern Iraq also become a problem for the Turks, most immediately because it was the principal base for periodic Kurdish incursions into Turkey. The U.S. has wrestled with the problem since our invasion. To this day, the issues arising from our invasion as they concern the Kurds are a very, very sensitive matter for the Turks. The U.S. ___ to build and maintain a stable Iraqi nation, friendly with the Turks and providing no home for the PKK. Over the past year Turkey's position on Iraqi Kurdistan has evolved and a more fruitful relationship has been established between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds.

There is of course considerable uncertainty about the future of an Iraq nation – whether it will survive as a state and what the relationships between the central government and the various regional entities. So our creation of the "safe area" in the 1990-91 period has had unforeseen consequences that deeply involve us today. We were not interested in the establishment of an independent Kurdish nation. I certainly did not in 1991 foresee today's situation – nor do I know of anyone who did, except the Turks whose "nightmare" scenario actually became reality.

On the other hand, I really didn't see any alternative in 1991 to what we did. It was a humanitarian necessity that we help a million and a half people survive and give them protection so they could decently survive. I also thought that it was the right approach even from a Turkish political point of view. We wish our crystal ball had been clearer.

It is true that in 1991 the Turks were not unanimous in their concern over an independent Kurdish state and its potential impact on Turkey's own Kurds. The military, saw the developments in Iraq as very dangerous. Ozal had a somewhat different view. He didn't worry too much about a Kurdish state; he thought that in such a case, the Turks might act as an "older brother" and establish a positive connection. His formulation was quite vague; he was primarily interested in getting the Kurdish problem off the Turkish political agenda by getting the Kurds away from the border.

The second year of my tenure focused on winning the Gulf war and protecting the Iraqi Kurds. In that second year, we also had difficulties with our presence in Turkey. We had one American killed. Many families were scared and wanted to leave. I was constricted in my travels and received a lot of death threats. There were a number of incidents involving Americans. Americans were worried about their safety and sought assurances. Marc Grossman and I spent a lot of time trying to calm those fears. There were some in the official American community that wished for a draw-down of the American presence in Turkey. I did not agree much to the unhappiness of some of our staff. I never thought that the situation had deteriorated to a level requiring any mandated reduction in our official presence.

The anti-Americanism exhibited by some Turks was not organized. Some of the feeling stemmed from a religious fervor fostered by Islamic fundamentalists; some of it was just an opposition to our policies. Popular opposition during the Second Gulf War was far, far worse. As far as I can remember, there were a number of disparate groups making anti-

American waves, but no single entity or even a coalition was driving these sentiments. Unlike 2003 the President of Turkey strongly supported us. I don't remember the PKK being involved. The death of the one American weighed heavily on the whole American community in Turkey. Interestingly enough, I received a nice note from Brent Scowcroft well after that incident thanking me for providing support for the American community and for not succumbing to the pressure for evacuation.

Q: On several occasions, you have referred to the Turkish military-civilian relationship. How would you describe it?

ABRAMOWITZ: The Turkish military is and remains a respected institution in Turkey, stemming from the successful liberation efforts led by General Kemal Ataturk in the early 1920's. He was of course the "father of his country" and the military sees itself as the keeper of Ataturk's political philosophy. The Turkish military is an autonomous institution, not under civilian control. This has been true from the beginning and is still, by and large, true today, although its power has diminished somewhat and its reputation has been a little tarnished. When I was in Turkey, the military was run by a general who did his best to stay out of politics, while trying to calm whatever restive feelings existed in his military. Unlike some of his predecessors, he was not a "puritan"; he liked informality. The situation in Turkey in the late 1980's and early 1990's was not like today; there wasn't that sharp cleavage between the secular and the religious as you have today. There were plenty of people who thought Ozal was a "closet" fundamentalist, but I never saw any evidence that he had an Islamic agenda. He was a devout Muslim – even though sometimes he took an alcoholic beverage – but I don't think that had much, if any, influence on Ozal's political and governmental agendas.

The Turkish military was not the easiest societal sector to deal with. I don't know whether they ever disclosed much information to us. I felt, as is true in other similar situations, that its relationship with the U.S. was through our military and not the embassy. I saw them often, in part to provide information that Ozal had not passed on to them. I tried to develop a close relationship with the Turkish military leaders; I think on the surface it appeared perfectly civil, but I never reached the point at which I could pick up the phone and chat with a senior officer. The relationships were very formal. I would be invited occasionally to their homes. I would invite the leadership periodically; sometime they would show up and sometime only one or two. It was uneven.

Military to military relationships were, as far as I could see, quite good. We were NATO partners; Turkey depended on us for more modern weapons. I think everybody recognized that we were the key component of Turkish security. The military to military relationship may not have been as close as they were in Korea where both belonged to a unified command, but they were close. Even with the U.S. military, I felt relationships were pretty formal, even though they were deeply involved in Turkish military affairs through our military assistance program and our presence on Turkish bases. I would characterize U.S.-Turkish military relationships as close but not warm.

Q: Let me move to another aspect of your job. Did you have much pressure from

American interest groups (e.g., Greek American, Armenian American, Turkish American)?

ABRAMOWITZ: I spent a lot of time with Armenian Americans primarily on the genocide issue. We discussed the issue at great length particularly during the period in 1990 when the Senate was fighting over a resolution of condemnation, which I described earlier. These conversations were held in Washington when I would return for consultations. I think they perceived me as being dispassionate and able to see the various aspects of the issue. They knew what I was doing on the Hill; they were not thrilled by my position against the genocide resolution, but I had reviewed the situation as I saw it with some of them and they understood where I was coming from. As I suggested earlier, this was one of the most difficult moral issues that I had ever confronted in my work, but as a representative of the U.S. government, I felt had to be concerned by the practical aspects of the situation and the needs of the U.S.

I spent less time with the Greek-American community. I didn't spend much time on the Cyprus issue and had very little contact with Greek government, except for that one session I mentioned earlier with the Greek prime minister. Senator Sarbanes, the voice in Congress of the Greek-American community, spent a few minutes during my confirmation hearings to air his views of the Greece-Turkey situation, but it was mostly for the record. Periodically, when I would return from Ankara, I would call on him to bring him up to date; we obviously disagreed on the situation, but he was always cordial and very well informed.

I should mention that in November 1990 I was offered the presidency of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. I decided to take it, but I informed the board that I could not accept it formally until the Gulf War was over. I informed the Department of the offer and my response. Then the Kurdish migration occurred and I told Carnegie that I could not take the position until that problem was resolved. I hoped that by the summer of 1991 that problem would be resolved. The Kurds indeed were returned to their homes by July and that was the end of my Foreign Service career.

Q:. How was the Washington backstopping?

ABRAMOWITZ: I was satisfied with the support I got from Washington after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. As I had done in Thailand, I came back for consultations frequently. Also having the advantage of knowing many of the senior policy makers both in State and in Defense. I could always speak with them if necessary, and frequently did. For example, I would always call on Secretary of Defense Cheney during my trips back. Relations with the NSC were close and exceedingly helpful. Nick Burns kept us well informed of president-to-president communications as well as assuring that certain actions took place. Towny Friedman was very good as the country director in State and we talked frequently by phone. He was smart and active. I had contacts with Secretary Baker. So I had no problem getting senior officials to focus on the small number of issues that I raised. For example, with the help of Bob Zoellick, then the counselor of the Department, and over the opposition of EUR, we got the U.S. government to issue a

statement in support of Turkey's membership in the EU – the first we had made. Now its almost a monthly occurrence.

Q: Before we end this interview, I would like to spend a little time on your post-Foreign Service work. In 1991, you retired and accepted an appointment as president of the Carnegie Endowment. What conclusions have you reached about the involvement of the private sector in U.S. foreign policy?

ABRAMOWITZ: I don't think that anything that I have done in the private sector has been as meaningful or as important as what I did in the government.

For the last sixteen years we have witnessed a vast expansion – almost explosion – of "think tanks." There were of course "think tanks" in 1991, but they were not nearly as numerous or as well funded as they are today. "Think tanks" have been players all along providing intellectual contributions for policy setting and often shelter for government officials whose party may have just been voted out of power, who wish to continue their absorption in policy matters and who look forward to their party returning to power so that they could return to government positions. This ability to provide a setting for the "revolving door", in addition to the intellectual ferment good think tankers can provide, has given "think tanks" a considerable degree of importance in the Washington dialogue. Their input has often been quite meaningful, although I don't want to suggest that "think tanks" always make important contributions; like all human endeavors, they also fall prey to proposing "intellectual garbage" and sometimes, as a group, loudly supporting ideas that have very little merit. Many have access to important officials and use it. "Think tanks" are players in the development and occasionally the implementation of foreign policy. By and large, but not always, their involvement has been useful. Information overload has become a permanent fixture of our scene.

Of course, we have to remember that "think tanks" are not monolithic; they do not speak with one voice. It is hard to generalize about their effectiveness and usefulness in policy making. The other problem is that these organizations contribute to the short-sightedness of American politics. Our politics are already much too near-sighted; i.e., what should we do tomorrow and what impact will that have on a party's political standing. I can't say that this problem originated with the "think tanks", but they do contribute to it through their activities. The advent of the Internet with its blogs exacerbates that tendency and increases the shrillness of discourse. Their contributions often create confusion as well as animosity and division. The babble of voices sometimes clarifies policy and sometimes creates more confusion. It is a mixed bag. The profusion of "think tanks" has increased the impression of influence. All you have to do is to read a newspaper or listen to a news broadcast to see how often an individual associated with one of these private institutions is quoted. There is no question in my mind that today "think-tanks" are a relevant part of the foreign policy process. How important they are is a matter for controversy, but that they are a participant is not questionable.

When I was president of the Carnegie Endowment, I was more interested in efforts to create institutions than I was in specific policy development except for a few issues like

the Balkans. We expanded our interest in such subjects as immigration, non-proliferation, etc. But I spent much of my time on efforts to establish and expand two institutions:1) a Russian-American "think tank" in Moscow which was Carnegie first attempt to establish a presence overseas since World War II and 2) the creation of the International Crisis Group, which was established over a period of two years in the Endowment.

On the first, I think that the Carnegie's Moscow Center has turned out to be a very successful and useful enterprise, particularly as a tool to advance open intellectual discussion in Russia as well as advancing internationally. It has become a prominent platform for discussions and presentation of varying point of view, which had been absent until the end of the Soviet Union. It was essentially a free-wheeling "think tank" very much like what we see in the U.S. and that was precisely the purpose we had in mind. The Moscow institute has been alive and well for thirteen-fourteen years; it has expanded significantly since its birth and has become a model for Jessica Mathews, the current Carnegie president, in her efforts to establish similar institutions in the Middle East and China, her vision of a global think tank. The founding of the Moscow institute naturally took a lot of my time. I and my deputy were constant visitors.

The crisis group had little to do with the Carnegie "think tank", but I thought it was worth all the time and effort that it took to establish – some two years – to get it effectively underway. If you want more information about that group, go to www.crisisgroup.org. I am proud of the work that group has done. It started with 3 people and a 2 million budget and has grown to 140 people and a 16 million dollar budget. It is working in some 30 countries. It is an indispensable source for anyone interested in detailed foreign policy. It has worked hard to establish an effective advocacy effort, which is quite impressive.

I was particularly impressed by the very weak governmental responses to the disintegration of Yugoslavia and to the Rwandan genocide. It was these two events which were the genesis for the International Crisis Group. I wanted to establish an organization which would provide a continuing on-the-ground analysis of a situation. I thought that any analysis far removed from the action, as in most think tanks, could not provide adequate support to the policy makers or "get a seat at the table." This was particularly true for pre-conflict and actual conflict situations. Continuing analysis from the scene was essential in coming up with recommendations for actions to help prevent or contain such conflict. The Crisis Group is an analytical organization, a prescriptive organization and an advocacy organization.

It began in Sierra Leone; but got a real push when George Soros gave us $800,000 to monitor the Dayton Accords which were seen then as the key to maintaining peace in Bosnia. Efforts were focused on what was happening to the parties, to highlight deviations from the Accords and recommend corrective actions. As you can well imagine, our goals brought us into frequent conflict with the U.S. government on issues of post-Dayton management activities and particularly on what to do about Kosovo. Since we were a private group, there wasn't anything the U.S. government could do about our activities. Furthermore, General Wes Clark was frequently on the same "wave length" with us on what to do in Kosovo and spent considerable time with ICG as well as

later becoming a board member. So ICG expanded from Sierra Leone to the Balkans and to many other countries. Indispensable to this grown was Garth Evans, former foreign minister of Australia and president of ICG for fourteen years. I am convinced that in certain cases ICG had a real impact on the decision making. The main goal was to get governments to take actions which for one reason or another they did not want to do. James Baker's statement on Yugoslavia that we "didn't have a dog in that race" in 1992 was a disastrous one. ICG insisted that the U.S. government behave otherwise – and it sometimes did.

I did spend a lot of time on the management of the traditional functions of the Carnegie Endowment as well as doing a good bit of writing, mostly op-eds, articles, and speeches. So my six years at Carnegie were very busy indeed. My vantage point enabled me to see gaps in the governmental policy process.

Q: On behalf of the Association of Diplomatic Studies and Training let me thank you for all the time you have given us. I think that historians and researches will find your insights a fruitful source for their discussions.

End of interview