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

RUTH E. HANSEN

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INTERVIEW

Q: Today June 21, 2004. This is an interview with Ruth E. Hansen. Let's start at the beginning. Could you tell me when and where you were born and then we'll talk a little bit about your family, your parents.

HANSEN: I was born in 1946 in Chicago. My family is originally from Chicago, both parents born there. My father was raised on the West Side, in the Austin neighborhood, and my mother on the South Side.

On my father's side, his family on his father's side came from Norway, immigrants who came to the United States in the mid-1800s, I guess. I have heard the story of his grandmother coming as a 13-year-old and going into service with a Chicago family. His own father was a high school principal in Chicago. His father and all his uncles graduated from Northwestern University and went into a variety of professions – education, law, pharmacy.

Q: With an immigrant family, this is sort of remarkable that they would be within a relatively short time going to Northwestern, being a high school principal and in other professions. What was the secret of their getting into that position?

HANSEN: I don't know if there was a secret. I do remember my grandfather, the high school principal, always saying we should "keep our standards high." I suspect that was a

lesson from his own family and had something to do with their success.

Q: What did your father do?

HANSEN: My father was originally a teacher as well, in the period just before World War II. He taught briefly in the same high school where my grandfather was the principal, Sullivan High School in Chicago. He also taught at a couple of junior colleges in Chicago and then served in the Navy during the war as an air navigation instructor. He was assigned to Athens, Georgia, to a naval air station near Chicago, and in Florida, and then spent a few months in Hawaii during the de-mobilization period after the war. Later, as his family grew and financial demands grew, he went into business. With two friends, he invested in a small printing company in Chicago, Acme Letter Company in the late 1940s. The company was faltering, so he soon bought out the partners in order to take responsibility for the company and make it a success. He remained in the printing business until he retired at about the age of 70. He started with about ten employees, built it up into a firm of over 100, later merged with another company and ultimately sold the business.

The other side of his family is interesting as well. On his mother's side, the background is English and German. They were much earlier immigrants to the country, settling in Pennsylvania and then moving to Kentucky and eventually into Kansas. The legendary family character we always talk about on that side of the family is my father's grandfather, who was called "Doc" Workman. He was a doctor, probably a fairly rudimentary physician, in Kansas in the late 1800s and did some exploration out in Colorado in what is now the Estes Park National Park area. We had an old family cabin there that we used to go to in the summertime occasionally. It was very rustic, with no running water, no electricity, nothing except the howling of the wolves in the distance.

Q: How about his wife?

HANSEN: Doc Workman actually had four wives over the years. He lived to a very old age and outlived each of his wives, one of whom was the mother of my grandmother, Grace. Grace became a nurse and, after what I understand was a rather lengthy courtship, finally agreed to marry my grandfather. They had met when he visited Colorado one summer while Grace was there. I think they were both around 40 years of age, so they got married rather late and then they had their two children, my father and his sister, Elaine. Elaine was quite the beauty. She was a model for a time and then married a doctor, Leslie Lisle, and lived in Columbus, Ohio, with their three children.

Q: On your mother's side, what was her family name and where did they come from?

HANSEN: On my mother's side, the family is Swedish and more recent immigrants who arrived in the U.S. in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Her father, Henning Ohrn, immigrated as a young man and, though he spoke English very well, spoke with a rather heavy Swedish accent. His wife, Frida Swanson, was born in the United States. They

lived in Chicago and my mother and her sister Victoria and brother Carl were all raised there in Chicago. Grandpa Ohrn worked for the International Harvester Company, rising to the position of foreman. He was fortunate in that he held his job even through all of the Great Depression, and family lore has it that he often helped out and supported the less fortunate during that time.

Q: Where did your parents go to college?

HANSEN: My father graduated from Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, in 1938. He later earned a teacher's degree from Chicago Teachers College and a Master's in history from Northwestern University. My mother attended for two years what was then a junior college in Chicago, North Park College, now North Park University, a denominational school of the Evangelical Covenant Church. Then she went on to complete her undergraduate studies in English at the University of Chicago.

Q: Did you grow up in Chicago?

HANSEN: I was in Chicago until the second grade. I attended the John Hay Elementary School in the neighborhood. Then we moved out to Wheaton in the western suburbs of Chicago, so I mainly grew up in Wheaton, Illinois.

Q: What was Wheaton like?

HANSEN: When we moved there it was a small town on the edge of the suburban developments for the Chicago area. Beyond Wheaton were the corn fields. At that time, the population was about 11,000. It's now well over 30,000 and surrounded by still more bedroom communities. It was a very much middle class, perhaps upper middle class, suburban WASP-ish upbringing.

Q: Looking back on it, was there much of a Scandinavian overtone within your family?

HANSEN: There certainly was, mainly because of my mother's Swedish family. The church that we attended was part of the Evangelical Covenant Church denomination, originally a breakaway from the Swedish Lutheran Church.. Our particular church in the neighboring town of Glen Ellyn, Illinois, had a very much Swedish element, especially at Christmas time. They had Christmas services that reflected Swedish traditions, complete with the Santa Lucia service. That's the ceremony with the young girls dressed in white, one of them wearing a wreath of candles, with the "Santa Lucia" music in the background. One Christmas, I was asked to be the Lucia so I had the wreath of candles in my hair, had to recite a little poem and so forth. My most striking memory, though was the fire extinguisher in the front row of the church. Anyway, it was a nice little ceremony. Very warm memories of that time, of course.

Q: Was there Swedish cooking in the family?

HANSEN: Yes, of course, thanks to Grandma Ohrn. We always had a smorgasbord dinner on Christmas Eve. The main remnants of the Swedish cooking traditions that we retain is the tradition of Swedish pancakes with lingonberry sauce, not to mention Swedish meatballs.

Q: Did you have brothers or sisters?

HANSEN: I'm one of five children, second in line. I have an older brother Richard, a sister Beth, and two younger brothers, Ted and Larry. With five kids, I'm sure that everybody has a different story of what that the family was like. My older brother was actually born a twin. His twin brother died just a few days after the birth. In the 1940's, of course, a premature birth was a pretty risky situation, and the other twin couldn't be saved. Richard has been a reference librarian for many years and works at Regis College in Denver. My sister is also a librarian, a faculty librarian at Governor State University in Illinois, and is married to Mike Shaw. My brother Ted lives in Indianapolis with his wife Ann and their three daughters. Ted was actually in the Foreign Service himself for a few years and served in Caracas and then, after he left the State Department, for a long time was the stay-at-home father. The youngest brother is a neoropathologist, as is his partner Nancy Harrison, and he teaches neuropathology at the University of California at San Diego. So we're pretty well spread out. But we do manage to keep in touch and to get together whenever we can.

Q: You mentioned two of your siblings were librarians. How important were books in your family?

HANSEN: We all did an awfully lot of reading. We were a very bookish family, very academically oriented. We were expected to do well in school. We've all got a couple of advanced degrees at least, so that high standard that my grandfather used to talk about very much applied in the area of academics.

Q: What particular types of books or subjects intrigued you?

HANSEN: I enjoyed reading the biographies that were written for children on such figures as Sam Houston and Clara Barton and Molly Pitcher from American history. But I was also very much into the books series for kids, such as the Bobbsey Twins stories and the Nancy Drew mysteries. Then, for a while my role models for career professions were Cherry Ames the nurse and Vickie Barr the airline hostess. Those were the things that I thought about as a career when I was, say, in the fifth or sixth grade. Not very high aspirations in retrospect, but it seemed exciting at the time. I have to credit an English teacher in about the seventh grade who said this is ridiculous, that I should be reading better things than those "girls' books". He got me to read the Bronte sisters and Jane Austen, among other authors, so my reading got a little more serious in junior high and high school.

Q: I take it you were a good student?

HANSEN: I was not a straight A student, but I tried to be and got close a number of times, but basically As and Bs.

Q: How about at home? Was there much of sort of the family sitting around the table at dinner time and talk about events or subjects or things of this nature or not?

HANSEN: Well, I think my parents would have loved it and tried to make it happen, and I'm sure it did on occasion, but I wouldn't say that that it was an everyday occurrence with five kids with different schedules and a hardworking father with a long commute. It was pretty much a feat to get dinner on the table and everybody around the table at one time. Plus many times we were in a hurry to finish dinner and get back to television.

Q: Oh, yes, you were in the era of television just coming on.

HANSEN: I remember some of the very early television programs from when we were kids in Chicago: *Lunchtime Little Theater*, the *Howdy Doody Show*, Hopalong Cassidy, Roy Rogers; and for the adults, *Your Hit Parade*. By the time we got out to Wheaton, it seemed that the TV was on all the time. I didn't watch it as much as my younger brothers and my sister did, but it seems to me that that TV was on just constantly.

Q: Did you have any particular things that you liked on TV?

HANSEN: On daytime television, there were a few quiz shows I used to watch with some regularity and really a silly program called *Queen for a Day* where women would be invited to tell their sob stories and the audience would vote for which of two or three women had the most dramatic sob story. Then she would be awarded all kinds of prizes to make her feel better, I guess, and deal with her problems. It was really a ridiculous program. There were a lot of TV series and sitcoms in the evenings that we watched with some regularity. There was *Father Knows Best*, *Leave it to Beaver*, *Superman*, standard fare. There was the really a very dramatic story of the FBI agent, Richard Philbrick, *I Led Three Lives* and, on late night TV, *The Tonight Show* with Jack Paar.

Q: In school, what subjects particularly interested you?

HANSEN: I would say reading. I wasn't very enthusiastic about math and science. I had a sort of typical girl thing at the time in terms of difficulty with math. I liked doing math but it seemed kind of tricky to me. Maybe it was a kind of dyslexia in math. But reading I loved and was very comfortable with.

When I got to high school, there was a special world literature class for seniors. The teacher was well liked and it was a really popular course and for good reason. Students selected their own readings from a list of works from the ancient Greek and Roman period right up to the present. You had to choose across genres and group up with other students to give presentations to the class on one selection. At that time, our junior high

and high schools were just beginning to introduce advanced courses for what would today be called "gifted" students. Not surprisingly, I wasn't admitted to the advanced math courses. But I was disappointed not to get into an advanced writing course. I appealed that to the high school English Department and managed to get into the advanced writing course taught by another popular English teacher, a Miss Kidwell. She took no nonsense from the students and, very dramatically, dumped all of our first essays into the trash can. Dead silence in the classroom. We were stunned.

In high school I had to take a foreign language and I signed up for was Spanish. You had the choice of Spanish, French, Latin, probably German. I really fell in love with the Spanish language and took Spanish during all four years in high school. I had a very memorable teacher for three of those years, a Mr. Samper. He gave us a good grounding in the grammar and got us into the literature and culture quite a bit. During high school I also became interested in history, government, political science. I'm not sure just what sparked it, but it was during high school that I decided I'd like to be in the Foreign Service, though I'm sure I didn't even know just what it was.

Q: Was there the feeling that boys went off in one direction and girls in another in education?

HANSEN: Somewhat, although certainly there were an awful lot of smart girls in my class, with a lot of girls as the top students in high school, including in math and science. It was on the playing fields where the boys and girls really divided up. The boys had softball and the girls would play tetherball, for example, though we were all into kickball. I liked to think of myself as something of a tomboy at the time because I preferred to play softball. I do regret that girls were not given better sports activities. I think I would have enjoyed getting into sports more than I did. It wasn't very popular or very common for girls to be really active in school sports.

I attended Wheaton Central High School right there in town, graduating in 1964 in a class of probably just over 400 kids. I know of at least two other Foreign Service officers who came out that high school around the same time, one of whom entered the Foreign Service in 1973 in the same A-100 class with me. And a couple of luminaries: Bob Woodward of Washington *Post* and *All the President's Men* fame was a few years ahead of me, and the actor/comic John Belushi just afterward.

Q: On politics, where were your parents on the political spectrum?

HANSEN: On my father's side were staunch Republicans. Grandpa Hansen used to say that he hoped his grandchildren would grow up to marry people who were of "Northern European background, Protestant, and preferably of the Republican persuasion". My mother's side was Democratic. Wheaton is the county seat of Du Page County which was and probably still is a real Republican stronghold.

So politically, as a kid, I pretty much assumed I was Republican. But I started thinking a

little differently during the 1960 presidential campaign between Kennedy and Nixon. Nixon came to Wheaton on a campaign stop, so that was a big deal and we all turned out to cheer him. But then there was the televised debate between Kennedy and Nixon. The standard analysis now is that, if you heard the debate on radio, Nixon seemed to come off better because you would focus more on the substance of what was said in the debate. If you watched it on television, then Nixon came off poorly because of his five o'clock shadow, a gray suit that blended him into the background, or whatever. Well, I watched the debate on TV. There I was fully expecting to favor Nixon, but instead, to my own surprise, I actually thought that Kennedy did better in the debate. So I think that I was influenced by that particular event because it got me thinking as an individual about politics rather than following the conventional wisdom around me.

In general, that was about the time that I started to become politically aware, with Kennedy's election and inauguration. In terms of international events, the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban missile crisis were among the first international events that I paid attention to. Then in November 1963, during the fall of my senior year in high school, President Kennedy was assassinated. Like everyone else who was around that day, I remember just where I was and what I was doing when I heard about it. We were on a half-day schedule at high school that year, and on my way out of school at mid-day, I overheard a couple of teachers talking about "the first assassination since …" but didn't realize what they meant. A few minutes later, over a coke at the dime store lunch counter, my girlfriend and I heard the radio announcement of Kennedy's death.

In terms of extracurricular activities, I didn't do that much at school. Our church was largely the center of my social activity. I was very active in the youth group in church and other church doings. We had the regular schedule of services for the week: Sunday school and the morning service on Sunday morning, a late Sunday afternoon youth group meeting, then the Sunday evening service. Often the high school kids would go out someplace for hamburgers or pizza or ice cream after the Sunday evening service. There was also a mid-week prayer service I sometimes attended, and a choir practice, since my poor voice was tolerated in the choir for a while.

The youth group meeting might have involved a special speaker or discussion groups, or Bible study, Bible "drills", films, sing-alongs with the old Christian choruses. It was no doubt hard for the youth group leaders and for the kids – I was the "program chairman" at one point - to think of something to do with those kids week after week. We also had a Friday night social event and occasional "retreats". The "Hi-League retreat" would take us off to the denominational camp at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, for example.

Also through the denomination, when I graduated from high school in 1964, my folks sent my older brother and me on a European tour run by the Evangelical Church. Ostensibly the main event was in international youth conference in Switzerland, but there was a wonderful tour organized around it. The tour must have lasted a good four or six weeks, a "grand tour" by bus. This was an eye-opener for me in terms of what's out there by way of art and architecture and all that Europe has to offer. I saw my first opera, which

was “Aida”, at an outdoor amphitheater in Italy, complete with live horse. It was wonderful. Because of the Swedish background of the church, the tour included several days in Sweden, and Richard and I had a chance to meet my mother’s Swedish relatives.

Q: What was the dating situation in high school and college?

HANSEN: I myself wasn’t typical because, to my dismay, I didn’t date at all. Most kids did, of course, and I’ve since gathered that there was a lot more going on at my high school than I in my innocence ever imagined. In our discussions groups at church, one of the burning issues that the counselors tried to get us to discuss was whether a girl should kiss a boy on her first date. That was the issue, at least in the counselors’ minds. So that makes it seem like there wasn’t much happening. But in my high school there was drinking and I knew of a few girls who got pregnant. That would have been very scandalous, and the unwed mothers’ home was the likely fate. These were the days before “The Pill”, which changed things a lot.

Given my family’s educational background and emphasis on education, it was a foregone conclusion that I would go to college. As I mentioned earlier my father had attended Wheaton College there in our hometown, and my mother North Park College in Chicago. Those were the only two schools I seriously considered. They just seemed natural. Because of my interest in the Spanish language, I also looked into Middlebury College but it wasn’t a very serious option. Anyway, my dad very much wanted his kids to attend Wheaton College and in the end told me that that’s what I would be doing. I resented it, in a way, but at the same time it took the decision off my back. I was able to live on campus, which was a plus, and I enjoyed the freshman year there. After that it wasn’t so hot, but I stayed on and graduated in 1968.

Wheaton is a small Protestant school, about 1800 students, non-denominational but very religious and very conservative. Billy Graham is probably its best known graduate. One of our yearbooks described Wheaton College as “30 miles to the right of the University of Chicago,” so that gives you an idea. There were religious events all the time – prayer groups, prayer meetings, classes were opened with a prayer, chapel every day. I had a couple of wonderful roommates my first year and other wonderful roommates thereafter. But after my freshman year I couldn’t wait to get out of the place.

Q: What was the turning point?

HANSEN: We used to talk about a “sophomore slump”, which I guess was a very typical thing. You’d have a good freshman year and in the sophomore year you’d fall into the sophomore slump. I fell into the slump and on top of that began to question some of the religious teachings I’d always tried to believe in. I had been raised in a religious home, always been active in church, all of that, but I began to find a disconnect between what I’d been taught and what I was thinking myself. In the turn of phrase, I started to “question my beliefs” beginning in about my sophomore year in college.

A dramatic turning point for me was in the spring of 1967, when I came to Washington, D.C. on the Washington semester program at the American University offered and Wheaton participated in. This program has expanded quite a bit by now, but at the time it was a program that was run in the junior year of college by American University for selected students from probably 20 different small liberal arts colleges around the country. These students came to Washington for a semester of study of American government and politics. By that time I'd become very interested in political science and history. Being anxious to get away from Wheaton, I applied for the Washington semester and I was accepted for it. My college advisor tried to discourage me from applying. He didn't think I could meet the demands of the program and, in fact, it was a difficult and challenging program. But I did well in it. My time in Washington was an absolute eye opener for me, coming from a small town and from Wheaton College and from such a sheltered background. It just opened up a whole new world, and that was the world for me from then on.

There wasn't much at the time by way of formal internship programs, but I stayed on in Washington for the summer of 1967 and worked for an Illinois congressman, Cong. Robert McCloskey. It was glorified secretarial work, so there wasn't much substance to it, but we had a good time that summer. Then it was back to Wheaton College in the fall. I had enough credits to finish college after the fall semester, and then I graduated with my class the following spring.

During the spring semester, since I didn't need to attend any more classes, I lined up a trip to Europe for myself. Just about the first thing that I did when I got to Europe was end up at the American Consulate in Luxembourg. At that time, it was popular – and cheap – to fly to Europe via Icelandic Air trip from New York to Reykjavik and then to Luxembourg. I had a second or third cousin who was doing this European hitch hiking thing at the same time that I was and he had gotten to Luxembourg a week or so ahead of me. When I showed up, we got together briefly. It turned out that he had somehow gotten hooked up with a couple of other American kids and one or two of them had been arrested, I think for marijuana possession. For some reason my cousin thought that, if I went with them to the consulate and promised to sort of look after these kids, then the consular officer would be willing and able to help them in some way. I'm sure that I had absolutely no influence, but I went with my cousin and talked with the consular officer about these kids whom I had never even met myself. Somehow we all went off on our merry ways. That was my first overseas experience with the Foreign Service. The consular officer just looked at us in total disbelief. I can't imagine what he must have thought of us, but luckily nothing further came of the incident as far as I ever heard.

My parents had lent me money to buy a VW bug which I picked up in Luxembourg. I spent part of that spring in Bordeaux at a French university trying to learn a little more French. It didn't work out very well, so I quit and then traveled around Europe, sometimes with other students, sometimes by myself. I was in Europe when Martin Luther King was assassinated in the U.S., and came home right at the time that Bobby Kennedy was assassinated. Things were looking bleak in the United States. .

Going back to the Washington Semester program in 1967, this was getting to be an exciting period politically. President Johnson was very controversial and becoming very unpopular, terms like "strategic obfuscation" were bandied about, people were getting very distrustful of government and of Johnson in particular, anti-war sentiment was heating up. The American University professor who led the Washington Semester Program was quite an outspoken academic, very liberal, and he was determined that we would be exposed to all the controversy that was swirling in Washington at that time. One of the wonderful things about this Washington Semester Program was that they arranged for the classes to meet with government officials in the executive, judicial and legislative branches, plus lobbyists, journalists, etc., to get a good idea of how Washington worked. So we had opportunities to talk to people who were directly involved in the issues of the day. Again it was quite an eye opening experience to have that kind of exposure. We were not a terribly outspoken group, but certainly some of the students in the Washington Semester Program were more willing to challenge authority than I had been and more so than students I'd been going to school with back at Wheaton. That was very eye-opening, too.

At this time, students across the country were getting into the protest movement, the anti-Vietnam War protests, hippies, etc. This was the era of "don't trust anyone over 30", and I got into some of that, too. Even at Wheaton College, that last semester I was there, there was a small anti-war group, a teeny tiny chapter of Americans for Democratic Action. We staged a really small-scale anti-war demonstration.

After I graduated in l968, that summer, the Democratic National Convention was held in Chicago. It was very raucous, very violent, with police-demonstrator clashes outside. That summer I worked for my father downtown near the Loop in Chicago, so I was going into the city everyday and following very closely what was going on. It was eerie, to say the least, to see jeeps full of armed soldiers or armed police going through the streets of Chicago. It was really dramatic. I was very much sympathetic to some of the protests against Johnson because of the Vietnam War and so forth, and somewhat sympathetic to the sort of hippie atmosphere that pervaded the demonstrations. It was interesting since I was working for my dad that summer and a lot of the employees, though they were Chicagoans and probably Democrats, were on the conservative side. They couldn't understand how the boss's daughter could be sympathetic to the hippies. They just couldn't fathom this at all. It was a culture clash.

A little later, when I was in Washington for graduate school, I went up to Capitol Hill in January of 1969 when Nixon was to be inaugurated. I watched from a distance and couldn't have gotten any closer. The Hill almost looked like an armed camp, with phalanxes of soldiers around the Capitol building, sharpshooters on the roof of the Capitol. Very eerie.

Q: Were the students, the male students at Wheaton going into the military sort of automatically without protest?

HANSEN: For the most part, yes. Wheaton had an ROTC chapter, and all the men were in the ROTC program. A number of them were joining the military as officers after graduation. One of them, who had been either the student body president, or senior class president, was opposed to the Vietnam War, as I recall, and was one of the leaders of the small anti-war movement on campus. As I heard the story, the president of the college threatened in some way to withhold his commission. As far as I know, that didn't happen, though, and the student went on to join the army as an officer upon graduation. I don't know where he served. He had qualms about the war, yet he served. I expect that was often the case; people just went and did their duty.

Q: What was next, after your graduation from Wheaton College?

HANSEN: As I mentioned, since about the age of 16, I had been interested in the Foreign Service. There was the influence of the Spanish classes which I enjoyed so much and I wanted to do something with languages, plus I had developed an interest in political science and international affairs. With those interests in mind and with a strong interest in living again in Washington, DC, I had applied for the Foreign Service program at Georgetown University for the Master's program and I was accepted. Frankly, I really didn't know what else to do upon graduation from college. I thought about going to law school, which would have still been rather unusual for a woman at that time, but three years of law school seemed like a long time. But I knew I could handle the Foreign Service Master's program so that was kind of an easy decision.

I did also apply to the Foreign Service at that time and took the written exam and passed it. I took the oral exam the summer of 1968, but did not pass the oral exam. In those years, the oral exam was a one- to two-hour interview by a three-member panel of Foreign Service officers.

Of the questions I remember, I'm sure there were questions on international affairs, but one of the most striking questions was that they asked what my marriage plans were. This kind of question is not allowed in employment interviews now, but it was pretty much a standard question for a single woman at the time. I wasn't offended or surprised by it, though it was awfully annoying.

I should add that, when I was thinking about applying for the Foreign Service, my political science advisor at college told me not to do it. His reasoning was that the Foreign Service generally didn't hire women, so you might as well not try. He tried to discourage me but I applied anyway. This was the same adviser who had discouraged me from going to the Washington Semester Program at American University because he didn't think I could handle it. So I didn't get a lot of encouragement from that source.

Back to the question about marriage plans, in my own mind it was an easy question to answer, if somewhat embarrassing. I mentioned earlier that I was atypical as far as the dating scene in high school. I had not dated, even through all of college. So I could very

easily and honestly say that I hadn't had any romantic attachments and didn't expect that I would. At that time I simply did not expect ever to get married. I expected to remain single and wanted a Foreign Service career. That was the answer I gave. I'm sure they didn't believe it. Then they concluded the interview. I waited for their decision, and when they called me back in to tell me that I had not passed the exam, the one officer said that they were sorry that they couldn't admit me into the Foreign Service. But, he said, you're going on to Georgetown for graduate school; you'll probably marry a nice young man and you won't have to worry about a career.

One of the other questions that they asked me was about Chicago, where the interview took place. One of the interviewers was an African-American and he asked me about the history of Chicago. Well, as it happened, I couldn't remember much at all about the history of Chicago. And of course it turns out that one of the early settlers and traders in the area that is now Chicago was a black fur trader, du Sable, so his point was made. The panel also asked about whether I had taken advantage of the cultural life available in Chicago, going to concerts and things like that. I had done some of that, but I think I probably came across sounding like a very naive, innocent, sheltered suburbanite, which is what I was. In all honesty, I don't think I was really ready for the Foreign Service at that point, so I can't say the Foreign Service interviewers made a bad decision.

Anyway, that was my first experience with the Foreign Service and my college advisor proved to be right, that I would have a hard time getting in.

I started in the fall of 1968 and the master of science and Foreign Service program there was normally, it normally took a year and a half to go through, but I started working while I was at graduate school, so I extended it to a two year program. The spring of 1970, so =68 to =70.

Q: Tell me about the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown. How did you find it?

HANSEN: I started at Georgetown in the fall of 1968. The program for the Master of Science in Foreign Service normally took a year and a half, but I started working while I was at graduate school, so I took two years to finish the program, earning the degree in the spring of 1970. We were a relatively small group of students in that particular class, about 30 or 35 students. At the orientation session for the program, we were told that, as a practical matter, though most of us were aiming for the Foreign Service, very few of us would get in, because it was so selective. They burst a few bubbles at that point, I think, but turned out to be right. They said that most of us would probably go into banking or business or something else, academics or whatever, related to international affairs, but not the Department of State Foreign Service. Aside from myself, I know of one other student from that class who joined the Foreign Service after teaching for a number of years.

There were several specialties that we could choose among. International economics, international relations generally. I think you could choose a regional studies specialty as well. I chose the international relations specialty, although at that time my main interest

was in Latin America. We had some very good professors. Others were not as memorable. One of the best was the professor of modern American diplomatic history. It was a wonderful, enlightening course. He did a great job, and did a terrific imitation of Franklin Roosevelt when we got to the World War II period. Another instructor tried his best to teach us basic international economics. He was a good professor but I'm afraid we just weren't getting it. In the first exam he gave, most of the students got Ds or Fs. I was relieved to have gotten, I think, a B or C. He was totally dismayed and seemed to think that he had thoroughly failed to convey the information. It certainly wasn't his fault. He pulled us up by our bootstraps and we got through his course eventually. We had a curious professor for one of the Latin American studies courses, a professor who was originally from Cuba. I don't remember much from the class, except that he always had jokes to tell – in Spanish. I followed them right up to the punchline. He'd rattle off that punch line and I'd miss it entirely. Everybody else would be laughing. I don't know if everybody got the jokes or not, but I sure didn't.

Q: Where were you working during graduate school?

HANSEN: When I started at Georgetown, I found it was great going to school, but I was also a little bored, so I got a Christmas job at one of the catalog stores that used to operate in Washington, in the jewelry section. The following summer I buckled down a bit more and started looking for a government position. I found a "research assistant" position at the FCC which did not turn out well at all so I stayed only a couple or three months. I was then able to line up a job on Capitol Hill and worked for about a year and a half for a California congressman by the name of William Mailliard. He represented Marin County and the northern part of San Francisco, and he was the ranking Republican, the ranking minority member, on the then-Foreign Affairs Committee, now the International Relations Committee. He was also on the Merchant Marine Committee. I worked on his personal staff. I found the job through an employment office on Capitol Hill. The title of the position was "legislative aide," a slight cut above secretarial work. My main responsibility was to answer constituent correspondence on questions or concerns involving legislative issues.

At the same time he was hiring for this legislative aide position that I took, the Congressman was also hiring two other assistants, more substantive, higher ranking assistants. He hired two guys for those jobs and me as the legislative aide. As it turned, as I later found out, I had about equal qualifications. However, even if I had known about the higher-level openings, I probably wouldn't have had the nerve to apply for them.

The Congressman's Washington staff worked mainly in two different areas, under the direction of a spectacular executive assistant who had been with the Congressman for many years. One area was the assistance constituents needed in dealing with the government – primarily veterans' affairs and Social Security problems. A couple of very experienced and capable women handled that side. They had been doing this kind of work for years and really knew their stuff. I was on the legislative side and responded to inquiries that came to the congressman's office from people who wanted to track bills

going through the system or were lobbying on behalf of one piece of legislation or another. An awful lot of these constituent letters were part of organized mass mailing campaigns on behalf of legislation dealing with animal rights or Medicare coverage for chiropractic services, things like that. I came to think that the American system of government was, in a way, democracy by deception. People seemed to have this simplified notion of bills coming before Congress and being handled the way you learn in your textbooks and not realizing that there's a lot behind a piece of legislation in terms of how it gets through the system, and that most legislative proposals don't go anywhere at all. Some of my work in handling the legislative correspondence was quite routine, but I appreciated the occasional opportunities to explain in some substance how the legislative system worked.

Q: What were the Congressman's primary concerns on the Foreign Affairs Committee?

HANSEN: I guess it was probably the foreign assistance program because he worked a lot with a Mr. Matt Harvey, who headed the Congressional liaison office for USAID. Since I was on the Congressman's personal staff, I didn't have responsibilities or opportunities to get involved in the foreign affairs side of things. I was fortunate to meet Mr. Harvey because I later went to work for him at USAID.

Q: How about the Vietnam War protests at that time?

HANSEN: Opposition to the Vietnam War was becoming more and more widespread. It was no longer a hippie kind of thing but was becoming more mainstream. Congressman Mailliard was a Republican, President Nixon was in the White House, the Congressman supported the Nixon Administration, including its Vietnam War policies. At one point, there was a major anti-war demonstration of some sort taking place in Washington and one of the anti-war groups was trying to get congressional staffers to sign on to war protest statements. By that time, I was an opponent of the Vietnam War and I was going to sign onto the statement. But they wanted me to identify myself as working for this particular congressman and, given his position, of course I couldn't agree to do so. That was a little bit of a dilemma. I was sorry not to be able to sign onto it, but at the same time I couldn't bring the congressman's name into it. But here's a twist. The congressman at the time lived in Georgetown, in a large, beautiful home. It turns out that some anti-war protestors floating through the streets of Georgetown needed a place to stay, and the congressman's wife put them up in their house. The protestors probably never knew that they were staying at the home of a Republican congressman who supported the war.

Q: You later worked for USAID?

HANSEN: Yes, I left the Congressman's office and went to work for Matt Harvey in Congressional Liaison at USAID for about two and a half years as his "special assistant." I appreciated the opportunity to work for him; it was certainly a step upward in rank and pay, but sometimes there was less to the job than met the eye. There were many frustrating days when I just didn't have serious work to do. My main responsibility came

at the end of each week, when I was to write and circulate a report on that week's legislative activities related to USAID. This meant that, during the course of the week, I was free to attend and expected to attend committee hearings and House and Senate floor debates and so forth related to the foreign assistance program, plus I gleaned information from the various legislative affairs officers on the staff. That part of the job I loved, and I wrote good reports. Before long, I had a pretty good distribution list for that report, and a number of people asked to be added to the list. I think these kinds of reports are very standardized by now and probably go through a lot of clearances before they're distributed. I didn't have to clear my reports with anybody except my boss. But that was the bulk of my work. When things were busy on the Hill, it was great. If there wasn't anything happening on the Hill, it could be deathly dull and quiet at times.

I did to get to hear some interesting debates about foreign assistance. At one point, the foreign aid bill was up for a vote in the Senate. It had been debated all week, with a lot of criticism heaped on the bill. The actual vote didn't come until the Friday and, Congress being a "Tuesday-Thursday club," a lot Senators had already left for the weekend by the time the vote came up on Friday. The debate had not been going well. There was a lot of criticism of AID at the time, in part because of the Vietnam War connection plus because of the public security programs. So there was a lot of skepticism of about what foreign assistance could accomplish and how it was being run. At one point on the Friday my boss came in and sat down next to me in the gallery of the Senate and asked how it was going. I told him I didn't think it was going well at all, that Senator Kennedy and other aid supporters were absent, that the debate had been so critical. As it turned out, the bill was defeated. It was voted down to everyone's surprise. I don't think even the critics expected actually to defeat the foreign aid bill. The Senate later found some procedural mechanism to bring it back for a vote and went ahead and passed it.

There was another very striking event around that time. At one point, there was a major debate in the House of Representatives over legislation pertaining to the Vietnam War. I was able to attend in the gallery and listened to a good part of the debate. For a fairly lengthy period, the House was practically full, with Members sitting in their seats and actually listening to the debate. You seldom saw that happen. It was a real discussion, with Members seriously paying attention and listening to what everyone had to say, and the debate went on and on. By that time, I had attended a lot of sessions of Congress, of both the Senate and the House of Representatives, and this one was highly unusual, a rare event. In retrospect, I think it was a reflection of how pervasive the Vietnam War issue was becoming.

Another of the main issues at the time regarding foreign assistance was the USAID police training program. AID used to run police training and I believe it was done in Vietnam, Argentina, elsewhere, and it became extremely controversial because of abuses committed, or thought to have been committed, by the recipients of the training under repressive regimes. It was about that time or shortly afterward that the legislative restrictions were enacted to preclude AID from doing police training. I think only in the last several years has AID been able to get back into that field at all, and in only a very

limited way.

Q: Working at AID, did you come aware of the divide between AID and the State Department?

HANSEN: Yes, at least I certainly felt like I worked for AID and certainly didn't feel that I had any connection with the State Department at all. I was working in the Main State building, in the old section, but I certainly never felt that I had a connection with the State Department. I don't recall my AID colleagues referring to State Department colleagues in anyway or having any particular interchange with them, which may be telling in itself.

In any event, I did still want to get into the Foreign Service. As I mentioned, I had taken the exam earlier and had not passed the oral exam part. I knew I could take it again, so I did so a couple of years after the first try. Again, I passed the written but not the oral part. In both of those oral exams, the panel members had suggested some things I should do to enhance by chances of joining the Foreign Service. One panel recommended that I read the journal "Foreign Policy" regularly. They recommend that I travel overseas and that I visit an American Embassy. I didn't tell them about my Luxembourg experience back in 1968. So, I proceeded to do those things. I subscribed to Foreign Policy, and I read it. When I visited Spain as a tourist, I went to the U.S. Embassy in Madrid and asked for an appointment with a Foreign Service officer because I was interested in the Foreign Service as a career. They let me speak to a consular officer who was perplexed as to why I was there but kindly spoke with me for a few minutes. I'm sure she was too busy for this sort of thing. Anyway, I did these things and checked these boxes. Then, I went through the exam process yet again in 1971 or 1972. Again I passed the written exam. At the oral exam, about halfway through it, for some reason I had the feeling that I was going to pass; I don't know what gave me that sense, because I can't say that I was doing brilliantly, that's for sure. We got to the end of the interview, and the panel asked if I had anything more I wanted to say. I said, well, this is now my third try and I've done what the other panels suggested to me to prepare for the Foreign Service. I really felt like I'd done what I need to do and would really like to join. Actually, when I mentioned that I'd subscribed to the "Foreign Policy" journal, as recommended, one of the interviewers allowed as how he'd never found it all that helpful. Anyway, I went off and waited for their verdict. When they called me back in, they said that I still had not done all that well on the oral interview, but they appreciated what I had done to try to prepare for the Foreign Service. They recognized my commitment and, realizing that the Foreign Service needed different kinds of people, they welcomed me in. As you can imagine, I was thrilled and very relieved. I eventually came into the Foreign Service in November of 1973.

Q: So, you joined the Foreign Service in 1973. What was your A-100 class like?

HANSEN: This was a wonderful group of people. We had just a wonderful time together and became very close. In the early 1970s, the State Department was not doing much hiring. I think the Department sort of pulled a class together when it could, when it had the funding, and I had the impression that our class was formed pretty much at the last

minute. We had a lot of single people in the class, a few of whom got married right afterward joining the Foreign Service. There was quite a variety of in terms of age range because the State Department had just lifted an age restriction in hiring. Until then, the cut-off was 32 or 33. That restriction had been removed so there were some officers just over that mark. That was incredibly lucky for me, because my soon-to-be husband, Lawrence Plotkin, was one of them. We met in the A-100 class and got married a couple of years later. By 1973, more women were also being brought into the Foreign Service, and about a fourth of the class was women. Larry and I formed some very strong friendships that we keep up to this day.

Another major change that had occurred in the Foreign Service by 1973 was the practice regarding married officers Until recently, it had been the case, as I came to understand it, that if a Foreign Service couple wanted to be assigned overseas, the woman had to resign. The State Department simply would not assign a married couple overseas; later on, I heard of one exception to the practice, but it was otherwise pretty hard and fast. I believe it wasn't necessarily required that the woman resign, but it always was as far as I knew, with that one exception. And I understand that this was a matter of practice, rather than formal, written policy. In 1973, the practice had just changed. There probably were not yet many tandem couples as such, but women were coming into the Foreign Service in greater numbers and able to stay and begin to follow normal Foreign Service careers.

Q: How did you find the A-100 course? Was it a good introduction to the Foreign Service?

HANSEN: It was very good in terms of giving us background on the State Department and the other foreign affairs agencies. As was often the case, one of the most appreciated sessions was on representational entertaining, how to entertain on a junior officer's budget, which fork to use, etc. But I was kind of disillusioned by some aspects of the course in some ways. There were a couple of guys running it who must have been among the most cynical of Foreign Service Officers. They gave a very negative impression of the Foreign Service. I was surprised and disappointed by their rather devil-may-care attitude and by the fact that they seemed to have a hard time explaining what a political officer could expect to do overseas. They were very vague about how one goes about establishing contacts and made it sound like hanging out with students at the universities was the main occupation. It all sounded a little worthless. So I wasn't very happy from that point of view. Here I'd gone to all this effort to get into the Foreign Service and I began to wonder about what I was really getting into. My first assignment was a consular position, which wasn't exciting, but at least I knew what a consular job was.

Q: Where were you headed for your first assignment? What was your "cone"?

HANSEN: I was in the political cone. I had been told I might be offered a Foreign Service job earlier if I opted for the consular or administration cone, because the political cone was far more competitive. But I stuck with my first choice and so came in as a political officer. There were four political officers in my A-100 class, the others being

men. I think they were all given political officer assignments. I was interested in Latin America at the time, and the normal practice was to be assigned first to a consular position. The Latin American region of course had plenty of those. My first assignment was in the Dominican Republic and that pretty much suited me. I was given some brush-up Spanish training at FSI and went to Santo Domingo in the spring of 1974.

Q: How was your consular training?

HANSEN: It was good and solid but not nearly as thorough as it is these days. There was one quite surprising session on issuing passports for individuals who went abroad for sex change operations, traveling in one direction as one sex and returning as the other.

Q: You were in the Dominican Republic from when to when?

HANSEN: It was originally a two-year assignment, but I was dissatisfied with the assignment for a variety of reasons, some of them personal, and I was able to curtail the assignment to 18 months. I went in the spring of 1974 and departed in November 1975.

Q: What was the situation there when you arrived?

HANSEN: The President was Joaquin Balaguer, who served as president during several different periods over a period of years. Though I don't recall the details, there was political unrest in the country just at the time I arrived and there had been demonstrations where violence occurred. This meant that, the first few days I was in the country, I had to stick close to the rather drab temporary apartment I was assigned to, so it was an inauspicious start to my first overseas assignment. Things were pretty well closed down for a while because of the political atmosphere. Later, during my first year in Santo Domingo, the head of the USIA office was taken hostage and held for several weeks. She was very game about it all, it seemed, and came out of it alright.

Economically, the country was in dire straights, as I expect it still is. There was widespread poverty, unemployment was high, economic prospects for the youth were poor. Santo Domingo was one of the "visa mills", so the workload at the consulate was very heavy and demanding. People were very anxious to get to the United States, one way or another, and the visa lines were long. There was a high rate of fraud. You had to expect that applicants would lie to you. It was a very uncomfortable situation and very difficult work.

Q: This is always a difficult job for a young American who has probably never been lied to blatantly. Did you have a problem dealing with this?

HANSEN: I sure did. I think most of the junior officers did. The Consular Section was set up so that we would rotate among different kinds of consular work – non-immigrant visas, immigrant visas, US Citizen Services. My first assignment was on the non-immigrant visa line. After the first day there, I honestly thought I could never go back and

do it again. It felt impossible. I went back the next day and got through it, and by the end of the week, I was falling into the pattern of it. It was a really terrible job and, yes, people did lie to you. They were so anxious to get visas. The consular officers became known in the country, and people would stop you in the street or on the beach to make a pitch about their visa problems. At the end of my tour, at the airport on my way out, someone raised a visa issue with. It sometimes got to you. I'm sure I had never lost my temper before like a did with some of those visa applicants. On the other hand, Julio Iglesias came through the visa line one day, so there were compensations.

Q: How did an interview work?

HANSEN: On the non-immigrant visa line, we had three or four visa windows, like bank tellers, and a kind of cattle shoot funneling the applicants up to the windows. The waiting line was under cover but otherwise open-air. There were local guards outside but really very minimal security. One applicant opened his briefcase in front of me, just to extract some papers, and there was a pearl-handled revolver inside. The applicant would have his passport and his visa application form and whatever supporting documents he would bring. You'd have a couple of minutes to talk to him, ask where he was going and why, and especially why he would come back to the Dominican Republic rather than stay in New York or Miami or Puerto Rico. Of course, it was very hot outside, and waves of hot air and odors would come wafting into you through the visa window. It was a very unpleasant experience for both the consular officers and the applicants.

The local employees were very important to our work. The Dominican Republic is the kind of place where personal relationships mattered a lot, and it helped to know "who was who." Well, we Americans certainly didn't always know, and the local employees on occasion could tell us that so-and-so was related to so-and-so and helped give us a sense of what the bigger picture was.

Q: What kind of supervision were you getting?

HANSEN: My very first supervisor was a wonderful gentleman, Don Parsons, one of the best supervisors I ever had in the Foreign Service. I admired him very much at the time and we've kept in touch over the years. He was very good in keeping our spirits up. He took a light-hearted attitude toward the work, but he also took it very seriously. At a Country Team meeting, I happened to hear him speak to the Ambassador about some of the issues we were facing in the Consular Section, and it helped remind me that, as frustrating as the consular work could be, it was also serious work that could give you a good picture of what life was like in the country. that you could get a real picture of the country.

Generally speaking, though, I would say that the Consular Section was quite isolated from the rest of the Embassy. The consular building was several blocks away down the street away from the embassy. However, I think the DCM was very good about trying to keep in touch with the consular officers in terms of their work. One came and sat with us on the

visa line a couple of times. Both the Ambassador and the DCM included consular officers in representational events.

Q: Did you get any feel for the Dominican Republic while you were there?

HANSEN: I traveled all over the country. We were a very close knit group in the consular section, and I got to be close friends with a few other Americans in the embassy and some of the local employees. We traveled all over. Of course we all learned to dance the meringue. One of the popular day trips was to San Cristobal, not far from Santo Domingo, to the residence of the former dictator, Rafael Trujillo, who was killed in 1961. There was a pleasant town, Santiago, in the center of the country, a nice mountain town called La Vega, the town of Sosua on the northern coast that had taken in Jewish refugees during World War II, plenty of beaches to check out. The Dominican Republic is a small place so it was fairly easy to cover most of the territory, though the driving could be hair-raising sometimes. So we saw and experienced a lot, and certainly saw how difficult the life was in the country.

Q: How did Haiti compare?

HANSEN: I visited Haiti a couple of times as a tourist. It was shocking to see the difference. Having been around the Dominican Republic, I knew how poorly the people lived. But conditions in Haiti were far worse, even way back then. A former USAID colleague visited me one time in the Dominican Republic and she wanted to take some pictures of life around Santo Domingo. She especially wanted to get a picture of a horse or a donkey pulling a cart, but she missed a couple of shots. Well, we were going on to Haiti, and she thought she'd get that kind of snapshot there. We got to Haiti, and one of the first things we saw was actually a person hauling a cart in place of a horse or donkey. It was just a miserable place with some shocking things to see, like people living almost in holes in the ground. The situation seemed much worse than in the Dominican Republic, as bad as it was there.

Q: You were coned as a political officer. Did you get any feel from your colleagues at the embassy about what political officers were doing?

HANSEN: A little bit. As I mentioned earlier, I'd become a little disenchanted about the political cone after the A-100 course, so I originally wasn't that unhappy to have gone into a consular job initially. As it happened, when I got to the Dominican Republic, one of the young political officers had to leave post early for some reason, so there was an unexpected vacancy in the Political Section. Although I had mixed feelings about it, I thought well, really, I ought to see if I can get that job because I am supposed to be a political officer and, now that I've seen what the consular work is like, I would just as soon make the switch. By then, I had developed something of a friendly relationship with the political counselor and I thought I could go and have a chat with him about it. But when I went in to see him, he stayed firmly behind his huge desk and it was pretty clear that it was not going to be a very comfortable discussion. I explained my interest in the

political officer position and he explained how really they were thinking of developing this position as sort of a "sports officer" position as a way of promoting understanding between the two countries. He didn't quite literally say it should be a guy in the job since it was going to be sports related, but it was pretty clear that he didn't want me in the job, whether because of my personal qualifications or, more likely, because I was a woman. I did not make any complaint about it, but it was pretty clear to me that I was not going to get that job.

Q: After Santo Domingo?

HANSEN: I came back to Washington. I really was questioning at that point whether I would stay in the Foreign Service, and it had largely to do with my personal situation. I was still single, and I would say generally that Foreign Service life is not as kind to single women as it is to single men. In the Dominican Republic, I had worked with a number of colleagues who were single professional women. I admired them very much. They were highly capable, very accomplished and cultured, great bridge players. But frankly I wasn't sure I wanted to end up like them. So I returned to Washington in part to reconsider the Foreign Service as a profession. I was going to a job on the INR watch staff, the 24-hour Current Intelligence Staff that worked alongside the Operations Center.

However, before starting the job, I took some vacation time and, to my great good fortune, made a trip to visit a former A-100 class colleague, Lawrence Plotkin. We had become acquainted when we both joined the Foreign Service and had even gone out on a couple of dates, and we had kept in touch a little bit by letter once we went our separate ways. But somehow, when I arrived in Warsaw where he was assigned, it felt like I had come home. It just seemed totally right to be there with Larry. To make a long story short, I canceled other travel plans and stayed in Warsaw with Larry through the end of the year. Just before Christmas, fortified by a couple of vodkas, he proposed and I accepted. I went back to the States right after New Years Day to visit my family briefly in Illinois, then went to Washington to start the INR job, and Larry and I got married in Washington, DC, at the American University chapel on February 28, 1976. Larry was on home leave at the time and went back to Warsaw after another week or so. I requested a leave-of-absence (leave without pay) to be with him in Poland until he finished his tour there. I stayed in the INR job until July of 1976 and then went to join Larry. By that time, he had transferred to the Consulate in Poznan, Poland, which has since been closed, for the final year of his three-year assignment, so we spent a honeymoon year in Poznan.

Q: How did you find Poland?

HANSEN: The year in Poland was very memorable; it was a fascinating experience, though difficult in some ways. Since I was not working, since on was on leave-without-pay, I was free to travel with Larry around the consular district when his duties as Branch Public Affairs Officer took him to Szczeczin or Wroclaw or other cities, and we traveled widely elsewhere in the country as well, including to the town on the eastern border that Larry's family came from originally, Sziemiatycze. This was the mid-1970s, and Poland

was in the depths of the communist system. There were food shortages, lines to stand in for the little shopping available, and so forth. We were quite isolated out there in Poznan, halfway between Warsaw and Berlin. There were four officers and their families at the American Consulate. The only other consulate in town was the Soviet, so there was nothing by way of a diplomatic community to provide any kind of cushion. Americans had to assume that all of their conversations were monitored and that they were tracked everywhere they went. We adjusted to that aspect of things pretty well, mainly just by ignoring it, but we were careful not to talk much about personal matters on the telephone or around the apartment. We lived in a lovely, spacious, but poorly furnished apartment in the Consulate itself, upstairs from the main consulate offices, right on a very pleasant park.

We got to see a lot of the country and to meet a lot of people, especially university types. Although we had some friends among the Poles, we weren't able to get close to many because they felt quite restricted in spending any time to speak of with Westerners. The ones we did meet were very friendly. At least one contact told us that she could no longer see us on a personal basis because she would have to report the contacts to the police, and she didn't want to have to do so.

I had the chance to study Polish a little bit at the university in Poznan. They offered a class in Polish to foreigners, so I attended that class and also shared conversation lessons with a Polish student of English. I picked up more Polish than I would have expected. By the end of the year I could carry on a dinner table conversation pretty well. We developed a real admiration and real sympathy for the Polish people during our stay in Poland. It was a wonderful experience and one I was grateful to have.

Q: Tandem couples still were relatively a new phenomenon in the Foreign Service, weren't they?

HANSEN: Tandems were indeed a new phenomenon. We must have been among the first, and we did not at all get sympathetic hearings. When we got married, I was lucky in that I was able to get a leave of absence in order to be with my husband, even if it meant an interruption in my career. At that time the State Department and USIA were pretty ready to give leaves of absence to accommodate tandems but not much else. As a USIA officer, Larry had inquired about cutting short his assignment in Warsaw, and USIA absolutely was not going to hear about that. This was rather understandable, as the request came up at short notice and of course USIA did not have anyone language-qualified to step into Larry's place. Their position was not unreasonable, but the response was certainly very curt. Over time, the State Department and other foreign affairs agencies began to see the advantages of tandem assignments and some reasonable accommodations began to be made. But I think that, just about all along, the notion of one officer taking a leave of absence has been a dominant first choice on the Department's side, rather than going to the trouble to try to arrange tandem assignments overseas.

When we were getting ready to move on from Poland, we had some trouble lining up a tandem assignment. At the last minute, a tandem possibility did open up in Panama. It came as a surprise to us and would not necessarily have been our choice, but we took the chance. After having served in the Dominican Republic, I was interested in a tour elsewhere in Latin America, but would have chose a "real" Latin American country like Colombia or Argentina, not another country quite so closely involved with the United States as were the Dominican Republic and Panama. Still, Panama wasn't a bad choice. I think Larry may have been more concerned about the weather than anything else, but even that turned out to be okay. I had Spanish already, and Larry was able to get in-country language training, which was quite a novelty. I think USIA showed a bit of flexibility on that score in terms of tandem considerations. I went on to Panama from Poland in July of 1976, and Larry came a bit later, in the early fall. He spent a number of months in Panama studying Spanish, and in the end also spent a few months in Washington finishing up the Spanish training.

We ended up having a fantastic three years in Panama, from 1977 to 1980. Most importantly for us personally, our first daughter, Anya, was born there in September of 1979.

We were very fortunate to be in Panama at a very dramatic and fascinating time for both the United States and Panama. The U.S. and Panama had just completed negotiating the Panama Canal treaties and there were ratification processes to go through in Washington, DC, in the Senate, and in Panama, through a plebiscite. Domestically in Panama, the country was experiencing something of a political opening to opposition elements. General Omar Torrijos was in charge. Panama had been under his dictatorship for about ten years – "ten long years", as many Panamanians used to say. Our ambassadors to Panama at the time were, first, Ambassador William J. Jordan, and then Ambassador Ambler Moss.

Torrijos was beginning to open up the political system a little bit, partly in response to U.S. pressure on democratization and human rights and partly in response to a practical need to allow political opening in order to help garner support for the canal treaties in both the U.S. and Panama. I served in Panama as a mid-level political officer. My main responsibilities were to follow domestic politics and human rights issues. This meant that I had the job of building relations with the emerging political forces as well as the old-line political parties that had dominated the country in the past.

Q: Obviously we were for new parties and all. This must have been, as you say, a fascinating time to watch this. What was your impression of the politicians?

HANSEN: The politicians were largely businessmen, lawyers, and journalists. A number of them were associated directly or indirectly with a famous, or infamous, past political leader, Arnulfo Arias. He was elected president of Panama twice in years past and was thrown out of office both times. During our tour in Panama, he was allowed to return after years of exile in the United States. That was a huge event, with masses of people on

hand to welcome him back. His nephew, Guillermo Endara, was one of our main political contacts and, some years later, after Arias' death, was elected president.

These emerging, or returning, politicians were advocating democracy and respect for freedom of expression, human rights, etc., but you had to wonder how they really understood these concepts. In a country like Panama, politics is very much a matter of personal relationships. In such a small country, it very much mattered who was who, and who was related to whom.

I think the political opening was possible basically because of the other event that was going on at that time, the completion of the Panama Canal treaties that were negotiated under President Carter. At that time, because of the importance of the Panama Canal and because the U.S. Southern Command was located in Panama, with thousands of American citizens living there with the U.S. military and the Canal Zone administration, Panama loomed quite large in the State Department context. Within the State Department, the two largest "country desks" were the desks for the Soviet Union and for Panama. They were about equal size in terms of personnel, so that gives you an idea of little Panama's importance.

The existence of the Canal Zone and the Americans running the Canal was hot political issue in Panama for many years, and there had been violent clashes between Americans and Panamanians in the recent past. Just as we were arriving in Panama, the treaties were being finalized that would allow for the reversion of the Canal Zone territory to Panama and later on the turnover to Panama of the Canal operations. These were enormously important developments for Panama, and they were hot political issues for the United States. So I think the political opening derived from the fact that Panama needed to demonstrate that it would be capable of running the Canal and would be a respectable, responsible country for the United States to deal with on somewhat more equal terms, or at least ostensibly on more equal terms.

Q: How was the Panama Canal issue viewed in the United States?

HANSEN: I've just been thinking about all of this again recently. Ronald Reagan has just passed away, and there has been a lot of discussion and analysis of his legacy as President of the United States. But of course he was very active politically before becoming U.S. President, and one of his main issues was the status of the Panama Canal. As I recall, he really played to the issue very much and was a very strident opponent of the Panama Canal treaties. He was very outspoken and helped to make the reversion of the canal to Panama a hotly contentious issue. I think he coined the line, or at least popularized it, saying that the U.S. should keep the canal: "We built it, we paid for it, and it's ours." I think American sentiment against the Panama Canal treaties was just about as heated and emotional as any political issue I've observed in the United States. Some Americans seemed convinced that the Canal Zone and the canal itself constituted U.S. territory, which clearly was not the case. The original treaty relationship between the U.S. and Panama providing for construction of the canal specified that the U.S. could operate in

the Canal Zone "as if" it were sovereign, but it did not grant sovereignty to the United States. For example, babies born in the Canal Zone were not U.S. citizens unless their parents were; in fact, babies born in the Canal Zone had Panamanian citizenship. The Canal Zone had a "Canal Zone Post Office", not a "U.S." Post Office; plus, it didn't even have a zip code.

So here's what was happening. The two Panama Canal treaties had to be ratified by both countries: in the U.S. Senate in the United States, and by a plebiscite among Panamanians. In preparation for the Senate ratification debate, many U.S. senators following the issue wanted to come down to Panama to see the situation for themselves because of course they knew what a testy issue it was. Over the course of six months fairly early in my assignment, we had something like 44 members of the United States Senate and quite a few U.S. Representatives came down to Panama, either individually or in small groups. The U.S. Embassy had a dog-and-pony show that we set up for them in coordination with the Panama Canal Commission and the U.S. Southern command to try to expose them to all of the issues inherent in the treaties, to answer any concerns they had, and hopefully to win their support. All the visitors had rounds of meetings at the Canal Commission and the Southern Command. Generally they met with Torrijos or someone close to him. They spoke with local Panamanian politicians and with Americans living and working in the Canal Zone, some of whom supported the treaties and some of whom did not. They also were given a helicopter over-flight of the canal. Each of the embassy control officers had a chance to go along on one of the over-flights, which was quite a thrill. The full range of American politics was represented, from Senator Barry Goldwater to Senator Robert Byrd to Senator George McGovern.

Q: Did you think the reversion of the Panama Canal the right thing to do?

Did you think it was going to work?

HANSEN: I absolutely thought it was the right thing to do, and I thought it could work, given the long lead time built into the process.

One of the interesting situations that we encountered relates to this question. As I mentioned, the conservative politician Ronald Reagan was strongly opposed to the Panama Canal Treaty. So, at first, was William F. Buckley, the prominent conservative commentator and *National Review* editor. Buckley is Catholic, and it turned out that the Catholic Archbishop of Panama was a Panamanian-American, Archbishop Marcos McGrath. Well, Archbishop McGrath got in touch with Buckley, took issue with his opposition to the Panama Canal treaties, and invited him down to Panama to look at the situation first hand. Sometime before Larry and I arrived in Panama, Buckley had visited and had been won over by McGrath, who convinced him, essentially, of the importance of the Panamanian people having a vested interest in the future of the canal and its success. So we had an important political commentator on the right supporting the Panama Canal treaties, in contrast to most others at that end of the political spectrum.

Q: Was there concern within the embassy, and among people you talked to, about the ability of the Panamanians to run the Canal? One, did they have the expertise to run the Canal, and two, would possible future political instability or unrest in Panama render the Canal unusable?

HANSEN: Yes, those are excellent questions and just the kind of issues that people were grappling with all during this period. I think that most of us in the U.S. Embassy, certainly I, basically supported the idea of the Panama Canal treaties. Support for the treaties was the official policy of course, but I think even personally we thought it was the right thing to do. In good measure, Panamanians were already running the Canal, since many of the canal workers were Panamanian, and we thought there was plenty of time for them to prepare for the responsibility of the canal operations. After all, according to treaty provisions, it would take until the year 2000 for the canal to be turned over fully to the Panamanians, though reversion of control over the so-called Canal Zone came earlier. We felt there was plenty of time for them to be fully prepared to do it. I think the major argument in favor of the treaties was that the best way to protect the Canal in the long run was to give Panamanians themselves a vested interest in it. As long as the canal was seen by Panamanians as an American operation, it was essentially under a potential threat. Once it could be seen as their own, something they are responsible for, something they can benefit from directly, the canal was actually in a safer position.

One of the U.S. Senators who visited Panama was given a briefing by some Panamanian military officers on the vulnerability of the Panama Canal to attack. He was given a scenario about how easy it would be to lob a missile of some sort into, say, the Gaillard Cut, a very narrow channel in the Canal as it approaches the Pacific Ocean. A simple attack like that could essentially shut down the Canal for months. Though I don't think the scenario was intended as a direct threat, certainly its implication was clear, that the Panama Canal was a very vulnerable operation if it did not have the support of the people of Panama. So I think there was a sense that the safe thing to do in the longer run was to go the way of the treaties.

At the same time, as you mention, there was also concern among many Americans that, in the future, political unrest in Panama could pose a danger to the safety of the Canal and of Americans living in Panama. The U.S. Senate took on this issue very directly. In the end, the Senate insisted on an amendment to the treaty that constituted quite a blatant change. It was surprising that the Panamanians accepted it. Basically the treaty was changed to provide that the United States could "intervene" to protect the Canal in case of political unrest in Panama. The Senate also inserted an understanding that U.S. military vessels had the right to go "to the front of the line" of ships waiting to make the canal

But there was serious concern about potential unrest. As it turned out, the political situation in Panama in fact did deteriorate, and the U.S. had occasion to take advantage of that right to "intervene" some years later. By then, General Torrijos had died in a 1981 airplane crash, and one of his cohorts, Manuel Noriega, had taken charge of the country. In 1989 he invalidated Endara's election as president. So there was a lot of political

unrest, the U.S. had imposed sanctions on Panama and, perhaps most significantly, there was the issue of Noriega's involvement in drug trafficking. He was indicted in the U.S. in 1988. Meanwhile, in Panama, a group of Panamanian soldiers tried in late 1989 to overthrow Noriega, but they failed. Tension was building up between the U.S. and Panama, and shortly thereafter, Panamanian soldiers killed a U.S. Marine lieutenant in Panama City. This incident together with the drug charges against Noriega essentially gave the U.S. a basis for the military operation in 1989 when Noriega was seized and brought to the United States to face drug charges. The treaty allowed us to do that.

Q: What were the "Zonians" like, the Americans living in the Panama Canal Zone in almost colonial style?

HANSEN: They had a reputation for living a colonial lifestyle, and that stereotype applied in many cases. There were even a few who made it a matter of pride never, or practically never, to step foot outside the Canal Zone except to get to and from the international airport. But I think they were the exception. Still, many did live in a sort of glorious isolation. Others married Panamanians and very much entered into the life of the country. So there was a mix of experiences, it seemed.

The Canal Zone did give the impression of American life a la the 1950s, approximately, with neat houses and trim lawns all looking very much alike. Between the Canal Commission and U.S. military facilities, you could do all kinds of shopping, entertaining, socializing right there in the Canal Zone.

Q: Were you, as an embassy officer, considered the enemy by the Zonians?

HANSEN: Well, there might have been some tension there, but overall I would say no.

Q: What was the society like in Panama? What was it like to live there?

HANSEN: Well, it wasn't a very exciting place to be, but life was very pleasant. It was quiet and family-oriented. Not much was going on by the way of cultural events. A few performers came in occasionally from the United States or elsewhere. We played a lot of bridge and got into a Scots country dancing group that the local expatriate Scots initiated. There were a few movie theaters to go to, either in Panama City or in the Canal Zone. It was very easy to travel in the country, and we did a lot of traveling. Contadora Island was a popular luxury resort island on the Pacific Ocean side. That's where the Shah of Iran stayed for a time after his ouster by the revolutionaries in Iran, as he sought a place to spend his exile. On the Atlantic Ocean side, we visited the San Blas Islands, where there was a much more rustic resort facility, with palm-thatch huts. There were a couple of nice mountain towns to visit, one close to the capital, El Valle, the other toward the Costa Rican border near the city of David. There were a lot of good restaurants, near the embassy and near our apartment which was just behind the embassy. We had a very nice sixth-floor apartment with a balcony overlooking the Bay of Panama. Because of the way Panama is configured, when you look out over the Bay of Panama you're actually looking

east. So we would see the sun rise over the Pacific and set over the mountains behind us. You could take a short train ride from Balboa near Panama City to Cristobal, near the Atlantic seaport of Colon. It covered about 50 miles and took about an hour. They called it the fastest transcontinental railroad in the world. We also had the chance to make a transit of the Panama Canal, which took about 12 hours, aboard a U.S. Navy helicopter attack ship, the USS Belleau Wood. That was a very memorable experience. The ship just barely squeezed into the canal locks, with inches to spare. Even with parts of its superstructure folded up and over the deck, it managed to damage part of the overhang from the lockkeeper control building at the Gatun locks at the Atlantic end of the canal.

Q: What about the campesino class, the Panamanian people who didn't belong to the elite business and political classes?

HANSEN: There were serious economic disparities in the country. Panama had an unusually high per capita income for a Latin American country, but of course it was not spread out at all evenly. There was an elite business class that was very prosperous and did very well for itself, whether in international banking and commerce or in domestic business. Panama had become an off-shore international banking center, so there were quite a few foreign banks operating in Panama City. There was a very much impoverished urban poor in evidence in the streets of Panama City and even more on the streets of Colon on the Atlantic end of the Canal. Then there were the *campesinos* out in the countryside. Maybe if they were lucky they would work on a banana plantation run by United Fruit or whatever, but they were not in good shape economically and it was a concern, very much so. The country was very dependent economically, however, on canal operations and on economic activity associated with the American military presence in the Canal Zone.

Q: How heavy was the hand of Torrijos?

HANSEN: By the time we were in Panama, Omar Torrijos could pretty much be considered a kind of benevolent dictator. It wasn't a really very harsh rule. It no doubt was earlier on when he first took power. He appeared to be genuinely popular among the lower classes and the poor in particular whom he treated as his base. At the same time, Panama did not fare very well in our annual human rights reports. There were a lot of serious shortcomings, the lack of real democratic practices for starters, the functioning of the courts and so on. Women had some role in political life and there were a few very prominent women. There was quite an active press, some of it supportive of the regime, but it was generally an operation of the business elite. None of it was very responsible, and the reporting was often sensationalist. There was a respectable labor union movement in the country.

Q: What was the situation when you left in 1980?

HANSEN: The treaties had been approved by both countries, by the plebiscite in Panama and by a very narrow vote in the U.S. Senate where a two-thirds majority was required.

President Carter had visited Panama in about the fall of 1979 to commemorate the treaties coming into force and the formal turn-over of the Canal Zone to Panama. There was tremendous excitement in Panama at that point, and it was very satisfying to see that outcome. Opposition political parties were quite active, and legislative elections had been held. The former Shah of Iran had come and gone, having spent a couple of months in Panama in late 1979 and early 1980, before decamping to Egypt where he died a few months later. His sojourn in Panama, as I understood it, was in good part a result of a close relationship between Gen. Torrijos and President Carter's key adviser Hamilton Jordan. American attention in Latin American by 1979-1980 had in good measure shifted to Nicaragua with the fall of the Somoza regime there.

Q: How did you find being a tandem couple? This was your first time to work as a tandem. How did it work out?

HANSEN: It really worked out just fine in the end. When I first arrived at the embassy in Panama, it was apparently quite disconcerting to some people to find that I continued to use my maiden name after we were married, which was quite unusual at that time. Some people professed to be confused as to whether we were really married and why I kept my own last name, so we had to listen to a little bit of that. But people got over it. Larry and I had very complementary jobs and knew some mutual contacts, as he was the information officer. It was a mutually supportive situation and I think turned out to be a benefit to the embassy.

Certainly, when Anya was born in September 1979, we got a lot of support from the embassy. I had no trouble at all getting approval for about two months' leave, most if not all of it sick leave, to stay at home with her for a while after the birth. People were very generous and bestowed on us myriad congratulatory cards and gifts.

Q: And after Panama?

HANSEN: We would have liked to stay overseas if we could have found tandem assignments, but instead we just came back to Washington. Upon returning in the summer of 1980, I took what the Foreign Service Institute used to call the political economy training course, a four-month program which I thought was very well done. It was basically intended to make sure that political officers had the economic background needed to cope with economic issues.

My follow-on position, beginning in January of 1981, was in the Economic Bureau, in the old East-West Trade Office (EB/EWT) that dealt with trade sanctions. I worked in particular on the high-tech trade sanctions against the communist countries. This was what used to be called the COCOM system. COCOM stood simply for "Coordinating Committee." This was in international committee based in Paris composed primarily of the NATO countries, minus Iceland and plus Japan, for the purpose essentially of coordinating their high technology trade – military equipment, computer systems, satellite systems, other high-end technology or equipment transfer -- with the Soviet Union, the

Eastern bloc, and China. The American representatives to COCOM worked out of the U.S. Mission to the OECD. The experience in the East-West Trade Office stood me in very good stead, because in almost every job I had subsequently, trade sanctions or export controls were involved in some way.

Q: I assume that this entailed an interagency process at the Washington end. What were some of the issues at hand?

HANSEN: The United States had a differentiated policy towards the various communist countries, more hard-line against the Soviet Union and China, somewhat more flexible towards some of the East European countries like Poland and Romania at various times, and quite flexible towards the old Yugoslavia. Applying this differentiated policy could be quite difficult, because it involved judgment calls, and especially when "dual use" issues arose – when a country sought to import computer or other equipment ostensibly for civilian purposes but which could, at least theoretically, be diverted to military use. The issues were seldom clear cut, and there were a lot of interagency disagreements among the State Department, Commerce and the Defense Department, whether in reference to proposed licensing of U.S. sales or approval in COCOM of transfers by COCOM partners such as France or Great Britain. The Defense Department was very reluctant to see much of anything of interest transferred, and the Commerce Department generally wanted to see things go forward. The State Department was often the middle ground, and there were a lot of very contentious cases.

Q: Who headed your office?

HANSEN: Mr. William Root, a fantastic person to work with, very knowledgeable and detail-oriented, and very supportive of his staff. He had done the job for many years. Others in the office were Richard Mueller who was the China expert and later on consul general in Hong Kong, and Don Kursch, who was East European expert.

Most of the cases that we dealt with were cases that came up in COCOM. The various member countries would submit to the committee proposed transactions for technology sales to, say, the Soviet Union, Poland or Romania. In brief, they would be asking for an "exception" to a broad ban on such sales. Then representatives of the other member countries would refer to their capitals for guidance on whether or not to approve the "exception request" or under what conditions to approve it. Our office was on the receiving end of that process. We would receive the cases from the U.S. representatives on the Coordinating Committee and then circulate them interagency for comment and recommendations. Most COCOM countries approved the exception requests in a pretty pro forma manner. The United States was the main one to look at the proposed transactions seriously and in detail and to try to analyze them with reference to a recipient country's military capabilities. The Defense Department's role in this process loomed large because, of course, if the Defense Department made the case that a particular transaction was of concern, it usually carried the day. When the United States had to decline to approve a particular exception request or recommended conditions on the sale,

it often became quite a contentious issue between the United States and the involved COCOM partner.

I worked in the Office of East-West Trade until our second child, Alison, was born in November 1981. The State Department was again very generous, allowing a year's leave-of-absence, which we appreciated tremendously.

Q: Where were you assigned when you came back to work?

HANSEN: This was not easy to work out and took quite a bit of time. I was nominally still assigned to the EB Bureau but I did not have a particular slot and spent a few weeks in the time-honored State Department tradition of "walking the halls." In the process of hunting down a job, I came across some really odd little jobs that I never knew existed, things tucked away in remote corners of INR or in the Protocol office. Coincidentally, and luckily for me, it happened that the head of the BENELUX Desk in the European Bureau, Mike Lemmon, had just then managed to create an additional mid-level position to help him out on the desk. I interviewed for that job and started in about March of 1983 for two years. Right afterward, I picked up temporarily as the Norway-Denmark Desk Officer until the summer of 1985.

Q: What was Larry doing during this time, and how did you find it working and having two young children at home?

HANSEN: Larry was at USIA headquarters in the Arts America office. It was quite a job for us, juggling work and home responsibilities. I remember just being tired all the time, and I'm sure Larry was, too. It was exhausting and even hard health-wise. One winter I came down with pneumonia, twice. But of course we wouldn't have traded for anything.

We had found a very nice preschool for the older girl in Arlington, and the baby was at first with a woman in home-care not far from where we lived. who took a couple of kids into her home to look after. So the daycare situation was really pretty good, and we were very comfortable with it. But it entailed a lot of tight scheduling and real problems if one of the kids was sick. Plus you always feel guilty – guilty about leaving a demanding, high-pressure job "early" at 5:00 or 5:30, and guilty for having the kids in daycare at all.

I was really grateful to a number of people for allowing all this to work. A couple of secretaries in the office were very good and helpful. Mike Lemmon was just wonderful, and I've always been grateful for his support. He put in far longer hours than I did and never complained about my leaving when I had to leave. I did stay late many times when I really had to because of official visitors or other events, but I pretty much walked out the door everyday at 5:00 or 5:30 in order to pick up the kids on time. In later years, I tried to return the favor to others, to parents of young children working for me, and tried to be supportive of them in meeting their obligations.

Q: What issues were you dealing with?

HANSEN: Mike Lemmon had the lead on Belgium and the Netherlands, particularly on political and political-military issues, while I covered the economic issues for both countries and was the Luxembourg desk officer. On the political-military side, the main issue was the NATO missile deployments in Belgium, the SS20s. It was a huge and very time-consuming issue. On Belgium and the Netherlands in terms of the economic issues I was looking after, some involved trade sanctions issues, primarily the COCOM trade sanctions which affected Belgium's trade relations with China. There were aviation issues with the Netherlands, as well as COCOM issues. There were also some trade issues involving nuclear technology for Libya.

A lot of the work on the desk entailed preparing briefing papers for senior-level meetings and visits. All three countries are members of the European Union and of NATO, so whenever a U.S. official had meetings with these organizations, there would likely be briefing papers needed on the BENELUX countries. There were very close relations between the U.S. and the BENELUX countries, politically and economically. The Netherlands generally was in a race with Great Britain as the largest foreign investor in the United States. With these rich relationships, officials were always coming in for visits and meetings of one kind or another and this was very time consuming in terms of preparations, writing up the reporting cables afterwards, and so forth.

There were two major issues with Luxembourg, one regarding landing rights in the U.S. for their cargo carrier, CargoLux, and arrangements for a state visit to Washington for the Grand Duke and Duchess of Luxembourg. It was the first such visit in 20 years, and I was fortunate to be involved in the planning for it. This was during the Reagan administration, and the visit went very well. It was the only state visit I was ever involved in and had a chance to go to the White House for the arrival ceremony. The Grand Duke and Duchess pulled up in a limousine and were received by the Reagans. I'm sure it would be true for any presidency, but certainly with the Reagan presidency, a state visit was staged like a movie set and everything was perfectly programmed and choreographed very precisely. You had a particular place to stand when you went to the White House grounds to watch the ceremony unfold, and it came off with military precision. We went into the White House after the welcoming ceremony, and went through the receiving line to shake hands with President and Mrs. Reagan, who seemed programmed like robots, and with the Grand Duke and Duchess. A Marine string ensemble was playing. Coffee and pastries were laid out, and we were all in and out of there in about 15 minutes. There was a state dinner at the White House. The Luxembourgers were thrilled with the events overall, and it was all really very nice and impressive.

Q: Well, then you say you filled in at one point on the Scandinavian countries?

HANSEN: Yes, as the desk officer for Norway and Denmark. There was a gap on that desk and I had a few months to fill before starting Serbo-Croatian language training for our next assignment. Even though it was just for a short period of time, it was kind of a kick for me personally to have the opportunity to work on Norway and Denmark, since

part of my family background is Norwegian. From Danish contacts I met at that time, however, I learned that most Norwegian Hansens are actually Danish. In either case, I figured I was in good company. Probably the major event that occurred during this five- or six-month period was a visit to Washington by the Prime Minster of Greenland, which is under Danish rule. I can report that I was made an honorary member of Greenland's "Polar Bear Club" for looking after the Prime Minister of Greenland, and I still have the lapel pin to prove it!

Q: Then you and Larry were assigned to Belgrade?

HANSEN: We were assigned to Belgrade. By this time, we had been in Washington for several years and we needed and wanted to go overseas. But we were having a really hard time lining up a tandem assignment. It was very difficult even simply to identify positions that might be available at the same time, much less to compete successfully for them. Part of the problem was that we were dealing with two different agencies, State and USIA, and their assignment cycles were very different. USIA would decide on assignments overseas before the State Department would even begin to advertise any corresponding openings. We had a hard time reconciling the State and USIA approaches. The long and short of it is that we walked a tightrope down to the very end. At one point, we found that there was an opening for Larry to bid on in Belgrade, and we could project an opening for me to bid on that should become available at the same time. Larry applied for and got the Cultural Affairs Officer position. He was assigned to that position by USIA before I could even bid on a corresponding State Department job. It was a very nerve-wracking period. We had tried a number of other options earlier, and they did not work out for one reason or another. We felt a lot of pressure to make this one work.

Anyway, Larry had his assignment to Belgrade and we were thrilled with that. I went ahead and applied for a political officer position in Belgrade when the job was advertised. As it turned out, I was competing with another tandem officer for that job, and there was a "shoot-out" at the assignments committee. We did both finally did get the jobs and were very excited about it. I have always been grateful to Tom Niles, who was a DAS in EUR, for his help because I think he was instrumental in my getting the position. I did have an opportunity to thank him for it later on. We were very excited about the assignments because Yugoslavia was really a prime place to go in Eastern Europe. It was a very desirable and sought-after posting.

Q: How did you find the language?

HANSEN: Well, it was hard. Larry had studied Polish previously at FSI, and I had learned a little bit of Polish. Serbo-Croatian, as the language was called then, is not nearly as complicated grammatically as Polish, but it still was a real challenge. Overall, we had a good experience at FSI, although some of the teachers were better than the others. We studied both the Serbian and Croatian versions of the language but, serving in Belgrade, we really spoke Serbian.

Q: Did you get a feel for some of the strains within Yugoslavia from the instructors?

HANSEN: A little bit, yes. We had several teachers, most of whom essentially taught Serbian. These included Svetlana Hanaher, who was an amazing teacher, very dedicated and very determined that we would all do well; Father Milosevic, who was a Serbian Orthodox priest, and a Mr. Jovanovic, a very feisty and energetic guy. We had a lovely and particularly effective instructor who taught Croatian, Mrs. Kapolina. The instructors seemed at least on the surface to get along and they certainly put on a good face for the students, but you could sense some degree of tension among them.

Dr. John Lampe ran the East European area studies program that year and did a terrific job. I really felt that we were well prepared to serve in the region.

Q: Were you in the same language class with Larry?

HANSEN: Yes, there were about eight of us altogether going through the language training program. Eventually we got to the point where they divided us up, and Larry and I were place on something of a faster track, along with Bill Ryerson, an amazing student of languages, who was going to Belgrade as Consul General. He later was the first U.S. Ambassador to Albania, having taught himself Albanian while in Belgrade. To our mutual relief, I'm sure, it worked out well for Larry and me to be in language training together. However, we certainly never studied together at home!

Q: What was the situation in Yugoslavia when you arrived?

HANSEN: We served in Belgrade from the summer of 1986 to the summer of 1990. My assignment was originally for three years, but I requested and was given an additional year. It was a terrific four-year assignment, and may have been the last good period to serve in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), as it was called then. Inter-ethnic tensions were certainly increasing sharply by the summer of 1990, but the real violence didn't erupt until a year later.

When we arrived, Ambassador John Scanlan was the ambassador, and later Ambassador Warren Zimmermann. Both had served in Yugoslavia earlier in their careers, I believe.

In the summer of 1986, Josip Broz Tito had been off the scene for several years, having died in 1980. Analysts and commentators had generally predicted the break-up of Yugoslavia after his death, but it hadn't happened yet. I think the republics/provinces comprising Yugoslavia were hanging together longer than most people had expected, but the divisions were coming. The Communist Party was still very much in control, but both it and the country generally were very much de-centralized. The Yugoslav military was something of an exception and at that time was probably one of the few institutions that could be described as of a federal character.

Tito had left in place a political and economic system that, in the end, highlighted and

fostered nationalist differences among the peoples and regions comprising Yugoslavia. While he was alive, he managed to hold them together, often using repressive measures, and the governing system had swung back and forth between more and less centralized structures. At his demise, political and economic power was centered in the republics, rather than at the federal level. Much authority had been devolved to the republic level. This meant that, in order for politicians to succeed, they needed to satisfy their people in their republics, and they found that playing to nationalist themes worked to their immediate advantage. When the break-up of Yugoslavia came, it was a break-up responding to these nationalist pressures and sentiments. It was not simply a throwing off of communism and turning to democracy; it was satisfying nationalist goals.

Economically things were not going well in Yugoslavia. For a number of years before the mid-1980s, Yugoslavia had enjoyed relative prosperity and had shown some economic promise, even as a communist country. By the mid 1980s it was faltering economically, partly due to external circumstances in the world economy but of course also due to the gross inefficiencies of the so-called worker self-management system. With nationalist sentiment building up, people in the various republics also began to think that they were being taken advantage of economically by the other republics. Slovenia thought, for example, that its relative economic success was being used to subsidize the poorer parts of the country (Kosovo, parts of Bosnia, parts of Southern Serbia); Macedonia thought that it was receiving artificially low prices for its natural resources and in turn being over-charged for mediocre goods manufactured in the wealthier republics of Slovenia and Croatia. Everyone saw the political and economic situation as a zero sum game and felt they were getting the short end of the deal.

In a way, the American presence reflected the make-up of Yugoslavia. We had the embassy in Belgrade, of course, which was the capital of both Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia; a Consulate-General in Zagreb, Croatia; and USIA American Centers in Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, and Skopje – that is, in each of the republican capitals. We did not have an official presence in either of the provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina, which were also part of the Republic of Serbia. This was a substantial American presence in a country of 24 million people, considerably larger than in any of the other countries of Eastern Europe, with the possible exception of Poland. There was a very large Fulbright exchange program for Yugoslavia. All of this reflected the very strong U.S. interest in this communist country that had managed to maintain some independence. It kept out of the Warsaw Pact and out from under the direct thumb of Moscow. The United States invested a lot in our presence in Yugoslavia.

Q: What was your job, and what piece of the action did you have?

HANSEN: I was one of four or five officers in the Political Section, headed first by Richard Miles, who later went on to serve as ambassador to several different countries, and then by Louis Sell, who later wrote a biography of the notorious Slobodan Milosevic.

I was the political reporting officer for Serbia, including the ethnic-Albanian province of

Kosovo, and the human rights officer.

When we arrived, Slobodan Milosevic had not yet come fully to the fore, but I believe he was already at a senior level of the Serbian communist party. One of the other key figures was Ivan Stambolic, a rival of Milosevic's who was assassinated some years later. There were two major issues that probably could be considered the crux of Serbian politics at the time, the status of the Province of Kosovo and the economic, political, and human rights conditions there and, more broadly, Serbia's standing within the Yugoslav federation.

Upon arriving at post, I was introduced to and began getting acquainted with human rights activists and emerging political opposition figures. After we'd been there about six months, the Serbian Academy of Sciences came out with a major paper about the future of Yugoslavia and its major issues and problems. The first part of it was a fairly straightforward pro-reform paper, in good part dealing with needed economic and democratic reforms. Then it launched into essentially a tirade on Kosovo and the threat they felt that Kosovo, with its about 90% ethnic Albanian population, posed for Yugoslavia and for Serbs in particular. With this document, the Academy helped to popularize the theme that Serbs in Kosovo were suffering at the hands of the ethnic Albanian majority there and were being "forced" out of Kosovo. Kosovo is an area that Serbs considered integral to Serbia as a nation. It carried tremendous emotional and historic appeal for Serbs as the cradle of Serbian civilization, the site of the historic Battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389, and home to the ancient Serbian Orthodox patriarchate. So the tensions that ultimately tore Yugoslavia apart were beginning to come out into the open. They had been present for a long time in other fashions over the years, and at various times they had been held in check by the repressive measures of the Tito regime. Certainly the situation was beginning to deteriorate in the first couple of years that we were in Belgrade.

Q: Did you get down to Kosovo much?

HANSEN: I did. In my first visit, I had the opportunity to accompany the Political Counselor, Dick Miles, and a visiting human rights officer from the State Department Human Rights Bureau.

There were a number of individual human rights cases that were of concern to Washington at the time, but the major issue was the treatment of the ethnic Albanian population, particularly in Kosovo and in Macedonia. There, there was a fairly high rate of arrests on what we tended to consider political grounds, for expression of political opinion, usually having to do with the status of Kosovo. At the time, advocacy of a change from province to republic status was understood as codeword for advocacy of independence for Kosovo and ultimately for creation of a "greater Albania" comprised of Albania, Kosovo, and portions of Macedonia and Montenegro. The Serbian authorities, and by extension Yugoslav authorities, interpreted any discussion of a Republic of Kosovo as subversive and as intended to stir up ethnic conflict. In their minds, the

Kosovo and Macedonian Albanians wanted the province to attain republic status, equal to that of the other republics of Yugoslavia, which under the then-constitution theoretically would give Kosovo the right to break away from the federation, which would contribute to the break-up of Yugoslavia.

Q: What did a visit to Kosovo entail?

HANSEN: During most of the time we were in Yugoslavia, diplomatic travel around the country could only be arranged via the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry. It wasn't that you couldn't travel otherwise, but your chances of getting appointments with anyone were practically nonexistent without going through the Foreign Ministry and the protocol structures in the various republics and provinces. In keeping with this practice, we flew or drove down to Kosovo and were met by a local protocol officer who accompanied us to all the appointments that his office had arranged at the Foreign Ministry's request – for example, with the editor of the newspaper, an Albanian-language publication; with Kosovo government and communist party officials, and so forth. On this particular visit, we were taken to visit a large hog-raising farm and meat-packing plant, one of the provinces self-management enterprises. For the most part, our interlocutors were ethnic tandems of Serbs and ethnic Albanians. They seemed to work in parallel structures. It gave the impression that the ethnic Albanians had more autonomy than they probably actually did, especially as Serbia began to try to alter the equation. We were free to raise any questions we liked but the responses were seldom very enlightening. Our interlocutors were always very articulate and always had a good line of gab to feed to foreign visitors. It was sometimes hard to understand what they were really saying, even with an interpreter, because the lingo of the Yugoslav communist system was a language unto itself. It was by no means straightforward.

Kosovo was a basket case economically. The unemployment rate and poverty levels were high. Factories were operating at far from full capacity. In the capital of Kosovo, Pristina, the shops were poorly stocked, streets were trash-strewn, sidewalks and roads were in bad repair, streets were crowded with overflow pedestrians. There were tremendous numbers of young people, mostly unemployed or under-employed. In decent weather, the evening "korzo" brought crowds off people out to walk the main street through town. The main economic activities were agriculture, a lot of it very marginal, and mining. The famous Kosovo Plain was quite fertile and was lovely in the spring. Kosovars would brag that it had the potential to be comparable to California in food production, quite an exaggeration.

Kosovo was the least developed part of Yugoslavia and was largely supported by outside budgetary supports from the rest of the federation, which was a very big sore point in Croatia and Slovenia, the wealthier republics that ended up supporting this disaster in Kosovo. While the Serbs remaining in Kosovo were largely an aging and declining population, there was a high birth rate among the ethnic Albanians and, unfortunately, a very high infant mortality rates. I think it was the highest in Europe at the time. In response to earlier unrest in the province, the Albanians in Kosovo had been to some

degree bought off by investments in the province financed from the rest of the federation. For example, there was a university in Pristina where students could study in Albanian, but for what? There were no jobs to go to.

It was a very unhappy situation. The Serbs felt Kosovo was an integral part of their homeland yet they didn't feel safe there. You would hear outrageous stories about Serbian women being raped, nuns attacked. A lot of the stories were probably exaggerations and distortions, but there probably was an element of truth as well. One of the Serbian themes at the time was that Serbs were being "forced" out of Kosovo by population pressures from the growing ethnic Albanian population and were "forced" to sell their property to the ethnic Albanians because the Albanians offered prices they couldn't refuse. Their phrase was migration "under pressure."

So there were a lot of ethnic tensions. Another example was simply the way Serbs spoke about Albanians. They often used the Albanian language term for Albanians, which was acceptable to use when speaking Albanian, but when spoken in Serbian it was considered a derogatory term. Serbs used it freely. Generally, they considered Albanians the lowest of the low, perhaps on a par with gypsies, the Roma who were also on the bottom rung in Yugoslav society. It was sometimes difficult to speak with Serbs about these ethnic issues. They were very emotional, very close-minded. They couldn't understand why we weren't more sympathetic to what they perceived as the dangers posed by the ethnic Albanians in their midst.

Q: What was the attitude of the embassy about the Kosovo issue?

HANSEN: Especially in the first couple of years we were there, I would say it was seen as something of a longer term issue. Over time and with Milosevic's rise, it took on more immediacy. We often tried to make the case to our interlocutors that, be treating Kosovo Albanians with suspicion and imposing ever more repressive measures in the province, they were creating a self-fulfilling prophesy. If they were concerned about Kosovars seeking to break away from Yugoslavia, Serbia's handling of the Kosovo issue and treatment of ethnic Albanians only made this more likely. No one was persuaded.

In the embassy, I think there was a sense that, yes, at some point it could reach a flashpoint. There had been violence in the province in the past and there could be again in the future, but I don't think it was seen as an immediate threat to stability in the region. And in the event, of course, it was elsewhere in Yugoslavia that the break-up occurred and violent conflict erupted initially. But Kosovo was certainly something we understood as a serious matter. Ambassador Zimmerman took on the issue aggressively and tried to convince Serbia to deal more appropriately with the ethnic Albanians, to respect freedom of expression and so on. Prominent Americans visiting Yugoslavia at that time conveyed similar kinds of messages. It was a sensitive thing. Larry may mention in his transcript that the famous writer Joseph Brodsky visited Belgrade, and Larry managed his program. Brodsky met with Serbian writers and other intellectuals and made the case that they had to come to terms with the Kosovo issue with respect for human rights, to no avail. Joan

Baez gave a concert in Belgrade, which was attended by a huge crowd. The audience obviously knew her music and loved her, but she made a comment about the Kosovo issue and the temperature in the concert hall plummeted.

Q: Wasn't there any sort of human rights group within the Serbian body politic that was concerned about Kosovo?

HANSEN: There was a semi-official human rights structure and independent human rights groups were emerging. There were human rights activists in Serbia, but they were mostly interested in the rights of Serbs. They were looking after their rights.

A semi-official Yugoslav human rights structure was taking shape in about 1989, under the leadership of a prominent law professor, Vojin Dimitrijevic. He told me once that, of the committee's 40 members, he was satisfied with most of them but about four were problematic. At one point early in the committee's existence, Rep. Steny Hoyer led a CODEL to Yugoslavia and we arranged a luncheon where he met some of the human rights committee members. As one of his conversations developed, I could sense that one of his interlocutors, a member of the human rights committee, probably held some typically unenlightened Serbian views. I was able to steer the conversation in a direction that revealed them, and in fact he made some derogatory comments about gypsies, for example, and questioned the right of the U.S. or other countries to look into the human rights situation in Yugoslavia. The Congressman was understandably nonplused, and even asked the gentleman for confirmation that he was indeed a proponent of human rights. The Congressman later asked me about the gentleman, and I commented that we seemed to have found out one of the four problematic members of the committee, and now just needed to find the other three. The Congressman got a good chuckle out of that.

There was a lot of Congressional interest in Kosovo at the time. I had another very memorable experience when Rep. Tom Lantos and his wife asked for a tour of Kosovo in about August of 1989. Congressman Lantos was very interested in human rights issues generally, very active on human rights issues in Eastern Europe, and particularly interested in the dilemma in Kosovo. That summer, he was spending some time in Bulgaria, where an anti-Turkish campaign was underway, and took advantage of his proximity to Yugoslavia to be driven into Serbia for a visit to Kosovo, and I was his control officer. With an embassy driver, I picked them up at the border with Bulgaria and we drove down into Kosovo for about three days. This was a wonderful experience for me as a political officer. Lantos is a very impressive individual. He and his wife are quite a pair and we had a wonderful several days traveling around Kosovo. Both he and his wife asked a lot of good questions and were genuinely interested in understanding the situation from all points of view. They came with their sympathies for the ethnic Albanians, the underdogs, already pretty much in mind and they certainly didn't change their minds, but they seemed really to want to understand the situation in Kosovo and the relationship between the ethnic Albanians and the Serbs. We just talked and talked that whole long weekend. It was one of those moments in the Foreign Service where everything comes together, and I had the chance to bring to bear just about everything that

I'd come to understand about the situation and talk about it to someone in a position of responsibility in Washington in Congress. It was a terrific experience.

Congressman Lantos was especially interested in meeting Ibrahim Rugova, who then was emerging as a leader among the Albanians in Kosovo. We were able to set that up, and they had a long talk over lunch or dinner at the Grand Hotel in Pristina. Lantos had asked me beforehand what I thought of Rugova, and I said that I thought he was in over his head. After their discussion, Lantos said he agreed with me. As years went on, Rugova continued to play a lead role in Kosovo and was president of Kosovo for a long time. So obviously he grew into the job.

We also had to arrange for Congressman Lantos to meet with at least someone in the official Kosovo structure, and we did have a meeting with a top ethnic Albanian official, whose wife was Montenegrin. She joined the meeting as well. This official could be assumed to be hostile to Lantos because Lantos was so critical of the regime he represented, but they had a pretty good conversation. I had to serve as interpreter, which was quite a challenge. At one point, the Kosovar official made the comment that human rights are fully respected in Kosovo. Lantos replied, "Would that that were so," and raised his eyebrow at me as if wondering whether I could manage that phrase. Luckily, thanks to the Serbian teacher at the embassy, I had the exact Serbian translation at hand ("Kamo sreche") and tossed it right off. As I mentioned, this official's wife joined the meeting, and their ten-year-old daughter showed up as well. Quite strikingly, this multi-ethnic family was making a graphic point about ethnic integration. As the wife said directly, "How could we live here if we thought our own children's rights would not be respected?" Congressman Lantos, I'm sure, was not taken in by any of this, but he responded in a very avuncular fashion. He had the little girl on his lap in no time, and his wife was showing her pictures of their grandchildren. They had something like ten or 12 grandchildren, arrayed in a photograph in veritable "Sound of Music" fashion, complete with the white suits and dresses.

Q: Did you find that some of the Serb officials were their own worst enemies? Did they come across as very crude, tough guys?

HANSEN: They could, certainly, and they had a hard spot in their hearts when it came to the Kosovo issue, or to relations with Croats and Slovenes, for that matter. On the other hand, they could be charming and lovely. Sometimes I kind of enjoy telling people, when they come down on Serbs generally, that I found them to be a warm and friendly people. They certainly were towards us on a personal basis. Obviously they subsequently earned a very bad reputation for themselves. But we had a great tour in Belgrade, in the old Yugoslavia.

Q: What was it that was keeping Yugoslavia together, as internal pressures were building up and change was coming to Eastern Europe?

HANSEN: Yugoslavia was created originally out of the turmoil of the Balkan wars, the

break-up of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires, and World War I. There used to be a sense that Yugoslavia's independence and territorial integrity were threatened from the outside by potential territorial demands from surrounding countries. The joke reflecting this was that Yugoslavia was surrounded by "brigama", meaning it was surrounded by worry. "Briga" means "worry" or "concern" in Serbo-Croatian and, when declined as "brigama," the word was spelled with the first letter of the names of the countries surrounding Yugoslavia: "b" for Bulgaria, "r" for Romania, "i" for Italy, and so forth. The "m" referred to the Hungarian name for Hungary. The Soviet Union was also seen as posing a potential threat to Yugoslavia's independence and sovereignty. So for a long time, the country held together to resist these perceived outside pressures. During the communist period, Tito and his heirs resorted to repression to keep potential dissident elements under control and to stifle nationalist sentiments that might have threatened Yugoslavia's cohesion.

By the late 1980s, with Tito gone and with nationalist leaders coming to the fore in the Yugoslav republics, we came to see that the threat to Yugoslavia came less from outside forces and more from internal conditions. There was in fact less and less holding it together. People did not see that they had shared economic interests in the Yugoslav state. They certainly didn't value the country's ethnic diversity, which was so intriguing and charming to outsiders. With the de-centralization in place, there were few federal institutions. At the federal level, there was a weak collective presidency, a rotating presidency; the federal legislature was weak and was under particular attack by the Serbs because their greater numbers in the general population were not reflected proportionally in the Parliament. There was a National Bank, which was also weak and was a focus of hot political debate as to its powers. The communist party still had a federal structure but it was falling apart under nationalist pressures. With the Catholic-Orthodox divide, there was certainly no religious institution to contribute to unity, quite the opposite. The Yugoslav military was about the only institution truly of a federal character, and it was probably dominated by Serbian officers at senior levels. Then, serious economic dislocations occurred due to hyper-inflation. So, there was not much at all holding the country together. I think the system proved very resilient. It was able to absorb an awful lot of tension, and the demise dragged out for some time, longer than might have been expected.

Q: When was Milosevic's famous visit to Kosovo?

HANSEN: The visit that purportedly spurred him to take on and use Kosovo as an issue in his political maneuvers was in the spring of 1987. That was when he visited, I believe it was Kosovo Polje, a town near the provincial capital Pristina. There was an incident outside the building where he was speaking, police clashing with demonstrators. He looked out on the scene and made a pledge to Kosovo Serbs, along the lines, "You will never be beaten again." Then, later on, after he had consolidated his power within Serbia and drained the provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina, he visited Kosovo Polje again for the 500th anniversary of the 1389 Battle of Kosovo Polje, in June 1989.

By then, his repressive policies towards Kosovo were taking hold. A curfew was imposed, and there was a ban on group meetings, for example. Larry may mention in his transcript a visit to Kosovo arranged about this time by USIA, for an American art history expert, the spouse of an embassy officer, to speak in Pristina. She drew a huge crowd. No disrespect to her, but I'm sure it was not only interest in art history that created such a large audience. Rather, it was an authorized event that allowed people to come together when they couldn't otherwise. When I visited Kosovo one time myself during that period, we drove through a town out in the countryside and stopped briefly in the town center. Just looking around, we saw four or five different cases in which police had stopped young Kosovar men and were searching them and/or their cars. The police presence became very strong and noticeable.

Q: What about Serb-Croat relations, or Serbian relations otherwise in the federation? Did the U.S. Consulate in Zagreb see things differently from the Embassy in Belgrade?

HANSEN: As I've mentioned, there was a general sense among many people in Yugoslavia that their interests, their national interests were not helped by being part of this Yugoslav federation, but in fact were harmed by it. They didn't get out of the federation as much as they put into it supposedly. I think these were distorted views and played on politically. They weren't necessarily correct views from an objective viewpoint, but that was the way a lot of people felt. Particularly in Slovenia and Croatia, there was a lot of distrust of and antagonism towards Serbia. They could easily point to Serbia's treatment of Kosovo and criticize it on the grounds that it was anti-democratic and violated human rights. But Slovenia and Croatia were not necessarily on the side of the angels, except by comparison. Leaders there were also highly nationalistic. The Croat-Serb issue was especially sensitive because of the large ethnic Serb population in Croatia and the raw deal they thought they were getting from the Croats. When the break-up came, the Serb-Croat conflict was a huge element. Just before the eruption of conflict, I had the impression that the Bosnians were almost frantically trying to avoid a break-up, sensing, I think, that they would be caught up in it and suffer at the hands of both sides.

Q: Were you covering just Serbia?

HANSEN: For the first three years, I was basically covering Serbia, especially Kosovo, plus Vojvodina, as well as human rights issues. In my last year, a new political officer arrived and took over the Serbia and Kosovo portfolio, which was something of a relief to me, frankly. Instead I picked up on Bosnia and on general foreign policy matters. Yugoslavia at the time was a leader in the so-called Non-Aligned Movement, so foreign policy issues were quite important in the relationship.

Q: What was your impression of the Kosovo Albanians? Did they seem at all accommodating?

HANSEN: They were of course unable at that time to speak out in any kind of a very frank way. They basically restrained themselves for a long period, for a good number of

years until 1999 when the lid did finally come off. In the spring of 1999, the U.S. gave the ultimatum to Milosevic and the air strikes ensued. During all those years, I think the Kosovo Albanians were incredibly restrained, extremely patient with their situation. The situation simmered for a long time, even as the conflict went on elsewhere in the old Yugoslavia and as the country was torn apart.

I should mention the story of one Kosovo Albanian communist party leader who was prominent during the time we were in Belgrade, Azem Vlasi. We used to meet with him regularly when we visited Kosovo. He seemed for a long time to try to hold things together in the province and to try to avoid the Serbian machinations aimed at undoing Kosovo's autonomy. He made numerous pleas at communist party gatherings. The major meetings were actually broadcast on television, so we could watch what was going on, although there was no doubt even more happening behind the scenes. He finally had to just walk out of the party, as did others from Croatia and Slovenia at different times. His departure was certainly part of the falling apart of the communist party at the federal level. At one point, there was a major strike that went on for months at one of the major mining complexes in Kosovo, with the miners holed up and camping out right in the mines. In "solidarity", Vlasi went and joined them. He was ultimately arrested at Milosevic's behest and was held in preventive detention for over a year before being put on trial and convicted on some charge. For a long time, I held on to a newspaper clipping with a photograph of Vlasi being brought into court, flanked by two very stern-looking but probably ethnic Albanian police guards. It seemed to me a very ironic photograph. Vlasi passed as a kind of leader in Kosovo, though many ethnic Albanians no doubt would have accused him of being a collaborator for most of his political career, since he went along with the system for so long.

The key ethnic Albanian leader who emerged was Ibrahim Rugova, who I mentioned earlier and who is even now (summer 2004) president of Kosovo. As far as I know, I was the first embassy officer to establish contact with him. He seemed quite weak at the very beginning. If I recall correctly, he was the president of the Kosovo Writers' Society. It must have been about 1988 that you started to hear his name among the "intellectuals" of Kosovo. I know that Ambassador Scanlan was still at post. I said at one point that the embassy needed to start meeting some of these emerging leaders, but it was not easy to establish contact with them. Then we had a congressional staffer visit. I took him down to Kosovo and we managed to meet Rugova. We must have requested this meeting through official channels, though I'm not sure about that. It was a rather stiff, formal meeting. At the end of the conversation, I told Rugova that the Ambassador would be coming down to Kosovo the following week and asked if we could arrange a meeting. He demurred at first, claiming he would be out of town, but then he called me later in the week to say that he would be available after all to meet with the ambassador. I don't have a clue what went on behind the scenes in Kosovo as that meeting was set up, but I expect there was quite a bit of nervousness about it.

In those initial meetings and subsequently, Rugova seemed always to have to be extremely careful about what he said to foreign visitors. He would keep the radio playing

while we spoke, for example, presumably on the assumption that the meeting was being monitored. Of course he never spoke openly about an independent Kosovo. He had to talk around the issue.

Q: What was the situation in Kosovo was far as the schools. Did they have classes in Albanian, or were the Albanians forced into the Serbian mold?

HANSEN: I expect there was something of a mix depending on the different communities in province. But there was schooling in Albanian. There was the university in Pristina essentially for the ethnic Albanian community. Some people spoke both languages, though it was more often Albanians speaking Serbian than vice versa. But I did meet several Serbs there who said they were raised in Kosovo and went to Albanian-language schools. I also was aware of Albanians who spoke no Serbian whatsoever.

Q: When we talk about the Balkans, we are really talking about Yugoslavia in a way. What about Croatia, particularly because it was the other big entity in this federation. What were you getting about Croatia when you first arrived, although it wasn't your particular beat?

HANSEN: Of course the political reporting on Croatia as such was done by our consulate in Zagreb. There was something of an artificial divide as a result; obviously the embassy's political reporting needed to be integrated. I don't have particularly insights as to how this was handled by the Ambassador and DCM. At my own level, I don't feel the coordination was particularly strong. I don't think that I had a good sense of the political situation in Croatia, and expect the reverse was also true. It was naturally very easy to be critical of Serbia and Serbs for their behavior regarding Kosovo and relations in the federation generally. But there were things going on in Croatia also that deserved a critical eye.

I remember when Ambassador Zimmermann first came to post. One of his early meetings was with a Serbian individual who asked for an appointment and came in to talk about what he reported as the maltreatment of Serbs in Croatia. We heard these kinds of rumors and allegations in Belgrade quite often, and it was the kind of thing you would take as part of the litany of Serbian complaints about their victim-hood. But apparently there was at least some substance to the complaints, or at least they reflected to a degree how the substantial Serbian minority in Croatia perceived themselves as being treated. And perception is reality, in a way. In any event, I'm not sure what reporting had come out of Zagreb about the status of Serbs in Croatia, but it was something the ambassador picked up on, in part I think to provide some balance for his exhortations regarding the deteriorating situation in Kosovo.

The subsequent conflict in Yugoslavia centered in good part around the issues of Serbs in Croatia and Croats in Serbia. I certainly have no sympathy for the way Milosevic and other Serbs pursued things in the years after I left Yugoslavia. But I've always thought that the Serbs did have some legitimate complaints and some legitimate concerns. I don't

think that they were very well understood and certainly were not addressed by the international community. The Serbs had no excuse for doing what they ended up doing, but they did have concerns that as a matter of fairness should have been understood and addressed. The fact that they weren't may have contributed to what happened after. Although, as I say, there's no excuse for what the Serbs did.

Q: How did we see Milosevic? Was he sort of a rising star when you arrived at post, or was he already seen for what he was?

HANSEN: He'd been in banking, actually, just before or just around the time that I arrived in Yugoslavia. I think he was initially seen as relatively progressive, but that image didn't last long. He was prominent in Serbian politics, and the other prominent figure was Ivan Stambolic, who I think was viewed more favorably liked than Milosevic. As I mentioned earlier, there came to be sharp rivalry between them later on. Stambolic was killed several years later. I believe his body was missing for a number of years until fairly recently the Serbian authorities made some progress in establishing what happened to him. I think that Milosevic was seen as responsible for Stambolic's death ultimately but I don't have a good sense of the details on that issue. In any event, Milosevic's demagogic character emerged pretty clearly over the next few years. I never met him personally since embassy contact with him was at a higher level. For a time there were differences of opinion as to where Milosevic was headed, but his true course was pretty clear well before I left the country. He spoke English very well and was very glib. He was certainly one of those political figures in Yugoslavia who knew what outside observers wanted to hear. They could all spout the right words and could be quite duplicitous. But despite his rhetoric, Milosevic did come to be seen very much as the culprit. One of the disturbing things, of course, was that he did enjoy a degree of seemingly genuine popularity among his Serbian constituents.

Q: Then you turned from Serbia to follow events in Bosnia-Herzegovina? What were you seeing there?

HANSEN: During the last year in Belgrade, I worked on Bosnia-Herzegovina. We were seeing Bosnia-Herzegovina as the real crisis point. It was a focal point of the standard analysis we used to give official visitors, visiting journalists, etc. Everybody would ask what would happen if Yugoslavia broke up, because after Tito's death everyone expected that it would. It was in a way amazing that it held together as long as it did. The standard analysis was that, if Yugoslavia were to begin to fall apart, probably Slovenia could break away without too much difficulty. If Croatia tried to follow suit, there would certainly be some violence associated with that kind of move. I confess that I personally never envisioned the extent and severity of the violence, but that was our standard analysis. If Bosnia tried to become independent or break away in some fashion, we always said there would be serious violence. There would be a blood bath because the territory couldn't be divvied up in a rational way among the competing ethnic groups. As the divisions among them sharpened, people were being pressured to identify themselves with one group or another, even if they were from mixed families or had not personal inclination to take

sides. In the embassy, I think we sensed that Bosnia was a crucial piece of territory. As that last year went on, there were more and more localized conflicts, political conflicts, not necessarily violent conflicts, but political conflicts across Bosnia, particularly in the Herzegovina region.

The leadership in Bosnia-Herzegovina seemed to me a little on the amorphous side, and perhaps that left room for nationalist leaders to assert themselves. There was a formal set of leadership structures because Bosnia did have its representation in the federal presidency and the federal parliament, and there were corresponding structures at the republic level. Some of the officials in these formal structures seemed to be trying hard to hold the place together, indeed to hold Yugoslavia together. It seemed to me that they knew that, if things started falling apart, there would be serious problems and Bosnia would bear the brunt of it. For a time, of all the republics, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia seemed to be trying the hardest to hold Yugoslavia together in the waning days of the federation. Certainly, the Bosnians had a lot at stake, as subsequent events showed so tragically.

Just before the end of my tour, I made two trips to Bosnia in about March and then in the spring of 1990, the second trip accompanying the DCM. We got a sense of real tension even then. Many of the officials we met with emphasized that "we just really have to keep Bosnia together, and keep Yugoslavia together for Bosnia's sake."

It's hard to say to what extent Yugoslavs generally had a sense of impending doom at that point. I recall one conversation with some Foreign Ministry officials. One young officer asked about the United States' experience. What would the United States do in these types of circumstances? Well, that was an easy answer, though seemingly not one that he expected. I reminded him that the United States had faced the secession of southern states, and that, as a result, we fought our civil war, the bloodiest war in our history. He became very quiet.

Looking at the overall picture of Yugoslavia at that time, I wanted to mention one particularly interesting and important visitor to the embassy in probably early 1990. Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger came to Belgrade for a short visit. He knew Yugoslavia very well, having served there very early in his career. Partly because of the events of 1989, with the fall of communism elsewhere in Eastern Europe, people were agonizing all the more about what Yugoslavia's fate would be. Well, Eagleburger came and wanted to get a sense of what was happening in Yugoslavia. One of the events we arranged for him was to bring in political and human rights figures from all of the republics, and from Kosovo, I'm sure, to have a sort of a round table discussion with him. It was quite a phenomenal evening. They all came to the ambassador's residence and sat in a huge circle around Eagleburger. They each essentially seemed to be giving their rationale as to why their republic or province should be treated in a particular way, and asserting their complaints about their status in the federation. The upshot was that Eagleburger commented as he left, not to the participants, as I recall, but to embassy officers and his accompanying staff, that he just didn't see how they could hold

Yugoslavia together. A number of the participants had made in plain that they didn't want to. The Slovenes and Croats were clear at that point. It was sort of like the cards were on the table and you could see how the hand was going to be played out. There was a sense that the situation was grim and would go from bad to worse. It may be that there was so little intent or interest, among the people of Yugoslavia themselves, in holding the country together in a positive way that they only way to do it would have been by repression.

Q: Other recollections from 1989?

HANSEN: Between the U.S. invasion of Panama, where we had served, in December 1989 to seize Noriega and all that was going on in Eastern Europe, we hardly knew where to look. December 1989 was particularly dramatic because there was a lot of television coverage of Panama, and we were trying to follow that closely.

Then, just before Christmas, I happened to take Anya and Alison by return overnight train to Zagreb to see the Christmas decorations and do a little shopping. With Orthodox Christmas coming later and being a less prominent religious holiday anyway, there wasn't much of a feel for Christmas in Belgrade in December, so I thought we'd try Zagreb, which had a little more to offer. Well, the day we were in Zagreb was just the day that demonstrators and anti-Ceausescu forces seized power in Bucharest and the Ceausescus fled the city. Throughout the day the kids and I went back to the hotel room we'd taken for the day so I could see what was happening in Bucharest. Many of the events and developments of that day were being caught on television and televised live around the world. Yugoslav television had interpreters on duty all day to interpret live broadcasts of events from Bucharest, where the protestors had taken over TV.

It was just a phenomenal thing to watch. I really don't know what the Yugoslavs made of all this. Of course, they always saw themselves as separate and distinct from the other countries of Eastern Europe, but they must have seen some parallels. For Serbs in particular it must have been interesting. There had historically been a close relationship between Serbia and Romania. I later heard the expression that Romania, for its part, considered its only true friends to be "Serbia and the Black Sea."

Q: Where did you go at the end of your Belgrade tour in the summer of 1990?

HANSEN: Before finishing up on our Belgrade tour, I did want to talk a little bit about how our children fared there, to give them their full due. Anya and Alison were young children when we were in Belgrade, aged six and four when we arrived for the four-year tour. I'm sure there were some initial shocks to their systems, and each had a little difficulty initially in settling in to these very different circumstances. But overall it seemed to have been a wonderful time for them.

They attended the small international school there, the International School of Belgrade (ISB), which kept its doors open during the entire conflict in Yugoslavia and I think is

still operating today. They had a wonderful time at that school. It was a very protective environment, they had a lot of good friends, and they thrived. They did very well in classes academically, and the teachers were great. Anya had some chances to do some acting and singing and became very interested in both, the beginnings of her career in theater. She graduated from Northwestern in Drama and is now a stage manager in Chicago by profession. Alison was also into music, singing and piano, and went on to study theater at New York University and now works with an independent producer in Manhattan. In Belgrade, both Alison and Anya took piano lessons from a lovely, elderly local woman, a Mrs. Bach, who taught many of the children in the international community.

We traveled around the country a lot with the kids. They saw a lot of Yugoslavia. In particular they fell in love with Dubrovnik, which we visited several times. We had a particularly memorable time about halfway through our tour in Yugoslavia. My parents and Larry's mother and aunt all come for a visit at the same time. The whole group, all eight of us, headed out in our two cars for a trip to Sarajevo and Mostar, and then out to the Adriatic Coast to Dubrovnik, then into Montenegro across the Gulf of Kotor, through Budva, and to Sveti Stefan. Then we took the car train from Bar back through all those mountains and mountain tunnels to Belgrade. It was a wonderful trip and gave all of us a good feel for those parts of the country. We still talk about it.

Q: We had three kids and they loved it there. Then we came back to Washington and it was a very miserable time for the children.

HANSEN: We had a similar experience. The transition back to Washington was difficult.

There was a very sad turn, though. Living in Yugoslavia, we always felt that our kids were safe. Generally, unlike in the United States, you didn't have to worry if somebody spoke to them on the street or offered them candy, for example. Yugoslavs were just very loving towards children. So it was very shocking, later on, to see that children were so frequently the victims, or even the targets, of the violence that erupted in Yugoslavia. It seemed totally out of the Yugoslav character, as we had experienced it. I have never understood it.

Q: Where were you assigned after Belgrade?

HANSEN: We returned to Washington, where I had an assignment as the Country Affairs Officer for Romania, the Romania desk officer. I was the desk officer from summer 1990 to summer 1992. Just before leaving Belgrade, I had a chance to make a quick visit to Bucharest. I caught a ride with the naval attaché in Belgrade, who also covered Bulgaria and Romania. He and his wife were going to Sofia by car, so I rode with them. It seemed like a terribly dismal place compared to Belgrade. We spent the night there and then drove up to Bucharest, which was just as dismal.

Ceausescu was gone, but the situation was very tenuous. Obviously, in Romania the

transition away from the communist system proved far more difficult than in any other country of the Warsaw Pact. When I went to Bucharest for that short visit in early June of 1990, the student protest blocking part of the downtown area was underway. They had set up a sort of camp at one of the major intersections and were protesting the course of the so-called democratic revolution thus far. It was not going well. Just getting rid of Ceausescu had not completed the job by any means.

Ion Iliescu and the National Salvation Front came to power that spring, after Ceausescu was killed, with Iliescu elected president in May 1990. Iliescu, a former communist himself, was not the democratic leader that many Romanians, and certainly not the U.S., had hoped to see emerge in Romania. The students carrying out the demonstration were agitating for further and better democratic reform. Shortly after I visited Bucharest, the demonstration was broken up by the famous miners incident, in which Iliescu's cohorts arranged to have miners come into Bucharest from the Jiu Valley and disrupt the demonstration. It was a needlessly violent event, and it overshadowed American-Romanian relations for several years thereafter. There was a reprise of this scenario in 1991, when miners were again used to storm Bucharest. So the democratic revolution in Romania was very much an unfinished process when I came on to the desk. Deposing Ceausescu had really been more of a palace coup than anything else, and it took a long time for more genuinely committed democratic reformers to come to the fore.

These were huge developments for our very small embassy in Bucharest to follow and deal with. While I was on the desk, I would sometimes hear complaints around the State Department – why isn't the embassy reporting on this or that? Why isn't there better coverage of one issue or another? But it was quite a small embassy for such a large and complex country. Romania was a country of 23 million people, about as many as Yugoslavia. Yet the number of American embassy and consulate officers in Yugoslavia was easily twice the number in Romania. In Yugoslavia, we had offices throughout the country, while in Romania we were stationed only in Bucharest. The embassy was very thoroughly engaged in following developments in the country and pressing for progress on human rights and democratization, as well as other issues, but it was a lot to cover.

When I first started working on Romania, the ambassador was a political appointee, Ambassador Alan Green. It must have been a very difficult time for him. I don't believe he'd had international experience to speak of. The upheaval in Romania would certainly not have been something he could have anticipated in taking the ambassadorship. Later, it was Ambassador John Davies, who had lots of East European experience and knowledge of how Washington worked.

During the whole time that I was on the desk, though there was some limited progress, Romania did not really come to terms with the democratic process the way other countries in the Northern Tier did. Romania was starting from much more difficult circumstances compared to, say, Poland or then-Czechoslovakia. The Ceausescu regime had been sickeningly repressive and had driven the economy into the ground. Its economic recovery had to start from an extremely low base, with seriously deteriorated

infrastructure and widespread poverty. Romanians had very little experience in dealing with the West through trade, business, or tourism, since it had been such a closed society. It did not have a community of expatriate countryman, like Polish-Americans, to take a special interest in the country and help it along the way.

During the Ceausescu regime, we did have a kind of special relationship with Romania for a while, because Romania had been willing to stand up to Moscow to some degree. Romania did not participate in the military operations to put down the Prague Spring, for example. But then Ceausescu became so repressive and turned the country into such a miserable place that obviously that special relationship couldn't continue. It was a very repressive regime at the end and did horrible things to its own people. So, when Ceausescu was gone, everybody was thrilled by that, but those who came into power at first were not of the same caliber and the same ilk as we saw elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

Working on Romania in Washington was very trying and often very frustrating. When I originally applied for the job, the Deputy Director of then-EUR/EEY told me, in the winter of 1989 just before the revolution took place, that change was likely in Romania, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe. When it came, he said, there is a good chance it will be violent change, but ultimately Romania had the potential for a very rich relationship with the United States. Certainly he was right on the potential for violence. That turned out to be the case. But the "rich relationship" took a good ten years in coming. While I was on the desk, the relationship was at a very low point because of the unfinished nature of the democratic revolution, the people in office in Romania, the agonizing "most-favored nation" trade issue, the adoptions question, ethnic tensions between Romanians and the ethnic Hungarian population of Romania, etc. Iliescu and people around him were, understandably, viewed with great suspicion in Washington. Washington just did not want to deal with him.

At the same time, we had a steady stream of Romanian officials and political figures coming to Washington during those two years, and they were received in Washington. We kept telling the Romanians what they had to do to improve their standing in Washington, but the reforms in question were difficult and, even if their intentions had been the best, progress would have been slow. Many Romanian officials seemed to think that if they just explained their situation to Washington, Washington would eventually be persuaded. They seemed to think it was a public relations issue, rather than a substantive issue.

Eventually, Romania managed to get approval for a visit by the Prime Minister. I think he was supposed to meet with the Secretary of State, but at the very last minute the Secretary couldn't take the meeting and it was going to have to be with the Deputy Secretary instead, which was not really the appropriate level for a Prime Minister. But it was the best we could do. (Actually, I don't recall the specifics; it could be that the meeting was originally to be with the Vice President and then passed to the Secretary of State.) The Romanian ambassador called me up and asked, "Ruth, what do you think I should do?" I

recommended that they proceed with the meeting because it really was the best we could offer, and so they did that.

Romanian officials came often to beseech us and press their case. Deputy Secretary Eagleburger and other State Department officials were very generous with their time and met with government officials, opposition political leaders, just about anyone who wanted to see him. Eagleburger met several times with the chief rabbi of Romania. But it was evident that some officials and their staff were uncomfortable dealing with the Romanians, who seemed untrustworthy to them. The relationship was thin, and U.S. assistance was limited to humanitarian assistance and assistance to promote democracy and human rights, though that was quite broadly interpreted, given the needs in the country. Nevertheless, the workload was heavy, and it was a difficult two years.

Q: Did you feel almost like a pariah within the Eastern Europe office?

HANSEN: Well, I think some people felt sorry for me because I had to deal with Romania and these difficult Romanians, though over time I developed a certain fondness for the Romanians at the Romanian Embassy and elsewhere with whom I dealt regularly. During this period, there was almost a sort of competition between Bulgaria and Romania as to who was doing well on democratization and so forth, since those two countries were viewed in something of a different class compared to Poland, Hungary, and then-Czechoslovakia. In 1990-1992, Bulgaria was ahead. Later on, the tables were turned a few times.

Q: Did adoptions cross your desk at all?

HANSEN: Yes, adoptions were very much an issue and were related to the horrible conditions in Romanian orphanages at the time. Right after the overthrow of Ceausescu, the terrible situation of the orphanages and the AIDS babies came to light. The stories were just sickening.

This set of issues was part of the legacy of the Ceausescu period when government institutions just did not meet the needs of the people and in fact imposed exceptional hardships on them. Ceausescu wanted to keep the population of the country growing, so he imposed a ban on abortions. Abortion was otherwise, unfortunately, a rather widespread birth control method in Eastern Europe. According to Ceausescu, Romanian women were supposed to have lots of babies, but the deteriorating health care system was not equipped to deal with pregnancies, birth, and small children. With deteriorating economic conditions generally, families were not equipped to support their children in many cases.

I remember hearing a statistic from Dr. John Lampe, during the Balkan area studies course I'd taken before going to Yugoslavia, about the childbirth conditions in Bucharest. He reported that, at one point in the mid-1980s, of the babies born in Bucharest hospitals, only 10% *survived.* That's how miserable the situation was in terms of health conditions.

One of the steps that Romanian doctors supposedly took to treat newborn infants was to give them blood transfusions. Somehow it was thought that blood transfusions were going to help survival rates. Of course they didn't have appropriate sanitary conditions for doing the blood transfusions. Among other practices, they re-used needles. Romania ended up with a lot of AIDS babies that we learned about after the Ceausescu regime was overthrown. They and many other children were placed in orphanages by families who didn't want them and/or couldn't care for them. The orphanages themselves were not supported at all adequately, and so those miserable conditions developed and finally came to light after Ceausescu's overthrow.

One way of dealing with the problem of these institutionalized kids was to open Romania to international adoptions. All kinds of legal and other problems arose because of questionable practices in selecting children for adoption and in approval of adoptive parents, plus continuing problems in management of the children's institutions.

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Q: How did this impact the desk?

HANSEN: Fortunately, the adoptions issue was a shared burden because the Consular Affairs Bureau was involved in directly assisting American citizens in the actual adoptions process. They really bore the bulk of that burden. But the issue was always there and was always a topic in official meetings of any kind. Some of the American assistance flowing to Romania through USAID and other U.S. agencies was targeted at the orphanage problem. When the Peace Corps started operating in Eastern Europe, some of the early volunteers served in Romania orphanages.

Q: What was the Romanian government like, and what were some of the developments and issues during the two years you dealt with Romania?

HANSEN: Among the main figures was President Ion Iliescu. In May 1990, he was elected President with 85% of the vote in Romania's first fumbling attempt at free elections, and he was re-elected with 61% of the vote in the fall of 1992, in elections generally endorsed by international observers. He had been a member of the communist party in Romania, had fallen out with Ceausescu at one point, and became sort of a dissident communist. Petre Roman was Prime Minister for a good part of the time, and then a technocrat, the former Finance Minister Theodor Stolojan, who was somewhat better thought of in Washington, became Prime Minister when Roman was ousted in that second miners incident. The miners incidents very much colored the way Romania was viewed in Washington, understandably enough and rightly so. Iliescu of course denied that he orchestrated anything but he could hardly escape ultimate responsibility. The first event in June 1990, in particular, was seen as a very brutal method of repression and he was held accountable for it. For a couple of years afterward, officials in Washington couldn't even think of Romania without thinking of the miners coming into Bucharest. It happened again on a slightly smaller scale in September 1991, with the ouster of Roman

as Prime Minister, which of course only reinforced the problem. The Iliescu regime was just seen as a regime that Washington could not work with.

The political opposition was very fragmented and ineffective. One of the best organized opposition groups was the ethnic Hungarian party, but it was viewed with suspicion by its Romanian counterparts. A major issue the American Embassy had to deal with was how to get the democratic opposition to work in unity, to be coherent enough to present a reasonable alternative to the forces in power, and to function effectively in a democratic system. The other side of that coin was the need to convince the government to foster democratic conditions of governance.

On this score, the United States was full of advice and help, though with some restraints on our assistance. Just before I joined the desk, the State Department developed a set of "benchmarks" that Romania would need to reach for normalization of bilateral relations, implicitly including reinstatement of "most favored nation" (MFN) status. The benchmarks encompassed free and fair elections, independent media, civilian control over security services, and respect for human rights, including the rights of ethnic minorities – i.e., ethnic Hungarians and Roma. U.S. assistance was targeted to helping Romania make progress on these benchmarks.

The issues of ethnic relations were important in Romania and in U.S.-Romanian relations. The ethnic Hungarians of Romania lived mainly in the Transylvania area and generally were very critical of the Romanian majority and the Romanian authorities. They seemed not to feel comfortable as a minority in Romania, with some good reason. There was always tension in Romania as to what the status of the Hungarians should be. Did they have aspirations to break off part of Romania and patch it to Hungary? What were Hungary's intentions in Romania? Hungary and the ethnic Hungarians in Romania had a very effective propaganda machine and were always able to get very sympathetic hearing in Washington, and the Romanians often suffered by comparison.

The status of the Roma was also an important human rights issue in Romania, as in other East European countries. The Roma were certainly on the very lowest rung of the ladder. Throughout the region at that time, there were sporadic outbreaks of violence against gypsy communities. Somebody in the gypsy community would be accused of stealing something or some other crime and the local Romanian or Czech or Hungarian population would torch a gypsy house or camp or something like that. The authorities would not take action to prevent it or prosecute the perpetrators. These issues were raised regularly in our bilateral relations with Romania and other countries and were included in the annual human rights reports. This was certainly an unresolved question for that part of the world.

Romania was not deemed eligible for the full panoply of U.S. assistance because we were so uncomfortable with the Iliescu regime, but a lot of assistance was provided in democratization. A lot of it came down to how to help the opposition, the so-called democratic opposition. Obviously we weren't supposed to be taking sides in any respect

with one political group or another, but as a practical matter I'd say that we did. We were very straightforward and up-front about wanting to see a democratic system in place and see the democratically-oriented parties able to operate freely. The American Bar Association through its Central and East European Law Initiative (CEELI) was very much involved, plus the National Endowment for Democracy and the American political party institutes, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI); the latter had a slightly different name at the time. The Human Rights Bureau in the State Department took a particular interest in Romania. Ambassador Richard Schifter headed the bureau at the time and seemed to take a special interest in Romania. He was the one really sympathetic figure among senior officials in Washington, sympathetic towards Romania. In fact there was quite a lot of tension between the Human Rights Bureau and the Policy Planning staff. They had diametrically opposed views of how to deal with Romania, so there was constant tension there, and the EUR Bureau was often caught in the middle.

Q: What about MFN?

HANSEN: "Most Favored Nation" status, which erroneously implies preferential treatment in regard to import tariffs, was the somewhat anachronistic term used up until a few years ago to describe nondiscriminatory tariff treatment. In many ways, this was the defining issue in U.S.-Romanian relations, because Romanians interpreted the granting of MFN as a U.S. "seal of approval" and because U.S. officials – in Congress and in the Executive Branch – used the MFN issue to press broadly for improved human rights conditions. As a result, the MFN issue carried an emotional charge and political value far out of proportion to its objective utility in potentially promoting business and trade between the United States and Romania.

Post-1989, many Romanians professed not to understand how the United States could have accorded MFN to the notorious dictator Ceausescu yet deny it the "new" Romania. By way of background, Romania was accorded MFN status in 1975, mainly due to Ceausescu's independent foreign policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Romania constituted a chink in the Soviet armor and for that reason was valued by the West in the Cold War context. As Ceausescu's repression of his own people intensified, however, the United States threatened to cut off MFN. By 1988, with the writing on the wall, Ceausescu pre-empted a U.S. move to drop MFN by renouncing it himself in February 1988. In July 1988, Romania's MFN status was formally suspended by mutual agreement of the two governments.

After the fall of Ceausescu, the United States hung on to the MFN issue, knowing of its appeal to Romania. With little other leverage over Romania, it was a very useful tool for the United States to use to press Romania for genuine democratic reform and improved human rights conditions. Romania's problems in these areas festered. In late 1991-early 1992, finally things began to take a turn for the better. The new technocratic prime minister was in place, and in December 1991 a new constitution was adopted by the Romanian people in an orderly referendum. Under these more promising circumstances,

the United States focused on electoral processes as the indicators by which MFN could move forward, and we pressed hard for free and fail local, presidential, and parliamentary elections.

After successful local elections in February 1992, the State Department announced U.S. readiness to sign a new bilateral trade agreement providing MFN, subject to requisite Congressional approval and with an eye out for presidential/parliamentary elections then anticipated in the spring or early summer of 1992. The trade agreement was signed in April. Romanian authorities ultimately postponed national elections until September, however. This maneuver aroused suspicions in Washington and among the political opposition in Romania that President Iliescu was playing for time in order to enhance his electoral prospects and that, for partisan purposes, Iliescu would try to claim credit for winning MFN from the United States.

Given these atmospherics, the timing of U.S. Congressional action on the bilateral trade agreement became awkward. First, an early fall Congressional recess, due to coming U.S. elections, threatened to leave the MFN issue by the wayside and to put if off well into 1993, thus diminishing its utility as leverage for Romanian reform. Second, the Bush administration simultaneously had other, heavier issues to manage with a Democratic Congress – namely, MFN for China – and had little or not political capital or energy to spare for a fight over Romanian MFN, if it came to that.

Nevertheless, the President notified Congress on June 3, 1992, that he had determined to waive the restrictions of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment for Romania and on June 22 submitted the newly-signed trade agreement for congressional approval, arguing that it would be good for the American economy and help reinforce political and economic reform in Romania. The House of Representatives took up the trade agreement, with its MFN provision, on September 24. However, at the urging of Rep. Lantos, who actively lobbied against MFN for Romania, partly because of the issue of the status of ethnic Hungarians in Romania, the House postponed a vote until after Romania's September 27 elections.

In the event, even without the political boost of MFN, Iliescu came close to winning re-election in the first round of voting on September 27. On September 30, without further debate, the House rejected the Romania MFN measure 88-283, ending the issue for 1992. Shortly thereafter, Iliescu went on to win the run-off presidential election on October 11.

By then, I had left the Romania desk, finishing that assignment in the summer of 1992. President Clinton submitted the bilateral trade agreement to Congress anew in July 1993, by which time Romania was the only East European country lacking MFN, grouped uncomfortably with a string of pariah states. I understand that Congress approved MFN for Romania on a provisional basis in October of that year, after the State Department acceded to Rep. Lantos' urging to open a branch office in Cluj, Romania, in Transylvania where the ethnic Hungarian population is concentrated. The bill was signed by President Clinton and came into effect in November 1993. The Cluj office opened in January 1994.

In subsequent periods, President Clinton submitted reports to Congress affirming Romania's continued compliance with Jackson-Vanik conditions, and its MFN status continued unchallenged. There is more to the denouement of this story, but basically in July 1996 the Congress approved legislation allowing for permanent MFN status for Romania, and it came into effect in August. The issue continued to resonate in Romania in Presidential elections there in the fall of 1996.

To sum it up, the democratic revolution in Romania was an exceptionally difficult one in the East European experience. That Romania has come as far as it has today, now a NATO member and bumping up against EU membership, is remarkable, to say the least. It's a testament to the people of Romania and to the commitment of the United States and our partners in supporting and promoting democratic change in the region.

Q: Was Moldova an issue?

HANSEN: To a degree. I think that some Romanians harbored the notion that they might be able to get some territory that Romania had lost to Moldova after the war, but it never was a live issue, at least from my perspective on the Romania desk. I had the impression that, as miserable as Moldova was economically, even people in Moldova of Romanian background wouldn't have seen a particular attraction in Romania under Iliescu.

Q: Was there an active Romanian-American community in the United States? Did they play the role that some ethnic communities do in terms of U.S. relations with the old country?.

HANSEN: Yes, there was something of an organization, but it was not nearly as effective as those of other communities, like the Polish or the Hungarian. The ethnic Hungarian lobby was very active and effective, and the ethnic Romanians, if you will, suffered by comparison.

Q: Then in 1992, where were you next assigned?

HANSEN: As a tandem couple, we anticipated difficulty in lining up joint overseas assignments. As it happens, Larry was not due for reassignment until the following summer, the summer of 1993. So I, in the meantime, wanted to have just a one-year assignment in the State Department so that I could pursue an overseas assignment when Larry was doing so. I was able to get a commitment from the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, S/CT, for a one-year assignment. When the assignment was actually made, it was for two years. I panicked momentarily but the assignments people said, "Don't worry. The regulations don't allow for a one-year assignment in Washington, but when the time comes, we'll do a curtailment." Well, I was not at all reassured and felt very anxious that any curtailment request would be denied. Later on, I did have to request that curtailment. To my relief, the assignments officer said, yes, he remembered the commitment and was there to make good on his word, which he did.

Anyway, my assignment that summer of 1992 was to the Counterterrorism Office. I worked for Jonathan Greenwald. Ambassador Peter Burleigh was the Coordinator during the first few months I was there, a real gentleman in every sense of the word and a pleasure to work for. Subsequently Ambassador Tom McNamara was in that position. I served in S/CT until the summer of 1993. In my section of the office, I was one of several regional affairs officers; I covered Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

It seems strange to say it now, but things were relatively quiet on the counterterrorism front during the year I was in that job. Most of the interesting work that I did was in the first six months or so. I was very gratified that, about half-way through the year, I was offered the opportunity to fill in behind my supervisor when he left early for language training. It would have been a great opportunity to step into a more senior position. However, another officer in the section had just been promoted and therefore outranked me. I pointed that out to the office management, knowing that the opening would then go to the other officer instead. I was sorry to miss the opportunity, but objectively speaking, that was the way it had to be.

Q: Let's hear about some of your responsibilities in S/CT.

HANSEN: As I mentioned, the most interesting part was at the beginning. I had two really neat experiences. The first was a trip with Ambassador Burleigh to Sweden, and then with Jonathan Greenwald and others to the three Baltic States. We had a system of regular consultations with Sweden on counterterrorism issues. Ambassador Burleigh, who did an awful lot of travel for these kinds of consultations, was going to Stockholm for talks with Sweden, which went well. Iran and Middle East terrorism generally were among the major issues. Subsequently, an S/CT team, including representatives from the Diplomatic Security Bureau and from the CIA, went on to the three Baltic capitals for counterterrorism consultations and to talk about possibilities for counterterrorism training. S/CT had a small budget for this purpose, for training in certain aspects of counterterrorism.

Shortly after completing those trips, almost as soon as I returned to Washington, it worked out for Ambassador Burleigh to have a round of consultations in Moscow. This would have been in the fall of 1993, so it was still early in the post-Soviet period. These were among the first formal counterterrorism consultations between the United States and Russia. Basically I had to organize both of those trips, the Sweden/Baltic trip and the Russia consultations. These were my first visits to the Baltic states and to Moscow, so I valued the opportunities very much.

In both cases and throughout my year in S/CT, there was a lot of discussion of Iran and the Middle East, particularly Iran's role as a state sponsor of terrorism. The bombing of Pan Am 103 was still an issue, with discussion about who was responsible for the attack and how the issue could ever be resolved. These were new areas for me, so it was all very informative for me personally. In the latter half of my S/CT assignment, it happened that I picked up quite a bit on Iran, though it was not in my specific area of responsibility.

Q: Looking at Eastern Europe and Sweden, why would they be concerned with terrorism?

HANSEN: It was a matter of nurturing partners in cooperation against terrorism and conveying a sense of what we understood to be the problem in the Middle East and where the terrorism problem was coming from. A lot of it had to do with how European countries would deal with Iran. We saw Iran as behind a lot of what was happening in the Middle East, yet the Europeans were quite interested in business deals with Iran and so forth. We were trying to come to a common understanding with our European partners and with the former Soviet Union about the source of the problem on how to control it through diplomacy, through countries' legal systems, understanding business and banking activities by individuals linked to terrorist structures, and so on.

Q: After the one year in S/CT, you went into Bulgarian language training?

HANSEN: Yes, Larry and I had bid on and been assigned to excellent jobs in Sofia, Larry as Public Affairs Counselor and I as Political-Economic Counselor. At the time that we bid, Bulgaria was at one of its sporadic high points in its post-communist transition, so we were very optimistic about the assignments and excited about the opportunity to serve again in the Balkans, under more promising circumstances than at the end of our Belgrade tour. By the time we finished language training and got to Sofia, Bulgaria had slid downward from that high point and shortly moved into a disastrous period of mismanagement by the former communists, under a government of the Bulgarian Socialist Party.

Q: Before we going further, let's start with the language training. How did you find the Bulgarian language?

We were in language training from the late summer of 1993 until the spring of 1994. Actually, Larry had to finish up a little early and go out to post a little ahead of schedule. The Bulgarian language has a really interesting historical background, basic to the development of the Cyrillic alphabet which spread widely in the region. At first, I didn't expect to like the language because I'd heard it spoken and always thought it sounded rather unattractive, compared to Serbo-Croatian and even Polish, which I'd come to appreciate years ago. In the end, once I got used to it, I thought that Bulgarian also was a very attractive language. It is probably the simplest of the Slavic languages. It isn't declined, like Polish and Serbo-Croatian, though it has a remnant of declension with the article attached at the end of the word. Pronunciation can be tricky in terms of where the stress falls in a word. The language always seemed erratic in that respect. The other tricky thing was body language. In Bulgarian, as in Greek and Albanian, and perhaps other languages, you nod your head for "no" and shake your head for "yes." That was hard to get used to, and it was easy to make mistakes. I had thought, having background in Serbo-Croatian, that learning Bulgarian would be quite easy. The similarities of the languages did help at first, but the advantages didn't hold up that long. Learning Bulgarian was still

a major challenge. Larry and I were often in class together, and we both did well in the language

There were several Bulgarian language instructors at FSI; a couple of them were quite strong. One was a lovely and very dedicated woman who unfortunately passed away a couple of years later. Another was a Bulgarian Orthodox priest by training. He sometimes let his understandably strong anti-communist and other political views enter into the classroom. The course of instruction was not as strong as the Serbo-Croatian course had been, though one of the instructors in particular occasionally used some innovative approaches, including the use of broadcast media.

Once we were in Bulgaria, I found that, even though it had been a number of years since I used Serbo-Croatian, I still would resort to Serbian words occasionally by mistake. If I couldn't think of the Bulgarian word, the Serbian word might come to mind. I used to make the joke that I spoke Bulgarian with a lot of Serbian words, which meant that I really spoke Macedonian. The Bulgarians thought that was very funny, since in their heart of hearts many of them considered Macedonian an artificial language contrived by Tito's Yugoslav regime, and thought that it was really Bulgarian anyway. Knowing Bulgarian, in fact I could understand Macedonian. Once while visiting Macedonia, the Bulgarian president made a statement on TV, and it was interpreted simultaneously into Macedonian. The two versions were extremely close; it was almost like hearing the same thing said twice.

Q: So, you were in Bulgaria from when to when?

HANSEN: From the summer of 1994 to the summer of 1997.

I was the Political-Economic Counselor. We had a small section of five people including a secretary, one of these combined political and economic units. We had a good and cohesive staff. There were a couple of guys in the section when I arrived who had been in Bulgaria for a couple of years, so they knew and understood the situation and the dynamics of Bulgarian political and economic developments really well. A year later two new officers came in who got up to speed really quickly and did a great job.

The ambassador at first was Ambassador William Montgomery, for about the first year-and-a-half that we were at post. He then was called upon to return to Washington to work on Balkan reconstruction and Serbian reform. After about a six-month hiatus, Ambassador Avis Bohlen arrived and was there past our departure.

Q: What was the situation in Bulgaria when you arrived?

HANSEN: It was not going very well. Over a period of about a decade altogether, Bulgaria had a kind of circular political development in which it would make some progress towards democratic reform and market economics. Then things would fall apart and progress would cease or be walked back. We arrived in one of these downturns in the

cycle. The communist system as such had collapsed at the end of 1989, and the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) was formed, while the old communist party re-shaped itself as the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). There was also a key political structure reflecting Bulgaria's substantial Turkish minority, the Movement for Rights and Freedom (MRF).

By the summer of 1994 the Union of Democratic Forces that had been in office for several years. They had a kind of a coalition with the ethnic Turkish party, the Movement for Rights and Freedom. Zhelyu Zhelev was the president. This coalition had collapsed by the time that we got there, though the government had not yet fallen. There had been a lot of speculation over the preceding year or so about whether and when Parliament would take up a vote of confidence in the government and thus whether and when there would be new elections. The vote of confidence had been sidestepped several times. Very shortly after we arrived in fact the government did fail and new elections were called in short order. So the situation was quite dramatic right from the start. There had been a lot of skepticism in the embassy as to whether new elections would ever be called, because it would be such a dangerous situation for this Union of Democratic Forces. It was not at all clear that they would do well. By the time we arrived, though, it seemed pretty obvious to me that there was no other way out, given the constitutional structure and the way things were sorting out politically. In the end, new parliamentary elections were held and the Socialist Party, the former communists, won.

During that period in Bulgaria, political figures all along the political spectrum, despite protestations to the country, had their short-term interests at the fore. Whoever was in office tried to do things for themselves, for their group, and to change the system to their own benefit, not necessarily the benefit of the country overall. This was true of the democratic forces, many of whom wanted basically to turn the country back to the way it was before the communists took power, as well as the Socialists. There was an element of a kind of class division. The old elites of the country wanted to get their homes back, get their farmland back, and so forth. It was understandable that they would demand restitution, but the property issues were handled poorly, especially regarding agricultural lands, orchards, and vineyards, so that there were many property disputes and potentially rich agricultural lands were left to deteriorate. Bulgaria ended up importing a lot of foodstuffs that it should have been able to produce by itself. It had been a breadbasket for Eastern Europe during the communist period, and it lost that capacity. I don't know that it has fully recovered even now. There had been a significant Peasant Party in Bulgaria prior to World War II, and the remnants and new members of that party were components of the Union of Democratic Forces.

In 1994 there was no consensus as to where the country was headed, and it took a good three more years and a major economic collapse under the Socialists for that consensus to develop. But more about that later.

In those early post-communist years, although the UDF was to our minds right-thinking in terms of basic democratic principals, economic reform, aspirations to western institutions, and so forth, as a practical matter they were not doing a good job of

instituting reform in the country. It was a very frustrating situation. Then, when the UDF finally lost political power, the Socialists came in and tried to turn back the UDF-backed reforms, such as they were. It was a very messy situation, the country just was not making progress, and the economy was suffering as a result.

All the economies of Eastern Europe went into pretty serious slumps after the communist system fell because all of their structures fell apart and there was nothing really there to replace them. Bulgaria was one of the lesser developed countries of the Eastern Bloc to begin with, and it was less experienced in even a modicum of international trade and international business, so it was starting from farther behind and was worse off than countries like Poland and Hungary. Romania and Bulgaria were at the tail end. They did not do very well in instituting new systems that would let their economies thrive. It was not a good situation, and there really was not a strong clear leader who could create a vision for the country.

President Zhelev was a leader among the democratic forces and was president for the first couple of years we were in Sofia. He had emerged from the environmental movement in Bulgaria, where a nascent opposition had been able to function in a minimal way in the latter part of the 1980s. He showed vision at the beginning and was very well regarded by the United States, probably for longer than he really deserved, given his overall performance. Over time, he lost his ability to compel support among Bulgarians. His original mission got mired down in the politics of his own democratic cohort if you will, some of it having to do with personal rivalries and also with the role of the ethnic Turkish party, the MRF. When Zhelev's term was up, he ran for re-election and won only a minuscule portion of the vote. So that reflects how far he had fallen.

Q: How communized had the Bulgaria under the old rule? Did they have large collective farms and all that?

HANSEN: Yes, they did. Bulgaria was pretty thoroughly Sovietized and very close to Moscow politically. Bulgaria was often semi-jokingly referred to as the 16th Soviet republic because it was the most loyal of the Eastern Bloc countries. On the other hand, there were no Soviet troops stationed in Bulgaria. There were a couple of ways to look at that. Some Bulgarians liked to say that they were clever enough to keep the Soviet troops out. Others looked at it as a reflection of how confident Moscow was in Bulgaria's cooperation, that they didn't need to have troops there. There was at least one very positive outcome from this situation, in that Bulgaria did not have to cope, as most other bloc countries did, with issues surrounding a withdrawal of Soviet troops. Those were difficult and contentious issues elsewhere, and at least Bulgaria was spared that.

One way or the other, the relationship between Bulgaria and the USSR was qualitatively different from the relationships of the other Warsaw Pact countries with the Soviet Union. Bulgaria and Russia were close historically, and there were strong cultural links between the two countries. Most Bulgarians speak Russian, and the languages are very close. According to the Bulgarians, and I think it's accurate, the Russian Cyrillic alphabet

derived from the Bulgarian. Among Bulgarians, there was no innate hostility towards Russians as there was, say, in Poland. That's speaking historically. Of course the relationship with Russia did get to be very problematic post-1989, largely because of Russia's economic influence in Bulgaria and the operation of Russian criminal groups.

In addition to agricultural production, one of Bulgaria's main roles in the Eastern Bloc was in the computer field. Bulgaria was home to much of the computer development in the bloc, and its expertise was quite genuine. On the positive side, this meant that Bulgarians were highly competent in applying computer technology to certain aspects of, say, defense reform. On the negative side, for a while you would hear that the "best" computer hackers operated out of Bulgaria.

Q: By the time you had arrived there they had started de-collectivizing and redistributing farmlands?

HANSEN: Yes, as I mentioned, that was one of the challenges that the UDF did not handle well when it came into office post-1989. The slow and ineffective pace of economic reform and privatization was an issue all during the period we served in Bulgaria. Much of the U.S. assistance program was directed toward economic reform, and a lot of it was applied in the municipalities. In some of the cities and towns around the country, it was possible to have some impact, while progress was so slow at the national level.

Q: When you arrived there, what were the U.S.-Bulgarian issues?

HANSEN: Looking narrowly at Bulgaria in and of itself, the direct U.S. interests were minimal, frankly. There was no reason to take a particular economic interest in Bulgaria, U.S.-Bulgarian trade was very modest, and the Bulgarian community in the United States was small. It was one of those situations in which, if things were going well, Bulgaria could easily have been taken for granted. But there was potential for things to go quite wrong in Bulgaria, in which case there could be serious fall-out. So, it's sad to say in a way, but the United States had a sort of negative interest in Bulgaria.

For example, Serbia, or the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), was under U.S. and international sanctions at the time because of the Yugoslav conflicts. The U.S. and the international community generally needed Bulgaria and other countries surrounding the old Yugoslavia to implement the sanctions, particularly to prevent oil supplies to Belgrade. We had a lot of issues with Bulgaria regarding the oil boycott, and the situation was similar with Romania and Macedonia. A gray market and even a black market, particularly in the oil trade, came into operation in the region and undermined the sanctions. These were constant issues in the relationship. A portion of U.S. assistance had to be devoted to helping Bulgaria do what it needed to do, with mixed results.

The situation was similar on export controls generally. Arms manufacture had been an important industry in Bulgaria under communism, and Bulgaria was part of the network

that supplied arms to a number of nations around the world, including pariah states. Bulgaria professed to want to get this trade under control and in line with Western standards, but it had a very hard time doing so, even when it tried. I don't think we were convinced that it always tried. The U.S. worked with and pressed Bulgaria on developing an effective export control system, and we did see some progress there eventually. But given the level of illegal activity in Bulgaria, control over trade in munitions and military equipment was elusive, even with the best of intentions.

Protection of intellectual property rights (IPR) was another perennial issue in the relationship. Shortly after we arrived in Bulgaria, we took our teen-age kids to explore downtown Sofia, and they wanted to buy some cassette tapes. So I gave them the equivalent of about $10, and to my surprise they came back with a handful of tapes, they were so cheap. It turned out, of course, that they were pirated products, so we had to cut out buying up illegal merchandise. Beyond cassettes, Bulgaria was awash in pirated videos, computer software, CDs. As a result, IPR and the "watch list" were major issues on the bilateral agenda.

Looking at the larger picture, however, the U.S. took a strong interest in all the countries of Eastern Europe in democratic and market reform, improved respect for human rights, defense reform and civilian control over the military, and responsible roles in their relations with their neighbors. We supported their movement towards eventual NATO and EU membership. Bulgaria was very much a part of this larger picture, of building a Europe "whole and free".

Much of our political engagement and the bulk of our assistance were dedicated to supporting these goals. As I've mentioned, Bulgaria faced some real challenges in implementing meaningful economic reform. It was also difficult for them to get a handle on judicial reform. In some areas of democratic reform Bulgaria performed quite well. From the beginning, the Bulgarians figured out how to run elections efficiently and well. They were great on the process of conducting the voting in a free and fair manner. They did the job well technically. Unfortunately, the political realities behind the elections meant that the results were not that helpful, because they did not foster the development of a political consensus about the country's direction. The pendulum would simply swing back and forth between the UDF and the Socialists.

Most of the electoral reform and political party development was helped along significantly by the excellent work of the American political party institutes, NDI and IRI. They did just a tremendous job. About halfway through our tour, there came time for a presidential election, when President Zhelev's term was up. The democratic forces, from which Zhelev arose originally, were having a terrible time agreeing on a candidate to put forward. By then, Zhelev was very much on the outs among the pro-democracy parties. In the end, the IRI advised them on running a primary election, which Zhelev lost. The winner in the primary election went on to win the presidency and served very respectably. It turned out to be a very healthy process for that group of democratic forces because it forced them to work together and brought to the fore a candidate who might not have

been considered otherwise. This was quite exciting to see, for the novelty effect if nothing else. As far as I know, it was the only primary election ever conducted in Eastern Europe, though I couldn't say for sure.

Bulgarians were also very successful in another area of democratization, that of forming non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for advocacy and action in various areas of political and social concern. Not to detract from Bulgarians' sincerity or to begrudge them the assistance they received, but international aid funding was quite readily available to support NGO formation and operation, so it was very much encouraged from the outside. Sometimes it almost seemed like a kind of a job creation program, in that assistance supported management and leadership positions in the NGOs, essentially providing income for people who might have had minimal income otherwise. The embassy had Democracy Commission funds to support NGO development. Our funding often was used to equip NGOs with computer equipment. Ironically, this meant that the NGOs we were supporting had computer set-ups far superior to what we had in the embassy, where we were still muddling along with stand-alone Wang PCs. The last year I was in Bulgaria, the Political-Economic Section had one unclassified e-mail terminal, which usually took over a day to transmit to or receive messages from the State Department.

In terms of relations with neighbors, one key issue for Bulgaria was its relationship with Macedonia. To its credit Bulgaria, at the instigation of President Zhelev, I believe, was the first to recognize an independent Macedonia. This was an issue for Bulgaria, because historically Bulgaria considered Macedonia simply to be a geographic territory of Bulgaria, not a separate country, and Macedonians to really be Bulgarian, not a separate national identity. On the surface, Bulgaria accepted the reality of an independent Macedonian state early on. However, for many years there was a sub-text, to the effect that "… but everyone knows that Macedonia is really Bulgarian." They probably are well past that point by now.

There were also outstanding issues with Romania, Greece, and Turkey. The treatment and status of Bulgaria's ethnic Turkish minority – about 10% of the population – was occasionally an issue, including in terms of human rights. Towards the end of the communist period, there had been a major campaign against the Turkish minority, requiring that they Bulgarianize their names, among other things. Many ethnic Turks fled to Turkey at that time, so that was a nasty legacy to try to overcome and it took some time. As in other countries of the region, the status and treatment of the Roma minority was of concern.

Q: How did you find dealing with the government?

HANSEN: When the Socialists were in office, our dealings could sometimes be quite difficult, as the Socialists at that time were not fully signed on to the goals of integration with Western institutions. Under the Socialists, for example, we had to press the Foreign Ministry quite hard on some UN human rights issues. The UDF governments were more amenable goal-wise, but they couldn't necessarily accomplish everything they set out to

do.

Here's an example that illustrates the very dramatic change that occurred, even over just the short time we were in Bulgaria. Right after the fall of the communist regime, one of the political figures to emerge among the democratic forces was a gentleman named Solomon Passi. He was elected to Parliament and made a statement early on that Bulgaria should join NATO. Few believed that would ever be possible; even some of his own political colleagues were skeptical. Even if Bulgaria decided it wanted to join NATO, would NATO want Bulgaria as a member? Wouldn't it be terribly costly for Bulgaria to join NATO, given the reform and modernization of the Bulgarian military that would be required? Did Bulgaria really need NATO membership anyway? What was the threat to Bulgaria at that stage?

However, NATO membership, as well as eventual EU membership, was adopted as a basic goal for the democratic forces. Over time even the Socialists came onboard with the idea. Bulgaria has now joined NATO, and ironically a Socialist was president at the time. So in the space of just over a decade, Bulgaria achieved that major transformation in its outlook and orientation. It took a long time to get there and it was quite phenomenal that they could do it. I think the global war on terrorism and the U.S. military action in Afghanistan helped Bulgaria make part of the leap, because Bulgaria made a political decision to support the United States in the war on terrorism. They provided an air refueling facility for American planes flying over to Afghanistan, for example. So, they took a number of very difficult decisions that I think really opened the way for the United States to support their NATO membership.

In contrast, shortly before I arrived in Bulgaria in 1994, there had been a huge political issue about whether American troops could be supported by a train passing through Bulgaria into Macedonia where we had peacekeepers stationed for a while. It was simply supplies, not armaments or anything. That practically caused the UDF government to fall, when all the parliament had to deal with was issuing approval for a supply train to pass through the country with non-lethal equipment. Ten years later the Bulgarians allowed and supported refueling operations for military aircraft going into combat. That's a real turn-around. It's been very gratifying to see that a country like Bulgaria could make such a huge turn and bring itself around to such a different point of view.

Q: How open did you find the press, and people generally?

HANSEN: It was hard at times. I must say it was hard. We had served the four years in Belgrade and we sort of thought we knew and understood the Balkans. I think we expected to find a lot of similarities between Bulgaria and Serbia, so we were a little bit surprised, I think, by how hard it was, initially, to settle in to Bulgaria and to begin to feel comfortable and get a feel for the country and its people. Things were quite different in Bulgaria, I would say. It was kind of a hostile environment when we first arrived. There was not necessarily a lot of overt, anti-American sentiment, but somehow you just didn't really feel comfortable. You didn't feel like you were being welcomed, although some

individuals would be very warm and friendly and some of our contacts were very welcoming. We just generally felt a little uncomfortable. It was a difficult transition for the whole family. Sofia was very run-down in areas, streets were in terrible disrepair, garbage pick-up was a serious problem, stripped and rusting cars decorated our neighborhood where we were housed for the first six months, shopping for food was difficult. Overall, whereas I always would give myself a good six months to begin to feel comfortable in a new country, it took me a little longer in Bulgaria.

Once we did begin to feel more comfortable, and maybe it was also a function of change going on in the country, we ended up having a wonderful time there. We probably had more personal friends in Bulgaria than we had in any other post. Either we had to change and adjust more than we expected or maybe even the country changed during the time we were there. I think it did actually. The people did develop a sense of self-confidence in dealing with foreigners, so I think there was a kind of change in the psychology of the country during the period that we happened to be there. We ended up having a wonderful time and feeling very comfortable and very much welcomed, but it was hard at the beginning, partly, I think, because we erroneously anticipated that it would be so easy.

Q: How did the socialists conduct themselves while they were in office?

HANSEN: They were in office most of the time that we were in Bulgaria, as it turned out. While some individuals were charming, they could be a very unpleasant group. There was a lot of infighting among the Socialists, and among the democratic forces as well, for that matter. But the Socialists were probably at more of an extreme. It was very factional. A good number of the Socialists never really set aside their communist way of thinking and behaving. It was not a real enlightened group of leaders there, really, on either side. The Socialists were very easy to distrust. There were also a lot of personality conflicts, really very serious personality and personal conflicts, among members of both groups. One key figure in the Socialist Party, who was a major player in the palace coup that deposed the communist regime, was Andrei Lukanov, who towards the end of our tour was assassinated outside his apartment building in broad daylight in a rather ordinary residential neighborhood. An embassy family lived in the same building. The shooting was thought to have been carried out by Russian Mafia business ties. I believe that arrests were finally made and a trial held in just the last couple of years. It was a very brutal set of circumstances. A number of the Socialist leaders were thought to have Mafia ties or otherwise be involved with nefarious business activities.

At that time, the Bulgarian economy was doing poorly. Of the relatively little business activity going on, much of it was tied up with what was loosely called Mafia circles. There was a lot of gray market activity. As I mentioned, one of the issues at the time was the international economic boycott of Yugoslavia, especially the oil embargo. Bulgaria and the other countries surrounding Yugoslavia always said that their economies suffered greatly because of the Yugoslavian embargo. It hindered their economic development and interrupted their trade patterns and so forth. That was certainly true to some extent. But I think the real damage was in the opportunities presented by the embargo for smuggling

and gray market economic activity to circumvent the embargo. These developments further distorted an economy that was already seriously disrupted. Just as the country was trying to move to a market economy, the people could see that so much illegal economic activity was underway and that criminal circles were benefitting the most from the fall of communism. This undeservedly gave market economics a pretty bad name.

Q: How did the Bulgarians relate to the Yugoslav conflict?

HANSEN: They seemed to have somewhat ambiguous feelings about it. They paid lip service to the general international policy towards Yugoslavia and the position that the economic sanctions had to be maintained until the conflict ended. At the same time, they seemed to feel ambivalent because of the international involvement in the old Yugoslavia. They were not comfortable with such international "intervention". They wanted the conflict to end but were uncomfortable with outside military action to bring it to an end.

Q: Were you noticing a gap between the young people and the older people?

HANSEN: Oh, absolutely. This was a very interesting thing to see in terms of the political development and the various elections that took place. Bulgaria was suffering some serious demographic problems. It's a rather small country, a population of only 8 or 9 million in 1989-90 and declining in population as people emigrated overseas looking for better economic opportunities. There was a dramatic population drain after 1989, plus a low birth rate. So, its population was declining. The youth were generally very pessimistic about their chances for a decent life in Bulgaria, rightly so because things were not looking good at all. They generally supported reform, and the pro-reform parties had a younger base. The older generation was very much of the old communist mind set and very sympathetic to the Socialist Party. At one point in the context of one of the elections, the International Republican Institute did some excellent polling that showed how disenchanted the population was. There was a great deal of disappointment in Bulgaria's progress, or lack thereof, in the post-communist period, and a broad consensus that Bulgaria was not going in the right direction, that people had not reaped the benefits of democracy that they thought would come so quickly after 1989. People evidenced a lot of disillusionment and unhappiness at how the country was faring in the mid-1990s. In fact, many people came to the conclusion, especially the older voters, that they were better off under communism. By this time, the Socialists were in office and part of the reason for Bulgaria's poor conditions was bad government by the Socialists. But the democratic forces were the ones held accountable, and they paid the price for that. They were seen as responsible for not carrying out the promise of reform. In the end, the Socialists benefitted for a time from widespread disillusionment post-1989.

Q: How did the Socialists deal with all these reform advisers that were coming in from the United States and Europe? Were they dismissive?

HANSEN: They were, and they basically didn't work with the advisers. While the

Socialists were in power at the national level, we ended up steering a lot of our assistance to the municipal level, where there was more receptivity. You could often find more pro-reform mayors and local leadership.

Q: Was the United States seen, then, as in some ways supporting the opposition? Didn't the embassy have to be careful about that, to avoid the appearance of interference in domestic politics?

HANSEN: We did have be careful about that, obviously. We always cast our assistance as support for democratic and market reform, and always said we would support those who were committed to working for reform.

So, as a practical matter, yes, we ended up supporting the opposition in a sense while the Socialists were in office. I think we were pretty successful in maintaining our credibility, however. It was not really an issue.

But here's a curious example. I mentioned that the democratic forces held a primary election campaign to choose their presidential candidate at one point. USAID to its credit was concerned about the United States being seen as supporting the opposition by advising them, through IRI, on running this primary election. USAID insisted, and rightly so, that the same kind of offer be made to the Socialists, to keep things even. As the Political-Economic Counselor, I volunteered to take on this somewhat unsavory task. So I went and met with a top Socialist Party official; I think it was the chairman of the party. I explained the assistance we were providing to the opposition on a primary campaign, and offered to do likewise for the Socialists. Of course, we were pretty confident that they would decline the offer, and they did. What was interesting was that, later on, several political leaders in the Socialist party complained that we were helping the democratic forces with their election campaign. Fortunately I was able to say, well, we offered the same kind of assistance to the Socialists and we were not taken up on it. It became obvious that word of the U.S. offer had never been filtered down within Socialist Party ranks. The top official had kept it to himself, and nobody else ever knew that we had offered it until they asked us about it. So it was a very good thing to be able to say that we made the offer and had not been taken up on it. Actually, I rather enjoyed that.

On balance, as mentioned, I think our credibility was good.

Q: Were any of the Socialists representing a newer generation of socialism in the European sense?

HANSEN: As in Social Democrats?

Q: Yes.

HANSEN: Yes, there were some. There was a small Social Democratic Party, comprised largely of former Socialists, which expanded somewhat while we were there, drawing

increased membership from the Socialist ranks. It was a small party and never fared very well in elections, but they were very respectable. There were others in the Socialist Party who I wouldn't call really enlightened, but they were pragmatic enough to make some fairly good decisions and, in fact, at least one very astute decision.

I'm jumping ahead here, to the last year that I was in Bulgaria, really the last six months. By the end of 1996-early 1997, the Socialists had been in office for a couple of years. They just ran the economy into the ground. There was hyper-inflation and high unemployment. There were bread shortages, really serious bread shortages and shortages of food generally. They were selling off the flour that the country produced, leaving too little for the domestic market. People were in bread lines; soup kitchens were started up, at least one of them supported by the embassy community.

Then, at about the same time – it must have been in December of 1996 - there were major street protests in Belgrade against the Milosevic regime. For I don't know how many days in a row there were major street protests against Milosevic in Belgrade. Some of the democratic leaders from Bulgaria went to Belgrade and at one point took part in the marches with them. They came back to Sofia and managed to pull off something similar in Sofia. For about a month or more, the democratic forces ran massive street protests in Sofia and eventually in other cities, calling for the removal of the Socialists. In Sofia, there was a daily march beginning in the late afternoon and into the evening, through town along the main shopping street, Vitosha Boulevard, to the main square around the Nevski cathedral behind Parliament. These were peaceful marches every day, with rallies into the late evening. Thousands of people participated. At least in Sofia, there was virtually no uniformed police presence. I should clarify that it wasn't peaceful at the very beginning. There were two incidents, one outside Socialist Party headquarters and another outside Parliament, that did involve violence and, in the latter case, very heavy handed intervention by security police to break it up.

The democrats got the process under control, however, and the police did not intervene, and so the demonstrations remained peaceful until the climax. Towards the end of this period, the protests were spreading throughout the country, including along some of the main highways. Roads were closed sporadically and there were some clashes. Downtown Sofia was almost totally closed down by protesters. It was getting to be a very tense situation because it was obvious that there was a lot of political discontent with the horrible mess the Socialists had gotten the country into, and the democratic forces were able to build up this pressure against them.

At this time the head of the Socialist Party was Jan Videnov, who was young but of the old school. There were two other major leaders – one was the Interior Minister - who were also relatively young but, more importantly, were very pragmatic. The situation got to the point where there had to be a decision within the Socialist Party as to how they would finally respond to this tremendous political pressure and the fact that they were losing their parliamentary control. Some of the Socialists in Parliament were falling away and moving to the Social Democratic Party. So the Socialists ultimately had to decide

whether they would try to hang on to power at all costs or whether they would step back and allow new parliamentary elections to be called, as demanded by the protesters. The two more pragmatic leaders carried the day, and the Socialists refrained from bringing the situation to a point of violent conflict by trying to break up the demonstrations. At the last minute they stepped down from government, allowed a caretaker government to come into place, and elections were called shortly thereafter.

Of course the Socialists lost the election and the Union of Democratic Forces and other generally pro-democracy parties came back in. It was a tremendously exciting spring, that last spring of 1997. It was like a second democratic revolution in the country to finish the work left undone back in 1989-1990.

When the democratic forces came back into office, they did so with a much clearer reform mandate than they had ever had before. The events of the spring had finally forged a political consensus among Bulgarians that they had to take reform seriously and implement it effectively. They finally accepted that they really had to bite the bullet and proceed with democratic and market reform, even though it would be painful, particularly market reform. They finally made a real break with the past and agreed generally on where the country needed to go, including towards NATO and EU membership. It took all those years to get to that point.

Q: How were relations with Turkey at the time?

HANSEN: There was a set of issues. The Bulgarians had some serious work to do with the Turks on cooperation in law enforcement, especially on the problem of drug trafficking, and we did see some things accomplished in this area.

Regionally, with the Yugoslav sanctions in effect, we were concerned about the impact of the sanctions and of the Yugoslav wars on the trade patterns in the area. One of the issues concerned goods that would normally transit from the Balkans to Western Europe through Yugoslavia via the famous "Brotherhood and Unity" highway across Yugoslavia. That had been a pretty efficient route for the heavy truck traffic from Greece, Turkey, and the Middle East. The Balkan conflict cut off that route. So issues arose concerning alternate routes, managing truck traffic at multiple border crossing points, and so forth. There were serious problems with long backups at the border crossing points.

At this stage, Ambassador Richard Schifter came up with his notion of the Southeast Europe Cooperative Initiative. This is kind of a long story, and I don't really want to dwell on it, but the idea was that there needed to be uniform ways of handling customs matters and transit of trucks and other traffic across the borders throughout Southeast Europe. This was needed in order to let the goods flow smoothly and to diminish the negative economic impact of the Yugoslav sanctions from disruptions of normal trade patterns. It was very hard to get this initiative off the ground, in no small part because the U.S. did not have funds to put behind it, though Ambassador Schifter did eventually attract very modest U.S. and other international funding. There were several attempts to

get at these issues. The Southeast Europe Cooperative Initiative was one, and it has endured over time. It has now been merged partially with the Stability Pact for South East Europe.

The South Balkan Development Initiative was another attempt to encourage cooperation among, specifically, Albania, Bulgaria, and Macedonia on transportation and communication links. Our main involvement there was through the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (TDA) and the Commerce Department. Again, we didn't have really have serious resources to put against it, other than through TDA feasibility studies. It was largely a matter of trying to get the countries to cooperate among themselves to let traffic flow and build infrastructure to support new transit patterns. If the individual country didn't see a benefit for itself, especially an immediate or short-term benefit, it wasn't going to put a lot of resources into it. So the cooperation was thin and progress minimal. There were a lot of efforts to try to get at this set of issues. It was very hard to do for lack of resources and lack of political will among the countries to cooperate very effectively.

Q: At that point, I wouldn't think the Russians had much to offer for Bulgaria ….

HANSEN: Well, they didn't, but they kept their footprint there. Theirs was still one of the largest, if not the largest, embassies in town. They had close relations with the former communists on the Bulgarian political scene. The Russian embassy maintained a large, separate cultural center as well.

Q: Can you elaborate a little on the official American presence in Bulgaria?

HANSEN: Let me mention a couple of things about the American presence, just to give a sense of what it was like to work there. It was a really difficult situation in terms of the physical layout. We had this teeny, tiny, ugly embassy building which I'm sure was crowded and cramped and too small even during the communist period when the embassy had a very small staff. By the time we got there the official American presence had blossomed. There were perhaps 100 Americans on the embassy staff, so that tiny building in downtown Serbia housed only a small portion of the embassy staff. The Embassy building held the ambassador's front office, the small Political and Economic Section, the Defense Attaché's office, the Regional Security Officer, and a few others. Everybody else was disbursed in buildings throughout the rest of the city not very close by, not very easy to get to and from. The USIS office was half a dozen blocks away, right in the heart of downtown Sofia. It was a neat location, but hard to get to and vulnerable from a security standpoint. It would take longer to drive there than to get there walking.

USAID was in a separate building at the opposite end of the downtown area in a medium rise building. The Consular Section and most of the Admin staff were somewhere else in a residential neighborhood. I never did find a good way to get there. There was a separate Peace Corps office. The doctor's office and the CLO were elsewhere. We were just all over the place. It was a sizable presence by then and we were totally spread out. It was

very hard to hang on to a sense of an American community. We did have the Marine House, a new house on the outskirts of town, to resort to for TGIFs on Friday evenings and for other events. It became something of a gathering place, as is often the case. Otherwise it was hard to feel a sense of community.

I credit the two ambassadors we had - both Ambassador Montgomery and Ambassador Bohlen – plus the DCM for trying really hard and I think with some success to make an American community of all this, but it was difficult.

The main embassy building, which used to be an apartment building, was absolutely the pits. It was a dump and a fire trap. It was a tall skinny building with an elevator that often didn't work. The facilities were crumbling. State Department visitors told us it was the worst American Embassy they'd ever seen. The only nice thing about my own office was that, having apparently been a separate apartment at one point, had a separate powder room. It was the one and only "executive washroom" I ever had in the Foreign Service. Even the Ambassador's office in Sofia didn't have an executive washroom, so I was lucky on that score. A brand new American Embassy has just been opened in Sofia. I've seen the drawings and pictures, and it looks really lovely.

Q: What about relations with Romania?

HANSEN: I mentioned earlier that there a sort of running competition between Bulgaria and Romania as to which was doing better on reforms and which had better relations with the United States. During the time that I was in Bulgaria, Romania was definitely ahead of the curve. The Romanians had their reforms better underway, although it was such a long haul in Romania and they had such a long way to go. Their relations with the United States were better at that time. Things were looking pretty good for Romania. The Bulgarians had a hard time understanding why the United States looked favorably on Romania at that stage. I expect it was the other way around whenever Bulgaria happened to be ahead of the curve. Their relationship was not particularly close or warm.

One of the abiding issues, and it may still be an issue, was the location for a second bridge across the Danube. There is only the one bridge across the Danube River between Bulgaria and Romania, at Ruse on the Bulgarian side. There was a running debate as to whether there was enough truck traffic and economic activity to justify a second bridge and if so, where it should be located and how it could be financed. There were political aspects to this issue on both sides of the border. Romania's then-President Iliescu was thought to favor a location closer to his home territory of Iasi, Romania. Bulgaria wanted the bridge at the other end of the river border in Northwestern Bulgaria.

Another bilateral issue between them had to do with the Bulgarian nuclear power plant, Kozloduy. The European Union had long since told Bulgaria that it had to close down portions of that plant and upgrade others. If there were a nuclear incident at that plant, the prevailing winds would carry any polluted air into Romanian territory. To counter that issue, the Bulgarians claimed concern about pollution from a Romanian chemical plant.

These issues came into play from time to time.

Q: Was there the feeling among the Foreign Service people, comparing Bulgaria's experience to that of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, that Bulgaria was at the lower end of the totem pole?

HANSEN: Perhaps somewhat. Certainly we understood fully why Bulgaria suffered by comparison to those other countries in terms of the reform experience and the relationship with the United States. We all knew that Bulgaria faced a much tougher situation, started out from a lower starting point, and did not have the kind of historical relationship with the United States that some of the other countries did. Everyone understood the sort of the special political claim that Poland. for example. had on America's good graces and why Poland received far more U.S. assistance than Bulgaria ever did. I think people sometimes felt that we were laboring in the field and doing our best but finding it a discouraging situation.

That's why, towards the end of my tour, it was so exciting in those last six months to see the turnaround that occurred and to see the possibilities that Bulgaria could now take off on a reform trajectory. And they did just that. It's still been a long slow process, but they did take off. They turned that corner and headed in the right direction.

Q: What about the universities? Were they a source of intellectual and political ferment?

HANSEN: Not ferment, I wouldn't say. Bulgarians are a very highly and well educated people. They are very education-oriented and intelligent, very hardworking academically. Larry will tell you more about this, but, in terms of a place for political dissent and so forth, there were some student groups and there were some students active in the political parties. But I wouldn't describe the universities as a separate nucleus of political activism as such. I'm sure Larry will talk to you about the American University in Bulgaria (AUBG). After 1989, there was an American university set up in the town of Blagoevgrad in Southern Bulgaria, funded primarily by George Soros and the U.S. Government..

Q: Does this go back to Roberts College? What about the American College of Sofia?

HANSEN: Not AUBG; it's a separate, new university.

The Roberts College organization did have a school in Bulgaria, the American College of Sofia, a high school, and this brings us to a situation involving our family.

Prior to World War II, there had been in Bulgaria an American high school on the outskirts of Sofia, run by the same foundation that founded Roberts College in Turkey. The school was closed during World War II. The school property was taken over by the communists after the war and used by the Bulgarian Interior Ministry. When the communist system fell, the foundation asked for the return of its property. Under the early UDF government, a portion of the property was returned and the school gradually re-

opened. The Interior Ministry still held onto part of the property. Its guards controlled access to the area including the campus, which was often problematic in that visiting parents or embassy staff were denied admittance on a fairly regular basis, especially early on. The ministry also had a firing range on the property.

In any event, on a competitive basis, the school admitted a first class of Bulgarian students and year by year added classes to establish a full high school. So this was the American College of Sofia. It essentially became part of the long Bulgarian tradition of foreign-language high schools, in which students complete their high school studies in the specified language. It used a Bulgarian curriculum, which is quite different from the typical American high school curriculum. There were other English-language high schools in Bulgaria, plus high schools taught in French, German, Italian, Russian; the ethnic Turks were advocating for re-establishment of a Turkish-language high school, and that may have happened by now. It's an excellent system that produced excellent results, as we could see by the many Bulgarians we met who were so fluent in foreign languages. Under the communist system, I understood, admittance to these elite schools was often reserved for the elites. The American College in Sofia was quite different in that competitive exams were used. This meant that its student body came from among the very best students in the country.

By the time we got to Sofia, the school had been back in operation for several years, and we anticipated that our kids would attend. Our older daughter, as a sophomore, joined that first class moving through the high school. It turned out to be a poor match, both academically and socially. At that point, the school wasn't really prepared to teach fully in English. The math book was in Bulgarian, for example. There were a few American teachers on the staff, but the Bulgarian teachers often lapsed into Bulgarian. The students were at times quite antagonistic towards the few international students on campus. It was a very uncomfortable environment.

To make a long story short, our daughter transferred to a boarding school outside London half-way through the sophomore year. That mid-year transfer was a difficult one, and I'm sure her sophomore year was pretty miserable all the way around. But the new school worked out wonderfully for her, so in the longer run, the situation worked out. She got into the drama program from the outset, was active in it all the way through, and went on to Northwestern University and a very successful career in stage management in Chicago. She had opportunities to get into London often and got to know that fantastic city. As they say, sending a child to boarding school is often as hard or harder on the parents than it is on the child, and I think that may have been the case here. It was a very hard decision to make. We were just thrilled, though, to see how she thrived in the new environment, especially in the junior and senior years.

Our younger daughter attended the Anglo-American School for eighth grade. It had a split campus at the time. The upper grades were located in a building on the campus of the American College of Sofia cum Interior Ministry. It was a situation somewhat similar to what our daughter remembered from Belgrade, so she was quite comfortable there. When

it came time to move on to the American College, several of her classmates made the move as well, so she had a good group of cohorts to make the transition. By then, the atmosphere at the college was a little better. Given the academic demands of the school, we lined up a tutor for our daughter who helped her cope with the math and science courses. She ended up doing very well, and was very active in the school's extra-curricular drama program. With her group of friends, primarily from among the international community, she became quite comfortable in Sofia. The kids would hang out downtown on the week-ends, she developed some close friends among the American Embassy staff, and she began to take a real interest in her surroundings. It was a good Foreign Service experience.

Q: Did you get any high level visits?

HANSEN: Only a few, and none from the State Department. This was a reflection of where Bulgaria stood in terms of U.S. interests and how we judged Bulgaria's progress, or lack thereof, on serious reform. The one exception was a 24-hour visit by Richard Holbrooke, then the special envoy for Yugoslavia. Since he was the highest-ranking State Department visitor, he was treated practically as a head of state, including a dinner hosted in his honor by President Zhelev.

During our last year in Bulgaria, the Defense Department was taking more of an interest in the country. At around the end of 1996 or early 1997, we had an excellent visit by Undersecretary of Defense Walt Slocum. I mentioned earlier a pro-democracy leader by the name of Solomon Passi, who was a strong, enthusiastic, and steady advocate for Bulgarian membership in NATO. He had founded an organization, the Atlantic Club, to build public support for that goal. Undersecretary Slocum came and spoke to a public session of the Atlantic Club, at the Sheraton Hotel. The room was packed, SRO. His reception was very warm. Slocum seemed thrilled by all of this, saying that he'd never had such a reception in all his travels around the region. I think he may have paid a second visit later on. Partly thanks to the success of his visit, or visits, Secretary of Defense Cohen came in July 1997, right at the end of my own tour.

This was another great success, thank goodness. It was wonderful to participate in it. By this time Bulgaria had gone through that second revolution, if you will. The Socialists had stepped aside and the democrats had come back in with a parliamentary majority and a real mandate to move the country in a pro-reform way, including towards NATO membership.

As a sidelight in terms of the logistics of the visit, Cohen was traveling in the region and was in Kiev just beforehand. Apparently the program in Kiev had not gone well and he got bored. On a Friday evening, the embassy in Kiev called me up – I was the Acting DCM at the time – to say that Cohen wanted to come to Sofia a day early, on Saturday evening, actually about 12 hours ahead of schedule. So at the very last second, we had to move up the arrival ceremonies and juggle some of the arrangements for his meetings and events on the Sunday and also on Monday morning. Everyone in the embassy and on the

Bulgarian side pulled together beautifully, and it all came off without a hitch. The success of the visit apparently gave the Secretary a very positive picture of Bulgaria, and he promised to return a few months later for a regional defense ministers meeting. I think the Bulgarians were floored that he would be so spontaneously receptive to that second invitation. The visit was a huge success.

Speaking personally, it was a real treat for me and a perfect way to wind up my tour on that very nice high note.

Q: In the summer of 1997, where did you go next?

HANSEN: Before we move on, I would just like to register my admiration for the two ambassadors we worked for in Sofia, Ambassador Montgomery and Ambassador Bohlen. They both did great things for Bulgaria and for the U.S.-Bulgarian relationship, often under very trying, frustrating circumstances. It was an honor to work with them.

When we left Bulgaria, I had the very good fortune of being assigned to a year's senior training at the National War College at the National Defense University at Ft. McNair in Washington, DC. That was a very wonderful experience.

Q: How did this expand your knowledge of the military? You had worked with the military before, hadn't you?

HANSEN: Yes, I had done some work with the military, but it certainly did expand my knowledge and understanding. Overseas, we always had defense attaches or military advisory groups to work with. Those were generally good relationships and good colleagues to work with, but kind of a small snapshot of the military. In Washington assignments I'd had some dealings with Defense Department colleagues. I frankly found them sometimes a little difficult to work with. State and Defense often had slightly different agendas, of course, and it wasn't always very enjoyable trying to work under those circumstances. The Defense Department always had a very strong card to play – "our way is good for the security of the United States of America" - and they used it often.

The year at the National War College was very instructive in terms of an in-depth exposure to all the military services and seeing how they relate to each other, to get into the military culture a little bit. It's quite a different world from the State Department. A major purpose of having State officers at the National War College – there were about a dozen of us in that class – is to allow opportunities for the civilians and the military to understand each other's values and culture.

Q: Did you get involved in any particular projects or trips?

HANSEN: That was the best part. In the course of the year, students from each of the military services facilitated trips to representative bases – Norfolk, Ft. Bragg in North

Carolina, an air base outside Las Vegas, another base at El Paso. On the flight out to Las Vegas, we were on a cargo plane that was doing refueling exercises on the way. We had a chance to go to the back of the plane and watch the guy who did the refueling. A little fighter plane – it looked like an insect from our perspective inside the cargo plane - came up behind this huge cargo plane. A long hose was maneuvered out to the fighter and attached to pump in the fuel. Then the disconnected and the fighter veered off and away. It was a phenomenal thing to see, very impressive, and certainly an experience that I would never have had any other way.

The State Department contingent took a turn at this kind of thing also. We were asked to schedule a day of meetings/briefings at the State Department. That was not as exciting as the refueling experience, but we did what we could. The funny part was the planning process. One FSO took on the thankless job of organizing the visit. Her first meeting with the other FSOs for planning purposes was a real kick. Everyone had a "vision" of what the visit should be like and spoke about it eloquently, but she had a terrible time getting people to settle down to logistics. That discussion in itself showed up a major difference between State civilians and the military.

The year at the War College was just a tremendous opportunity to get a sense of what the military is all about and what its capabilities are and what its issues are. At that time, the military was dealing very much with the issue of what the future threat would be: the terrorist threat, "asymmetrical warfare". There was a lot of discussion and study of this issue, but it seemed the military had been struggling with it for a long time without making a lot of progress. It's been interesting to see that, under Bush II, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld still has had to work this issue.

We had a set series of lectures and seminars as the basis for the academic program, plus the opportunity to take elective courses. Many of the speakers were outstanding: Supreme Court Justice Scalia; the then-Mayor of Baltimore; Dick Cheney; Newt Gingrich; top military officers; a couple of top Foreign Service Officers. President Clinton made a major speech at the National Defense University which all of the students attended.

Of the elective courses, the most memorable was a course in Civil War history, which I never felt that I had understood very well. There seemed to be all those generals and all those battles that I couldn't keep straight. The course helped me to understand that in fact there were a lot of different generals involved, particularly on the Union side, because so many of them failed and President Lincoln had to replace them. And one reason there seemed to be so many battles was that the North and the South sometimes called the same battles by different names, the North using a geographic feature such as Bull Run and the South using the place name such as Manassas. And in that case, a second battle occurred at the same site. The instructor took us to visit several different battle sites so that we could get a sense of the strategy and how things played out in military terms. I learned a lot from the course and have continued to do quite a bit of reading on the Civil War.

The instructor was very good, but he made a mistake at one point towards the end of the

course. He said something about Sherman's march to the sea across Georgia, to the effect that, notwithstanding conventional wisdom in the South, in fact he had not destroyed civilian property on the massive scale that was attributed to him. Well, there were a lot of Southerners in the class, and when he made that point, the temperature in the classroom plummeted by a good 20 degrees. It got downright chilly, though no one said a word. At the next session, he corrected himself to some extent. He explained that it was not Sherman's policy to destroy civilian property, but in fact the troops did so, interpreting very broadly what constituted property that could support the military effort. In fact, destruction of civilian property did take place. Obviously the instructor had been taken to task by some of his students. At the end of the course, the instructor tried to raise the question, "Is the Civil War really over in the United States?" He got zero response. It seemed to me that the military students had by then just disconnected themselves from him and were in no mood to take up that rather sensitive question. Though I don't mean to suggest at all any issues of racism – I saw none of that at the War College – it seemed that the Civil War was still being fought in the minds of some in the classroom.

The other big event at the National War College was the travel at the end of the year. As you know, each year the National War College sends its students on field trips around the world. At embassies abroad, we're on the receiving end, but this time I got to be one of the travelers. My group went to Vietnam and to Thailand. This was just as the United States and Vietnam were beginning to build on a new relationship, and the National War College trip was actually one of the first official defense exchanges between the militaries of the United States and Vietnam. We were given the red carpet treatment, including meetings with senior military and Defense and Foreign Ministry officials. We visited both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, which many people there still called Saigon. Then we had a couple of days in Bangkok as well. I had never been to that part of the world, and I can't imagine a better way to go than as part of a U.S. military delegation. In Hanoi, we got to see the Hanoi Hilton where American POWs had been held, and a military museum commemorating the war. Seeing these sights with American military colleagues was quite an experience. The Vietnamese hosts were gracious in their victory, I must say.

Q: What did you do after that?

HANSEN: I stayed on in Washington after that, and I held a series of jobs in the State Department, beginning with a position as Deputy Director in the Office of Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Affairs in the International Organizations Bureau (IO/PHO). I worked for Edmund Hull, who is now our ambassador in Yemen, and then for Gordon Gray, who is now DCM in Cairo. Bill Wood was Acting IO Assistant Secretary for a good part of my time there, then David Welch.

The office was labeled "Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Operations" because of the way IO was reorganized at one point, but the main responsibilities were actually in UN peacekeeping and in UN sanctions, not in humanitarian operations as such. I was there from the summer of 1998 to the summer of 2000.

Q: What piece of the action did you have?

HANSEN: Our office was divided into two sections. As one of two deputy directors, I headed the section handling U.S. involvement with UN peacekeeping operations in the Balkans, the former Soviet Union, and Cyprus, plus UN sanctions. At that time this meant primarily the sanctions on Iraq and the Oil for Food program that subsequently fell into so much disrepute.

In Balkans peacekeeping, there were several operations still underway, descended from the UNPROFOR mission that functioned, or mis-functioned, during the Yugoslav conflict. A UN police mission in Eastern Slavonia by then was being spun off to the OSCE. A large civilian mission (UNMIBH) continued in Bosnia, primarily a civilian police (CivPol) operation, while there was a separate NATO military mission. A smaller UN observer mission, unarmed, was on hand in Macedonia (UNPREDEP), including with U.S. military troops. There was also a tiny observer mission on the Prevlaka Peninsula between Croatia and Montenegro (UNMOP). After the U.S. air war in Serbia/Kosovo in 1999, the UN civilian administration mission for Kosovo was established (UNMIK), alongside the very large NATO military presence there. The CivPol component was a major element of UNMIK, but beyond that, UNMIK basically constituted the actual government of Kosovo until local institutions could be established. Beyond the Balkans, other than the Cyprus mission, there were UN missions in Tajikistan and Georgia in our area of responsibility.

For all of these missions, there were shared responsibilities. Within the IO Bureau, the UN Political Affairs office had the lead on Security Council policy on peacekeeping. IO/PHO handled the more concrete issues of how the U.S. interacted with the actual missions, with the UN Department of Peacekeeping, and especially with Congress, which cast a very critical, skeptical eye towards the UN generally and UN peacekeeping in particular. The regional bureaus, especially EUR, were very much in the picture, and we worked very closely with our EUR colleagues. At the time, there was a special office in EUR for Balkans issues – really for implementation of Bosnian and later Kosovo peace plans – plus the Office for East European Assistance. So there was a lot of coordination to be done. There was a very big picture there.

Q: How did you come to see UN peacekeeping?

HANSEN: It's a very complicated and difficult set of issues. The United States certainly has had changing views about UN peacekeeping over the years. In the late 1990s, we were at something of a low water mark, still reeling from the way the Somalia mission unfolded a few years beforehand. More broadly, there was deep dissatisfaction, and for good reason, with the grave shortcomings of UNPROFOR in the Balkans, and there was the dark shadow of the massacres in Rwanda where the UN essentially did not respond. Kofi Annan was the head of the UN peacekeeping at the time of the Rwanda disaster. In Congress, the Jesse Helms view very much held sway, so there was a great deal of skepticism about the UN, as seen in restrictions on U.S. funding of peacekeeping

missions, particularly for Africa. We would often find ourselves in a situation where the U.S. voted in the Security Council to establish a peacekeeping mission, yet Congress blocked any funding for the U.S. share of expenses. This tactic didn't inhibit the missions in any concrete way. They still went ahead. But it meant that other countries contributing troops for the missions were not reimbursed as they should have been. Our UN arrears built up substantially. After the U.S. successfully re-negotiated with UN partners the share that the U.S. would contribute to UN peacekeeping, Congress came along and most of these arrears were settled.

There were good reasons to be dissatisfied with the UN's performance, but some of the problem lay also within the Security Council, in terms of what UNSC members were prepared to do – both in terms of the kinds of peacekeeping operations authorized and how they were staffed and funded. One underlying problem was the fact that the U.S. paid a large share of the costs for UN functions generally and a slightly larger share for UN peacekeeping. Yet, partly because of the UN requirement for sharing out UN jobs among nationals of the member states, the U.S. did not always have the influence it wanted in actual operations. We were laying out the money yet didn't often see the kind of people in charge that we thought would run things efficiently and well. So we didn't want to pour more money into a weak system. While I was in IO/PHO, the Secretary-General had a special report done on UN peacekeeping. The commission preparing the report had some good solid members. It was headed by Ambassador Brahimi, an Algerian diplomat who was pretty well respected in the Department, and an American academic expert led the staff work. It prepared a very thorough report with a strong set of recommendations. The State Department analyzed it thoroughly and favored a lot of the recommendations. I honestly don't know where it all came down, but from what I see currently, the UN is still facing a lot of the same problems in peacekeeping.

To go back to the Congressional interest, I wanted to mention the great lengths IO/PHO had to go to in reporting to Congress. As a matter of law our office had to go and brief the Hill, committees on both the House and Senate sides, once a month on UN peacekeeping operations around the world. We called it the Round the World briefings. The briefing materials were prepared in great detail, and the office directors had to spend a lot of time preparing for those sessions. At times they could be quite agonizing. Some of the committee staffers were outright hostile. One of them in particular, on Senator Helms staff, was downright rude and very uncivil. In a way the staffers were sometimes simply playing their roles, doing what their bosses expected them to do. It was not necessarily personal animosity, but it certainly was a very uncomfortable situation and not something that anybody enjoyed being involved in. It was not a real good example of the kind of relationship that the legislative and executive branches ought to have.

Q: How did the United States come to decisions about new UN peacekeeping missions, or terminating existing operations?

HANSEN: With the fallout from the American experience in Somalia - the "Blackhawk Down" syndrome – and together with perpetual congressional concerns, the Clinton

administration developed a rather complicated set of criteria to help determine U.S. positions at the UN, or for that matter in regard to unilateral action, on future peacekeeping efforts. There was an outline for analyzing the conditions and problems a peacekeeping mission would be intended to address, whether U.S. participation would make a difference, what the exit strategy would be, and so forth.

In a couple of cases in the Balkans we actually did close down peacekeeping missions or portions of them. In one case in Eastern Slovenia, we made ensured a handoff from the United Nations to the OSCE to carry on a police training mission. Ultimately the OSCE mission was brought to a conclusion as well. There was a judicial reform element in the UN mission in Bosnia, UNMIBH, and we worked pretty hard to make sure that that element was passed off to the OSCE. There was congressional opposition to the UN being involved in such a long-term undertaking as judicial reform. A few years later, the CivPol mission in Bosnia was taken on by the European Union, and UNMOP was deemed a success and brought to a conclusion. It was only reasonable to insist on these transitions, to work for conditions where the missions could be ended or handed off to other entities, but Congress was perhaps even more interested in seeing missions concluded as a matter of principle, because they were so costly to the U.S. and because of congressional distrust of the UN. In any event, it was important for the Administration to be able to demonstrate to Congress that UN missions were not unending. Some of the Middle East missions and the peacekeeping mission in Kashmir had gone on for decades, but we were able to bring some of the others to an end. A couple of the UN missions were so old that they had actually been established by the General Assembly many years back, rather than by the Security Council as is the case now.

We saw a rather unusual situation unfold in regard to one of the Balkans missions, the preventive deployment in Macedonia, UNPREDEP, to which the U.S. contributed military troops. It was one of the few if not the only UN preventive deployment, and it was a genuine success in deterring potential conflict in Macedonia as had been seen elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia. Macedonia had long been considered a powder keg, so this was a real accomplishment, no doubt about it. UNPREDEP included several hundred American soldiers over a period of several years, which was unusual in itself, and the way UNPREDEP came to an end was really interesting. For the most part UN missions are periodically re-authorized by the UN Security Council (UNSC). Every six months or every year their mandates are reviewed and usually renewed for another six months or other intervals. In about February of 1999, just before the air war in Serbia due to the Kosovo situation, the mandate for the mission in Macedonia came up for renewal. And just at that time, in a move that was not very smart and certainly not timely, Macedonia decided to expand its commercial relationships with Taiwan. This was totally unacceptable to China, a Security Council member. Several years previously, under somewhat comparable circumstances, China had vetoed mandate renewal for a UN mission in Guatemala, and it predictably followed the same practice. It vetoed the UNPREDEP renewal. This was a genuinely dramatic moment that could not have been anticipated before Macedonia made its gestures to Taiwan. Anyway, it was kind of ironic that we in Washington were wringing our hands over whether or not to renew the

UNPREDEP mandate – I favored renewal – and then all of a sudden the issue was decided for us because of China's veto.

Q: What happened in Macedonia when they left?

HANSEN: The UN practice is to pack up quickly. Within a month, they were gone. There was a very unfortunate incident shortly after the veto. Several of the American soldiers in UNPREDEP, for some unknown reason, went off along the Macedonia-Serbia border, a border that was poorly demarcated, if it was marked at all, in the dark of night and got picked up by Serbian authorities. Two or three of them were held for several months by the Milosevic regime in Serbia. At that point, they no longer had UN status, so it was a rather delicate issue for the U.S. government to have to deal with just at that crucial time.

Q: And Kosovo?

HANSEN: The other major event of course was the formation of the Kosovo peacekeeping mission. UNMIK was established by a UNSC resolution as the U.S. conducted the air war. It had not been at all clear that the U.S. would be looking to the UN for a major role in Kosovo, and it was brought into the process pretty much at the last minute. I think the UN was somewhat taken by surprise that they were being asked to do this. As I understand it, the decision was made at a very high level, certainly way above where I was at the time, although we'd suspected that something was coming. What other alternative was there? The OSCE had a major role in Kosovo, but the interim administration and CivPol responsibilities fell to the UN.

The peacekeeping mission, UNMIK, took shape in the summer of 1999. In IO/PHO, we had to take a number of steps to produce the requisite congressional notification for the U.S. support for the UNSC resolution establishing it. This was done over a week-end, late into the evening. I understood that the National Security Adviser himself, Sandy Berger, reviewed and revised the draft congressional notification, which of course was highly unusual. I think it's safe to say that the elaborate procedures set out by the Clinton Administration for evaluating a potential peacekeeping mission, its exit strategy, etc., were just a matter of going through the motions when it came to Kosovo. The UN faced major challenges in getting such a large, far-reaching mission in place, with such a large CivPol component. The CivPol functions are among the most difficult to carry out. So it was a huge undertaking that took shape more slowly than the U.S. would have wanted. But we should have known it would be difficult and slow. The UN essentially provided an interim government for Kosovo until local institutions could be developed. The UN is still in Kosovo today.

Q: Did you get involved in issues concerning the military troops provided by other countries? Their quality?

HANSEN: Yes, these were among the concerns that the State Department had, as did Congress, concerning how the UN did its peacekeeping business and what kind of troops

they had to rely on. The problem is that the countries that have large numbers of troops available are not necessarily countries that are going to have well trained and well equipped troops. They can't even transport the troops they have to where they are needed. U.S. troops are well trained and equipped, but we're certainly not going to send them in, in the thousands, to countries in Africa and elsewhere around the world. It's a real dilemma. The U.S. military has had a training program in place for a number of years to train African peacekeeping troops. That has helped a little bit. The UN has to provide much of their equipment, which is costly. There are similar quality issues in terms of the civilian police that countries provide for the CivPol missions. In the Balkans, two of the major UN missions were largely police missions – in Bosnia and in Kosovo. UN member countries provide police officers for these missions. In Kosovo, they conducted actually police operations and later were involved in mentoring newly hired and trained police officers. The OSCE ran the police training school in Kosovo. . In Kosovo the international police mission numbered as many as 4,700 so it was a big deal. The quality of training and the kind of equipment the police were able to bring from some of the donor countries was at times a difficult issue.

Q: Moving away from peacekeeping, what UN sanctions issues were you involved in?

HANSEN: It was almost entirely the UN sanctions against Iraq and the Oil for Food program. The Oil for Food program at that point had not been in existence very long, but it was already a very difficult one for the UN to administer and for the United States to be engaged in. We had three very well qualified, very energetic people working on it, but it was a real bear of an issue.

The program is the target of investigations now, so it will be really interesting to see what turns up. There were some problems even as far back as 1998-2000 but I think of a different magnitude than what we're hearing about now. There will be a lot of criticism of the UN in connection with Oil for Food, but I think it's only fair to remember that the UN was trying to do the tasks that the Security Council set for it. The conduct of nationals of Security Council member states was not the responsibility of the UN directly. If nationals were engaging in nefarious business dealings, that has to be considered in good measure a law enforcement issue for the country involved – including the United States. But looking at the sanctions overall, I would say that we were looking for trouble. Oil for Food was a huge operation, basically trying to control all imports into Iraq. This is just about an impossible task, rife with opportunities for corruption and mismanagement. Such a far-reaching and long-running sanctions regime was bound to run into trouble. At the UN, a lot of discussion arose, partly because of the Oil for Food situation, of "targeted" or "smart" sanctions that would be far narrower and, presumably, shorter term, in order to avoid some of those problems. Perhaps by now there has been some progress in that direction.

Q: What kind of problems?

HANSEN: Well, the big issue, really, was the impact of the sanctions on Iraq itself and

how Saddam Hussein played the sanctions issue to his own benefit. Broad UN sanctions on trade with Iraq had been imposed in the context of the Gulf War. For a long time Saddam Hussein refused a proposed Oil for Food program that would allow Iraq to sell oil and use the proceeds to buy humanitarian goods for the country. He preferred, apparently, to let his people suffer, rather than to cooperate with the international community even to that extent. He preferred to complain and rant and rage against the international community for imposing sanctions at all, rather than cooperate with a system that would alleviate the impact of the sanctions. When he finally agreed to the Oil for Food program in about 1996, the term "humanitarian goods" was applied very broadly. All manner of goods were sold to Iraq under the program, not only foods, medicines, and medical equipment, but heavy equipment of all sorts, luxury cars, equipment to maintain the oil industry. A fundamental feature of the program was a UN-administered food distribution program, in which "food baskets" of basic foodstuffs were distributed throughout the country. That's on the "food" side. On the "oil" side, there was a small international committee, I think it was a three-person committee, that set the sale price for legitimate oil exports from Iraq under the program. That said, Iraq also engaged in significant smuggling and sale of oil outside the Oil for Food program. There was also oil trade between Iraq and Jordan that was permitted, or at least overlooked, separate from the Oil for Food program. That was a concession to Jordan, as far as I understood, to help ensure its cooperation in administering the program.

The Oil for Food program grew to be a huge undertaking. There were thousands of contracts, each of which had to be approved by the UN Sanctions Committee for the Iraq sanctions. Most committee members did not review the proposed contracts carefully, but of course the United States, and maybe the UK, did. Outright military goods were barred anyway, but we needed to look out for any dual use items – goods that had a legitimate civilian purpose but could be diverted to a military use, especially nuclear or chemical or biological warfare (CBW). Our staff had to manage the interagency review of the contracts overall and the sensitive contracts in particular. Given the huge number of proposed transactions, this process became incredibly cumbersome. A backlog built up, leaving the U.S. vulnerable to criticism that we were delaying provision of humanitarian goods – even though, strictly speaking, it was seldom humanitarian goods as such that were held up. Countries whose companies wanted to conclude their sales would object to delays. Russia and France, both of which were very large participants in the Oil for Food program, were especially active in pushing for approval of contracts of interest to them.

We took a number of steps to streamline our internal USG processes, and the situation improved somewhat.

The overall situation reminded me of my previous job in the office of East West trade many years back, where we dealt with the controls on high tech exports to communist countries. We had many agonizing sessions with Defense Department analysts and CIA analysts in trying to figure out what could be approved and what should not be approved. We were looking at things like refrigerated pumps, fertilizer equipment, pumps of various kinds that theoretically could be used in a CBW program.

Q: Well, now that the U.S. is involved in rebuilding Iraq, it seems that the sanctions really dug deep into the infrastructure of the country and really harmed it.

HANSEN: It depends on how you look at the situation. Certainly people made the argument that the sanctions did dig deeply and did hurt Iraq and its people. We heard that kind of very sharp criticism. The way we looked at it at the time was that Saddam Hussein had the ability to buy products on the international market to meet the needs of his own country. Very unfortunately, the Iraqi regime chose instead to spend its oil earnings in ways that did not go very far in meeting the nutrition and health needs of the people. That was not the fault of the sanctions; that was Saddam Hussein's doing. In Northern Iraq, where the UN administered the Oil for Food program more directly, people were significantly better off. There was plenty of money flowing in under the Oil for Food program. If Saddam Hussein had decided to invest in the educational sector, he could have spent his money there rather than on his palaces or on fancy cars for his friends and things like that.

We certainly shouldn't have been surprised that he would manipulate the Oil for Food program as he did, to his own benefit. Our view was that the resources were there to meet people's needs - not fully, but to meet them better than they were being met. The fact that they were not met better was really the responsibility of Saddam Hussein, not the sanctions themselves. The bottom line was that people did suffer. It seemed very easy for some critics to blame the sanctions and not turn a critical eye to Saddam Hussein. As long as critics could point to under-nourished children, crumbling schools, and ill-equipped hospitals, the PR battle was a losing battle, I think.

Looking at the Iraq sanctions issue overall, I think the system was effective in keeping dual use items out of the hands of Saddam Hussein. In terms of trying to manage a very large process of allowing designated humanitarian goods to come into the country, distributing goods throughout the country, and meeting the humanitarian needs of the people, it was far more problematic. It was a little like trying to run a centralized economy, like trying to run Iraq from the UN in New York. What an impossible task! We always said that a centralized economy such as the Soviet Union could never really work, yet in a sense we were asking the United Nations to run a centralized economy in Iraq.

As I mentioned, problems of this kind contributed to discussions at the UN about how to craft "smart" sanctions so that they would not cause suffering among the innocent people of a country but instead would directly target the leaders responsible for violating international norms.

Q: When did you leave the IO Bureau?

HANSEN: I left in the summer of 2000 and moved to the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, INL. This is the so-called "drugs and thugs" bureau. This was probably the only job I ever had in the Foreign Service that my kids and my

parents seemed to make sense of. The term "drugs and thugs" meant something, as opposed to all that vague work I'd done previously in political affairs, peacekeeping and so forth. The term rang a bell.

I worked in INL from the summer of 2000 to the summer of 2002. In the IO bureau I had been a deputy office director. In INL, I was able to get a position as an office director which was nice, not least because office directors got parking passes for a modest fee.

I was director of the Policy Planning and Coordination Office (INL/PPC), which actually covered quite grab bag of functions. Our office handled the INL Bureau's public affairs and public diplomacy functions, plus congressional relations and relations with the United Nations in its anti-drug and anti-crime programs through the UN Drug Control Program (UNDCP) and a related office on crime. We produced the State Department's major annual report on the drug issue, the international narcotics control strategy report, which was probably about 800 pages long. We had a small staff that came in on a temporary basis and prepared that report every year, pulling together information provided by our embassies overseas and relevant Washington agencies. Most of the work of the office focused on counter-narcotics, particularly in Latin America, since the great bulk of the bureau's funding was dedicated to the Latin American illegal drug problem.

Another major function of the office was kind of an odd thing to have in that mix but it was a very important job. During my tour in INL, I recommended that this function be separated out and bolstered as a separate office, and I understand that something along those lines was done a couple of years later. In any event, this was the staff of five or six officers who managed U.S. participation in international police missions under the UN or the OSCE. We were contributing some 600 police to the UN peacekeeping mission in Kosovo at that time, plus providing the leadership for the OSCE police training school in Kosovo. It was our office that managed the recruitment of those officers through a contractor, DynCorp, and oversaw their functions in place. Other major police missions were still in place in Bosnia and East Timor. When the United States went into Afghanistan, this staff got involved in the planning for police training there.

This CivPol staff was a highly effective staff that I admired very much. The success of their work overall really stood out in Kosovo. They were involved in the early planning for the Kosovo police mission, and it was their strategic thinking that shaped the 4700-strong UN police mission and the OSCE police training school there. These two endeavors have been among the major success stories in Kosovo, where a new police force had to be built from scratch. It was quite a remarkable achievement. The police function for Kosovo represented a huge investment for the United States. For a while there, it was costing roughly a million dollars a week.

In terms of the UN police missions, these presented the same kinds of challenges as other UN peacekeeping missions. The UN had a hard time getting contributing countries to provide capable and appropriately trained police. The police missions often had to be set up rapidly, which only added to the problem. Even the United States had some difficulty

in getting the right kind of officers into the field, though we improved significant after some initial problems in, say, Haiti and Bosnia. This was something that INL worked on continuously all during the period that I was associated with it, whether in IO, in INL itself, or later in the EUR assistance office.

Q: Let's talk about the drug business. That was the main issue for INL, wasn't it?

HANSEN: Absolutely. The real issue for the bureau was drugs coming into the United States. That meant that the real issue was Latin America because most of the drugs came from Latin America, from Colombia and other countries. This was the time of the so-called "Plan Colombia" through which we were supporting Columbia's efforts at eradicating the coca crop by aerial spraying of herbicide. Colombia was the third largest recipient of U.S. assistance, after Israel and Egypt, so that reflects how important the effort was to the United States.

This was also a time when an aircraft interdiction program was in place. It allowed local air forces to intercept airplanes in their airspace that were thought to be involved in drug trafficking, including shooting them down if the pilots did not heed specified warnings. The U.S. provided advisers and other assistance in running this program. I gathered that this had been a very controversial program when it started up several years ago, and that State Department lawyers were very critical of it because of civilian aircraft safety issues. I believe the program nevertheless served quite well for a time. Unfortunately, and disastrously, there was a terrible mistake in the program several years ago in which a missionary airplane was shot down by the Peruvian military. An American missionary and her infant adopted daughter were killed in the incident. Others on the plane were injured. The aircraft interdiction program was then suspended for a time, and its procedures were reviewed and tightened, and it was reinstated later on, as far as I understand.

Well, that was one very sad event. But the counter-narcotics program in Latin America was controversial on a lot of other counts as well. Who knows whether it will ever succeed. Everyone in the bureau certainly understood that demand in the U.S. for illicit drugs was a major part of the problem, but dealing with that aspect was not our mandate. We also understood that alternative development was crucial to the success of the counter-narcotics effort, and no one pretended that we really had enough resources going into those efforts. Mr. Randy Beers headed the bureau most of the time I was there. I recall his telling a journalist at one point, who was challenging him on the record of Plan Colombia, that we simply had to try. We had an opportunity to assist a Colombian government that was trying to get the issue under control, and to reassert control over its own territory, and we at least had to try to do our part to make it work, understanding fully how difficult it was and how elusive success might be. The idea was to cut off the supply as close to the source as possible.

Q: In dealing with international crime, was there crossover into counter-terrorism?

HANSEN: Yes. The 9/11 attacks occurred while I was in INL, so we were involved, as was literally everyone else in the State Department, in responding to the terrorism challenge as we came to see it in a new light. Most of INL's work in this area had to do with terrorist financing. Another office in the bureau handled it directly and worked closely with Treasury and Justice on international cooperation to tighten countries' controls on international banking and finance.

Q: How about Congress?

HANSEN: Congress loomed large in our picture, and INL/PPC had an officer dedicated to the congressional liaison function, supporting the INL front office, which dealt with Congress intensively and at senior levels. The Assistant Secretary seemed to be on the Hill all the time. He worked that angle very assiduously.

Q: When did you leave INL?

HANSEN: I finished in the summer of 2002 and went back into the European Bureau, what I considered my home bureau. I took a position in the Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance for Europe and Eurasia. Ambassador William Taylor headed the office at that time, though he left soon to work in Kabul on assistance coordination for Afghanistan. Tom Adams became the Acting Coordinator for almost a year, until Ambassador Carlos Pascual arrived as Coordinator, a DAS-equivalent position. As one of three deputy coordinators, I headed the office overseeing U.S. assistance to Eastern Europe, an annual budget of about $500-600 million, primarily for Southeast Europe and Romania. By 2002, Poland and the other Northern Tier countries, except Romania, had "graduated" from U.S. assistance and were receiving only residual amounts of support. I served in EUR/ACE until I retired in May 2004.

Q: How did you happen to return to EUR?

HANSEN: Well, as I was finishing up in the INL Bureau, I actually had begun to think about retirement. I couldn't quite bring myself to turn in the paper work, however, so I concluded that I wasn't really quite ready and would go for one more assignment in the Department. By then, Larry was already retired, and I didn't really want to think about serving overseas so close to my own likely retirement, given the benefits of locality pay in Washington. As it happened, I didn't get bids in until quite late in the assignment cycle. Coincidentally this position in the European Bureau was still available. I think someone else had been in line for it and then backed out at the last moment for some reason. I went ahead and applied for it and got it. As a Senior Foreign Service position, it was a stretch assignment, which was good.

EUR/ACE was in a rather strange position within the European Bureau. The assistance functions for both Eastern Europe and for the Soviet Union had each originally been separate from the regional bureau, under the Deputy Secretary and/or under a Special Coordinator. With reorganization within the Department, and with downsizing of the

special Bosnia and Kosovo implementation offices in about 2001, these functions were brought directly into the regional bureau but with a special status. The Assistance Coordinator, somewhat like a DAS, reported directly to the EUR Assistant Secretary. Under the Coordinator were the three deputy positions, which were equivalent to office directors. I handled Eastern European assistance; another deputy handled the former Soviet Union, and a third handled law enforcement assistance and cross-cutting budget management. It was all rather clumsy bureaucratically.

In managing U.S. assistance to Eastern Europe, we coordinated closely with the regional EUR offices for the countries involved, to ensure that the assistance supported policy appropriately, to further democratic and market reform. We managed the allocation of assistance funds to a dozen or so assistance implementers, primarily USAID, which administered about 70% of the funding. Other major implementers were State/INL in support of U.S. participation in international police missions and in police training functions, Commerce, TDA, and Justice. The major recipients were Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia, and Macedonia, and then smaller programs for Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, and Croatia. Montenegro benefitted from a generous congressional earmark and so also had a sizeable program, despite its very small size. With a population of only about 650,000, Montenegro was no doubt the largest per capita recipient of assistance in the region.

Q: The Baltics, Poland, and others had matured enough so that they were out of this.

HANSEN: Yes. They had essentially, as we put it, "graduated" from bilateral U.S. assistance several years earlier at different points in time. Over the years, Poland had been far and away the largest recipient of U.S. assistance, yet even its "graduation" took place later than originally anticipated. In all cases, the transition away from communist systems to democracy and market economics took longer than we had thought. By the time 2002 rolled around, however, pressure was building within the Administration to bring assistance to a close even in the countries for which the transition had been far more difficult, such as Bulgaria and Romania.

On my first day back in EUR, I sat in on the Deputy Secretary's session with the EUR Bureau to hear its budget proposal for the ensuing fiscal year. Just about the first thing the Deputy Secretary asked about was when we would see more graduations from U.S. assistance. In my area, he cited specifically Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania. OMB was also very anxious to see graduations in these countries and maybe in Russia as well.

As a result, much of my work in EUR/ACE involved review processes for the future of our assistance to those countries. Though these were hard decisions to reach, we ultimately set schedules for graduations by Bulgaria and Croatia, and Romania was pretty clearly going to be next in line. One issue that figured prominently in our deliberations was these countries' progress towards EU membership. They were in fact progressing and, obviously, the closer they got the harder it was to justify sizeable U.S. assistance. We had excellent congressional support for East European assistance. During the time that I worked on these programs, Congress always appropriate more funding than the

Administration requested. Our main struggle for funding was within the State Department itself and with OMB.

Another substantive concern for us was assistance coordination with the European Union. As part of our approach to "graduation", we were very much thinking that these countries should be aided by the European Union more so than by the U.S. With our diminishing resources, we needed to make sure that we avoided duplication and that U.S. and EU efforts were complementary. A special situation prevailed relative to Serbia, where the bulk of our assistance was contingent on Serbia's cooperation, or lack thereof, in rendering indictees to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, in The Hague. Particularly close coordination with the European Union was needed in order to bring focused pressure to bear on Serbia to improve its record of cooperation. This approach succeeded over time, though as of this writing in the summer of 2005, the two major Serbian indictees, Radovan Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic, are still at large.

We've seen good progress in the region and it was an honor to play a role in it. The fate of the former Yugoslavia – notably Serbia, Bosnia, and especially Kosovo – of course remains a very incomplete story. There is still important work to be done.

Q: Then you finished up in 2004.

HANSEN: Yes, I went ahead and retired in May of 2004, having left EUR/ACE at the end of February.

Looking back on Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall, particularly the Balkans where so much terrible violence occurred, I think it's just phenomenal what was accomplished. Though their transformations were more difficult and took longer than originally anticipated, it's still tremendously impressive to see how far the countries of the region have come. Most have already joined or on track to join soon both NATO and the European Union. These are truly major accomplishments. The people of the region deserve all the credit they can get for making this happen, but much credit also goes to the United States and to the U.S. taxpayers who made such generous investments in the transformation of the region. It has been extremely worthwhile and a real success story. We can all be very proud of what has been accomplished. Though the job is certainly not yet done, it was a great experience for me to be involved in it and to be able to conclude my Foreign Service career on such a high note.

Q: This will conclude our interview. I want to thank you very much.

HANSEN: And I thank you.

End of interview