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DR. REUBEN LEV

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Lev]

Q: Today is the 18th of June, 1999, and this is an interview with Reuben Lev. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. I'd like to start at the beginning. Could you tell me where and when you were born and something about your family?

LEV: I was born July 12, 1930 in Brooklyn, New York. I am a first generation descendent, depending upon what part of the history you're looking at, of Russian, Polish or Byelorus immigrants. My mother was a homemaker. I was the last of seven children, six brothers and a girl. And my father had been an escapee from the Imperial Russian Army, he and his brother. They went to fight the Japanese during the Russo-Japanese War, and they just kept going. And my uncle ended up going, I guess it would be, west to England and settled in Canada. My father went east and then turned west, and he ended up in New York.

Q: When did he get to New York, do you remember?

LEV: He would have gotten to New York just at the outbreak of the First World War.

Q: About 1914.

LEV: About 1914, 1915. My mother had arrived several years before he did.

Q: How did she get to the United States?

LEV: They had worked very, very hard, and like other immigrants, they just packed up their suitcases. With my eldest brother, they had gone to Hamburg, and then they couldn't get out of Hamburg, and they ended up leaving through Antwerp. And from Antwerp they ended up in Ellis Island and in New York City.

Q: Just in time, too? Because World War I wiped those ports out for a time.

LEV: Well, that was it. She had gotten in under the wire, and my father had just beat the guns of August, 1914.

Q: And your parents married or met where?-

LEV: They had married and met in what is now Byelorus. My mother was from a small town called Slonim, and my father was from a small town called Volkovysk. And my mother's family, from what we understand from some oral history, had a very good position in the town because they had a wood floor in the cabin, and her father had been the official slaughterer, the kosher slaughterer, of meats and chickens. So evidently they did comparatively well. About my father I don't know too much other than that he was a musician and a typical day-to-day laborer before he ended up in the Russian Army. He became an infantryman, and he was also a member of the division or battalion band.

Q: Tell me a bit about family life. Was your family orthodox or where were they on the religious scale?

LEV: In the religious scale, they were considered orthodox. My father was a member of what we would call in Yiddish a little *shul*. The *shul* was made up of friends and families from the original town, this was the way they did things when they came over. They

would get together with those that were residents of the same town, and set up their own little *shuls*. And in this case it was set up in a storefront. Then they found some additional space, and then they set up what they felt was a legitimate synagogue, with the ark and the Torah and everything else. And my mother kept a kosher home, but she understood that in the real world it might be different. When you're outside the home, she said she hoped that we would be able to maintain a kosher life. But she knew what was going on here in the United States.

My father was a rather fascinating guy. He was one of the officials of this small synagogue there in Brooklyn, and he religiously went Friday nights and Saturdays and all the holidays, and he made sure that I learned Hebrew so I could be confirmed, my Bar Mitzvah, as he did with all the other boys. M mother was, I think, well ahead of her generation. My sister, and she's the only one left, but Rachel, was unusual in that she had a mother who pushed her to go to school, not to go the usual route, you know, learn how to read and write, get married, have babies, and that's the end of it. But she made sure that Rachel did get a full education, and my sister graduated from Hunter College as a lab tech. Mom made sure that she prepared herself for life in America. "Live in America" was at that time a definite dream, and we more or less fulfilled it. We were brought up during the depression. Things were rough, as I think you can probably attest to.

Q: Yes, anybody of our generation can.

LEV: I remember as a kid we were all out there hustling, shining shoes, selling papers - but there was a home life, and Mom made sure that she was the real dominating factor, while Pop would disappear about five in the morning and come home at nine or ten at night.

Q: What was he doing?

LEV: He was a presser in the garment industry in Manhattan. There was the Star Craft or Starlight Dress Company, the Record Dress Company, I'm sorry, I can't quite remember. But the important thing - and I was very, very fortunate, as were my siblings - was that there was a central, hard-core family, and Mom made sure that we had food, whatever there was, we were all clean, and the important thing was education.

Q: If your father was gone, what about dinner table talk and all that?

LEV: There was very, very little that I would remember because, I was the last and rather a surprise to my mother (my mother was well into her 40's when I came popping along - there was six years between me and my next brother). But I do remember that on Friday night he was always home for the Sabbath dinner and Saturday, and sometimes on Sunday he would take me and my other brother, and we used to go for walks and things like that. But during the week, from Monday through Thursday, there was very little table talk other than among my brothers and my sister. Rachel at that time was working part-time, too, while going through high school and college. At that time my eldest brother had been married, and Morris had been a customs inspector, as was my next brother. So

we did have dinner together on Friday night and Saturday and sometimes on Sunday. The talk was who did what to whom and how were things going. And then of course I remember during the war itself, some of the very sad notes and letters that came from Europe and then all of a sudden stopped. In fact, I still have several souvenirs of those.

Q: I was born just two years earlier, in 1928. In these early years when you were in Brooklyn, did you get a feel for politics? Particularly in the Jewish community, socialism was a big deal, but also you had the New Deal. I was wondering, did you have a picture of Roosevelt in your house?

LEV: Roosevelt, but in my house was Eleanor, not Frank. The day began with Eleanor and it closed with Eleanor. My mother and my sister had a love affair with the woman. I remember one time that she visited the local high school, Thomas Jefferson, which was around the corner from where we lived. She gave a talk at about eight o'clock, and the auditorium was literally wall-to-wall people and their kids. But basically they were apolitical. They wanted to make sure that any person in politics, other than Herbert Hoover, was considering the masses, not from a Communist or a socialist point of view but with people out there busting their buns, to put it bluntly, that there should be some sort of a fair wage. My father had been one of the first members of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, and my mother was very, very proud of him because it was a pretty gutsy move in their time. It was neither socialism nor Communism that they supported, but as Pop used to tell us a fair and equitable system, where if you do piecework, everybody should get the same amount of money.

Q: When you started out, where did you go to elementary or grammar school and so on?

LEV: I went to a typical New York City public school at that time, PS 182. The first couple of months I had problems because like most of my friends and playmates, I basically spoke Yiddish. So English became for me like ESL, English as a second language. What was unique about the area I was brought up in (and I didn't realize it was a slum until I took a sociology course at NYU) was that it was truly a mixing bowl. You'd hear everybody yelling in Polish, Yiddish, Italian, German but we all understood each other. We'd go back to our own little homes but then we all met again in school, and met additional friends. The teachers were teachers then. As my mother told us, they were like gods or goddesses. Whatever the teacher said, that was it. You didn't challenge them, and you did not disrupt the class. And a couple of times when my mother found out I did disrupt the class, and she said, "You don't do that in class," and got me home and gave me the just-in-case smack across the head. But we were taught a tremendous amount of respect for education.

Q: In playing, was it a pretty mixed group? Were there Polish and Irish kids?

LEV: It was an unusual community there in Brownsville. In one area we had the Poles. There was a Greek Orthodox group. There were the Italians, the Russians, the Jews, and the Jews themselves came from a great variety of places. So it was really a fantastic mixing-bowl. And we didn't care.

Mrs. LEV: We also had an area of blacks, so that in school there was a sampling.

Q: Were the blacks part of the community, would you say?

LEV: Very, very little. They were on the periphery. One or two might join us in playing kick-the-can or punchball. In school, of course, we'd all be together, but then after school they had a two- or three-block area, and they stayed pretty much to themselves. And you know, looking back from 50, 60 some odd years, I can understand why, but at that time, whether the guy was black, blue, or whatever made no difference to us. We didn't see color, and that was the beauty of the area.

Q: What about religious observance during the High Holy Days? Did you attend services?

LEV: I was observing those, and again with my mother and father keeping me in tow, especially the Yom Kippur and the Passover services. And I was studying for my Bar Mitzvah. I had a man who looked to be a million years old teaching me the rules and regulations and how to put on the *tefillin* so I'd be prepared for the time when I'd be called up for the Torah reading. And we also respected a lot of the other people who were Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and everything else. They would invite us to their homes, you know, to show us, this is what we do on Christmas, or this is what we do on specific saints' days. And again, I may sound like a parrot, but it was an absolutely phenomenal mixing bowl, and there was a semi-integration. There were differences – there was no doubt about it – but yet when it came to religious observance, in those days in New York City, come the Jewish High Holy Days, the city came to a screeching halt. And during the Christmas and some of the major Christian holidays, the city also came to a screeching halt.

Q: Well, it's interesting. I mean, one of our icons in the Foreign Service was a Lebanese Christian, Philip Habib, and he was a Shabbos goy, *I think.*

LEV: They used to pay him to put the gas stove on.

Q: Put the stove on and things like that. What about reading and things that you did for fun?

LEV: Well, as a kid - I think we're still talking about that part of my life – like everybody else, I used to like comic books. I remember that when the first issue of Superman came out I was about five years of age. At that time they went for the strong men, like Captain America and Captain Marvel and Shazam and Billy Batson. But it was the teachers who said, "Hey, you're going to start reading these books." So for relaxation at home or at night or wherever we would swap comic books, but in school, the teachers made us read us books that were possibly two or three years beyond us. And we all read on grade in those days. If you were in second grade you would read at the third and fourth and fifth. But we read anything and everything. And then they also at that time – this was toward

the latter part of my childhood – Classics Illustrated came out, books like Tale of Two Cities in comic book form. Basically that was my introduction to the so-called classics.

Q: Was there a good library where you lived?

LEV: A fantastic library. This was part of the New York City library system which in those days was phenomenal. When I got to third or fourth grade you were required to have a library card and every two or three weeks Mrs. Stocker told me or told the class you had to do a book report, on any book you chose. And again, the library branches were phenomenal. It was just great, just absolutely great.

Q: Did you listen to radio programs?

LEV: Oh, yes, the usual kids' programs. You'd get home at about 3:15 and you listen to, what was it, "Jack Armstrong" and "Captain Midnight" and "Henry Aldrich" and Eddie Cantor and Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy.

Q: Movies?

LEV: Movies - whenever we could put together our 11 cents. And this may be illegal, but at those times 10 guys would chip in a penny, and one guy would buy the ticket, and all of sudden he would go upstairs and open up the exit door, and 10 kids could go running in. And the matrons would be running around. But most of the time we were pretty legitimate.

Mrs. LEV: You also had the Yiddish newspapers in those days.

LEV: My father had the liberal paper, the Daily Forward. One time when I was selling newspapers, I had an extra copy of the communist Freiheit, and I brought it into the house. That was the first and last time I ever brought that in. Well, to me, a Jewish paper was a Jewish paper. They loved to read the paper, and then of course, in those days in New York (and I think it still exists) there was a Jewish radio program. It was WEVD, and every Saturday night, after *Shabbos* and every Sunday, my mother and father would listen religiously to the programs, whether it was a Jewish philosopher or a Jewish opera or the Bagelman sisters, who became the Barry Sisters. It was a hard life, but it was rich.

Q: What about the Yiddish theater? Did you get to that at all?

LEV: Oh, yes. We sat in what in those days they called the family circle. People from the same town formed a club or a family circle, and they would get special tickets to the Yiddish theater once or twice a month. There was a big one on Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, and then of course the major ones were on Second Avenue and around Houston Street. So I was fortunate to see some of the big ones: Luther Adler, Molly Picon, Seymour Rexite, and Jacob Jacobs.

Q: By the time you got up to high school, where did you go?

LEV: Well, it was a local high school, Thomas Jefferson, that would have been in '45. The war had ended. I was angry because before going to high school, I used to live around the corner from the high school, and then we moved a mile and a half away, but I still had to go back to the same school. At that time, up until the early '50's, Jefferson was ranked in the top 10 academically. It was a phenomenal school. We had phenomenal, very experienced teachers, and they took nothing from anybody. And going through it, I griped and grumped like everybody else, but in retrospect it was an excellent education because we had dedicated teachers, male and female. They weren't there because it's a job. They were there because they were actually dedicated. So again, I lucked out in the high school.

Q: Did World War II have much of an impact on you?

LEV: World War II did have an impact on the family. My brother ended up in the army. My eldest brothers ended up with the Department of the Treasury. Morris and Bill who were customs inspectors took on other responsibilities for safeguarding the ports. My sister wanted to join the Waves. She had been a graduate of Hunter College, as I mentioned before, and she was going to go in. But unfortunately, at that time, because she was Jewish, they had a list of 10, and she was always number 11. So Rachel went to work in a hospital and also was involved in performing certain tests that she never did tell me about but that dealt with the military. As a kid, I said, "Mom, I want to run off. I'm 14, I can join the Merchant Marine." She said, "Over my dead body!" My mother made sure I stayed through high school.

Q: In reading the news during World War II, you could pick up a sense of geography and the rest of the world. Was that true for you?

LEV: It certainly was. When I was stationed in Brussels at NATO in '80-'83, my reading and hearing first-hand what was going on during the Second World War made that assignment that much more interesting because, hey, Lev, *you are there.* And whether it's the D-Day beaches or the First World War – it really started me on being a history buff ever since, I would say, 1942.

Mrs. LEV: Did you have to keep a scrapbook of newspaper articles and a log in school?

LEV: Yes, we were required in school to do so by the teachers. We said, "What are we doing this for?" When the Battle of the Bulge started in December of 1944, we were required to track it day by day. When it was over in January, my brother sent me a bunch of letters, describing his experiences. He was a combat corpsman, and he was assigned at that time to a rest area in a general hospital, which all of a sudden was behind the lines. When I ended up in Belgium I tried to find the family on whose farm he stayed. One of the family remembered him, but unfortunately the farm that he was kept on now has an autoroute running right through the property.

Q: What about when you were in high school? What were your favorite subjects?

LEV: Well, I don't know if lunch and rest period count, but my favorite subjects were history and geography and economics. And I enjoyed math and science, but I was selective. But I really had a lot of fun with the social sciences.

Q: On the fact that your wife is here, I'll ask a loaded question. What was social life like in high school?

LEV: Oh, it was absolutely fantastic.

Mrs. LEV: Especially since he was also on the football team, which he hasn't mentioned, and he was also All-City Orchestra, which he hasn't mentioned.

Q: Would you talk about these?

LEV: Well, I was a dynamic 130 pounds and about five-foot-five, five-foot-six, and I went out for the football team, and I did play for Jeff a couple of years. And also I loved the trumpet because my brother, who ended up in the army, left his trumpet behind when he went off to war. And I became a trumpet player. I used to pay 50 cents a week for my lessons, which was a bundle in those days. I joined the band at Jefferson, along with playing football, and I was selected with several other people to become part of the All New York City Symphony Orchestra. I think the most exciting time at that point was when Bruno Walter couldn't make it, and we had some guy called Leonard Bernstein leading us at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. How do you play when you're in awe at the same time?

But the social life was – again, it was as different world – the problems of today with drugs and stuff, I'm sure were there than. But the peer pressure was a *positive* pressure. The clubs weren't what a club is considered to be now, but a club in the true sense of the word, where guys and gals got together. They would have parties on Saturday nights, they would go on trips to museums in New York City. And we'd get together, and it wasn't unusual that I would go out with somebody else's girl, but once you were going steady, there was the unwritten rule that said, okay. But there were always mix and match, things to do. And if it sounds almost like a sylvan world, it wasn't quite. We had our moments. But basically, socialization was very, very good. We all had similar wants, similar likes, similar dislikes, and I guess it was because of this almost ghettoish life that we all led, and our mixing-bowl life with people of different race, religion, and creed.

Q: What about with dating? Particularly in that period, I can recall family pressure was to stay with somebody of your own religion. This was across the board. It wasn't nasty. It was just, "Can't you find a nice Jewish girl?" or in my case, "Couldn't you find a girl who's not Catholic?" We all palled around together, but there was this particular constraint.

LEV: Well, I think, for my own family, it was an unwritten rule that likes would go to likes. I don't remember that in my group there were any interracial or inter-religious

marriages. We all went out together but we all ended up in the same social group and the same social group would be either within the church or within the synagogue or sometimes there was a YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) and a YMHA (Young Men's Hebrew Association). So you had the Y's for the Christian group and the Y's for the Jewish group, and they would get together, but when it came to serious dating, I think people pretty well stayed intra-religious and intra-racial.

Q: Yes, there was pressure, and I don't consider it particularly biased. It was just that it was better to do it this way than that way.

LEV: It was the way it is, and to some degree, I think, a lot of people still believe in it. But if you look at my family now, our family is the UN. I have a niece who is Thai. I have a nephew who is Italian. We've got a niece who is Roman Catholic. I have a Puerto Rican elative. I have another niece who is black, but she's from Trinidad. Let's see, I've got a Jewish wife-

Mrs. LEV: By chance.

LEV: -by chance, and the irony is the only niece who married a Jew divorced him and married an Italian. Sean is Irish Catholic. Helene's gone through several marriages, from a Jew to... right now she's got herself a-

Mrs. LEV: —Catholic, very nice guy.

LEV: Mulligan, delightful guy. He is a retired superintendent of schools in Buffalo. So this is what happens. And I think we've always been that way. We've always felt that the name of the game is that the kids are going to outlive us; they have to live their lives. If they're comfortable with their mate, male, female, or whatever, that's fine. And so far in my crazy family, it's worked out comparatively well. But in those days it wasn't, "Hannah, you've got to marry a Jewish boy." It just was a feeling that this is what would happen.

Q: Basically mild direction, I would say.

Mrs. LEV: Well, you were thrown together socially for the most part with people of the same kind of background.

LEV: Even in schools.

Q: Yes. Well, when you were in high school and the war was over, were you kind of pointed towards anything? I mean, were either your family or you thinking about where you were heading?

LEV: Well, what happened, when I was getting ready to graduate in June '48 and the draft started up again. I was a good high school student, but I wasn't really a class ace; I was a good strong C+/B- student. In the New York City public college system you had to

take an entry examination. I did well on the exam, but when they factored in my high school average, I couldn't make it during the daytime, but I was given what they called a provisional space. That meant if I went at night and maintained a B average, I could automatically transfer to daytime. I was going to do that, but then when they started the draft I figured, well, let me get my military time in right now. So instead, in '48, I enlisted in the navy to get into naval aviation. And then the Korean War broke out and I had my flight training and through the five years I was in the navy it was a lot of fun. I was young, no responsibility, had money, and responsibilities in the service. I survived the Korean War, and became a meteorologist also. And then when my mother had passed away, I got a hardship assignment for three months at Floyd Bennett Field, and that's where I met this young lady. Then I ended up with the hardship tour with the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean.

Q: I'd like to go back to the beginning, in the navy. Where did you take boot training?

LEV: I as at Great Lakes, got there October '48 and finished in about January of '49. And then after boot training we were transferred to the Alameda Naval Air Station in San Francisco. And then for flight training they transferred us to Milton, Florida, to the naval air station at Whiting Field, and we were there for about 12-15 months.

Q: When you say "flight training," what were you doing?

LEV: Well, you trained in an SNJ-5. Then I ended up with what they called the Sky Raider, the AD-2, which was in Corpus Christi. And then we went to the *Valley Forge*, when the Korean War broke out, and then I came back to Ellison Field. And then ended up in Floyd Bennett when my mother passed away.

Q: During the Korean War what were you doing?

LEV: I was with the VA 165 on the *Valley Forge.*

Q: And where was it?

LEV: Let's see, we went from San Diego to Pearl Harbor, picked up the squadron, and then from there we were off port in Sasebo, Japan. And then out into the Sea of Japan, and we did our work from there.

Q: Did you get any feel for Korea or Japan while you were there?

LEV: I got more of a feel for Japan. It was a lot of fun, and especially when we pulled into port at Sasebo. The Japanese still weren't quite sure what to make of the crazy Americans, considering it was only about four or five years after the war. But we were well treated, well taken care of. It was a fascinating culture, totally 180 degrees the opposite of what we ever thought. I learned that when you're in a foreign place, you try not to get involved with Americans. I carried that into the Foreign Service.

Q: Oh, yes, I know. I mean, I was with the air force, a ground person, doing Russian in Japan at the same time. It was fascinating. A real eye-opener. A lot of us were saying, I want more of this.

LEV: The bug was there, and as I said, I knew that there was more than Brooklyn in '48.

Q: And so you came back. You met your wife when?

LEV: I met Marilyn New Year's Eve, 1951.

Q: How did you meet?

LEV: She was going out with a friend of mine, I think.

Mrs. LEV: We met at a party.

LEV: At a party.

Mrs. LEV: What was that that you said? You don't know how you got engaged? I think it's a male thing. We met at a party and didn't date after that. We each dated each other's friends for about two years, I guess.

Q: Well, then, when did you get married? Were you still in the navy when you got married?

LEV: No, no, I left the navy in October of '53. We got engaged in November of '53 and got married in April of '54.

Q: What about when you were with the Sixth Fleet? How long were you out there?

LEV: We were out there from April until October. Then they sent me and a group of other people back. It was a fascinating trip. We had flown from Nice, France, to Lagos and the Azores, and to Brazil, and from Brazil up to Westover Field. That itself is a wonderful trip. That would have been in '52.

Q: And while you were in the Navy, what were you thinking of doing?

LEV: Well, I was going to make a career of the navy. But since the new GI bill for Korean vets had just been signed I figured, well, let me get out, and get a college education, and maybe I'll follow my original career while becoming a lawyer or some sort of an administrator. So that's what I did, and I ended up at the Washington Square College of NYU (New York University), and we were married '54. I pushed through in two and a half years, and I graduated in October, 1955.

Mrs. LEV: With honors.

LEV: With honors. And then I took a nationwide examination for a public administration internship in the New York state government. I got one of the 30 annual positions. I got very interested in public administration and political science, and I got a scholarship for grad school.

Q: Where did you go to graduate school?

LEV: The Graduate School of Public Administration at NYU. It took me – I was going at night – four years to get a master's degree. And I stayed with the New York State Department of Tax and Finance for about 8 years, and then I was transferred as a management analyst with a new organization, the Administrative Board of the Judicial Conference of the State of New York, that was responsible for revising the whole court system in the State of New York.

Q: What was the New York system like where you worked? Was there much in the way of politics, or were politics concerned, or were they keeping it pretty professional?

LEV: Well, it was like any political entity, whether it's state, federal, or whatever. You had your hard-core civil service, and I was a civil servant, and we had at the top the commissioners who were politically appointed. But we had good people who were political appointees. The Democrats were running New York City, and the Republicans were running New York State, so you had Republicans in charge of the state operations, but within the cities you had Democrats. I was lucky. I had supervisors who trained me. They were all pragmatists, and I learned a lot from that too. Because you have the book way of doing things, you have the political way of doing things, and you have the real-world way of doing things. And it was a matter of how do you mesh all three or how do you separate the three, depending upon the situation.

Q: You were doing this until when?

LEV: I was doing that until July, 1965 when I became a member of the Foreign Service. Sometime in 1964 I read an article by a political appointee in the Department of State talking about the problems that the Foreign Service and the Department of State as a whole was having in restructuring itself to meet the needs of different world. I sent this person a letter with my resume saying that I agreed with the article and believed that with my experience, background, and training, I would fit in very, very well with the Department of State. And then I received a package in the mail from Bernie Rosen, who described a new program they were establishing, the Foreign Service reserve program. This involved a five-year appointment with the possibility of renewal for another five. And I said, "While five years is fine with me, is there a way of getting into the Department of State, whether through a civil service appointment or whatever?" He said, "There is the Foreign Service Staff program, which you're overqualified for." Which is also basically the same thing as the FSR or an FSO, but it deals with the managerial end of the Foreign Service. But there's no limit. If you're good, you're good. And I said, "I prefer going the FSS route to the FSR route." And then we got a letter, and we were invited up for an interview.

Mrs. LEV: You were invited, but you took me along because I had never seen Washington.

LEV: I was invited. And the board – let's see, I'm trying to remember – there was Coulter Denham Hyler III, a fellow by the name of Bill Buffalo, and a third fellow. I don't remember who was on my panel. But when they found out that Marilyn was waiting for me down there in the old second floor somewhere, they said, "Would she mind if she came into the interview?" And Marilyn was invited.

Mrs. LEV: I minded my own business reading a magazine.

LEV: So what was rather unusual at that time, and looking back when I myself was with the Board of Foreign Service Examiners, it was unusual to bring in the wife.

Q: Yes, it is.

LEV: A couple of weeks later, we got a letter offering us an appointment to Jakarta. That was during the time of Sukarno. Marilyn at that time was very, very pregnant with our daughter and we had a son who had Perthes disease. It was a bone disease and he was in braces.

I had heard from the counselor for administration in Jakarta recommending that I not take the post, because we would have to evacuate Marilyn to Singapore for the baby, and for any decent type of medical attention, we might have to evacuate Brian either back to the States or possibly to Tokyo. So I refused the appointment. Then I was offered and accepted an appointment in Santiago, Chile. In July of 1965, I became a member of the Foreign Service, and my two-year assignment ended up with almost five years; my DCM, Bob Dean, said, "Reuben, you ain't going no place. You're staying here as long as I'm here." And I had a very, very exciting tour. We got involved with the local community, with my locals (now nationals). The local staff was absolutely phenomenal, and we had a heart-wrenching time when we finally left in April of 1970. To this day, in 1999, after 30 years, we're still hearing from them. In fact, our kids had a surprise 45th wedding anniversary party for us, and I received a phone call from one of my nationals, Raúl, who had been one of my stalwarts.

Q: We'll talk about the time in Chile. You were there from '65 to '70. Who was the ambassador when you arrived?

LEV: Ralph Anthony Dungan was ambassador when I arrived, and he was followed by Ed Korry, who had been in Ethiopia at the time. And the DCM's were Bob Dean and Harry Shlaudeman, both excellent. My counselor for administration was Jim Keegan, he had worked with Roger Abraham in Mexico City where he had a heart attack, and they sent him to Santiago because it was a quiet post. And it was at that time the Movimiento Izquierda Radical (MIR), the radical leftists, started to really get involved, and the Frei government had legalized the Communist Party, so Santiago was far from being that

quiet post where you can recuperate from your heart attack. Then we had Marty Martínez – his name was Manuel Martínez – he was also the executive officer of the AID mission. We were one of the first posts that integrated. We had a joint administrative staff, so we finally worked together as a mission. This was not what Dungan had wanted, but Korry did. Marty himself was an AID type; I was State; Ellis Glynn, the general services officer, was State; as well as the USIA man. It was the first successful joint administrative support (JAS) operation in Latin America I think.

Q: What were you doing?

LEV: I was the personnel officer and also filled in as administrative officer. The hard work was integrating all these various personalities, and each one protecting his turf. Sid Weintraub, who was the counselor for economic affairs was also director of the AID mission. So integration not only happened on the administrative side but also on the substantive side.

Q: This was a time when AID had its own empire, and State Department people were kind of annoyed because often AID got better benefits and that sort of thing. I would have thought that putting AID and State together would have been breaking a very big rice bowl, because AID would be losing, essentially.

LEV: Maybe because it was Santiago it worked out well and we all worked very closely. I think there was a personal element that was able to overcome the service rivalry. We had to for self-survival because at that time AID had the balance of payments and operation reduction. It was a reduction in force where you're going to have fewer men doing the same amount of work.

Q: How about Ambassador Korry? How would you describe his operation from your perspective?

LEV: Korry was a fascinating guy. My understanding is that he had been either a journalist or in some other career with the old Look Magazine. He had his own way of dealing with things. I felt that Korry did not take professional advantage of the people he had around him. He had a solid team, whether it was the political or economic, but at times he just seemed to have his own agenda. It did lead to some problems, and after we had left Chile in '70 he was removed. I forgot who replaced him, but that was the time of the coup. And afterwards when he wrote his own story about what had happened in Chile the only place he could get it published was in one of those flesh magazines. I don't know if it was Hustler or some ridiculous place.

Mrs. LEV: Maybe it was Playboy.

LEV: No, it wasn't Playboy. It was, as I said, one of these back-bench magazines that you would read with a brown paper cover. But, he was professional; he was politically oriented; my own personal feeling is that he just did not know how to take advantage of his excellent staff.

Q: Particularly, when you think of Harry Shlaudeman.

LEV: There was Harry, there was Sam Moskowitz, who was his counselor for political affairs; there was Sid Weintraub. These guys went out to the grass roots and there was a young political officer named Keith Wheelock, who went out to the countryside to find out what is going on there. They really understood the situation while, for one reason or another, Korry either misread it or didn't put it all together or, again, he may have had his own agenda. It's my own personal view that when the balloon finally did go up and they threw Allende out, he was surprised. And we just couldn't understand it.

Q: When you first arrived in Chile, what did you think of it?

LEV: I think that we felt very little change. Having come from New York City, it was like going to another large urban center. Santiago at that time was about three and a half million people. The Chilean population is somewhat similar to the United States. About 85 per cent of European origin, and the other 15 per cent are of Indian background. It was very, very Westernized, except in the rural areas. It seemed that the only thing that changed was that we were speaking more Spanish than English. It was a very comfortable transition. Housing was excellent. The weather was phenomenal. The climate was like Los Angeles, smog and all and the same type of temperature. The people were highly educated; the literacy rate was about 90 per cent. And to the work itself – it was just a matter of moving my own background and expertise as an administrator and adapting it to the need of an overseas post with multiple responsibilities for the other agencies and people. We had at that time a staff, other than the Peace Corps, of about 60 or 70 Americans in the embassy. AID was a similar size. AID, State, and USIA employed about a hundred odd Foreign Service nationals. Plus there were almost 300 Peace Corps volunteers throughout the country.

Q: On the personnel side, did you run across particular Foreign Service type problems?

LEV: Well, I do remember that they sent down a junior officer trainee who had 40 weeks of French. When I asked why they had sent a highly qualified French speaker I was told that there were no francophone slots available. The only available JOT (Junior Officer Trainee) slot was in Santiago. His name was Jimmy Carter, believe it or not, but it wasn't the Carter. He was a sharp son of a gun. He picked up Spanish [*snap*] like that. But other than that the operations were pretty basic and we always had the FAMs to fall back on.

Q: The Foreign Affairs Manuals.

LEV: Manuals. I always used them as a guideline. They were not my bible, but there were times when I could use them to clinch as agreement with some of the Foreign Service types. But those were very exceptional cases. Basically, it was a matter of being a human being, being a listener, being as objective as the system would permit. I also had an excellent support staff. My nationals were fantastic, and several are still there. They were truly bilingual, they understood English, slang expressions included..

Q: What about the political situation when you arrived, and how did it develop during your tour?

LEV: When we first got there all we knew was what had been in our area studies. I had no language study because there had been no time. I didn't pay much attention to hat was going on for the first three months. I was just trying to settle in as a family, finding out where the right buttons were – finding housing, waiting for furniture to come down (which took about six months).

But by about December I became very aware of what was going on in the political arena. President Eduardo Frei, who had been elected in 1964, had legalized the Communist Party, and that led the other radical groups to become more active. At that time the Socialists were further to the left than the Communists because the Communists having just been legalized wanted to preserve a moderate image. The government itself was slightly left of center.

Things were going a little bit better for the country. As a result of the Vietnam War the copper prices were doing very nicely. They were going out of sight. But Chile had no real manufacturing capability so raw material would be exported. The finished product had to be imported at twice the price. Another problem – one that Frei was trying to address – was that only about 35 or 40 per cent of arable land was in agricultural use, and they were importing a tremendous amount of stuff. What Frei wanted to do was to get more of the large ranches, called *fundos,* under cultivation so as to minimize food imports. Now, in 1999, this is exactly what they're doing, and some of our fruit – grapes, apples, peaches and pears – is coming from Chile. But at that time, they were importing more than they were exporting. And that led to some political unrest, and then, of course, the extreme leftists took advantage of this thing and made a wedge and made it very difficult that the universities and particularly in the universities there was a lot of dissent and unhappiness on the part of the students.

Q: Mrs. Lev, what was your perspective on how things were there?

Mrs. LEV: For about the first two years that we were there, Chile was very pleasant. As a woman and as a wife, I didn't have any concerns about traveling by myself from where we lived to Santiago proper. I had no concerns about our son being at school or even leaving the baby with the maid for short periods. But after we were there about two years, toward the end of 1967, things began to change. One of the first signs for me of the change was Reuben coming home and saying that the home of one of the military attachés had had a firebomb thrown at it. That really sort of began to signal changes.

An ambassador from another nation told me not to accept packages, and to tell the maid not to accept packages. And occasionally there were phone calls, if we were at a coffee or if we were doing something with the ambassador's wife, telling us, "Don't ask questions, go home and stay there," or "Go home, the kids are being sent home from school." And the environment began to change. An American friend and I had gone downtown

shopping, and we were caught in a demonstration that was really very frightening. We hid in a store because it wasn't the crowd that was frightening, it was the water guns being used to control them. When that ended we got home as quickly as we could. Another time I was in a taxi and suddenly became aware of chanting and a mass of students, arms linked, walking up the street. I was really very frightened. I didn't know what would happen or where to go. But the driver turned around and said to me in Spanish that it was not a demonstration against America; it was over a student problem. It was a dramatically different environment. Social affairs with Chilean friends didn't change. But there was a different sense for me as an American woman and wife, that it was no longer this lovely peaceful place. One day we had gone to Viña del Mar with the children and when we came home that night the maid was frantic. We had passed through Santiago proper and seen a lot of tanks and army personnel but hadn't thought too much about it. But she was afraid that we had been caught in the demonstration that had involved a call-out of the military and several deaths, too.

And in Viña we hadn't known anything about it. So we didn't think to call her and tell her we were all right, and when we came in it was like a fiesta, "You're home! You're safe!" So the first two years was a different experience from our final almost three years from the perspective of making a home and living with your children and your family in a foreign country. I was certainly not terrified all the time, far from it. Chile was a beautiful place to live, and for the most part the people were wonderful, but there definitely was a change. And not having been politically aware earlier, it was very much a learning experience, albeit at times not comfortable. But that's part of the Foreign Service.

Q: Reuben, how was this translating in the embassy?

LEV: The government itself, and this may sound like heresy, was *too* democratic. It's difficult to explain, but there was too much leeway. There was very little control from the top vis-à-vis the heavy imports of foodstuffs and of finished products. The middle class was starting to become very strong, but there was still at the top those who had a tremendous amount and at the bottom those who had zilch, to put it bluntly. It just didn't work out the way he had hoped. It was almost like Hooverian economics. The idea that if you put it in at the top it will trickle down to the bottom didn't work. And people were angry about what was going on, plus they used the business with the Vietnam War – translated as the imperialistic Yankee chewing up those poor people in Asia. And of course, there's poor Cuba as the stalwart against the imperialistic Yankees. At the top there was just a tremendous amount of, maybe it was complacency, people at the top not listening to what was going on. This almost was the feeling that we had about thinking within the embassy. Marilyn and I had a tremendous number of informal contacts with the Chilean population, not only the people at the top, but the middle class and some of the people below, the families of the maids that we visited. They were telling us that there's too much complacency on the part of the government about the situation with the people at the grassroots. And this is what the political section with Sam Moskowitz were trying to explain to Korry. In the elections in September, '69, there was a leaning toward the left. Between September of '69 until we left in about April of '70, many of the stories we were getting back from the field as well as through official and informal sources were

saying that there's going to be a problem in the September 1970 elections. And as a result, for the first time in Chilean history, that's when Allende was elected on a plurality, and the rest, unfortunately, was history, until '73, when Pinochet threw him out, and everybody was saying *hurray hurray hurray*, and then there were the knee-jerk reactions, and I think we may very well see this in a Kosovo situation. First we banged on the Albanians; now the Albanian ethnics may start banging on the Serbians. So this was that was happening, where the leftists were banging on the rightists in '70, and then in '73, the rightists, who threw out the leftists, started to whack on them. But at that point, I think, unfortunately, it became rather negative. But they looked for Pinochet to come in.

Q: Were we thinking in terms of the Cold War, that the Communists have to be kept out no matter what, were the Socialists almost overlooked because we were concentrating on the Communists? What would you say?

LEV: I think it was the other side of the coin. Pretty much what I saw was that the Socialists were more leftist than the Communists, and, I think, our concentration, rightly so, was on the Socialist movement. The Communists were still feeling their way back. They had been underground all the way from about 1940, about 20-some-odd years. So now that they were legitimate I think they were just playing it cool – "Hey, we don't want to rattle the cage," so to speak. But we had focused on the Socialists, and the extreme movements – the Izquierda Radical. We had an excellent political section; they had their thumbs right on the pulse.

Q: What were you getting from your local staff?

LEV: The local staff knew they could talk with me and my wife. But others, unfortunately, some of my colleagues, were aloof from the nationals. Their attitude was what did the nationals know – they only live here, they only work here, what information could they give us? We were one of the very few who were taken in by these people to their homes, to see their families. Some people in the embassy to whom we relayed what we learned were b le to follow it up, and learned that it was accurate.

Q: Were you getting a feeling of disquiet from your nationals?

LEV: Yes. They had told us what was going on. We had a very politically oriented maid, she may have had a third-grade education, but Idesia was absolutely phenomenal. We'd have somebody at the house, and Idesia would serve dinner, and at the same time tell us whatever she thought of the political situation. She had lived in a *cayampa*, which was a slum area. I remember one time we had a bunch of clothing and mattresses and bedding that we took there. I nearly tore up my station wagon. And we spoke to the extended family living in this house maybe as big as the room we're in for the interview.

Q: We're talking about a 20-foot by 10-foot room.

LEV: It had a kitchen tucked into an alcove. They were very, very proud people. I remember the grandmother took us into this little cubbyhole, where she had an old Singer

sewing machine, and it was like the gods of Baal. We apologized because one of the mattresses had gotten a tear when I pushed it into the station wagon. And she chastised us, "It's only a tear. I can take care of it."

But they told us what was going on there, and they would say, "There's no reason for this. There's a lot of money, but it's stopping at the top. It's not coming down to us." And they said they don't want very much. What they wanted was a fair and equitable wage. Or give us the land; let us work the land. Or let us rent the land.

Mrs. LEV: They liked working for Americans. They didn't love Americans politically, but they liked working for them.

LEV: It's the old story, you know, "Yankee go home! (But take me with you)" kind of attitude. But they were very, very open, very honest about it, and they were excellent sources because they really represented the grassroots. And Idesia wasn't a Communist, she wasn't a Socialist, she was just trying to be a pragmatist; saying, we are the people – try to do something more for us than what's being done.

Q: This was your first go-round in the Foreign Service, how did it work?

LEV: Well, it was a fascinating period. I think I had more problems working with certain Americans than I had working with my nationals. What I found was that the nationals really knew the real world, where many of my American colleagues were ghettoized. They lived in the American area or the English-speaking area, and they just went from their home to the embassy and back to their home. The parties would be what I used to call "circularity." The counselor of administration would have a party, and then it would go to the economic counselor, and then they would reciprocate, and then an Anglophone embassy would have a party. You would go to them and you would reciprocate. But very, very few were invited to the homes of the Chilean middle class or the intelligentsia, the university professors and stuff. Sid Weintraub did get involved with the intelligentsia because he himself had a doctorate, and we met some wonderful people through some of our own nationals. And there was one national I had working for me, his father was a colonel in the *Carabiñeros*, which was the national police, and he invited us to his home, and it was just fantastic. But among the Americans themselves, it was just, "What do you know?" Especially with me; they were a little annoyed at me because I came in at the equivalent of a 5.

Q: About a major in the Foreign Service.

LEV: And all of a sudden these guys say, "Hey, I remember when I started out as a 7. How dare they bring you in at that level?" And I'm saying, "What the heck's the difference?"

Mrs. LEV: It was an old-boy network. It was very rigid and passed on to their wives as well. So it was a very stratified and that may very well have been true in other embassies as well, judging b y what I heard from other people. Within the American community,

your identity was your rank in the Foreign Service or your husband's rank in the Foreign Service.

LEV: In the pecking order of the foreign service list I outranked some of the guys that had been in the Service eight and ten years, and there I was up in the top 15, and they were down in the bottom 20. But it didn't bother me. Rank never bothered me. It never bothered me when I was in the navy; it was just working with the individuals, how can we contribute. So there was a certain amount of naïveté because of my experience working with the State of New York had made me somewhat naive. I was lucky there because as a generalist I had cut across all sorts of ranks, so to speak, and all types of people with different types of experience and professional backgrounds. And I think it was the generalist in me that I carried to Santiago, and all in all I was successful with it, except for the few to whom the pecking order was all important. And some of the wives would say, "If I talk with her, what can she do for my husband?"

Q: Yes, I often found that the wives picked up the stratification much more than the men. I was a consular officer, and in some embassies this was lower down on the pecking order. I know what you mean. In 1970 where did you go?

LEV: I was transferred back to the States, and that began my love affair with the Bureau of International Organization Affairs. I was brought back as an international administration officer, and I dealt with all the international organizations as an administrator, personnel officer, budget and finance officer. It was a three-man office. I worked at that time at Wynn-Southworth. Sam De Palma was the assistant secretary at the time. And after that most of my career was within the International Organization Bureau.

Q: You were in the IO Bureau, from '70 to when? In this particular job.

LEV: From '70 to '73, I was working in the budgetary and administrative and planning staff. Then I was assigned within IO to the staff dealing with UNESCO.

Q: '73 to-

LEV: '73 to '75, I guess. It was in the '73-ish, '74-ish area. After the UNESCO job, I was detailed to the Civil Service Commission as a member of the Presidential Panel on Federal Compensation as a result of my expertise in international salary administration as well as with New York State. That assignment lasted two years, and then I was reassigned back to the Department, and I was put into Cultural Affairs which soon became the Educational and Cultural Affairs Division of the International Communications Agency, the old USIA. I was there until the latter part of 1979. I was working with John Shumate as his assistant in administration. And then at the end of '79, I was assigned to the U.S. mission to NATO. I went into language training, and left for NATO in '80. And then the family joined me in the summer of '81. And I was an international administrations officer there at NATO, working with Bob Stevens, and

army officer, who now is a retired army colonel. I was one of two of the State Department civilians who was working in his division.

I forgot a very important element of my life. Let me back up. I left the Presidential Panel on Federal Compensation, it would have been about '75.

Q: I have you getting in there about '75.

LEV: Okay, but from toward the end of '75 to '78 I was assigned as the executive officer on the National Commission for the Observance of International Women's Year. My God, if I forgot at all, how could I forget that? And that was a result of the "Decade of the Woman" of the United Nations.

Q: Why don't we just talk about the period '70 to '73 when you first went into IO? What was your impression of IO, '70 to '73? This was early Nixon.

LEV: Very early Nixon. Well, I found it very, very exciting because I found myself, again, in a true generalist position, but nobody wanted an IO assignment at the time because it didn't help you in your career. As I mentioned, there were two or three of us in what became the Budgetary, Administrative, and Planning Staff (UNBAPS). We were responsible for the administrative and budgetary oversight of all the international organizations of which the U.S. was a member of or had been an associate of. And I found it exciting in that it was a multilateral operation; not the kind of a thing where you just work with one group in a foreign ministry. Here you worked with different organizations, different countries; you were working with senior personnel from the directors general down, who were multinational. The Secretary General was U Thant, and it was the time of the debt crisis. It hasn't changed very much in the last 20-some-odd years. But I was involved in dealing one-on-one with these international organizations, and it was exciting.

Q: Well, as a professional public administrator, what was your impression at that time of how the UN was run, from what you were learning about compensations and staff caliber and from various people with whom you were dealing?

LEV: I found that in the UN and the other international organizations, members of middle management and to a certain level senior management (those that weren't politically appointed) were all top-notch in their field. They all knew what they were doing, and at the same time they were all frustrated because they were working for the Secretary General but he was under the gun of a 120 or 130 nations telling him how to run the organization. My theory, and unfortunately it's been proven, is that international organizations were not set up to be efficiently directed. There are just too many people who want too many pieces of the action, and for them to become efficient would be almost like trying to get the Department of Defense to be truly efficient or getting rid of the $16 hammer or the $200 toilet seat. But they were run, under the circumstances, comparatively well. They had to be careful – as all the governments were watching them – to make sure that you hired enough of our nationals, and put our nationals within

certain levels of the P-grades (P-1, 2, 3, 4, 5), that we had our proper proportion of people. But administratively they were good. A manager who would have been an Afghani had to ride herd over other multinationals, some of whom from a political point of view were not exactly friends. It's like putting a Pakistani in charge of an Indian. Or you would have an Iranian who would be a boss of an Iraqi, or an American in charge of a Russian or vice versa. It was like a math project, all sorts of permutations and combinations. And this was of great help to me in what would be later interviews in my last assignment. But the people, I think, were good – were dedicated – but at the same time, the higher echelon were being torn by 130-some-odd governments telling them how to run it.

Q: What was the feeling that you were getting about U Thant.

LEV: I found that U Thant was comparatively weak because he was being pushed and pulled. At that time, the period from '70 to '73, was a dynamic period. The Vietnam War had wound down, and there were problems that were just bursting out all over the place, and the UN was being asked then, as they are now, to do things that they're just not capable of doing, such as setting up peace forces. But from the humanitarian point of view, I think he did very, very well under the circumstances. Our big argument at that time was that the United States was paying too much in dues. The assessment at that time was over 30-some-odd per cent, and we had recommended a cut back to 25 percent. There was a big battle about that. My recommendation that of one of my co-workers' was to leave it alone at present but when any new nation came in our dues should be reduced proportionately. The irony is, had we done that, we would have been well below 20 per cent, because of the increase from 120-odd nations to about 150-odd. But maybe it was political but the decision at that time was to say, "We stay at 25 per cent." Another recommendation, my colleague and I had made at that time and were laughed out of court was to treat the organization like a country club. Every member of the country club pays an equal share, so if you have 125 members, divide the bill by 125. But others said: no, no, that's not fair, it's not equitable. The United States is the rich brother – and after the Second World War it was true. We had about the only decent economy going. We have the same problem in dealing with the assessment at the OAS. I think we were assessed over 66 per cent but we only paid the equivalent of 50 per cent because we felt that that would be our fair share. So technically we were running about 15 per cent behind. But it did force the OAS and to some degree the UN into a more focused managerial operation. One of the recommendations that was accepted – in '71, '72 – was to establish a salary review committee; I was an adjunct to the U.S. representative on that. The object was to bring UN salaries more in line with those of the so-called host government. The salaries at that time were just crazy. They're still a little bit nuts, but they're still in reason. They had used Geneva as the base for the UN salary so that if you worked in New York, you had what is similar to our cost-of-living when we're overseas, which meant that in order to maintain your standards in Geneva, you were given an extra amount of money in New York. So one of the important changes made by the committee was to move the base from Geneva to New York. But then costs in Geneva went crazy, and anybody working in New York did very well. Also, based on what I think was called the Ottawa Agreement employees of the UN system would be tax-free. The United States is one of the only

countries that has not agreed to that. This resulted in another weird situation, a tax equalization fund. This provided that an American working alongside an Indian in the same job, in order to equalize their emoluments would be a reimbursement for his tax payments. This led to a pyramiding effect. You would pay $1,000 in taxes; the UN would give you back your $1,000; but you would have to add that $1,000 on to your regular taxable income.

Q: In the '70 to '73 period what was the attitude towards the United Nations and international organizations from the Nixon White House and the Congress?

LEV: Well, we had a congressman from New York, John Rooney, with great power over appropriations. Rooney was not a lover of anything international, and every time IO prepared a budget, it ran into trouble with Rooney. One of the things that got him going was the amount of building that was going on in Geneva for the headquarters buildings for the ILO and an organization, believe it or not called BURPI, which is the French acronym for the international patent office. They were all putting up headquarters buildings because they had outgrown their old headquarters. But Rooney didn't like the idea of their building what he called "monuments." He was right to some degree because they wanted some elaborate things. But these plans were cut back not only by the United States delegations but those of other countries as well and even within organizations. But he didn't like the buildings themselves, and when we had to pay our dues, he threw in a lot of roadblocks; we shouldn't pay for this, shouldn't pay in for that. To him the UN staff was overpaid and under worked, and this was the general attitude. But other than that, it made no difference whether it was Nixon or Carter. The attitude toward international organizations was the same and I think it is even today. Once you leave the beltway, the UN is just another acronym. Once you get out of Washington and New York City, people really have no idea what international organizations are about.

Q: Well, did you find yourself as part of a team fighting the battle to keep us in the UN system where we should be?

LEV: Yes, it was difficult because of attitudes beyond the beltway that the UN is a debating society; what do we need it for? And then while we were trying to tell them in simple terms, maybe if its a debating society we'll learn to speak instead of going to war as we did with the League of Nations fiasco. To some degree it's been successful, not necessarily the UN but the other international organizations like the World Health Organization, the International Labor Organization, ICAO, and the others. It's been a good sounding board where people can present certain things; even today we're dealing with the World Trade Organization. But though we agree or we disagree, at least there's a forum where you can bring your problems. And what I kept being reminded of is the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, to what all those guys did, and it was exactly the same thing. They found a common give-and-take, a balance as to how do we achieve things?

Q: Did you feel that Nixon wasn't trying to undercut the UN the way Ronald Reagan did at a later point, at least early on?

LEV: No, I think Nixon and Carter were pretty amenable, as long as the UN didn't rattle their own political agendas. And, with Rooney on the Democratic side and then with Helms as a minority member in the Senate, Nixon felt he had pretty good control over the type of people he could recommend for ambassadorships as well as in dealing with the budget. I think with Reagan we ran into a different type of philosophy, which was just generally misguided. The irony is that Reagan, who hated big government, has more buildings and things named after him as monuments to big government.

Q: Well, I thought we would stop at this point, and we'll pick this up in '73 when you were working with UNESCO from '73 to about '74.

LEV: Okay, fine.

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Q: Today is the 30th of June, 1999. Reuben, let's talk about UNESCO. In '73 we're into the Nixon Administration. What was the feeling about UNESCO at that time, that you and other people had?

LEV: Well, originally, before I went into UNESCO, I was part of the IO administrative and managerial operation, which at that time was called IO/BAPS, Budgetary, Administrative, and Policy Staffing. But then they needed me to serve on the UNESCO desk within IO. At that time there were a lot of problems with Congress dealing with UNESCO because we had been involved with the Egyptians. There was the time of the Aswan Dam, everybody was worried about the cultural destruction of Abu Simbel and the other temples. So the United States, which had about three or four million dollars in Egyptian pounds, put it to good use; we bought a temple, which is now in the Brooklyn Museum as part of the beautiful exhibit there. However, Congress was very, very unhappy, because of what was going on in Egypt and the whole Middle East shortly after the Yom Kippur War. They asked, how dare we give the Egyptians money in these circumstances? One of the congressional staffers told me, "Hey, look, we're getting bombarded with letters from everybody, from people who are involved with all the religions other than the Muslims that "Why are we feeding these guys money when they're tearing heck out of the religious operations?" whether it's Christian, Muslim, Coptic, or whatever. In discussions with some of the congressional staffers we tried to explain to them that this had nothing at all to do with politics; it had to do with the protection and preservation of something that once it's lost is gone. That's when I first came in contact with the office of William Cohen, who was a congressman from New England.

Q: Yes, from Maine.

LEV: They were absolutely fantastic. Cohen had been able to diffuse the problem up there in New England. We developed a boiler-plate letter as a response for the

congresspeople, and we were successful. I felt very, very good. This was one of the few battles that we actually won.

Q: What was happening with, say, John Rooney of Brooklyn? He had a large Jewish constituency, at that time.

LEV: When I spoke to Rooney's staff aide he said, there's a Jewish issue, and Rooney has a lot of votes out there from Jewish people. And I said, "Look, that has nothing to do with it. I'm Jewish. This is really directed towards the protection of something that's cultural." And then I said, "What would happen if they took down the Arch at the Grand Army Plaza?" He said, "My God, that would be sacrilege!" I said, "Well, that's it," these are old temples that went back to about the second millennium BC, and the one that we have went back several thousand years and had also been converted later to a Coptic church. And so Rooney's office was, I wouldn't say appeased, but happy with an honest explanation. It was a PR (public relations) operation not pushing a Department of State point of view but, a cultural point of view.

Q: Well, did you get involved in any other issues? What about our problems with UNESCO's leader, M'bow from Senegal, who was running UNESCO like a little fief with all the problems that come with fiefdoms, like corruption. In addition, Senegal was not particularly friendly towards the United States at the time.

LEV: At the time Irv Lippe was the director of the office and all of us including Fred Lawton and Will DeClerq were very much involved with trying to get the UNESCO management to come back to the real world. But it was M'bow who was able to dominate the operation, because he had all the other major contributors behind him, even thought we were contributing 25 per cent. The other major Western powers wouldn't go along with us. The French, because UNESCO is headquartered in Paris and Senegal being a former colony, being Francophone, they didn't want to put too much pressure on. Some of the rationalization for not interfering was that M'bow was just doing things the African way. So we weren't successful at that time in bringing the administrative roller coaster to heel. In fact, to add insult to injury – and this is where Rooney jumped all over us – they put up a sixth building and so we had the issue of what they called the *sixième bâtiment*, and we fought like crazy. They needed it like hole in the head, but again, we were unsuccessful. And again, it was that the Western allies couldn't get together. And even if they did, the non-Westerners, the East Europeans, had sufficient votes to defeat us.

Q: Well, did you sense any change in attitude towards UNESCO in 1973?

LEV: In '73 there were ripples. We're kicking in 25 per cent of the budget and we want at least 25 per cent results; but it was not what we were getting. IN fact, M'bow was running an empire, a fiefdom. He had converted one of the floors as a personal penthouse for himself and as a reception area. But one of the problems also was that a director of administration, an American, was being driven up the wall because he couldn't get to M'bow at all. He was pretty well frozen out. M'bow had taken this fellow on as a sop to the Americans, but he froze him out totally. There was a lot of anger, but to temper some

of this anger, there were many good UNESCO programs dealing with education, and other matters and a lot of the NGOs (non-governmental organizations) involved that had a lot of good programs and received a lot of support from the U.S. and from the State Department. But on the administrative and managerial side, no matter what we did we just couldn't get enough people to support us in saying let's put a stop to this thing.

Q: What was your view of the staffing of UNESCO?

LEV: In UNESCO, as in other international organizations, the political nature of the beast – geographic distribution, the allocation of positions to member states – always leads to a bloated bureaucracy or bloated secretariat. But I think the key was that he was bringing in a lot of his own cronies, and that's how he was able to get the votes. He said, "Hey, you know, Malawi, I'll give you two P-4's for one P-5 and if you'll give me your vote."

Q: P-4 being?

LEV: Being the equivalent of a mid-grade, about a GS-13. And then if the guy was really good and he could garner some more votes, "I'll give you a P-5," which is equivalent to a GS-15.

Q: And these are tax free?

LEV: They're all tax free. However the United States never signed the agreement, exempting from national tax any national working for an international organization. The United States was the only country that didn't agree. And so the U.S. does tax American employees of international organizations.

Q: What were you doing with UNESCO? I mean, what was your oversight and management?

LEV: Well, the oversight and management again dealt with getting this Feilai temple into the proper track vis-à-vis the Congress and the public itself, also dealing with programs vis-à-vis the M'bow syndrome, and also putting together papers and trying to get additional support from the Hill to continue to contribute to those programs that we felt were of national interest, again dealing with education and science.

Q: Did you find that UNESCO was carrying out its educational role?

LEV: Like any other organization, it bastardized itself to meet the lowest denominator; and had it not been for the NGO's pushing for support of certain programs, I think UNESCO's educational role would have been in trouble. There were programs for international training of teachers, establishing schools in places without them, developing text books that would meet the needs of certain countries to improve literacy rates. Working with the World Health Organization, UNESCO's programs included education about sanitation with respect to drinking water for example. Improving literacy is

important in this regard because if you could read instructions one-half of your battle is over.

Q: Were there programs in this area that made the U.S. very uncomfortable – problems relating to intrusion of strict governmental control or indoctrination? Was the Cold War intruding into this?

LEV: Well, it was. But again, we were semi-successful tempering this. Many countries, when they were preparing books and pamphlets were trying to rewrite their own history. And for some at that time, the Soviet Union could do no wrong while "imperialistic Yankees" were always wrong. The Soviet Bloc were really expert at it. We were babes in the wood, but we learned very, very fast. The NGO's did try to have UNESCO be apolitical. Now as far as what countries put in their books, I think that was basically an internal affair and what can an international organization do about that? In many of these emerging Third World countries everything was controlled from the top. The press, all communications were centralized; that's their culture, and that's they way they do things.

Q: During this time, were we in a way trying to bypass UNESCO, at least, or to influence UNESCO by dealing with the NGO's?

LEV: Yes, we had binational centers, and USIA was very, very instrumental in setting up libraries. You knew this was successful when the authorities started to burn the libraries, because the libraries had books covering all sides of an issue, so that people could read and the academics or intelligentsia could do research on all facets of a specific issue, and hopefully come up with a more objective point of view. USIA would get books and the old reel-to-reel tapes that people wanted. And the binational centers were also places where people learned English if possible from local teachers who were English speakers. The centers also had courses that trained people to do research, and do shorthand, and things like that. And this apolitical American effort was really appreciated. They did a good job.

Q: Who was our UN ambassador during the '73-74 period?

LEV: George Bush, and then John Scali. Bush's deputy was Tap Bennett, who was an old pro. It turned out that Tap was my ambassador when I went to the U.S. mission in NATO. But Bush was good. He listened. He led a pretty good battle over there.

Q: Was there any push from IO to say, "Let's try to get this in hand," or was it just, particularly with UNESCO, "Well, they're doing some good things and some bad things, and let's just play the game as best we can"?

LEV: Well, not quite, because at that time the assistant secretary was Sam De Palma, and Sam was an old career FSO. We did what we thought was necessary, not only with respect to UNESCO but to the UN system and what they called the "common system" which included seven or eight other international organizations including. We took the same approach to all of them focused on efficiency and economies of scale. We accepted

that there would be some fat, but what we wanted was a good solid cadre of people who know what to do and how to do it. And, I think, most of the international organizations did have that kind of personnel who were dedicated to what they were doing. As in any large bureaucracy there were the so-called 10 per cent – give them their money but lock the door and don't let them interfere with the true operation of the organization. This is the approach we took. We fought quite a bit vis-à-vis the salaries of the international organizations – how do you pay them, the allowances, the perks, staffing? And we constantly reviewed the draft budgets. Numbers were important, yes, but what kind of programs were they funding or what kind of programs were they requesting? Were these programs in the interest of the organization? Were they of interest to the United States? We looked at the programs from the operational and managerial point of view. We tried to introduce zero-based budgeting. We tried to introduce management by objectives. And they were very receptive to state-of-the-art review of budgets and programs and operations.

Q: It sounds as though you were doing this when you were dealing with an organization that couldn't care less about this. It was a good old international patronage system run by a master at patronage.

LEV: Well, when it came to UNESCO that was it. It was a patronage system. But fortunately the people in the trenches were the ones that were doing the work, and they did a darn good job. Unfortunately, when the top is immovable there is the threat that if you keep that up, we're going to write your job out of here. But in spite of that, they did a pretty good job of trying to keep programs going.

Q: Well, was the staffing in Paris or the whole Paris operation sort of a burr under your saddle, was pretty flamboyant living, or anything like that a problem from our perspective?

LEV: It wasn't exactly a burr; I think it was more like something caught in the craw of their throat. What you had there, again, was a small group at the top with M'bow. M'bow was an old politician from Senegal and he knew how to play the pieces of his orchestra, so to speak, in order to make sure that his position was protected – and it was. But again, going down the ranks, we were happy with what people were doing. Some of the people put themselves in jeopardy by coming to speak to us at the U.S. mission to UNESCO. We had some very interesting and frank discussions with them. We would ask, "Why is this going on?" and then they would say you have to go up to the higher ranks. That was a very, very slow approval process, like going from one of our GS-2's to get to the Secretary of State to sign off on something. And by the time the proposal finally got approved or the problem got looked at it was already too late.

Q: Did the Soviets play a helpful or unhelpful role?

LEV: Well, I felt it was rather unhelpful because if we said "black," they said "blue"; if we said green, they said orange. And no matter what came out of the Western Bloc, it just didn't fit their agenda. I think basically their agenda was just to disrupt, to show that, you

see, they can't do anything right. To do anything right you have to follow us. And in effect, it wasn't just the Soviet Union it was really the Soviet Bloc. They were a potent political force because they had sufficient votes, but at the same time they know how to wield their power, to say: "If you vote that way, you're going to be in trouble, buddy." And they played hardball, and we played sort of a hardball game also. But I think we stayed more democratic, fortunately, in talking with our groups. And we did have groups – Latin American group, the West European Organizations. Within each of the groups we tried to get a point of view across. And sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't because of what was more important to other countries than the so-called international program – the question of what the program could do for me sitting here in the middle of Zululand or wherever? Is this going to help me, or what do I have to do to make sure I get some funds for my education program. And if I support X in his position will he support me in mine.

Q: Did you feel any pressure or influence from the Kissinger-Nixon combination, or was the UN so peripheral to them that you kind of went about your own business, or did you here, say," The White House needs this or that"?

LEV: Well, I think, both of those. Somebody's always speaking in the name of somebody in authority "The White House wants this," or "OMB wants that," or "The VP's office wants this," or Senator Whosis wants that. But I think with Kissinger there was an advantage because he was not only involved with academia; he was also involved with the real world. I think we benefited by having Kissinger at the White House and then at State. He didn't want recommendations. He said, "Let me make the decision, but give me sufficient information so that I can have a reliable set of facts to base a decision upon. I want the pros and cons. And if I have more questions on the pros and cons I will say, 'all right, fill me in on those things.'" And it made a lot of us say, "Hey this is great," because unfortunately we had to try to guess what kind of a paper they wanted, what answer are they looking for? So, you have the answer, and you develop the question to meet the needs of the answer.

Q: Well, you were with UNESCO for '73-74-ish. Where did you move after that?

LEV: After that I moved over to the Civil Service Commission. When I was with the Budgetary, Administrative and Planning part of IO, one of the areas in which I became expert had to do with international salaries and emoluments. At that time the Civil Service Commission was under the chairmanship of Bob Hampton with whom I had worked when he was a member of the International Civil Service Advisory Board (ICSAB), as his support person. He said, "Reuben, would you like to come over and work with us for a couple of years on a special project?" And the project was very exciting. It had to do with the total Federal compensation package that they were redesigning and redeveloping. I said, Yes, it will be something different, something I hadn't done in the domestic area since I had worked with the State of New York. So I was detailed to the Civil Service for two years, from '74 to '76.

Q: You mentioned there was an international flavor to this.

LEV: With the Civil Service, what I did bring over was the international flavor, that is, dealing with the so-called emolument package: how do you pay a person for living outside the country? or in the case of the Civil Service, a person who is headquartered in San Diego and is temporarily transferred to Omaha. So my experience with that problem was really very, very useful. You try to find a specific base. Is the base where you work? And then, what does it cost to live at the other post at the same level? It's similar to the Foreign Service, for example, what do we have to pay a Foreign Service officer assigned to Paris in order for him to maintain the standard of living he had in Washington, DC? And this was done, but except on a domestic part. In the United States, living in the northwest for example is living in a different world from Washington or in New York. And one of the things we did for the Civil Service was develop locality scales. We also developed what came to be the Senior Executive Service, recommending a contract of two to three years which could be extended for a year or more.

Q: When you were working with the Civil Service Commission, did you run across petty dukes in various areas who had always run things in Omaha this way, and "By God you're not going to mess with me"?

LEV: Unfortunately, yes, and I think it goes back to the fact that, wherever you have a bureaucracy, you're going to get the so-called 10 per cent. Some of them were competent; some of them were incompetent. I think they had reached their so-called "Peter Principle" and were operating under Murphy's Law.

Q: Well, the Peter Principle is you rise by promotion to a state of incompetence, and therefore you are no longer promoted.

LEV: That's right. But it goes a little bit beyond that, because the way we looked at the old Peter Principle was that you were promoted to your level of incompetency. Some of the people, just kept on going, and if in doubt they went by the book; the Foreign Service people by the FAM (Foreign Affairs Manual). The Civil Service people by the FPM (Federal Personnel Manual). The idea was that if its not there, it doesn't exist. But this locality idea shook up everybody. We had some problems with the congressional committee that handles the civil service, and some of the staffers were saying: "You can't do this." I said, "Take a look around your table. You'll find that your congresspeople all come from different parts of the country. Are you going to tell the congressperson from New York, that his constituent, who is a civil servant, can't have more money because he's living in New York?" So Congress was pretty receptive to the idea until it came down to the budgetary crunch. There were other people who said, "We've been doing it this way for years. We have one Civil Service; the grade is from 1 to 18. It works. It's worked since 1849. Leave it alone. It should not be tampered with - if it ain't broke, don't fix it." But fortunately, there were only a few and we did have support from the top, from the chairman of the Civil Service Commission. He gave us what amounted to a blank check, to carry out our general mandate to see what can be done to revise the government's total salary-emolument package. We kept him pretty well in the loop. We had conferences with him every week or once every two weeks, to fill him in. He had

assigned to us some excellent people, so things went comparatively smoothly. And anytime we ran into a roadblock, we said, "The chairman has said...." and it would melt away. There was one mistake, the appointment of somebody from a consulting firm to be the overall leader of the band who was very, very heavy-handed and just couldn't get involved with the bureaucracy. Since we knew we were going to change the world of many of the senior civil service people we had to use tender loving care. He came in like a roaring freight train, and he knocked us back several months, and then the chairman contacted his firm and they found another project for him. And that's when Bob put in one of his senior people, and after that it was just very smooth.

Q: Well, in '76, you're off this temporary assignment doing rather fascinating work with the Civil Service Commission. Where did you go then?

LEV: I became the executive officer of the National Commission for the Observance of International Woman's Year, which had been set up in 1975 in fulfillment of the UN mandate that each of the member states was to establish a national commission to carry out the objectives of the Decade of Women. In November of 1977 we had a very successful national conference of women in Houston. There were about 15,000 including all of the First Ladies still living – Betty Ford, Rosalynn Carter, and Lady Bird Johnson. Others included: Bella Abzug, Gloria Steinem, Alan Alda, Helen Gurley Brown, the editor of one of the major magazines. And we had people from academia and from everyday walks of life. Many issues were debated including the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) which became a major rallying point for many. I would argue that although years ago efforts to pass a Constitutional amendment on child labor failed, today every state in the union has very strong laws on the books dealing with child labor. And the thing to do is go from state to state and find out what laws are discriminatory, and then bring political clout to change them, mend them, throw them out, or bring in new ones.

Another issue was abortion on which there were solid forces on both sides. The rights of prostitutes also came up – they wanted to be left alone, and they wanted the right to carry on their business. Another important issue involved the private sector and government support for day-care for the children of working women.

Q: What was your role in this?

LEV: In my role as the executive officer I was responsible for making sure the programs got going. I was also responsible for $5 million that Congress gave us. What made that part easy was that they gave us a no-year appropriation, meaning they gave us the money in '75, and the organization would finish in March or April of '78. In '75 we had asked, I think, for 10 million and they gave us five million. Senator Chuck Percy was instrumental in helping us get the bill through the Senate and through his alliances and friends through the House of Representatives. Although with the no-year appropriation we didn't have to submit a request every year, but we still had to do the appropriate reporting to the Office of Management and Budget. I also had to ensure that the monthly meetings were properly

run. For example, we were required by law to have all the meetings taped. We also had to fund a site for the national convention; we settled on Houston.

Q: Did Lady Bird Johnson have much to say about that, do you feel?

LEV: No, the reason we ended up in Texas was that we had a division within the Commission itself. Some wanted a state that was totally union, others wanted a state that was not totally union. Texas was what I think it was called an "open" state, if you want to join the union you can; if you don't want to join the union you don't have to. So that's why they selected Texas. Plus, Houston did come in with a better package for us also. We also had to deal with logistical problems, finances, getting the report put together and printed, and provide appropriate reporting to Congress and the OMB.

Q: I would have though that you would have had a problem, because we're talking about dealing with approximately 51 per cent of the population, which had become more and more restive because of really gross discrimination. Some elements were extremely strident, and then there were some very strong political cults to the right and to the left. And here you are trying to manage this, I mean, a male representing a government which up to then has been pretty discriminatory towards women. The very fact that here you were, a male, in charge of this particular thing – was this a problem?

LEV: I think at the beginning yes, because they didn't trust me. And for the same reasons you're giving, that here he is, a male, and he's running the show, he's got control of the money, the logistical operations, he can make or break it. But at that time, Mildred Marcy was the director of the Commission, and working with her was fantastic. Through Mildred's efforts we allayed the fears that I was there as a spy. After that I was dubbed, in a loving sense, the "resident Chauvinist."

But then we really settled down to work, and I think it became very, very professional, so that the question of being a male never arose.

Q: Well, I think, based on all our experience, that woman for years, maybe centuries, certainly decades, had been putting together organizations – being the charitable ones, the community ones, much more effectively than men, because with men the ego gets involved, and not as much gets done, whereas women in our society have proved to be better organized.

LEV: There was one meeting about a very, very hot issue, and finally one of the Commission members jumped up on the table, and she was about maybe four feet five, and she was yelling at the top of her lungs, "Sisters, sisters, you're behaving like men." Everything came to a pregnant silence, and then they all broke out into laughter. So when it comes to running meetings or developing organizations or dealing with specific issues, I think it makes no difference whether it's men or women. They had the same problem; they had the same successes, as in an organization run by men. In both you have your grumps, your gripes, you have to deal with the dynamics of how a meeting is run, who is your official leader, who is the unofficial leader, who are the alpha cats and the beta cats.

We did have some very, very strong personalities, and I expected that as a result there would be some sparks. There were, and the meetings were hot and heavy. But again, it was brought back into the professional context: we are here for a specific purpose. We were successful in developing and approving the programs developed by the staff that I had pulled together. We had a staff of about 60-65 people, most of them program officers putting together information. There were also people who were helping the states develop their sub-national state commissions. These in turn would elect delegates to go to the national conference that was being planned for November 1977. And I was instrumental in helping them get people together and organizing, and of course telling them how much money we were able to give to each of these state organizations. But in reality, these state organizations pulled the money together for their delegates. And the number of delegates was based almost on how we elect delegates to Congress, you know, by geographic distribution with one delegate shall be for *x*-number of women in the state.

Mrs. LEV: I was certainly not a participant, but Reuben would come home, and he was so excited by what the women were doing. Even though there were times when he was very annoyed by the dissension, there was this sense of excitement about something happening. I think that that excitement pervaded the conference, and I think also that his sense of what was going on had something to do with their acceptance of the fact that even though he was a male he was sharing their sense of need and their sense of excitement. But I was not part of that other than through what he would come home and say: "Hey, this was very exciting," or this was what was happening. And even the negative events that happened were meaningful because, for the first time, there was an international podium, there was mutual support and excitement over the Decade of the Woman. So he was excited by what he was doing, and I knew that what was happening there was not always going the way they would have liked it, but nonetheless, there was movement forward, and I think the fact that so many states later adopted elements of the ERA proposals was a factor. But through him I had a sense of the excitement of the times. And I'm sure that was pervasive.

Q: Could you put in context – I mean we're getting ready for an American meeting, the one in Houston. This was an American meeting. Was this the equivalent of ones being held in other countries in getting ready for the international meeting? I would imagine issues in the American meeting would be American issues, not dealing with female circumcision or that type of thing?

LEV: There was some liaison with some of the Western national commissions, but very, very little with the East dealing mostly with questions about the advance of the program in a general sense. There was an international meeting of women in I think it was Mexico City. It was a total fiasco because it imploded for political reasons – Cuba was jumping up and down, the Western Bloc was trying to impress the Eastern Bloc, and everybody impressed everybody, and nobody did anything. And then there was another meeting within this same period, I think in Copenhagen, which was the last international meeting of women. We sent our national chair and one or two other people to that meeting which was much more successful. It was less political than the one in Mexico City. From the feedback I had gotten, many of the women expected that at Mexico City all women

would unite as one to go forward together. And then they found out the hard way that each government had its own agenda on women's issues, and that cultures ran very, very deep. What made Copenhagen somewhat more successful is that the delegates recognized that they were dealing not only with all of the issues affecting women, but also with the cultures involved going back thousands and thousands of years. So in Copenhagen our delegates understood that, and tried to deal with issues that could be dealt with internationally.

Q: Was the U.S. government pushing any agenda that you were aware of, or was the government's role simply to help this group, which was non-governmental, have a good meeting?

LEV: I don't remember any pressure to present the U.S. point of view. The U.S. point of view was that we're abiding by the UN resolution to establish a national commission which was to have meetings, make proposals and recommendations. The political issues came from outside the government – people like Phyllis Schlafly, the pro-lifers, the anti-lifers. The private sector was very, very concerned about the impact on their profits if they were required to set up day care centers. Some of the manufacturers of women's garments who worried if women aren't going to wear bras, what are we going to sell? You're going to put people out of work. As silly as it sounds, that actually did happen.

Q: What about the national conference in Houston. How did it come off?

LEV: The meeting, I felt, was a success. The three first ladies kept things tempered. We had a very, very strong agenda. They met the timetable and all the agenda was successfully dealt with. Each of the commissions at the state level were going to go back to their capitals and start lobbying for changing laws or amending laws. There would also be informal assistance – that if someone in New Jersey needed help from somebody in New York, the people in New York would help New Jersey do lobbying. I think they surprised themselves. About 15,000 people attended and there were about 1,000 delegates.

Q: Did you have much dealing with Bella Abzug, because she was from your home town and was a renowned, very aggressive congresswoman, who did not hide her light under a bushel?

LEV: Bella was a very, very astute politician, but she only made one mistake, which was to run against Moynihan for the Senate seat. And the second mistake she made was to be one of five candidates to run in the Democratic primary for the mayor of New York. But when you knew her in the real world, she was a very, very bright, dynamic lady, and she did have very pretty brown hair under that hat. We had many meetings with Bella, who was the deputy commissioner, and with Mildred, to discuss strategies and things like that. She was very astute. She knew what she wanted. She had been responsible, when she was in Congress, for the passage of the "Sunshine Law," and the "Sunset Law," providing that when a program is completed the unspent money must go back to the Treasury. And our surplus did go back to the treasury; I think out of my $5 million I was able to give

back $650,000-750,000. We ran a very economical group, but we weren't penny-wise and dollar-foolish. Bella was a solid lady, delightful to work with. She would drive you up the wall because she had her own ideas, but she wasn't the way she was presented by the press. Gloria Steinem was also very, very helpful in maintaining a balance.

Q: Well, in '78 you moved out of this. You had been sort of used as a fireman. Where did you go then?

LEV: We wrapped up shop in about March or April of 1978, closed the books on IWY. Then a very good friend of mine, Ralph Eye, who was at that time in the Bureau of Cultural Affairs involved me in a White House plan to combine State's Bureau of Cultural Affairs with USIA to form the International Communications Agency (ICA). And I became part of this new organization, and the effort to blend the two groups. Alice Ilchman became director of the ECA, the Educational and Cultural Affairs Division of the ICA. I worked with John Shumate, who was the director for administration, as one of the officers who was trying to help him mesh the USIA culture and the State Department culture. And then I became an instant expert in dealing with the book program with which I had not been familiar. I discovered that sending books to our libraries involved a very active review process. And my question was, why do we have this other than making sure that a book is not offensive to a culture? And then I went to New York and took a look at our warehouse, and we had books galore. And I said, "What do we need this for?" because many of the publishers would be very, very happy to send us copies of books that they felt would be of use to the library, not that they were going to advance education, but from a commercial point of view. So I was involved with writing a report that established a process to make sure not only that the books were not offensive but would serve a purpose, whether with a negative or a positive view of the United States.

Q: There's one thing about a book being offensive, but there's the practice during the McCarthy period when they were yanking books out under no particular standards. I can understand that you have to worry about a culture. But what about the United States? I mean a good half the books published are sort of slamming the United States or American culture. Coming from the academic world with writers, left, right, and center. Were we involved in that? Did it make any difference?

LEV: Oh, it did make a difference for one reason, which is that because we are an open society, they don't need us. I mean, the books are there, the books are on the shelves, and their own embassy people who would have the counterpart of a cultural affairs officer, all he has to do is go down to the local Brentano's or Barnes and Nobel, and you can find books that are pro-U.S., anti-U.S., and on any issue. It's not that we were controlling it. The stuff was available. It's just a matter of having a better access for these governments that when we establish the libraries within the binational centers or within the USIA libraries in all of these countries they can go in and do research on a project knowing full well that they're going to get all sides covered in dealing with specific issues. So the open society – I mean, it was there. They didn't need us. And of course the paperbacks, and then in England you had the headquarters for Penguin and the Oxford Press. So the stuff was available, and it overcame what I think – and I agree with you totally – was an

embarrassing period of time – I mean the McCarthy era. It was stupidity carried to the n^{th} degree, but the materials were there.

Q: Was there any drive to have somebody sitting, and saying, "Well, these binational centers certainly shouldn't get books by Marcuse who was at that point a prominent leftist guru at the University of San Diego.

LEV: I think the program, when I got involved in it, '78-80, was a carryover from the McCarthy era. We did have this, I wouldn't call it censorship *per se*, but we did have people who were reviewing these books and using their own judgement on whether they were appropriate for our libraries. When I did mention it, I said, "These guys can go out and get these books anyway." When it was argued, "We don't have to feed the fire." I said, "You're not feeding a fire. Let them read it, but make sure that you have another book that deals with the same issue whether from the right or the left and let them make the decision."

Q: This is basically passing the decision on to the binational center, which was not completely under our control.

LEV: Not quite. The binational centers reviewed recommendations about what not to take and what to take. If there was something that they wanted, and somebody back in Washington thought they shouldn't have it, then something would get lost in the mail or "I'm sorry, your airgram got lost" or "We don't think that there are sufficient copies of the book to go around." I mean any excuse served. So there was a sort of a subtle way of telling the BNC what you could have and what you couldn't have.

Q: But essentially we did cut out books, while you were there.

LEV: There was this extra layer of book review. And that was good.

Q: When you talk about book review, it means essentially censorship. It has to, I mean, otherwise why would you review a book?

LEV: I think the only review finally did evolve down to the point of making sure that the books wouldn't go out with certain types of pictures or language – Henry Miller books for example, Steinbeck, or Hemingway. But it was fine. And then in Moscow they were really surprised that they had some good solid books there dealing with America, and one of the things that we had problems with, that we heard from our USIA people there in Moscow was that, Hey, you guys really are pushing something. We had a copy of the Soviet Constitution, and many people came in there to read it, and they were absolutely shocked because technically, the Soviet Constitution was more liberal than the American Constitution.

Q: Oh, it was a great Constitution if you look at it there are all sorts of rights.

LEV: And they used our Constitution as the base. But they never had access to it, so the Soviet academics came in, and wow, did they start a furor, so it was great. So it was little things like that. We did get out, dig in, and said, "We're not doing anything. This is an official Soviet document." But we don't have it in our libraries because we don't think it's appropriate. But it was there. So there was some left-handed humor that we enjoyed.

Q: You know, the organization was called ICA for a short time, which annoyed everybody who was in what we have to still call USIA, because it sounded like an offshoot of the CIA.

LEV: Originally it was supposed to be the Communications International Agency, CIA.

Q: Yes, but this was a Carter innovation which died very quickly.

LEV: Fortunately.

Q: USIA and State. How did you find these two cultures were working together? They had been running exchanges, in a way, jointly, because the USIA people abroad, USIS, were picking who would be exchanged, and then the process was carried out in State. It was a peculiar operation, so it made sense to put them together.

LEV: There were some real diehards, saying: "State, you don't understand us." And State would say, "USIA, you don't understand us." But fortunately the people in the middle ranks, the guys in the trenches, were what made this go. From an administrative and managerial point of view – and even from a substantive point of view – the move was successful and was working – the exchange program, the Fulbright Program, the book program, support of the libraries. Support of USIA programs out in the field came from a more vociferous member of the country team at embassies because many of the USIA types were the PAO, the public affairs officers. Many of the PAOs were concerned because the ambassador could send a note back to the director of USIA, "This guy is no good," and there goes his career – again, the rating system sort of got involved. But the meshing of the groups, I think, worked out very well. I think what helped it was that you just had to work together, and otherwise the whole thing would just fall flat on its face. And it was successful, again, from the ICA point of view, with our exchange program. Everything went over lock, stock, and barrel, so it made it easy. You still had the same people doing the same thing, where duties, responsibilities, programs, objectives didn't change; the only thing that changed was the letterhead.

Q: Who was the head of ICA in those days? Was it Reinhardt?

LEV: Yes. John Reinhardt.

Q: But, I mean, that didn't change things particularly?

LEV: No, he was happy that things were moving the way they were. And again, Alice Ilchman was the one that handled the ECA part of it, and it turned out that from a

political point of view – I think she was the daughter of a former secretary of the Treasury or somebody who had worked in the Federal Reserve System – she was a bright, dynamic lady, and we were lucky, I guess, to have good people.

Q: Did you see a difference in the ICA people and the State people? Were they two different breeds of cat?

LEV: I found that they were basically the same. The people were okay. They had their little quirks. "This is not the way we did it," and then we'd say, "Hey, guys, we didn't do it that way; however, this is the way we're going to do it now." I think it's a natural instinct. "I'm so comfortable, why are you taking away my shoes?" kind of a thing. But, they did work together professionally. I think the mistake at that time was the separation between the FSIO (Foreign Service information officer) and the FSO, so there was some animosity, I think, on a one-to-one basis. But overall, I think it worked out very well.

Q: In 1980, you went where?

LEV: Okay, after 1980, I was assigned as an international administration officer to the U.S. mission in Brussels, USNATO.

Q: Brussels. So you were there from '80 to when?

LEV: '80 to '83. First they put me into language training for 20 weeks.

Q: French?

LEV: French, and so you go to an organization with 20 weeks of French where they all speak English and you live in a Flemish area. Other than that it was fine.

Q: All right, next time we'll pick it up there.

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Today is the 6th of August, 1999. Reuben, what are we off to, and what are we doing?

LEV: Okay, should we start with the NATO operation or just bring us up to date now?

Q: Oh, no, the NATO operation.

LEV: In NATO it was a three year assignment.

Q: So you were there from when to when?

LEV: 1980 to 1983. I was assigned as international administrations officer. I was responsible for what they called the Civil Budget Committee where I was the U.S. representative (rep). I was also the U.S. rep on the Coordinating Committee of

Government Experts, which dealt with administration and budgetary policies for NATO and for other international organizations co-located in Europe, such as the European Union, the European Patent Office, and the European Space Agency. Because I was the only one in the mission who knew how to deal with the issues, I was able to develop my own policies – with approval, of course, from EUR/RPE. And it worked out very well. It was very exciting; in an embassy you're working one-on-one with someone in a specific ministry; here I was working with 15 other counterparts. It led to some fascinating give and take; we all had to give, and we all had to take. I also established an informal group of five consisting of representatives – all senior bureaucrats – of Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, and France, the major contributors at that time to NATO. We just compared notes on the areas of interest to one or the other of us and where we needed support of others in proposing a particular national policy, whether concerning international operations or personnel administration or the budget. And whatever the Five decided, the other eleven followed suit. I was the only member of a diplomatic service. The others came out of their civilian ministries.

I also got involved with terrorism. I was sort of an adjunct to NATO's Special Committee concerned with how each of the member states was dealing with terrorism. At that time it was comparatively quiet. But while I was there, there were several attacks by terrorists, most of them of North African descent. Belgium itself, I think, was an excellent place to be. It drove Marilyn crazy because the so-called "eight-to-five" hours, were nonexistent, and work on the weekends, of course. One day we had to wake up the ambassador at about four o'clock in the morning when a telegram informed us that the U.S. is going to announce that we have a neutron bomb that will kill people but not destroy property. And then our poor fellows in USIA had to do quite a bit of political wordsmithing and to say it's not all that bad. But it came out at the wrong time because in 1982-83, that's when the Marine building in Lebanon was blown up. And there were a couple of other terrorist activities involving Lebanon, and a few of our embassies got hit.

Q: Who was our ambassador?

LEV: At that time it was Tap Bennett, and I had the good fortune to serve with Tap for the full three years that he was there. I think he finished up his tour about the same time I did.

Q: Was he interested in what you were doing?

LEV: He was very interested in it. He was a fascinating man. He knew what was going on and he was interested in what was going on. During the morning meetings, the equivalent of the country team meetings, we all had to report on what we were doing. If something struck him, he would say, "I want you to see my secretary and make an appointment for *x* o'clock. I want to go into greater depth." He was very interested in the administration of international organizations and NATO: Were we getting economies of scale? Were we really getting our money's worth? Were these people really doing what they're supposed to be doing? And he was a people-oriented ambassador, which made it somewhat easier for me.

Q: When you came to NATO, were you getting suggestions in the corridor or anywhere else of concern that the administration wasn't doing too well? Questions about how well the organization was being administered, and whether we were getting our money's worth?

LEV: Well, this was one of the responsibilities of the Coordinating Committee of Government Experts. Each of the 16 member states had representatives on this group which was supposed to make sure that we were truly getting the value of what we were contributing. Plus, there was an independent body of auditors consisting of five or six members from each major contributor. The U.S. member headed the group, and I dealt quite a bit with him. He had a problem with the others. It was a matter of auditing techniques. Their approach was that if you spend a dollar on pencils, show me the pencils. And our view was, we spent a dollar on pencils, however, were all these pencils really necessary? Our approach was to determine whether a given action was necessary. Is this item necessary? Are additional people really required to perform *XYZ* functions? Where the others were more straitlaced in determining when you spend something, show me the receipt. When you go to a gas station, and you put in for mileage, show me the receipt.

Q: It was more a straight auditing rather than an efficiency test.

LEV: I guess that would be it. Quality control was the approach we pushed. By the time I left they were starting to more in that direction, and the U.S. auditor and I were very successful in persuading the others that auditing is not only counting pencils but also examining necessity and quality.

Q: But did you find that on the whole, was there a major problem with NATO, or was it rather working with an operating system that wasn't out of control?

LEV: It wasn't out of control. It helped that there were then only 16 states. It worked very, very well, in comparison to the UN. There was a common goal, a specific purpose, as opposed to the UN's more generalized objective. And the experts working on NATO affairs all had specific programs to deal with.

One of the developments at NATO – while I was there and in which I had a hand – involved civilian programs. This was unusual; the usual concerns were with weapons, tactics, oil reserves and so forth. Under this civilian program, Science for Stability, the Southern Tier countries – at that time it was Greece, Turkey, and I believe Portugal – were helped to develop graduate courses in international affairs and science. There was some opposition among NATO members. Somebody said it was "Science for *Stupid*bility." But supporters – the British, Dutch, and the U.S. – prevailed. It was inexpensive –$5 million for three years. Members sent educational experts to help develop graduate courses in science and international affairs. So we were successful in that. There was also a committee on modern society, which helped members develop NATO infrastructure including common road signs and driver's tests. Belgium at that

time was either the first or the second in the world in automobile-caused deaths. Everything had to be decided by consensus, so diplomatic skills were important. It was almost like playing Monopoly, I'll give you Boardwalk for two railroads. At times it did end up with horse trading. But in my little group of five we understood the problems the members were facing at their own ministries, so we were able to work things out before we got into formal conferences and council meetings. There was no bloodletting or questions of who did what to whom. I'm sure it's been your experience that when you hear about communiqués that they are developed long before the leaders ever meet. And the communiqué itself is a matter of give and take and negotiations.

Q: Oh, yes, that's where the negotiations go on. Well, now, tell me, as you were dealing with this, what were the characteristics of some of the groups that you dealt with? I'm sure somebody could say, "Well, that Lev was very American, and he said such and so and worked in such and such a way." Let's talk about some of these, the French for example.

LEV: By this time, the French were technically not involved with the military, but they stayed in what they regarded as the civilian, dealing for example with the non-military infrastructure.

Q: How about the French delegate in your committee?

LEV: The French delegate was a fascinating person. He was a member of their diplomatic service. Unfortunately, he didn't have enough training in dealing with people. I believe he was a consular officer, which surprised me, because consular activity, day to day, is with people. But he was from somewhere behind the scenes, and either he had a problem understanding what NATO was about, or his instructions were fuzzy. But when he was replaced in 1981, and succeeded by a woman, things turned around 180 degrees. Working with her, we had a better understanding of the problems she faced with getting certain proposals across or supporting a U.S. initiative or a Dutch initiative or a German initiative. So the French all in all were very, very much involved and after her assignment there were no real arguments or battles. We all understood where we were, what the limits were from a budgetary point of view. We all knew what we wanted from the infrastructure, what we wanted the NATO infrastructure to do for us as a whole, and how we could improve its operations. Could we streamline it any more? Could we bring in more electronic support, whether it was moving away from the electronic typewriter to bringing in computers? There was some opposition to computers. But about '81-82 we started to bring in computers, and in 1983 we were all finally hooked up to a mainframe.

Q: What was the role of the Germans? How did you find the German representative?

LEV: The German, Karlheinz Karl was a fascinating man. He was from their Ministry of the Treasury, and working with him was no problem. He would look at me, and I would look at him, and he knew I was Jewish, and he understood what the situation was from 1933 to 1945, but we had an excellent working relationship. We also had a wonderful personal relationship with him and his wife. His wife, I believe, was a pediatrician.

Mrs. LEV: She was a brilliant lady.

LEV: A brilliant lady, and it worked out well.

Q: From what you've said, it sounded like the Dutch representative was sort of a spark plug there.

LEV: Robert Smits. He wasn't exactly a spark plug. I think he would act as a mediator if thought that things weren't going the way they should be or if everyone was starting to sing together and then somebody was off key. He would say, bring in the bass and bring in the sopranos. He was from the Treasury Ministry detailed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was also a lawyer and a colonel, and part of the queen's front office. So he felt that he was responsible for helping things along. But I think it was almost like a five-cylinder Audi: all of the five cylinders worked together. There were difficult days, as in everybody's life. But basically we all had a feeling for each other. There was not only a working relationship but also a personal one and deep friendships developed. Even after all these years, we're still in touch with some of them. It was an unusual group.

Q: In '80-83, what was the feeling about the "Soviet menace" at that point, because, as you know, it waxes and wanes?

LEV: Well, at that time we felt the threat was very, very real. And then we also believed at that time that they were the ones that were funding the mess in the Mideast, that they were behind the bombing of the Marine barracks and the terrorist groups that were wandering around Western Europe. The feeling was that if it came to a military showdown the two sides were in balance because we all had the bomb and other capabilities. So everybody was concerned, we all felt the threat was real. There was constant debate going on within NATO about what do we do if an atom bomb hits, how do we prepare? Do we dig deeper down into a Maginot Line, or do we send airplanes up?

Q: And of course we had the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December of '79. Did you get any repercussions during this early period from our hostage situation in Iran? Was that a major concern or not?

LEV: It was a concern, but I think the general feeling was that it was an isolated situation reflecting that the Iranians, feeling their muscles, were taking on what they called the Great Satan. And that if there were to be any kidnapping of any NATO member it would be in order to extort money. There was an incident where a terrorist shot a bazooka at one of the U.S. generals, but fortunately the general was in a well armored Mercedes, and all they ended up with was broken glass. The attack was traced to Soviet-supported East German terrorist groups that had gotten into West Germany.

Q: On the terrorism side, did you feel that any of the members were a bit soft on this?

LEV: Well, one of the things that we were concerned about was the attitude of the Belgians. The Belgians felt that they had an unwritten agreement to provide "safe haven," in exchange for good behavior in Belgium. But then terrorists started to shoot up of synagogues and private offices and to take hostages. I think then the Belgians realized that terrorists don't play by the book. So the soft attitudes at that time became very, very hard locally. At that time Belgium was the only so-called soft spot. Everybody else was in the real world.

Q: And of course the Germans had the Bader-Meinhof, the Italians had the Red Brigades, and the French had the Charles Martel Group, so they had been inoculated against this complacency.

LEV: As far as personal security itself is concerned, we worked very, very closely with the security folks at the various embassies. The American security officer was Greg Bujack, who was a real expert whose views had great weight. He strongly recommended that those living outside the so-called international compound, which was basically at Waterloo, secure their houses with appropriate types of locks and have bars on their windows. He said you can never protect 100 per cent, but improve what you have now. He dealt with the entire American diplomatic family, which included the embassy, those of us at USNATO, and the representative to the European Community. We also exchanged with the other NATO members. It was to make sure that we all were as secure as security would permit. There was some argument about how to deal with NATO security. We were right near the international airport, and a plant manufacturing the Lada, the Russian equivalent of the Fiat. We'd drive by this Lada plant, and you'd see antennas galore. This had its positive aspects because NATO was able to jam the transmitters or intercept their messages. But there was concern, for example, that a pickup truck could stop outside NATO with an 80 millimeter mortar, throw in about five mortar shells in about 10 seconds, and flee down the road. So steps were taken to prevent cars from stopping and for the first time guards patrolled with their FN rifles off-safety and loaded and ready to go.

Q: Well, in '83 you moved on. To where?

LEV: In '83 I came back to the Bureau of International Organization Affairs as director of international recruitment. I was in that position for three years, during which I developed a database and brought in the computer. I had a consultant, Bob Allen, a retired Foreign Service officer, who helped me establish a program to encourage international organizations to hire more American citizens. Technically each organization is supposed to hire a certain per cent of its staff from each of the member states. But with 130 countries, it's a difficult calculation. My job was to get a fair share of Americans and at the same time to make sure that we had highly qualified candidates whose qualifications could not be challenged. We were comparatively successful and I had the complete support of my assistant secretaries, first Greg Newell, and then Alan Keyes; both of whom took the opportunity at meetings to bring up the question of American staff representation.

Q: Did you feel at all, when you were with United Nations Affairs, the basic distaste that at least the early Reagan Administration had towards the United Nations?

LEV: Well, it goes back before then, as we questioned what return we were getting for our contribution. One of the problems we had was the absence of any real administrative oversight in the UN. It was a matter of Parkinson's Law. If there was a vacancy, it was simply filled. And it just kept snowballing, and the UN became a very top-heavy organization, not for administrative, but basically for political reasons. Every member had to have somebody in a senior position, and of course this would be a retired foreign minister or other minister or a high-level friend of somebody who knew somebody else. As a result the UN was not designed to be administratively functional from a managerial and quality perspective. We had been fighting for years to change this, and one of the things I had got involved in was reducing the budgetary reliance of the organization on the U.S. We were successful in reducing the assessment from about 31 per cent down to 25 per cent. And by taking advantage of additional funds as new members came in, we went from 25 to 24.2. I know.8 percent doesn't sound like much, but when you're dealing with multi-million-dollar budgets it does add up. But in the UN we didn't get the support for our position so we're now behind the ball by billions of dollars. But from an administrative point of view, at that time, '83 to '86, things were improving.

We were also looking at the other international organizations. We said, "If you don't shape up, we're going to pull out." And everybody laughed at us. Then we pulled out of UNESCO because of M'Bow's mismanagement. But we still participated in those activities of UNESCO that were really of concern to the U.S. from a policy point of view. While we pulled out of the administrative and plenary side, we still retained a very good foothold in some of the organization's activities. It turned out that the Brits followed us. We were also threatening to pull out of the ILO, but the ILO came around with administrative improvements.

Q: How did you develop lists of qualified people?

LEV: It was very easy. We sent out announcements to other U.S. agencies; for example, if the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna needed scientists or biologists or whatever with specific types of background, it was easy enough to go to the Department of Energy or DOD or also to some of the scientific think tanks. We even got in touch with Brookings. We asked universities if they were willing to second a professor emeritus in chemistry to the IAEA. It was the same thing with the World Health Organization. That part was very easy and it was also very exciting, to meet these people.

Q: Did you find the hand of politics reaching in? Did we worry about the Indians putting in too many people from the Congress Party? Somehow I find it difficult to think that, with people like Alan Keyes and Greg Newell, we were a benign organization.

LEV: Oh, far from it. In fact, it led to some very interesting morning meetings, and one of the things was that you had the American Heritage group.

Q: This was a conservative group.

LEV: Yes. Alan was very, very popular with them and wanted to bring in some people who I think would have been destructive. They also started to offer up people who did have the appropriate qualifications. But political pressure on appointments came not only from Alan or Greg but it from the Hill. You had to play the political game, there was no doubt. But we did have some excellent people that came to us through the political process.

Q: What was your impression of how Alan Keyes operated? He keeps running for President. I've heard not the most laudatory comments from people who worked with him – that he was more inclined to lecture and to talk than to perform.

LEV: I found Alan a very, very bright individual. I mean he was sharp. He knew what he wanted, but part of the problem with Alan at that time at least was that he did not surround himself with good, solid people. And this is what any politician, or even a good lecturer, needs – a good solid support system to provide information and avoid doing or saying things that, in effect, will work against you. For example, I read in the paper the other day that Alan's PR person was having an argument with one of the talk show hosts.

Mrs. LEV: Jay Leno.

LEV: With Jay Leno. I think, maybe Alan has failed to surround himself with good solid people. They're all dedicated to him, and Alan knows what he wants to do, but I'm not quite sure he knows how to get there. He does have a following, but a run for President I think is going to be difficult, as we saw even for his run for the nomination for senator from his state. He had a tendency to lecture, but he was also a good listener, and followed up with good questions. So you had to be well-prepared to defend your position and proposals.

Q: Well, did you run afoul of any particular problems on the political side? I mean, somebody came and said, this brand-new Swarthmore graduate wasn't going to get a job.

LEV: I don't remember anything of that kind. We had developed a beautiful boiler-plate letter explaining to applicants the process involved in international organization hiring. And I think the complexity of this scared them away. But if we felt we had a good possibility of getting one of the youngsters as an intern we'd grab him.

Q: Well, '86 you moved on, I guess.

LEV: In 1987 I worked at FSI helping Pru Bushnell and Judy Kaufmann develop a course and briefing book for deputy chiefs of mission. I also did some lecturing for them. I went out to the woods, which was nice, and did lecturing there to various groups.

Q: You'd been around a while. What were some of the qualifications you felt a deputy chief of mission should know?

LEV: Well, since the DCM is the equivalent of an executive officer on board ship, he had better be oriented toward people, especially his own, and know how to keep people working for him. How do you retain their loyalty? How do you write a report on an officer that will help him in the competition for promotion? And so we emphasized personnel administration, personnel management, and quality control. We emphasized also his responsibility to the ambassador – if the ambassador needs him, he has to be there. He has his economic man, his political man; he has to be his point man in dealing with ministry activities. And, of course, pay and emoluments are important. So it is important to make sure that he is taken care of, in a positive sense. If you have a happy DCM, usually you have a happy embassy. If you get a DCM who's grumpy and grouchy it passes on down.

Q: Did you find at the time that the selection process for DCMs was bringing in good people?

LEV: Well, it turned out that a number of the new DCMs were friends of mine. We had gone up through the ranks together, and I knew that some of these guys were excellent, having worked with them. And then when they went overseas, they continued in that vein; they were low-key, very sharp, very bright, knew what buttons to push, when to push them, how to deal with ambassadors, how to deal with their staff, how to deal with Washington, with their Desk officers. So I knew the guys that I did meet and maybe it was just unusual, but they were fantastic. Al La Porta was one of them. He was on his way back to Indonesia and just recently went out now as ambassador to Mongolia. But they were good-quality appointments. None of them were political. They were all from the ranks.

Q: Well, then, in '87, where to?

LEV: From '87 until I retired on September 30, 1988, I was the acting director of IO's UN Systems Management and Budget Office where I was helping develop the budget, dealing with the Hill on the deficit, dealing with the Administration, with members of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, the Senate and House Finance Committees, and trying to get money.

Q: Well, I haven't been following this closely, but since the time you're talking about, we haven't been paying what we owe to the UN, which has always struck me as being, not only cheap, but also irresponsible. Could you talk about at this time, when you were close to this problem?

LEV: At that time, '87-88, one of the problems we had was that the UN administration was not being responsive, not only to the U.S. but also to the needs of other delegations. And one of the ways of getting them to hear us was to say we're not going to pay up in full. We're just going to pay enough to make sure we don't lose the vote. The rule is that

a nation loses its vote if it is in arrears for more than the equivalent of two years. So at that time we were in comparatively good shape as far as losing our vote, but we did have arguments on the Hill that by doing this we were shooting ourselves in the foot because we were losing clout, not necessarily with the UN organization itself but with other member states who would argue that if we weren't paying our share they didn't need to support us on positions or policy. So in my opinion, it was counterproductive but we couldn't convince the Hill.

Q: Did you find that the staffs of the Senate and the House of Representatives understood the position but parroted their masters? Or how did you find them?

LEV: The staffers always say that my boss wants this, my boss wants that. But I have a feeling that many of these people come in with their own agenda and are able to influence the actions of the elected representative. They understood what our presentations which were in good, old-fashioned English. The easy part was to present the numbers; if we don't pay this, we don't pay that, this is what's going to happen. And we did point out the counter-productivity of doing what they were doing. But they're more receptive to what's happening in with their own constituency where the role of the UN is not important or understood. The staffers were good, they were sharp. But they had their own agenda. No matter what we could do, their minds were set. When you're dealing with people like the good old senator from North Carolina,

Q: We're talking about Jesse Helms.

LEV: Yes, Jesse Helms – they have their way of doing things. Today, after 18 months, we finally have an ambassador up at the UN, it didn't help our situation, not to have one. Some of my colleagues have said that we lost representation on some very, very important administrative committees in the UN. For the first time in memory there is no American representative on the Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions – and that is a very key committee which reviews all of the Secretariat's budgetary inputs and presents them to the Secretary General. We also have a key American, John Fox, who's a member of the Joint Inspection Unit in Geneva and they may not request renewal of his appointment. So we may be losing some very, very key positions.

Q: What was your reading at this time – we're talking about '87-88 – of Jesse Helms and his staff, and who was doing what within that particular group?

LEV: Well, the reading since then hasn't changed much. From an administrative point of view, the UN is run no better or no worse than Congress. No international organization has been set up to run as a truly functioning quality-controlled organization. There's too much politics involved. You're dealing with 130 and 140 counterparts, and they are all of equal stature in the General Assembly. Whether you're the United States or you're Zambia – each one has a vote. And each gets clout from being a member of a block. The U.S. has lost that clout while Africans get together, the West Europeans get together, the Latin Americans get together. When you five fingers together you have a very strong fist. And I'm not quite sure what Senator Helms has been shooting at. He feels that

administratively the UN is a mess. But I've worked with the UN staff, and some of these people are really top-notch. At times they find themselves hindered from the top as we do, a top-heavy bureaucracy can sit on really solid people. The people working within the UN or any of the international organizations are good, but it's a matter of getting them unfettered so they can do what they're supposed to be doing. But there are so many orders coming from various directions, whether from the hierarchy within the organization or informally through the back door or some other route.

So it's not the quality of the people; it's the amount of pressure that's brought to bear on these people. The pressure comes from various sources. It's not that they're an administrative mess; it's the pressures that are brought to bear on them from various sources. It's the same thing within the U.S. Government itself or the State Department. We have pressure from all over the lot, whether you're overseas – you know we have our CODELs and everything comes to a screeching halt – and I remember what we went through when we finally got the money to build up the campus here (and much to our surprise we did get the money) or the establishment of the diplomatic security bureau. It's easy to deal with this because its within the U.S., but when you're dealing with the UN and international organizations, you're dealing with 100 plus, and NATO is now 18 plus. So administratively I think they're doing a comparatively good job considering the pressures that are being brought to bear on them.

Q: Did you have the feeling that there was somebody on Jesse Helms' staff who was calling the shots, or was it Jesse Helms? Because this is such an important thing, I'm trying to capture that particular time.

LEV: Well, the feeling I had was that it was Jesse and maybe one or two of his staff, perhaps his chief of staff. Here we are in a democracy, but yet you get one senator who's elected by 100,000 people, who can bring the country to a screeching halt. And this is exactly what he's done as far as some key appointments are concerned. Some of Clinton's nominees, like those of any other president, are not knights in shining armor, but holding Holbrooke up for 18 months –

Q: We're talking about the ambassadorship to the UN.

LEV: To the UN was really stupid. And Helms held up a lot of other ambassadors back then too because he wanted A and Y, and you're-not-going-to-get-this-person-unless-I-get-what-I-want kind of a thing.

Q: Well, just to touch on it, what did you do after you retired in 1988?

LEV: I became an assistant professor of business management at Trinity College, an all-girl Catholic College here in Washington, DC. After a year I became the chair and I stayed there for five years. I was also able to get a couple of other retirees some adjunct positions with Trinity College and other colleges elsewhere. Then in '93 I was asked by ACTA, if I'd be willing to come out of retirement and have my name up for the position of director of administration for a new organization to implement the treaty for the

Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. I was there for the two years '93-95, participating in getting a new organization off the boards.

Q: What was this organization trying to do? I mean, I think the title tells it, but what was the situation at that time?

LEV: At that time we were still called the Provisional Technical Secretariat because we needed 65 of the 120 signatories to the treaty to ratify it for the organization to become fully effective. Everybody had to sign an agreement, it was a matter for each of these countries to go back to their respective legislatures to agree with the treaty and to become signatories. And when the 65th signatory comes in, the treaty automatically goes into effect. Among the treaty's important provisions was one banning chemical weapons and calling for a team of inspectors enjoying full oversight and full freedom of access to the signatories, to make sure that the chemicals used for peaceful purposes, even to make aspirin, are not diverted to make something else.

So we started out with what we called the "dirty dozen." It was about 13 or 14. And when I left it was 150. Now I think they're at a staffing now of about 350, which includes inspectors and staff for a training facility. So it was a very exciting time, very hard, but gratifying.

Q: Well, there was a lot of pressure on us because weren't chemical weapons considered to be the poor country's nuclear weapon?

LEV: Well, that was it, but, even Iran is a signatory to it. Iraq no. Some of the nasties are not members. Maybe they have joined since.

Q: Libya, I take it.

LEV: Libya is one; Iraq is another; and there may be a few others.

Q: North Korea.

LEV: It doesn't take much, but at least, they have to get their chemicals from someplace, so the treaty would hopefully more or less control those countries that produce the specific chemicals, if it's going to be for fertilizer, let it be fertilizer, if it's going to be cosmetics, let it be for cosmetics. With the bombing of Khartoum in the Sudan we'll never know what the story was, but it was said that they were making components for chemical weapons.

One of the problems they had here in the States and in many of the other industrial nations is that you get some inspector from Lower Slobovia or someplace, who would come in and steal secrets – you know, industrial espionage – and this is what a lot of companies were concerned about. So a system was established that enabled the company that was visited to review the notes that were taken to make sure that their commercial

interests were protected. And as a result the U.S. ratified the treaty in April of '96, I think it was. The gas incident in Tokyo drove a number of members to become signatories.

Q: Yes, sarin or something. It was some sort of a religious group in Japan that put sarin into the subway system.

LEV: That was it, and they injured a lot of people and there were some deaths. But I think you hit it on the head. Chemicals are the poor man's atom bomb – neutron bomb, really. And how you stop that I don't know, but at least we do have an organization to put some sort of control over it. The level of success will be up to the participants themselves.

Q: Is the organization tied to the United Nations or separate?

LEV: No, it's a separate international organization.

Q: Well, I think this is probably a good place to stop.

LEV: I think it's excellent.

Q: All right. Well, I thank you very much.

LEV: And I thank you, Sir.

End of interview