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

AMBASSADOR ROBERT G. RICH, JR.

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INTERVIEW

Q: On behalf of the Foreign Affairs Oral History Program in the Association for Diplomatic Studies, I am about to interview Ambassador Robert G. Rich, Jr. Bob is a specialist in East Asian affairs and served in many of our key posts in that region. However, he was Ambassador to Belize and has served in the Caribbean area. I will ask you first, Bob, what interested you in the Foreign Service and made you decide to become a Foreign Service officer?

RICH: Thank you Ambassador Dunnigan, and I will call you Tom from our long association. Tom, I really wasn't aware of the Foreign Service until I was in graduate school. However, I had been interested in Asia in particular as I grew up because of relatives who were missionaries with the YMCA in China. Their stories and the letters back and forth made me more aware of the Far East than perhaps some my age at that time. Then I was a junior naval officer during the Korean war, although I did not set foot in Korea during the war. I was on a ship at sea. That being a rather defining period for our generation, I increased my interest in Asia and did quite a bit of reading of Asian history while on a destroyer for a couple of years. So, when I was out of the Navy, I changed directions in my academic work and went to Cornell University as a candidate in the graduate school in cultural anthropology and Asian Studies. It was there at Cornell that I first heard of the Foreign Service. A fellow language student was there on a year of

language and area study in mid-career, paid for by the Foreign Service. This Foreign Service officer was Henry Heymann, a man who later became one of our real experts on Indonesian affairs. Henry told me a lot about the Foreign Service and interested me in the career and persuaded me to take the Foreign Service exam, which I did in 1955. I was busy then with my studies and somewhat to my surprise in the summer of 1956 I was offered an appointment as a junior officer. I perhaps unwisely deferred at that time because I was trying to finish some course work and asked to have another chance later. As I've learned more about the Foreign Service entry procedures in later years, I know that was a risky thing to do. But to my good fortune, I was offered an appointment again in the beginning of 1957 and came in as a junior officer in March of that year.

When I entered the Foreign Service I think I clearly expected only to serve a modest number of years, perhaps about five, and then return to academia, finish my Ph.D. studies and become a professor. That was something of the goal I had set for myself. What really captured my commitment to a long-term Foreign Service career was the people I worked with in the early years. Tom, you may not know it, but you were one of those, at my first assignment.

I had had some experience already as a junior naval officer, experience as a junior engineer for awhile with a major American industry, and I had been a graduate research assistant in physics and, after the Korean War, a graduate teaching assistant in academia, and I thought I had some modest perspective on those careers and those institutions. I was really captured in the Foreign Service by the dedication and ability of the people that I worked for and with in those early years. I think I was extremely fortunate. I don't mean that they were atypical, but I think they were among the best, and not everyone's experience probably was as good as mine was.

I also found that not only were the people able and dedicated and giving of their best, but that the work was challenging, the problems seemed real, important and worthwhile devoting one's self to. I very soon let the goal of becoming a professor recede into the background until many years later when it was a little late to go back and finish that Ph.D.

Q: Bob you mentioned your first assignment where we became acquainted. Tell me, what did you derive from your period of service in the Executive Secretariat of the Department?

RICH: One important thing about that first tour in the Executive Secretariat, and I am sorry to say that I don't think first tour officers are allowed that privilege anymore, was a very dynamic perspective of the Department of State from the apex, from the viewpoint of the Secretary's office and staff. The caliber of the people, the dedication to their work, the major issues of the world that I was able to observe, and the efforts of our government to deal with them in an honorable and moral way, were extremely inspiring. That gave me a sense of the Department as an organization and as an institution with high purpose that I think served me well in succeeding years of overseas service before I came back to the Department at mid-career.

Q: After your tour in the Executive Secretariat, you were assigned to the Embassy in Seoul in 1960. What did you do in the embassy?

RICH: Actually, I went out in late 1959 as a junior political officer at the time the embassy was beefing up its political staff to observe the spring 1960 presidential elections. I overlapped for several months with the officer that I would eventually succeed because of this effort to have additional hands and talent on the scene for that election period. Personally, I was responsible for a couple of provinces in the middle of South Korea, the Ch'unch'ŏn provinces, in which I traveled extensively and observed the campaign and the campaigners. I came to know at that time several important members of the opposition party that later became cabinet members in the first post-Rhee government. However, the defining period was the election itself. Rhee, of course, was the first president of the Republic of Korea after World War II. He was an American-educated man with an Austrian wife and a very dominant personality. Korea had adopted a republican form of government, somewhat on the pattern of the United States, and the ideas of democracy were being instilled in schools, although I must say at the top there was more form than substance to the democracy at that phase. It was still a rather authoritarian government based on authoritarian institutions and very hierarchal cultural traditions.

One strange thing about the constitution in Korea at that time was that the president and vice president were elected on separate ballots. In the immediately preceding period, Rhee's vice president had been a member of an opposition party, a situation which he found intolerable and with which he wasn't going to put up. A great deal of the focus in the 1960 election was on the vice presidential campaign. One thought that Rhee, himself, wasn't in any danger of being defeated. He was the father of his country, so to speak, although Korea was still very devastated from the Korean War and a poverty stricken nation of perhaps a $100 *per capita* income in 1960. This was quite a contrast with the dynamic Korean society approaching $10,000 *per capita* GNP today.

The presidential candidate running in opposition to Rhee actually died of natural causes after the deadline for filing a new candidacy, leaving Rhee himself uncontested for a new term. This threw all of the race really into the vice presidency, and there were strong-armed tactics used. Rhee's party, the Liberal Party at that time, was well-organized down through the countryside, but was not adverse to using sticks and strong-armed methods as well as a great deal of money which passed from hand to hand in the election campaign. In those days, money was passed out in white envelopes, and a lot of free alcoholic beverages and other goodies were dispensed.

Rhee's running mate was declared the winner in the election, but it was clear to us that he had not. There were UNCURK observers (UN Commission for the Unification of the Republic of Korea), in which Australia, New Zealand and others were participating, plus the large American embassy observer team. It was clear to all of we outside observers that the vice presidential vote had been rigged. Many ballot boxes were stolen or stuffed. This

was widely enough known among the general public that the students came out and protested. It is striking that they did, but perhaps understandable because it was among the schools that democracy had really taken hold. Students had become used to electing their own leaders, their own officers, and they thought that what they were being taught about democracy was supposed to be real. So there were student demonstrations, initially not in Seoul but down south in the peninsula.

It started with high school students rather than in the colleges, and the student demonstrations were put down rather brutally. That might have been the end of it except that a couple of days later the body of a young lad was dredged up by a fisherman in the Bay of Mokpo with a tear gas grenade projectile imbedded in his skull. This was a tragic case and it was clear that he had been killed by the riot police, almost certainly not on purpose, but they had tried to hide the event and dispose of the body. That sparked a general outpouring of student demonstrations which spread to the university level and then spread up the peninsula to Seoul. What was being demanded was not that Rhee step down but that there be a recount of the election for the vice presidency and apologies for the police brutality and the other brutalities that had occurred during the election period.

Rhee at that time depended on a police force that was not gentle. The regime had also organized university students to demonstrate in ordered cadres against the United States. Whenever the Korean government wanted to make it clear that they didn't like something that the United States was asking it to do, there were organized demonstrations against the American embassy. Student marshals actually formed battalions and classes to march against the American embassy from time to time. Suddenly this mechanism which had been created as a tool of government was unleashed on behalf of the people themselves, and the students rose up in what has become known in Korean history and folklore as the April Revolution of 1960 in which the students poured into the streets. Seoul at that time was a city of a little over two million people, although a city of 13 million today. We estimated that at the height of the demonstrations, probably one million of those two million people were in the streets of Seoul.

Q: Was the embassy ever in danger, Bob, during your period there? Were the riots directed against the embassy and did the government protect us?

RICH: The demonstrations against the embassy had been organized and controlled so we were never in any danger. The spontaneous demonstrations in April 1960 were not directed at the American embassy in any fashion. They were against the presidency, really, and the police. The demand was to have new elections. The presidential guard, a segment of the police, was arrayed at barricades outside the Blue House, which is the Korean equivalent of the White House. At the height of these demonstrations the police at that barricade on someone's orders lowered their rifles and started firing into the mass of students, creating death, panic and confusion.

Seoul in those days was essentially a city of walls. The properties were walled, streets were bounded by walls, and it was very hard for the students to get away because you

couldn't flee through properties due to the walls. So there was a lot of bloodshed. As the streets began to clear, police armored vehicles began to move out into the city firing indiscriminately. The government's newspaper, the *Seoul Shimun*, which was about two blocks from the American embassy at that time, was burned by demonstrators. Police kiosks were burned.

Some of us who were out observing the demonstrations were at times almost caught in cross fire. We certainly got plenty of tear gas. I remember one vivid incident that seems to have been in slow motion. I was trying to work my way back from the presidential palace area to the embassy, and the motorized machine guns were rounding the corner behind me firing indiscriminately. I was trying to get off the street because again there were walls beside the sidewalk. I ran past the burning newspaper building into a small alley and here was a little boy about two feet high selling extras of a newspaper. I grabbed one and gave him some money and he started counting out the equivalent of farthings to me in change. Here we were in the middle of this little street and I am thinking, "Those guns are going to round that corner any moment and I am going to be standing here and get killed for the equivalent of about three cents because I do not want to embarrass this honest little boy and not take his change." Fortunately, the boy and I both survived.

After a day during which the police were completely routed and most of the police boxes and stations burned, President Rhee brought in the military to establish calm in the streets of Seoul. The army commander, who was in good contact with the U.S. Forces Commander of the UN Command and the U.S. embassy, told us and then told the president, "I am not going to turn the army against the people. I will not fire on the people." At that time Ambassador McConaughy was the U.S. Ambassador. He went to see Rhee to tell him basically that the U.S. Government would not support a repression of the people and would not in any way encourage the army to carry out orders of that type. With that impasse, a situation which had originally only been demanding a recount of the election, was transformed after all the violence that had occurred against the mostly peaceful demonstrators, into demands for the resignation of Rhee, who shortly stepped down and went into exile in Hawaii.

I would like to backtrack a moment to say a little about those demonstrations because Korea is a society in which education has a great deal of cultural prestige, and if there is anything that has more prestige than education, it is medicine-doctors. Seoul is a city of universities and even in those days had a very large student population compared to most American cities. These are huge universities, many of them around the outskirts of the city, and some of the campuses were closer in in those days than they are now. When the university students came into the streets, the population came out to support them. It was the students who were the actual demonstrators. They came in their orderly ranks with their marshals as they were taught to do against the American embassy, but in vastly greater numbers. Then there was almost an electric current that went through the crowd when the medical students from Seoul National University arrived in the center of town, having trotted in formation for several miles in their hospital whites. Here were the doctors, and you almost felt that the mandate of heaven had been withdrawn from the

regime at that time. That is the way the public felt, and that really was the end of the Rhee regime.

I was out there in the streets during most of this as an observer to report to the Embassy. One of my colleagues from that time who later became an ambassador to a couple of countries and I were talking in recent years. He said that he would never have sent his officers out into the streets like that to observe when he was ambassador. I said, "I don't agree with you. In this day and age are we going to sit back and rely on CNN to know what is going on, or are we going to have our own sources?" Of course, we didn't even have walkie talkies then, certainly not cell phones. We would dive into a tea room and grab a phone and call back into the embassy.

In the period that followed, Ambassador McConaughy left and the embassy was in charge of Marshall Green, one of our great Asia hands. Marshall, who had been DCM, became Chargé d'Affaires ad interim. I had a rather interesting view of things in those days because Marshall used me as his note taker for most of his key conversations and as his personal telegram writer. This was a practice of utilizing able junior officers and giving them special experience that I tried to use as I got into more senior positions, a practice which I think is often not used as much by some of our successors as it was in those days: the business of training more junior officers by involving them in key meetings and having them write the reporting cables. There is another factor that I have always appreciated very much, and that is that the process provides a witness to very sensitive dealings. There are times when it is awfully good to have had another person who can say, "Yes, that is what transpired." So I don't have a lot of sympathy with those ambassadors who feel like they have to do it all by themselves.

The immediate period which followed was one of very orderly transition along constitutional lines in Korea. The chief justice formed an interim government, as there was no vice president. He was the next officer in line of succession. He formed an interim cabinet whose task was simply to calm the country and conduct free and fair elections. When those fair elections were held, the party which had been in opposition to Rhee became the victors. This was the Democratic Party (*Minjudong*), a name which has gone through many iterations in Korea, so it is not quite the same Democratic Party of later. But some of the politicians have their lineage right back to those years, President Kim Young-Sam, for example, who was a junior congressman at the time. A politician whom I had gotten to know quite well as an opposition figure became the Minister of Finance in the new government, and I found myself as a fairly junior officer in the rather interesting position of being one of the few people in the embassy who knew some of the new government, since most of the senior people had been dealing primarily with the government in power. That new government was a prime ministerial government. As a reaction to authoritarian leadership, they thought they wanted to do a European style, Westminster system, which would be more accountable to the parliament and the people. However, the government was inexperienced, although it was not as weak as it was perceived within Korea. It was perceived by the public as very weak, and there were a number of reasons for this. We are not totally blameless. One of the principal reasons was

that after the students had created this tremendous revolution, there was a headiness to it which made it hard for many to quietly go back to classes. What in effect happened was that now students came out and demonstrated for everything. Over almost anything you could name somebody was demonstrating in front of city hall or in the main plazas of the city with banners, etc. These were not the huge demonstrations with the public behind them that had brought down a regime. Nevertheless, in the now open media environment these were publicized in the headlines of the papers every day with photos. I suppose to those of us who were foreign observers these seemed like the natural after ripples of an earthquake, and they had no punch to them. The objectives of the demonstrators were almost whatever they happened to think of when they got up that morning. But, with a newly free, but not very responsible press, and a government which wanted to bend over backward so as not to appear to suppress the students (thereby allowing almost totally free rein to these ripples), the impression given to many Koreans was one of anarchy-that the center was falling apart. I think out of that strong feeling really grew the seeds of the coup d'etat that occurred in May 1961 by an army general, Park Chung Hee. Korea was threatened by an enemy only 30 miles north of the capital, a heavily armed enemy who was ready to take over the country by armed force. The army, having been developed with our assistance, was one of the best run institutions in the society at that stage. The military officers certainly felt a commitment to the nation and many felt that if anarchy was going to rule then the country was vulnerable to attack by the totalitarian enemy to the north. I think that was a bad judgment, and that the new democratic government was slowly taking effective hold, but the general public could not see that.

Q: It was about that time, Bob, as I recall because I was still serving in the Secretariat, that President Eisenhower canceled a trip he had scheduled to Korea. Did that cause difficulty for the embassy there?

RICH: The circumstances were a little different, Tom. What he actually canceled was a trip to Tokyo. You may recall that there were major student anti-treaty demonstrations in Japan at that time, so he canceled his trip to Tokyo at the last minute and came to Korea. This was the period after the student revolution, and before the coup d'etat. Eisenhower was feted as a hero symbolic of the public's feeling that the United States had sided with democracy in the April crisis, and had at least not thrown its weight in with an autocratic solution to the crisis. Eisenhower was treated as the conquering hero. I have never seen a state visit by one of our Presidents with such overwhelming outpouring of the public. People of the city poured out into the streets. This was not a happy time for the Secret Service, because the arrival motorcade was totally stopped in its tracks for over an hour, with the crowds pressing against the President's car and entourage. However, it was a friendly and joyous crowd with no hostility. It was almost a triumphal visit to Korea and certainly buoyed the White House spirit after having to cancel Japan. For the Koreans there was also a bit of "one upmanship," because they had not yet restored relations with Japan at that time. There was still a great deal of bitterness from the forty years of Japanese colonialism and the World War II period.

Q: Bob, those were certainly exciting days in Korea.

RICH: Yes. I don't think I should leave this period without talking a bit about the coup period which brought in General Park Chung Hee and a period of authoritarian rule in Korea which, however, became the period of its great economic miracle.

This was a situation in which not only had the government been, perhaps, too lax in allowing the appearance of anarchy to rise, but it had also in the public's eyes been a patsy to the United States. I think, perhaps, we too quickly tried to take advantage of the fact that a friendly government had taken over. After all, it had been difficult at times to do business with Syngman Rhee. He had been a very stubborn man, perhaps rightly so from his perspective. In any case there was a big push by the United States to negotiate a new economic relationship with Korea which would have them do everything that we wanted on the economic side. A special negotiator was sent from Washington, and an agreement was reached after hard negotiations in which essentially almost everything the United States asked for we got. I think that was partly due to the naivete of the new government as well as the general goodwill that existed. Some of what we were trying to get probably was very important, but I think we overreached, because the impression was that the government had essentially given up its sovereignty to the United States.

That element of weakness added to the other, coupled with an important naive attitude by Prime Minister Chang Myon, who had been an academic. He felt that because the constitution said the military was subject to civilian rule, that that made it so. He really made no effort to cultivate the military hierarchy or to understand their point of view. Essentially, the military and the civilians didn't talk. The only place that they ever talked was at the residence of an American embassy officer. So there was certainly a gap in understanding, all of which contributed perhaps to the coup which followed.

When the coup took place there was one other factor of Korean misapprehension that I will always remember. Most Koreans believed the military could not conduct a coup in Korea without American approval, because there were American Military Assistance Advisory Groups, MAAGs as we called them, down to the battalion level all over the country, physically present with the Korean units. These were mostly small units, but they were scattered throughout the structure of the Korean military. Park Chung Hee did a very interesting thing. He first wrote plans which could bring his forces to the Kimpo Peninsula southwest of Seoul for exercises to practice repelling an invasion. Well, these plans were known by the Americans and were approved, of course, in military channels. They seemed innocent enough. This is how he prepositioned his coup forces within striking distance of Seoul. Then when the time came to move on Seoul, it was very simple. He simply took the carburetors out of all of the American's jeeps, took their two-way radios away from them, and moved out. By the time the first MAAG officer who had been attached to those units got himself to a place where he could communicate, it was several hours too late.

In that first coup day, we Americans knew very little about Park Chung Hee, later to become President Park. He was not one of the top generals. There was some evidence that

he might have toyed with communism in earlier manhood, and there was considerable concern as to just what this coup represented. There was also concern, very deeply, for the destruction of a democratic government. However inept, it certainly could learn and was learning, and it would have matured over time. In that first day, when the coup was not yet solidified, the major Korean forces were of course still north of Seoul facing North Korea on the Demilitarized Zone. Those commanders commanded the real power of the armed services. Their communications were poor with the coup group, but they had good communications with the UN Command, which was the U.S. headquarters command. The UN Command was the strategic and tactical command for the defense of South Korea.

So messages came in to U.S. General Magruder, the UN Commander, from the division and corps commanders to the north asking what they should do. Should they come down and throw this upstart out of the capital and defend the government? Well, obviously the United States was not in a position to give such orders to Korean generals, but we could transmit their question. So General Magruder and Marshall Green, as Chargé d'Affaires, and I, as observer and note taker, trundled up to see the President, Yun Po-Sun. Under this constitution the president was relatively a figurehead, the executive power being invested in the prime minister. But the prime minister was nowhere to be found, having disappeared during the night hours of the coup. Nobody knew where he was. He had apparently gone into hiding, and most of his cabinet was also unreachable. The constitution said that the President was the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, so we went to see the commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

We sat down in the Blue House and General Magruder conveyed the messages that had been received from his commanders. Marshall Green said, "Mr. President, this is not our decision to make. You are the commander-in-chief. However, we have technical means to transmit your messages to your army. What are your orders?" The president agonized over this and finally said, in essence "I cannot be responsible for the deep bloodshed in the streets of Seoul which will ensue if major forces of the Korean army are engaged in battle in the city, so tell them to stand where they are." That message, of course, was relayed, and after receiving that message essentially not to challenge the coup forces, those generals all made their accommodations with General Park within 12 hours and the coup was solidified.

In the days immediately after the coup, Park governed with the aid of a group of close supporters dubbed the Supreme Council for National Reconstruction, or SCNR. This was a group of colonels and lieutenant colonels, mostly unknown to us. In an effort to try to sound out this new force without acknowledging or dealing with Park Chung Hee directly, we sought to talk to some of the SCNR. I was able through a contact to invite three of the lieutenant colonels to my home, and was surprised when they came. Each side looked upon the other with considerable wariness and suspicion. They arrived with armed escorts who remained outside, but the colonels entered conspicuously wearing sidearms. I decided this was a time to take a stand, so I said we did not wear weapons in the home and asked them to hang their pistol belts in the hallway. They did!

Q: After those exciting years, Bob, I see that you were moved to another area which is also in the news. You went to Indonesia I believe in 1962, specifically to the consulate in Medan. What was your job there and what sort of supervision were you receiving from the embassy?

RICH: Tom, when I first went to Indonesia, to Medan in North Sumatra, this was coming to an area where I spoke the language, having studied it intensively at Cornell. Furthermore, I was sent there for the first six months on a language assignment with authority to hire a tutor. I thus immersed myself into the society and traveled about to become completely fluent in the Indonesian language.

This was a period when Sumatra was still feeling some of the vibrations from separatist movements in the post-war years. It had not been fully assimilated yet into the Indonesian nation as run from Jakarta. North Sumatra was also the only area where the new Indonesian language was spoken as a native language. Elsewhere, it had been a market language between cultures. It was adopted by Sukarno as a symbol of the independence movement in the 1920s and had become the national language and after independence taught in all of the schools, but it was not the language of any major dominant group in Indonesia. I have always thought this was a very smart move and one which the Indians bobbled, because India picked the language of one of the major groups, Hindi, as the national language, thus making all non-Hindi speakers at odds with the choice. The comparable choice in Indonesia would have been to pick Javanese or Sundanese as the national language. But the Indonesian language, which was a variant of Malay spoken along the Straits of Malacca in northern Sumatra, had become the language of the independence movement and the language of Indonesia.

North Sumatra was important to us economically as well as politically at the time. There were major American investments in the rubber industry. There were beginning to be significant oil investments further north in Sumatra. There were also major Indonesian military commands in the north, with the top headquarters in Medan.

I found the most significant thing in my slightly less than two years spent in Medan before moving down to Jakarta was really the observation of the process of a society closing in towards totalitarianism. The communists had the upper hand in Indonesia in those years. There was a determined move towards subverting all institutions of society to a communist perspective. This meant politicizing everything. It got to the point where you felt if you went to a flower arranging club you were going to hear the same political speeches and the same jargon that you would hear from the Communist Party's own rallies. It was frightening, because you saw increasingly a society in which people were afraid to speak out, in which the individual became atomized and was no longer able to talk with any frankness to anyone but oldest and dearest friends known since childhood. In every context which was the least bit public, the same jargon was mouthed, the same political rhetoric was espoused. It was as if everybody had to run the same direction as fast as he could because he would be trampled if he didn't

These were the years when one by one the somewhat autonomous institutions of society were subverted. By the time I moved down to Jakarta to be a political officer in the embassy, we were beginning to see that only the army had been able to withstand the leftist politicization juggernaut. All the secular institutions had been neutralized or subverted. It didn't matter whether you were a teacher or businessman, everybody had to say the same thing. This all intensified dramatically then when Sukarno also launched his "*konfrontasi"* (confrontation) against Malaysia, effectively declaring war.

These were years full of rhetoric, full of high sounding phraseology and a great deal of speech making with a great deal of anti-foreign rhetoric. The Dutch had already been thrown out by the time I got to Indonesia. The British were then thrown out in conjunction with Sukarno's "confrontation" against the formation of Malaysia to the north.

I should point out that when I was in Medan at this time I was not the consul in charge, I was the number two in the consulate. I did economic reporting, cultivated contacts with the military, and made field trips throughout much of Sumatra. I made the first official trip in a long time to the northernmost province, Atjeh (previously Acheh, now spelled Aceh), which had once tried in the nineteenth century to become an American protectorate, and actually found myself on the west coast of Sumatra when I heard on a radio that the British Embassy in Jakarta had been burned and the British Consulate in Medan attacked. I was "acting Principal Officer" of the Consulate at the time. I knew I had to get back swiftly to Medan, but the only way to do that was straight across swamp and mountains on a road built by the Japanese during World War II and scarcely maintained thereafter. I was alone, the Branch PAO who was with me having broken off the trip in Atjeh before I continued down the west coast. I had a 4-wheel drive jeep with a winch, and to retrace my steps would have taken a week, so across the islands I went. In the swamp I had to winch the jeep out of mud. I bartered my last canned goods for villagers to pick up the jeep and put it on a ferry across a river, and had to use the winch to haul downed trees off the track over the mountains, but I got back in less than two days. The only other such wild episode was at another time in the Batak highlands when I was suddenly accosted by an ancient gentleman with a rifle that looked as old as he was poked into my belly. He thought I was Dutch and was about to shoot me. Furthermore, he did not speak any Indonesian, only the local Batak dialect. Fortunately one of the younger men with him understood enough Indonesian to persuade this fiery elder that I was not Dutch and therefore could be spared. After less than two years in Medan, however, I was shifted to Jakarta to the political section of the embassy.

The emasculation and neutralization of the institutions of society had gone quite far by this stage. The air force and navy had been subverted. All the secular institutions had either been neutralized or subverted in the sense that they were led by communist sympathizers or were unable to express separate opinions. The army under General Nasution, however, had maintained its independence and had done this despite increasing efforts to bring it to heel politically. This effort intensified greatly with the Sukarno-

initiated confrontation against Malaysia and the British, and the state of war that then existed. There were repeated demands for the army to train "volunteers" to crush Malaysia, and, of course, the volunteers to be trained were to be supplied by the Communist Party which had the mass organizations to mobilize this kind of participation. The army leadership saw through this and realized what the game was. When they could finally resist the pressures no longer in the war atmosphere, they agreed to train units but marched them around with wooden rifles and wouldn't give them weapons.

Frustrated in that ploy, the next ploy of the Party and Sukarno was to urge each unit to take on "political advisors." These were essentially to be political commissars, again supplied by the Communist Party (PKI). The army also resisted this. Army chief of staff General Nasution had had some training in the United States and was seen as pro-West in the sense that one often used that phrase in those days. Nevertheless, the effort to bring the army to heel did not end. This must have been when the plot was born to decapitate the army, creating a shock effect to destroy the top army leadership and then assume, probably correctly, that the rest of the army would fall in line. This afterwards became known as the GESTAPU, which is an acronym for Korean words meaning the September 23 Movement. In Indonesian parlance GESTAPU had a conscious similarity to the Nazi Gestapo idea. In any case, in the middle of the night cadres assassinated five top generals of the army and surreptitiously buried the bodies on an air base outside of Jakarta. In this crisis, two key people got away. General Nasution escaped by jumping out of a window, although his young daughter and an aide were killed. He went into hiding. The second key survivor was General Suharto, who has been the leader of Indonesia almost ever since. It is uncertain today whether he was a target or not. He wasn't considered one of the top three or four generals. In any case he was spared, to the later unhappiness of the plotters.

In the two or three chaotic days that followed, the bodies were not immediately discovered. It was not clear what had happened. Sukarno's first move was to appoint a new chief of staff of the army who was a known communist. All of the decrees of the president and all of the steps that were taken at that level clearly appeared to be consistent with my ex post facto interpretation that this was a clearly defined effort to decapitate the army and bring it to heel. However, certainly sooner than they would have expected, the bodies were discovered on a remote part of the big air base near Jakarta. This produced a major shock across Indonesian society when it was realized what had really happened in the middle of the night. All that was first known was that there had been some shooting around various homes and people had been taken off in cars and were missing. The shock effect created a remarkable phenomenon. Here were people who for several years had not spoken out to hardly anyone about how they felt, but in this moment of national shock, people spoke out. They realized in those first hours and days after they spoke out that they were not alone. Until this moment everybody had been so alone politically. Whether you were a teacher, a lawyer, a bureaucrat, a military officer, or a businessman, you were essentially alone and therefore were powerless because there were no longer institutions or organizations through which your concerns or dismays could be felt, and you couldn't express counter views publicly without injuring your livelihood or your family. But in

speaking out there was a sudden realization that the people who counted in society-probably the great majority-were in great dismay at the rapid politicization of society to the far left. It was in that moment that I think the Communist Party's end was written, although it played out over a period of several weeks in a great deal of violence. At the village level, throughout Java in particular, the villagers felt extremely pressed by the communist ideology because the Communists had pressed on so much of their sense of identity in their culture that there was a violent backlash from which we get the English word, amok. Javanese society is very controlled, very highly stylized in its interpersonal relationships. There is a high value on cordiality and interpersonal relationships, even among enemies. And, yet, when the pressure gets so great that the kettle does pop, it is very violent.

Q: Bob, while all this was going on in Indonesia, it was obviously being watched with great anxiety in Washington. What was the U.S. policy at this time? We had supported Sukarno, and here was a revolt apparently against him, although I suppose there were some anti-Chinese and anti-American factors in there too. Could you tell us a little about the U.S. policy at that time?

RICH: Thank you Tom. It is well you asked that because we perhaps should step back a moment from what was a political process and look at what was happening with the United States. The U.S. Ambassador in Indonesia for many years had been Howard Jones. By the time he left he had been ambassador for seven years, which is quite a while. Over this period he had built a very close and valued relationship with Sukarno personally which he felt was very important. His access to Sukarno made it possible always to get to him with American concerns. However, as the society raced toward the left, and anti-Western rhetoric was whipped up by the crush Malaysia and anti-British campaign, there began to be a disconnect in Washington between what Washington was seeing happening and what it felt was being reported from its ambassador in Jakarta; not so much as to what was reported in terms of fact, but what was reported as to what the government's policies were. Howard Jones would go talk to Sukarno on any issue of importance, which was very appropriate, but he would report the conversations as Sukarno would probably have wanted them reported. He would report what Sukarno said almost as if it were gospel and would rarely, if ever, imply that there was any difference between what the president was telling us and the objective reality on the ground. He would often imply that we should trust the president in each instance. The significant divergence, however, between what Sukarno was telling us and the reality as reported in other embassy reporting and by intelligence agencies, media, missionaries and others, led to a lack of confidence in Washington that our message was being adequately, forcefully placed to Sukarno.

This was a period also known within the Embassy as the "second secretaries revolt." The bulk of political and economic reporting in those days was done by the first and second secretaries, the "journeymen" of the professional service. Unfortunately, in later years rapid early advancement and reduction of positions overseas have hollowed out this vital segment of our embassy staffs. I moved to Jakarta from Medan to find the pot boiling as

professional staffs chafed under what were viewed as Ambassador Jones' unrealistic acceptance of Sukarno's assertions despite all evidence to the contrary. Somehow I again ended up writing many of Jones' "first-person" cables, although he did not take me along on as many of his meetings as had Marshall Green, but debriefed me upon return and said write it up. I tried to bring some cautionary language into those reports and believe I helped reduce somewhat the tension between the Political Section and the "front office," but I could go only so far in expressing caveats in messages which Jones would send in the first person. The problem persisted. If I may diverge a bit, I would note that Howard Jones was a devout Christian Scientist. One of the tenets of that church is that acting as if something is true will help it become so. The Ambassador seemed to feel that if he kept emphasizing the positive that things would change for the better. Unfortunately, they did not.

So the White House sent out Bobby Kennedy, and Ellsworth Bunker was sent on a separate mission essentially to evaluate the embassy operations. Out of this came the change of ambassadors, and Marshall Green came to Indonesia as ambassador. Marshall was not on the scene very long when the Gestapu movement, or this September 23th Movement, occurred.

After Howard Jones' retirement he set out to write a book which in his first drafts was a very self-serving effort to justify his own approaches. I had been able to work very positively with Howard Jones, although I was certainly aware of the way he seemed to stretch credibility regarding Sukarno. When I was back in Washington on the Indonesian Desk and he showed me some of his early drafts I frankly told him, "This is not going to fly. You are just not going to look credible. The history is out there." So he rethought it. I am sure he talked to many others besides me, but I will say the book he eventually wrote, which is *Indonesia, The Impossible Dream*, is a very important and creditable book and quite a different book from the one he started to write.

Back to Indonesia. Even when I was in Medan there was this anti-foreign and leftist haranguing which was having an overflow against American interests, although we were never the direct target of Sukarno and his regime. To some extent he held the communists a little bit in check against us and tried to direct them more towards the British and others. But we did have Americans on the plantations who were arrested over trivia and put in jail for weeks at a time, and we couldn't get them out-problems of this sort. In Jakarta we had increasingly violent demonstrations in front of the embassy, although they never did any serious damage to American property.

When the break came with the discovery of the assassination of the generals and the visceral outpouring of Indonesian society that turned the whole thing around, the army and the people turned on the communists. At the village level there was much killing. Most of it by the villagers, and on Java local wrath was taken out against the Chinese as well. But most of the killing took place where law and order had broken down entirely. There was no significant death toll in Jakarta, where the army managed to maintain control and discipline.

One thing that many, many Indonesians, particularly army officers, said to me in that period was that one thing that made it possible for them to turn on their own communists on the eve of the PKI taking power was their sense that they were protected from Chinese intervention by American involvement in Vietnam. This is an aspect of our involvement in Vietnam that is little known. At that time American military power was real throughout the sea lanes between China and Indonesia because of our major military involvement in Vietnam by 1965. The Communist Chinese regime had been very, very close to the Indonesian Communist Party. The Indonesian Communist Party was a self-grown party that had a history of its own. It was not a puppet of anyone. It had, nonetheless, developed strong relationships with the Chinese, and Mao Zedong and Zhou En-lai had made it clear that they would protect them. While I don't think that the prospect of Chinese military intervention at a distance was a realistic one in 1965, in the minds of Indonesians it was a real threat, and in their psychology the thing that made it safe for them to turn on their domestic enemies was the presence of American military power between them and Beijing.

Initially, even in this turmoil, there was no intention by the army to unseat Sukarno. Sukarno was a truly popular figure. He had been the father of his country. He had been a great nation builder in a society of many cultures and dialects and languages. But at this late period for some reason he had latched on to an alliance with the communists as a way to secure his place in history, mistakenly so. Suharto emerged as the general who rallied the army after its decapitation and essentially rejected the newly appointed communist puppet chief of staff whom Sukarno had named and pushed him aside and led the military to restore order. Sukarno hung on for some time as the nominal leader, but he became increasingly marginalized and increasingly trivialized as his pronouncements continued to try to restore the *status quo ante* in the face of a situation which was not going to turn back the clock. As he continued to make pronouncements in that vein, he very rapidly began to lose public credibility as well as credibility with the elite. As he lost credibility, he eventually reached the point where he was virtually put under house arrest. This was a gradual process, not a sudden one, and not necessarily one that had been intended.

I believe it was about this time that I went back to Medan as the principal officer. The consul that was there was a Vietnamese speaker and had been grabbed for a special project in Vietnam, and Marshall Green asked me if I would go back up and take charge of the post as principal officer. That period in Medan was significant essentially for dealing with the military in the north, which was a very important military command, and observing the rebuilding of the nation after the end of the communist movement.

I recall one interesting vignette of the times. Only a year or two earlier, the Soviet Union had established a Consul General in Medan, principally I am convinced in order to keep watch on and outrank the Chinese Consulate there. After the destruction of the communists and marginalization of Sukarno, authorities in North Sumatra wanted to have a ceremony and place a monument on one of the plantations in memory of one of the early martyrs, an army lieutenant, who had been killed by a Communist union before the

September 23, 1965 events. The Soviet Consul General, as dean of the corps, found himself with the task of making a speech on this occasion on behalf of the Consular Corps. The Consul General was a retired World War II army general, with several young KGB types on his staff. The Consul General came over to discuss his draft speech, successive versions of which he consulted on with me and the British Consul, in order to try to set a proper tone. It must have been a supremely embarrassing day for him as the senior communist representative to stand up and eulogize the fallen victim of Indonesian communism. All I can say is that he did it like a man!

From there I went back to Washington to be Indonesian Desk officer, continuing what became seven continuous years of involvement with Indonesian problems. Marshall Green was still ambassador in Indonesia, so I had a very good working relationship with a strong ambassador there and a newly non-communist government trying to rebuild the society and the economy. It was a period for me primarily devoted to dealing with economic and military aid issues.

Q: I believe the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was still alive in the late sixties, early seventies, Bob. Did SEATO have any repercussions in Indonesia, hostile or friendly ones? Was it this time or later that Indonesia joined in the ASEAN organization?

RICH: Tom, my sense of time is often inaccurate. I can tell you what happened but often not when. But my memory of it is that SEATO was not a factor in this. Sukarno was not a supporter of SEATO, not in favor of it, but it was not a major issue, nor did SEATO act in any way. The ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) effort was very much inspired by Indonesia, certainly through Adam Malik, who was Foreign Minister after the end of the communist rise, and Sukarno's Foreign Minister when Sukarno was still nominally the president. But this, of course, occurred after the confrontation against Malaysia had ended and ties had been established between Indonesia and the new state of Malaysia.

Q: You worked on the Indonesian Desk for some time after you returned from Jakarta. Then I notice you went to the Operations Center as deputy director. That must have been like going back for you because the Operations Center was the direct successor of the Executive Secretariat. Can you tell us a bit about your experiences there and how that prepared you for what was coming?

RICH: Tom, obviously the Operations Center represented a round-the-clock effort such as we had not tried to maintain in the Dulles days. We had teams of people effectively in communication with the world on a 24-hour basis and staff preparations going on at all hours for the principals of the Department as well as some capabilities to assist and run crisis task forces, which became an increasingly significant part of the Operations Center's efforts.

I don't remember a lot of things that stand out in that time except the need to recognize what was important or urgent, and the opportunity to interact with the White House, the

Pentagon and the principals of the Department in crisis atmospheres and get a better sense of what Washington principals need in these circumstances and how they react to information that is obtained. That, I think, was much more significant for me than any specific event that happened to me during this period.

As Deputy Director of the Operations Center, in addition to standing shifts as a Senior Watch Officer I had some role in the planning for the remodeled Operations Center which followed. I didn't actually get to work in that newer, more hi-tech environment, but we worked out the requirements for what was needed.

Q: Following that assignment to the Operations Center, you became staff director of the Board of Examiners. This can be an important position, but it was, of course, out of the line of what you had been doing before. Can you tell me how that affected you and what your opinion is of the way we are handling our entrance exam these days? I ask because my four years as head of the junior officer program was at about that time and I was deeply concerned with the fate of those officers we were receiving from the Board of Examiners.

RICH: It was very different from anything I had done before, yet I found it absolutely fascinating work. I was not doing many examinations myself, but the period I was there was one in which we were trying to reassess how we selected Foreign Service officers. Could we do it better? Specifically we focused in on the written examination process which was coming under attack as to whether it was fair to women and minorities. It was also a question of could we better staff the Foreign Service to meet the needs of the modern era. We were doing well for the generalists, the political officers; we were not doing so well with the people doing consular work or administrative or economic work. We certainly were not attracting enough people with real economic talent to hold our own in the economic negotiations and analysis that we needed to do around the world and to hold our own as an institution in Washington vis-a-vis the professional staffs of the Treasury and others.

So I hired a consultant and had a lot of fun writing up new requests for proposals for the Foreign Service written exam. For years it had been given by the Educational Testing Service at Princeton University. We felt that over the years they had gotten rather blasé on this contract and were not putting their best efforts into it any more. They were sort of repeating the kinds of things they had done in the past, and we thought it needed a totally new look. We didn't discount the Educational Testing Service, but we felt we had better let them compete with everybody else and we put up new and quite stringent criteria for which they would have to compete.

What we were really looking for then was how could we recruit and measure people for specific skills, particularly economic and administrative skills. And how could we find people who would be psychologically attuned to doing consular work, for example. The contract was then recompeted with these new criteria, and I among others was surprised almost that Educational Testing Service won again. We had shocked them out of their

complacency, and they really went to work and performed, so they deserved the award. I do believe that the process enabled us to recruit and hire better economists and people with modern administrative management skills as well as people who were particularly attuned to the people-to-people aspects of consular work. To some degree, however, I feel these accomplishments were eroded in future years with the emasculation of the cone system and further claims that women were not doing well on the professional aspects of the examination. A later generation at the Board of Examiners was able, however, to take up where we left off and also improve the oral examination part of the process.

Q: I certainly agree that that was interesting work for a person who is interested in the Foreign Service as an institution and its future. You then spent a year at the National War College, which I know from experience is a rewarding year for all of us. Following that I notice you were sent to Trinidad in a totally different area where you were promoted to DCM. Could you tell us what some of the problems you had to wrestle with there were?

RICH: In Trinidad we were in a society in the Caribbean, English speaking, which had many close ties of travel, trade, shopping, immigration, and language to the United States, although its institutions and cultural orientation was still much more British. We had had a military naval base in Trinidad from World War II right up until almost a year or two before I went to Trinidad. This was one of the bases for destroyer swaps with the British before we actually entered the war against the Nazis. The long American military presence had left an overlay of anti-militarism in Trinidad which we had to deal with. This was also a period in which Trinidad was developing new oil resources. Major American companies were making offshore discoveries, so there was an economic boom fueled by petroleum. These economic issues and oil issues, and the underlying military issues were largely what I dealt with.

This was the only period of my career when I worked for non-career ambassadors. I had two political appointee ambassadors that I worked with in Trinidad, and it was a very different experience for me than working for the experienced career officers that marked the rest of my career. The first one was a real gentleman who, however, had come to this appointment from being a political contributor and really had no particular interest in our business. It soon became apparent that he was not interested in nor did he enjoy the bread and butter work that we do from day to day in the diplomatic service. I thought that he would be able to make the speeches at the Rotary, etc. but he was a very shy man and didn't like to do that either. So, that was a new experience. He soon decided that he had better go back and look after his investments, and there followed a significant hiatus when I was Chargé d'Affaires ad interim.

The most interesting thing about the Trinidad experience was dealing with Eric Williams, who was sort of the grand old man of the English speaking Caribbean and a former historian at Howard University. He was constantly writing books. He was a man who was convinced, however, that racism was going to extend itself and be the major problem of

the future. Therefore he saw most problems in US-Trinidad relations in terms of race. I, nevertheless, had good and productive dialogues with Eric Williams.

Eventually, we had another political appointee arrive as ambassador. This gave me a very strong sense of what a difference there is between some of our outstanding political appointee ambassadors who are chosen for their talent and ability and the mistake that administrations of both parties sometimes make of choosing people purely on the basis of campaign contributions, because the new ambassador was chosen exclusively for his campaign contributions. Furthermore, his wealth was accidental, if I can say that oil discovered on your piece of desert is accidental, not because he was a good manager or entrepreneur. Unfortunately, this man was very racist himself, and that created a very great difficulty. He had not wanted to go to a black society, but that is where he was named. It became very difficult for us, because after his introductory meeting with Eric Williams, Eric Williams would never speak to him again.

So those problems of trying to manage a situation in which my superior officer was essentially *persona non grata* with the host government was very difficult and one I hope I handled well.

Q: Was it not at this period, Bob, that Trinidad became an independent republic? How did that affect our relations, if any?

RICH: Trinidad was independent already, but it was a parliamentary system with the Queen as the head of state. Her representative was a governor general who was a prominent Trinidadian, himself, and Eric Williams was prime minister. So Trinidad was indeed independent. This was the period shortly after the failure of the formation of the West Indies Federation. There had been a hope that the smaller states of the English speaking federation as they gained independence could be welded into a single federation and the capital was to have been in Trinidad. I lived in something called Federation Park which was built as the housing area for the Federation government. But the rivalries of the individual leaders, and particularly the rivalry between Michael Manley in Jamaica and Eric Williams in Trinidad, caused the Federation to be stillborn and the states each went their own way independently. Later Trinidad did change its form of government to a republican form of government and it now has a president, rather than a governor general as head of state. But that was not a significant change and occurred after I departed. They were fully independent already.

Q: After your years as DCM and Chargé in Trinidad you returned to the Department to the Korean Desk. This was during the period of President Carter, and I recall that one of the first promises he made was the withdrawal of our troops in Korea. Can you tell us a little bit how this hit you on the Desk and how it finally worked out?

RICH: This was a fascinating period in terms of policy development in Washington if you look at the issue of Korean troop withdrawal during the Carter administration. It is one

that I have actually written a rather long research paper on when I was at the Senior Seminar after I left the Desk.

When I was still in Trinidad Secretary of State Cy Vance and Under Secretary Phil Habib came down for an OAS meeting, and Phil Habib stayed behind a day. I had worked for Phil in Korea many years before when he was political counselor there. After a private dinner as he requested, Phil said, "I want you back in Washington next week." I was Chargé d'Affaires ad interim at the time. He said, "I want you to take over Korean affairs, as we have a little problem." Well, the problem he had particularly in mind was not troop withdrawal, but something that became known as Koreagate, which at that early stage Phil Habib was handling sort of out of his pocket on the seventh floor. It was getting too big for that, and for reasons I have never known or wished to inquire, he did not feel the leadership in the Korean office at that time was such that he wanted to turn sensitive problems over to them.

I explained that I had a new ambassador on the way, a fine career officer was coming and he wasn't there yet, and at a small post anyone below DCM was pretty junior. Did he want me to turnover the post to a junior officer or could I wait a couple of weeks? Well, he agreed that I could wait a couple of weeks, but he asked me to leave the day after the ambassador arrived. I said, "Well, as long as you explain that to the ambassador, fine." I didn't want to say "Hello, I am leaving tomorrow." That is how I got back into Korean affairs in July 1977, some five months into the Carter administration, and less than 24 hours after my return to Washington.

During the campaign President Carter had advocated withdrawing U.S. forces from Korea, later modified to U.S. ground combat forces. I think everyone in the State Department working on the problem assumed that this would be a negotiated outcome with some *quid pro quo* demanded of North Korea, or at least that we would not just do this unilaterally. It soon became apparent after the President took office, however, that this was to be simply a unilateral American withdrawal. We weren't obtaining a *quid pro quo* or anything else to reduce the danger of destabilizing aggression. So there were efforts in the Spring of 1997 to try at least to work out a mechanism that would mitigate the problem, but the results were minimal.

I thus came on the scene in a very difficult period in US-Korean relations. The Koreans, having seen us already pull out one division unilaterally earlier, and seen the collapse and our withdrawal from Vietnam, had come to the conclusion that their basic national existence was at stake in trying to maintain some credible U.S. forces presence in South Korea as a deterrent to the North. In the process of trying to maintain that deterrent, however, they used methods that were not acceptable in an American political society, and thus "Koreagate." I don't fault their motives, but I certainly fault their methods.

The media very quickly came to describe this in terms that led the general public to believe that perhaps half of the Congress had been suborned by foreign, wily ways. The

reality, of course, was far less than that, but certainly in the public mind it appeared that it could be a major scandal of our government.

I was thus essentially tasked with two critical problems in this period while I was Director of Korean Affairs. I originally had a two year tenure in that position and then was asked to stay on, so actually held the position for 4 ½ years, more than two years longer than any other Director before or since. Essentially at the request of the assistant secretary, Dick Holbrooke, and with the acquiescence of Under Secretary Phil Habib until his heart attack, and then later working with Secretary Vance, I essentially dealt directly with all the rest of the government on behalf of Korean issues. This was how the "country director" system was originally supposed to work, but more often the directors are too layered in the bureaucracy. I did not even report through a Deputy Assistant Secretary after Bill Gleysteen moved from that responsibility to become Ambassador to Korea.

Q: Bob, those were certainly critical days in our relationship with the Koreans. Besides discussing Koreagate and the troop withdrawal question, I think it might be useful if you added a word about the Korean reaction to the Carter administration's emphasis on human rights.

RICH: The Korean reaction was primarily a concern that the American attacks on handling of human rights were leading to American disengagement from the defense of the peninsula, which for them they felt was a life and death matter as they were still threatened by a dangerous, antagonistic, totalitarian regime in the north. The United States had been effective from time to time in mitigating the authoritarian regime's excesses in South Korea. I say mitigating, not eliminating. The difficulty in the Carter administration was largely compounded by the sense emanating from the White House that this was a regime that we didn't want to be dirtying our hands by associating with. The new Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, Patt Derian, had earned her spurs in the American civil rights campaign in the South and brought to foreign affairs the same highly public, confrontational spirit of condemnation, pushing a policy of public criticism of our friends. Given the stakes involved with security in Northeast Asia in particular, this made it very difficult at times to do business on a respectful basis. I felt that one of the real pluses of diplomacy in this area on both sides-and I count here a number of key people on the Korean side as well as people on the American side (the American Ambassadors and others in Washington)-I felt that one of the main successes that those of us had who were tasked with trying to maintain the vital interests of our two nations in the relationship was to somehow manage these problems amidst such a volatile and high toned public environment of antagonism in charge and counter charge.

I would like to say a little bit about how Koreagate and the troop withdrawal issues interacted at this time, because certainly the efforts to influence the American Congress, misguided and improper as they were by Korea, came out of a deep motivation in Seoul that maintaining the American support was absolutely vital to their national existence. At the same time, the American political backlash to that effort came close to destroying the very support that was important to both nations. That atmosphere made it very difficult for the Congress to act in a reasonable manner on some of the issues that had to be placed

before the Congress under our law to implement the troop withdrawal program in a relatively safe manner.

We moved to a major reassessment of the troop withdrawal scenario in the last two years of the Carter administration. This reassessment was sparked by an intelligence re-evaluation of North Korea and a build-up in North Korean military assets that led us to be convinced that there was a far more dangerous situation on the peninsula than had been perceived while American attention was diverted by the Vietnam War. We instituted significant new policy studies in which the State Department was given the lead under my direction, but with very important roles by the Defense Department and the intelligence agencies. This high-level policy review, conducted without any public leaks so that President Carter would not feel backed into a corner, led eventually to a trip to Korea by the President and to virtual abandonment of the troop withdrawal program. Although it was played low key by the White House, it was a significant change in policy.

That decision was not behind us very long when President Park of Korea was assassinated and transition to a democratic government was again aborted by an internal power coup in the military led by General Chun Doo-Hwan. This, in turn, led to a major incident in the southern part of Korea in the city of Kwangju. Ever since it has been known as the "Kwangju incident." That was important for the United States in several ways. It was Korean forces brutally putting down a popular protest, but many Koreans perceived the United States as being culpable or involved because of the command relationships that existed in Korea on the military side. There was very little public understanding in Korea of the limits to which the U.S. command structure extended. In fact, the UN command, which is headed by a U.S. four-star general, does have tactical command over the Korean armed forces in time of war when it has responsibility for deployment of forces against external attack. But not all Korean armed forces are seconded to the UN command in time of peace, and the forces that were used by General Chun in Kwangju were not forces under the UN command, nor did he have any obligation to ask our permission in any way.

Q: On that point, Bob, was there ever any tension between the UN commander (the American four-star general) and our ambassador on issues such as this?

RICH: I think far less then there might have been. There had been a period of significant tension between our ambassador and our commander in the early to mid seventies. At the time that I was dealing with our ambassador and commander in Korea on these policy level issues, I would say there was not. This includes the two successive UN Commanders during those years, General Jack Vessey and General John Wickham, both of whom went on to be Army Chiefs of Staff (and Vessey later to be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs). This period included at the embassy part of the ambassadorship of Dick Sneider and all of the ambassadorship of Bill Gleysteen. That period was one of great harmony between the two senior American officials on the ground. I believe it is the only place in the world where we have a U.S. Ambassador and an independent U.S. Forces Commander whose jurisdiction is over exactly the same piece of territory. We have other

places where we have independent forces commanders, but they don't usually have quite the same piece of real estate that they are responsible for. So there is obviously a need for a great deal of diplomacy and cooperation between these two individuals, and I saw it work very, very well in Korea during the Carter administration. There is a period slightly before the time I was directly involved when it worked very, very poorly, but at the time of crisis with the Chun coup and the Kwangju incident, the coordination and mutual support was absolutely outstanding between the commander and the ambassador. My own experience of those years informed the later positive dealings by Mike Armacost and myself with the U.S. Air Force Commander (Clark Air Base) and Navy Commander (Subic Bay Naval Base) in the Philippines.

The Kwangju incident has remained a problem in some respects in US-Korea relations because of the Korean public perception of U.S. complicity. The U.S. role was one to try to mitigate the actions of the Korean government and the Korean military, while focusing our greatest concern on deterring any North Korean adventurism during a time of South Korean turmoil. There was a point at which order had to be restored in Kwangju after the bloodbath. We then made it very clear to the Korean military that they must not break the rules of the UN command. This is something that our commanders and ambassadors have always insisted upon, because in time of war you have to know what you can count on. In this case a more chastened General Chun decided that he needed to use a more experienced group to go down and restore order after the debacle that had been created by troops that were untrained for riot duty. He turned to a unit which had been so trained and which was led by a commander native to the Kwangju area. This unit was seconded to the UN command at the time, and a request was made for the release of the unit with promises made that it would carry out its responsibilities in a peaceful manner. The United States acceded to that request. Technically, the UN commander couldn't have done otherwise unless he needed the forces to oppose an enemy, but we recognized that even that acquiescence would be seen as a political gesture. Nevertheless, order was restored virtually bloodlessly, and those were not the troops that created the problem.

In Washington, we were following these events with great concern because instability had been created, and the U.S. role, other than to try to mitigate internal Korean behavior and try to restore some semblance of constitutionality and continuity as soon as possible, was external. One danger always in Korea was that North Korea would take advantage of any instability in the South to launch aggression with the tremendously powerful military machine they had sacrificed so greatly to build with over 20 percent of their GNP devoted to the military. Some analysts have even said it was 40 percent. The reality may be 25 percent or so through the 1970s; it is hard to estimate. So the United States did take steps to warn North Korea not to intervene, stationed a carrier in the area, and sought in other ways to be sure that the crisis was not expanded by outside intervention.

Q: I am curious about one thing, Bob. During this period, or subsequently, were we embarrassed in our actions by the activities of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, who received a great deal of publicity in this country and has his own public relations center?

RICH: Yes, but not to a significant level. It was one of those things that I felt I didn't want to touch with a ten foot pole. It was largely something going on on the sidelines, in the background. It did not have any major impact on actions by either government. It was one of those things that you wished would just go away.

Tom, perhaps I might say a few words about the Koreagate scandal, and of the cooperation between the State Department and the Justice Department. I found this unique in my career but very intense at the time. We were working directly with then Deputy Attorney General Civiletti, with Speaker Tip O'Neill at the House of Representatives, and with the two ethics committees of the House and Senate. This was a process in which each day we were trying to get further cooperation from the Korean government on evidence that was needed to help determine clearly what degree of culpability existed in our politicians, or Americans of any stripe, improperly having been bought or influenced on behalf of foreign interests. This was very sensitive because it engaged the senior political levels of both governments. It also involved problems of distrust which helped poison the troop withdrawal issue as well, because each of those issues made the other more difficult. And yet, I would say that the cooperation within our administration between Justice and State at that time was excellent. I did not ever feel that there were institutional suspicions or bureaucratic backbiting or anything of the sort. It was a common effort to deal with the problem.

I took on additional staff simply to do detailed archival research to back up the various investigations underway, but personally coordinated with the State Department's Assistant Legal Advisor for East Asia, Elizabeth Verville, and Deputy Attorney General Civiletti's right-hand man, Paul Michel (now a Federal Appeals Court Judge), and drafted almost daily instructions to our Ambassador in Seoul. Coordination with Seoul on this and the troop withdrawal issue was also enhanced by almost daily secure telephone conversations I held with Ambassador Gleysteen. These conversations enabled us both to assess the political and bureaucratic nuances at the other end better, principally so that the Ambassador could phrase his recommendations in a manner most likely to receive a positive hearing in Washington, and at times so that I could add postscripts to Washington instructions that no one wanted to put directly into writing.

Washington coordination following the assassination and Chun Doo-hwan coup was also enhanced by the establishment of a special telegraphic channel by Secretary Vance to be used as we engaged in the delicate process of trying to move Korea back toward democratic government. This channel was managed out of my office with copies going from me directly to the other key players in the White House, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the CIA without getting the messages into their bureaucratic systems. In the State Department, of course, the Secretary and Assistant Secretary Holbrooke received all these messages. This process built a strong relationship between key players in the cooperating agencies at a sensitive time, but later led to some miffed reactions by some of those who had not been in the know but thought they should have been.

Q: Following your re-emerging in the Korean situation, you had a year at the Senior Seminar in 1981-82. I presume like most of those who have gone there you found that a very worthwhile experience. After the Senior Seminar you were assigned to another hot spot, our embassy in Manila where you became DCM. There was tension already in that country and perhaps you could tell us a little about the situation as you found it arriving there after President Marcos had been in office a number of years.

RICH: I will try to do that Tom. I might say a few words first about how I got there. I was asked by Mike Armacost to join him as his deputy in Indonesia. Mike was in preparation to go to Indonesia as ambassador, and he knew of my long experience there and language capability. We had both come to respect and work well with each other during the days of the Korea problems. So Mike and I began preparing to go to Indonesia. However, the Korean issues caused us to go to the Philippines for an interesting reason. Morton Abramowitz was tapped to go to the Philippines as ambassador, but mistakenly there were those in the Pentagon who blamed Mort partly for Carter's troop withdrawal policy. Mort had been in ISA at a critical period, and I think if these critics had really known Mort they would have known that he was an honest broker in that situation, had clearly not thought the President's policy was wise, but had done his best to carry it out in an honorable manner. But those somewhat further removed from the reality had nevertheless identified him as part of the problem, and because of our major military interests still at that time in the Philippines-we had the tremendous Naval asset in Subic Bay and a major air base at Clark-the Defense Department had something of a veto over who was going to be our ambassador in the Philippines, at least if it was a career officer. On very short notice, Mike was thus switched from preparations to go to Indonesia to going to the Philippines. At his request I switched with him, as his Deputy. So we ended up in Manila, not in Jakarta.

When I arrived in Manila there was a certain surreal quality to the environment. Politics and economics really weren't discussed by Filipinos. Every night we were out at Philippine social events. In the first six months I was home only one evening, and many of those evenings it was two, three or four events to go to. Of course, after six months I learned when I could say no, but it was still heavy. It was terribly discouraging, because these events were filled with ladies dripping with jewels, talking of nothing but fashions, jewelry, money and shopping trips to the United States. One of our friends was a "blue lady." The "blue ladies" were an institution of which I don't think there has been anything comparable since perhaps Elizabethan days. I think of them as ladies in waiting to the court, as in Shakespeare's time. They were the ladies on whom Imelda Marcos called at the slightest whim. They got their term from an earlier campaign when the campaign color had been blue, and they were evermore known as blue ladies. These ladies were the matrons of wealthy families who were beneficiaries of Marcos favoritism. Some of them we probably would call cronies. Because their husbands' wealth, prestige and power were essentially dependent upon the Marcoses, they could not in the slightest way turn aside the whims of the "first lady," or "FL" as Imelda was known in those circles. It was a bizarre situation. Imelda Marcos was a woman who slept very little. Two or three hours a night is all she ever seemed to sleep. If she were bored, she would call one of her blue

ladies to come play cards or ping pong with her, etc. It was literally that type of institution. I have seen a prominent Filipino hostess giving a dinner at which I was a guest receive a phone call from the palace and then make her regrets to her guests and leave the dinner table to go off to the palace probably for no more important reason than to amuse the first lady. I describe that because it gives something of a picture of the atmosphere of the regime by these latter years of Marcos' power. Marcos, himself, had retained a certain astuteness as a politician. He was very much the lawyer, and very much the able politician still. But FL was something else indeed. I don't think that I have ever known any other person whom I would truly describe as amoral-not immoral, but amoral-simply without the instincts that most of us have that there is a right and a wrong. And yet she required constant adulation and attention. I have vivid memories of sitting in opulent banquets at the palace and thinking: There are millions of people in the world who would five their eye teeth to be here and would talk about the evening all their lives, yet I just wish I could be home with a good book!

One of our successes in Seoul was the renegotiation (for another five years) of the U.S. military bases agreement. I was one of the four people who worked directly on this, with Ambassador Armacost the able leader of the team. The success almost certainly led to Mike being called back not too much later to become Under Secretary for Political Affairs in the Department of State. I understand why the next round of negotiations five years later failed, leading to our withdrawal from Philippine bases, and have always thought skillful handling could have prevented that result. But that is another story!

The atmosphere in Manila changed very, very dramatically with the Aquino assassination. Just as things changed in a moment in Indonesia with the assassination of the army leadership and the subsequent discovery thereof of the bodies, the Aquino assassination created an abrupt change in the Philippines. It has not yet been proven really who was behind this. Marcos, himself, was very ill at the time. Those around him clearly were afraid this was a fatal illness, that he was not going to recover. I tend to believe Marcos when he said to the Ambassador and myself not too long thereafter: "How could you believe that I did this, because it is the worst possible thing that could have happened to me politically?" I believe this because he was smart enough politically to realize that. You don't create that kind of a crisis, because it will engulf you. But Imelda was not so smart politically, and that is why without firm evidence I have always felt that she was a key part of the cabal, as was the army chief of staff, General Ver.

Imelda clearly intended to be Ferdinand's successor. For some years theirs had been a political marriage of convenience. If it had been a love match it hadn't been for years before I got there. Each of the Marcoses had their separate love interests. But Imelda clearly saw herself as the next head of the Philippines, a successor to her husband. I think she felt that with Aquino coming back and her husband apparently on his deathbed, this rival had to be eliminated. And I don't think she really would have had any moral qualms about it at all. It was clearly a question of power.

After the assassination, Filipinos that we in the embassy could talk to began to talk about real issues, both the business people and the politicians. The charades that had been going on were swept aside. The real problems of the country and real politics began to be the bread and butter that makes life interesting for a diplomat. The modernizing sector of the business community was what really turned things around in that period. The crony capitalists in the Philippines had not been successful. Marcos nominally tried to follow the *zaibatsu* example of the Japanese, but unlike in Japan where essentially the *zaibatsu* had won their position through their business acumen, Marcos appointed friends and relatives to business empires and this didn't work so well. The business conglomerates of the crony capitalists in the Philippines were largely a wreck, which resulted not in economic industrialization but in a vast milking of the resources of the nation. The best estimates that we were able to put together in the latter Marcos period were that for almost 20 years 10 percent of the GNP had been siphoned off into non-productive activities, much of it abroad. Now that 10 percent probably made the difference between the Philippines being as economically successful as Taiwan, Hong Kong, or South Korea and just rocking and stumbling along as they did. They started out with more advantages than the others. They had the English language, good business ties with the United States, in the early period preferential trading arrangements with the United States, reasonably good infrastructure, a literate population and a hard working people.

The press of course played up demonstrations against the American Embassy, but these were really insignificant. The embassy had demonstrations from time to time by leftist groups and some towards the end by Marcos loyalists who were mostly paid demonstrators. But we were not the target of any really destructive problems. We had a fairly good perimeter on our embassy, and I don't believe it was ever breached. We never had any hostile crowds inside the compound.

The post-assassination period led finally to another election which took place shortly after I had left the Philippines because I had been tapped for an ambassadorship. However that ambassadorship got stalled for reasons unrelated to me, but very much related to a fight between two powerful Senators in the Senate. So during this crisis I was assigned in Washington to working on Philippine problems. Steve Bosworth had by now taken over as ambassador in the Philippines from Mike Armacost, who was now Deputy Under Secretary of State. Steve asked me to come back to the Philippines for the elections because he wanted someone else to help at the senior level dealing with the senior people in the society because he didn't have enough people who knew them. So Mary Ann, my wife (who had been Armacost's and Bosworth's personal assistant), and I both went back. She kept track of the election reporting teams, while I maintained contact with key business figures in Manila and assisted the official American election observer mission to meet knowledgable persons and observe key stages of the balloting and counting. We had election teams all over the country. It was clear that Mrs. Aquino had won, but Marcos claimed victory anyway and had a falsified election reporting scheme set up. We had a very intensive embassy observation going on throughout the country. There were also two official foreign observing teams: a presidential observing team from the United States and also an international team fielded with the help of the National Democratic Institute. It

was clear who had won, but it wasn't clear what the outcome would be since the incumbent was still claiming victory.

I returned to Washington shortly before the post election crisis and then led one of the crisis watch teams we set up in the Operations Center when the military crisis broke.

Q: Bob, I think it would be interesting if you would talk about the events around the Marcoses' departure from the Philippines that led, of course, to his long sojourn in Hawaii and eventual death there.

RICH: Perhaps my most significant involvement and a very unique one occurred with the extraction of Marcos from the Philippines. Let me tell you a little bit about how I got involved in this and then discuss what the issues were, because it was clear that the U.S. Government as a whole had not made decisions that it probably should have made in advance of such a maneuver. When the Marcos situation finally collapsed in Manila he was extracted under escort of our MAAG Chief in the Philippines, Brig. General Teddy Allen, initially to Guam. At that point I went home from the Operations Center Friday night for the first good night's sleep I had had for some time. When I got up Saturday morning Mary Ann and I needed to go out and do some shopping. As we were just about to leave the house, the phone rang and it was John Monjo, who at that time was senior Deputy Assistant Secretary in the East Asia Bureau before he went out to be Ambassador to Malaysia. John asked if I would go to Honolulu. I said, "When?" He said, "Now." I said, "Why?" He said, "Well, the Marcos entourage just arrived there a few hours ago, and there are all sorts of questions which we can't sort out from here. We can't figure out what are the real issues that Washington has to decide. Would you take a lawyer from the Department and go out there for a couple of days and sort out what are the real issues that have to be decided here in Washington? We are having a problem because five or six different people in Honolulu keep calling different people in the U.S. Government. They are calling the White House, the Pentagon, the State Department, etc. and different people are getting different stories. We can't even coordinate it in Washington because there is not one channel for all of this." This sounded like a reasonable, doable assignment, so I forgot shopping and threw some clothes into a suitcase and headed for Honolulu. I got there Saturday night and sat down with General Allen, who was absolutely punchy from lack of sleep at that point. He talked about ten hours non-stop into a tape recorder with me asking questions about the actual process of physically getting them out of the Philippines.

Now we had some 40 plus Filipinos on a U.S. air base, not just President Marcos and immediate family, but several of the cronies and their immediate families, nursemaids, cooks, doctors, security guards, bottle washers, etc. Nobody knew where they were going, what they were going to do, or even who all the people were. There was some expectation that after a couple of days on the base Marcos would go live in a house that he owned and we would have done our bit and that would be the end of it. Well, that was certainly a naive expectation. Two plane loads had been brought in. The first plane brought all the

people and their carry-on baggage, and a second plane was full of cargo the Marcoses were taking out.

We sent several long messages back to Washington outlining a series of issues that needed attention. Well, by Monday morning, the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific said, "Great, I don't want anything to do with all of this. Let's turn it all over to the State Department." So by Monday afternoon he had gotten Washington to agree that we were no longer there just to sort out some of the problems but that Rich (i.e. the State Department) was supposed to take charge for the U.S. Government! I was now to be the inter-agency coordinator and liaison with all the issues of the Marcos entourage in Honolulu. My two day stay extended to three months.

This evolved into quite an operation. We set up a system whereby everything we sent immediately went to the NSC, the State Department, the Pentagon and Justice, with State taking the lead. The Marcoses had been given one-half of the senior officer BOQ duplex, and I was installed in the mirror half, with the living area turned into an office and operations center. The other members of the Marcos party were housed in a two-story BOQ not far away, and we had the full use of one of the Officers' Clubs as our dining room. This complex of several buildings was then cordoned off by a guarded perimeter within Hickam Air Force Base.

After about one month I kept periodically saying, "Can I come home?" "No." I got no sympathy out of Washington at all, "You are out there in Hawaii." I would say, "Yes, I know, but I don't live here." And, besides, I thought at that point we ought to disengage from the Marcoses. But there was an element of "keep Rich there as a security blanket and Marcos won't keep calling President Reagan at the White House." It was that towards the end more than anything else, I think.

But to get back to the real issues. There are a number of things of which I would like to take note. Although I wrote a long report on this when this episode was over, I'm sure it is buried somewhere in the archives and will probably not be looked at the next time we try to extract an autocrat from a critical situation. This is at times important to be able to do. It was clear that the United States stepping in and extracting Marcos saved a lot of Filipino lives. If we had not done so there could have been a lot of bloodshed and problems created that would have been a long time healing. That was avoided-a very important goal. There will probably be other occasions when it is worthwhile our doing these things. But there are certain things that should be thought out ahead of time.

Let me start with the more mundane. We had 45 people on our hands, and no decision had been taken as to what rights these people had. Some of them didn't even know what country they were in or why they were here. Many had been separated from their families. Questions included: "Are we going to give them asylum or some sort of status in the United States? Are they going to be able to stay if they want to? If they want to stay can their immediate families join them? If they don't want to stay are we going to take them

home? After all, we brought them out. Are we going to fly them back?" So those kinds of people questions had to be dealt with and reasonably soon, in the first couple of weeks.

There was the issue of the wealth that the Marcoses took out with them, in particular the second plane load (which I think was a mistake to have occurred), and which included jewelry which when I later saw it I felt would have made any museum or the Hapsburgs envious.

Then there was the issue of assisting the Marcoses to a more permanent destination. Were they going to stay in the United States? When were we going to get them off the base? The naive assumption that they were immediately going to leave the base was totally false. Who was going to be responsible for their security? How were they going to pay? Were we going to assist them to move on to a third country?

One of the basic issues that I think should be addressed but was not adequately addressed in this case is the immunities of a head of government who is extracted by us under such circumstances. I think a good case could be made if the government decides in time that legal immunity to a foreign head of state should continue for a certain limited period of time. Because of all the furor around the Marcoses, the American government simply just caved and nobody at the cabinet level was willing to say, "No, this is absurd." As a result, they were told you have no immunity at all here in the United States. Well, this allowed a tremendous onslaught of legal suits, and the Marcoses could not admit to any funds or resources or they would have been immediately attached by one court or another. Within about ten days or two weeks there must have been over a hundred legal suits filed against them. One day Marcos was in his sitting room, about the size of the living room we are in now, and he had set these stacks of folded legal briefs spread out on the floor. They covered the entire room and then some.

The legal problems with which the Marcoses were faced really fell into three categories. One set was suits in which the Philippine government was a party seeking custody of any wealth that had been removed from the Philippines in the evacuation, claiming that this had not been properly acquired with legal funds from his salary and therefore it was property of the Philippine people. Another set of suits involved property, real estate, office buildings, homes, etc. in the United States which it was claimed were owned by the Marcoses, although very complicated legal maneuvers had been conducted to not show them as the owners. Typically there had been several series of cutouts through Panama and elsewhere to hide the true ownership. A third category of suits dated to a rather archaic part of our law which was passed by the first Congress of the United States, about 1787, called the Alien Tort Act. It had been a dead letter for 200 years until the Carter administration, when it had been used unsuccessfully once. Having been revived, quite a few suits were brought under this act. What it amounted to was that it allowed people outside the United States, in this case in the Philippines, to bring suit in United States courts for acts which had not been perpetrated in the United States, in other words for actions in the Philippines. A typical case might involve a family or someone on behalf of a family whose son or husband had disappeared at some point and allegedly was killed by

constabulary forces or others under Marcos' authority. These almost all involved disappearances, torture or killings of some sort over the many years of the Marcos era.

These three sets of suits all raised, of course, different kinds of complications. The problem for the Marcoses, having not been given any immunity at all, was that, unlike you or I, they could not go down to a bank and open a bank account to pay the normal bills and expenses of everyday living. Washington had rather naively assumed that shortly after arriving at the base they would move out to a home on the heights of Oahu that they were believed to own. There had been no anticipation of an extended stay as guests of the U.S. Government on the base. These legal complications made it quickly apparent that Marcos was not going to acknowledge any ownership of any property in the United States. The house on the heights allegedly belonged to someone else whom we were repeatedly told was going to use it and that it wasn't going to be available. So the problem became where would they live and how do they pay for it.

During the early weeks there was much talk in the press about Imelda Marcos' "little green dress." Every time any press appeared, any photographs were to be taken, or meetings with anyone outside those of us dealing with the Marcoses, Mrs. Marcos would put on the little green dress, which was probably the simplest dress she owned, and let it be known to the general public that this was all she came away with, with barely the clothes on her back, and that she was a poor, destitute person and she needed the sympathy of the world. This was part of an act and image they carried on for weeks. I mentioned that they couldn't open a bank account. If they had opened a bank account, immediately liens would be attached to it. Any visible property in the United States that they legally acknowledged would be attached with these multiple suits. Therefore, they could not, from their perspective, acknowledge anything at all.

The problem for us, therefore, was not only how to end the expensive custody arrangements, which were not very satisfactory to the American people, but to do so in a manner which preserved the security of the Marcoses in a very volatile environment and begin the process of U.S. disengagement. The large Filipino immigrant population in Hawaii was split right down the middle between Marcos boosters and haters. Where were they going to take up more permanent residence? It had been a rather tacit U.S. assumption that they would go to some third country and not remain long in the United States. In fact, from the very beginning of the exodus from the Philippines it was clear that Marcos was considering several alternatives to staying in the United States. Following the onslaught of legal problems, this became an even higher priority for him, because he clearly wanted to get somewhere where he would be better protected from legal harassment (from his point of view), from which he was not being protected in the United States.

After consultation with Washington, I was given the go ahead to try to work with the Marcoses in trying to locate a third country to which to go. It was an educational experience to see the kind of operators that emerge from the woodwork when great wealth, or presumed great wealth, is at stake, because operators official and unofficial

from numerous parts of the world emerged with offers, all having a tremendous price tag which they expected to be paid for any basic services that were provided.

A number of alternatives emerged and were discarded. At one point there was a prospect of an offer to go to a small West African country. I recall sitting at the dining table in the Marcoses' part of the duplex talking with the president about his options. Mrs. Marcos was sitting perhaps 15 feet away in the sitting room area, not part of our conversation directly. Suddenly she spoke up very loudly and said, "Well, I'm not going there. If you want to go, you go ahead. I am just a simple housewife. I am going home." She then rose and stomped out of the room. Somehow, I can never see her as the "simple housewife."

One interlude I recall President Marcos was very interested in was an offer from the Knights of Malta, but after some investigation we were able to inform him that the Knights of Malta didn't have a country and didn't really have anything but a few decorations and honoraria that they could bestow upon him.

Finally these various options centered on Panama. Negotiations proceeded with Panama with the assistance of our embassy there, and we obtained permission for Ferdinand, Jr., better known as "Bong Bong," to be allowed to leave the United States and fly down to Panama to assess the options and strike a final deal. A deal was struck for the Marcoses to rent at tremendous expense a home in the highlands in northwestern Panama, quite far from the Panama Canal Zone, for which the Panamanian government insisted it had to provide security, also at a very high monetary price. As the best of a poor deal, they decided they would go. Arrangements were made and the airplane was on the tarmac, luggage was packed when the Customs Service decided, "Ah! We will use a little known part of U.S. law and we will inspect baggage outgoing as well as incoming."

It is possible that Customs might have confiscated that part of the goods that the Marcoses had brought in on the plane with them. Among other things I knew this included a case of 20 small gold bullion bars which had been a wedding gift from Ferdinand to his wife. We don't know what else was involved, but there were obviously other things of considerable value. I noted earlier that a second plane load of effects had been impounded by customs and had been inventoried there in an ammunition bunker on the base. One time I had the chance to view those goods which were being held by the U.S. Government until settlement of the suits that the Philippine government had filed to claim this property. The U.S. Government said that it would keep the goods safe until the courts decided. However, there had been no attempt until now to deal with those goods, lesser certainly in number and in bulk, that had come in physically with the party as baggage.

When they learned that this was going to happen on the way out there was a small panic in the family, and various friends were coming and going. I suspect some contingency plans were being made for some of it not to go out with them. I felt that that was not my major concern. My major concern was to get them safely on their way without getting them killed and thereby end the U.S. Government's responsibility for them.

However, Madam Aquino at the last minute called up Noriega in Panama and persuaded him that it would be a very unfriendly act to harbor the Marcoses in Panama. She very much wanted them hostage in the United States where they could be brought under pressures through our legal system. At the nth hour, with bags ready to go through Customs and the airplane fueled and ready to depart, the deal fell through. That was the last major effort to move them onward to some more permanent location. It became clear that we had them in the United States, whether we wanted them or not. My attention then turned primarily to trying to get them off the base into other quarters. It was six weeks before we finally succeeded.

Perhaps a few stories are interesting from that period. There was a big tree in front of this duplex, between there and the Officer's Club that we used for the mess, and it became known by the Filipinos as the thinking tree. A few chairs were placed under the tree. I dealt with Mrs. Marcos as little as I could, since my official dealings were with the president, and she was a personality that I found very difficult and personally very repulsive to me. Therefore, I maintained politeness but did not try to socialize with her in any way. However, from time to time I was caught by her. One day I was stopped by her outside under the tree. You may recall that at that time television was just full of stories about the Marcoses, and they watched them all. She came out blowing steam one day and said, "Shoes! I don't understand why they are so upset about my shoes. We make shoes in the Philippines, it gives people work, and there is nothing wrong with me buying shoes. Besides, I have a lot more shoes than that down in Tacloban." Well, the background of that was that her shoes were not made in the Philippines. They were all made in Italy. And when she said, "Besides, I have a lot more shoes down in Tacloban," she was referring to the palace she had built and furnished in the central Philippines near her childhood home without her husband's knowledge a few years previously. They went down there while I was still in the Philippines, on their annual trip to the ceremonies to reenact MacArthur's Leyte landing. After the ceremonies, Imelda told Ferdinand that she wanted to show him something. She took him to this palatial home and he wandered through a few rooms and turned to her and said, "Whose is this?" She said, "It is ours." They also had such secondary palaces in quite a number of places in the Philippines. So she was saying that she had even far more shoes than the television was talking about.

I cite this only because the way she reacted was so typical: What is wrong with all this? There was a total opaqueness in her moral understanding of why anybody should get excited over such things. Why was it an issue?

Back to trying to get them off Hickam Air Base. Some of the issues that had to be resolved in the future should be thought through in advance. For example: How long would the Secret Service provide protection after they moved outside military facilities; how would the transition be conducted between the United States being responsible for security and Marcos' own security detail? They eventually did move to a very modest home on the water, but any home on the water in Hawaii costs a lot of money. It was actually a rather small place, not easy to maintain security there because there was little

distance between house or road or house and adjoining houses. It was spoken of in the press as a much more palatial place than it was. There too the charade of not owning anything continued. The little green dress was trotted out upon occasion, and if Marcos was to be seen he would try to be photographed lifting weights or something showing he was fit as a fiddle and ready to go.

We did eventually work out arrangements to return a few of this entourage to the Philippines after it became clear that this was a permanent exodus by the Marcos family and clan. Some of these security people, personal servants, staff, medical personnel and others had their lives and families back home, and we returned them to the Philippines at U.S. Government expense and made arrangements to parole the immediate families of those who planned to stay into the United States under circumstances which would allow them to work and earn money. So the human thing was done properly, but it all had to be decided after the fact of the exodus, not before as would have been better. I think these issues are useful because in the future when the decisions are made there should be an awareness in advance that these are all parts of the problem. What kind of immunity is going to be granted and for what period of time? What kind of responsibilities is the U.S. Government acquiring for people who are evacuated by us? The decisions should be made ahead of time, and the party to be evacuated should be told clearly what they can bring and what they cannot bring and what the status of personal effects will be. At the time an emergency exodus is made there is no time then to make those decisions. That is why I hope the U.S. Government will think about these things and have a plan. I actually wrote a draft plan in this regard and gave it to the Secretariat after this episode. Without that there will again be a lot of *ad hoc* decision making under pressure in an emotional environment. It certainly was the case in the Marcos episode, where there was a high pressured, volatile press environment, both in our country and elsewhere. There will inevitably be cases again in the future when it is in the deep interest of the United States to avoid civil war, chaos, mayhem and death, and to help smooth a transition to a constructive future by assisting in such an enterprise.

Q: Bob, I wanted to ask, during this period when you were in Hawaii with the Marcoses, what was the position our embassy in Manila was taking? Were you getting copies of our messages?

RICH: After a few days of sort of going *ad hoc*, I basically established a communications center that was similar to an embassy. I had a telegram series under my name from Honolulu. I sent info copies to Embassy Manila of every piece of my traffic to Washington. I was not as lucky getting Manila's traffic. This was not a lack of good will, and eventually I got more of it, but it was simply that they were extremely busy, had their own problems, and only slowly realized the value of sending info copies to me. At that point Marcos was not one of their immediate problems in Manila. It was a little harder to get the embassy tuned to infoing us in Honolulu on as much of their traffic as we needed to get. But it eventually worked out.

Q: Did you get help from the Department in the way of a communicator or was it all military support?

RICH: I used military communications entirely. But I had my own series. It didn't get cleared through anybody. I saw to it that a copy of everything was provided to the Commander-in-Chief Pacific (CINCPAC), who in effect was my host. I called on him several times to be sure he was comfortable with what I was doing. I had outstanding cooperation and help from CINCPAC. The CINCPAC Judge Advocate worked with me full time during this period, essentially almost as my deputy, and has become a life long friend. He later became Judge Advocate General of the Navy and retired as an admiral. The Air Force was a little less comfortable with all of this because we were coopting a significant part of their facilities, not only their senior officers' quarters, but an officers' club and a BOQ, as well as Air Force personnel to establish a perimeter and checkpoints. This was fine for a few days, but it wore thin for the Air Force Base Commander very quickly. He and I saw each other almost every day. His main interest was usually, "When are you going to get them out of here?"

Q: How long did you stay with them and how long were they at Hickam?

RICH: They were at Hickam for six weeks, as I recall. I stayed there almost three months, because I was instructed to maintain liaison with them after they moved off base. It was a longer period than I felt advisable. In fact for several weeks, at least a month before it was over, I was urging the Department to disengage. I felt it was in the U.S. interest not to appear to continue to be nursemaiding Marcos. I felt at that point there was very little still to be accomplished. However, what was being accomplished, from Washington's point of view, was essentially to keep Marcos off the White House's back. In the earlier period I was engaged in extremely intense policy issues and operational problems. In the latter part I felt I was mostly just providing a security blanket for Washington. Admiral Poindexter (NSC) vetoed the suggestion every time the State Department supported me in suggesting we stand down. Early on the Marcoses had picked up the phone frequently to call "Ronnie" and Mrs. Reagan, and the Reagans didn't want that. So giving the Marcoses the sense that the U.S. Government was still concerned, paying attention to their problems, and passing their messages continued to be of value to the White House beyond the point when we had accomplished most other purposes.

Those are the important things that come to mind. Essentially it involves an awareness of the multiplicity of the issues that will be involved in any such evacuation. With advance contingency planning it would make it a lot easier the next time around.

Q: Well, now after your adventures with the Marcoses, you came back to Washington in mid 1986?

RICH: When I came back to Washington I began immediately preparing to go to Belize as ambassador. This was an appointment that was already a year and a half over due. I had left the Philippines en route to Belize, but the nomination had been held up by

problems not related to me but problems in the Senate. Now this nomination was revived. In fact, one morning I thought I was going to Fiji as ambassador, and in the afternoon I was going to Belize again. In any case, the Belize appointment was now on track, and when I was finally able to disengage from Philippine issues I began preparations for that appointment.

Q: And when did you actually arrive in Belize?

RICH: In the summer of 1987. Belize had been independent for some years at that time.

Q: I often wondered, Bob, Belize must be torn between various areas-pulls on it from North America, the Caribbean, the British and from Central America. Do any of these have any overweening influence?

RICH: Essentially it is a Caribbean society with British-style institutions. It is in many respects much more similar to Trinidad and Jamaica than to its Central American neighbors. However, there is a split personality because a significant and growing portion of its population is of Central American origin. The dominant society, which is a combination of English Creole and Caribbean extraction, known there as Garifuna, dominates both government and the economy and is of British cultural descent. I say cultural descent because racially it is primarily black.

However, there is an indigenous Mayan population, mostly poor, mostly rural. And in the north there is a significant population of Mexican origin that moved down into Belize earlier in the 20th century when there was a lot of violence and mayhem in the Yucatan. They have become assimilated and are mostly bilingual in English and Spanish.

Q: I was going to say you would see several languages represented there?

RICH: English is dominant. Spanish is also spoken in the north, but these people are two generations assimilated into Belizian society and speak English as well as you or I. However, there is a more recent wave of immigration which promises to change Belizian society significantly. That is the immigration of the last couple of decades primarily from El Salvador. El Salvador is not contiguous, but given the poverty and unrest there in the last couple of decades there has been movement to the United States and also to Belize. It is one of these situations where people go and tell there friends that there is land over here, people are not shooting each other, come join us. That population is not assimilated, is mostly poor and rural, and is producing a significant Spanish speaking minority in certain areas. This concerns the Belizians because they see it as their culture being threatened by people who have a different attitude towards law and order, how you settle disputes (not in the courts but maybe with a machete or a gun), etc.

The United States is very important to Belize. Most of the trade and investment are with the United States, as is travel, tourism and shopping. In order of importance to Belize, I would list the United States, Mexico, Britain, the Caribbean Community, and adjacent Central American states. Almost everyone else is off of their radar scopes.

Q: How does Belize handle its defense problems?

RICH: Belize has a defense treaty with the United Kingdom. It took its independence very late, the latest of all the Caribbean possessions of the Crown, simply because of an unresolved claim by Guatemala to the entire territory of Belize. Belize hesitated to go independent because they felt that if they cut the tie to Britain, Guatemala might march in. When they did finally take independence in 1981, they extracted a major defense commitment from the British, and it is one of two places in this hemisphere where the British have resident forces, the other being, of course, the Falklands. Until 1993, the British maintained Harrier jets there and some heavy armor as well as a battalion of ground troops. The battalion is rotated and Belize is used by the British as a jungle training area. They only have one other such training area, and that is in Brunei. The argument within the British military of course is a cogent one today, "Why do you need jungle training facilities; the next war is not going to be fought in the jungle? There aren't that many jungles left." For example, the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines, where our men fought the Japanese so valiantly in the jungles, has no jungle left except in the confines of the former U.S. Subic Naval Base perimeter, now a national park.

The United States was not interested in the British pulling out of Belize. Everyone concerned, and oddly enough even the Guatemalans, seemed to feel that the British presence was a stabilizing force. It certainly gave assurance to the Belizians that they could maintain their democracy behind this shield. Therefore, there was no move anywhere in the hemisphere or within Belize, itself, to remove British forces. The only pressure in that direction was from the budget types back in Whitehall who periodically said, "This is too expensive, we need to do something else."

We did have a military assistance office in Belize as well as a Defense Attaché, and a very modest program primarily to maintain liaison and assistance on a training basis. It enabled CINCSOUTH in Panama to have a relationship with all the military in the region. The Belizian armed forces were very small, and so our assistance to them was of a very modest nature both in matériel and training.

For a small embassy we did have a rather remarkable set of commitments. There were seven different agencies of the U.S. Government under my aegis in Belize. We even negotiated a military medical research agreement during the time I was there. We had an economic aid program. We had a small military assistance program. We had a rather large Voice of America contingent operating a VOA relay station in southern Belize which was targeted at the trouble spots of Central America. This broadcast primarily in Spanish to Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. The cogency of that investment is now probably less than it was just a few years ago. We also had a Defense Attaché and an important anti-narcotics program.

When we were flying down on the plane for my arrival in Belize after all my preparation and briefing, I said to my wife, "This is going to be different. All my career, one way or

another, I have been involved in issues of considerable national interest and concern to the United States to which considerable attention was paid on the Seventh Floor (Secretary of State, etc.). Given the other priorities in Washington, nobody at a very high level is going to pay much attention to Belize. I don't know if we are going to be bored or not." My wife had brought some needlepoint and other activity materials, and I had brought some books. Well, we were certainly not bored. I found that there was considerable challenge and a great deal of worthwhile things to do professionally, as well as a dynamic small society in which we made life long friends.

But, to get to the problems of the United States. Institutionally, from a Foreign Service standpoint, what had happened there happens all too often for reasons that do not support our diplomacy- a large gap between assignment of ambassadors. In my case, I noted earlier how that had occurred, but what it meant in this case was that there was a two-year gap between my predecessor's departure (he had been the first American Ambassador) and my arrival. Given the size of the post, of course the deputy was not very senior. The deputy, unfortunately, in addition to not being very senior, had not been a man very ready to take responsibility, and he let things go from week to week on the assumption that pretty soon an ambassador would arrive and he could put things off. Well, things can be put off only so long without considerable decay. I found the embassy in very poor morale with no sense of direction, and agencies that were totally going off in opposite directions to each other. The strongest figure in the country team was an AID director who decided that he really owned the country.

This had to be pulled together. So from an internal management view, the immediate challenge was to reestablish a sense of direction, pull the team together, get a management operation going and define and pursue the major interests of the United States. So I would be a strong proponent of saying, "Don't leave posts uncovered so long." It is less serious in our major embassies where the deputies are always senior, able, experienced people. But, in any case that was probably my first challenge and I was satisfied in the long run. It worked out very well.

Two other problems emerged there which are not at all unknown in our business. I think they are among the most difficult kinds of problems an ambassador has to deal with, particularly an ambassador such as myself who didn't have an awful lot of clout back in Washington from a place like Belize considering the crises on which Washington was focused. One was corruption within the U.S. mission, itself, and the other was the discovery of misuse of U.S. aid to abet narcotics trafficking.

One of the biggest interests of the United States that I dealt with during my tenure was the fight against narcotics. We had a major marijuana eradication program going on in Belize, and this merged during my tenure with an effort to address the more serious problem caused by the inroads of the cocaine Mafia from Colombia and trafficking of cocaine up through Central America as the sea routes had become more difficult. A small country like Belize simply had no physical means to prevent this.

Q: Was the Belize government willing to cooperate?

RICH: Yes. We had excellent cooperation from the government, but it had no real means to either control its air space or sea boundaries. So we invested quite a bit in assisting them in intelligence and in means to better monitor and interdict trafficking. This process expanded throughout my time there.

But a problem arose with the egotist who had been running the AID program and who had been running fast and free over all sorts of regulations and laws in the process. I found that already before I got there that he had been subject to one AID investigation. By the time I had been in Belize only a few weeks, many people had come to me with problems about the AID mission. I had a two page list of horrendous allegations, mostly involving the AID Director himself. Well, it simply wasn't possible for me as Ambassador to investigate all of these directly. Therefore, I contacted the AID Inspector General (IG) and told him, "Look, there is an awful lot of smoke, and an awful lot of problems. The AID mission itself is split right down the middle between people who are the favorites of the AID director for whom all sorts of laws and regulations seem to be bent, and others who for one reason or another appear to be on the outs. In any case, there are so many allegations it is not possible to sort this out given the deep antagonisms within the mission, itself. I need you to send somebody down here to check it out."

That was done and it actually led to a series of IG investigations of the AID mission. I was told eventually that they were preparing a federal indictment against the AID director. I had not thought things would be that serious, but I said, "If this is going to be the case, this man is a major figure in Belize on behalf of the U.S. Government, and I would like him transferred well in advance of an indictment so that the harmful publicity here can be subdued." In that respect I was not successful. They weren't willing to transfer him until just days before the indictment came down. So we did have to deal with all of that in a very public way.

When a new AID director was named, I asked Washington if we could do a complete zero-based assessment of aid to Belize, because the aid program was fragmented in all sorts of little pockets and we were spending a lot of money and not getting much visible for it. With the help of the new AID Director and a positive response to my zero-based assessment request, we set the AID program there on a much sounder track, and I felt that was an important accomplishment. Things went very well, and morale was restored in the AID mission too. Unfortunately for the previous director, who had many fine qualities and was a very experienced man who should have known better than to do the things he did, they chose one of his violations which to prosecute. He was convicted in federal court, stripped of his rank, fined and spent six months in prison. He was due to retire, and fortunately in those circumstances he did not lose his retirement. You don't lose that unless you are guilty of treason.

Well, that was the first problem. The other problem was with the Belizian government. I had forged very excellent working relationships with the government, I believe. Then an

election came along two-thirds of the way through my tenure, and the government changed. This is a problem we often have, of course. I had maintained good relations with the leader of the opposition and former prime minister, George Price, who was sort of the father of the country, and his party now was restored to power. But, while I had maintained good personal relations with Price, after all I was this American who had been dealing and working on programs with the previous government which now became the opposition. So, when Price came back into power, he brought with him a certain degree of suspicion of the American Ambassador, which had to be slowly overcome. Fortunately, because I had maintained frequent dialogue with him and tried to give him every sense of dignity as the leader of the opposition, we were not dealing with each other as strangers. However, in this British style parliamentary system the new government had come into power by the thinnest of margins. It had upset the previous government by less than 2 percent of the vote.

The north central part of the country was the area in which we had the most severe problems with drug traffic. There was a town up there, Orange Walk, that was frequently spoken of as the "wild west." Even our DEA people wouldn't stay there after nightfall. That area had elected a man to the parliament whom we knew was a brother and crony of a known drug trafficking kingpin who was in jail in the United States. The government only had a one seat majority in parliament, although later it acquired two by paying off one member to switch sides, so every seat was vital.

It wasn't but a month or two after the government changed that we began to get very good evidence that this member of parliament from Orange Walk, who had been named Minister of Works in the new government, was improperly utilizing AID road building equipment for illegal purposes. Our biggest infrastructure effort was a roads program which came under the Ministry of Works. There were serious problems also with the implementation of the program. Guidelines were not being properly observed. So, as we gathered evidence, I consulted with the AID director who said, "I have enough basis on which to put a hold on the program for performance reasons. We have a bunch of new equipment coming in, and we will just keep it on hold on our property ostensibly for entirely non-political purposes." Well, that was fine because that gave us a kind of cover excuse to put a hold on the program and at the same time gave a public reason for the AID director to negotiate with the Ministry of Works while we tried to address the more serious issue.

The bigger problem as I saw it was that here we had a major AID program under which some of our equipment was not only being diverted for inappropriate and illegal purposes, but for purposes directly opposed to a major public policy concern of the United States. The Minister was using some of the road equipment also to grade air strips in the jungle for transhipment of narcotics. This, as far as I was concerned, was absolutely something that the U.S. Government and people could not tolerate. Eventually it would become known, and that could blow up the entire AID program to Belize. So after we collected sufficient evidence, I engaged in quite a dialogue with Washington. Essentially what I sought was permission to go to the Prime Minister to lay the evidence on the table

and ask him to deal with it quietly. I said, "My bottom line is that there cannot be anyone administering USAID funds or equipment who is involved in narcotics traffic."

After some hemming and hawing I got an okay from Washington to go ahead, although given the Inter-American Affairs Bureau's preoccupation with counter insurgencies and communism I never felt I had really gotten the attention of anyone very senior. So I went to see the Prime Minister. His first reaction was, "You are trying to bring down my government. This is all a plot to overthrow me." So that was a long conversation. We finally got off of that kick, but he was very suspicious. He was a man who honestly could not believe ill of someone whom he had known all his life in Belize's small town atmosphere. He didn't want to believe ill of him. He was very dubious. He went out to near one air strip we had described the location of to him and said, "I didn't see any air strip." I then authorized my Defense Attaché to rent a private plane from the municipal airport and take some photographs from the air, totally openly, nothing clandestine about this. We hired a bush pilot. I didn't even want to use our spraying planes. It was quite clear that what we photographed was nothing but a clandestine and unauthorized air strip; it wasn't just an improved road. We also had witnesses to how it was done. Upon being shown these photographs, Prime Minister Price was clearly very disturbed. He said he would undertake his own investigation, which is what I asked of him. It took several weeks and in the meantime we had the AID program on hold. Publicly it was on hold over management discrepancies. Eventually the Prime Minister came back to me and said, "I have reluctantly confirmed your allegations."

Q: He admitted it?

RICH: Yes. It was very hard for him to do. I had set a deadline of about two months during which things were on hold, after which we would shut down the AID program if the problem were not resolved. Meanwhile, we were not spending any more money or supplying any more equipment for the roads program. I said, "Mr. Prime Minister, I really have to have a resolution. It is up to you how you do it. You have done part of what I have asked in carrying out the investigation. The other thing I ask is that you remove this individual from any position where he will deal with our funds. Thirdly, I would hope that you could gather sufficient evidence and go to court and prosecute." He never did do the third, but he found a way in a few weeks to remove this man from that ministry, giving him another job as a face saver, which had nothing to do with our programs or funds.

In the meantime AID had been working diligently with the ministry of works staff to resolve problems and we were able to announce that the problems had been sufficiently resolved and the program could go forward. None of the other problem ever became public. I was very pleased that it did not, and that we were able to resolve it satisfactorily. It is the kind of thing that I know our people have to deal with from time to time when you are faced with suspicions by a foreign government that you are manipulating their very existence, and yet you have to stick to the basics of right and wrong in the interest of

the United States and hopefully deal with the problem in a way that does not destroy the bilateral relationship in the process. That was an interesting episode.

Q: I can certainly believe it. How long did you spend in Belize all together?

RICH: It was a three year tenure. I was able to turnover the post to another fine career ambassador who remained four years because the Clinton administration was slow to name a successor. He in turn was succeeded by a political appointee who also did a very fine job indeed, although I regretted to see yet one more post lost to the career Foreign Service.

Q: After that you returned to this country and became a diplomat-in-residence?

RICH: I was at the Atlanta University Center, and my office was on the Spelman College Campus.

Q: Yes, there are four or five campuses.

RICH: Spelman is the flagship Black women's college. Morehouse, immediately adjacent, is the men's college. Then there is Morris Brown College, mostly catering to the local community, and Atlanta University. They are all virtually contiguous. I was accredited to the International Affairs Center of that complex, which was on the Spelman campus. It was a very fine experience. I enjoyed the teaching and learning more than I have ever known about a very significant, dynamic segment of our society that I don't think is adequately represented in the media or in the image of the Black community. That Atlanta educational complex is really an area out of which come an awful lot of the movers and shakers of the Black community.

Q: Did you find anyone in your period there who was interested in the Foreign Service?

RICH: I did. On the side I conducted classes for those who were interested in the Foreign Service exam. They had something of a disadvantage because these were primarily undergraduate institutions, and as you know most successful candidates for the Foreign Service these days have graduate degrees. But the top graduates from Spelman and Morehouse all go on to graduate degrees in the major universities in the United States.

Q: Well, perhaps some of those seeds you planted will someday bear fruit in various Foreign Service officers.

RICH: I think they may. I had some students there who would make outstanding Foreign Service officers. The Director General of the Foreign Service came down for a program. Dr. Jeannette Cole, who was the President of Spelman College, was very active in the transition of the Clinton administration in the educational sphere. She is an outstanding woman educator and a role model for any young woman to emulate.

Q: Well, after that year, Bob, I gather retirement came?

RICH: I retired and worked in Atlanta off and on as a consultant in various things and then came back up to Washington. We moved back as our roots were here after all these years. I joined a small institute in Washington called the Korea Economic Institute of America, working on Korean issues and was particularly involved publishing an annual academic monograph which I believe has steadily acquired prestige. After three years with the Institute, I retired again and now do a bit of consulting amidst gardening, reading and family interests.

Q: Looking back on your career in the Foreign Service, do you have any final thoughts?

RICH: Tom, I feel that I had an outstanding career. There are several things that I am unhappy with about the Foreign Service, but they are all administrative. I feel like the personnel system changes too rapidly. You cannot advise any young candidate or young junior officer wisely because the system changes so much. I also am not terribly enamored of the present bidding system. I think it absorbs far too many administrative resources and actually works against the interest of the government and the Foreign Service. I did not, myself, bid on jobs until the very end of my career when I was told I had to or else. Frankly, I felt I had a far more interesting career by not being involved in that system than if I had been making the decisions. I feel we ought to reinstate an awful lot more guidance from within the system itself in judging where people should go and where the needs are for talent, because now needs are not adequately being met while people quibble over bids, and some place that may not have a big reputation doesn't get the talent it needs. So I would go back to a more directive system, while obviously leaving some of the flexibility that we all have had. I also think the grievance system has been carried to extremes. I think we now are spending far too many resources administering ourselves, administering the personnel system, than we did during most of our career.

I do believe that the system remains good at its roots. I believe in the value of the American presence at posts abroad. I hate to see so many consulates close, because that presence is far more valuable than ever realized by the policy levels and budget levels in Washington, that physical presence of knowledgeable and able American diplomats in significant cities in the world. It makes an impact on people, makes an impact on the future, and makes a strong input into defending the interests of the United States over a period of time. We lose that every time we close a post. We lose it every time we thin down our posts to the point where we can barely administer the multiple agencies who are sending people abroad.

One of my biggest concerns is the loss of those second secretary jobs in economic and political affairs. Those were the jobs in which my generation learned the ropes. Those were the journeyman jobs, not the apprentices, but the journeyman. Now you have people becoming section chiefs or even DCMs without real experience adequately to prepare

them. They haven't had the opportunity to do the journeyman work under experienced senior officers.

My other complaint I suppose is one that is often voiced but it is voiced in a way to throw off on political officers. I don't throw off on political officers, I guess I was one. But, I am very critical of political officers who do not know how to manage people and resources or understand economics. I see it from time to time in office directors who really don't manage their staff, resources, archives or anything else, although they are brilliant on the front line. Both talents are needed. We need that middle sector, the journeyman jobs, which have been cut too thin. That is when you hone the talent and the experiences that are needed when you get into more senior responsibilities.

Q: Well, thank you Ambassador Rich. This has been an illuminating and interesting time for me. I must say that I agree with every one of your recommendations for the Service. Perhaps that is because we are somewhat of the same generation. Thank you.

End of interview