

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

DAVID E. REUTHER

Interviewed by: Raymond C. Ewing
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is the August 29, 1996. This is an interview with David E. Reuther which is being done on behalf of the Association of Diplomatic Studies and Raymond Ewing is the interviewer. In talking with you today we want to review your Foreign Service career. You apparently went to high school in Seattle, Washington and then went to Occidental College in Los Angeles and a little later came into the Foreign Service. Dave, why don't you tell me a little bit about your early life and how you got interested in the Foreign Service and what else you did before actually joining the Service, which I think was in 1970?

REUTHER: I have always considered my interest in international events came from being raised in Seattle. As a premier Pacific Ocean port, Seattle offered exposure to the nations and history of the Pacific Rim. The Pacific was where East and West fatefully met and clashed. In school I read extensively about the battles that took place there during World War II. But if history and proximity didn't catch one's eye, Seattle the melting pot did. The main immigrant groups were Scandinavians, of which a large number came after the World War II. There were large Filipino and Japanese communities, and a small Chinese community. The Seattle Art Museum, for example, had few Van Gogh and Degas paintings, but a stimulating collection of oriental art. The University of Washington always had an excellent Far East Asia studies program. Growing up in such an environment encouraged an awareness of Japan and China. Because Seattle was one of the few Pacific entry points into the United States, the city was often exposed to Asian artists touring on Cultural Exchange programs. I distinctly remember watching a performance of Japanese Kabuki performed by a visiting group.

Seattle's place in the world and the encouragement of my high school history teacher, Grace Meyers made it seem quite natural to pursue studies in college in political science and international affairs.

Q: I, also, grew up on the West Coast and was very much aware that we are a Pacific nation and used to think going back East might be to Denver.

REUTHER: I have similar recollections of experiencing what a vast country the West was. Once my father announced we were going to take our annual two-week camping vacation and go back East. So, we packed our sleeping bags, our tent, our Coleman stove, and jumped in the car and drove and drove and drove for days and finally arrived in Salt Lake City. While that was about as far East as I got when I was growing up, this, and other annual camping vacations around the West, taught me that the U.S. was a country of great beauty and diversity.

Q: But, you went south to college in Los Angeles.

REUTHER: Yes, to Occidental College. I was interested in a small, liberal arts college with ready access to the professors and a manageable curriculum. I had taken summer courses at the University of Washington during high school and was very much aware that a campus of tens of thousands was not for me. So many students, so many course offerings, how could one stay focused in such academic abundance? Occidental was the best experience for my curious mind. The Political Science faculty was top notch. I can still remember some of the classroom stories either Raymond McKelvey or Richard Reath would tell which combined the practical and academic and otherwise illustrated the point they were making. Probably most important for my future Foreign Service career, Occidental had a two year History of Civilization requirement. This course illustrated that our generation stood on a road that others had also trod. Starting with the art and religion departments each department discussed the contributions of its field to world history in chronological order. On a practical level this course allowed the students exposure to every professor on the campus. This helped many discover and focus their academic interest.

Q: What was your major?

REUTHER: My major was political science even though Oxy at that time offered an international affairs degree. The difference between the two was the number of required courses you took to prepare for the comprehensive examination. At the end of the four years, because of excitement or curiosity, I found that I had completed more than enough courses in political science, economics and history to be awarded a degree in both political science and international affairs, but I restricted myself to taking the comprehensive exams in the one field.

Q: So, you finished at Occidental in 1965. What did you do after that?

REUTHER: By then I was deeply interested in China and had already focused class

papers and read extensively on China. I had been accepted at the Sino-Soviet Institute of The George Washington University in Washington, D.C., in China studies. It therefore seemed like a good idea at the time to start on Chinese language studies. The summer intensive Chinese language program at the University of Washington, however, seemed more like Marine Corps boot camp. The faculty was great, but demanding, and moved us through the material in quick step. It was very frustrating. The only thing that made it survivable was that of the twelve people in this class, eight were Chinese Americans from the Seattle area and they were having an equally difficult time. It turned out that these young men were from families that spoke Cantonese at home. But the meetings of the local Chinese businessmen society were conducted in Mandarin. Because their fathers were unable to participate in the business meetings, they were bound and determined that their sons would have the language to succeed. So, here were these poor guys who were Cantonese speakers with six tones and all the consonants that Mandarin doesn't have, just struggling away. That helped the rest of us get through.

Q: It was an early lesson, perhaps, of the extreme differences among Chinese.

REUTHER: Oh, absolutely. Like Americans who takes pride in their home state, the Chinese also identify with their regional origins.

Q: After that intensive summer language program you came to Washington, DC?

REUTHER: Yes, to the Sino-Soviet Institute that Professor Franz Michael had just established at The George Washington University. He was my academic mentor and key to finding the necessary scholarship funds. Professor Michael had an extensive association with China. He and Professor George Taylor were important contributors to the strong China program at the University of Washington. They authored one of the key textbooks, The Far East in the Modern World, used through the last 1950s, early 1960s in Asian survey courses. Their personal history is fascinating. Michael was German, Taylor was British. During the 1930s they arrived in Asia and obtained a employment teaching at Yenching University. Their China was the China trying to modernize and resist the Japanese. Their personal history constantly reminded we students that modern Chinese history didn't begin in 1949.

Q: Was this an area studies program?

REUTHER: Yes.

Q: Leading to what?

REUTHER: A Masters Degree in international affairs from The George Washington University and a certificate from the Sino-Soviet Institute, a dual certification.

Q: And you did mostly China studies. Did you do some Soviet studies?

REUTHER: Although an area studies program, there was an implicit assumption that

China and the Soviet Union were to be studied as communist nation-states. We were to see communist China, not necessarily Chinese communists. Despite my China concentration, I enrolled in a couple of courses on the Soviet Union. I remember writing a paper on the organization of Soviet agriculture.

Q: Were you interested at that point primarily in political or economic issues or historical and social?

REUTHER: I'm afraid my interest was encompassing. Ultimately what I found intellectually attractive about studying China was the vast difference between what was happening in China versus how it is perceived in the outside world. The China in American newspapers in the 1960s was a gross characterization of what small reality we knew. So, not only did you have an interesting, unique political culture; but also this American caricatures. It is a great lesson in paradigm construction. Harold Isaacs discussed this very point in his 1958 book Scratches on Our Mind.

Q: But at that time, in the mid-'60s, you came to The George Washington University to do those studies there was no reality check by field experience. You weren't allowed to go to China.

REUTHER: And the lack of field experience is what made the subject intellectually challenging. All these things were being said about China in the 1950s and 1960s that seemed more associated with domestic American political partisanship than with Chinese reality. Then there would be intellectual breakthroughs ignored by the political culture because it didn't fit the partisan paradigms. I'm thinking of Donald Zagoria's excellent work on the Sino-Soviet split all drawn from an exegesis of published sources. The implication was that these national leaderships were not communists per se, but *Chinese* and *Russian* communists. During the 1950s and 1960s the American Cold War paradigm of monolithic communism reigned supreme. As a consequence, the role of Chinese nationalism in coloring Chinese choices was ignored. On the contrary, in his introduction to the China White Paper in 1949, Secretary of State Acheson argued that Chinese nationalism was a strong force and that, if the U.S. would just bide its time, Chinese nationalism would eliminate Russian influence on China. Acheson argued for a policy of treating China as a Soviet lackey, pressing Beijing and Moscow together under the assumption that Chinese nationalism would corrode the relationship. By 1962 when Zagoria wrote Sino-Soviet Split Chinese nationalism had begun to erode the relationship with Russia—something Acheson predicted. By that time, however, we were in the midst of pretending there was a vast communist conspiracy.

Q: Did you get your degree in a couple of years?

REUTHER: I finished all of the course work and was starting on the dissertation when I ran out of money.

Q: So, you had to go to work.

REUTHER: I had to go to work.

Q: And, you probably worked for the U.S. government since you were here in Washington.

REUTHER: That is right. I cast a very wide net. I took the Foreign Service exam, the Civil Service exam, and whatever else was out there. I talked to DIA, CIA, State.

Q: I see you started out with the National Security Agency as an East Asian analyst for three years from 1967-70 before you came into the Foreign Service.

REUTHER: That's right.

Q: Anything special to say about that? Did it give you a chance to use some of your Chinese and your area studies?

REUTHER: Yes. The National Security Agency (NSA) provides intelligence drawn from the electro-magnetic environment to the analytical community. I joined a program designed to train mid-level managers. This was actually a very interesting experience because the Defense Department has a particular way of training people, that is, from the bottom up. They made you empty wastebaskets, you did the most mundane reports, you were assigned some of the real basic stuff. The idea being that when you become a manager and were directing the work of others, you won't be so silly and arrogant as to demand in an hour some report that you know took you two hours or longer.

But, what interested me at the time was the reaction of my fellow trainees. The 30 people hired for this program were all college graduates, but many were unable to adjust to idea that you had to know what you were talking about before you were given supervisory responsibilities. To them their college degree was a ration card to be exchanged for employment regardless of their interest or capabilities. As you can imagine, those people were weeded out rather quickly.

At NSA I had some absolutely fascinating experiences. I arrived shortly after the North Koreans attacked and seized the *USS Pueblo* and was assigned to an office that was still analytically cleaning up some of the aspects of that incident. I did some China work and then I came back to the Korea section and was working there when the North Koreans shot down a Navy intelligence EC-121. On Monday, April 14, at approximately 5:00 pm EST, a four-engine, propeller-driven, Navy EC-121 aircraft took off from its base at Atsugi, Japan, for a reconnaissance mission in the Sea of Japan. The aircraft had 30 Navy personnel and one Marine enlisted man aboard. Shortly before 1:00 am on Tuesday, April 15, the Department of Defense received a report that this reconnaissance aircraft had been downed over the Sea of Japan by North Korean aircraft. This became my baptism in quick response. At that time a senior Air Force NCO, who had been in electronic intelligence since North Africa in WWII, covered North Korean issues. From our small office we collated and analyzed electronic intelligence on the North Korean attack. Our primary focus was to determine the location of the American aircraft. As I recall, the path

of the U.S. EC-130 carried it outside the internationally recognized 12- mile limit and that the North Koreans launched when our aircraft was even further away from North Korean air space. We provided our findings to the U.S. intelligence and diplomatic community. We also produced maps and charts, some of which were used during the UN debate of the incident. We worked straight through for about four days, just the two of us with people looking in from time to time. This was a unique and pressured situation. Nevertheless, the experience stood me in good stead during my years with the State Department when coups, crises, or interagency conflict called for a quick response and a cold head.

Q: So, somewhere along the line you must have passed the Foreign Service examination.

REUTHER: I passed the Foreign Service exam in 1967. The State Department entrance exam at that time consisted of an extensive written examination, equivalent to the college entrance SAT or graduate level GRE, and an essay. If you passed the written, then you were invited to take an oral examination. The setting was typical. Three gentlemen behind an uncluttered table, you sat in a chair in front. The interview took place on campus so I interviewed with my colleagues. By some luck of the draw, the most intelligent, academically honored, but rather egotistical, student went first. Something went terribly wrong. He left the interview distressed and slammed the door when he exited. That panicked us. If the lion couldn't succeed, what chance did we mice have?

With failure assured, I had nothing riding on this exercise and decided I would enjoy myself. There were basic questions about tracing the westward expansion of the U.S., art, and my China studies. The interviewer who participated the least suddenly asked me to tell a joke. That caught me flatfooted because I am not a joke teller. I can hardly repeat good jokes I've enjoyed! After a pregnant pause I leaned forward and offered a play on words, pointing out that some commentators were beginning to think the Chinese leader Mao Zedong was a CIA agent. Wasn't he being called the Great Helm's man? (The background is that Richard Helms was CIA Director at the time). Apparently still in active contention, I responded to a number of other questions and subjects. Among these was a what-would-you-do scenario. The basic story assumed you were stationed at a consulate in France, the local business luncheon group invites you to speak on American culture. The issue is what topic would you pick? My line of thinking was that every Frenchman knows the Americans have no culture -- except jazz and Jerry Lewis. My father, a jazz aficionado, exposed me to the great talents of that very American medium, so I dipped into his teachings. I've always thought this cross-cultural question was the most difficult of the interview and that my father's love for jazz was why I passed and was placed on the roll of prospective hires.

At that time, the strain of the Vietnam War on all federal budgets meant that the State Department was not hiring. As you know, one's eligibility on the hiring rooster is valid for only one year. Consequently to maintain eligibility one would have to repeat the exam process every year. However, during that period, on the anniversary of my passing, I received a letter saying that the Department had not hired from the eligibility list and therefore it decided to extend the eligibility of those listed. I took the exam in 1967, got

that letter in 1968, and 1969. I didn't think too much of it, I had already started at NSA, married, and begun planting my feet. Another letter came in late 1969 saying that the Department was hiring but one had to go to Vietnam, into the CORDS [Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support] program. Newly married, working on China at NSA, I passed on the Department's offer. Early in 1970 another letter arrived offering a Foreign Service appointment without prerequisites. The next class started in April. I accepted.

Q: So, you actually entered in April 1970. Did you do your initial training in Washington at the Foreign Service Institute?

REUTHER: That is right. FSI was an amazing, congested facility spread throughout Rosslyn, Virginia at that time. The Vietnam Training Center occupied the ground floor of a nearby apartment complex. The crowded building at Key Street was where the new recruits were brought. The building seemed poorly adapted to its training function. You bumped into people who were training in a European language, and turned a corner and passed a room where Cambodian training was in progress. The same facility also housed the professional studies program. To new recruits some things really stuck out. I remember our sophomoric bewilderment as someone in the coffee room was described as an officer just returning to Washington after being overseas since Eisenhower was president! When you understand that with the average tour lasting 2-3 years each, that is only four tours. Of course, European tours were longer because they involved less physical hardship than Asian tours.

The A-100 course was the beginning of our exposure to statecraft and State Department functions. FSI has access to some of the top academic scholars and they would come and lecture to the group. We even had lectures by Joseph Campbell, author of The Power of Myth, who would later have his own show on the Public Broadcast System, PBS. This was all by way of opening our minds to the cross-cultural world we were about to enter. On the other hand, we also had exposure to more internal State Department issues, management issues, like where to go to arrange travel overseas.

Q: Did that include Consular Training? Wasn't this still the time that new officers were required to serve first in a consular assignment?

REUTHER: Yes, the assumption was that everyone would first be going to a consular tour. But as it turned out for myself, the couple of people that went to Vietnam and a couple of others, the consular tour requirement was not as inflexible as we expected.

Q: After the A-100 course, the first three months, did you have any language training or did you go right away to your first overseas post?

REUTHER: I was fortunate to draw an assignment that required language training. I must remark though, I presumed that because we had all taken the same written exam and succeeded at the oral exam all those 40 some people, that is State and USIA officers in the same A-100 class would have much in common. On the contrary, the diversity of

personality was comforting. I was particularly struck because I would swear that 50 percent of those people had had Peace Corps experience, or were literally coming off their Peace Corps tours. There was one couple that had just returned to the States the Friday before the Monday start of class from Africa. They were literally were in their bush sandals during a Washington spring!

Q: It was probably all they had.

REUTHER: That was precisely the case. Like myself, I found my classmates, middle class men and women from a broad spectrum of academic backgrounds. Despite the stereotypes of the time, there were no rich scones of the elite from Ivy League colleges.

I remember one morning at the donut and coffee break everyone seemed more reticent than usual. It all stemmed from the day before when a small group of senior Foreign Service wives invited our wives to tea. This was to be a first taste of the social etiquette and responsibilities of the Foreign Service wife. The senior Foreign Service wives spoke of servants, dropping cards, buying antiques and querying, "And of course, your silverware pattern has a fish fork?" These young middle class women, themselves drawn from hometowns all over America, were horrified by the senior wives' presentation. And that night we employees got an earful of how the spouses were not going to put up with such pretentiousness.

Q: That is interesting because we are talking about 1970 and the Peace Corps was established in 1961 and in many ways the '60s were its heyday and its strongest. Fifty percent of an A-100 from the Peace Corps probably is not the case today. Although over the years the Peace Corps has been an important contributor to the Service.

REUTHER: Those who are concerned about public service issues, for example who select to pursue a Foreign Service career, would find the A-100 classes of the early 1970s an interesting laboratory. Certainly I approached State with what I think was a fairly standard stereotype -- propagated by our political process -- that all Foreign Service officers are East Coast, Ivy League schools, and old money. I thought I was the only person to whom that didn't apply. But as we talked, it was obvious this stereotype didn't apply to them either. I don't think we had one Ivy League graduate in there. We are talking Occidental College, Oberlin, Ohio Wesleyan, universities of California and Pennsylvania, Colby. I think what stimulated these people was the outward turning that the country went through during the Kennedy years when these people were in high school. That expansion of horizons, epitomized by the Peace Corps experience, somehow opened their minds and encouraged them along different paths which came together in April, 1970 to the halls of the State Department.

Q: Was the April, 1970 class the first class that did not have the restriction of going to Vietnam to CORDS, after the long hiatus of hiring?

REUTHER: No, we were the second. There was another classes between us and the 'Vietnam or else' class. Obviously when the Vietnam bound realized that State was not

being exactly honest, there was a bit of a revolt. Years later this event still rankles in some memories. Nevertheless, many of those officers who went to Vietnam had extremely productive careers, including some ambassador appointments. The irony probably is that, here the State Department makes this extensive recruitment effort -- at the time people said 10,000 took the Foreign Service exam and 100 to 150 were hired annually -- and it expected these same people to accept official duplicity. The untold part of the story is that up to ten percent of those assigned to CORDS were Foreign Service officers. On the whole these people had a unique experience in translating ideas into programs. When refugee programs and humanitarian assistance programs became important in later years, the CORDS-experienced provided a tough cadre of people who understood how to make programs work. Twenty years later many a successful officer working the crises in Somalia, northern Iraq or Bosnia had a CORDS tour in his background. One of the better books on CORDS was Richard Hunt, Pacification: The American Struggle for Vietnam's Hearts and Minds (1995) on which I wrote a book review for the Foreign Service Journal.

Q: What language training did you have after the A-100 class?

REUTHER: At the end of class I was assigned to Thailand, after language training. We finished the A-100 class about June and I was assigned to language starting in September. With a three month gap, I was assigned to the Thai desk in Washington and met Director John Dexter and his deputy, Alf Bergesen, both officers with extensive experience, yet willing to take time to mentor. Deadlines and clear writing, that is what the Foreign Service is all about and my training started on the Thai Desk. But there are always tricks of the trade, special rites for the newly initiated. I remember my first official cocktail party - at the Thai embassy. What rules of savoir-faire did my senior colleague pass? Alf said, "Be wary, never drink wine. Always take a drink in a highball glass because the glass will fit into your coat pocket without tipping. You are here to meet people and that means always being free to shake hands. A plate in one hand and a glass in the other won't do it. A wine glass isn't stable enough for a stand-up reception." That was the lesson of my first diplomatic reception.

Q: Did you follow it?

REUTHER: As a junior officer, taking the advice of senior officer always has cachet!

Q: I don't think I ever put a glass into my pocket. Before we leave the class entirely, you mentioned there was the feeling about Vietnam, partly from personal experience from those who didn't want to go there but wanted an opportunity to go elsewhere and have a normal Foreign Service career, was there a lot of feeling about the Vietnam war at that time, 1970? Was it pretty uniformed against what we were doing there?

REUTHER: I would say there was the normal amount of wondering what it was all about. This was not a group of people that were so set on a particular point of view that they couldn't entertain other ideas. They really wanted to find out what was going on and they saw this as one measure of performing that function, getting on the inside. Some

were there to not prevent Vietnam, but to at least try to understand it. As I said, we had a strong group of people with a demonstrable practical streak, a fair percentage of whom became senior officers.

There was one interesting experience during the A-100 course that I am not sure whether to count as an expression of our practicality or our idealism. To illustrate problems in policy making, communication, and negotiation, the FSI staff organized us in teams to play Disarmament. This simulation exercise required each team to select a negotiator and a team leader. Each team had 10 nuclear weapons and our objective was to negotiate mutual disarmament with another team. Each team privately decided how many weapons to lay aside and then instructed the negotiator who would meet with the representative of the other team. To make the game interesting, the staff required us to ante up 25 cents for each weapon. If an attack was declared, the weapons' cache of each side was subtracted and the team with the most weapons received 25 cents for each surplus weapon. In the first round, each pair of teams lied in their negotiations with the other team and instead of disarming held steady at 10 weapons hoping to win the money if the other side disarmed! So here you were, in the midst of the Vietnam War, with people just out of the Peace Corps, and they couldn't avoid war. Well, this result came as a complete shock to some of our more idealistic members!

Q: Yes, Vietnam was still in the background. A few years earlier it probably was more controversial. I can remember being in the Department here in 1968-69 and every conversation in the cafeteria seemed to be on that subject, and then being up at Harvard in the spring of 1970, there was a lot of controversy about Cambodia and all, but the end was beginning to come. I think people realized that something had to happen.

REUTHER: The people in my A-100 class were well aware of Vietnam in particular and the world in general. They hadn't written off anything, but did presume they were there to lend their talents and make some sort of contribution.

Q: In a positive way.

REUTHER: Yes, in a positive way. These were thoughtful people trying to work through some of the issues. They understood the American system, the pressures on Congress, but probably were less parochial than other generations of Americans. Again, a fair number of these people had gone into the Peace Corps and were already thinking there were other contributions to be made.

Q: So, you had a few weeks on the Thai desk and started language training.

REUTHER: Yes.

Q: How much language did you have?

REUTHER: Well, I was lucky. At the end of our training we were provided a list of posts with junior officer positions and asked our preferences. My recollection is that there were

only three Asian posts on the list and a Political Section job at the embassy in Thailand was as close as I could get to China. I checked Thailand and on the last day of the class, assignments were announced. Bangkok it was! Unbeknownst to me, however, State inspectors had recently completed an evaluation of the staffing in Bangkok. Their report recommended abolishing my junior officer position in the political section. So, suddenly I was in language training, but without an onward assignment. In time the embassy suggested waiting until the next Thai language position opened the following summer. That allowed me a full year of Thai study, a luxury considering junior officers were only supposed to receive six months language training.

I think one of the interesting things about Washington, going back to David Brinkley's book on wartime Washington, was its lack of major immigrant communities, such as New York or San Francisco. With the start of language training in the fall of 1970 the teachers were eager that we have an opportunity to experience Thai cuisine. But, Washington at that time had no Thai restaurants. So, the next best thing was to go to a fairly broken down Szechuan-style Chinese restaurant that had spicy food. What is remarkable is that when I returned five years later, Washington was full of Thai restaurants. Large numbers of Asian immigrants finally arrived in the Washington area.

Q: Do you think that change in Washington was related to the end of the Vietnam war and the influx of refugees?

REUTHER: Not necessarily. We should first understand the attraction of American academic institutions for overseas students. Many of these restaurants were operated by people who had come for a university education, liked the U.S., and stayed. The establishment of ethnic restaurants is a vital and common part of America's immigrant tradition. Consider: why is it easier to establish a Chinese restaurant in the U.S., than an Italian restaurant in China? My favorite place is a Thai restaurant on Connecticut Avenue. There's an interesting Foreign Service story here. When we came back from Thailand, it was one of the first Thai restaurants to open in the Washington area. Nearby in Bethesda there was a Shakey's Pizza (This is 1976.) and I suddenly realized I could understand the non-English conversation in the next booth -- Thai. I leapt over the booth and said in my best Thai, "Who are you? What are you doing here?" It turns out this is the owner of 'my' Thai restaurant on Connecticut Avenue. He was embarrassed to say his American born kids only ate out at pizza restaurants. He had come as a student and thought opening a restaurant was the thing to do when he decided to stay.

Q: And now there are plenty of Thai restaurants in Washington.

REUTHER: Wonderful Thai restaurants!

Q: They cater to those who like Thai food, but also the Thai community, part of which is still students.

REUTHER: Yes.

Q: So, you finally got to your first overseas post in 1971?

REUTHER: Right. We got there in August/September, 1971.

Q: Was that your first trip outside of the United States?

REUTHER: Yes, if you don't count Vancouver, Canada, which is a Seattle's neighbor to the north.

It was all quite a wonder. We stopped in Japan on our way. An A-100 colleague was already in Tokyo so we had an inexpensive place to stay. We rode the bullet train and visited Kyoto. I had seen Kabuki performances in the States; on our last day in Tokyo we watched with the luggage in the lobby until the last minute dash to the airport. We arrived in Bangkok on a weekend, were met at the airport, and taken under the wing of an embassy colleague from the Political Section. In those days there was somebody from the embassy to get you settled, you were not just tossed into a hotel room. With our administrative check-in completed, we immediately flew up-country to take up the assignment at the consulate in Udorn. My stomach was already suffering the effects of new diet and new spices.

Q: Why don't you remind me exactly where Udorn is in reference to Bangkok and to neighboring countries?

REUTHER: The travel books always tell you Thailand looks like an elephant's head with an ear off to the right-hand side and the trunk becoming the peninsula. That ear is northeast Thailand, about a third of the population of the country is there. The Thai center of gravity, if you will, is the Chao Phya River valley that stretches from Chiang Mai in the north to Bangkok. All of the Thai capitals since the 13th century are on that river one way or another. Northeast Thailand is on a plateau, about 500 feet above sea level and except for one little stretch of mountains is literally as flat a piece of land as I have ever seen. In fact, what was so remarkable about the northeast plateau --to a Seattle boy -- was that the horizon didn't leap out in front of you and soar another 10,000 feet. It was boringly flat.

Q: In those days we had a consulate also in Chiang Mai.

REUTHER: That's right. And in Songkhla.

Q: How big a post was Udorn?

REUTHER: Udorn was a three-person post. A consul and two vice consuls.

Q: You were one of the vice consuls, probably the junior vice consul.

REUTHER: Very junior vice consul!

Q: You did consular work, visas, etc.?

REUTHER: No, actually the post had no visa issuing authority, so I missed the consular experience which most of my A-100 colleagues had. State Department standard practice was that the A-100 graduates' first assignment was a consular tour. But, Udorn, Thailand, was a very unique assignment. The post's primary responsibility was political and economic reporting, with a focus on the local insurgency and oversight of the U.S. military presence. There was an insurgency in the inaccessible, mountainous parts of northeast Thailand, funded and assisted by the Vietnamese and the Chinese. This made Thailand one of the dominos. So, we were very focused on how the Thai were responding to the local guerrilla threat. The consul in Udorn when I arrived was Tom Barnes. Tom already had extensive CORDS experience in Vietnam and was a strong admirer of John Paul Vann. His focus and dynamism played out in many ways, but he was intensely interested in counter-insurgency issues. This worked to my advantage. We were in southeast Asia, next door to the Vietnam War. There was plenty of responsibility and little need for formality. Junior officers at Udorn had more responsibility than was the normal case for the Foreign Service. For example, administratively Tom Barnes divided the 13 provinces in the Northeast between the two vice consuls, one in charge of the northern half and the other in charge of the southern half. Your job was to visit each of your provinces, each district within each of those provinces and gain a feel for the caliber of the local officials stationed there, the tasks and challenges that they faced and the nature of the insurgency. We did a tremendous amount of traveling in our consular district. We wore out two British Land Rovers on those laterite roads. We were knowledgeable about each district, but in considerable disfavor with the embassy administrative officer whose budget couldn't support new vehicles. Tom, himself, traveled extensively and was known as the officer who had visited every district in the northeast, some 126.

The consulate's interest in the insurgency wasn't our local fixation, but an integral part of the American presence in Thailand. At that time the embassy included the Development and Security Section, in addition to your typical political and economic sections. William N. Stokes was counselor of embassy for Development and Security in the early 1970s. In bureaucratic theory, organization reflects interests and here was a whole separate section focused on the insurgency in Thailand and the Royal Thai Government's response.

Q: You mentioned that the two vice consuls covered half of the northeast. Which half was your responsibility?

REUTHER: I had the southern half which included the provinces from Korat to Ubon along the Cambodian border. I also monitored the U.S. Air Force facilities on the Thai bases in Korat and Ubon.

Q: To what extent was there interaction with what was going on in Cambodia and Laos in that period? Were their refugees coming? Were you interested in what was happening there or was that pretty much being taken care of by others?

REUTHER: Reporting on Cambodia was not our primary responsibility. The Thai-Cambodian border is extremely rugged, steep cliffs, sparse populations on both sides so interchange was difficult. From time to time we would forward a report from our conversations with the Thai Border Patrol Police who were responsible for the Cambodian border. During one of my trips a Thai Border Patrol Police patrol escorted the consulate political local, Wongphan Na Lamphon, and I to the temple at Khao Phra Wiharn. The World Court ruled years earlier that this temple stood on Cambodian territory. Standing on a cliff overlooking a valley that reminded me of Yosemite, it was clear that the temple was inaccessible from Cambodia. We interviewed the local Cambodian commander in one of those Cambodian-French-Thai-English conversations that doesn't reveal much. The consulate's priorities were elsewhere and we didn't have the refugee problem that later emerged from Cambodia and Laos. From 1971-73, the borders were very quiet. Of course, there was the time when the Vietnamese infiltrated a sapper team all the way across from Laos to Udorn and attacked the base in late 1972.

Q: Attack what base?

REUTHER: The Thai base in Udorn in late 1972. One reason the consulate was located in the Northeast was to monitor the presence of some 42,000 GIs, primarily air force personnel, stationed at four Thai bases -- Udorn, NKP (Nakhon Phenom), Ubon and Korat. At each of these bases, the USAF had a wing of aircraft. Udorn also held the 7/13th Air Force subquarters. By 1971, other bases used earlier in the war, such as Thakli, were closed. The arrangements for the bases reflected common ground between Thai pride and our needs. In the 1960s this translated into an arrangement where we used these facilities at the invitation of the Thai Government. These were not U.S. bases; the senior commander was the Thai base commander. The consulate's role was to make sure that the American component on those bases had good relations with the Thai civilian community.

Consulate officers were well placed to monitor base-community relations. We had the language; we stayed in town, not on the base, when we visited. We often invited a government official to join us for dinner and as the evening progressed people from a variety of Thai offices might stop by our table. We could quiz these officials on the insurgency, base-community relations, whatever was of interest. We also made formal calls on provincial officials from the governor on down. Our frequent visits and passable language skills supported camaraderie with the local officials that kept us well informed on local attitudes and problems. These consulate trips were an important part of making certain that the Thai and American governments were informed and comfortable. The governor or mayor knew that he could talk to us and, therefore, resolve a problem. It would have been a shocking departure for a Thai official to call in the ranking American air force officer and say, "Your people have erred, I want you to do this, that and the other thing." That sort of explosion is the worse case scenario we were there to prevent. The consulate and its American officers were an important part of a feedback mechanism. Errors or arrogance could be costly.

Thankfully, cross-cultural errors they were infrequent. My primary United States Air

Force contacts were the base commanders and the wing commanders at the two bases I covered, Korat and Ubon. These air force representatives were absolutely marvelously trained, culturally sensitive and profession gentleman. They understood the importance of base-community relations and were very willing to listen to whatever feedback we might offer. You have to understand that I was the equivalent of a second lieutenant in my own organization and I was interacting with a senior colonel of another organization. The exemplary cooperation I saw between those two American national defense establishments was key to smoothly advancing America's interests.

Q: Did the embassy take a lot of interest in your area? Did the ambassador travel up often? Or was it pretty much left to the three of you?

REUTHER: The embassy exhibited a strong interest in our insurgency and political-military reporting. It would commission reports or ask for contributions to larger reporting projects. We would have some visitors, but I can only recall one ambassadorial visit. Leonard Unger was the ambassador. He had been ambassador since September 1967 and earlier served as the DCM in Bangkok from 1958-62. He had already met everybody in country during his long ambassadorial tour. The rumor around the embassy was that the ambassador's long tour represented Washington's general reluctance to move ambassadors in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. The argument was that this was a way of avoiding the prospect of public testimony before Congress upon reassignment. Ambassador Unger was a strong and knowledgeable ambassador, much beloved by his staff. His wife, Anne, was delightful and sympathetic to family problems overseas. The ambassador and his wife demonstrated the best professionalism and humanity of the career service.

Q: He came in 1967 and you are there in 1971-73. He left post in late 1973. So, he was there 6 years.

REUTHER: Then William R. Kintner came in for little over a year.

Q: Besides the substantive political reporting and working with the American Air Force, did you do anything else? Any economic or commercial work?

REUTHER: Northeast Thailand was an outpost of the Vietnam War, so economic and commercial work didn't come to Udorn. Because the Northeast was the poorest part of Thailand, one focus was to monitor implementation of joint AID/Thai government rural development programs. One AID representative was stationed in almost each of our Northeast provinces. Over the years AID program in the Northeast had been extensive and covered a number of development issues: finding new crops for the people to grow, and locating scarce water. Th Northeast benefited from one of the best road-building programs in the world. The Thai were lucky there was any room left to grow any crops! The idea behind the road building was to make it possible for the most rural farmer to bring his crop to market and not lose revenue to a middleman.

Q: Including feeder roads? I hope they were a different kind of feeder roads than we

knew in Africa where they were very rough.

REUTHER: By the early 1970s Thailand had an extensive feeder road network. Of course, the best roads linked the provincial capitals. The farther from the provincial capital, the more primitive the road. When we visited district-level offices along the Cambodian border, we often traveled unimproved, rutted laterite tracks. Passengers and vehicle were totally covered in dust by the time we reached our next stop.

Q: Surely AID had a mechanism to report on its programs. What was the consulate's role?

REUTHER: The high water mark of AID officers in the field had passed. For budgetary and other reasons, AID presence was shrinking; programs were turned over to Thai agencies, such as Accelerated Rural Development (ARD) of the Ministry of Interior. With our language skill, our regimen of visiting every province and acquainting ourselves with Thai officials, it was natural for the consulate to submit follow-up reporting from time to time on development issues. When we traveled to a province, we called on the governor and his immediate staff and, with that entrée, talked to the police or representatives of other Thai agencies.

Toward the end of my tour I recall reporting on Thai implementation of a program to provide up-country villages with water pumps. Despite the stereotype of Southeast Asia as lush jungle, northeast Thailand was almost a desert plateau, so, improving access to water was a important quality of life program. We found, in our trips to representative villages and the provincial headquarters, that the Thai program, administered out of Bangkok, was broadly based and evident in every province. A large number of the pumps, however, were broken and unrepaired. An interesting lesson in the complex process of modernization. The AID/Thai program sank the wells and provided the pumps. Overuse, misuse, or age rendered the equipment unusable after an interval and then village leaders were at a loss as to repairs. ARD had no maintenance or follow-up program.

I found this dilemma interesting because of the academic debate over initiative versus organization in any society. This debate was most succinctly stated in a common self-comparison between the American and German armies during World War II. The story paints a picture of the American GI dashing around Europe until his jeep breaks down. The American finds some gum, fixes the problem and dashes off. When the German vehicle breaks down, the Germans would sit by their vehicle and await the arrival of the organizational unit responsible for fixing vehicles. Well, what that means is that maintaining requirement is an acquired awareness. The Thai villager who had never dealt with much mechanical equipment was untrained, not incapable. In the end our suggestion was that the Thai water agency provide the village headman with a post card to call for help.

Q: Reporting on insurgency, base-community relations, program monitoring, is there any other responsibility which was a priority with the consulate?

REUTHER: One of the programs to which we contributed was USIA's International Visitor Program. At the height of the American Foreign Service presence in Thailand in the late 1960s we had three consulates, and a USIS library and an AID mission in almost every province. We became very familiar with Thailand. The embassy was always on the alert for highly talented people from all walks of Thai life. Our International Visitors Program gave us the opportunity to pick some of their best and brightest and provide them an opportunity to experience the United States, its people, institutions and history. The program was successful at recognizing talented Thai. Some Thai agencies saw our IV program as sort of a genius award sort of thing. If we choose one of the officers in their ministry, that was a boost to his career. The Interior Ministry, in particular, understood what the Americans were looking for, initiative, understanding, get-up-and-go, can-do attitude. The IV program paid enormous benefits for us both in helping the Thai understand the U.S. and in stimulating the Thai bureaucracies to select on the basis of talent.

Q: So you were able to nominate people that you identified as you traveled around?

REUTHER: Exactly, and because of our extensive travel, we met district officers or deputy district officers. So, you are talking about somebody 28 to 35 years of age who easily will be in the service of his country until age 60. In identifying talent so early, we built a reservoir of goodwill toward the United States. Of course, we also picked more senior officers, governors, deputy governors and program directors. I suppose the point is the high quality of our choices was a function of our contact with a broad range of the Thai people, not just the talent that might accumulate in a nation's capital.

Q: How many districts were you involved with?

REUTHER: I had seven, I think.

Q: How many provinces?

REUTHER: Oh, I'm sorry, my sector had seven provinces and probably 60 districts.

Q: And there would be a governor as key officer in each province?

REUTHER: Right. There were 72 provinces in Thailand at that time.

Q: Were there Peace Corps volunteers in Thailand?

REUTHER: Yes. Thailand hosted an extensive Peace Corps program. Thailand's was one of the largest programs that the Peace Corps ever had and I think it remains in the top five programs. As official Americans, we were instructed to stay away from the Peace Corps Volunteers. We certainly didn't need to turn to them for information on the local situation, we had our own very accessible official and unofficial sources. So, our contact with the Peace Corps volunteers was pretty much confined to Thanksgiving and

Christmas when we would host an American party. We invited the volunteers in for good food, good company and a long hot shower -- some of them had rather basic accommodations. Their programs were all quite interesting but out of our vision.

Q: How about American missionaries?

REUTHER: My next door neighbors in Udorn were an elderly American missionary couple, who arrived in Udorn in 1938! At that time they landed in Saigon, unloaded their vehicle and drove to Udorn. It wasn't until long after the war that you could drive into the northeast from Bangkok. They stayed in Udorn during World War II with the Thai partisans protecting them. The Japanese apparently did not bother them. Because of their long residence in the area, they had seen a significant change in Thailand's economy and had taught every Udorn governor English since the far recesses of history.

Q: Were there any other consulates in Udorn?

REUTHER: No. Americans were the only ones so crazy as to be out there. In all reality, the consulate's presence was a function of the fact that the subquarters of the 7/13th Air Force was on the Udorn base, as well as a fighter wing, and the Air America operation.

Q: And that post was closed?

REUTHER: Yes, just recently closed. One third of the population of Thailand and an increasingly dynamic economy just disappeared from American awareness. I can say that because Thailand did not have a national newspaper that covered the provinces as well as consulate reporting covered it.

Q: If Udorn was a reporting outpost collateral to the Vietnam War... It was upcountry. I don't suppose there were any congressional visitors.

REUTHER: In the two years I was there, no congressmen visited. When I worked refugee issues in the mid-1980s, I escorted a number of concerned congresspeople, such as Congresswoman Pat Schroeder. The Vietnam era was a different time in relations between Congress and State. The one congressional incident I had at the time was an encounter with Moose and Lowenstein.

Q: They were a notable pair, staffers from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I believe?

REUTHER: That's right. Richard Moose and James Lowenstein were staff investigators for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and by the early 1970s had a reputation with the Foreign Service. As I recall, when they visited in 1972 I was alone at the consulate. Tom Barnes and the other officer were traveling. A telephone call from the embassy's Political-Military Section alerted me that Moose and Lowenstein were in Thailand and might come to Udorn. I was to be polite, but not accommodate their rumored interest in entering the Thai Air Force base at Udorn. At issue for us was that the bases we were

flying from in Thailand remained under the control of Thailand. We had no status of forces agreement. The RTG [Royal Thai Government] was in total charge. It would be a violation of the arrangements between the American and Thai governments for me to assist Moose and Lowenstein to enter a Thai base.

The embassy's warning turned out to be correct. Moose and Lowenstein - I think this was 1972 - showed up in Udorn, came to the consulate and demanded that I gain them access to the Thai base and the American units it contained. They were not interested in being deflected from their task. I remember this conversation because I was threatened and insulted in ways that I had never previously experienced. The one threat that still rings in my ears was their threat to ruin my career, if they did not get their way. I may have been on my first tour in the Foreign Service, but I was a China scholar and I had heard stories in the hallways of congressional blacklists and the reality that Congress can and does destroy Foreign Service careers. What made the threat all the more believable was that you know that the highest levels of the State Department are not about to protect some first tour officer from congressional wrath. After the browbeating I took from Moose and Lowenstein, I was certain that my career was over. Others tried to cheer me up, but I lived with this fear for some weeks until nothing happened and I decided that I was too small a fish for them to waste their time on.

Q: Was your reporting primarily to the embassy or directly to Washington?

REUTHER: Our line of command went directly to the embassy and the embassy decided whether it would forward our reporting or include it into broader embassy reporting. I can't recall whether the embassy ever failed to pass on our reporting. On the other hand, there is what I call the distillation issue. My experience is serving -- in succession--an up country consulate (Udorn), an embassy political section, and then a Washington desk. What I saw in the course of three tours was that our beautiful 4-5 page reports on the insurgency situation in, say, Chaiyaphom province would be come a paragraph in the embassy's weekly report to the Department and distilled further into a mention about political stability in a report to the assistant secretary. You see the squeezing of information very quickly in that sort of situation. Direct reporting avoids some of this, if Washington is properly staffed, otherwise it just clogs the desks of the few Washington officers.

Q: There is always a certain tension there depending on where you are sitting and at a particular time. Sometimes there are people in Washington who have been known to say that we want more and more information from the consulates, from the field, not filtered.

REUTHER: If we wanted, we had a tool in the old airgram for which the distribution rules were different. The originating post designated the distribution on airgrams and sent them to whomever. But those were five or six pages of information that was of such detail it was only of interest to the Washington analytical community. The policy officer won't have the time to consume such detail.

Q: Were there times when there were differences in the analysis of something between the

consulate and the embassy?

REUTHER: A few, mostly confined to the issue of the insurgency. The embassy's Development and Security Office seemed wedded to the Thai perception that everything was under control. In Udorn was Consul Tom Barnes with long experience in Vietnam and who claimed the honor of having visited every district in the Northeast. So, we would report an ambush or guerrilla movement, some military activity, and the government in Bangkok would say it was no big deal. DS accepted the Thai evaluation and blocked our reporting and analysis that the Thai weren't doing enough in the field to hold these things down. Udorn reported that the Thai were not quite doing the military necessary, and perhaps actually avoiding the guerrillas in some areas. And, in fact, it was a fairly low-level insurgency that fed on peasant resentments but lacked a claim to nationalism. Insurgencies that do not have a nationalism appeal can be managed.

Q: Where there was a difference in views, did you feel you could convey that through an airgram to Washington or was the embassy preventing that from happening?

REUTHER: Because this transpired during the Vietnam War insurgency reporting was cable reporting. When Tom thought that the DS section was grievously wrong he would go to Bangkok and raise his objections in conference with the DS section and the ambassador. The ambassador had been there for a long time so as things tended to reoccur he had the awareness that perhaps we shouldn't always take the word of the Thai that everything was going okay. Like Tom, there were large numbers of Foreign Service officers with Vietnam experience who were willing to hear all sides of an issue. At stake in the intra-American discussion of the insurgency in Thailand was a cross-cultural issue about whether the Thai shared the American can-do attitude. Some argued the Thai were handling the situation, others argued that if the embassy didn't hold them to a can-do standard, then they will succumb to somebody who was more adept.

Q: Was the Thai military quite strong within the country? What was the government system in Thailand at that time? Was it pretty centralized without much democracy?

REUTHER: By contemporary standards the Thai Government in the early 1970s would rank low on anyone's 'freedom index.' The government was run by two military officers, Thanom Kittikachorn and Praphat Charusathien. There was no parliament, it had been disbanded at the start of the Vietnam war period. Factions based in the military controlled the country's political life. The key event in post-World War II Thai politics occurred when Sarit Thanerat, who ran the army, faced off in 1957 against another faction headed by Phao Sriyanon, which controlled the police. Sarit's success left the country with a military dominated government. The casual observer at the time could have seen a typical Latin American military run country.

Q: Thailand in recent years has been extremely successful economically in exports. Had any of that begun to get underway during the time you were there in the early '70s?

REUTHER: From the perspective of the consulate in Udorn most of that economic

growth would come later. What we saw was the groundwork; the infrastructure projects; the tremendous road system; the various water projects; the development of human skills and dedicated administrative organizations to direct development resources. Japanese investment was just arriving. Thailand's economic blossoming was in the future. By the time I returned to Thailand for another tour ten years later, these economic seeds came to fruition.

One of the keys to later development was American spending on the Vietnam War in Thailand. This included the development of significant skills within the Thai population. For example, the payroll section of the American Air Force unit on a Thai base might consist of an NCO and seven Thai, three or four of which the Air Force would have taken back to the United States and given further training in finance, financial management, statistics, accounting and related subjects. When the American military presence departed, we left a sophisticated, English speaking middle class. Our departure coincided with the Middle East oil embargo that placed vast amounts of wealth in the coffers of the oil producing countries. Companies with on contracts in the Middle East hired American-trained Thai as skilled overseas workers. So, vast numbers of Thai who worked for us at the up-country bases went to the Middle East for jobs as office workers or project managers.

Q: Which was well paid.

REUTHER: Well paid by Thai standards. When I went back to the northeast in 1985, I couldn't believe it. Streets were paved, new housing was going in, agricultural processing plants existed where there hadn't been any before. It was just totally different. But, again, all of this was in the future. When I was there first, it was a military run government, no parliament. Who could have predicted the consequences of the Thai students studying in the U.S. at the time, the increasing professionalization of the Thai bureaucracies established as counterparts to an American or international equivalent, the impact of Japanese investment, and the role of Thai self-confidence?

Q: It sounds to me to sort of summarize, you had an unusually diverse and fascinating first tour in a country that was obviously very important to the United States at the time and in part of the country where a lot of interesting things were going on.

REUTHER: I was fortunate that my interest in Asia brought me to Thailand under circumstances which exposed me to the U.S. military, AID programs, and humanitarian assistance. Subjects which would weave themselves in and out of my career for the next 25 years. In fact, two decades later I was working in the Pentagon and realized that the Air Force general I worked for was an F-4 pilot at Udorn at the time I was there. Starting from the same place, we both had full careers within our own professions and again came to work together. However anecdotal, this illustrates how intimately involved State and Defense are and should be.

Another illustration of Foreign Service and uniformed service cooperation in the field - and the resource differences at the time between our departments - was the "brick" that

we carried in Udorn. Today we think nothing of lightweight cellular phones, but the early 1970s equivalent was the Motorola portable radio. Each of use in the Udorn consulate had such a portable radio and a recharging stand for its battery, issued to us by the American military. We were hooked into the U.S. command net at the Udorn base. This arrangement was necessary, not only to maintain 24-hour contact with our military, but also to overcome the unreliable Thai telephone system. The radio was literally the size and weight of a brick and uncomfortable to carry. At social occasions people would often set them down (together) resulting in a scramble to select the one that was beeping!

Let me say something of cross cultural communication and its application to problems on our side. My next tour was in the embassy Political Section and one of the things that we consistently did was use the ambassador's dinners as venues to introduce sub-Cabinet Thai officials to each other. Many Thai bureaucrats worked similar issues but didn't professionally meet. So, we performed the function of acquainting Thai officials to each other. The American penchant for interagency meetings - a mark of the value we placed on policy coordination - is a value that the Vietnam War forced the Thai to adopt. Other bureaucracies simply didn't understand the value of coordination. Such dinner parties with their theme of coordination sounds nice of us, but we were just passing on hard-won lessons. One of my lessons from this first tour was the absolute need for liaison with the Air Force, the Agency, AID and with all the other organizations that were out there. You were part of a team.

Q: Was it pretty much the Air Force rather than the Army or Navy?

REUTHER: The Army had a small facility at Udorn, but not much of a presence.

Q: So you finished your two-year tour in Udorn and then went down to the embassy in Bangkok. You didn't go up to Mexico City or to issue visas somewhere?

REUTHER: My luck held. My DCM was very pleased with what we were doing up-country and he was quite willing to encourage personnel to make sure that my next tour was in the embassy political section.

Q: You had home leave but no further training?

REUTHER: That's right.

Q: What sort of job did you have within the political section?

REUTHER: The political section at that time was divided into two sections, external and internal reporting. The external reporting unit followed Thai attitudes towards Cambodia or ASEAN issues; Thailand's foreign policy stance, that sort of thing. There was even a China watcher. Bill Kushlis, myself, and a couple of other people were assigned to the internal reporting unit. We looked at domestic issues: we sought to identify who were the movers and shakers in the Thai system, the major political factions, and what were the personality and policy issues within the Thai bureaucracies. The Thai ministry of Interior

was highly centralized and attractive to a talented Thai civil service. Because I already met a large number of Ministry of Interior officers up-country, it seemed natural to be in the internal section. My previous experience thus gave the embassy an advantage in working with the important Ministry of Interior.

I think my first few weeks in the Political Section were typical of Foreign Service political work. One of my early jobs was to write extensive political biographies on the main Thai players. I particularly remember writing on Air Vice Marshal Dawee Chunlasap. Biographic writing may not sound fascinating, but it is key to the skills of the Foreign Service. To write a bio, you have to investigate history as seen by those in the country where you are stationed. What was their view of history as they lived it and what did they take away from that experience? In Dawee's case, he was a young officer when World War II broke out. He was a member of the faction that associated itself with the United States. That faction prospered in the post-war world, vice the faction that allied with Japan. So, one quickly learns the basic lesson of diplomacy - if you don't understand the other side's history, you will miss the common elements needed to build friendships and international consensus.

Within weeks of my return from home leave in the States, Thailand was in crisis. October 16, 1973 was a day I will never forget. Since early October, the Thai student union organized anti-government demonstrations in Bangkok protesting the lack of democracy. As was oft the case, the students and their leaders represented elite academic institutions. There was considerable popular support for the students. The public provided food and blankets during the student sit-in at a central park. Suddenly, that October day, it all went sour. Shooting started. Army units associated with the son of Prime Minister Thanom shot on student marchers, so it was a pretty messy business. For the embassy, this crisis raised a number of issues. We still had a major military presence, extensive commercial interests, and a large American community. We needed to know what was going on and we needed to protect American interests without meddling in an internal Thai matter. At the time I supervised the Political Section's internal reporting unit. Our first task was the same as any media journalist, get the story and get it in the hands of our Washington leadership with dispatch so that the Department could make the policy determinations. We had officers from every section of the embassy working in our crisis center or out on the street during the gunfire. I remember one of the military attachés put on this loud Hawaiian shirt and had one for his son, and the two of them got into his radio-equipped car and went to where the shooting was. They would pose as two lost tourists, poke around a little bit, and then return to the car and radio in what they saw. About 150 people were massacred and many more injured. It was just one mess, just incredible. Everything was rumored, and we had to chase down every rumor. We had to keep vacationing GIs and American tourists out of harm's way. The consular section people called hotels to pass the word and be alert to missing tourists. We ran a 24-hour operation for days.

Q: As a result of that the government fell?

REUTHER: The government fell. Thanom and Praphat had to leave. There was no way

they could recoup the loss. The king moved against them and they flew off to Taiwan -- an interesting destination for these two.

Q: And the new government?

REUTHER: Sanya Thammasakdi, a senior member of the judiciary, conservative and close to the King, headed the new government. It was a very difficult time for Thai authorities and for the embassy. We had 42,000 Air Force personnel in the country. Washington's concern was the change of government's impact on our troop presence. As Vietnam wound down the White House had its hands full, and was sensitive to congressional reaction. The image of having fought in Vietnam to thwart the paradigm of dominos falling to the communists and then getting kicked out of Thailand by a democracy movement was a nightmare for some. I understand that Secretary Kissinger and Ambassador Unger spoke often. There was an ambivalence to the protesters' attitudes toward the U.S. On one hand we were accused of supporting the previous regime; on the other we were the paragon of democracy. In the meantime we were reporting everything we could uncover on attitudes toward the U.S.

In reporting the coup events and their aftermath, my internal affairs unit competed with the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), another USG agency, which was sending Washington translations of the local Thai press, a source that was a little flamboyant, if not misleading, at that time. We were under great pressure to transmit our reporting cables and beat FBIS's translations to Washington. Rapid composition, with balance, and covering the appropriate subjects; that's what the Foreign Service teaches. The absence of balanced reporting leaves Washington in a difficult policy situation. I mean, we literally had the impression that the Secretary's office would call the ambassador and say, "What is this we read in the Thai press that the Americans are going to be thrown out, or the Thai government can't respond, etc." For weeks after the coup, Washington's sensitivities were such that the political section was chained to subjects FBIS reported and driven to beat FBIS deadlines. That went on for about three months before sanity finally prevailed.

Q: The FBIS bureau was in Bangkok?

REUTHER: Yes, FBIS was one of a number of offices in Bangkok that made the embassy the second largest mission in the world at that time. Because Bangkok was a transportation hub across the Pacific and from Europe, the embassy encompassed all the State Department's regional officers, payroll, courier, and medical. As well, we had a large State/USIA representation, an enormous AID contingent, and an extensive military contingent. An embassy performs many functions and often hosts a variety of federal agencies. In our case, when all assigned staff was counted, Bangkok was the second largest embassy in the world. Cairo was the largest at that time.

Q: And the ambassador during your time in Bangkok was?

REUTHER: Ambassador Unger was still there when I first returned to Bangkok for my

second tour. But Vietnam was winding down and he was eager for another assignment. The issue of who would be the next American ambassador became an important psychological element in post-coup Thai thinking. I fundamentally believe that the Thai-American relationship was sound and family close. Since World War II, we had been through a lot together, but the coup brought new actors to the Thai stage that didn't share this history or camaraderie. A new American ambassador was coming at a time when the Thai were feeling very sore from this bruising that they had inflicted upon themselves and they looked to the U.S. for support and encouragement of their new democratic direction. American attitudes toward the coup were important because many young Thai leaders and the Thai academic community were once students in the U.S. So American approval was important, especially because no one was certain what the Thai military would do in the wake of the change in government. The new government was not necessarily effective. Strikes and demonstrations continued, inconveniences mounted. The new government was supposed to be kind, not effective. That is what Sanya was noted for, his judicial equanimity, Buddhist scholar in his spare time, close to the king, somebody who would just stand there and by virtue of his presence make people feel good and sit down. But, the insecurities grew. Anyway, the Thai public, the students, the government and the military looked for a sign from the United States. The Thai public, the students, the newly vocal commentators wanted that sign to be an approving one.

Into this uncertain environment appeared a new, politically appointed ambassador with a military background. Many Thai saw this as a chilling American commentary on their recent overthrow of a military government. The ambassador would have to handle considerable skepticism about the direction of American policy.

Q: This was in the Nixon administration.

REUTHER: That's right.

Q: William Kintner, who probably had some Vietnam experience?

REUTHER: Ambassador Kintner was a 1940 West Point graduate who served until he retired from active duty in 1961. I believe he was an artillery officer, because he was hard of hearing. After his retirement he held an academic appointment at the University of Pennsylvania's Foreign Policy Research Institute which some in Bangkok in 1973 considered a conservative think tank overly concerned with cold war issues. The ambassador was co-author with Robert Strausz-Hupé and others on a 1959 book entitled Protracted Conflict: A Challenging Study of Communist Strategy. The eyes of the moderate Thai reformers saw a cold war warrior, with a military background, coming to Thailand just when the civilians had thrown the military out. Some Thai groups interpreted his appointment as a sign that the United States wanted the military to come back. Given the fluid situation in Thailand, suspicions of the new leaders made the ambassador's tour a delicate and difficult assignment. The ambassador's image became a diplomatic problem for the smooth execution of American foreign policy. In this case, the fact that Ambassador Kintner was politically-appointed worked to his disadvantage, because it made the Thai focus on his background and give consideration to what he

‘represented.’ A career Foreign Service officer would have been more ‘neutral’ in local eyes because an FSO represented not his personal background and political mentors, but his country. Unfortunately, the ambassador had other personal characteristics that contributed to a rocky job performance. In fact, his tour was cut short. We understood that the Royal Thai Government signaled that his presence was not beneficial to a continued productive relationship.

Q: That is pretty unusual.

REUTHER: It is extremely unusual. Thailand was never a Western colony and had the self-confidence to bend with the times - up to a point. But, in fact, the ambassador had seriously erred in the Royal presence. His conduct in other ways was very frustrating for Thai officials. For example, as an artillery officer he was deaf in one ear and therefore he spoke in a tone of voice loud enough so that he could hear himself; that meant he was shouting. So, dinner parties at the ambassador’s residence -- which were the vehicles for building friendship, looking over the talented officials, gauging the direction of Thai policies -- became painful occasions as the ambassador sat at his end of the table speaking in a dominating voice. You couldn’t talk to your neighbor under these circumstances.

The background to these events, of course, was that Thailand was starting a new uncharted course into the stormy waters attendant with the reconstitution of parliamentary democracy. As an officer in the internal reporting unit of the Political Section, my responsibilities were to monitor and analyze the student movement and the new Parliament. Because of the fluid political environment of the time, this was by far the choicest portfolio. My portfolio put me in the unusual position of having CIA colleagues come to me for information or introductions to the student activists!

Q: He also had a difficult act to follow, Len Unger having been there six years or so.

REUTHER: I’m not certain the issue is whether Ambassador Unger was a difficult act to follow as a politically appointed ambassador, or whether Ambassador Kintner was just the wrong person with the wrong talents at the wrong time. When he arrived we were looking forward to easing his transition with briefing papers on the culture and politics of Thailand and whatever else it took. It was clear early on, however, that he did not perceive the American Foreign Service professionals as part of his team. This attitude cut him off from our feedback. And things began to snowball. When your Thai contacts tell you, beg you, not to be invited to the ambassador’s residence, this was terribly, terribly unusual. For their own reasons the Thai weren’t even willing to sit through a normal rotation and they actually came to us in a very covert way and asked for relief.

Q: It sounds like some of these problems could have been anticipated?

REUTHER: I suppose it depends on your focus. Most politically-appointed ambassadors are chosen for domestic reasons, not foreign policy reasons. To that extent you are gambling that the receiving country has the stability and maturity to allow you to ignore

its needs while fulfilling your domestic needs. In this case, Kintner would have had less of a problem if the military regime had not been overthrown. When he was nominated for the position and approved by Congress, the needs of the Nixon Administration may have been to 'shore up' our image in Congress and Southeast Asia in the wake of our slow withdrawal from Vietnam. It is ironic that if we were in Vietnam to support the forces of democracy, those very democratic forces in Thailand complicated the job of Ambassador Kintner.

On the other hand, Ambassador Kintner had other traits that complicated his tour and discomforted the Thai. I later learned that a visiting delegation from Pennsylvania questioned whether Ambassador Kintner had the proper disposition for this position. The DCM, Ed Masters, kept this information to himself and, in fact, took the opposite tack with us. He told us privately and in staff meetings that we had a great opportunity to demonstrate our professionalism to a politically-appointed ambassador. We were excited to have this opportunity to demonstrate the talents of the Foreign Service. Masters was smart.

Q: Were you there when the new ambassador came?

REUTHER: Yes, that would be Charlie Whitehouse who came down from Vientiane.

Q: And he was quite different?

REUTHER: Ah, Ambassador Whitehouse was different from anybody else I had ever seen at that time. He seemed from a different era. His father was a Foreign Service officer. The ambassador was born in Paris, I believe. He struck me as patrician, correct, old school.

The arrival of Charles Whitehouse changed the atmospherics in terms of the embassy's relationship with the Thai government and society and within the embassy. By then, the embassy and the Thai had gone through quite a bit together between the coup in October, 1973 and his arrival in late 1975. I left shortly after he arrived.

We had gone through one or two parliamentary elections. The public regarded the Sanya Government as an indecisive civilian government. On the other hand, Thai reformers and knowledgeable elites looked to us for that welcome hug that everything was going to be okay. If Ambassador Unger knew everybody, Ambassador Whitehouse started at square one. Ambassador Whitehouse ran a more formal mission and rebuilt a more formal relationship with the Thai government. In retrospect, I think that his strategy was helpful at the time--let's start correctly and become friendly later on. But the relationship went through additional strains at that time.

In the spring of 1975, Saigon fell. The Thai were fairly confident that they would survive, they had survived the Japanese and weren't too worried. But shortly after the fall of Saigon was the *USS Mayaguez* incident. Because the United States ordered armed aircraft to fly from Thai bases and attempt to rescue the crew, many Thai saw our response as a

blatant violation of Thai sovereignty. The civilian government at that time was upset with the United States. Concerned about the fragility of democratic government in Thailand, the civilian administration saw this as an incident in which it was made to look impotent and ineffective. Thai democratic forces were trying to strengthen their case with their public and were concerned we were undercutting them. There were some in the embassy who shared the Thai concerns.

Q: The military had not tried to come back into power yet?

REUTHER: That's right, they had not. That would come later. There would be another confrontation between the students and the military in 1976. That confrontation forced some student leaders to join the guerrillas in the bush. Later, the insurgency collapsed. The students were uncomfortable in the jungle, the Chinese withdrew their support, the Vietnamese were occupied elsewhere and the insurgency always lacked a claim to Thai nationalism.

Q: You mentioned you went to the consulate in Songkhla. When was that?

REUTHER: That was the spring of 1975. There was an opening because the incumbent was due long postponed leave and transfer. One of the values of a small constituent post is to provide training for young officers. The DCM's invitation to gain a little management experience at this one-officer consulate was a rare honor. The Songkhla consulate had political and economic reporting responsibilities - there was a Moslem based ethnic insurgency along the Malaysian border - and it coordinated USIA programs with local universities. It was a fascinating 10 weeks.

Q: Now, that is in southern Thailand in the elephant's trunk.

REUTHER: That is right. The temporary sojourn to Songkhla turned out to be more exciting than my young family, complete with infant daughter, originally thought because we were there when Saigon fell on April 30, 1975. At the time the embassy informed me that Washington had announced we had evacuated all the people for whom we were responsible out of Saigon. So, if anybody showed up on the beach, we were not to approach these refugees, make any contact or otherwise communicate to the Thai that we had any responsibility towards these people. The issue wasn't that we were just washing our hands of the Vietnamese, but there obviously were going to be large numbers of different kinds of people arriving and we didn't want to close our options, if you will, by creating the presumption with the Thai Government that we would take care of each and every refugee. So, my orders were to stay away from them.

Within three days, boatloads of people began arriving. Shortly, there were large numbers of people on the Thai beaches. My instructions not to become involved didn't prevent me from enlisting the assistance of the local missionaries, a couple of Americans and a couple of Swiss. The missionaries had already taken the initiative to minister to the humanitarian needs of this refugee population in the makeshift camps the Thai arranged. I indicated that, if the missionaries came across any identifying papers or information that

the Vietnamese wanted to pass on, I would take them. For about three weeks, list of names and U.S. government identification numbers dominated reporting cables from Songkhla to the embassy. Fairly dull reporting compared to the insurgency in the northeast or parliamentary elections, but my DCM later said that Songkhla's reporting played a crucial role in focusing Washington on the fact that we had residual responsibilities toward these people and that the numbers involved were significant.

Q: Did a number of those eventually come to the United States?

REUTHER: I would presume so. I had moved on by then. My reporting, indicating that there were Vietnamese employees in the refugee stream, was the first such concrete evidence. That reporting contributed to the establishment of a refugee program.

Q: In the ten weeks you were in Songkhla you also did the kind of thing you did in the northeast earlier?

REUTHER: Yes, a lot of traveling to the provinces, talking to the police, governors. There was an ethnic Malay insurgency in this area. At the peak of the Thai dynasty's power and just before the Europeans arrived, Thailand had expanded down the peninsula with the result that the last four Thai administered provinces were predominately ethnic Malay. An insurgency, with antecedents in the communist anti-British emergency, continued to sputter. Our interest was the impact of the insurgency on political and economic developments, Thailand's modernization, and the effectiveness of the Thai bureaucracy in delivering services.

Q: Your consular district went down to the border of Malaysia?

REUTHER: That's right. The consular district stretched from Nakhon Si Thammarat to Pattani in the south. Tin mining was a major industry and tourism was growing. One of the Democrat Party parliamentarians that I had met in Bangkok represented a province in the Songkhla consular district and we continued our close relationship when I was in Songkhla. As I prepared to depart Thailand at the end of my tour, he presented me with a large painting in appreciation of the year and a half we had worked together. I was very pleased to see that, twenty years later, he became the prime minister. At that time we were both young men starting our respective careers. In the early 1970s although the Democrat Party had the largest block in the Parliament and was the oldest organized political party in Thailand, no one believed it could come to power. There was serious animosity between it and the military. There are two lessons here. First, every country experiences political change over time and the internal dynamics may move in unexpected directions. Second, the United States is well served if the Foreign Service has the resources to take advantage of the future by meeting another country's potential leaders before they get to the capital. It seems to me that, in countries of particular interest to the U.S., the Foreign Service ought to have a core of officers who have the appropriate language skills and who experience a country in their first or second tour and then return ten years later. So, you would have a political officer, or an economic officer, who was an old acquaintance of someone who is now the minister of finance, etc. There

is no better way of creating acceptance for American policy than a familiar face. Friends are cultivated, not commanded into existence.

Q: I think your experience was good and significant but also unique to have essentially your first five years devoted to one country with language training, and service in a consulate and then the embassy.

REUTHER: I think what you are seeing is that I was the beneficiary of some excellent senior officers who took seriously their roles as mentors. I remember at the end of my tour in Udorn writing to Personnel in Washington saying, "Gee, I would like to stay here. I'd like the job opening up in the political section," and Washington not being encouraging at all. I mentioned this to the DCM and he made it happen. He also provided the Songkhla opportunity. When I later assumed supervisory responsibilities, I included in my vision mentoring as well as directing.

There were many lessons I took from my first two tours. I was struck by the consequences of congressional antagonism toward the Foreign Service reflected in our strange financial situation. The diplomat's skill is the skill of developing a human relationship, friendship. Friends are cultivated, not ordered up. There isn't a society that doesn't associate food with friendship -- except when it comes to performing the business of the American public. What I am thinking of are embassy representation funds. You have to understand that we had a 13 person political section and our entire representational budget, for the political section of the second largest American embassy, was \$1500. For comparison, each officer in the New Zealand embassy's political section had \$1500 for his own representation. Yes, **each** New Zealand officer had the same amount of money allocated to the entire American 13 person political section. Our individual share of the section's allocation was insignificant, meaning to perform our employer's requirements of developing contacts and meeting our host government counterparts, we would have to pay for it from our meager junior officer pay. If Congress's paradigm that Foreign Service officers were independently wealthy were true, then this parsimony would be understandable. But that stereotype died years ago and was but an embarrassing hardship for the vast majority of the junior officers whose background was middle class, state university.

I solved my problem by teaming with a colleague at the New Zealand embassy. He had representational funds, but didn't have Thai language. We both had responsibility for following parliamentary issues. He would pay for the lunch, I would chat with the Thai parliamentarians, and then we would share notes later. We would write up one set of notes and file them with our respective capitals. But, it still seems strange to me that the New Zealand government paid for my contact work in Bangkok.

Q: At the end of your time in Thailand you went back to the United States. Is there anything else you would like to say about that period in Bangkok or Thailand?

REUTHER: No, I think we have covered everything.

Q: It looks as if you went back to your first Washington assignment. How did that come about?

REUTHER: It was another bit of serendipity. Although I enjoyed political reporting, I realized that reporting on countries in the midst of political development and modernization required understanding economic forces. Even though I had a comprehensive exposure to economics as an undergraduate, I was eager to enroll in FSI's six-month course in economics. I lobbied heavily for that assignment, despite negative noises from central personnel, and finally succeeded.

Q: That would have been January, 1976?

REUTHER: Yes.

Q: That course was described as the equivalent of an under graduate major in economics?

REUTHER: Yes. The same courses as an undergraduate major, but much more intense. Some courses covered in one week material normally presented over a semester. It was a bear of a course, as advertised. I thought the course was absolutely fabulous. The staff FSI organized to teach these courses was utterly fascinating and delivered the most stimulating lectures that you have ever come across. FSI, in fact, has an excellent academic reputation. I recall that when we took the area study course in preparation for going to Thailand, FSI enlisted Joseph Campbell, who later would be all the rage on television, with a series I believed entitled *The Power of Myth*.

So, I survived the economics course. The professional requirement for completing this prestige course was accepting an economics-designated job. You will recall that at that time State Department organized its officers into cones - political, economic, consular, and administration - for assignment and promotion purposes. I exited Thailand as a political cone officer. One of the benefits from the economics course was that I also became an economic cone officer. This came in handy later when bidding on jobs. Not only did I improve my job prospects via taking the economics course, but I was most fortunate to find an onward assignment in Washington in a desk job in the Near East Bureau, the Iraqi desk. I eagerly took that assignment, not only as a price for the course, but also because I believed that a strong career development program involved being familiar with the work of two regional bureaus.

Q: This job was to be desk officer for Iraq, not the economic officer for entire office.

REUTHER: That is correct.

Q: And the U.S. Interest Section in Baghdad had been there since when?

REUTHER: From 1967.

Q: Did you get to travel to Baghdad shortly after assuming your duties?

REUTHER: The Office Director, Morris Draper, wanted a strong desk, so within a short period of time I embarked upon an orientation tour which included stops in the Gulf, Bahrain, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, and then up to Baghdad and on to Jordan. Not only was I coming in contact with a new bureau, but also a whole new topography. You have to understand I had just departed steamy Southeast Asia and my hometown is the western part of Washington State, which is called the Evergreen State. To go to a real desert was just amazing. We've all seen the pictures, but that doesn't mean you understand the reality.

Q: Was not having Arabic a problem?

REUTHER: The language demand for a Washington desk job is different from being in the field. A Washington position is primarily an analytical, policy management and coordinating job. In reality, the Iraq Desk job was supposed to be a somnolent introduction to desk duties. As luck would have it, another Lebanese civil war started. This event consumed the talents of the office director and everybody else in the office. Although a Middle East novice, circumstances thus required that I also cover economic and political issues involving Iraq, Jordan and Syria.

Q: Probably all the leaders of those three countries at the time are still leaders today.

REUTHER: I believe so.

Q: When did we reopen the embassy in Baghdad?

REUTHER: Our typical experience in the Middle East is that during an Arab-Israel war, the Arabic countries break diplomatic relations with the U.S. After a decent pause, we return with a scaled down mission called an Interest Section which is technically under a protecting power and usually housed in our former building. In time, diplomatic relations are restored and the embassy again flies an American flag. This cycle began again with the 1972 war. By the mid-1970s most embassies had been restored; except Baghdad. This was Baghdad's way of demonstrating disagreement with the other Arab powers. When I was the Iraqi Desk officer, 1976-78, our Baghdad mission remained an interest section. Ed Peck was the chief of the mission and David Mack his deputy. It would not become an embassy until Iraqi's desperate days during its war with Iran.

A Washington desk job is fundamentally different from a job in the field and calls on a different set of skills. A major focus is policy coordination, which exposes you to working with other U.S. government agencies. You seek understanding of State's perspective, gather an understanding of the other agencies' needs, and hammer out American policy.

Q: When you came fresh and new to a job in Washington it was often more demanding, more challenging, more difficult to establish yourself than in an embassy abroad because

in an embassy you were an important part of the only American embassy in town, but in the Washington policy arena you were only one of many and you have to deal with stereotypes of your agency and it takes a while to establish your credentials and be able to get something done.

REUTHER: Yes. Also, I think, a Washington desk job probably requires you to cover a variety of more detailed, specific subjects, very briefly. If you are working in the internal section of the embassy in Bangkok you are the parliament officer covering political parties. You're not reporting about what the military is doing, or what the drug scene is. But, on the desk on any one day, you are working with the Economic Bureau on a grain sale, or working with the FBI on a technical legal issue. The Iraqis at that time smuggled machine pistols made in Florida out of the U.S. in their diplomatic pouch, so I had a delightful time working with the CIA, the FBI, and Customs. After months of pressure the Iraqis returned all but one of the 10 pistols.

Q: You also have to work with the Iraqi interest section in Washington. Were they in the Swiss embassy?

REUTHER: Actually they were in their own building, flying the Swiss flag because Switzerland was the designated protecting power.

Q: But in many ways establishing rapport with lots of different people was probably as important as understanding the least nuance of what was happening in Iraq.

REUTHER: The mark of the domestic assignment over a foreign assignment was the need to work closely and productively with a variety of domestic agencies. Because of various embargoes against Iraq, I worked closely with Treasury, for example. And of course, because of the situation in Lebanon, I also had extensive contact with embassies of other countries. For example, we were trying to establish a reasonable dialogue with Syria on Middle East peace issues. As part of encouraging a dialogue and making ourselves more transparent, we offered the Syrian Foreign Minister access to Walter Reed for a medical checkup. He was having very serious problems that he didn't want to become public, so he didn't want to go to a Syrian doctor. In time I found myself with the Syrian ambassador sitting in a waiting room at Walter Reed. I remember that circumstance vividly because during the course of our confinement I found the ambassador to be a very cultured gentleman. But as we spoke I noticed that he was scribbling on a legal yellow pad. I thought he was making notes for some future meeting. When he finished he handed me the page. It was a sketch of me. I framed it and still have it. His foreign minister safe, the ambassador could relax. You can't make too much of a pleasant human moment, but creating such moments was important in possibly changing the atmospherics of political relations.

Q: Well, there are aspects of diplomats that one doesn't suspect. Jordan, also, was obviously a very important country to the United States. We had a fully established embassy there in Amman and, I suppose, in Damascus, but not in Baghdad?

REUTHER: Yes. In fact, the Iraqis wanted to play it that way because that was their policy objective vis-a-vis the other Arabs. They wanted to be the tough guy, the last to normalize. Iraqi policy was to influence, if not dominate, intra-Arab debate on policy toward Israel by being obstinate. We were not deterred by such bravado. Our policy was not so much to 'get along' with Iraq as it was to give the other Arab countries cover to engage in productive discussions with Israel, by creating the image of a steady normalization of U.S.-Iraq relations. To that extent presenting an image that relations with Baghdad were better than they were, or at least not as bad as Iraq wanted to present them were our minimalist foreign policy goal. Of course, Baghdad's stance meant it would not be very cooperative. We wanted to repair our building and they made it very difficult. By ignoring the bravado and tenaciously overcoming obstacles we watered down the benefits of such intransigence.

Q: Well your time in the Near East Bureau came to an end in 1978 and you moved up to the Secretary's Office?

REUTHER: That is right. I moved to the Secretariat Staff (S/S-S), the office that supported the Secretary. In Washington our responsibility was to manage the paper flow; while traveling, we coordinated the Secretary's schedule and communications with the embassy. We were organized into eight teams, one officer and one secretary to each team. When the Secretary traveled, at minimum, two teams would accompany him. One team would be on duty at all times and the other stand down. Most trips during this period involved some advance planning. In that case one team would precede the Secretary and assist the embassy with the required preparations. The other team would travel with the Secretary. The team that was in place on arrival would take over and those who traveled with him would try to get some rest. It was a very brutal, physical existence of numerous time zones, uptight embassies, and exacting demands. At that time tours in S/S-S were mandated to be only one year, because they just exhausted people so quickly. And, we had it easy. There were stories still being told about S/S-S teams during the Kissinger years and of working such demanding hours that people fell asleep while copying documents on the aircraft.

Q: At the time you were there it was Cyrus Vance, who was very different.

REUTHER: That's right. A lawyer by training, self-confident, Secretary Vance knew how to get the best out of people with a light touch, as far as I saw.

Q: You did several trips with the Secretary?

REUTHER: Several trips, again concentrated on the Middle East. This was the Camp David period so Middle East issues were very hot and heavy at that time. Of the eight trips that I took that year, six of them were to the Middle East. The normal circumstance was that the Secretary's travel was planned in advance. On those occasions, we were responsible for tasking the desks that covered his destinations for briefing papers. You know he is going to see the King of Jordan, so what do you want him to say, what is the background, maps, historical material. We would collect such papers into briefing books,

distribute them and in this way the Secretary and his party were prepared. There were other, more hectic trips. Once we only had 12 hours notice. We were told in the morning that we were leaving that evening. This is 1979, i.e., all pre-word processor and whatnot, the days when you had real secretaries, and none of the desks could draft the normal volume under such a short deadline, although they could pull together the latest things they had done. So, literally we took the assistant secretary, a couple of deputy assistant secretaries and a couple of office directors, and tossed them on the plane and they dictated the briefing material as we proceeded across the Atlantic to the Azores, and on to Cairo and the rest of the trip. I remember going to the back of the plane where the press was located and borrowing a small, portable, manual typewriter as I lent my fingers to the task of turning edited drafts into clean copy. We were up all night. We left Washington about 8:00 p.m. and flew through the night typing and dictating away, an incredible thing. Of course, the Secretary was in the back of the plane sleeping. Somebody had to be alive at the end of the trip. Seemed natural that it should be him.

Q: Did you travel some with the Deputy Secretary too?

REUTHER: Yes, one trip to Paris when the Deputy Secretary attended an OECD economic summit. At that time Secretary Vance was in Moscow so both ranking officials were out of the country. I particularly remember this assignment because it was my only official trip to Paris. From Moscow Secretary Vance decided on short notice that he would attend a NATO meeting in Portugal. Consequently, I was detached from Paris and sent to Portugal to advance Lisbon for him. This opportunity expanded my horizons because my personal focus on Asia would otherwise have left no time for a tour to Portugal. I remember being struck by the fact that, right across from the embassy, was an exquisite Chinese restaurant and then thought, "Of course, Macao, and all those explorers!"

While with S/S-S, I went to Mexico City with President Carter and Secretary Vance. That was the trip when the President fell ill. That was the first time I worked with the White House; it wasn't a comfortable match. The White House staff with which we had liaison wasn't professionally organized to the extent that they refused to coordinate requirements and plans, yet demanded immediate obedience to their every whim even if it was a minor staffer's touring needs. I was embarrassed by such arrogance, particularly because it seemed to be systemic rather than individual.

Q: You certainly get a good overview from that perspective of the way the Department works or doesn't work, you have to work with many different bureaus, various under secretaries and their staffs.

REUTHER: It is an excellent perch for career development. In my mentoring of younger officers, I often referred to that progression: up-country reporting, embassy reporting, desk and then being around the Seventh Floor (the Secretary's suite), as a career path that everybody ought to experience. You do end up seeing how information is handled, how the Department coordinates with other agencies and what the Secretary needs. You can be out in the boonies, you can be in embassies, and you can be on the desk for years

without ever coming to a realization of what the Secretary of State needs in some particular circumstance.

Q: This is a second part of an oral history interview at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center, the Association of Diplomatic Studies and Training with David E. Reuther. It is being conducted on October 3, 1996 and I am Raymond C. Ewing.

David the other day we took your career up until approximately 1979. I would like to go back and ask you a couple of questions that occurred to me later about your time as desk officer for Iraq from 1976-78, in the light of subsequent and very interesting events. You left in 1978 from that job, did you see anything on the horizon relating to the war between Iraq and Iran? Was that something that you and others were beginning to think about?

REUTHER: Around 1979 I can't really recall anything that would have suggested a future Iran-Iraq war. I have subsequently concluded that Saddam simply seized the opportunity that opened when Iran made itself reprehensible to the rest of the international community. Iran's seizure of the American embassy left it quite isolated, not only diplomatically, but also militarily. Tehran antagonized the very country upon which its primarily American-equipped military was dependent. For Saddam then, Iran looked like easy pickings. But that was in the future. At the time I was dealing with Iraq, both Baghdad and Tehran used different Kurdish factions to harass each other. But, then that had been going on for a years and in fact during the 1976-78 period there was a lull in this activity.

As to U.S. policy, the Carter Administration came to office in the middle of my tour. Its basic thrust was that the United States should have diplomatic relations with anybody, regardless of whether we approved of them. This policy stressed that opening communications was key to reducing tension. Because, Iraq was the last of the Middle East countries that had broken off relations as a result of the 1972 war, the Administration sought to move Baghdad to a more formal relationship as the first step to nullifying its opposition to a Middle East peace. I think that is where our efforts were directed at that time, to look for opportunities to establish some sort of dialogue with them, or at least undercut Iraqi policy by creating the image that progress was being made. As I mentioned, for Baghdad, a truncated relationship with the U.S. was a pillar of its foreign policy. Iraq's position was that it was the last true Arab state, the only protector of the Palestinians, that the Syrians had sold out and established relations with the Americans. So, part of Baghdad's policy was no official relationship with us; that is why our willingness to establish a dialogue was a direct, albeit subtle, challenge to Iraq's policy.

Q: My second question which you have already touched on relates to the Kurds. I am curious as to what extent you as the desk officer or the State Department had continuing contact with the various Kurdish groups and how you did that?

REUTHER: Well, actually we had had a rather intensive relationship with the Kurds prior to my coming on the scene, as I understand it, and that relationship had climaxed and was on the ebb, if you will. Mustafa Al-Barzani, of the Barzani clan, was in the U.S. as were many of his clan members. Many of the older Foreign Service officers with whom I worked had personal relations with the Barzani Kurds that went back over the years. They kept a social relationship, so I was included in entertainment at Barzani's house a couple of times here in the Washington area.

Q: Finally, I wonder whether you perceived at that time any threat by Iraq towards another neighbor, Kuwait?

REUTHER: No. There wasn't anything in that time period that would have suggested any danger for Kuwait. I don't recall Kuwait being the subject of special condemnation or attention. As I said, the prime thrust of our policy was to move to a more formal relationship, undercut Iraqi challenge any intra-Arab inclination for peace talks, encourage a more responsible dialogue with Iraq, and do that by making ourselves available. I think we licensed the sale of some Boeing commercial aircraft at that time. On the other hand, when they become difficult, we reciprocated. So, we had this whole incident of them smuggling guns in their diplomatic pouch, catching them red-handed made our protests that much more effective. That was basically what we were doing at that time.

Q: But you were the Iraq desk officer essentially before the Iranian revolution took place.

REUTHER: That is right. The Shah was still in power and we were still on very close and friendly relations with Iran.

Q: So, there was no tilt towards Baghdad or the idea of dual containment or any of these things?

REUTHER: Right. As a matter of fact, when you really look at it, Iraq was very much a backwater in our efforts at that time because shortly after I came on board, Lebanon blew up again. So, in this five-person office you had four working on Lebanon; and I was covering Jordan, Syria and Iraq on a daily basis. So, our whole focus, responding to the pressure of daily events was in a whole different area. There was no tilt to Baghdad or containment.

Because we are talking about the Carter Administration, we should note the beginnings of strong American interest in the issue of human rights. During the Carter administration, the State Department established the Bureau of Human Rights. One of the consequences when you set up a new office is that you alter the policy flow through the bureaucratic system: who has to be cleared with, who has to be dealt with.

In our effort to create the image of working toward establishing a normal dialogue with Iraq, someone came up with the idea of presenting Saddam Hussein with ornamental

pistols as a gift. Intelligence said Saddam was an avid gun collector. If he showed off American gift guns, he would be undercutting his own policy. We became involved in long, complicated bureaucratic battles with the Human Rights Bureau over this gesture. Of course, Iraq had a bad human rights reputation and HR refused to sign off on the permission to provide this gift. In retrospect, it appears to me that the traditional goal of diplomacy, and a goal to which the Carter Administration seemed committed to, was the larger goal of establishing a dialogue so that you can exert influence. The new world of human rights ran counter to engagement. Dialogue was replaced by our requirement that country X comply with our list of demands. There is no reason human rights can't be part of a foreign affairs dialogue. As the movie *Z* about Greece portrayed, some governments were carrying on some nasty activities. When you move from 'what you wish for' to 'what you can accomplish' priorities become an issue. In the early days Pat Derian and her colleagues in the Bureau of Human Rights demanded that human rights not be one issue among many priorities, but *the* priority. Perhaps this was necessary to establish the Bureau's turf. The end result for handling relations with Iraq was the Human Rights bureau strictly limited our tools of engagement. The irony is that both the HR Bureau and Baghdad were in agreement that the U.S. was not engaged in a constructive dialogue with Iraq. An interesting irony.

Q: Well, perhaps it would have been better if Saddam Hussein had gotten the ornamental pistol, instead of some of the other weapons that he came to acquire in the later period.

Let's move ahead. After you left the Secretariat Staff, I believe you moved to the Office of Chinese Affairs as an economic officer. Tell me a little bit about that. That was a period from 1979-81, the end of the Carter Administration and the beginning of Reagan Administration.

REUTHER: While assigned to Secretary Vance's office, the Carter Administration completed the task of normalizing diplomatic relations with China. The Administration closely held this decision. The January 1979 normalization was as much a surprise to many inside the Department as those outside. With normalization came an expansion of officers assigned to the new Office of Chinese and Mongolian Affairs and I was invited to join the China desk. At that time, the China Desk Office Director was Chas Freeman. The office was divided into two sections: political and economic. I was assigned to the economic half, under Jerry Ogden, and had responsibility for Sino-American economic relations, including export control issues and liaison with Murray Zinoman in OES (Bureau of Oceans, Environment, and Science) on science and technology issues.

Normalization presented an unprecedented opportunity. Chas Freeman, as you know, was office director at that time and his oral history should be perused for important guidance on this period. He is talented, a gifted linguist, and one of the few officers involved in the initial breakthrough in the early 1970s.

He had thought deeply about what it meant to reestablish relations with Beijing. In addition to easily anticipated foreign policy issues, the State Department itself had to prepare for the new relationship. One of the consequences for the Foreign Service of the

previous policy of only recognizing Taipei was that the Taipei embassy provided a limited number of positions for Chinese language speaking officers. The post-normalization Foreign Service, which would have to staff an embassy and numerous consulates, needed language capable officers. Checking with Personnel we determined that Chinese language training for younger officers was one of the things that had lapsed over the years because of budget circumstances, lack of need, and the unintended foreign policy signal training a fair number of officers would have sent. There was a sizable number of older officers with Chinese, but precious few younger officers. Even at that, the Department had Chinese language slots in Manila, Bangkok, and Hong Kong, as a method maintaining a cadre of Chinese speaking officers. With diplomatic recognition, the numbers were totally inadequate, so one of Chas' first objectives was to press Personnel and FSI for more Chinese language training. We had an embassy and consulates to staff. Now, if one were just staffing a country like France -- where there are good newspapers, adequate roads, a modern transportation system -- an embassy and a consulate or two might be adequate to understand national trends. But, China is a vast, continental, developing country with primitive transportation and communication networks. So, if you were to find out what was happening you had to be in those places. For comparison, look at German or British embassy staffing in the continental United States. The U.S. is a modern, sophisticated country and excellent media facilities, yet the Europeans just don't rely on an embassy in Washington, but have the United States covered by numerous consulates.

Q: In that period when you were just starting, did we already have some consulates?

REUTHER: No, those were post-normalization objectives.

Q: How about on the economic trade side. Was there much business community interest? Were you involved in negotiating agreements? Were you analyzing the Chinese economy? What sort of work did you do?

REUTHER: All of the above. The establishment of diplomatic relations meant replacing the previous tight embargo with trade. To answer the question what sort of market might China be, one of the first things we did was to commission our in-house Intelligence and Research Bureau to conduct some studies for us. I remember one of the questions put to them was, if China were to acquire a telephone network equivalent to Italy or Spain, mid-level European, what would it require? The answer was that it would require the world's production of copper for the next five years to wire China like a mid-level European country. Obviously, if China bought all of the world's copper, prices would skyrocket. So, it was to the U.S. advantage not to have this largest, last, undeveloped country setting traditional modernization goals. Fortunately, satellite technology was at hand, but if the stringent export control laws scared away U.S. business, we would have no commercial relationship, a weak Chinese economy, and potential supply and price problem in the international economy. With this in mind then, we encouraged American companies to consider offering satellite technology.

Of course, such an effort collided with the encrusted export control laws that applied to

China. Over the previous 30 years, many a freshman congressman demonstrated his anti-Communist mettle by sponsoring anti-Chinese legislation. The result hardly left any room for any significant trade. There was a need to communicate both to the Congress and the business community that the government was serious about encouraging trade. Our office drafted speeches and sought fora, such as the U.S.-China Business Relations Council, to communicate that the U.S. Government supported trade and encouraged business to sell items for which it earlier could not obtain export licenses.

At the time of normalization our export control laws placed China and the Soviet Union in one category, Yugoslavia, in recognition of Tito's break with Stalin, in another. Written this way, the law assumed that the Chinese would potentially divert any purchase to Moscow, and that any sale to China, became a precedent for a sale to the Soviet Union. One of the most acrimonious aspects of interagency implementation of the new relationship with China was overcoming these presumptions. The whole geopolitical basis of the opening to China was that Washington and Beijing were anti-Soviet! To Chas and others it was obvious that if other bureaucracies dragged their feet implementing existing export control regulations, then trade with China was problematic. In time, because of our interagency delays, we rewrote the export control regulations to remove China from the same category as the Soviet Union. The export control issue took enormous amounts of our time as either we or our principles fought these issues in interagency fora. In time, the Chinese realized little was coming out the pipeline and at high level meetings we began to receive queries from the Chinese as to this project or that computer. Two of the largest issues revolved around the Landsat II Ground station and the Western Geophysical computer for oil exploration. To State, China's economy was so needful that diversion to non-economic purposes was a remote chance were we willing to take. Defense fought us well into the next Administration. We tried to establish export control guidelines for equipment, especially computers: typical graduations were - some low level where U.S. companies threw stuff away (but above current technical limits for sale to China); a low mid-range for which we wanted a presumption of sale; and a high-mid range for which no presumption of sale was warranted and every case reviewed individually.

Even these attempts didn't streamline our deliberations. I remember one seemingly simple case, I think it was of a y level medical diagnostic equipment on which DOD kept stalling. Finally, we tried to create a deadline and get a straight answer from them as to the problem. Turned out that some Army lab in New Jersey owned the earlier version of this equipment and wasn't about to approve it for sale to China until they got the budget to buy a replacement for themselves! With the exposure that the problem was not a level of technology issue, but a budget issue for that lab, we obtained consensus for the sale. Export control remained a contentious interagency issue.

Q. How else did you go about building a relationship with China?

REUTHER: If the first element of our approach was to encourage U.S. business, the second element was to demonstrate to the Chinese that the U.S. sought a full and productive relationship. The trade embargo was only a symptom of the extent to which

the United States worked over the years to totally isolate China. While China was a member of the UN after the early 1970s, it certainly was not a major economic or international actor. It might have trade relations with France or the United Kingdom, but let's face it, the United States is the premier world power and American acceptance meant international acceptance in a manner China had not enjoyed since 1949. So, one of our objectives was to look for areas in which we could engage our two countries in responsible, normal, commercial, and diplomatic endeavors. An analogy we used at the time was that there was great hole in the ground that was a lack of Chinese contact with the U.S., and our job was to fill that hole.

So, we approached this task from a number of angles. China was still a centralized economy dominated by significant bureaucracies. How to engage each bureaucracy and give its personnel insights into the workings of a consumer economy? China's association with European economies was insufficient experience for it to connect with the American economy. The American economy was in the midst of deregulation. Unlike the Europeans, we did not have a national airline, or shipping company. We knew the U.S. economy would 'feel' different to the Chinese.

One of our first steps was to negotiate a maritime treaty, for example. That is a fascinating little case study. The State Department's Economics Bureau has a maritime office. Because of its specialized knowledge of maritime issues, it was the lead negotiator for the American side. Of course, our delegation included other government agencies with equities in this issue. There were representatives from Defense, Transportation, Treasury, and others.

With the negotiating team set, we invited the Chinese to Washington. Setting an American venue was very important to us at that time because we wanted to use this opportunity to increase the pool of Chinese officials who had visited the U.S. The penalty for the years of no contact was that Chinese officials had never seen the United States, had no idea how big it was, no idea of our consumer economy and certainly little understanding of our technological advancement. Nothing like an American hotel room or barbecue invitation to a private home to underscore an important message. The Chinese may have visited Europe, but if they only thought the United States was a little bit bigger than France, or like Germany, then they weren't getting the whole picture. So, we were quite eager to invite their teams here as an educational experience.

In this vein you will recall that Deng Xiaoping came to the United States in early 1979. I had not yet taken up my Chinese Desk assignment, but my understanding is that our organization of his schedule was designed to educate him about the size and variety of the U.S. I believe his schedule had him stopping in Hawaii first, and then on to Washington. From there he went to Texas and California. The point of the exercise was not for him to come into the West Coast and do serially West Coast, Texas, Washington and maybe out through Europe or something like that. We wanted him to fly across the United States twice assuming that sitting in that plane five hours would give him a physical understanding of the size and majesty of the United States.

So, we began negotiating a maritime agreement. The first problem was our own legislation which forbade port access to Soviet Bloc countries. But then, wasn't that the key political-strategic factor, China was no longer a Soviet satellite? Of course, in reviewing which ports we would offer to open, in close cooperation with our colleagues at Defense, we undertook a considerable effort to balanced commercial ports with those which may have had naval facilities adjacent to them. We wanted a clear appreciation of our national security and economic interests.

The Chinese, for their own requirements, wanted the final list of Chinese and American ports to be of equal length. This was not easy. The U.S. has three coasts, China one. I remember collaborating with Navy representatives and comparing size, water depth, etc. of the Chinese ports with our ports. It made considerable economic sense for Los Angeles to be on our list and Darien to be on theirs. For face purposes, the two lists of posts are equal, but their list included ports of no particular interest to us because they were too small for U.S. merchant vessels. Nevertheless, we also believed the Chinese port list reflected a signal from the central government to the local governments, and the country as a whole, that opening the country to foreign trade was government policy. Considering the Qing Dynasty efforts to thwart western trade 140 years earlier, the openness of the Chinese position and its connection with its own domestic reform was remarkable.

Q: Were they equally interested in the Gulf coast as well as the West Coast?

REUTHER: At the time a primary product in Sino-American trade was American grain. Economic reform in China coincided with an extraordinary decision to feed the Chinese coastal cities with imported grain. It was cheaper and unburdened the Chinese rail system. So the mouths of the Mississippi and the Columbia rivers were of interest. In terms of industrial trade, of course, Beijing sought access to the southeast and southwest coasts. Part of our objective was to build bridges with the Chinese and overcome the years of separation. In addition to problem solving, we wanted to create scenarios where they would have to talk to us, have to visit us, exchange with us, begin to understand our requirements, the unique aspects of the U.S. market, etc.

The other economic issue of high priority for us was an aviation agreement. An aviation agreement provided immediate economic and cultural benefits for American business, tourists and academics.

Q: Deregulation had started?

REUTHER: Yes, deregulation of the American market had started. Between our deregulation and the Chinese, like all of Europe, with its national flag carrier, we entered these negotiations from two different perspectives. The Chinese already had negotiated a number of civil aviation agreements with Japan and the Europeans by the time their high-ranking team came to Washington. Again, the Department's Economics Bureau, which had an aviation office, headed the American delegation. As with the maritime agreement, the Department of Transportation, Treasury, FAA, and the military were involved.

During these negotiations I heard one of the best advertisements for Boeing airplanes that I have heard in years. During the 1972-79 period, we allowed the Chinese to fly commercial aircraft into the United States on a one-time basis, if they had a U.S. military crewman in the cabin. One of these officers was the Air Force representative to our civil aviation delegation. He told of one flight, which he said was typical of the minimal skills of the Chinese pilots, into Los Angeles. He swore that when the aircraft was five feet off the ground, the Chinese pilot reversed the engines and the plane fell onto the runway. The landing gear absorbed this tremendous impact and nothing untoward happened. After that experience, this air force captain said he loved Boeing quality.

And there were other stories. When the Chinese were going to New York in those days, they had no experience with heavy traffic and the requirement to circle, waiting one's turn to land. Normally, New York air traffic controllers create two stacks of airplanes to safely separate the aircraft and prioritize landings. The Chinese pilots' inexperience with these procedures created a special burden for New York air traffic controllers. Apparently it got to the point that, when the Chinese aircraft arrived, the air traffic controllers pulled all the stacks away from New York, brought him down, and then returned to normal procedures. This story, however, isn't about safety. It's about Chinese inexperience with a commercial economy and the multiple ways in which we could develop a productive relationship with China. We believed it was to our advantage to expose them to how we handled these kinds of problems. China and the United States, as large continental economies and therefore have a great deal in common, particularly the scale of the economic and social issues we both face. Our problems are on a much more vast scale than those facing the Europeans.

Civil aviation was another venue for an interaction in which standards and technical parameters would be exchanged, and ultimately the benefits of American equipment and procedures extolled. At that moment, the Chinese commercial aviation was in its infancy, few planes were in the air, safety relied on the lack of planes in the air. The Chinese piloting experience was to get airborne, be assigned a very small slice of air space (by the military which controlled the sky), get to his destination and be brought down. Every time we exposed them to our system, we were educating, building expectations.

The civil aviation negotiations were interesting because the Chinese brought with them their standard bilateral civil aviation agreement. It was quite inadequate because it assumed both countries had national airlines. During our initial meetings we explained at great length that there was no U.S. national airline. We had numerous airline companies. We described how we allocated routes through a bidding process. The Chinese were absolutely flabbergasted. How could a country like the United States not have a national airline? In their lobbying effort, the PanAm representatives took advantage of the Chinese presumption, saying, in essence: "Don't listen to what the government guys tell you. We are the U.S. national airline. Remember, we served China in the '30s..." In fact, some of the officials in the Chinese aviation system were mechanics with PanAm in the old days, so the PanAm name resonated. The prime American bidders for the routes to China were PanAm and Northwest. PanAm gained an advantage with its nostalgic presentation. The Chinese support for the PanAm bid, to the extent the Chinese were

unfamiliar with aviation trends in the U.S., in part reflected the success of our embargo which kept them on the periphery of world trends.

Q: PanAm and Northwest actually participated in the discussions?

REUTHER: As with many of these negotiations, there is an official delegation and industrial representatives. On one hand, the industrial representatives acted as resources for our delegation, but did not participate in the bilateral discussion. On the other, they had full access to the opposite delegation. They hosted some of the meals, privately met with the Chinese delegation and made their own presentations to them. It would be interesting to get the Chinese to tell us what they thought of that whole thing.

Our effort, again, was to try to educate them as to how we operated, why we had so many airlines, why we were so big, how the whole thing worked, because we saw these early meetings with China as methods to educate them as to what we were about.

Q: During this time did you have an opportunity to visit China, or were you pretty much working on the interagency and negotiating side in Washington?

REUTHER: Actually I took my first trip to China at that time. Included in my portfolio of responsibilities was what we called science and technology (S&T). International cooperation in S&T evolved from a concern for controlling the technology of mass destruction and the budding environmental movement. The White House had an S & T office. During the Carter Administration, Frank Press headed that office. The relevant State Department organization was the Bureau for Oceans, Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES). Again, we saw scientific cooperation with the Chinese as a method of contacting their educational system, generating immediate benefits for both sides and subtly educating them about ourselves. Science and technology exchanges with the Chinese were in fact a very major part of our bridge building program. There was an umbrella S&T agreement with China and under that there were a large number of individual protocols which again sought to fill the void between the two countries. Our objective was to reverse the many years of suspicion and no contact.

My first trip to Beijing was as the State Department escort officer to the annual S&T conference. The conference created a useful deadline for putting the final touches on various agreements under negotiation and a ceremonial focus for the overall relationship. As this was my first trip to a country I had studied from afar, rather disparate images stand out today. The trip took place in January a particularly cold month for northern China. We were invited to a piano concert. The weather forced one to wear an overcoat in transit, but what I didn't realize was that this vast, first-rate (to the Chinese) auditorium was not heated. Absolutely everybody there looked like a buffalo wrapped up as best as they could. The poor piano player was probably freezing his fingers off.

Q: The pianist wasn't wearing gloves.

REUTHER: He should have, because it was cold. Beijing in the winter doesn't have the

snow of Minnesota but it has the winds and temperatures of the upper plains. The other meteorological factoid that struck me at the time was the low humidity. Any negotiation requires last minute changes and notifications to the delegation. One day I was struggling with the embassy's copy machine which was probably invented when Marshall was Secretary of State. The low humidity of the Beijing winter meant that there wasn't enough moisture for the rollers to pick up the paper. At times you had to breathe on the edge of the paper and then put it onto the rollers. One page at a time. It really slows down your copying. Just another illustration that good equipment doesn't get to the field.

Q: Did we have an ambassador then?

REUTHER: Yes. Ambassador Woodcock.

Q: Who came from the labor union.

REUTHER: Right, the UAW. He had a long time interest in China. In fact, with normalization, things Chinese were all the rage. Major department stores, such as Macy's, had exclusive sales of Chinese products and Chinese influenced designs. It is interesting how Americans flock to fads. One day I took a phone call from a major mid-West manufacturing company. The caller noted that his boss recently finished a golf game during which he heard, at length, about his partner's trip to China. Could we recommend even more exotic Chinese destinations in preparation for the next golf game? One-upmanship in executive travel, if you will, which is absolutely hilarious because China had meager facilities for tourism at that time. It was all quite spartan. These and other travelers had no idea of how desperately inadequate the Chinese facilities were at the time. But, everybody had overly romanticized China.

Q: Well, there had been a long period, of course, of estrangement between the United States and China and to some extent China and the rest of the world...the Cultural Revolution and all that long period...and certainly there was an excitement at the thought of interacting with China. I can remember being on a panel discussion with you, Dave, in January 1981, I think, and you were stressing how important China was for the 1980s and the need for the Reagan and Bush administrations to deal with some important issues with China. I was talking a lot about Europe in the same panel but I think you were right that China was on the front burner and should have been.

Unless there is something else you want to say about that time as the economic officer on the China desk, maybe we should move on to your next assignment, which I believe was to the American Institute in Taiwan in 1981. I think you were there for four years or so. You were chief of the political section. Would you like to say something about the unique arrangement of the Institute not being an embassy?

REUTHER: Certainly a lot has been written about the way in which we organized ourselves in 1979 to assure a proper relationship with Taipei. It appeared to me that the Japanese precedent was in the minds of the American players. The Japanese in 1972 recognized Beijing and established an unofficial office in Taipei called the Japanese

Interchange Office. Taipei had an unofficial office in Tokyo. Taiwan used to be a Japanese colony. Taiwan and Japan had important personal, business, and educational ties that they wanted to preserve. The Japanese unofficial relationship worked. When we came on the same decision-point, we saw an advantage to the precedent the Japanese had set. I think there are minor differences, reflecting unique aspects of our law and customs. We told Beijing in our negotiations that we were going to do this and whatever their objections they would just have to table them. Beijing may not have liked it, but it found the arrangement acceptable. So, coming out of Washington I was first assigned to Chinese language training, 1981-83.

Q: Where did that take place?

REUTHER: At that time language training was one year in Washington and then one year in Taipei.

Q: Now, you had already had some Chinese before, but you pretty much had to go through the whole program because you didn't have any experience speaking.

REUTHER: Exactly. My previous language training was in academia, which, because American scholars couldn't go to China, was basically training for research purposes. Diplomatic use of language necessarily assumes face to face conversation.

Q: The second year was in Taiwan, in Taipei?

REUTHER: In Taipei. By that time the language school, previously located in Taichung in central Taiwan had moved to Taipei. The pre-normalization American presence in Taiwan was extensive and included a fair military presence. There could be no military presence under an unofficial relationship. The departure of the military left us with this vast housing pool in Taiwan. Instead of having facilities throughout Taiwan, we consolidated basic functions into the housing area on Yangming Shan, a mountain in a northeastern suburb of Taipei.

I finished the second year of language training in 1983 and took up my duties as the Chief of the General Affairs Section of the American Institute on Taiwan.

Q: Dave, we got you out of language training and into the job at the American Institute in Taiwan. You were there from 1983-85 and chief of the political section. Tell me what sorts of things were going on in Taiwan in those days? They were still, I'm sure reacting a bit to normalization of our relationship with Beijing. Was that your primary focus or was it more internal political developments within Taiwan itself?

REUTHER: Actually there were a number of aspects to it. On the one hand our primary mission, since we were still close emotionally to normalization, was to make the idea of the unofficial relationship work. For their part, the authorities on Taiwan spent all their time trying to prove to themselves and their public that we had an official relationship. For two years we engaged in a running game of thrust and parry with the local

authorities. For example, Taiwan's unofficial counterpart to AIT was the Coordination Council for North American Affairs (CCNAA). It had an office in Washington (and other American cities) and one in Taipei with which we conducted liaison as if it were the "foreign ministry." Publicly we were seen working with CCNAA which was housed in a separate building a few blocks from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In fact, we worked closely with talented and patriotic officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but in unofficial venues. At one point, for their domestic reasons, the authorities on Taiwan told us that they would move CCNAA into offices on the backside of the building that housed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This would create a situation where, if you will, the address for the ministry is 1500 Third Street, but the address for the opposite side of the same building was 1500 First Street. Despite their arguments of efficiency and obtuseness (the CCNAA and MFA addresses would be different), their intent was to impart the appearance of officiality to the relationship. We begged them not to tinker with the symbols of unofficiality, and they finally dropped this idea.

This game of imparting officiality into the relationship dominated the two years I was in Taipei. Our objective was not to put Taiwan down. The reality was that we could have as robust a relationship with Taiwan as we desired, as long as we kept it unofficial, meaning out of the public eye. A public event would force Beijing to notice; otherwise Beijing would turn a diplomatic blind eye.

Taipei needed the appearance of officiality for the Kuomintang-dominated government to justify its hold on power. The rationale for KMT rule was that it was the government of all of China. In partial proof, there was a national government on Taiwan and a provincial government. Because Taipei needed the psychological boost of officiality, incidents arose from time to time where Taipei would steal a march on us. After our long years of association, Taipei was familiar with American practices and weaknesses. I recall one day seeing a picture on the front page of the local newspaper of an American military officer, in uniform, at a medical conference. The local authorities had invited an officer from a military medical corps, at their expense, to a conference in Taipei. They knew that in encouraging him to wear a uniform, a symbol of sovereignty and hence sovereign recognition, the officer was violating U.S. policy. My office spent the day calling the major hotels in town, tracking the officer down, and getting him out of town. So, one mark on the wall for them.

Since 1979 the authorities on Taiwan sought to make the relationship as official as possible, and we sought to maintain an unofficial relationship. The ultimate audience for this thrust and parry was not the international community or friends in America. At issue for the authorities on Taiwan was their domestic legitimacy which they had tied to their claim to be the government of all of China. For them these exchanges had an edge, yet I think both sides exhibited professionalism and good humor. That's the point. It is the role of diplomacy to manage disagreements and insure that small conflicts do not snowball into major issues.

In the early 1980s, the issue of the Republic of China's position in the Asian Development Bank [ADB] was an illustration of the tension between the KMT and the

Taiwanese. Up to this time, the KMT position was that if its rival, the People's Republic of China, joined an international organization, then the ROC would leave. This made sense within the paradigm of the "One China" issue. Neither the CCP or the KMT wanted to establish a circumstance in which both were represented, no two Chinas, no one China, one Taiwan. Of course, this policy left the KMT isolated internationally. The Taiwanese political opposition, starting with the Presbyterian Church's declaration of 1972, argued that the hardline KMT position was isolating the island. Moderate KMT forces were seeking a way to undercut the Taiwanese criticism. So, domestic and international politics came together over the status of the ROC in the ADB.

Q: But what was the role of AIT in all this?

REUTHER: Actually, we played a number of roles which are illustrative of what foreign service work is all about. First, we did extensive reporting on how the various factions in Taiwan thought about the representation issue at the ADB in Manila. We talked to government officials, Taiwanese politicians, and business people. Second, with Director Lilley in the head, AIT Taipei, we were making a number of suggestions of how the issue of the ROC's representation could be handled. This was important because there were actors on the U.S. side, in Congress and in the Executive Branch, whose support of the KMT position complicated the discussions. Ultimately, I think the KMT moderates won a major victory. The ROC stayed in the ADB as "China, Taipei," a formula that opened up renewed ROC participation in a number of organizations and especially the Olympics. But I don't think the record of the internal KMT debates is well documented yet.

Q: Handling an issue such as ADB membership, didn't that involve contact with the authorities on Taiwan at the highest level?

REUTHER: It certainly did and I think part of Director Lilley's contribution, and our efforts in GAS, was to restore a productive association with the KMT. One consequence of the change of relations in 1979, of course, was a much less intimate relationship with the elite, the Kuomintang. I don't remember whether the heads of the American Institute in Taiwan ever did see Chiang Ching-kuo, who was the president at that time. By 1983 he was advanced in age and ill with diabetes and other complications. As a consequence, he was not as readily available to AIT's senior staff.

Q: Were you in meetings with other senior government officials?

REUTHER: Yes, all the time.

Q: Who was the head of the American Institute at that time?

REUTHER: Jim Lilley was the Director when I arrived but left shortly thereafter. He was very well liked and did an excellent, discrete job. Familiar with the Chinese cultural context, he enjoyed superb contacts at the highest levels and performed an outstanding job on both political and commercial issues. He did much to repair the frayed edges of our altered relationship and projected confidence and sincerity in the strength of the

unofficial relationship. After a short hiatus, career Foreign Service officer Harry Thayer arrived as Director.

As we moved away from 1979, our relationship with the government authorities stabilized. Taiwan was also changing and the nature of our political work shifted. In addition to myself, there were three other officers in the General Affairs Section. One of them covered what we called the *tangwai*, or outside the party, that is, the political opposition to the ruling Kuomintang. I covered the Kuomintang. Because of the break in relations, our normal contacts with the Kuomintang had atrophied. AIT had good relations with the economic and the commercial offices of the government and the business community, but not with the ruling party. So, my job for the next two years was to reestablish the relationship with the Kuomintang. When my predecessor introduced me to his contacts, there were no Kuomintang officials at these 'hail and farewell' receptions. Circumstances in Taipei called for a special effort. Normally one arrives at post and your predecessor introduces you to the people he knew and that you are going to be working with. You in turn maintain those relationships and perhaps add a few new people. So, I spent the next two years working on AIT's contacts with the Kuomintang. When I departed post, the third ranking official in the party gave me a heart felt farewell party. Through diligence, perseverance and the fruits of two years of language training, we successfully reestablished a friendly and professional relationship.

Q: Of course, the problem for your predecessor at least partly was that that was very soon after the change of relationship.

REUTHER: Oh, absolutely, in fact, that is quite the point. I was the first officer to arrive who had no relationship with the events of 1979. In 1979, the Department gave people stationed in Taipei the option of staying or departing right away and two officers in the political section, Mark Pratt and Stan Ifshin, decided to stay. They were extremely talented and capable officers of the highest order and chose to stay and do what they could to work through the changed relationship. But to the same extent, they were sort of tainted by the break in 1979. I was the first person to head GAS without any connection to normalization.

Q: Well, it is hard to transform yourself to really in effect be a transition when you are identified, symbolically at least, with the previously situation. I noticed in your sheet here that you did report on democratization of Taiwan. You just talked about liaison with the government party, a pretty strong party, and I don't know how strong the opposition was.

REUTHER: In fact, one of the key things that was happening in Taiwan at that time was a consequence of the January 1979 change in diplomatic relations. The political opposition saw derecognition as damaging to the ruling party's claim to power. It argued that even the Americans have walked out on the KMT; that Taiwan was isolated, weak, and in danger of being turned over to Beijing because of KMT claims to be the government of all China. The end result of increased opposition pressure and derecognition was the Kaohsiung demonstrations on Human Rights Day in December 1979. The entire leadership of the opposition was in Kaohsiung on that day. The

government trapped the opposition into a street riot and used that circumstance to crush it. One individual, because he was ill and couldn't make the rally, was the only *tangwai* leader not rounded up. Also swept up in the government crackdown and tried in military court was the leadership of the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan. So from 1979 on, the worst aspects of the authoritarian government that had been in place since 1949 exhibited itself. Underlining the significance of these events, on the anniversary of the February 1947 massacre of Taiwanese protesting KMT rule, the family of one of the defendants was slaughtered in its home.

Q: The trial was before you arrived?

REUTHER: Right. The trial was during 1980. When I arrived everyone was in jail, the family was murdered, and little incidents denoting pressure on the opposition happened from time to time. For example, a visiting Chinese-American scholar fell off a five-story building while in police custody.

Q: Was this Henry Liu?

REUTHER: No, that was Chen Wen-cheng.

Q: Tell us about that.

REUTHER: With the 1979 round up of the political opposition, the hard-liners dominated the KMT and it entered a new period of repression. Of course, it is not always clear whether acts were committed on orders or by zealous lieutenants. Henry Liu was a KMT-trained political warfare officer, who worked as a journalist, had fallen out of favor with the KMT, and was in the process of writing a biography of Chiang Ching-kuo. The biography was supposedly very critical.

Q: And, he was an American citizen.

REUTHER: Well, at least a green card holder.

Q: But, living in Taiwan.

REUTHER: No, he was living in the United States. He knew he couldn't go back to Taiwan. He was researching this book and some of the people that he was talking to were partisan foes of the government. A group came to the United States in 1984 and assassinated him in his garage in a town outside of San Francisco. There is an excellent book by Kaplan, Fires of the Dragon that gives a fairly good description of the circumstances surrounding this murder.

What is interesting about this event is that it appears to have become a turning point in the way the KMT governed Taiwan. It is my impression that the younger, American educated members of the Kuomintang--those who had been pushing for elections and similar procedures to keep the party in power rather the strong-armed tactics--were quite

upset that they were a party to this murder. They didn't feel it was part of their self-identification. Mainly Mainlanders, they were not willing to see the Taiwanese opposition come to power, but they thought different tools were available to the KMT; that it could base its legitimacy on its success in economic policy. Oddly enough, there were signs of the system loosening, simultaneously with these murders. The KMT lifted censorship in the movies and a number of Taiwan films won awards at Asian film festivals. One USIA officer, Joe Moyle, was particularly close to the film industry. From time to time we would have special showings of movies that handled sensitive social subjects.

The point to make here is that Henry Liu's murder polarized opinion within the KMT. Just as the conservatives used the Chungli election in 1977 to dominate the moderates and went on to stage the 1979 Kaohsiung incident; the moderates gained from Liu's murder. It appears to have been a decision point that moved Taiwan to democracy. Ed Winkler, an academic, wrote an article in the fall of 1984 arguing that politics on Taiwan were moving from hard authoritarianism to soft authoritarianism. This article was published two months before Henry Liu was murdered. Without the murder, Winkler's conclusions would have been premature, but he may have been drawing on the stirring of these American-educated officials who had little influence at the time he was writing, but whose softer line would predominate in the wake of the Liu murder.

Q: So, Winkler was right but a little premature.

REUTHER: A little premature. Chiang Ching-kuo is an absolutely fascinating personality and an excellent biography needs to be done about him because his role in the political transformation of Taiwan is not well understood. He has had so many organizational responsibilities in his career that observers project his organizational roles as his personal beliefs. He first came to Taiwan as a strict enforcer of the security system. Later he was in charge of the China Youth Corps and may have realized very early that if the KMT was going to survive on Taiwan, it needed a Taiwanese patina. Nevertheless, the Mainlander dominated KMT began its rule by trying to convert the Taiwanese into Mainlanders. The Taiwanese language was banned in the airwaves; quota systems were introduced in the school system; your registration card identified you as either Mainlander or Taiwanese. Chiang, however, may have realized that the army, and then the party, in time would exhaust the pool of Mainlanders. This realization probably led to the Taiwanization of the upper reaches of the KMT and government, which all Taiwan watchers, and we in our turn, observed and reported. When a cabinet shuffle would occur, when the Kuomintang would have a standing committee election, Chiang would add one or more Taiwanese, generally balanced by Mainlander appointments, but slowly resulting in increasing numbers of Taiwanese in positions of influence. After each of these events, GAS submitted a cable explaining the significance of creeping Taiwanization. We would add that our interlocutors characterized the Taiwanese appointees as younger, Western educated, and more talented. Young, American educated Mainlanders suggested they and their Taiwanese counterparts were the group Chiang increasingly relied upon. In any event, we saw the process of Taiwanization of the KMT was preliminary to the democratization of Taiwan.

Our reporting from Taiwan focused on a couple of subjects. We watched the Taiwanization of the party. We watched the impact of the western educated technocrats in the economic arena. We also reported on the *tangwai*, the political opposition, most of which was still in jail serving their Kaohsiung incident sentences. Their wives, however, took up the challenge and rode their husbands' martyrdom to subsequent electoral victories. We extensively spoke to, and reported on, the activities of these opposition leaders.

The Taiwan opposition could be divided between those in exile in Japan and the United States and the *tangwai* on the island. Despite the government line that the political opposition (meaning the exiles) was a hair's breath from sedition and terrorism, on the island, the two sides played a sophisticated fencing match that defined the boundary for *tangwai* activity. This was particularly evident in the media field. The opposition was not allowed to own a newspaper, but it could publish magazines. From time to time, the Garrison Command, the premier security agency at the time, closed down the magazines. So, members of the opposition would register a number of magazine names. When the Garrison Command closed one title, for some article mentioning Chiang Ching-kuo's secret fortune or half brother Chiang Wei-kuo's activities, the opposition would return the next month under a new name. This ballet was interesting to watch. Sometimes Garrison Command would let the *tangwai* distribute an issue and then ban the magazine (collecting copies for sale, but in fact allowing some distribution); sometimes they closed it down at the printing shop. This was a great cat and mouse game in which each side tested the other. In an entrepreneurial spirit, sometimes the opposition would start a rumor that the next issue was going to be banned in order to boost sales.

AIT, and the embassy before it, had long reported on political events on Taiwan. What we were watching was new because the jailing of the opposition leader unified the movement (to the extent squabbling leaders were in jail) and handled it an excellent issue to proselytize the population. I should also note that the U.S. Congress was paying more attention to internal dynamics on Taiwan during the 1980s. Congressman Solarz from New York visited Taiwan and publicly identify himself with the opposition. His attention assisted their cause and gave them some cover. I recall accompanying him to a speaking engagement at a Taipei hotel. His address was not as remarkable as the opportunity for the opposition to meet without being arrested. It was interesting to note that the *tangwai* provided its own strict security on this occasion. For those who look at the democratization of Taiwan for clues to the possible democratization of Mainland China, note that the consequences of trade (not only in generating wealth, but training entrepreneurial skills) and American education are far more important than human rights posturing by foreigners.

Q: It was a very interesting period both in terms of U.S. relations, if you will, with Taiwan and in the light of normalization with the Peoples Republic in 1979, but also in terms of what was happening in Taiwan, itself. Of course you were on the political side, but we haven't talked about the economic side but the economy was booming, trade was prospering.

REUTHER: Trade was booming, substantial numbers of American businesses were in Taiwan, encouraged in the early years by U.S. aid programs, American investment and trade opportunities. Although my immediate responsibilities were political, I made an effort to go to the American Chamber of Commerce breakfasts and meetings to gather a sense from them about what was going on economically and politically. The Chamber was very active and a number of individual American businessmen had been in Taiwan for years. I particularly remember a couple of business issues. Most businesses were tied to their American home offices by increasingly sophisticated telecommunications. Garrison Command regulated communications and had set a maximum baud transmission speed so that it could easily intercept and read any traffic. By the early 1980s, however, contemporary equipment had long exceeded Taiwan's allowable transmission speed. Home offices were complaining to their managers on Taiwan. While the companies improved company-wide speeds, their circuits to Taiwan were comparatively slower and, in some cases, required separate circuits. The issue for the resident business people was do they just upgrade their equipment and not inform the local authorities or seek permission? The justification for 'do and don't tell' was in appreciation of the Chinese cultural context: not directly asking saved face. Asking guaranteed a negative response. I forgot how it turned out.

I was impressed with the economic progress evident on Taiwan. Of course, the island's entrepreneurial spirit had its positive and negative consequences. American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) members from time to time would express concern about losing good mid-level managers. Because of the open economy, lax intellectual property rights regulations and 'can-do' attitude among the Taiwanese, American companies often faced a situation where a trusted local middle manager would learn some part of the company's manufacturing process and then set himself up in business making a clone of that item, often at a cheaper price.

Another entrepreneurial story. During language training we traveled around the island and practiced conducting interviews. Once, we stopped at a substantial shoe manufacturing facility, I think in Taichung. The Taiwanese owner was making good money, but he knew nothing about design or fashion issues. During our interview, it became clear he had an arrangement with a Japanese trading firm from which he received patterns, dies and tools. He manufactured shoes to order for the Japanese trading company that sold to the American market. I have seen little academic writing about the role of Japan in post-war economic developments on Taiwan.

Q: If the economy was booming, the society must have been changing...?

REUTHER: There were a number of things happening in Taiwan. I think somebody ought to research, for example, Taiwan films at this time. During the 1980s the Kuomintang allowed the Taiwan film industry to move away from a very sterile period to producing innovative and interesting pieces. I recall the Taiwan directors even started to win awards at Hong Kong film festivals. The appearance of creative films was the result, in part, of a process where the senior KMT leadership was looking for opportunities to

give the new American-trained party members experience. The KMT was a bureaucracy; members worked their way up and proved their loyalty and competence along the way. At the time I was there, it seemed that the leadership started some of the American educated people in the cultural directorate. What these new people did was to loosen restrictions on the movie people and allowed them to be creative.

On the sociological side, Taiwan was the richest Chinese society in human history. But Chinese cultural history and embedded social signals assumed a traditional marginal economic (primarily agricultural) existence. Some in the KMT were concerned that, to the extent that traditional culture might lead people to dissipate their wealth, the KMT began a newspaper based “Ann Landers” column to inculcate new social signals. The message in part was puritanical, invest wisely and stay out of the bars. I often met young Taiwanese businessmen who owned two or three substantial businesses and were now channeling their wealth into mistresses or dance halls. Was this culture or a lack of alternative investment opportunities?

Apparently, as political and social changes accumulated, the ground was shifting under the KMT. I remember being told in all seriousness by a ranking Kuomintang official, that the Americans underestimated KMT factionalism. He argued that one of the reasons for going slowly on democratization was otherwise the KMT would shatter into small parties and lose the reins of power. He was certain rapid democratization would lead to chaos. Perhaps, while there were limits on our ability to see KMT factionalism, we understood the tensions between the moderates and the hard liners during the mid-1980s, primary over elections.

The KMT, which needed a mechanism to legitimize itself and extend to the grass roots, had held elections on Taiwan since the early 1950s. These elections allowed them to fan rivalries among local Taiwanese factions. The KMT would support one local faction one election and another local faction the next election. But, the older hard liners had always believed that the KMT should always win an election by a landslide. The people returning to the island, the moderates, the modernizers, were saying, you could win an election with 51 percent of the vote, your manhood was intact and you were still in power. That was a revolutionary idea and it took years before the older members of the party agreed that the only thing you had to do was to win the election, not overwhelm it. In fact, one of the senior reformers at one time, Lee Huan, lost his job because during an election in the late 1970s because riots broke out over allegations of KMT ballot stuffing, the old timers didn’t think 80 percent was good enough.

Q: In this period from 1983-85, to what extent was there interaction between Taiwan and the mainland and was there investment beginning to take place by Taiwanese entrepreneurs in China or did that all come later?

REUTHER: In the early 1980s there was no investment and little interaction. Getting permission to leave the island was very difficult. The Taiwan Garrison Command watched Mainlander and Taiwanese alike. In those days it was recognized that it was the Mainlanders, brought to Taiwan in the last days of 1949, who longed to visit the

Mainland. One *tangwai* stalwart at the time told me that Taiwanese were always worrying about a sell-out; that, as the Mainlanders aged, they might turn to Beijing in their twilight years and turn Taiwan over. After all, the KMT and the CCP were of a single mind that Taiwan was just a Chinese province.

For the Mainlanders, despite Garrison Command, there was a safety value. One could go to Hong Kong and once in Hong Kong one could disappear and visit mainland relatives. There were rumors that, because the people in Fujian Province spoke the same language as people in Taiwan, Taiwanese business people could sneak back to Fujian and do a little business. This seemed inordinately risky for a Taiwanese to me. The security forces easily monitored such travel. But, the KMT couldn't cut it off because that would damage its Mainlander supporters. So, they thought since they couldn't cut it off, they let the security organs monitor and regulate it. As the Mainlanders aged, contact with mainland China opened a little bit more each year. For example, our language teachers in 1982 were able to call their Shanghai relatives via a telephone link through Hong Kong that switched the call into the mainland system. I remember one of our teachers in tears; they had called for the first time that night. It was the first conversation they had had with their relatives since 1949.

While easily monitored and easily controlled, everyone seemed to believe that some contact was going on. The Taiwanese opposition with whom we were in contact believed it, but saw contact as propitiating the Mainlander community and spoke of this contact as evidence of a possible KMT sell-out. When the domestic reforms of 1988-89 came along, the abolition of martial law removed the authority of the Garrison Command to monitor this contact. The sub rosa contacts increased to the point where it was publicly acknowledged and regulated. Looking into the future, it isn't until you get into the 1990-91 period and the establishment of the Mainland Affairs Council and States Exchange Foundation that cross-straits contacts include Taiwanese business people in any numbers.

Anyway, every now and then there would be a whispered conversation about a Mainlander who had gone to the mainland. The basic rule was you could go to the mainland and see your relatives, if you don't talk about it, which makes a lot of sense in the Chinese context. Saving face means not trumpeting your activities. For example, at normalization we told the Chinese we would sell military equipment to Taiwan and they said, "Well, please don't do that." We said that the subject was not negotiable; we were committed to not abandoning Taiwan. They said, "Okay, but don't embarrass us by doing it publicly." At that time and I think it still is, on all arms sales of \$50 million or more you have to notify Congress, a requirement which guaranteed publicity. So, the Carter Administration chopped up all the arms sales to Taiwan into \$49 million packages. They would manipulate package size to keep it below this threshold. Taipei knew it, Beijing knew it, but as long as we didn't talk about it, we could continue an arms sales relationship.

Q: During this period when you were in Taiwan from 1981-85, first as a language student and then the political section chief, I assume you did not travel to the mainland at all?

REUTHER: No Mainland travel, that's right.

Q: Was that against policy?

REUTHER: Well, in my case, I had a full plate on Taiwan and the reporting from the embassy and four consulates in China satisfied any lingering curiosity. Those assigned to AIT were discouraged from Mainland travel. They would have had to travel on non-diplomatic passports. Complications could have arisen in those early days after normalization that could have complicated our claims of unofficiality. Of course, diplomatic passport carrying language students might proceed to their next assignment on the mainland--which they would do via home leave.

Q: Not from Taiwan.

REUTHER: Right. In the first place there were no direct transportation arrangements. And we wanted to maintain the veil of unofficiality. So Foreign Service travelers would go from Taiwan to their home leave address and then on to their assignment.

Q: It was a matter of changing status too, because an officer at AIT nominally left government employment.

REUTHER: Correct, like military officers, Foreign Service officers are appointed under a presidential commission. This bit of personnel arcania was one of the reasons behind the original draft of the Taiwan Relations Act. We needed an administrative device which allowed Foreign Service officers to resign their commissions, take a job with this private company, AIT, and still be eligible for reinstatement as a commissioned officer without the loss of benefits. Let me tell you, it took a lot of legal thinking to turn that light on and in the end we were never able to apply that system to our own military. AIT Taipei had a military section, but there is no way in our legislation, or via the regulations the uniformed serviced followed, for a military officer to resign his commission and then return to duty.

Q: So they were all retired military?

REUTHER: They were all retired military who had had full military careers, retired, and then were picked up as private hires. It was not possible for them to go back at all.

Q: I remember working in Personnel a little later than this and trying to keep track of all these people and arrangements. I think there were times when we weren't perfect and temporarily lost an individual here and there.

REUTHER: It was one of the more unique circumstances, I think, that Foreign Service Personnel has gotten itself into.

Q: And, it still continues.

REUTHER: Yes. It still continues and works well. It is a system that satisfies our need to generate language officers and staff AIT Taipei. There is some debate about moving the language school onto the mainland, but that involves many financial issues and with the present budgetary situation I don't think that it can be done.

Q: It also involves some other issues in the Peoples Republic in terms of hiring teachers and allowing students to be free and travel.

REUTHER: I don't think the PRC has a problem with that because we were running language lessons when I was there and traveling freely. But there is a difference between a few language classes and a complete, FSI-administered, language school.

Q: Not now, but I think in the past they have had issues.

Is there anything else you would like to discuss about your time in Taiwan? If not, maybe we should go on to your next assignment, which was Chief of the Regional Anti-Piracy Unit, Refugee Section, American embassy, Bangkok. That got you back to Thailand, but that is an unusual Foreign Service assignment to be involved with pirates.

REUTHER: More than unusual. Many Foreign Service assignments stress reporting or negotiating skills, rarely do people have program management opportunities. In this case there was a massive outpouring of Vietnamese starting in 1978-79. Actually most of those people were Chinese, although perhaps second generation. In any event, in the eyes of the Vietnamese government, these refugees were Chinese and Hanoi wanted to get rid of its Chinese population. As a consequence, large numbers of people fled into the Gulf of Siam, only to be plundered by the Cambodian/Thai/Malaysian fishermen in the area. Like the refugees at the time of the fall of Saigon in 1975, some in this refugee population had connections to the United States. In any event, the death rate, rape, robbery of the refugees was unacceptable. The U.S. felt a responsibility to act. AID invited Fred Cluny, who was later killed in Chechnya (former USSR territory), to design a program to halt these deprecations. He was a brilliant man and really understood humanitarian relief programs. Congressman Solarz, whom I knew from Taiwan, organized congressional funding for the program.

Cluny's idea was to work on a regional basis with the Thai, Malaysian, Singaporean and Indonesian governments to centralize crime reporting. One of the legal problems was that each country's judicial system was handicapped if the victim ultimately landed in another country. If we were to identify and bring perpetrators to justice, we needed the cooperation of the countries surrounding the Gulf of Siam. My job was to use the prestige and resources of the USG to facilitate that interregional cooperation among the respective governments. I contacted Thai, Malaysian, and Singaporean foreign and interior ministry officials in pursuit of our objectives.

The core of the program was an attempt to professionalize and strengthen Thai police forces to handle this criminal outbreak. My liaison with Thai interior ministry officials,

many of whom I knew from ten years previously, was as the blocker for the quarterback. The key member of the team was a DEA agent who first came to Thailand as a Peace Corps volunteer. An absolutely brilliant man, Tex Learly had both the language skills and the law enforcement professionalism to gain the active cooperation of the Thai police.

Q: Was there a narcotics element to this?

REUTHER: Not necessarily, except that Tex was the absolute perfect person for this assignment. He originally came to Thailand as a Peace Corps volunteer, acquired excellent Thai, and enjoyed the country. He later went into police work and DEA. I think while with DEA he had an assignment to Thailand, which he also found attractive. So, when they were looking around for someone who understood police work, had excellent Thai (he could even speak the royal vocabulary), and would understand the needs of the police, his name surfaced. By the time I arrived, Tex was already there. We also had a contractor, Steve Kraus, a young man from Minnesota with extensive understanding of refugee issues and programs, who completed the team. His enthusiasm, knowledge of Thailand, and familiarity with refugee issues was a great addition to the program. My job was liaison with the Thai civil authorities to see that the Thai Ministry of Interior supported this program.

Now you have to understand a little bit of Thai history. Remember we earlier discussed the student demonstrations that sparked the October 1973 coup? One of the consequences of that public uprising was, even though it was the army shooting down the students, the public burned down every police station in Bangkok. Public enmity for the police has a history. The police had lost the coup of 1956. The penalty they paid was that military officers were assigned as heads of the police from that time. The military officers had no interest in suppressing corruption and building a positive public image of the police. So, by 1973 the police had a reputation for venality and corruption. When the public had the opportunity, it burned down the police stations. In protecting the boat people by supporting the police, one is running against the grain of benign neglect into which the police had fallen. So, my job was to liaison with the Ministry of Interior as a symbol of our interest in encouraging a professionalization of the police. There were two police forces actually, the Border Patrol Police and the regular national constabulary.

Q: And in this program we were working with both?

REUTHER: Yes. One of the advantages that I brought to the program was that, because of my previous time in Thailand working the northeast and visiting every district chief and every governor, etc., all those officials I had known ten years earlier had moved up in the Thai system. They were now at the assistant secretary level in the Ministry of Interior. So I could walk in and have immediate rapport with a ranking government official. Of course, the program would have to survive on its own merits but at least one got in the door. In fact I have always thought that one of the things that the Foreign Service should aspire to in these major countries is a situation where people come in as young officers, go on to other assignments, come back as middle level officers, and finally return as senior embassy officers. That way you have your friends moving up with you or you

move up with them and you have instant rapport. It certainly made a difference in this case.

So, what we were trying to do was to provide training, encouragement, and political cover to our interest in protecting Vietnamese boat people.

Q: Today is October 10. Dave, you have been talking about your responsibilities as Chief of the Anti-piracy Unit in Bangkok from 1985-87. We have talked about the boat people and the pirate threat to them that you dealt with. What were some of the other things that your responsibilities evolved into during your time in Bangkok?

REUTHER: The anti-piracy program was enormously successful and drew the attention of Ambassador Bill Brown. He and Lacey Wright, who was the counselor of embassy for Refugee Affairs at that time, decided that the embassy needed to have a better handle on what we called refugee protection issues. Over the years since the end of the Vietnam War a large number of refugees flowed into Thailand. Extensive camps were established as the international community dealt first with humanitarian subsistence issues and then resettlement questions. In the meantime, any number of things happened from time to time in these camps--general security issues, for example. There were camps on the Cambodian border where rival political groups would clash. While the UNHCR was responsible for organizing services to all the camps in Thailand, the ambassador felt that the embassy should take a more active role and independently evaluate the situation. So, we took our little group and expanded it from anti-piracy, a very specific issue, to being the office in charge of refugee protection.

Q: Did you work with not only Thai authorities but I suppose with UNHCR and some of the other agencies?

REUTHER: Exactly, there was a tremendous expansion in our contact work and all the agencies we dealt with, both UN agencies and NGOs, that is, the volunteers in the camp who provided the sanitation facilities, the training, the health care, etc. The facilities being provided at each camp varied with how long the camps had been in Thailand. For example, the Vietnamese camps along the Cambodian border were fairly sophisticated by this time. The NGOs in these camps had been there for years and were very familiar with their work. But, still it was a difficult time. We woke up one morning to hear that one of the camps had been mortared. We dashed down there, about a two and a half-hour drive to the Cambodian border, to check it out. We were there to play detective: who did this? What does it represent? Who do we need to pressure to do a better job? What we found out was the incident involved RPG (Rocket Propelled Grenade) rounds rather than mortar rounds. My contribution was to dig up pieces of shrapnel to bring to our military colleagues so they can identify the weaponry and start identifying whom might be responsible.

On the other hand, there were camps in the northern part of Thailand, in the Chiang Mai

area, which represented Laotian groups that were coming over as the Communists were taking power or as the insurgencies of which they were a part began to fall apart. Most of these people were Hmong tribesmen. The Thai were quite eager that each camp represented a separate ethnic group. It was easier for them to manage. The Thai Government, of course, also was concerned about its security. Harboring refugees could seem like a political challenge to Thailand's neighbors. The Thai authorities were torn between their international responsibility to care for and resettle the refugees, i.e., making being a refugee attractive, and their self-interest in closing the border. There was a constant struggle between us and the NGOs and the Thai on that very issue. As I was joking with somebody recently, one of the disasters we had in the anti-piracy program was that a Vietnamese refugee once won a million dollars in the California lottery. This was instantaneously broadcast to Vietnam and for four weeks we had this spike in exits. It just drove the Thai crazy because they are very anti-Vietnamese, they didn't want any more Vietnamese, they didn't want anything done that would encourage Vietnamese. They were willing to be a way-station for those people who legitimately could go on to other countries, but they did not see themselves as a settlement place of last resort.

Q: Do you recall the order of magnitude figures on the refugees in Thailand at that time?

REUTHER: We are talking about 100,000 people in ten camps or so. One of the things we tried to do to stem the flow and show the Thai that we were on their side was to start up the ODP, the orderly departure program. This was a program where we would put people in Saigon to interview Vietnamese who identified themselves as possibly having relatives in the United States. This way people did not have to make the hazardous journey or at least already knew they did not have a good resettlement case.

Q: These would be American consular officers who would do that?

REUTHER: That is right.

Q: They would fly over?

REUTHER: They would fly into Saigon where there was a small office. But, the Vietnamese were not eager to admit that their people were leaving so we were torn by our promises to the Thai to cut down on the number of people coming in and using the ODP program to do that, and the Vietnamese desire not to admit that anybody wanted to leave. So the Vietnamese would try to close down our program or hobble it or not cooperate and the Thai were always watching the numbers saying we were not moving enough cases, and hence continuing to encourage the land and sea exodus. This became a very important issue between the two countries and was one of the issues that the ambassador spent a good deal of his time on, briefing the Thai Government on our efforts.

Q: Besides the sensitivities involving the Thai people and government and the Vietnamese government, there were also domestic political sensitivities in the United States. Were their congressional visitors? Did you get involved in that debate of how many refugees we should accept and what our responsibilities were?

REUTHER: Those kinds of issues were generally fought out in Washington. But we would often get congressional delegations that wanted to go visit the camps. I recall one particular time Congresswoman Schroeder was in country and wanted to visit the camps. While we all know there is domestic criticism of domestic congressional people traveling, the schedule Congresswoman Schroeder set for us was pretty demanding. And she was inquisitive. I remember sitting in this one small house before we reached the main camp and my Thai assistant is translating from Cambodian to Thai and I translated the Thai for the Congresswoman. It was a little bit slow, but everyone enjoyed it. Of course travel conditions to the camps were basic, Toyota Land Cruisers over dirty, dust blown roads. But there were people like Congressman Solarz and Congresswoman Pat Schroeder who made those trips.

Q: That was certainly a very important part of the end of the Southeast Asia wars, the handling of the refugees. There was obviously a very important human dimension, but also an international geopolitical one.

REUTHER: Yes, and the Thai were very focused. The Thai National Security Council and its leader Colonel Prasong gave a high priority to the refugee issue in Thai-American relations. Colonel Prasong became NSC director when the refugees first arrived. He was still there in 1987 when I left because he made it a personal pledge that he wouldn't move from that job because he was the person who received the assurances from the United States that Thailand would not be left holding the refugee bag. So, rather than move on to other jobs, he stayed there as the institutional memory of that pledge.

Q: We are in 1996 now, do you know what the general situation of Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees in Thailand is today?

REUTHER: There still are camps but I must say I haven't dealt with the issue in recent years.

Q: Anything else about your third time in Thailand that we should cover?

REUTHER: A couple of little anecdotes about what it means to be a professional officer and how you handle friends in a changing circumstance. With the end of the Vietnam War, the intimate relationship that we had with the Thai had to shift to a new footing. We discussed earlier that a political appointee ambassador in the 1970s was unable to make the transition to a more equal relationship. Ambassador Brown, however, was quite adept at using all his talents to get himself well and favorably known with a government that had seen all kinds of American ambassadors over the years. I remember when he first arrived in country, one of the things he did was go to Saraburi where the Thai have their Army parachute school and jumped out of a plane with a local group. Now, he is an former Marine and knows his business, but it was an important little adjustment which then took care of that whole segment of the Thai politic, the military. From then on, he gained their respect and received priority consideration for American interests.

The ambassador took very seriously his responsibility to inform Americans about events in Thailand and the issues the embassy faced. He was always available to brief groups, whether tourist, business or academic. He encouraged his other officers to make themselves available if he couldn't. Once we had a congressional delegation coming through Bangkok that very explicitly had said it was on a shopping tour and didn't want to be bothered. The ambassador just was not going to let an opportunity to brief pass by. We met the delegation out at the airport with one of these tourist vans, a nice well-appointed bus with a PA system. The ambassador stood on the steps of the van as it was coming into Bangkok. It take between 35-40 minutes to drive from the airport to downtown Bangkok and he took that time to welcome the congressional delegation, offer his embassy staff for anything they needed and then proceeded to give them a briefing on the Thai economic and political situation.

Q: I can remember doing the latter, briefing a congressional group from the middle of a bus, but I never felt that my calling to serve my country required me to parachute out of an airplane, so I think Ambassador Brown was a special kind of person to be able to do that.

After you finished your time in Bangkok in 1987, I believe you went to Beijing. Was that the first time you had visited the Peoples Republic of China?

REUTHER: Actually no. I had that one visit in 1980 when I escorted the S&T delegation to Beijing. But that made going to Beijing on tour in 1987 all the more remarkable because China over those decades of the 70s and 80s is going to be one of those places where people will have such stark comparisons. You will run into people who would say: "Well, you should have been here then," or, "the difference is so demonstrative." I think it is an amazing part of the way China has changed that what we saw in Beijing seven years earlier was quite different from what I saw when I arrived in 1987.

Q: Were you only in Beijing during your earlier visit?

REUTHER: Yes, and there was hardly a vehicle on the road, people were very drably dressed, and that alone just driving in from the airport you saw a lot more vehicles and people much more interestingly and colorfully dressed. Obviously they had more income and things to spend it on.

Q: In 1987 who was the ambassador and what was your specific assignment in the embassy?

REUTHER: The ambassador was Winston Lord and his deputy was Peter Thomson. The economic counselor was Kent Wiedemann and I was his deputy and concurrently head of the external reporting unit in the economic section. So, the economic section was divided in half, if you will. One half looked at what the internal economy was doing and the other half basically ran our trade relations with China, thus, we focused on China's external economic relations.

Q: Were you involved then in negotiations between the U.S. and China and what was the MFN, Most Favored Nation, status at that time?

REUTHER: The Most Favored Nation status at that time was as it was when we first started in 1972, that is, sort of an annual update. This is a draw back from the Jackson-Vanick Act which was designed to punish the Soviets over Jewish emigration. The Jackson-Vanick Bill only illustrates, I think, why lawyers and diplomats are worried about precedent, because if you do something in one area you may get stuck with it in another area. For example, Jackson-Vanick more broadly said that to gain MFN a country had to promise to allow free emigration. Well, when we explained Jackson-Vanick to Deng Xiaoping he said, "How many do you want?"

Q: Would 100 million be enough?

REUTHER: Right. Actually he said, "You want 20 million, 30 million? We can do that." And he did it with such a straight face that the Americans really did not know how to respond. Was he pulling their legs, lining people up, threatening, or what? The whole Jackson-Vanick thing is totally inexplicable to China. But, here we are stuck with a policy of making China promise free emigration--which is precisely what we do not want. In fact after getting this promise from him we had to go around and say don't you dare do such a thing. This sort of illustrates that when you are dealing with China on its own, all the stereotypes from the Cold War, all the anti-Russian stuff, all the anti-Chinese Communist stuff really gets in your way.

Q: Were you still there when Tiananmen Square took place?

REUTHER: Oh, yes. That was in 1989. Before we get into that let me address the issue of continuing negotiations. My office was responsible for economic agreements between the United States and China and many of the things that I had worked on while on the desk from 1979-81 period were still important issues. So, we worked on civil aviation a great deal. Not only negotiating further expansion, because the original agreement I think only allowed one U.S. airline initially could serve Beijing and a second airline could come in and serve Shanghai. We had more airlines wanting to get into the China market and were deregulated. So, we have to renegotiate with them that whole bit plus cargo sharing and things like that. So, yes, during that time I had a little rut in the road from our office to CAAC where we did a lot of negotiating.

Q: Were there also trade negotiations, delegations from the Special Trade Representative's Office that came? STR did not have a person in the embassy did they?

REUTHER: No, because USTR had a worldwide mandate, they did not have a person in the embassy. But, as issues arose, USTR would lead negotiating delegations to Beijing. I can remember one such circumstance involving tungsten. Chinese tungsten was being sold in Europe in violation of a marketing agreement we had with Beijing. Tungsten, like many minerals, is very specific to origins and trace minerals identified it as of Chinese origin. So, with that evidence in hand, we went to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade

and Economic Relations (MOFERT) and say, “Look, China is dumping tungsten in Europe against the marketing agreement we have. We will impose penalties, if you don’t stop this.” They said, “Don’t look at us, we are not selling it.” What really was happening was that Beijing was decentralizing the economy--as Western economics had been encouraging them--which meant that the province of Yunnan, which controlled these mines, had the freedom to market tungsten and were doing so in violation of Beijing’s international agreements. USTR arrived and we had about a week of negotiations on tungsten that resulted in them having to recentralize their economy to the extent that Beijing was required to impose an export licensing system on the provinces. I presumed Yunnan was not happy with this reassertion of central authority and probably bargained for a trade-off in another policy area. This whole incident was typical of new problems that arose from China’s participation in international trade. By the mid-1980s economic reform meant that there were more actors on the Chinese side, many of whom had short-term, parochial, interests that would lead to trade disputes with other countries until the central government developed new administrative mechanisms.

So, that was one type of negotiation. Another one, and one that would continue for years as it had in Taiwan, was intellectual property rights. We began to address IPR issues in the mid-1980s. As is typical of Foreign Service work, we in the embassy looked around and said, “Okay, we are about to talk to the Chinese about intellectual property rights. What do you suppose their position is going to be?” We took the initiative to plumb the various ministries, determine which ones might be on a Chinese IPR delegation, and gain an understanding of each ministry’s approach to IPR issues. It was easy for us to contact the ministries because the Chinese side saw the Economic Section as commercial officers. So I, or my colleagues in the economic section, had the widest range of contacts around Beijing. We interviewed people at the party schools. We talked to people on the factory floor. We had complete access to the ministries. The whole town was ours. In fact, we had better contacts around Beijing than the Political Section, and often had better insights into the Chinese government and policy debates.

Q: This was in advance to the negotiation team coming?

REUTHER: Yes, in advance of the negotiation. This is what the Foreign Service does to prep for these things. What we found out was that the National Science Foundation and the educational establishment in China opposed IPR. They opposed it on the basis that since China had no patent or copyright legislation of its own, and it was un-Marxian to be paid for the results of your own intellectual endeavors, they saw no benefit in it. We also found out that the R&D sections of industrial enterprises practiced what might be called reverse engineering. It seems counterintuitive, but the Chinese intellectual establishment was not pro-IPR in the mid-1980s.

Q: Reverse engineering? Figure out how something works and is put together.

REUTHER: Exactly. When you get your *Time-Life* book on how to do your deck in the back, that is what they were doing. On the other hand, when we talked to MOFERT officials they were very eager to obtain some agreement on intellectual property rights

because foreign investors had come to them and said, “I am not going to bring my plant here until you can protect my industrial process.” So, we reported our findings on the Chinese views on IPR to Washington. This research was in preparation for making the U.S. delegations’ presentation as sharp as possible.

A fairly sizable American delegation arrived and we had a fascinating week or so with the Chinese. This preliminary effort was pretty much an educational one. We tried to explain how we looked at patents and copyrights and why we deemed it important; why it was important to our trade; how much of our trade involved IPR issues. We argued how unfortunate it would be for them if they were unable to take advantage of the IPR gateway to technology by paying a few royalties. We pointed out that the industrial world would not be favorably disposed, if China continued to violate these patents. For the Chinese ministries that had intellectual rights offices, and not all of them did, we learned that there was another major input into Chinese thinking on IPR negotiations. These offices were very much aware of the status of our negotiation with the Japanese and Taiwanese on some of the same issues. During my ministry interviews, one of the very sharp comments I received, and reported, was from a senior cabinet secretary who supervised economic ministries, who said, “You cannot expect China to get ahead of what you have gotten out of the other governments.”

Q: We will not give more.

REUTHER: Exactly, they would not give more. So, what we had obtained from Taiwan or Japan was a cap for them in negotiating with us. Made sense to me that they would not want to be seen as giving more, or acting weaker, than Taipei or Tokyo.

Q: When you were on the China Desk and here again in Beijing, you were involved in negotiations with the Chinese. Are they tough negotiators?

REUTHER: While I wasn’t in a position to be the negotiator for the American side, in Washington and Beijing I did participate in some typical, primarily economic, negotiations. I stress economic because economic negotiations do not tend to be zero-sum enterprises, but areas where both sides could readily see mutual advantages. Of course, any negotiation session involves a great deal of educating the other side as to why you are taking the position you are. Remember our civil aviation negotiations in Washington? How surprised the Chinese were to find that we did not have a national airline?

I am not impressed with the idea that the Chinese are extraordinary negotiators - that the Americans can manly toss vodka with the Russians, but collapse when the Chinese pull out the egg rolls. Often the issue is not Chinese negotiating expertise, but pressure on our side that may damage our own position. When I was on the China Desk, all Cabinet level officials wanted to travel to China. Each trip had to look successful. Something had to be done or signed. I think the Vice President wanted to travel to China and the main trip even would be the opening of the consulate in Guangzhou. Except we had not finished negotiating the space and facilities for a proper consulate. Now, the Vice President’s

office doesn't care what the needs of the State Department were. State is to serve and suck it up. So we ended up with a consulate in the Dong Fang Hotel, a miserable facility from a work and security angle. Was this the product of superior Chinese negotiating? Not really.

Remember that in negotiating the Maritime agreement, the Chinese were strongly committed to a reciprocal list of ports? Fact. This illustrates why being in the Foreign Service was so interesting. You were there to tell your side what the trends, fads, and goals of the other side were so that you could factor that into your negotiations. Maybe that would help uncover the Chinese bottom line, maybe that would uncover some important deadline.

The reality is that there are differences in national negotiating behaviors, but they are not often as stark as the op-ed pages suggest. I always enjoyed negotiating with the Thai. Thailand had never been colonized, a fact which made the Thai proud and able negotiators. In contrast, I was told, the Vietnamese were always worried that you had something up your sleeve and that the subject of this round of negotiating was only a pretext. I suspect the Chinese are somewhere in between.

Q: About this same time the Uruguay round negotiations were going on to create the World Trade Organization.

REUTHER: In Beijing we were just starting out. Across the straits, we had been seeking IPR agreement from the government on Taiwan for years. When I was in Taiwan, 1983-85, the Taiwan authorities finally agreed to some basic IPR protection, after almost 15 years of discussion, for American authored books. For years American manuscripts were pirated in Taiwan. The Taiwan publisher would mark the front page "for sale in Taiwan only" or something like that, but then sell throughout Asia. Everybody went through Taiwan to buy their copies of the American classics, academic volumes book of the month volumes - the range of pirated books was significant. Even esoteric tomes such as Ambassador Hummel's father's book, "Biography of the Ch'ing Dynasty," a three volume work, was pirated.

So, Beijing was very much aware of our success in the region on IPR issues and we knew we would have to factor that into our delegation's presentation. Again, it is that kind of background work that the Foreign Service does, not only for Washington as a government negotiating agency, but for American business because, of course, we were sharing our insights with our business colleagues in Beijing and other embassies.

Q: There was, of course, a foreign commercial service office, element, in the embassy that was also dealing with American business presumably promoting American exports, working with specific firms. How did you work with them? Were they part of the same unit?

REUTHER: Actually, they were a separate unit in a different building wedged between the Romanian embassy and ourselves. Placing the Commercial Section in a separate

building was an attempt to make it more accessible to the general public. It was a very dynamically run office at the time I was there. I think they had a staff of four or five people, two or three of which were from the Commerce Department's Commercial Service and a couple of interns.

Q: All with good Chinese.

REUTHER: Yes, all with good Chinese and a good understanding of how the Chinese system operated. The Commercial and Economic sections would often share insights about commercial issues and the impact of the ongoing reforms. They were the first stop for arriving businessmen. Commerce would often organize industry specific trade delegations, like medical instruments or something like that, and maybe the Foreign Commercial Service would arrange a schedule and interviews. If the delegation was from the aircraft industry, we might do joint briefings because joint ventures might be the focus of such a group rather than trade. Speaking of civil aviation in China, one of the things we realized was that Chinese civil aviation had no independent traffic control capability. The military controlled the air. So, if a delegation came to sell equipment to improve their airports, you don't sell it to CAAC, you sold it to the military. One of the services the embassy tries to perform is to direct the American businessman to the office that has the decision-making authority.

Q: In addition to that, your two other main responsibilities were reporting on the external economic side and in being involved in actual negotiation - whether assisting a delegation or yourself dealing with a ministry.

REUTHER: Right. And, of course, what made the job interesting and dynamic were the extensive economic reforms that often that impacted on areas of interest to U.S. business. So, we have an extensive reporting responsibility. We tried to send economic officers around China to gain a feel for these reforms and how they were being implemented. We might, for example, be interested in regulations on access to foreign exchange. Such access was one of the key issues we watched, because the Chinese very tightly controlled foreign exchange. In the late 1980s foreign exchange issues might create strange situations. A businessman could come in town and find a Chinese buyer and go back thinking he had set the company up for years only to find out that the buyer doesn't have any foreign exchange. To get around foreign exchange regulations the Chinese buyer might suggest that the foreign company import something that the Chinese counterpart could sell to earn the foreign exchange to fulfill the original contract. The end result was that a foreign export might find itself committed to performing export AND importing roles just because foreign exchange was so tight. So, we did a lot of reporting on foreign exchange...who had it, who controlled it, what the policy was. In doing this and other issues embassy officers traveled to other towns to compare the central regulations with local practice.

Q: How much connection was there between this economic reform that you have just been talking about and the political environment. We mentioned before Tiananmen Square, the student involvement in the spring and early summer of 1989. How much of

that ferment did you see happening? I assumed you worked somewhat with the domestic political side of the embassy as well. I'm wondering, particularly from the economic dimension was there a connection on the political side?

REUTHER: To me there was a clear connection just because the way economic reforms were implemented under Deng Xiaoping and Zhao Ziyang. In the old days if the central government wanted to implement a new policy, the policy came down as an order to all. Reforms in the 1980s derived from a more flexible, experimental policy. Chinese think tanks were encouraged to design different policies mapping how to move from a command economy to a market economy. Implementation was also more experimental. Hunan experimented with one approach, Sichuan another, and Yunnan a third. But the most important aspect of these experiments were the articles in the papers or internal discussion about, say, how Sichuan was doing with housing reform. If Sichuan's experiment looked attractive to the conditions in another locality, then those officials might also pick it up. But it wasn't a matter of the central government saying anymore, "Okay, all you guys do this." So, there was a lot of ferment going on out there and a lot of experimenting at the local level. Both the anticipation of reform and the flexibility in implementation fed into the frustration of Beijing Spring.

We saw Tiananmen as connected with the frustration that reforms had come to an important junction, but were slowing down - in Chinese eyes because, in opening up the economy, corruption and misallocation of resources also emerged. The banking system didn't exist and that was the only command structure the government had to really keep the economy from flying off into hyper inflation which, if you understand Chinese history, is something to be avoided at all cost. The liberals were frustrated and were pushing an idea called neo-authoritarianism. The Western translation would be "Bonaparteism" or "rescue by man on a white horse," because they couldn't figure out how to put limits on the corruption and move ahead. They were looking for some dictator, some one person who would wave a wand or put all the corrupt people in jail, and move reforms forward. The issue was not democracy. The problem was how to move forward, if corruption involved the sons and daughters of the leading elite.

After all of this experimentation, all of these productive changes that had happened in the agricultural economy, or these great reforms, people were making money, dressing better. They had seen the Promised Land. When one young Chinese woman who was assigned to work in the embassy came in a mini skirt one day, I remember a colleague who had experienced China just ten year earlier -- just after the Gang of Four -- remarking that he was astonished by the changes in so short a time.

I don't know if we mentioned it before but one of the things you have to understand is how infectious and debilitating corruption is. When we are talking about the October 1973 rioting in Bangkok, one of the problems that played into that was police corruption. We talked about that and the fact that even though it was the army shooting at students, the public burned down every police station, because the demonstrators saw the police as corrupt and nobody was doing anything about it. Well, here you have the Chinese population in the spring of 1989 with this economic expansion that was being throttled in

their eyes by corruption and their answer was to call for a dictator to clean up the corruption. They didn't see any other method of reinvigorating reform. From our point of view, the spring of 1989 was not a democracy movement. We went down to Tiananmen Square and talked to demonstration leaders. They did not have a sophisticated understanding of democracy.

Remember the demonstration leaders at first were students from the premier universities, meaning they were sons and daughters of ranking party members. When government put out an editorial that said the students were being disruptive, student leaders took offense. In addition to their policy complaints was added the issue of face. So, a lot of things came together.

But Tiananmen was fascinating, in part, because it was a reverberation of what was happening in Europe. European Communism was failing in 1989 yet Gorbachev's visit in the spring and the whole thing starts off in a very Chinese way, a demonstration for the funeral for an honored leader was the excuse to get out into the streets. Once the students were out on the streets you couldn't lock the barn door. Gorbachev came, but the demonstrations caused obvious schedule changes. The longer the demonstrations lasted, the more difficult for the student leaders to maintain control, as new groups and students from outside traveled to Beijing. It was not hard to see a parallel with the student demonstrations of the Cultural Revolution. Finally, I think May 27 or 28 the authorities declared martial law. Now that was a significant event. We had established an office in the Beijing Hotel, which is right up from Tiananmen Square. From the hotel the embassy dispatched two officers at a time, from May through June, to chat with demonstrators in the square on a daily basis. Notice the return on investment in Chinese language training. We didn't rely on the papers, embassy officers had first hand information.

Q: You don't even have to watch CNN.

REUTHER: Right. We could talk to people, see who they were and see what was going on. The authorities declared martial law late May, responding in large part to labor and business people becoming sympathetic to the students. It was something I had seen during the 1973 student demonstrations in Thailand where the general public demonstrated support by offering food and drink to the students. The Tiananmen students were very disciplined. They could have been civil rights marchers in the 60s. They had their own security, cleaned the square and tried to maximize their presentation of themselves as within the Chinese system by their politeness and conduct...

Q: Why don't we talk about the role of the embassy. To what extent did incidents occur there related to what was going on at the square?

REUTHER: As I was saying earlier, the demonstration was very well organized, very disciplined and very big. You have to understand that, at that time and continuing to the present, the Chinese put the foreign diplomatic community in compounds. The main compound is on one of the main streets that exits on to Tiananmen square in a north south direction. From time to time, to keep their morale up and connect with the public, the

students marched out of the square and around the internal beltway. That would bring them by the embassy and housing compound. I don't think the Rose Bowl parade or the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade was ever as exciting as sitting up on the roof watching just miles and miles and blocks and blocks of people -- 10 across -- marching down the road. One of the more beautiful things was the parade of the motorcycle brigades. Economic reforms allowed people to establish private business, the 'getihu.' With their private income, one of these private business people's first personal purchases was a motorcycle. So you had this motorcycle brigade of private business people. Each vehicle had a small Chinese flag on the handlebar and then three very large Chinese flags on poles at about the third rank. This revving of the engines while going through Beijing was just stirring, I mean it had the emotional impact of a marching band during a sporting event.

Such parades were very stirring and obviously got people quite involved. In fact, the positive public response was the reason the authorities became worried and the hard-liners saw things spinning out of control. What is remarkable about Tiananmen Square is the push and pull between the hard-liners and the moderates right up to the end. We heard rumors that the PLA was divided. The struggle between the two was like the Greek myth about the sun and wind betting which one of them could get a traveler to take his coat off. That is what Beijing was like up to those first days in June. The Conservatives said to the Liberals, "Okay, let's see if you guys can get them to stop demonstrating." So, troops were sent in unarmed without their officers and the Beijing public stopped them from getting to the student center. The moderates in the government failed, the moderates in the student demonstration slipped away with martial law. The streets were left to the people of Beijing and a more inexperienced group of student demonstrators.

Well, if a political process started moderately, it rarely becomes softer, and often reverts to harder. What happened on the night of June 4 was that the hard-liners moved armed troops into Beijing and, like the Paris Commune of 1848, the population of Beijing rose up. The students were a minor focus of what happened that evening. The western press missed a good story by creating a students versus government story. Forgotten in that story—and part of the legacy for the Chinese—was the city of Beijing rose up in revolt. All the destruction, all the death, was caused by the troops fighting their way into Beijing. By the time the PLA arrived at Tiananmen Square, the students surrendered and were marched off very easily, according to a Latin American ambassador who was near the square until early in the morning. According to another account, the only incident between the student demonstrators and the PLA at Tiananmen Square occurred as one group of troops was escorting the students out of the square. In the negotiated surrender, the students were allowed to march out with their flags. However, another unit that had fought its way into town suddenly arrived at the square from the south. Seeing the students with their flags, this second unit apparently opened fire hitting some of the escorting troops as well as students. To the extent that Tiananmen Square was more than putting down a student demonstration, it was an urban uprising. The people of Beijing will remember.

Q: Was there some sort of shooting incident near or at the American embassy?

REUTHER: Obviously on the night of June 4 there was shooting all over the place. Beijing was full of tourists and business people. It became obvious that the situation in Beijing was very unstable. So, all the embassies in Beijing evacuated their nationals. We ultimately evacuated about 1500 Americans, tourists, business people, our own embassy staff. The Japanese evacuated 4000 out of all of China. All the embassies slimmed down their missions. There were probably fewer foreigners in Beijing on June 6, 1989, than in the last 500 years. Think about it. The point is that the dream of any nationalistic Chinese for the last 200 years, since the first opium war, is to get the foreigners out of China, because it is the foreign influence that corrupted and weakened China. So, there were conservative elements in the Chinese structure that were very pleased to see these departures. To them the departure of all the embassies was a next logical step.

Someone acted on that impulse. Across from one of the diplomatic compounds that faced Jianguomen Dajie was a Japanese hotel under construction. By virtue of the way housing was allocated, the Chinese knew apartment assignments among the compound buildings. In the morning of June the 6th, or two days after Tiananmen Square, a group of soldiers who were walking along Jianguomen Dajie in front of the diplomatic compound suddenly started shooting up from the street into the building.

Q: Into which building?

REUTHER: Into the diplomatic housing compound, building number one. They said they had received sniper fire from the roof of the building. More to the point: the platoon hidden in the building across the street simultaneously poured fire horizontally into building number one. Given a 10 floor building, if you are shooting from the street, bullets will lodge in the ceiling the first six inches or so from the window. In this case, however, you had horizontal fire poured into the apartments of the American, British, Japanese and German military attachés, those same embassies' security officers, one American economic officer and one Brit. They just trashed those apartments with automatic weapons fire. Later the American Defense Attaché told me that he received a phone call from somebody he knew in a central military unit who said don't be home at 10:00, click.

Q: So, it was planned.

REUTHER: Something was known in advance. Something whose objective was to scare us away, to make us close all of the embassies.

Q: Were there casualties?

REUTHER: No. All the apartments were empty except for one. The American security officer's kids were still there and the maid got them below the windowsill in time.

In retrospect, the objective of this incident was to do what the Boxers had wanted to do in the summer of 1900, make the foreigners go away. This shooting had a great impact on

us, being shot at tends to do that to you, but we were quite determined that we would not break off relations with China, they were stuck with us. We would stay engaged and not be scared out. In fact, we presumed the perpetrators were a small cabal of people and that there would be others who were not supportive of this kind of thing. But, if we left, if we did what the shooters wanted, then we would also leave the reformers naked to them.

What is interesting about this is that the Tiananmen Incident reintroduced China into American domestic politics. American politicians expressed the outrage we all felt. But after a while, moralistic statements about China became just another jab at one's American partisan opponent. So, a situation developed where some in Congress were calling for a break in relations with China and the imposition of penalties which meant the same thing. This created an interesting situation where the last remnants of the Boxer Rebellion and congressional China critics were making common cause, saying, "Break off contact." And you have the Bush Administration saying, "No, we have to stay engaged with China because we can't let them break it off and go their own separate way." In fact, the advantage at that time of having Bush as President was that, because he had been head of the earlier liaison office, he understood how important the whole issue was. I believe he understood how crucial it was to maintain contact with China so that we didn't lose contact with the reformers. Dealing with the Chinese has its frustrations, like dealing with the French. But frustration is no excuse to abandon the opportunity to educate.

Q: What was it like, working in Beijing after the embassy families and all those Americans had departed.

REUTHER: It was both frustrating and hard on morale. We were as caught up in reacting to the killings as everyone else, although I had been through a similar event in Thailand 16 years earlier. For those of us in the Economic Section, there was little of our standard economic/commercial reporting to do. There weren't going to be any negotiating delegations coming for some time either. One of the interesting indices of the frustration we felt was that some of our more talented compatriots turned their frustration into song. I had seen this phenomena when I was in Thailand, Foreign Service officers serving in CORDS came to Bangkok singing new lyrics to contemporary songs. The same happened in Beijing. If I can find a couple of examples, I will add them later.

[Songs of Frustration: to the tune of "Yellow Ribbon"]

I've just been down in Tian an men

How did we get into this mess we're in

I used to follow Zhao Ziyang, I wanted to be free

Now the PLA is here, and they have outraged me

They've brought those APCs

Chorus:

Just tie some flaming burlap 'round that APC

We've been here two months in the PRC

If you don't get some burlap 'round that APC

It'll run over us, so let's torch that bus

Put the blame on Li

Just tie some flaming burlap 'round the ol'

'round that ol' APC...]

Q: Now Tiananmen Square was toward the end of your tour. What other issues were you watching?

REUTHER: Remember, we were talking earlier about intellectual property rights. Another educational process that we closely watched was the British negotiations with the Chinese over Hong Kong, the bulk of which was covered by a 99-year lease that would expire in the 1990s. From the negotiating record I say much of those negotiations were not negotiations but educational seminars on how the British ran Hong Kong. I remember one report that talked about payroll deductions. A fairly clear concept to you and I, but alien to recent Chinese experience. In China you belong to a *danwei*, or work unit, which provides at little cost to you: your schooling, your housing, your food, your recreational facilities, so the wages you get are minimal and do not represent the cost of labor. Well, in a free market economy, of course, you have to buy all those things from your wages and save for a pension. Well, the Chinese don't have that, so the British had to describe to the Chinese the connections between payroll deductions, pensions and using stocks and bonds to make pensions grow. No negotiating team looks bad in its own cables, but there is an educational aspect to any negotiation as each side explains its perspective. In the case of the discussions over the future of Hong Kong, the minutia and detail were interesting to watch.

Q: Real basic.

REUTHER: Yes, some real basics. But then everything about the Hong Kong negotiations was unique. Even the fact that there were negotiations, China did not follow the Indian example. New Delhi extinguished Portuguese Goa by force of arms. The British-Chinese talks began as a rather legalistic discussion. At one point the Chinese increased the size of their delegation to involve bureaucracies that had implementation, rather than legal, responsibilities. I can't conceive of more complicated talks, certainly given the historical animosity between the two countries.

Q: It takes time and you have to start building and developing a foundation before you can get into the issues.

REUTHER: Exactly, and that is where we are with China. People talk about engagement but they are only thinking in national terms seeing China as an undifferentiated whole. But, China, like the United States, is a large continental society. Fortunately we have funding at the moment for five consulates. But if you didn't have those consulates you really would be quite blind to what is going on with the variety of reforms and the variety of circumstances. That would be like saying because there is a French embassy in Washington, Paris will understand Proposition 13 in California. Useful intelligence it not so neatly packaged. While a French Embassy might pass on a definition of Proposition 13, its consulate in California can explain in detail what stimulated the idea, who is behind it, what are the chances for this local movement to become national.

Q: And in some ways China is even more challenging than the United States is because it is so much larger and really has a lot of diversity. Dave, when you were there in the economic section, were you able to travel some in the rest of the country? Did you rely a lot on the consulates for reporting on what was happening in their areas or did you try to get a flavor yourself of the whole country?

REUTHER: Well, my experience was a mixture of both. Being in the cockpit of the embassy, if you will, we tasked the consulates for reporting on specific issues, or to determine whether a reform being touted in Beijing was really being implemented. With the consulate reporting in hand, we would combine it with conversations that we had with the Chinese bureaucracies or think tanks and file a report to Washington that we believed provided the best nation-wide picture. I personally didn't get that much of a chance to travel. I found my schedule crowded with visitors and a growing list of negotiating sessions. But, I had some absolutely outstanding young officers in the economic sections and we tried to free them for travel. I assumed that when they returned for a China assignment ten years hence, they would have a useful sense of comparison. So, officers from the economic section traveled to the port city of Tianjin from time to time. Some of the limits on traveling through China were not caused by our demanding schedules. Even by 1989, China's infrastructure was still rustic. You could not drive from Beijing to Guangzhou on paved roads. Air travel was in its infancy. To cover our district we generally traveled by train.

Q: That is near Beijing?

REUTHER: Yes, Tianjin, it is Beijing's port, if you will. Actually Tianjin's port is Tatu. It's the port where the allied army landed to lift the Boxer siege of the legation quarter in 1900, or the Marines landed in October 1945. Tianjin was a major city in northern China and the scene of local reform initiatives. Fieldwork allowed us to evaluate consulate reporting and central government promises. Such fieldwork is typical of how the Foreign Service with its language skills works. This is the way we did it in Bangkok a decade earlier when we were covering parliamentary elections. The embassy offered insights into

central government thinking and implementation in adjoining jurisdictions; and the consulates reported the regional feel. Consulates perform an invaluable function when you are looking at large continental economies.

Q: In 1989 you left Beijing. What month was that?

REUTHER: Actually that was later in the year. As you know June, July and August is the usual transfer season, but because of Tiananmen Square some people didn't want to return or start new assignments. So personnel informally froze the normal summer transfers for a little while. I didn't leave Beijing until late August.

Q: Approximately four months after the incident. At the time you left how would you appraise the general situation in terms of the relations with the United States on the economic side? Had things begun to return to the way things were before or would that take quite a while?

REUTHER: That would take quite a while to describe. Such a destructive event as Tiananmen Square makes people who need security and stability and predictability in their relationship hold back, and nobody wants stability and predictability more than business people do. Even after we started summer transfers, the business people stayed away. Of course, it is business peoples' interest in stability which makes them good advocates for transparent laws, protection of property and other accoutrements essential to underwriting the transition to modernity, if not democracy. Because most countries seek economic advancement they voluntarily put such instruments in place. Human rights advocates rarely have such a system wide impact, and they often meet with resistance.

The first few months after Tiananmen Square were quite telling. We began a series of economic reports discussing the economic price China paid for Tiananmen. I recall one report on the tourist industry in which we compared all international flights coming into China in the pre-Tiananmen Square period versus what was happening after Tiananmen. Literally everyone just stopped coming to China. Tourism collapsed and most airlines simply did not fly their posted schedules. Hotels, two major Hong Kong invested properties had just opened, had enormous vacancy rates. Some airlines still flew. Lufthansa had a joint venture with the Chinese airlines, which were being deregulated at that time, to build a service center for them. So, they could not terminate all flights. They came in once a week instead of four times a week. And they came in empty.

Q: But they were obliged to continue.

REUTHER: They were obliged to continue. Cathay Pacific was doing good business because all the businessmen took refuge in Hong Kong and then flew up for a day or two maintain their contacts and fly back. So, Cathay Pacific and Dragon Air, the two companies that flew the Hong Kong to Beijing routes, were doing okay, but everybody else was dead. Hotel occupancy rate scraped along at maybe 5 or 10 percent. We calculated that in tourism alone Tiananmen cost China millions of dollars in lost revenues.

So, I would be prepared to offer the proposition that the Chinese paid dearly for Tiananmen. The government understands the financial, prestige and industrial price it paid in the unintended consequences category, for example, under our export control regulations, guidance systems in the Boeing airplanes that China bought had to be under the control of a Boeing official. Such systems were not stored with the Chinese. This meant that after Tiananmen, the Chinese Boeing airplanes weren't safe to fly. The Boeing personnel had left country and there was no one qualified to adjust the systems or install new equipment. They had all left. By the time I left, most of the Chinese fleet could not be safely flown. So, even their domestic commerce was severely damaged by Tiananmen.

Q: I think we have covered China as vast as it is. You were there for one of the major events of the last 50 years, a fascinating experience.

REUTHER: You know it is funny how these things come to you. I was reading a book the other day which pointed out that Herbert Hoover, who would later become the U.S. president, was in Tianjin during the Boxer Rebellion and fired a rifle over the parapet. So, many Americans have had interesting experiences in China.

Q: After you left Beijing you went to a very different part of the world to the Sudan where you were the refugee counselor there. Who were these refugees and what was going on there at the time?

REUTHER: The refugees were the consequence of the neighboring Ethiopian civil war and the resulting man-made famine that had been going on for years. There were three quarters of a million Ethiopians in Sudan under the protection of the UNHCR. The refugee situation had existed so long that the international community's efforts were rather routinized by the time I arrived. The UNHCR supervised a number of NGOs that were providing the refugees with food, water, and shelter. The American embassy's interest was to oversee the efficiency of the UNHCR's performance.

Q: We were interested in that because we were a major financial contributor.

REUTHER: Exactly. That was the reporting side of this assignment. The other responsibility we had was to manage a refugee settlement program from Sudan based on the Southeast Asian premise that if there were refugees in these camps who had a claim to either U.S. citizenship or family in the United States, then we would resettle them. We had a budget that presumed that about 2,000 people annually would be resettled.

Q: That was far smaller than the Vietnamese resettlement.

REUTHER: Oh, yes. But, it was substantial and very similar. Associated with my office in the embassy was a contractor of 20 people who processed all these people from these camps. Don't forget, you are looking at three-quarters of a million people and you are going to churn them for people with connections with the United States. It is a very complicated project and I think the International Rescue Committee, which was the

contractor in this case, was able to find absolutely fabulous and dedicated administrators who accomplished this job under difficult conditions. IRC's job was to attempt to identify refugees who had a connection with somebody back in the United States. There was a procedure back in the States for checking the claimed relationship. The IRC office would then develop an elaborate genealogy on the claimant. Not only does this verify the claim, but it overcomes the problem that Ethiopian refugees rarely had adequate personal documentation. An interview was an important part of the verification process...if you are claiming you are the brother of someone in New York then one of the questions asked might be "What color was the tile in the bathroom of the family home?" The same response probably meant they lived in the same house. If they both identified a common neighbor, again you are drawing closer to the presumption that they did live in the same house and that the family relationship was established.

Once you had in fact worked this case up where you concluded that the claim was valid, and a refugee receiver in New York stepped forward - Lutheran Church, Catholic Church, some charity - the next step was transportation to the U.S.

Here is where the Sudanese came in. The Sudanese have 183 major ethnic groups in their country. They don't like the Ethiopians, they don't like the international community helping the Ethiopians. They, the Sudanese, are running a war in the South against one of their major tribal groups. So, the whole idea of international maintenance programs for refugees, or resettlement programs was questioned by the Sudanese authorities. To be fair to the government, the Sudanese had at an earlier time cooperative with a very similar resettlement program only to find out that the refugees were being resettled in Israel. That revelation brought the government down. So, Sudan paid a very high price for an earlier, naive cooperation. As a consequence, by the time I arrived in late 1989, the Sudanese didn't want to be naive and didn't want to cooperate.

Q: When you say the people running it you mean in the Sudanese government?

REUTHER: Yes, in the Sudanese government because the Sudanese government issued the exit visa. The Sudanese government meticulously required that all its normal procedures for leaving the country were fulfilled. For example, that you have receipted proof that your taxes had been paid. They had any number of hoops created to make it very difficult for us to execute this program. My predecessor had had a very difficult time with Sudanese obstructionism and had in fact only been able to move about 500 people annually because of all of the impediments.

Little in my Asian experience prepared me for Sudan, which, to my eyes, was the end of the earth. I concluded early on that Sudan and Burma are the two potentially richest countries in the world in which the indigenous leadership has deliberately driven the country into the ground. Some political leaders do it inadvertently; these elites did it deliberately. Khartoum used to be the winter capital for Europe. But by 1989 a drive around the city demonstrated abandoned hotels and open air nightclubs. Sudanese authorities had gone Islamic and closed these facilities. They took a hard conservative Islamic turn. They enjoyed all the money they were making surely, but it just didn't sit

well with their values and when the Falasha problem (i.e., the Ethiopians covertly resettled in Israel) occurred. The Sudanese just turned inward. One result was the emergence of obstacles to the embassy resettlement program.

Q: Were there any Falasha still there in the country? I think there was a subsequent exodus or flight to Israel?

REUTHER: Yes, but the subsequent exodus was out of Addis Ababa. The exposure of the covert Falasha resettlement to Israel severely damaged the program as the Sudanese had lost confidence in it and it had been very difficult for us to recover.

So, when I got there and made my initial calls on the Sudanese officials, who were my counterparts. I met the General who was in charge. In fact, he had also recently come to his job. We broke the ice when we realized both of us were amateur World War II historians. Recognizing the problems my predecessor had and that because the two of us were new to the job, I made a simple initial presentation to him. I acknowledged the delays my predecessor had experienced and offered that I wasn't there to waste my two years. I had a program that I felt was worthwhile and we would operate it in a transparent manner in which they would have no problems. But I wasn't going to repeat my predecessor's experiences of dashing around Khartoum hours before the midnight airplane departure scouring for last-minute permissions. It all seemed an unnecessary pretense on both our parts. Either we satisfied each other's needs or Sudan had to admit that it wanted us to drop the whole program. Between our common interest in military history and my willingness to operate a transparent program, I thought we had the grounds for a successful, professional relationship. Again, humanity and professional respect goes a long way to build useful business-like relationships.

Q: So you could establish a certain common language?

REUTHER: Very much so, and I had him over to the house and had his son over to the house, just the three of us, rummaging through my books and some of the maps. So, we had a respectable and professional, if not personal, relationship. He was very good at what he did and what he did was to guide me, not instruct me but to hint at things, and I began to understand the local environment in which he operated. One of the things that I was working toward correcting was the residual suspicion from the earlier Falasha incident. The Sudanese officialdom we dealt with were suspicious of our program but couldn't quite put their fingers on why. The reality was the Falasha incident but also the Arabic Sudanese didn't like refugees; they didn't like ethnic groups; they were involved in a civil war in the south, so who likes refugees? Why are these Americans saying they will take refugees?

Once I understood Sudanese antipathy toward refugees on one hand and suspicion that any country that accepted refugees must have some ulterior motive on the other, I formed a plan. In fact, during this period the U.S. relationship with Sudan was very strained and would remain so for years. A direct result of the poor relationship was that the embassy's allocation of 7 USIA International Visitors Grants was not being used. Remember in

Thailand, the International Visitor program was an important tool in developing Thai sensitivity to things American and identifying up-and-coming Thai counterparts? I obtained the ambassador's permission to use all seven grants for Sudanese officials - immigration, police, tax - responsible for my program. I proposed that we sent these officials on an immigrant/refugee tour of the United States. We took them from the Statue of Liberty to a Hmong and Vietnamese refugee settlement program in Minnesota. We scheduled cities like St. Louis to show them older immigrant communities, such as the German. When they returned, they had changed attitudes about what refugees and immigrants mean to America. The American public got their money's worth out of that IV program because here you took skeptics, people totally uninformed about the United States, and you exposed them to the United States in a very directed way - an immigrant's tour of the United States. Of course, they saw the Grand Canyon and other natural wonders, which was an important part of underlining the parallel geographic diversity of the United States. From then on I had no problems with that program. My Sudanese counterparts provided me the exit visas or whatever was necessary to run a smooth program.

Q: And the ambassador realized that perhaps this was the key program that could function that had some advantage to the United States that was going on in Sudan, whereas everything else was being frustrated.

REUTHER: Very much so, and he was very frustrated too.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

REUTHER: Ambassador Jim Cheek.

Q: Where were the Ethiopian refugee camps located? Were they near Khartoum?

REUTHER: No, they were adjacent to the Ethiopian border which meant they were quite some distance from Khartoum. The long drive over the desert to the refugee camps was depressing. You have to understand I am from Seattle, Washington, the Evergreen State. God didn't want boys from Seattle to be in places like this. It was absolutely desolate for miles. We would have to drive six or eight hundred miles before we even got to the first camp and even at that the infrastructure in Sudan was absolutely abysmal. Literally there were no places to stay.

Once we flew in the military attaché aircraft, a C-12, to the Red Sea port of Port Sudan. At 20,000 feet you understand how stark the terrain is. One of the pilots said, "Gee if we had to land that would be it." We could land, the terrain was flat in all directions, but you would never walk out of such desolate circumstances. It is an environment that is incredibly inhospitable. What was running through my mind of course was the movie of Lawrence of Arabia that had been done in the early 60s.

Q: Was that filmed in Sudan?

REUTHER: No, I think it was filmed in Egypt.

Q: Similar terrain.

REUTHER: Yes, similar terrain. I thought the film did a very good job of illustrating the physical demands of living in the desert. But, Sudan was very instructive in other ways. A haboob (dust storm) was one of the things that the city of Khartoum suffered from. These storms would come from nowhere. There would suddenly just be a wall of dirt coming at you, sixty or seventy feet high. Sometimes it was a localized phenomenon. The haboob itself was swirling, brown dust, but to the side of the storm the landscape was clear.

Q: In the Nile valley there were farms. Was this just dirt picked up off the desert?

REUTHER: Off the desert. It was incredibly biblical. There is no protection. No houses are sealed against dust. So, all your equipment, anything that is left out...I had a dinner party one night and a haboob hit. An hour later we were standing in the living room in typical conversational groups realizing that the air in the room was so dusty, we could hardly see across it. The other biblical phenomena I remember was desert rain. I was driving to work one typical, sunny, 100-degree day when all of a sudden I realize it is raining on the hood of my car. The rain cloud was small and it was only raining on the small area directly below that cloud. You could see the rain go down the street because it kicked the dust as it went.

Q: It was very different than Seattle or Thailand.

REUTHER: Exceedingly. In addition to performing the embassy's oversight of UN activities and managing our refugee resettlement program, I became involved in one other refugee issue. The famine in Ethiopia had gone on for so long that many of the NGOs had been in country for years feeding the people in Ethiopia from Sudan. This program, however, had come on to bad days. The USG and AID in particular had lost interest I think. So, when I arrived there was no embassy involvement in this covert feeding program and there were real coordination problems. Much of the grain for the program was from American AID stocks, some from European supplies, all purchased by northern European NGOs. Trucking the grain into Ethiopia was easy—during the dry season. American shipments became erratic and arrived during the wet season which enormously complicated the delivery of this vital material. One of the things I did was focus on reorganizing these feeding programs.

As a result of my involvement in the feeding program, the embassy in Khartoum began to take a more active role in opening a dialogue with senior Tigrean and Eritrean leaders that spent some time in their Khartoum offices. The two main leaders were Isaias Afwerki, the Eritrean, and Meles Zenawi, the Tigrean leader. Again, this demonstrates the value of a diplomatic mission overseas. The Khartoum embassy had an increasingly meaningful dialogue with two movements which in time would successfully come to power.

Q: They were both based in Sudan at that time?

REUTHER: Actually they were based inside their country and would come to Sudan from time to time for administrative purposes.

I should note parenthetically that our positive relationship with the Ethiopian resistance movements paid an unusual dividend. I think it was early 1990 that we received work that the Eritreans seized a Polish crewed ship. The Polish Government asked for American good services to obtain the crews' freedom. After an initial hesitation, the Eritreans did decide to release the crew into American custody. The turnover would be at the Red Sea port of Port Sudan. The ambassador led a small embassy group in the attaché aircraft. We flew in and established ourselves in a modest local hotel. What I found fascinating was that in one of the briefcases we carried was a satellite radio with which we could talk to a military command in Frankfurt. After the glitches and delays, the Polish crew materialized. They were very happy and clutched the small American flags we presented with enthusiasm. We understand the Polish Government was grateful for American assistance. We were pleased that our favorable relations with the Eritreans gave us the opportunity to be of assistance. You never can tell how friendships will payoff.

Q: Actually Embassy Sudan probably had a monopoly on contact with the resistance. They probably didn't go into Addis Ababa and had no contact with our embassy there.

REUTHER: Right. They would have no opportunity to do that because of the civil war they were fighting against the Mengistu regime. It was this civil war which resulted in famine for the people of Ethiopia. To handle the famine the international community engaged in a little slight of hand. The international community also administered a feeding program in Ethiopia to the population under Addis Abba's control. But the central government would not allow that same program to feed the population under rebel or dissident control. So, those people had to be fed by the covert program from Sudan.

Of course, the Ethiopian government had every interest in creating problems for the program from Sudan. So, the Sudan program suffered not only from normal problems, but also from Ethiopian interference from time to time. That is why I think some people had backed away from it and the semi-covert program had fallen on hard times.

As I said, one of the main problems of the feeding program from Sudan was delivering grain to Ethiopia before the rainy season arrived. The Scandinavian NGOs had long established a sophisticated program to handle the grain. Sweden even loaned them an army engineer to operate the logistics of the port of the Red Sea. One of the main problems was U.S. procedures for providing relief grain. American SOP was to respond when a NGOs identified a need within the American fiscal year. This procedure assumes that a famine was a one-time occurrence. You would not presume that you were going to have a famine next year, you had a famine first and then come to the U.S. government and said you needed food. The end result was, with October being the start of the American fiscal year, the NGOs had to present their request in October, survive a vetting

process, and hope for expeditious approval. If approved, the NGO had to locate the grain, then arrange shipping and get it into Ethiopia. This complicated procedure created a considerable lag time. Basically the contribution I made was to try to cut down on that lag time because U.S. grain, which was a third of what was feeding the people, always arrived in the rainy season when it couldn't be moved. When it rains in the hills of Ethiopia it looks like the eastern front during World War I, it is just all slush and mud and you cannot move heavy loads. So, you had a situation of where the food was coming in at the most inappropriate time. So, in cooperation with the Scandinavian NGOs I spent a lot of time reminding Washington that the Ethiopian/Horn of Africa famine was not a one-time event and that we should plan for the long haul. After working on this project for over a year, one of the greatest compliments I received was when the AID director sent one of his officers over and told me I was done, meaning he was taking over the program because now it was working. I took that as a success even though it was a turf seizure on his part. There are other parts of this story for future researchers. About the time the AID director relieved me, an inspector came from AID/Washington to review the program. He sent a cable back saying the program was no longer needed, and that I concurred in that judgement. I wrote a restricted cable to my bosses in the Refugee Bureau underlining my strong disagreement with the AID inspector. The upshot was that AID did not take over the program. It was shut down. I have the uneasy suspicion that stopping the feeding program was part of American pressure on the Ethiopian warring parties to stop the fighting. Excellent goal, questionable means.

Q: You mentioned the Swedish and NGOs and Europeans being active. To what extent were other official representatives in Khartoum involved in both the refugee and feeding programs in Ethiopia? Were the British and other European offices interested too?

REUTHER: They were interested in them in the same way we were. I would often share notes with my British or Australian colleague on the functioning of the UN, since we were both watching them and seeing that the money was properly spent and that programs were in place. Like ourselves, the Canadians and the Australians and the northern Europeans had refugee resettlement programs so we often shared war stories along those lines. One of those stories of exasperation arose from the fact that our refugee resettlement itinerary was Khartoum to Frankfurt, and then to the U.S.

Q: By charter planes?

REUTHER: No, regular commercial flights, Lufthansa, British Airways and Egyptian Air were the only flights to Europe from Khartoum. We would get so many seats on a Lufthansa flight. One of the problems that suddenly arose was that a new young officer took up his posting in the consular section of the German embassy. He stopped issuing transit visas for my refugees. After finally getting Sudanese officialdom on board I was incredulous that the Germany embassy was my next problem. It turns out that, to make up for World War II, German immigration regulations now allow anybody who arrives in Germany to declare that they want to stay.

Q: And some were doing that?

REUTHER: Nobody was doing that, it was just that this consular officer presumed that our refugees, going to the U.S. where they had relatives, might decide to take advantage of German law and stay in Germany. By refusing transit visas he thought he was preventing my refugees from choosing Germany. My argument to him that these people had a very attractive situation in the United States and very unattractive prospects in Germany didn't seem to sway him. In fact, I didn't untangle that whole thing until we finally sent a cable up to our embassy in Bonn to engage the attention of the German government which then instructed its consular officer in Khartoum to be a little more forthcoming.

Q: There probably weren't a lot of choice in routes between Khartoum and the United States.

REUTHER: Absolutely none. There was a British Airways that came in from Athens and Lufthansa that came in from Frankfurt. The Sudanese airline had regularly scheduled service, but we did not avail ourselves of its services.

Q: It probably wouldn't take you very far.

REUTHER: Their destinations were rather limited. I think you could fly to Cairo. The Sudanese were singularly isolated. It was all part of the difficulty of that environment. I don't think I have ever been in a more physically inhospitable environment.

I was also on the employees' welfare board and ran our little commissary. Our little commissary was important to morale because literally there was little on the local market to buy. You couldn't send your servant out and say, "Well, buy some broccoli or squash for dinner." We often had colleagues at the embassy in Nairobi cut a deal with a crew member of the Kenya Air flight that arrived once a week to put a box of vegetables on a plane for us.

Fresh food was such a scarce commodity in Khartoum that hunting for it became second nature. For example, at the Khartoum embassy, Matt Ward, who was the embassy economic counselor, and I had most recently been in China. He came from Shanghai and I came from Beijing. The two of us hung out at the Chinese embassy from time to time because the Chinese embassy grew its own food in its walled compound. By the way, the Chinese diplomats were excellent Arabic linguists. Or so my Arab-speaking colleagues remarked. For Matt and I this was a chance to retain our Chinese language skills and eat.

Q: Opportunity to get a decent Chinese meal.

REUTHER: Absolutely, which was literally one of the few decent meals in town. There was a Hilton Hotel, which had a restaurant, but its prices were beyond my pay scale.

Q: Sudan is almost the largest country in Africa and has a diverse set of ethnic groups. There was a civil war going on in the south when you were there. Were you involved at

all in any assistance efforts to the refugees in southern Sudan?

REUTHER: No, because the refugees in southern Sudan had fled into Kenya, Uganda and southern Ethiopia seeking safety and sustenance. We had no access to them. The UN access was in the countries of refuge. The on-going civil war was a very difficult thing for us and was one of the reasons for a lack of substance in the bilateral relationship. The Sudanese had simply told the embassy to knock it off and would not entertain any attempts on our part at mediation. It was a depressing environment. The western community consisted of a few Greek and Lebanese merchants and the Europeans associated with the NGOs providing services to the Ethiopian refugees. Among our weekly darts companions were two fliers, from Zimbabwe I believe, who flew small amounts of cargo around the country. They were killed in the south and I believe the subsequent investigation suggested that in fact the Sudanese army shot them down because their safe journeys created the appearance that refugee activities for the people in the south could be mounted from Khartoum.

Q: So, to the extent that any of those activities were taking place they were probably taking place at that time outside of Sudan in neighboring countries.

REUTHER: Yes. It was really very confusing. The civil war in Ethiopia forced refugees into Sudan where UNHCR and NGOs cared for them. But, the civil war in Sudan pushed refugees into Kenya and Uganda where the UNHCR and other NGOs organized assistance. One had the feeling that the whole horn of Africa was just a disaster at that time. Of course, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 did not improve the situation in the Horn of Africa. With Iraq's invasion, Washington called for a reduction in the size of our already small embassy. This was in part recognition that there was nothing Embassy Khartoum could do for the larger scene. Except for the refugee program, we had little positive dialogue with the local Sudanese authorities. They seemed to be slipping more and more into a conservative Islamic mindset. Anyway, Kuwait had priority and our problems were quite insignificant. Although Washington called for a reduction in the mission, the ambassador resisted.

Q: I suppose there was always the possibility of a terrorist threat?

REUTHER: Absolutely, in fact, Khartoum has a violent history. Every time there was a war in the Middle East somebody was shot in Khartoum. In fact, as you recall, there was that major hostage incident where Ambassador Noel and his deputy were murdered.

Q: That was back in 1973, after the 1973 war.

REUTHER: Then just four or five years earlier to the time I was there, there was another shooting. So, Washington and we operated on the presumption that Sudanese authorities could not maintain security. An important corollary was that people associated with terrorism in the Middle East had offices in Khartoum making it a dangerous place when the Middle East boiled over. Our first response to the potential for danger was to significantly reduce our files. As I said, the ambassador kept spurning Washington's

instructions to cut back and prepare for evacuation. After experiencing civil unrest in Thailand, then most recently the Tiananmen Incident, the situation ‘felt’ serious to me. I also instructed my contractor to reduce her files. For security’s sake we brought the files and all of the contractor’s office equipment into the embassy building. We were taking the initiative to move toward mothballing the program. Two days later we were told we were leaving, the entire American diplomatic mission, any other Americans, and certain other foreign nationals who also wanted to depart.

Q: When was that approximately? Was it 1991 by then?

REUTHER: Yes, in fact we departed Khartoum just a few hours before Desert Storm started. Washington had stopped negotiating with the ambassador and ordered him to close the mission and said that a New Jersey National Guard C-147 would be at the airport at 9:00 in the morning. The embassy security alert system worked perfectly and we all arrived at the airport at 9:00 only to find there was no airplane. It could have been a dangerous situation because we gathered all the potential targets in one place. The Marine Security Guards and the Security officer improvised and the evacuees were spread around town in a few safe locations. I was part of the group that went to the Marine House. The plane arrived in that afternoon—after fixing a blown tire. The Western community boarded in an orderly manner. Because this was a cargo aircraft there were no seats, most people sat on the floor of this cavernous vehicle. We were flown south to Nairobi. We cleared Nairobi customs and motored to the hotel arriving about 12:00 midnight. Many were still wired rather than exhausted from the long day and at 1:00 in the morning somebody was still up watching CNN. All of a sudden there was the sound of running feet, banging on doors and loud calls: Desert Storm had began.

Q: The embassy was totally closed, the ambassador had left, too?

REUTHER: While Ambassador Cheek and the staff departed, the embassy was not totally closed. Two volunteers were left behind, the DCM, Joe O’Neil, and an administrative officer. Joe worked out of the British embassy for security reasons.

Q: How long did you stay in Nairobi then?

REUTHER: We stayed in Nairobi only a couple of days. We were all sent back to Washington except for the AID mission officers. Because of its separate personnel system, AID Khartoum cut orders for its personnel that meant they did not fall under the general orders to return to Washington, but remained overseas on TDY.

Q: Were there families in Khartoum before you closed down?

REUTHER: No. With the August invasion, Washington had decreed that all dependents should leave post. By Christmas, all families had departed. Like post-Tiananmen Square two years earlier, the embassy was at minimal staffing.

Q: So, when you left Nairobi you went back to Washington?

REUTHER: Yes, went back to Washington. I was fortunate to land a temporary assignment in an office in the Political/Military Bureau that dealt with foreign military sales. This duty illustrated the changes that had occurred in American attitudes since I entered the Foreign Service. Shortly before I arrived in Washington in the fall of 1990, there was another military-led coup in Thailand. The post-Vietnam Congress rewrote the military assistance legislation to now read that a military coup was grounds for suspending U.S. military assistance. So, for three months I managed the suspension of military aid to Thailand, the country in which I started my career. My first assignment where the military was overthrown. In the 19 years I had been in the Foreign Service, Thailand demonstrated that the road to democracy and economic modernization was a rocky one indeed.

Q: But that was just a temporary job?

REUTHER: That was just a temporary job. Administratively, evacuees from Khartoum (and actually a large number of embassy officers from missions in Africa and most of the Middle East that were severely drawdown because of Kuwait) were in Washington for 30 days at a time. Every 30 days the personnel office had to make a decision as to whether we would go back to post. The Gulf War, as you know, lasted a relatively short time, but getting a clear idea of our status was difficult. Of course, no one could tell when things would be settled enough to return to as insecure a place as Khartoum. After about 90 days the Department decided we could go back. I was eager to return because my programs were a success and I had isolated my issues from the general unproductive relations we had with the Sudanese government. In addition, I felt uncomfortable about abandoning those refugees who would have been reunited with family members in the States had we not left.

We finally returned. International Rescue Committee (IRC), the contractor that ran the screening process found new volunteers to staff its offices. We pulled the files out, organized everybody and were back in business. Reestablishing the program was quite an administrative challenge; to mothball the program for three months and then bring it back on line.

Q: But, you were able to do that fairly quickly?

REUTHER: Yes. We had the core IRC people and excellent cooperation from the Sudanese.

Q: They were glad to see you back, no doubt. How long did you stay in Khartoum before you were transferred?

REUTHER: I believe I returned to Khartoum in April and by mid-May received my next assignment. After almost ten years, I returned to Washington. Building on my previous exposure to Iraq affairs I was offered the Deputy Office Director position in the Office of Iran and Iraq Affairs. In preparation for that assignment I was sent to Kuwait to help

reestablish the embassy's Political Section. The war rather inconveniently ended before the State Department's summer transfer cycle, so the Department was assigning temporary duty personnel as an interim measure.

Q: How long had the embassy been reopened then when you got there?

REUTHER: The embassy opened shortly after Desert Storm end in late February. Part of the symbolism of the restoration of Kuwait's sovereignty.

Q: So, you were there five or six months after that.

REUTHER: About three or four months after the end of the war. I arrived the last week in May. There was nothing ordinary about the work at post-war Embassy Kuwait. Newly appointed Ambassador Gnehm arrived on the heels of the military. We heard stories that he and a Special Forces unit entered the embassy, kicked down the door to the ambassador's office, and looked for booby traps.

Kuwait was a very interesting experience on a couple of ways. First, I had never seen a battlefield before. Secondly, Kuwait must have looked like Rome after the Visigoths visited. The Iraqis absolutely vacuumed up everything in the city. There wasn't a screwdriver. We were put into a hotel across the street from the embassy. Iraqi troops had kicked in all the doors, stole the doorknobs, stole the TV, and stole the sheets. They burned the Sheraton Hotel in another section of town because they couldn't loot it fast enough, damaging the top four floors. The looting was total and it was not all part of the panic of a quick departure. Looting was Iraq's occupation policy.

Obviously it was difficult to operate; there were absolutely no supplies in Kuwait. You had to bring in absolutely everything you needed. Before I arrived I didn't understand is that Kuwait city is built like Los Angeles – its geography presumes automobiles. Well, there were no automobiles. The Iraq's took them. Iraqi looting and Kuwait geography contributed on one of the rancid journalist pieces of the time. The wire services carried a story that one of the first ships to come into liberated Kuwait had automobiles on it. The underlying message was look how selfish the Kuwaitis. In fact, the cars were desperately needed because of the desert heat and a city laid out like Los Angeles.

Q: All spread out you mean?

REUTHER: All spread out with no public transportation and no sidewalks, but beautiful freeways. So, if you understood that the city was totally dependent on the automobile and the Iraqis had stolen absolutely everything with wheels, you would not have been surprised that one of the first shiploads of material into this looted city was automobiles, otherwise nothing could be accomplished. Of course, the Kuwaitis got a great black eye for that.

Then there were the oil well fires. I had seen the pictures of black clouds and oil mist on the white desert sand, but wasn't prepared for the constant noise, the roar. It was like

sticking your ear into a jet engine. There was an incredibly deafening noise. I was prepared for the dark skies and the fire and the smell, but it was the noise took me unawares as we traveled through Kuwait.

As an officer in the Political Section I had some internal reporting responsibilities, but was primarily recruited to work with the United Nations organization and the NGOs who were trying to cope with the refugee problems and the restoration of infrastructure services. Work similar to my Khartoum duties.

Q: Were you doing some reporting?

REUTHER: We were doing some reporting, but primarily coordinating with the UN. The Department wanted someone who understood the issues, who knew the UN, what its offices were capable of doing and what we should expect of them.

Q: How long were you in Kuwait?

REUTHER: Not very long, six weeks, through the 4th of July -- a memorable Fourth of July to be in liberated Kuwait. I know this assignment was six weeks, because more than that and the regulations require the Department to pay TDY. I returned to the States on July 15.

Q: What did you come home to?

REUTHER: As I mentioned earlier, I had experience with Iraq and we all realized that post-Gulf War policy toward Iraq would remain a major and delicate policy area. Ambassador David Mack was the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Near East Affairs and knew my work. He recruited me as deputy to Ron Neumann on the Iraq/Iran Desk. So, I returned to Washington as Ambassador Neumann's deputy. His focus was mainly Iranian issues and I covered Iraq and managed the office. It was indeed a substantive assignment at a propitious time.

Q: Now, this was the period right after the war and there presumably wasn't very much interaction between us and Iraq.

REUTHER: No, none at all. Our primary objectives at that time were two-fold. First, to maintain the coalition that had resisted the invasion of Kuwait, and secondly, see that Iraq fulfilled its obligations to the United Nations. The conflict had ended in an armistice (vice a surrender) in which Iraq was required to perform certain functions - get rid of its weapons of mass destruction, acknowledge Kuwait's existence, demarcate the Iraq-Kuwait the border—before the UN embargo was lifted. Actually there were approximately 15 specific steps enumerated in the UN armistice resolution. So, our job was to monitor Iraq's compliance with these requirements. At this time there was a certain naiveté on the part of coalition allies that Saddam would do the smart thing, the rational thing, and get out from underneath the UN embargo by quickly fulfilling Iraq's armistice obligations. Given the brutal suppression of the Shiite rebellion in the south and

the Kurdish rebellion in the north, the European coalition members should have had a more bracing view of the situation. Our major problem in the Department was that Saddam, obviously, had more independent plans and, rather than compiling with the UN resolutions (which might have cost him power in Iraq) basically was willing to wait the coalition out. Iraqi policy assumed that if Baghdad hunker down, then the coalition would fall apart. So, Iraq's post-war policy of believing that the coalition would not hold together was not that different from Saddam's pre-war assumptions.

When I took this position, I was aware of the considerable debate in this country as the public and the Congress struggled for understanding. As often happens, much of this is Monday morning quarterbacking. Some American commentators argued that U.S. policy contributed to Saddam's misreading of the situation in August 1990. One of the best academic pieces on the issue of 'could Saddam have been dissuaded' is by Janice Gross Stein, 'Deterrence and Compellence in the Gulf, 1990-91: A Failed or Impossible Task?' International Security, Vol. 17, Nbr. 2 (Fall 1992). Professor Stein's conclusion is that because Baghdad discounted American and European opposition, it probably could not have been deterred from the invasion. I believe that Saddam's calculation was impeccable. He was deeply in debt due to the recently concluded Iran-Iraq war, although his Arab neighbors contributed considerable funds Iraq's drubbing of the Persians. Rich Kuwait was there, viewed condescendingly by most of its poorer neighbors and Iraq owed major money to Kuwait. Extinguishing Kuwait eliminated a major debt and provided substantial future revenue. Who would oppose Baghdad? Not the Iranians; they too are exhausted from eight years of war. The Syrians are Iraq's traditional political foes, but they are not big enough to take on the largest army in the Middle East and perhaps the fourth largest in the world. As to the Europeans, the French won't object. Baghdad owes Paris so much money that it wouldn't jeopardize its creditor. The debt situation is similar with the Germans and other Europeans. And even if they object, what does that mean? Certainly nothing militarily significant. Saddam might have considered that the Americans would object. There will be a lot of American hand wringing and UN resolutions, but because nobody else will go along with the Americans, they will be isolated in their objection. Even if the Americans try to do something militarily, if you look at what they just did in Panama, they made a total mess out of it as the world press had told everybody. So, thinks Saddam, if the Americans weren't militarily effective next door in Panama, how are they going to effectively move 10,000 miles into the Middle East? And, anyway, where are the Americans going to plant themselves? Washington can't make common cause with Tehran. Saudi Arabia is the protector of the holy Islamic places and the idea that armed infidels would be allowed into Saudi Arabia was beyond anybody's comprehension. Saddam's calculations were impeccable to a point. And that point was the moment he invaded Kuwait. His action changed the calculus. The Kuwaitis actually put up a stiff resistance in the first few hours and shot down a command helicopter. From the helicopter they retrieved papers that suggested Saudi Arabia was in jeopardy. The Kuwaiti success and the enormous vulnerability of Saudi Arabia to further Iraqi moves made the Saudis more afraid of Saddam than they were of armed infidels.

Q: Back to your Washington assignment. Of course there were a couple of other issues that presumably were being dealt with at that time by Saddam but also of interest to us,

the Kurds in northern Iraq and the Shiite in the south. Were those of interest to you?

REUTHER: Very much so. As a matter of fact just before I arrived in Washington, Baghdad had suppressed rebellions in both the northern and southern parts of the country. Baghdad's policies toward these two areas combined military action and economic embargo. The coalition's Operation Provide Comfort provided relief supplies to the landlocked Kurds in the north. At the end of Desert Storm UN relief organizations established themselves throughout Iraq, but Iraqi authorities slowly began squeezing them out. And so started the tug-of-war between the UN and Saddam over each of the UN's armistice requirements Iraq was to fulfill before the embargo could be lifted.

The UN embargo never included food and medicines, but banned the sale of Iraqi oil so that Baghdad could not rearm. If Iraqi did not rearm, some thought, more resources would be available to pay Iraq's war debts and maintain its population. The flaw in that thinking was that Saddam had less interest in his population than the international community did.

First, Baghdad instituted an ironclad embargo against the Kurdish areas in the north. No food, no money, no salaries, nothing passed from central Iraq to the Kurdish areas. Our aerial photography confirmed refugee stories. At Iraqi army checkpoints in the north were oil barrels into which all travelers had to dispose of anything they carried, be it food, money or extra clothing. Nothing passed through Baghdad's internal embargo. The Shiites in the south suffered a similar fate. The UN humanitarian agencies that came to Iraq after Desert Storm quietly told of the difficult situation in the south. Because they had offices in Baghdad, they knew there were supplies in central Iraq that simply were not being provided to the rest of the country. As I mentioned, the Iraqis harassed the UN people, who being afraid for their own safety began to pull out.

Faced with what Saddam was doing to the Iraqi people, we spent considerable time developing the international community's response. For example, a rebellion continued in the swamps on the Iran and Iraq border. Intelligence told of a heavy Iraqi hand throughout the Shiite south. Taking a cue from the north we worked closely with coalition members and instituted the southern no-fly zone. This program denied Baghdad air cover for its troops and meant we would fly very low level reconnaissance. The southern no fly zone was also a response to Baghdad's increasingly obvious unwillingness to recognize Kuwait's independence and demarcate the border. In fact, Iraq began to move military equipment toward the Kuwait border. Needless to say, the Kuwaitis felt very intimidated. Our counter to Iraq's military moves and the southern no-fly zone and the emplacement of a move-it-or-lose-it policy. This was one small illustration of what happened on my watch and that of my successors. Saddam would challenge the coalition looking for some hole we would not plug, stretching the patience of the coalition, and looking for the point where the coalition would crack.

So, this became an assignment in coalition politics, not only at the highest level, but down at our office level. Maintaining coalition presence and consensus was the watchword. The British embassy assigned one officer to work with us on a daily basis.

We were in constant contact with the other embassies. The Assistant Secretary and his deputies were often talking either to other capitals or their Washington embassies as we tried to maintain the coalition and maintain the consensus to hold Saddam to his obligations. It was a very, very heavy demonstration of diplomatic prowess on the part of the very professional people in this bureau.

Q: At that time there was, of course, an Iraqi mission to the United Nations located in New York. Was there any Iraqi presence as part of another embassy in Washington?

REUTHER: Yes, there was. They had an interest section near Dupont Circle just as they had when I was the Iraq desk officer 16 years earlier. Algeria was still the protecting power.

Q: And they had a few diplomats here?

REUTHER: They had one person left. The officer who had been ambassador had fled to Canada by then. He didn't seem to have any interest in going back to Baghdad.

Q: Would you on the desk talk to this one individual or did you insist on dealing with them in New York or through the Algerian embassy?

REUTHER: We had no need to talk to the person in Washington. We had no bilateral relations. We dealt with Iraq in New York through our UN mission because it was UN requirements to which the coalition were holding Baghdad. Besides, the officer in Iraq's Washington mission had no standing with his own people back in Baghdad and was very low echelon. So, he was not an appropriate and responsible channel.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to say about your time in Iran/Iraqi affairs?

REUTHER: We should mention that not only was the coalition working to see that Saddam complied with the armistice his representatives signed, it was also concerned about the Iraqi population. As Saddam delayed compliance, the health and welfare of the Iraqi people became another wedge to attack the coalition. The UN embargo excluded food and medicine and the UN established a committee mechanism to approve imports so that Saddam could not rebuild his military. We knew what Iraq was importing and that it was only importing minimal amounts of food and medicine. If Saddam could misconstrue the embargo in the world press and induce famine in the population, the coalition would be under significant pressure. The responses we came up with were UN Security Council Resolution 706 and 712. Under this mechanism the international community would allow Iraq to sell oil for the explicit purpose of buying the food and medical supplies that it needed. As I mentioned, food and medicine never were embargoed; what was embargoed was the sale of oil, so Iraq all along was buying food and medicine, but only for the elite.

Q: With limited foreign exchange.

REUTHER: Well, actually Saddam and the Iraqi elite, which was primarily the Takriti

clan, had ample financial resources. The international community was feeding the Kurds in the North and now had to devise a system for the rest of the Iraqi population. Iraq's noncompliance with the simplest armistice terms had convinced most coalition members that the Iraqi leadership could not be trusted. So, resolutions 706/712 were written to require oversight. We wanted to make certain the UN would monitor the food into the country to see that the people actually got it. The foreign community wasn't interested in just providing food for Saddam's family; its interest was in the people of Iraq.

Q: Was the new resolution an American idea?

REUTHER: It was U.S. stimulated and we worked diligently to sell the plan. We were responding to a feeling that the international community shared: Saddam was starving his own population and we ought to make some effort to do something about it. But, of course, that is exactly the point. Saddam was starving his people to create the image that it was the international community's fault brought about by its embargo on the sale of Iraqi oil. So, we turned it around and said the international community will let Saddam sell the necessary oil but he has to assure us, since we have lost all confidence, that the Iraqi people will receive the food. Well, there you go, the last thing Saddam wants is food to get to the Iraqi people and UN monitoring because he, of course, is squeezing down on UN presence. The UN inspection teams seeking Iraq's programs for weapons of mass destruction received the most pressure. The UN inspectors would wake up in the morning to find all the windows in the UN vehicles were broken. Or, they were kept up all night with telephone calls to their hotel rooms. Their clothes were stolen. The Iraqi harassment of these UN teams is just unbelievable and unnoticed in the press in the months immediately after the war. When I left the Desk, Resolutions 706/712 were in place, but spurned by Saddam. I believe we succeeded in keeping the coalition together and focusing the coalition on the issues of Iraq's compliance with the UN armistice resolution.

Q: After you left the Iran/Iraq office, you went to the Department of Defense on an exchange assignment, I believe?

REUTHER: Yes, that's right. It was an excellent opportunity to see how our colleagues in the Department of Defense operated. Having been overseas with members of the uniformed services and having worked with DOD representatives in interagency groups, I thought it would be a good education to see issues from the other side. This exchange program was a long standing one that placed Foreign Service officers in the military commands and in the Office of the Secretary of Defense's International Security Affairs (ISA) Bureau while uniformed officers had tours in the State Department's regional bureaus and the Bureau of Political Military Affairs.

I see a strong need for DOD and State and have such exchange programs. After a series of frustrating meetings, and I have forgotten the subject, I was asked by my ISA colleagues why State was so difficult. With a little exploration we determined that the difference in approach to the issue at hand was that State was concerned about the impact of proposed U.S. moves on the domestic situation in the country in question. State was

looking for a solution that supported the reformers and blocked the conservatives. DOD was pushing for a solution parallel to the way the U.S. would handle the issue, regardless of the domestic consequences in the target country. DOD and State are players on the same team and such insights help teamwork. Of course, these off-line programs are expensive for the sending agency and they always are under threat of shrinkage from budgetary considerations. As I was winding up my tour, I failed to receive a short extension because State's Seventh Floor reduced and realigned the program.

Q: What particularly did you work on?

REUTHER: I was assigned to ISA, which is often called the Pentagon's mini State Department. ISA provides policy guidance to the Secretary of Defense on a regional basis. So there is a Latin American office, an Asia-Pacific office, etc. Given my background I sought the position in the Asia-Pacific office. In the Fall of 1993 my first major assignment was to support the one-person Korea Desk in the Asia-Pacific office. The Secretary of Defense was scheduled to attend the annual Korean-American defense consultations. In addition to organizing the briefing books for the traveling party, I also accompanied the group. It was a busy week. There were formal calls, the conference, and a simulation exercise for some of the delegation members. I took the opportunity to visit Panmunjom on the border, the U.S. Army's 2nd Division - the primary U.S. force on the Korean Peninsula, and the U.S. Air Force facilities at Osan. Once the Secretary's visit was completed, I was permanently assigned to handle Taiwan, Australia and New Zealand affairs. I often joked that if it had water around it I was responsible for it.

Q: This was from 1993-95 and you were working not only with the civilian side of the Department of Defense, but also with the Joint Chiefs on the military side, and I suppose to some extent with the State Department as well.

REUTHER: Oh, absolutely. Only this time when I went to interagency meetings I was the "them." In Asia-Pacific we worked closely with the Joint Chiefs staff, especially with J-5. New for me, we also worked closely with the Defense Attaché office of the respective embassies of our countries. I thoroughly enjoyed liaison with the Australian and New Zealand attaché offices.

I had worked with colleagues from Australia and New Zealand overseas, but this was a first opportunity to look closely at our bilateral relations. From the DOD perspective these are the most intimate security relationships we have in the post-WWII era. The Anglo-Saxon immigrant bond was strong. The AUSCANZUKUS countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK, and U.S.) constituted a special inner circle in the American security relationship. I was surprised, therefore to find a significant bilateral problem in our security relationship with New Zealand.

Q: Relating to port visits by U.S. nuclear ships?

REUTHER: Exactly. At issue was a series of policy moves in New Zealand when the Labour Party came to power in the mid-1980s. The country immediately fell victim to

economic problems that Labour handled via policies that might best be associated with its opposition, the conservatives. To burnish its credentials with its electorate, Labour indulged its anti-nuclear wing that was upset with French atomic tests in the neighborhood. And the French endeared themselves to New Zealand by blowing up a nuclear-test protesting Greenpeace ship in Wellington Harbor. I believe someone was killed in that incident. As a consequence the new Labour government publicly announced that it would challenge the U.S. Navy's nuclear 'Neither Confirm Nor Deny' policy. Not only did Labour want to ban nuclear weapons, but also nuclear power. To demonstrate the emotionalism of the issue, there is a very famous Wellington newspaper cartoon at the time that pointed out that one receives more radiation from the anti-cancer ward of the hospital than a visiting nuclear powered vessel.

Be that as it may, what Labour's policy meant was that New Zealand effectively opted out of its ANZUS treaty obligations. By the end of the 1980s rather than find a workaround so that both domestic and treaty obligations might be satisfied, Labour enshrined its anti-nuclear policy into legislation. So, you had an alliance partner who said that he would not allow you to perform your full functions as an alliance partner and he would not perform his full alliance role. New Zealand's policy shift took place against the background of the Soviet incursion into Afghanistan and the increase in Soviet naval presence in the Pacific. The Reagan Administration decided that New Zealand was no longer an alliance partner.

New Zealand's stand, of course, presented difficulties for the alliance, not only for what New Zealand did, but also for the precedent it set. Had Japan or some of the European powers taken the same stand, the U.S. alliance structure would have been fatally wounded. Punishment for New Zealand's anti-nuclear stand was withdrawal of intelligence cooperation, loss of access to latest military equipment, a ban on military to military training and a lowering of the level of contacts. Over time New Zealand's government also cut back on military budgets. American and New Zealand policies combined to leave the New Zealand military in worsening shape.

In the mid-1990s we praise the idea of the 'democratic peace,' that something inherent in democratic states prevents them from falling into conflict. New Zealand's anti-nuclear policy does not contradict this paradigm. Yet, I think the paradigm missed the point that for domestic reasons the Labour Government created a problem in its foreign relations. A problem that it was unwilling to resolve by devising a workaround so that it could maintain its international responsibilities and satisfy domestic audiences. My observation is that any country, including the United States, that is only willing to fulfill domestic demands and turn its back on its larger international responsibilities will in time create grave problems for the larger community.

At the time I was in the Pentagon, the New Zealand position was that no government had the ability to repeal the anti-nuclear legislation. Nevertheless a Conservative Government was in power and it signaled that it wished a closer, but perhaps not alliance, relationship. Part of Wellington's epiphany was that during Desert Storm, New Zealand volunteered warships to the coalition for Gulf duty but realized that its vessels experienced difficulties

coordinating with the other Anglo-Saxon navies because New Zealand's tactics and equipment were out of date. So, the Conservative Government probed for readmission to the inner core. We went through an interagency policy review. Was there some way we could encourage New Zealand to abandon its anti-nuclear position either in de jure or de facto that would then allow us to repair the relationship? There was little support for rehabilitating New Zealand without some contrition or some mutual excuse so that other countries could not use New Zealand's position as a precedent. The Navy was most adamant on the issue.

As I said, the NSC initiated an interagency review of our policy, in approximately 1994, I think. Our options were limited. New Zealand may have wanted to be reinstated in the Anglo-Saxon security world, but in the intervening years it had allowed its military to atrophy. The single exceptions were the ANZAC frigates being jointly built with Australia. And it wasn't certain whether New Zealand would fulfill its obligations to this program. Otherwise, what equipment New Zealand had had not been updated in recent years.

Q: What did Australia think about the problems in American-New Zealand relations?

REUTHER: Since the coves of Gallipoli in World War I, Australia and New Zealand have had a unique and close relationship. On this issue, however, Canberra, was unsympathetic to Wellington. A Labour Government also came to power in Australia in the mid-1980s and maneuvered around the pressures of its own anti-nuclear faction. So, it was not sympathetic to New Zealand Labour's handling of the issue. On the other hand, Australia sought to soften New Zealand's fall from grace. As a result Australia was very interested in U.S. policy on New Zealand and we fully shared our thinking about our policy options. We would not have changed our relationship with New Zealand without consulting Canberra.

As I mentioned, an interagency policy review under an NSC chair was launched in January 1994. We would have liked to find a workaround. Consensus formed around the idea of increasing the level of contacts. That is, reversing our policy of only allowing mid-level contacts. As down payment on the new policy, CINCPAC Admiral Larson made a trip to New Zealand. I provided inputs to his talking points. A CINCPAC trip was fitting, because it was the U.S. Navy's 'Never Confirm, Nor Deny' policy that Wellington challenged. Admiral Larson made a number of speeches and received good coverage in the New Zealand media. We saw Admiral Larson's and other trips as responding to the New Zealand leadership's desire that we make our case to the New Zealand public and hopefully begin to give the government some leeway on these issues. Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord followed Admiral Larson in August 1994, the State Department's Deputy Secretary included New Zealand in a January 1995 trip and the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, who happened to be an FSO, Kent Wiedemann, accompanied Talbott. The next American move following these trips was to extend an invitation to Prime Minister Bolger to call on the White House.

One of the symbolic ways of expressing our isolation of New Zealand since the mid-

1980s was to lower the level of official contact. We assumed that because a PM-Presidential meeting was a significant unilateral gesture, it would allow the current government to take some step that we could use to declare New Zealand's isolation ended. We had in mind an action such as repealing the legislation on visits of nuclear powered vessels. These power plants had proven their safety and the number of American nuclear powered ships in the categories that might visit New Zealand were declining. On the contrary when New Zealand's invoked anti-nuclear power legislation in the 1980s, the percentage of nuclear powered ships in the U.S. Navy was increasing.

Prime Minister James Bolger came to the U.S. in late March 1995. On that trip he called on the Secretary of Defense, met with the President, and lunched with the Secretary of State. As the DOD New Zealand Desk officer I produced the scope paper, talking points and background material for the SECDEF's meeting with PM Bolger. I also attended the session. The Prime Minister's visit was a major attempt to change our security relationship with a country I had been associated with since my early tours in Thailand. Like my counterparts at the New Zealand embassy, I had high expectations for this meeting. Unfortunately, the New Zealand leadership pocketed this meeting and was unable to provide any substantial reason for us to restore the previous security cooperation. At the time we were sending these positive signals to New Zealand, parliamentary elections were not far off. Some believed that Wellington would have to respond to us before the elections, because they would be held under a new electoral system that made it unlikely that any party would be a majority party. Skeptics voiced the thought that the Conservatives were using us to bolster their electoral prospects. By the time I left Asia-Pacific Affairs, nothing came of our effort to construct a new relationship that would allow the restoration of New Zealand's place in the AUSCANZUKUS security circle.

Q: This was by now the Clinton administration, 1993-95. I suppose New Zealand is also important to us in terms of access to Antarctica?

REUTHER: Yes, but that was one of the programs that we continued because it wasn't part of the alliance relationship. It was strictly scientific.

Q: You mentioned that you worked closely with Australia on New Zealand policy. What were other aspects of our relationship with Australia that you recall?

REUTHER: As a Foreign Service officer in Asia I always worked closely with the local Australian embassy. In a place like China where the Americans often had more language skills, officers from the English speaking embassies, such as the Australians, would often meet and share notes. The tour in the Pentagon, however, underscored for me the intimacy in Australian-American relations that I consider remarkable. The U.S. military has many exchange programs with foreign militaries, but our exchange with Australia was extensive. To the point where Australian officers were holding billets in the Pentagon in fields such as logistics and procurement. Australia was fully integrated into the inner core of the American security establishment. Cross training and mutual exposure built high levels of confidence when events such as Desert Storm arose.

You could see this remarkable relationship in the work of the Australia Desk. An arrangement had developed over the years where the Director of Asia-Pacific Affairs (that is, the #2 position in our office, usually a one or two star military officer) had a formal quarterly meeting with the Australian Military Attaché. These meetings were called the HADS-ISA meetings (e.g., Head of Australian Defense Service). Military attaches from other countries had good working relations and easy access to the Desk officers and our bosses, but these formal meetings were particularly symbolic of our close relationship of Australia. Because our relationship was so rich, these meetings provided a centralized venue for raising any security related issue. The agendas that I prepared for these meetings were extensive and covered not only our policy toward some world event, but the status of mutual scientific projects and the constant coordination on New Zealand policy.

Also symbolic of the intimacy of the relationship were the annual Australian Ministerial meetings. I'm not certain when they started, but they certainly were the highlight of my tour. These were annual cabinet-level meetings that alternated between capitals. In 1994 the venue was Canberra, 1995 Washington. These were major administrative events because protocol called for both the secretaries of Defense and State to attend. It is a project of enormous proportions to coordinate the schedules of these two American cabinet officials. Once the AUSMIN was tentatively on their schedule, my State Department colleague, the Australian embassy and I began to work on an agenda. The agenda would cover the waterfront. There wasn't an international subject that wasn't covered. Furthermore, there was an extensive communiqué to negotiate. The communiqué, of course, illustrates the connection between foreign and domestic policy because it was as much for the domestic audiences as mutual allies and neighbors. One of the difficult aspects of the whole proceedings, however, was to arrange the topics so there would be sufficient and substantive topics for each American cabinet official to address in the meetings. This was the job of the working level. There were murmurings from the immediate staffs of the secretaries of State and Defense over the allocation of topics, but such turf questions were to be expected.

The Australians hosted my first AUSMIN (as was our shorthand for these meetings) in Canberra. Ultimately the Secretary of Defense dropped out of the schedule and the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Ambassador Frank Wisner, headed the DOD contingent. This was my first time in Canberra. The Australians were gracious hosts and a number of our embassy officers in Canberra were FSOs with whom I had served in other posts. The meetings were held in the unassuming Cabinet room of the new Parliament building. While in town I had my own full schedule of meetings with a spectrum of Australian officials, including representatives of the Prime Minister's office, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. I also took advantage of the opportunity to visit the War Museum in Canberra and the Navy command center in Sydney.

The second AUSMIN was in Washington. Again, the job of the desk officer was to accomplish the preliminary coordination between State and Defense and the Australian

embassy. Next task was to commission background papers that provided a snapshot of the subjects to be covered. Working closely with State's Desk we coordinated and cleared the talking point papers from which the principals would speak. Closer to the event one would draft the scope paper that provided an overall view of where this meeting fit into the relationship, what the other side hoped to accomplish, and finally what we hoped to accomplish. After the appropriate clearances, these papers were put together in a briefing book, at least three inches in this case, and passed forward to the principal, with copies to the deputies who would also attend the meetings. Always a frantic time meeting the deadline for these briefing books. Nevertheless, briefing books are an invaluable photography of a relationship.

One final thought on the relationship with Australia is an observation about how democracies interact. One of my main projects was the preparation of the Annual Facilities Report. For decades Australia's contribution to the alliance was the provision of space for joint facilities that performed a number of defense monitoring functions. The Labour opposition liked to characterize the joint facilities as "U.S. bases" or as performing functions the Australian public would not approve. At one point the slow response to a question in Parliament about some construction at one of these facilities embarrassed the party in power. As a result, at least through the 1980s, the Australia desk officer queried the U.S. uniformed services that had equities in these joint facilities what our plans were. In my turn I gathered these responses and coordinated them into a report which was then forwarded to Canberra via the Australian embassy's defense attaché. The irony is that one of my duties was to assist the Australian government fend off potential domestic political attacks.

Q: Did I remember you saying that you were also desk officer for another island, Taiwan. How did that come about?

REUTHER: When I arrived at Asia Pacific Affairs Eden Woon covered all China issues. Post-Tiananmen sanctions restricted military-to-military contacts with Beijing and contacts with Taiwan were predictable. Dr. Woon had come to the position of Head of the China desk while he was still in the Air Force. In late 1994 he left ISA/AP to become director of the Washington State China Relations Council in Seattle. So, I added the Taiwan desk officer duties to my portfolio for about the last 12 months of my assignment to the Pentagon.

Q: Beijing-Taipei issues are in the news all the time now, wasn't that taking on a heavy load?

REUTHER: By this time an office reorganization allowed me to turn over my Korean responsibilities to a new officer. So, the portfolio balance remained. But you are right, Australian and New Zealand affairs dominated my attention. In mid to late 1994 we were in the midst of another round of Inter-Agency Working Group meetings on the Australian South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone proposal. Australia and New Zealand had long expressed interest in a nuclear free zone. Some fruitful international discussions had been held, but the Reagan Administration lost interest. This was just one of a number of issues

the Clinton Administration was reinvestigating. I was the lead ISA representative to the interagency meetings, most of which an NSC representative hosted. Our position was that nuclear free zones were a function of the Cold War, President Bush had removed nuclear weapons from U.S. naval vessels, and therefore the issue was overtaken by events (OBE). Law of the Sea concerns and U.S. Navy views were a large part of our disinterest. State was also not interested. Peripheral agencies interested in the issue were not strong enough to move the issue forward. As I was saying, though, as to Taiwan we were in the calm before the storm.

Q: Can you give us a flavor of the Taiwan issues that did come to your attention?

REUTHER: Our priority issues were maintaining the unofficiality of the relationship with Taiwan and organizing our best judgement on the issue of arms sales to Taiwan. The Clinton Administration, as it had with New Zealand policy and other issues, conducted an interagency review of policy toward Taiwan. Given the political sensitivity of the relationship, State was the lead agency. That policy review was completed around July of 1994 and announced around September, just before I accepted the Taiwan portfolio. So, I did not participate in the policy review, but kept abreast of the issues during the twice-weekly office staff meetings.

The end result of the Taiwan policy review were a few changes in procedure and nomenclature. CCNAA changed its name to the “Taipei Economic and Commercial Representative Office.” Fair enough. CCNAA don’t specifically refer to Taiwan or Taipei. On the grounds that trade had grown, economic officials of the two authorities could meet in each other’s office. For everyone else, in order to underscore the unofficiality of the relationship, American Institute in Taiwan and TECRO offices were the unofficial meeting places of choice.

For DOD, the policy review meant no changes. Because officers in uniform and government arms sales imply officiality, new rules about Taiwan representatives’ access to U.S. Government agencies did not affect DOD as they did Commerce and State departments. DOD equities required strict adherence to the unofficiality of the relationship with Taiwan and DOD continued to work through the AIT office in Rosslyn, Virginia.

Despite all the pro-Taiwan fuss in the media at the time, it is not clear that the interagency group could have changed much. The Republic of China, that is, the authorities on Taiwan, is the successor government to the Qing dynasty, and our normalization with the People’s Republic of China meant that the PRC was the successor to the ROC. To illustrate this legitimacy linkage, one of the first requirements the USG made of the PRC was that it resolved the issue of the Kwang Hua Railroad bonds *from the Qing Dynasty*. Any activity then that supports the officiality of the ROC impinges on the legitimacy of the PRC. This was particularly true during the 1970s and 1980s when the ROC unequivocally argued that it was the government of China of which Taiwan was a province. The contemporary PRC claim is a reflection of the earlier ROC claim. Calling on the ROC to change its name so that it is no longer the successor government to the

Qing runs into problems on the Taiwan side. The political party that ruled Taiwan from 1945 to the present is the Kuomintang. It legitimized its rule and hence financial and power position in Taiwan on the grounds that it was the government of China. Changing the name of the government on Taiwan has serious consequences for the Kuomintang and its relationship with the people of Taiwan. These are complicated Taiwan legitimacy issues that the USG cannot resolve. That is why our official position since the 1972 communiqué is a neutral one. The issue is for Beijing and Taipei to work out peacefully. The issues are delicate and so interwoven that cutting one innocent thread may lead to powerful unintended consequences.

Q: You were saying that one of DOD's main responsibilities was arms sales to Taiwan. The 1982 Communiqué talked about a steady decline in the amount of arms sold. How were Taiwan's legitimate defense needs handled?

REUTHER: Shortly after I assumed the Taiwan portfolio we began the annual arms sales process and a review of Taiwan's defense needs. This starts with a visit to Washington by a Taiwan delegation from the Ministry of Defense that presents Taiwan's list of the equipment it wants and justifications. We call this the pre-Arms Sales Talks. Taiwan's list is often eclectic. The list often included a wide variety of equipment from submarines to communications equipment to request for technology transfer for co-production purposes. My recollection is that this list comes to us toward the end of the year, November/December, and then we hold the Arms Sales Talks themselves in March or April.

Taiwan's list always reflects the unique political situation from which it arises. RAND recently completed a study on the Taiwan procurement process and that study notes that Taiwan's list is a combination of what Taiwan's military professional think they need to accomplish specific defensive tasks in addition to what the political leaders add to the list. The government wants to communicate to the Taiwan public that it is doing its best to purchase the latest equipment. The problem is that you end up with a list that can be both practical and hype. We have a responsibility not to rubber-stamp it, but give each item due consideration. We break the list into functions and turn it over to our best military and intelligence people to look at the functional components: air defense or anti-submarine warfare, etc.

Q: Both practical and hype? How do you contribute to the analysis?

REUTHER: Diplomacy is part of the nation's defense and one should not be unfamiliar with the thinking of the military side of the house. Personally, my avocation is World War II history. My personal career has been intimately bound with that of my colleagues in the uniform services. Thailand dealing with the Air Force; insurgency issues including my exposure to Foreign Service colleagues who saw service in a CORDS assignment in Vietnam. Iraq issues certainly had a military component. Some FSI training involved a class at an Air Force installation in Florida. When we were evacuated from Sudan, I had a temporary assignment in the Political Military Bureau that exposed me to my uniformed colleagues. Finally, at DOD each issue we handled whether Korea, New Zealand or

Taiwan, we handled the military side. So, I was able to guide and contribute to the ongoing discussion.

Q: Perhaps, your background is unique.

REUTHER: I hope not, in the sense that the national interest is best protected by good diplomacy, strong military and sophisticated intelligence. Each of which works best when each practitioner understands the needs and limitations of the other field.

Q: So, you orchestrated one session of an Arms Sales Talk with Taiwan. Lot of paperwork?

REUTHER: There was a considerable amount of information to digest between the Pre-Talks and the Talks. Primarily we wanted to make certain we understood where Taiwan was in its execution of some function and what might be the next best step to improve its performance. When you introduce whole new systems, it is important to determine whether the training, tactics and budgeting are in place. Buying the latest fad is a waste of money if one cannot integrate the system into current procedures. Also, by the time I was involved, a number of political changes in Taiwan had significantly impacted on Taiwan's procurement process. Under the unchallenged Kuomintang era Taiwan's defense budget and requests were sometimes more extensive than we could approve. With the impact of a more democratic system, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) opposition was generally anti-defense budget and by 1995 had made significant strides in both cutting the budget and making the Ministry of Defense more accountable. As a result, American defense companies would often contact us and complain that the Defense Department was holding down Taiwan's spending and they were losing contracts! In fact a much more sophisticated game was afoot. Democracy was coming to Taiwan.

The American defense contractors had never experienced democracy in Taiwan and they were unprepared for its consequences. This is not an unusual phenomenon. Twenty years earlier, as the American were winding down in Vietnam and the Congress was cutting the defense budget, we often were involved with the Thai Government to negotiate one politico-military issue or another. One incident I specifically remember was that we wanted to shift reconnaissance aircraft from an upcountry airfield to a southern airport. The distance was a couple hundred kilometers, but the saving on gas and maintenance was noticeable. Thai authorities had never been asked to approve an American proposal on the basis of financial savings. After all the money we had spent in Vietnam, we were asking to save the cost of a couple hundred kilometers! The Thai were dumbfounded and believed for a period that we had some ulterior motive. I suspect that the arrival of a more open system on Taiwan was equally bewildering to the defense contractors used to Taiwan's steady, no-nonsense, military purchases.

Q: You spoke earlier that you covered Taiwan in the calm before the storm. What are you referring to? What storm?

REUTHER: 1995 was the high mark of amiable cross-straits relations. Taipei and Beijing were conducting serious and highly educational talks through their mutual unofficial mechanisms labeled the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) on the Taiwan side and the Association for Relations Across The Taiwan Straits (ARATS) on Beijing side. It should be noted that the used of ‘unofficial’ offices to conduct real exchanges was inaugurated by the Japanese in 1972 when they established an unofficial office in Taiwan and copied by the U.S. in 1979 with the American Institute in Taiwan. Here was Taipei and Beijing copying the Japanese and American precedent! There had been an earlier summit between SEF and ARATS and one was tentatively scheduled for late summer 1995. A second successful summit was predicted to open further the budding economic and social relationship between Taiwan and the Mainland. It was not to be, however. Appointed President of Taiwan Lee Teng-hui was about to seek election as the Kuomintang candidate in the first popular election for President on Taiwan. A marvelous milestone in the democratization of Taiwan. Unfortunately, to demonstrate his talents in foreign policy for the electorate, he decided to he wanted to travel to the United States. Actually there had been informal musings about allowing short visits to set a precedent and move from there. With an election deadline, however, Lee couldn’t wait. With a campaign chest of \$4.5 million the Kuomintang hired a lobby firm to exert pressure on the Executive from the Congress to give Lee his trip, the venue was a speech at his alma mater, Cornell University. The Kuomintang move coincided with the swearing in of the highly partisan 104th Congress under Speaker Gingrich. Support for Lee’s travel to Cornell mushroomed and caught many unawares. In the Executive Branch there were many who were blocked from trying to head-off this train wreck because they could not conceive that Congress could be so irresponsible. In these circles there was no doubt Lee’s trip to Cornell, especially under circumstances of obvious Kuomintang lobbying, was a worse case scenario. But, Lee got his trip. The second SEF-ARATS summit was never held. The State Department shunned the TECRO representative. And, consensus withered for moving ahead on the provision of some of the systems the March 1995 Arms Sales Talks had favored.

The lesson here is that we can have pretty much any relationship we want with Taiwan, as long as it is low profile. Little has changed since the Carter Administration when we sold arms to Taiwan in batches less than had to be reported to Congress. In ending Carter’s policy and publicly announcing a major arms sale to Taiwan, the Reagan Administration poked Beijing in the eye, guaranteed a reaction, and ended up with the 1982 Communiqué. The issue is not that we need Beijing’s permission or are kowtowing to Beijing in our relationship with Taipei. The issue is that the lower profile a relationship we have with Taipei in certain areas, the more fulsome it can be. Until the two of them work out some mutual agreement. Anyway, Lee’s trip to Cornell was a watershed in which we were left with deteriorating relationships on both sides of the Strait.

Q: Given your long interest in China policy. These were rather anticlimactic circumstances for the end of your career.

REUTHER: Perhaps so, but one is always learning. It is always interesting to see how some of the events that one has been involved with are represented in the press or the

academic community. For example, I have read academic tomes on Sino-American relations that note that we refused to sell Taiwan the manpack Stinger missile and forced them to purchase a jeep mounted version. And there is a half-truth to this story. After Afghanistan and Stingers showing up in unexpected places, the uniformed side of the house disapproved of providing the manpack version of this weapon to anyone. I found this out when New Zealand sought to purchase this equipment for one of its UN peacekeeping forces. We did not sell manpack. The stingers had to be attached to something larger - so they would not show up in unexpected places. That we consummated a Stinger sale for Taiwan is a demonstration of doing our proper job, not abandoning the Taiwanese as critics charged. Anyway you are right. I transferred out of ISA/AP in October 1995. It was an enormous pleasure to work with my uniformed colleagues from Thailand to the Pentagon.

Q: What did you do after the Pentagon?

REUTHER: By then my retirement date was set for late September 1996. In fact, everyone from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asia-Pacific to the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy lobbied to keep me in the Pentagon for those last few months. State, however, was intent on removing these billets from ISA, the Pentagon's mini-State Department, and placing them in the military commands. Whatever the reasoning of State's Under Secretary for Politico-Military Affairs, I did not consider this move in the best interests of the Foreign Service writ large. I see enormous benefits from the cross-fertilization at an early stage in an officer's career. Those assigned to military commands usually were very senior officers who had few years to use what they learned.

Anyway, short-term tours were hard to find and generally uninteresting. I was lucky enough to be assigned to the office that handled Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. I had already begun to take courses at The George Washington University and this assignment whetted my research interests.

Q: Well, I want to thank you for sharing with us. You obviously enjoyed the experience. A last summary?

REUTHER: It strikes me that diplomacy is about being knowledgeable about a foreign environment so that, as Americans, we can explain America's views to others. This process builds friendships for the future. Friends are cultivated not conjured. It strikes me that one of America's great contributions to world economy is the salesman—the link between the consumer and the factory. The salesman understands that the consumer wants blue widgets and convinces the factory to paint the widgets blue. Without the salesman, the factory would be less knowledgeable about consumer interests. The diplomat performs a similar function; linking the American people with the rest of the world. Conversely ignoring the salesman weakens business. Now this analogy can't be carried too far. The salesman doesn't 'understand' his customer in the same way a diplomat steps himself in another culture to ensure that America's message is clear and that foreign feedback is properly interpreted. But, viewing another culture

condescendingly is a good guarantee of building enmity toward the United States. I am pleased to have worked with a talented and dedicated group of American Foreign Service officers. It was a rewarding and expanding experience.

End of interview