

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

STANLEY D. SCHIFF

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is November 9, 2000. This is an interview with Stanley D. Schiff. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Do you go by Stan?

SCHIFF: Yes.

Q: Let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

SCHIFF: I was born on February 23, 1925 in Weehawken, New Jersey.

Q: Tell me something about your parents.

SCHIFF: My father came from Russia at the age of about three. He was one of four children. My mother was born in this country, one of three children, one of whom died at around six years. My father was in business for all of his life. During the 1920s, he owned a small apparel factory while he [was] in the Depression. After Prohibition, he got into the liquor business and was a liquor salesman.

My mother, unusual for the age in which she lived, worked with my grandfather in a retail liquor store.

Q: What was the background of your mother's family?

SCHIFF: They came from Eastern Europe. We were never quite sure whether it was Poland or Russia.

Q: Was this part of the Jewish immigration?

SCHIFF: Yes, it was.

Q: Did you ever figure out what "Schiff" meant? Did it come from any particular name?

SCHIFF: When studying German, I learned it meant "ship" or "boat." If you travel around Germany, you'll see a frequent sign "Gasthaus zun Schiff." But this family came from Eastern Europe.

Q: In Weehawken, was there a Jewish community?

SCHIFF: It was a very mixed community. We lived in a town which was directly across the Hudson river from Manhattan. It was given the imaginative name of West New York. West New York was a very ethnically mixed community. There was a large Italian element, a significant population of German origin, and a considerable number from Eastern Europe (not Jewish; I think the Jewish community was rather small). At that time there were virtually no blacks or Hispanics. In subsequent years, after Castro came to power in Cuba, there was a big immigration of Cuban refugees both into the town of West New York and another town next to it, Union City. These became very heavy points of Cuban concentration in the United States.

Q: Did you have siblings?

SCHIFF: I had a sister.

Q: Growing up, did you basically live in the same place or did you move around?

SCHIFF: I lived in the same place until about 16 when I went off to college. I never returned to my hometown. My mother and father continued to live there until the 1960s when they found themselves culturally isolated. They had very nice neighbors, but they couldn't communicate with them because they were all Spanish-speaking, so they moved to another town nearby. Another factor was that they were in ill health and wanted to be close to my sister.

Q: Growing up, at the family table, was there a lot of talk about events?

SCHIFF: Yes. My father particularly, even though he had very little formal education (he only had a grade school education), as far back as I can remember, he was an avid and assiduous reader of "The New York Times," cover to cover. Yes, he was very interested in national affairs as well as international affairs. With family and friends around the Sunday dinner, yes, there was a lot of conversation about current events.

Q: I'm sure Franklin Delano Roosevelt was a topic that came up from time to time. Where did the family fall on that?

SCHIFF: They were great admirers of his.

Q: My family, too.

Were you pushed to read a lot?

SCHIFF: I think I just came to it myself. I don't know just what the influences were. I was interested in reading and began early and stayed with it forever.

Q: In Weehawken, did you go to public schools there?

SCHIFF: Yes.

Q: What about grammar school?

SCHIFF: I would put grammar school and high school together. The town of West New York, where I lived, was a working class town. When I got to college, I realized in retrospect that my education was not nearly as good as those kids who came from other parts of the state, the more affluent parts. But a number of the teachers were good, even though the program was not. I went back to a 40th high school reunion some years ago. I was somewhat dismayed to find out that a very large proportion of that class had never gone on to college. But that's the kind of community it was. At that particular time (we graduated in 1941), World War II was already in progress. Many from my class went into

the Service either then or shortly afterwards.

Q: Were there any particular subjects that you were interested in?

SCHIFF: History and geography, made for the Foreign Service.

Q: Absolutely.

SCHIFF: The thing that I really got interested in at a very early age was journalism. At about age 10 or 11, I was publishing my own paper. I still have one or two copies around my house. I can remember seeing articles, which I clipped from the legitimate newspapers, on things like Ethiopia (the Italian Abyssinian War), that kind of thing. So, I was very interested in that.

Q: You were out of high school when World War II started.

SCHIFF: Yes, I was in my freshman year of college.

Q: In high school, how about sports, social activities, and jobs?

SCHIFF: All of the above. I played on the tennis team. I played a lot of basketball. I did part-time work, particularly in my senior year. Socially, I was active.

Q: Did you get involved in the liquor business?

SCHIFF: Too young.

Q: By that time, they were pretty strict.

SCHIFF: Yes. As I recall, you couldn't work there until age 21.

Q: Were you active in the synagogue?

SCHIFF: No, it was not part of my life.

Q: How about your colleagues? Was there a strong Catholic Church influence?

SCHIFF: Where I lived, there was strong Catholic influence. Some of the kids went to parochial schools, though not my immediate friends. My immediate friends went to public school, but they were Catholic and they did attend church regularly.

Q: One thinks of this period as one of great ferment in New York City itself. Left-wing politics, socialism, etc. Did that penetrate to where you were?

SCHIFF: Not that I recall. There was considerable pro Nazi sentiment. In fact, German Bund headquarters were located in the adjacent town, Union City.

Q: You graduated from high school in 1941. What happened?

SCHIFF: I was age 16, so I went on to college. In my sophomore year at college, I volunteered for service. I didn't wait for the draft. I volunteered and as soon as I was 18, I was called by the Army Air Corps.

Q: Where did you go to college?

SCHIFF: Rutgers, in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Q: This was a state university, wasn't it?

SCHIFF: It wasn't then. It became subsequently. The agricultural school was state, but the rest of the school was not.

Q: Was it a private school?

SCHIFF: Yes.

Q: What were you taking?

SCHIFF: Oddly enough, I started to take science, which I had no business being in. It didn't take me more than my freshman year to discover I was not cut out for a science, so I switched to history. That was fortunate. Had I stayed with science, I probably never would have emerged from college with a degree. Of course, it was Depression. My real interest was in journalism. My dad thought that that would be a poor choice because the prospects for getting a job and a reasonable salary in journalism were pretty dismal, so he encouraged me to think along more practical lines.

Q: You were in the Air Corps from when to when?

SCHIFF: 1943-1946.

Q: Where did you take basic training?

SCHIFF: It was at Keeslu Field, Mississippi. From there, we went either to Maxwell Field or the University of Pittsburgh. At Pittsburgh, we got our first bit of flight training. From there, it was on to Perryville in Missouri, for what was called "primary training," where we trained in open cockpit biplanes, and then to Malden, Missouri, in "basic" training where we flew more on a sophisticated plane. I was almost through training and had been assigned to Single Engine School. I was going to be groomed for fighter planes. Then they discovered that I couldn't fly on my back. They said, "You'd better do something else." Flying upside down, I became disoriented. I was fine while I was flying rightside up. I suppose that meant that I was destined to go into the Foreign Service, to do things rightside up, not upside down.

In any case, I was assigned to Navigation School and ended up flying on a B-17 as a navigator.

Q: Where were you flying B-17s?

SCHIFF: We were sent to England to join the 8th Air Force. It was already fairly late in the war, so we didn't get to fly much in the way of real combat missions. But some of us ended up staying on for a year after the war in Europe ended and did a variety of things.

Q: Did the idea of staying in the Air Force appeal to you?

SCHIFF: No, but it did kindle an interest in the Foreign Service. Once the war in Europe ended, we went from England to France and set up a base there. That gave me an opportunity to see some of Europe. I had always been interested in that part of the world anyway.

Q: The war was over when you moved to France. Was there any prospective mission? Were the Soviets considered a possibility as...

SCHIFF: We were not conscious of a Soviet threat. We had missions. The first was high altitude photography. The second, which we stayed at for a considerably longer time, was flying high point American troops, those troops who had been in Europe for a number of years and were being readied to go back home. We would fly them from southern France to Morocco and then they would be picked up by the Air Transport Command people and taken back to the States. We would pick up for the return trip French refugees who had spent the war years in Morocco and take them back to France.

Q: Did the B-17 have much room?

SCHIFF: The B-17 was stripped of its armaments and they put in benches. As a navigator, I sat in the nose of the plane. They even put a bench in up there. It made for some rather exciting moments for some of our passengers, who had not had the experience of landing at 80-100 miles an hour in full sight of the runway. Eyes tended to open rather wide. But it also was kind of fun and interesting. We had a cross section of GIs going home and also French refugees. So, I was able to use a little rudimentary French.

Q: Did this kindle the international bug?

SCHIFF: It was one of the contributing influences, yes. I liked language and I enjoyed speaking French. It gave you an entrée that if you didn't speak the language you would never have. It just enhanced living in France, not that the living was great, but nevertheless it enhanced the opportunities for meeting people.

Q: You had about a year and a half of college before you went in?

SCHIFF: Yes.

Q: What did you do? Did you decide to keep going?

SCHIFF: Yes. When I got out of service, the first thing I did was to get married.

Q: Where did you meet your wife and what was her background?

SCHIFF: I met her as a freshman. Because I was young for a freshman, some of my colleagues fixed me up with a blind date who was from high school. I met her when she was a sophomore or junior in high school. She was just 15. We have been together ever since.

Q: Oh, how wonderful.

SCHIFF: We just celebrated 54 [years of marriage].

Q: What was she doing while you were in the war?

SCHIFF: She was in college at what is now Douglas College, which at that time was New Jersey College for Women, not a real sister institution, but it was the women's college in New Brunswick, a bicycle ride away. She finished shortly after the war ended.

Q: You came back and got married and then what?

SCHIFF: Then I went back to school. We were both in school for a time.

Q: Where did you go to school?

SCHIFF: Rutgers. I was a history major.

Q: I assume you had the GI Bill.

SCHIFF: Yes.

I started a master's program at Wisconsin and then decided to transfer back to Columbia University and got my master's degree from Columbia. I guess it was while I was still at Rutgers that I took the Foreign Service exam and passed and was waiting for the appointment. I went on to do my master's while I was waiting.

Q: Could you describe the written and the oral exam for the Foreign Service when you took it?

SCHIFF: It was about four and a half days of exam. It was tough. It included a separate exam on economics, for which I had very little formal preparation. There was a separate

language exam. I don't recall much beyond that, just that it was rather tough.

Q: Do you recall the oral exam?

SCHIFF: Yes. There was one question in particular that I remember. I had not had very much economics in my college training. There was a guy from the Department of Commerce who was on the panel and he asked me to describe the effects of the devaluation of the French franc. He let me go through probably a 10 minute explanation, at the end of which time he said, "That's absolutely wrong." It was sort of devastating, but the board didn't seem to attach overly much importance to my wrong answer. They passed me.

Q: Where did you get the idea of the Foreign Service?

SCHIFF: I think probably in the main from having been in Europe during the war and having been interested in the war even before I was in the military and probably some of it from academic interest – not college, but even from high school.

Q: Columbia had a very strong history program and was world-class.

SCHIFF: It was very good, among Columbia's historians were a number with national reputations. Henry Steele Connager was particularly well known and deservedly so. But I found in comparing the Columbia faculty against the Rutgers faculty, Rutgers, despite the absence of national renown, compared very well. I had the advantages of good education and good teachers.

Q: While you were doing history at Rutgers and Columbia, did you have any particular area of interest?

SCHIFF: I was particularly interested at that time in Western European history. That is what I concentrated on. Many years later, long after I had retired from the Foreign Service, I began taking graduate courses in American history, in which I became intensely interested, at the University of Maryland. If I had to start right now, I would want to do China, language and area.

Q: It's a big world out there and there is so little time.

SCHIFF: Our appetite is insatiable – and there is little time, unfortunately.

Q: What did your wife think about the Foreign Service?

SCHIFF: She was very interested in it. She was very supportive. She made an excellent Foreign Service wife.

Q: What was she taking?

SCHIFF: She was a math major and ended up, even though she never got an education degree, being head of the math department at one of the prominent Washington private high schools. In subsequent years, and continuing to right now, she conducts training courses for adults in math, statistics, and some other things.

Q: It's a very usable skill.

Did you get your master's at Columbia?

SCHIFF: I got the master's. We got caught up in the period of McCarthyism. The State Department did not have sufficient funds to bring us into the Foreign Service. So, most of us ended up waiting a couple of years for our Foreign Service appointments. We took the exam in '47 and were not appointed until the end of 1949.

Q: Could you describe your basic officer's course?

SCHIFF: Ours was different because we were all going to Germany.

Q: Did you know that beforehand?

SCHIFF: Yes. We were not brought in as FSOs. We were brought in as staff officers temporarily strictly for this German program that the U.S. High Commissioner, John J. McCloy, was very interested in. This was a period when civil occupation was replacing military occupation in West German, and we were the first contingents of replacements for military government officers.

Q: It was a transition to bridge the gap between the military occupation until the Germans would take over, using State officers to fill in that gap.

SCHIFF: That's right. This was also a transition between occupation and the restoration of full diplomatic relations.

Q: What sort of training did you get before you went?

SCHIFF: We had 10 weeks at FSI, very intensive language instruction. Most of us in that class had no familiarity with German. After that, it was basically training in things German by people who had served in Germany.

Q: What were they looking for you all to do?

SCHIFF: When we first went over, there were two basic things. One was to administer any residual functions that we still had as occupiers, which were much diminished. That was not a burdensome part of the job. The major part of our task was to contribute to the reeducation effort. That meant working with a variety of German groups and individuals, encouraging people to establish a working democracy at local levels. We were working with municipal and county officials to try to do this. I spent a great deal of time working

with teachers and with students. One of the things I did was to run an English conversation class for high school seniors who lived in the town. We had an interesting experience a few years ago. Our class went to Germany to celebrate its 40th reunion. Someone had arranged for a group to meet with the president of the University of Augsburg. My wife went to that with some of the others. I was not able to go. The President asked where each of these people had been posted during their stay in Germany. My wife said, "Buchen." He said, "I came from Buchen. I was in your husband's English language class." That was kind of fun.

Q: Did you feel any trepidation coming from a Jewish family going to Germany?

SCHIFF: I think I raised this question with the panel that interviewed me. They were rather reassuring. There was a certain amount of apprehension, but we actually found in the two years that we were there no hostility on the part of the people whom I dealt with either professionally or socially. We did get close to a number of Germans. There was none of that.

Q: Did you go to a central point or did you know where you were going from the beginning?

SCHIFF: We all went to Frankfurt for about a month of additional training. While we were there, families lived in the same hotel. That furthered this bonding process that I was talking about earlier. People really got to know each other.

Q: How many were there?

SCHIFF: There were 27 of us. All were married; there was one bachelor at the time and he didn't stay a bachelor for too long. They were looking for families.

Q: Also, by the time you were 25 or so, you'd better be married. That was expected.

SCHIFF: Yes.

Q: And have three children.

SCHIFF: My wife knows the count exactly of how many children in our group we started out with when we first got there, but the number that we had about two years later was some multiple of that. It was a productive period.

Q: This was that generation.

SCHIFF: Yes. There was one family which had eight kids and stayed in the Foreign Service, traveled all over. There were a couple of others who had five kids.

We stayed in Frankfurt for about a month and then we were assigned to Kreise (the equivalent of a county). Initially, we were assigned to work with the military government

people, who were in civilian clothing by then. That was a training period. Then we were moved out and given our own Kreise. Some of the military government people left Germany.

Q: I imagine that at that point, it would have been relatively easy for you all... I assume that almost everyone had had military experience. You all talked the same language and had somewhat similar backgrounds, etc.

SCHIFF: Yes and no. There were some excellent people. There were also some who were not and who had taken advantage of their situations to use it for private gain. Some of them were involved in the black market. Some of them were people who just didn't do anything. I replaced one guy like that. Nothing much had happened in the Kreis for which he was supposed to be responsible. So, there were both. Things changed. That's probably what they had in mind when they recruited us, that we did have different backgrounds. We all served in the military, but we had different backgrounds and different perspectives.

Q: This was obviously a pretty bright bunch of people.

SCHIFF: Yes.

Q: Was your contract, "If you do this and do a good job, you're in the Foreign Service, become officers, etc.?"

SCHIFF: No. We all understood what the situation was. It was only a matter of about six months after we were in Germany that we got our commissions as Foreign Service officers. What we got as a result of that was a reduction in pay. It was rather significant for some of us.

Q: Where were you assigned then?

SCHIFF: We were first assigned to Schwabischvish Hall, which is in the province of Wurttemberg. I worked with a military officer. We had responsibility for two Kreise/counties. I was there for some months.

Then I was given my own two Kreise in Baden, one of which was called Buchen and the other Tauberbischofshein. That's where I stayed.

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

SCHIFF: Germany was in flux politically. During that two year period, the Korean War broke out.

Q: You were there from when to when?

SCHIFF: '50-'52. The Korean War broke out and that changed the complexion of things

very significantly. The emphasis shifted from reeducation to rearmament. One of my major tasks - and I'm sure it was true for some of my colleagues - in the second year was negotiating with the Germans for the evacuation of a German military installation, which, after the war, had then been used to house refugees from Eastern Europe. We negotiated to evacuate it so that American troops could be accommodated there. That took up a lot of time. But the reeducation effort went on. It diminished in emphasis.

Economically, the area in which I lived, Buchen and Tauberbischofsheim, were very impoverished. It was a predominantly agricultural area with small farms. Buchen at that time had a population of about 4,000. There were about as many animals in the town, many of whom lived side by side with their owners. The unemployment rate was about 15%. Under German law, the German people were obliged to accommodate refugees who had come from Eastern Europe. So, there were social tensions. There was also a degree of unrest and dissatisfaction among those who had been either expelled by communist governments or who had fled them. So, it was rather grim, but it was during that time that Erhardt was the federal economics minister, and he pushed currency reform, which enabled Germany to begin turning around economically. The Germans at that time still did not have sovereignty, and they were beginning to chafe about that as well, but that was more of an issue at the national level.

Q: How did you find local officials that you dealt with? Were they getting bored with Americans hanging around?

SCHIFF: No. I had an excellent relationship with the local officials and I suspect most of my colleagues did. They were very cooperative. We tried to help them in any way we could, in small ways. I might cite one example that had a lingering effect in my own case. The High Commission had established a special fund made up of what were then called counterpart funds, which was local currency which the U.S. owned and could then invest back into Germany. They established a fund which they were going to use to pass out grants to various activities around Germany. I worked with a German Catholic priest who had established a youth home in the area where I was. I was able to help him get a grant. My wife and I were invited back to visit that place on its 40th anniversary, which coincided with our 40th reunion. So, we did go back. It was just delightful to see the place. It had flourished and they had taken kids from many other parts of the world. It was not ethnically pure. They had kids from Ethiopia and Turkey and they even had a couple of Vietnamese kids, the boat people. I was immensely pleased to see this because it was unusual in Germany. This was in the middle of nowhere in Germany. It had become a very successful enterprise. The relationship between the priest and myself and his successor and myself was very good. With the local officials, they were excellent. It was a very good experience.

Q: Did you find much interest in the American way of doing things?

SCHIFF: I think there was a curiosity about how Americans did things. That was one of the purposes of our being there. We were the only Americans in this town. We had a little park right outside our garden. There were times when people would come sit in the park

and look into our garden to see what we were doing. They were that curious. There were frequent questions about how the Americans would do something as opposed to how the Germans did it. The Marshall Plan, which began the exchange of people and so forth, had, I believe, a major impact because of the encouragement it gave to the exchange of people.

Q: Did you have any feeling about attitudes towards the Soviet Union or East Germany?

SCHIFF: Toward the Soviet Union, the feeling on the part of most Germans was venomous. You heard it particularly from people who had lived in Eastern Germany or in other countries where the Soviets had been present. Accounts of physical abuse as well, were frequent. They just loathed them, hated them. One thing which we frequently heard, "You Americans made a great mistake." What was the great mistake? We had not gone with the Germans against the Russians.

Q: Was political life beginning to resurrect itself?

SCHIFF: Yes.

Q: Where did Wurttemberg fall within the CDU, SPD?

SCHIFF: The area was basically CDU. Both churches, evangelical and catholic, had significant influence. Still, it was different from Bavaria; less conservative.

Q: Was this an area where there had been a significant amount of immigration to the United States?

SCHIFF: I don't know.

Q: You probably would have known if there had been. You would have had people coming back.

SCHIFF: Yes. We had a little bit of that. I never saw much of it. I can think of the few people whom I met. But I doubt whether there were many former Germans living in the U.S. who returned at that time.

Q: If you were in a place where a lot of people left, after the Wirtschaftswunder in '48, they started coming back to Germany after having left there in the '30s.

SCHIFF: They were very inconspicuous and insignificant in numbers.

Q: Was there much concern about an attack from the Soviet Union?

SCHIFF: When the Korean War broke out, yes. The term that gained great currency then was "Wieder Aufrüstung." Rearmament. The allies were now looking for a German military contribution. That really turned things around.

Q: Did you have any feel about HICOG being pretty civilianized?

SCHIFF: Yes. Some of the people might have been carryovers from the military, but they were in civilian clothing and it was basically civilian – except for the commissioner in Wurttemberg-Baden, who was a general.

Q: Did you get much direction from HICOG?

SCHIFF: I'm sure we did, but I'm not sure how important it was. On certain things, I suppose we did, but there is nothing that comes to mind other than this general thrust of policy that changed after the Korean War broke out.

Q: Was there any effort made for a Foreign Service institution to come around and tell you about the Foreign Service and get you ready to be a regular officer?

SCHIFF: No. Our entry into the Foreign Service came with our next assignment. That was the introduction.

Q: Is there anything else about Germany, any events in your area?

SCHIFF: No, I can't think of major memorable events as such. It was a period of flux. That's what was memorable, the fact that so much could change in so relatively short a time, within two years. That largely was provoked by the Korean War and the changes we had at the top policy levels, which were then reflected on down.

Q: You left there in '52. Whither?

SCHIFF: Strasbourg.

Q: That was a regular Foreign Service assignment?

SCHIFF: Yes, at the consulate.

Q: You were in Strasbourg from when to when?

SCHIFF: '52 to '54. Then the Department had two things going. One was, legislation that the Department had to administer, a change in the Seaman's Visa Program. Individual seamen were going to have to be issued visas. This meant that certain parts of the world - and they thought that Liverpool, England would be one - would be just overwhelmed with new visa activity. Strasbourg was not a terribly active post at that time. I think there were only five of us there. Our only claim to fame was that the Council of Europe was there. So, the decision was made to cut our staff by one and I was the one. So, I was sent off to Liverpool to run the Seaman's Visa Program. When I got to Liverpool, the U.S. Congress had to back off this initiative.

Other governments were about to do unto us what we proposed doing to them— namely, impose obligations on individual seamen to get their own visas instead of doing them en masse – so there was a backtracking on that and that program never saw the light of day. Consequently my assignment when I got to Liverpool changed. Instead of doing visas, I was fortunate and I got to do a variety of things, including economics and labor reporting.

Q: Let's go back to Strasbourg first. What sort of work were you doing there?

SCHIFF: I did the consular work. We issued non-immigrant visas. There was a considerable number of American troops stationed in the area not too far away. They generated a demand for consular services of various kinds. That was part of my task.

Q: Strasbourg was French. How French was it?

SCHIFF: It was French.

Q: How did the French treat you at the time?

SCHIFF: The relationship with the French was fine. It was a period when relations between Alsace and the rest of France were very strained. There had been volunteers from It was alleged that some Alsatian had volunteered for the S.S.. There had also been Alsatians who had been pressed into the German military. There was a trial in France during that period of people who had been involved in a massacre in another part of France. There were Alsatians who were accused of having been participants in that. So, there was an intense animosity between other parts of France and the Alsatians. There were stories we heard about Alsatians going to Paris where their tires would be slashed or their car would be covered with graffiti. But in our own relationship, there were no problems. The language that they spoke, many of them, amongst each other, was more Germanic than French, but certainly the educated ones spoke French and spoke French with us.

Q: Who was your consul there?

SCHIFF: George Andrews.

Q: Were you doing any political or economic reporting there?

SCHIFF: No, it was strictly consular work. We had two other people doing political and economic work.

Q: Your consular work was concerned mainly with GIs stationed nearby?

SCHIFF: Yes. Marriages, births, renewing passports, etc. Then the non-immigrant visa business. I also did some commercial work, but there was not much of that.

Q: There wasn't much non-immigrant business, was there?

SCHIFF: There was some. Of course, you had to be careful at the time. There was concern about people using a non-immigrant visa as a means of immigrating. Also, of course, there were people who were being screened for their participation – whether they were French or in some cases at that time we covered the Saar as well, so we were getting Germans – in Nazi activities. But it wasn't a voluminous business by any means.

Q: Did you have the feeling that there was a lot of sorting out between the Germans and the French at the time?

SCHIFF: Yes. This became a remarkable period in European history. You had the first of the European Union initiatives – the Schumann Plan, the Coal and Steel Community, the Atomic Energy Community... I still think in retrospect that Europe was fortunate in having had a coincidence of five or six unusually gifted statesmen in office at the same time during this period – people like Adenauer, Schumann, de Gasperi, Paul Henri Spaak. It was a remarkable collection. Then there was Churchill, of course, in England. Europe benefitted from that.

Q: Was that area involved in French politics?

SCHIFF: There were a couple of things. One thing which was going on that we were interested in was the French reaction to McCarthyism. We had the same interest in my next assignment, which was in England. Of course, the left in particular was very vocal on the subject, but it was not confined to the left. We're talking nationally. Then there was the relationship between France and a European movement in general but particularly at that time the French attitude towards German rearmament. We were pushing hard for it and the French were very reluctant to see it happen, of course. So, that was a big issue at the time. And the role of communists in the government.

Q: How about the communists, this being a working area, the Saar and all?

SCHIFF: I don't think there was a significant communist membership. Alsace was largely agricultural at the time. There were pockets of industry, but I don't recall that the communists in that part of the country were a particularly important factor. They were there, but were not terribly important. There is a major university in Strasbourg. I don't remember hearing a great deal about communist activity there either.

Q: You went off to Liverpool for this aborted assignment. You were in Liverpool from when to when?

SCHIFF: I got to Liverpool in late 1953 and left at the end of '54.

Q: How was living in England at that time?

SCHIFF: Tough. Some food items were still being rationed. Living quarters were hard to find. One of my more amusing experiences was in looking for a place to live. By that

time, we had three children. We ended up staying in a hotel in a small village outside Liverpool for close to three months, which is the maximum that we were allowed. I had advertised in one of the Liverpool papers for a house in a nice neighborhood. First of all, I learned what the definition of “nice neighborhood” was and how elastic that could be. Then I got one call from a guy on the Isle of Man, asking me if I wouldn’t really like to rent a house that he had there. How was I supposed to get there? “Well, you can fly.” This was one unrich American who couldn’t fly. That was tough.

Then living in a hotel with three little kids, the oldest of whom was five... We had brought our German maid with us, who had been with us since two of the kids were born. So, we were a curiosity in this hotel. If you’ve seen the play “Separate Tables,” you can appreciate the hotel atmosphere. This was peopled mainly by elderly women, most of whom were widows of cotton brokers who had been quite prominent in Liverpool society in the pre-war period. They couldn’t afford to keep up their big houses any longer, so they moved into a hotel. Our kids were objects of intense curiosity. The food in this hotel was not great. Our son, who was the oldest of the kids, about five, one night in a not very muffled voice said, “I don’t like English cooking. I like French cooking.” We weren’t declared *persona non grata*, but... But housing was tough there.

Q: Who was our consul general at the time?

SCHIFF: Sheldon Thomas. There was flux in England at the time. One of the things which was happening was that the first trickle of West Indians was beginning to migrate into England. This created social tensions, particularly in certain cities and brought out a not very nice quality among some of the English middle class - racist attitudes. It wasn’t limited to middle class. It was also true of working class people - not where we were, but in places like Manchester and similar industrial cities in the Midlands where working class whites were beginning to fear the job competition from blacks as well as other forms of intercourse which they didn’t like. This was happening at a time when

Britain was not in great shape economically. Nevertheless, it was an interesting time to be there.

Q: What sort of work were you doing?

SCHIFF: Besides administrative work, I was doing a lot of economic and political-economic reporting. Liverpool was unusual among major British cities at that time because most of the others were controlled politically by Labour. Because it had a particular demographic structure, Liverpool was still controlled by Conservatives. The reason for this was the fact that Liverpool was the principal point of entry for the Irish who were migrating for jobs. This tended to swell the local Catholic population. What you had was voting along religious lines rather than class lines. The Protestant white working class, which might have voted for Labour in other cities, in Liverpool voted because of their religious sentiments for the Conservatives. So the Conservatives were still in power. That changed in the period that I was there.

Q: The interesting thing is that if one were to go and eat in Germany, which had been defeated during the war, and do the same in England, you'd probably eat a lot better in Germany.

SCHIFF: Oh, you would.

Q: This was reflected in other things, too. What was the reason for this? Germany was essentially doing better than England.

SCHIFF: I'm not sure. There are some who would probably attribute it to the different rules of the trade unions. German trade unions by comparison to the British and American were very docile. I think that made a difference. There were also concerns on the part of British business that there were too many restrictive labor practices in Britain which had the effect of limiting productivity.

But other than these generalities, I don't remember what the explanation was. The British were also heavily dependent on imports, and they were having trouble exporting.

Q: Did you have much dealing with the British authorities?

SCHIFF: Some. They were one of several sources. My special beat was the labor side of things. So, my contacts were with the labor unions and with the Labour Party. But some were with other government officials who were not politically affiliated one way or another. But I don't recall that I depended heavily on British officials for information.

Q: Were we at the consulate general looking at the British trade unions as being a hindrance to the development of Great Britain?

SCHIFF: I can remember one particular source of concern. It was not so much with productivity as it was with the politics of trade unions. That was the role of the communists, and I don't use the term loosely. These were Party members. They had considerable influence among dock workers, which was the big union there. On the other hand, I was quite well acquainted with the man who was the head of the Dock Workers Union, who always reminded me of the actor Victor McLaughlin in physical appearance. He was not a communist by any means; he was a socialist. I can remember going to a big meeting that the Communist Party staged where they actually succeeded in fomenting a strike under very questionable circumstances. It was that kind of thing that was a matter of concern.

Q: Did the hand of the embassy rest at all on your work?

SCHIFF: Not a great deal.

Q: In '55, you left Liverpool. Where did you go?

SCHIFF: Trinidad.

Q: You had to see the source of the immigrants.

SCHIFF: We had to see firsthand why the sun never set on the British Empire. Wisely, the British went south and grabbed up the good tropical islands to compensate for their not very attractive climate.

Q: Today is January 3, 2001. Stan, 1955: Trinidad. You were there until when?

SCHIFF: From 1955 for not much over a year.

Q: What were you doing in Trinidad?

SCHIFF: I was the economic and labor officer. At that time, the consulate in what was then British Guyana had been closed, so we also had jurisdiction over British Guyana as well as Trinidad.

Q: Trinidad at that point was not independent.

SCHIFF: It was still a colony. It was on the threshold of becoming independent.

Q: How would you describe the situation in Trinidad at the time?

SCHIFF: It made an interesting contrast with British Guyana. That was one of the more noteworthy things. The population, the demographics of both the island and British Guyana, were quite similar. There was a roughly even split between Indians who had come as indentured servants and blacks who were originally slaves. Then there was a small number of Europeans and also Chinese. In that sense, they were both quite similar.

But their development had been different. There had been serious racial tension in British Guyana. There had not been in Trinidad. Not that everything was by any means totally harmonious, but the relations between Indians and Africans was reasonably good.

I suppose the main concerns at that time were really twofold. One was the economic prospects for the island. The other was its political future, whether it would gain its independence. I don't remember exactly when that happened, but it did in the not too distant future.

Q: Was there a leadership developing in Trinidad at the time?

SCHIFF: Yes, there was. A man named Eric Williams became the popular leader. I had an interesting experience meeting him. I remember calling up a local newspaper to ask about getting a subscription. They asked me to identify myself, which I did. Then there was a long pause. Then suddenly I found myself talking to Eric Williams. We made a

date to get together for lunch and that began an acquaintanceship with Eric Williams, who was the principal political force on the island.

Q: How did he strike you at the time?

SCHIFF: Intelligent, curious, anxious to develop a good relationship with the U.S.

Q: Later, there was a strained relationship. Eric Williams sort of marched to his own drum. Where was his source of strength?

SCHIFF: Basically in the African community there. Trinidad was somewhat different from the islands in that it had oil. It had a major resource. But the preponderance of the working class was black. How much support he drew from the Indian population I'm not sure. I don't recall that there were at that time particularly prominent Indians in political leadership roles.

Q: I assume they would be more in the mercantile class.

SCHIFF: Yes, they were. They were fairly numerous in the sugar plantations as well. The civil service jobs, the bureaucracy, was predominantly African. Also, in terms of cabinet positions or senior level bureaucrats, those were overwhelmingly African.

Q: Was there a British colonial rule or had it been pretty well turned over to the people of Trinidad?

SCHIFF: There was still a British Governor General there at the time, but it was not long after we left that Trinidad gained its independence. We had become friendly with a very intelligent Chinese who served as Secretary of Labor at that time. This was still under colonial rule. He became the first native Governor General after independence. This was a period of fairly rapid evolution. I can't remember precise dates and how the chronology actually spelled out. But they were already priming themselves for independence.

Q: Did Tobago play much of a role?

SCHIFF: Not at that time, no.

Q: Over in British Guyana, what were you doing?

SCHIFF: I didn't go over often, but I went over there a couple of times in the year that I was in Trinidad. It was interesting because it was so different. They were also going through an evolution there. I remember talking to the head of the British corporate firm which virtually controlled the economic life of British Guyana, who was retiring. I remember being struck in this conversation by the serious resistance this guy had to the desegregation which had been occurring in the area. The idea of socially desegregated clubs, for example, was anathema to him. It was a good thing he was going back to England because he would have been very uncomfortable there. Their situation was

somewhat different. This was a period when Cheddie Jagan, a communist, who had been in office and had been thrown out of office by the British, was sort of on the sidelines but nevertheless was a virtual reality. The mayor of Georgetown was a Chinese at the time. But the political prospects in that period for Trinidad were much better than they were for British Guyana, which had been in trouble because of concern about Jagan.

Q: Jagan was married to an American and was a dentist by training. He was very left-wing.

SCHIFF: Communist. His wife was a communist. You didn't have that kind of thing on Trinidad, that kind of movement.

Q: On Trinidad, did we have a consulate general?

SCHIFF: We had a consulate general and we also had the naval station there, which was a legacy from World War II. It had been reduced in size but it was still a significant presence on the island. Those were the two main offices.

Q: Who was the consul general?

SCHIFF: Walter Jenkins.

Q: How did he operate?

SCHIFF: I don't recall anything distinctive in his style, but a very nice guy who got on well with people. We had held a small dinner at our house to introduce him to Eric Williams because I knew I was going out and I thought it was important that he had established that contact with Williams. I liked Jenkins.

Q: Were you finding that as Trinidad was moving towards independence we were thinking that this was a great idea or was there a certain amount of foot dragging on our part?

SCHIFF: I don't think there was at that time any particular resistance to it. What was ultimately going to affect us was the disposition of the Navy station, and that was not a topic of discussion in my year there.

Q: Part of your assignment was to follow the labor movement. Were there any problems with that?

SCHIFF: Not as far as we were concerned. But there was always a certain amount of restiveness within labor because they were not the most handsomely rewarded people in the population for the kind of work that they did. But still, Trinidad was economically probably the best off or certainly one of the best off in the British Caribbean.

Q: As labor officer, was there any AFL-CIO connection?

SCHIFF: Not with my job.

Q: They didn't have anybody come down?

SCHIFF: Not that I can recall. This was relatively small potatoes compared to Central or South America.

Q: You left there in '55. Where did you go?

SCHIFF: I went to Cornell. This was so that I could appreciate the warmth of the tropical Caribbean. It was for a year of graduate work in economics and to give us an appreciation for how other people live. We had gone from England, where it had been cool and my wife had not been well (she had developed a respiratory problem there and Trinidad was a great place to recuperate from that). Then we were thrust into northern New York and the cold, but at least it was clean cold.

Q: You were at Cornell from '55 to '56 taking economics. Different schools have different thrusts. What was Cornell pushing in economics?

SCHIFF: There wasn't anything in particular. There was one thing that I considered fortunate about my assignment to Cornell as opposed to some other places... I had a friend who spent a year at Princeton about the same time and he was inundated with mathematics. I was spared the math and was grateful for that. There was a good deal of interest in less developed countries at Cornell. But I covered a broad range of economics in that year. It was a good program.

Q: As a State Department person, did you get any particular feeling from people? Were you a resource about foreign policy?

SCHIFF: That was a strange period in American academic life. At least to an outsider like myself, what was visible was the effects of McCarthyism. What I found was that in the classrooms, the faculty were rather guarded in what they said. Many of the faculty, some of whom were contemporaries of mine, were interested in foreign affairs. I can't recall that students were particularly, and I was not used as a resource.

Q: In '56, whither?

SCHIFF: Karachi, Pakistan.

Q: You were there from '56 to when?

SCHIFF: '58.

Q: Karachi was the capital of Pakistan at that time.

SCHIFF: '57-'59.

Q: You were at the embassy?

SCHIFF: Yes.

Q: Were you the economic officer?

SCHIFF: Yes, with a consular concentration on financial and economic planning activities.

Q: Who was our ambassador at the time?

SCHIFF: His name was Langley. He was a political appointee from New Hampshire or New England. He had been a newspaper publisher or editor up there. This was a rather exciting period in one way. It was during this time that the first military coup took place. In my first year, what I saw was a country going downhill and a political situation deteriorating. They were having real trouble with self-government. Then the military intervened and there was a military takeover. In my second year that I was there, the military was in control. The planning function – and I was pretty close to the planning organization there – took on a more important role under the military leadership than it had under civilian rule. There was less politics involved in some of the economic decisions, but Pakistan struggled throughout. It was a poor country and remained very poor.

Q: When you arrived, who was the political leader?

SCHIFF: I can't remember now.

Q: That can be filled in. But it had a regular democracy?

SCHIFF: Yes.

Q: What were you all seeing about this?

SCHIFF: There were two things that I can recall in particular. One was corruption, which was pervasive and which became a corrosive element in society. The other was inflation. This was interesting. The rate of inflation relative to many other countries was quite modest and yet it had a very pronounced effect, particularly on the thinking of the military. They felt their own economic situation was deteriorating. This was identified as one of the causative factors behind the decision to stage the coup, to get more discipline into the country's economic life.

Also, in the foreign policy area, there were continuing problems with India.

Q: I keep losing track of the Indo-Pak wars. This was between wars?

SCHIFF: Yes. But the memories of partition – this was not too long after – were still pretty vivid in people’s minds. We heard lots of tales of people’s experiences during the exchanges of population there. We had a number of good friends who had come from India and had their own horror tales to tell. That was also interesting, the fact that people who had come from India were among those who were most successful economically in the business world, very successful.

Q: What was the planning organization, the bureaucracy? Had the British left a pretty solid economic network?

SCHIFF: No, I don’t think so. British rule there was basically concentrated in maintaining law and order. It was not terribly interested in Pakistan’s economic development. I don’t know under what circumstances the planning structure was started, but when I was there, they had a group from Harvard under contract to work with the planning board. They had some very able people in that group. They had developed a pool of real talent among the younger Pakistanis, most of whom had done graduate work in England or in the U.S., some of whom I maintained contact with long after. A few of them became prominent years later in the international institutions in Washington. One of them became head of one of the offshoots of the IMF. Another one whom I knew very well, who was a very bright guy, came to the World Bank and ultimately became the number three man. He was the walking brain, a guy full of imagination and ideas. After another coup in Pakistan years later, he was asked to come home and served as a minister of planning or economics. He died rather young at about 60.

Q: Were you in Pakistan at the time of the coup?

SCHIFF: Yes and no. Officially, we were there, but it just so happened that my wife and I had gotten an R&R trip and we were able to fly out of Pakistan on a military plane to Saudi Arabia and we ended up going to Greece. It was while we were out of the country with our three kids still in Karachi being looked after by some close friends that the coup took place. We were able to learn that the coup had been bloodless and the kids were okay.

Q: Coming back, what was your observation of how the government was working? Was it a change or was it pretty much the same people?

SCHIFF: The people who were doing the planning, the people in the finance ministry, except for the minister, remained the same. They had some very able people. Those whom I knew best, both in the senior ranks of the finance ministry and in the planning, were very able. They all stayed on.

Q: Was it the problem that the country was poor and that no matter how much you plan, it’s not planners who are going to change corruption?

SCHIFF: No, it wasn’t. It was among the political leadership where it was assumed or

suspected that the corruption existed. It also undoubtedly existed in the lower ranks of the bureaucracy, especially among agencies responsible for enforcing regulations. Bribery could always be used to circumvent regulations. That was always a temptation.

Q: My little experience with Indian bureaucracy was as I saw it when I was in Dahahran when I'd go over to Bahrain and there were mostly Indian clerks. I'd see these files of dossiers piled high on desks and people going around and taking both key and coolies moving these dossiers around. It did not look very efficient. I've heard that the Indian bureaucracy was bureaucratically sporadic.

SCHIFF: I think that existed. My most memorable experience occurred when I and my family had driven from Karachi to Lahore to New Delhi. In crossing the border into India, what I particularly remember was that Indian officials copied down everything that was in our passports. For what reason, I don't know, but it was a painfully slow process. When we were coming back to Pakistan, we got a royal welcome from customs people and other Pakistanis who were maintaining control over passage of the border. It was, "Oh, you're back in Pakistan. You're among family now." They were very nice, not that the Indians had been hostile, but they had just been very bureaucratic.

Q: Did we have an aid program going on there?

SCHIFF: We had an enormous aid program, both military and economic. Both had sizeable contingents of people from AID or its predecessor, ICA, and also the military and Corps of Engineers, all of whom were active there. That was a period when we had the CENTO Treaty. Pakistan had a very friendly relationship with the U.S., whereas our relationship with India was not as good.

Q: Was there common knowledge about the U-2s flying out of Pakistan at that point?

SCHIFF: I don't recall any conversations about that.

Q: Was Bhutto a figure at that time?

SCHIFF: I just don't remember. I cannot remember the names of the political leadership in Pakistan at that time. The one name which comes back – and I'm not even sure of it – is the finance minister, who gave a speech just a couple of weeks before the coup at which I happened to be present. He said, "The winds of change are blowing and if we don't bend, we're going to get blown over." A couple weeks later, they were.

Q: One of the things we can all identify with is localitis. While you were at the embassy, what was the spirit of looking at India and what was coming out of New Delhi? Did you find you were all identifying with the Pakistanis?

SCHIFF: Yes. I seem to recall a conversation with our political counselor about something I might have written that was critical of the Pakistanis, and he said, "Well, in Delhi, our embassy would never have done that with the Indians, so lay off." Yes,

localitis did exist. Of course, this also existed here in Washington, not in terms of localitis but in terms of identifying more favorably with one country as opposed to the other. At that time, the Indians were close to the Soviets and this was anathema back here. That was a factor. Nehru, who was in office at that time, was not exactly on the most intimate of terms with the American leadership. My impression was that American leadership at the highest levels was much more comfortable in conversation with Pakistanis and felt that there was too much sanctimoniousness on the part of the Indians.

Q: Both the Americans and the Indians are almost too much alike. They tend to lecture each other and take a high moral tone, looking down on the other. Did you find this with the Pakistanis?

SCHIFF: No. Our relationship at that time was quite good. Certainly in personal relationships, it was excellent.

Q: Was there concern at that time about the Soviet menace?

SCHIFF: Yes, this was one of the basic concerns with respect to India and also one of the underlying concerns in the establishment of CENTO and our willingness to continue supporting CENTO. Whether it was a meaningful treaty is another story. It was something which was part of our thinking at the time.

Q: You would have been there during the overthrow of the king in Iraq? That sort of blew a big hole in CENTO.

SCHIFF: I can't remember the date of that. At least from my vantage point-

Q: I think it was July '58.

SCHIFF: '58 is what sticks in my mind, too. I don't remember being conscious of any particular reverberations in Pakistan, certainly not in the area that I worked in. I don't recall anything particular about repercussions from that.

Q: You left there in '59. Whither?

SCHIFF: Washington.

Q: It was about time, I guess.

SCHIFF: We had been out a long time.

Q: You were in Washington from '59 to when?

SCHIFF: About '64.

Q: What were you doing when you first came back?

SCHIFF: The first couple of years, I was on the Turkish desk working in economics and the military aid program. The second two years, I had been moved into the European Bureau and was working on European regional economics, specifically on the OECD.

Q: When you took over looking at the Turkish economy, how did Turkey look to you?

SCHIFF: When I moved into that job, Turkey had just finished shortly before negotiating a so-called “stabilization agreement” with the IMF. They had been in very sore straits economically. The IMF had gone in there in a fairly significant way and negotiated a program to straighten things out economically. That’s when I came in. Turkey had been at odds with the World Bank and had been deprived of an important source of funds. One of the things I was interested in – and it was a shared view – was in trying to restore their good relationship with the World Bank.

Q: Was the strained relationship a professional or political one? Were they screwing up their repayments or malinvesting?

SCHIFF: I suspect it was because of the mismanagement of the economy, the fact that they had gotten themselves into another difficult predicament and had to have the IMF come in there and bail them out. Turkey has enormous potential, but over the years it’s had trouble managing its economy. It’s again at that point right now.

Q: Did you have much to do with the Turkish embassy?

SCHIFF: We had some, but most of the substantive work was done through our own embassy in Ankara.

Q: How well was our economic section plugged into the economy of Turkey as far as reporting?

SCHIFF: They were well connected. We had a big AID mission there as well. The economic counselor was also head of the AID mission. So, there was that kind of coordination within the house. I think they were pretty well connected and were able to keep on top of what was going on. But I hadn’t been on the desk very long when I got a call about 3:00 am saying, “Come on down to the Department.” There was a coup taking place. I had this recent experience in Pakistan and I thought maybe this was the kiss of death in Turkey. It was a very tumultuous period.

Q: What had happened?

SCHIFF: As in Pakistan, one of the things that really bothered the Turkish military was corruption. Also, the military – and it is still something which figures importantly in Turkish political life today – was very wedded to the Ataturk reforms, to the secularization of Turkish society, and to the restrictions put on religious activity. One of the things the prime minister at that time had done was to encourage the expansion and

construction of mosques all over the country. The Turkish military regarded this as a revival of religious activity and they were really disturbed by it. In addition, corruption was very pervasive. This rankled. These were probably the two principal factors that precipitated the coup.

They did not particularly like the American ambassador at that time, Fletcher Warren. One of the things I remember reading in the earliest cables coming out was that the military had backed a large truck into the ambassador's driveway so he couldn't get out while this was all unfolding. The coup was for the most part bloodless and over rather quickly, but then we got into the next stage, which was the hanging of the country's three senior most officials. The hangings went on despite the protests that came from the U.S. and the West.

Q: Later on in Pakistan, they hung Bhutto, too. Usually, you don't see this. The military is taken a little more seriously, I guess.

SCHIFF: One of the things that people had said about the ambassador at that time was that his experience up until then had been exclusively in Latin America. He had misread situations in Pakistan, thinking of it Latin American terms, whereas this was something totally different.

Q: Was there concern from the economic side about too much money going to the military sector? This was Cold War time.

SCHIFF: Yes. I think there would have been voices on both sides, as usual. Someone on the economic side arguing that we needed more emphasis on economic development and the military saying we've got to have more on the military side.

Q: Dealing with the Turks, did you get involved with the Greeks? Were you aware that anything that you did in Turkey had to be replicated in Greece? Was Greece a concern in your work?

SCHIFF: Yes. It became one. After I had been on the desk for some time, we developed an aid package within the OECD. It might have been the outcome of a Wise Man mission. We were developing a package. I might have been the author of it. We had to do something in parallel for the Greeks. Both were interested in establishing a relationship with the European Community. We, the United States, had to view them as equally qualified.

Q: By the time you left after about two years, did you see that the military was beginning to take care of some of the problems with corruption? Was the economy in better straits?

SCHIFF: I had a stewardship of two years and I would have not left that place in less good shape than the condition in which I found it [Laughter]. I don't think I can recall anything in particular. The economy was perhaps somewhat better off as a result of the IMF stabilization program and the beginning of a restoration of the relationship with the

World Bank and other countries.

Q: What was your impression of the World Bank at that time? In recent years, the World Bank has been under increasing criticism because it sometimes tends to make demands on economies that have rather profound political or humanitarian repercussions.

SCHIFF: I don't recall that this was a factor at the time, although it's something that people discussed. The basic and abiding concern was with the strength of the economy. I don't think people were thinking in terms of social consequences – political consequences, yes, but not in the same terms as the Bank is being criticized now.

Q: Were we the only game in town as far as aid goes?

SCHIFF: We were the principal one, but we were not the only one. I think the Germans became an important source of financial assistance.

Q: The Germans have always had that Turkish relationship.

SCHIFF: Yes. There was something else which had begun developing and became increasingly important over time. The Germans were accepting large numbers of Turkish workers, so-called “gastarbeiter”. This became a very significant source of income for the Turks. A lot of this money was being repatriated to Turkey. That was important. The Turks did put considerable store in their relations with Germany. And conversely, the Germans with the Turks.

Q: They needed the Turkish labor.

SCHIFF: Yes. Also, they were one of the more important members of NATO, which attached considerable strategic importance to Turkey.

Q: While you were on the Turkish desk, were you picking up any concerns about Soviet meddling in Turkey, trying to destabilize it?

SCHIFF: I don't remember destabilizing. The Soviets were certainly interested in Turkey, but on the part of the Turks, the Russians were looked on as pariahs. There was a fierce resistance to things Soviet. That ran deep in Turkish thinking.

Q: At that point, you were in the NEA Bureau. Then you moved over to the European Bureau. Turkey in 1974 was put into the European Bureau. What was your exact position when you moved over to the European Bureau?

SCHIFF: In time, I became the officer in charge of OECD affairs. But I had started out with a concentration on international economic assistance, on the aid programs, on coordinating them. Some of the issues we got into then have remained issues over the years – one, for example, was foreign debt on the part of Third World countries, a prominent issue in recent times. It was a major concern at that time as well. And then, as

today, U.S. concern about the terms in which European aid was being extended to Turkey.

Q: What was your concern in dealing with foreign debt? You were with EUR?

SCHIFF: Yes.

Q: Was this a matter of coordinating with the other European countries?

SCHIFF: The problem at the time was that the European countries were using export credits which have much tougher terms (higher interest rates, shorter repayment periods) than our aid program did. Ours was essentially long-term supplemented occasionally by Export-Import Bank credits. But our main reliance was on the aid program. Where we might be talking 20-25 year loan repayment periods, the Europeans would have been talking about five or eight years. This was already seen as a growing problem for the recipient countries. So, we were trying to persuade the Europeans to soften their terms. This is an effort that has been sustained over a long period of time.

Q: What were our points of contact?

SCHIFF: Through a committee in the OECD, there was a so-called Development Assistance Committee. That was the focal point for all of this negotiation. Then, of course, it was supplemented by bilateral discussions.

Q: Could you explain where OECD was in its development? It's been a growing factor.

SCHIFF: First of all, it was an outgrowth of the Marshall Plan. The predecessor organization had been the Organization of European Economic Cooperation. The big change was with the U.S. becoming a member. Then it became the OECD. It shed its European image and became an Atlantic organization. Its sphere of activities have extended in a variety of directions. There was economic policy and development assistance, which were important. But it also got into labor and manpower questions, into science policy questions. Underlying this was a U.S. goal of establishing closer relationships across the Atlantic and furthering the integration of the economies. Our basic thrust was to get the people who were policymakers in governments to carry on face to face discussions rather than relying on diplomats. The object was to bring the policymakers from their capitals and bring them into close contact. This became a very important function. For example, you had senior people from treasury or finance departments coming together to discuss economic policy. When the Kennedy administration proposed a deficit finance budget, this would normally have been regarded by the financial types as inflationary. But at the time, we got the approval and sanction of the European finance people, so this was a big plus in selling the program to the Congress.

In time, we did the same thing with science policy. The organization had had a cooperative scientific research program which was rather narrowly focused. What we did

was to try to shift the focus to enable science policymakers from capital and discuss broader policy issues. I think it worked. People felt increasingly comfortable with this improved communication and about being able to call their opposite numbers in a capital somewhere in Europe and discuss things directly. This meant less reliance on the diplomats. They were the facilitators. The principals were the people from the capitals.

Q: This would be in very close cooperation with Treasury. How did you find your opposite numbers at Treasury? Was this still in the trying out stage?

SCHIFF: It was early, but as I recall, for example, with the Council of Economic Advisors, with the White House science advisor, with the people in AID who worked on development policy, I can't say it was a frictionless operation, but basically they understood the purposes and the objectives that we were aiming at and supported them. It didn't mean that you always got exactly what you were looking for in terms of cooperation. There were always national interests at play. But at least it began the construction of a system for cooperation which made eminent sense. That is vastly improved communications across the Atlantic.

Q: How about some of the players? So, often in matters dealing with Europeans, particularly Western powers, the French seem to take a contrary view. Was that a problem?

SCHIFF: It's not something that sticks out in my mind. Later, in a much later assignment when I was in Brussels working with the European Community, that was a different story. But at that time, I can't recall that the French were a particular obstacle.

Q: When we're talking about the Third World, where was the assistance going?

SCHIFF: I don't think I can answer that.

Q: This was a period when Africa was opening up and becoming independent.

SCHIFF: This was the beginning of the Kennedy administration and the beginning of major attention to the Alliance for Progress, so that became a real attention-getter.

Q: Latin America?

SCHIFF: Yes. Then, of course, there would have been the traditional aid programs which were the more important ones to countries like Turkey, Greece, Israel, Pakistan... I assume Indonesia and the Philippines were probably significant recipients. But the Alliance for Progress got major attention.

Q: Within the European Bureau, where did your position fit in?

SCHIFF: There was a regional office in the European Bureau. One part of it was devoted to NATO and the other part on the economic side was devoted to the European

Community and to OECD.

Q: At that time, what was the spirit with the OECD? Was it that this represented a step in the integration of Europe?

SCHIFF: I would say, in a very general sense, yes, although the real integration process was unfolding in Brussels. But one of the problems of the integration process was what happened to the countries that were outside the six. This represented a forum by which you could reach out and try to work out some of those problems. Of course, our major interest was in establishing the Atlantic relationship. I think at a very early stage in the Kennedy administration, George Ball, who was then the Under Secretary, gave a speech in which he spoke about Atlantic interdependence, which is the first time I remember hearing that expression. It might have been done in conjunction with a July Fourth Independence day speech where he worked in the notion of Atlantic interdependence. So, there was that interest also, developing a partnership.

Q: Did you feel that you were a bit like missionaries as we worked to further this relationship? What you were doing in the OECD was all part of this. There are Europeanists and then there are the other groups. This was seen as almost a priesthood of people who were preaching this. Did you feel part of that?

SCHIFF: Yes, I have to confess... I guess the notion was both European and Atlantic at the same time. It became more intense with the passage of time, as some of the problems began cropping up.

Q: My personal feeling is that it is one of the cornerstones of American policy. The whole idea was to keep these damn Europeans together so they didn't fight each other and drag us in.

SCHIFF: Exactly. A lot of interest existed in strengthening the bonds among the Europeans through NATO and the OECD. They complemented each other. I think it had paid off.

Q: Yes. You were in Washington during the Missile Crisis in October of '62. That wasn't your area of the world, but on the personal side, how did you view that?

SCHIFF: I was scared to death. But it did have some effect. I was not personally involved in this and I was hearing this from a distance, but there was concern about some of what we had in Turkey. But I was not involved in that. But, yes, this was a period of nervousness.

Q: How did the assassination of Kennedy hit you?

SCHIFF: I was devastated. I assume it was true for everybody that this was the shining light, this was the guy who was really building the city on the hill. Not that I didn't find fault with what some of the Kennedy administration did, or not so much did, as the way

in which some of its people conducted some themselves. I remember getting somewhat involved with the initial attempts within the bureaucracy to get something going on the Peace Corps. It wasn't that the idea was objectionable. It's that some of the people who were doing the things within the bureaucracy who were political appointees were not always the easiest people to deal with.

Q: I would think that your main leadership in the area you were working with would be George Ball as opposed to Dean Rusk, who was much more looking at Asia. Europe was sort of turned over to Ball, was that your impression?

SCHIFF: Yes, particularly in this area. He had a strong interest in it. He and the people whom he had as his principal assistants, Art Hartman and Bob Schaetgel.

Q: Douglas Dillon was over in Treasury. He was also a strong supporter, wasn't he?

SCHIFF: Yes, and he had as one of his principal advisors John Leddy. He became later on he had been Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs in the State Department.

Q: Was your feeling that the State Department at that time had a pretty strong economic team?

SCHIFF: It was a difficult period. There was friction between the trade policy part of the Economics Bureau, which was very global and GATT minded, and the European Bureau, which was very regional oriented. There was real friction between the two. From what I've heard, it was Ball who ultimately refereed this one and put the emphasis on the regional.

Q: GATT dealt with what later became the Kennedy Round, didn't it?

SCHIFF: The Kennedy Round was just one operation under the GATT.

Q: But you had these two things going at the same time. There was some contradiction.

SCHIFF: The people in the Economics Bureau were worried about the discriminatory effects of allowing the European Community to adopt what were really preferential arrangements. On the European side of the State Department, the tendency was to see it not simply in economic terms, but in political as well.

Q: By this time, you were formally in the economic specialty?

SCHIFF: Yes.

Then in '64, I went to Brussels to work in our Mission to the European Communities. My specific assignment was the Kennedy Round negotiations. I was working on trade issues.

Q: This was '64 to when?

SCHIFF: '67.

Q: Could you explain what the Kennedy Round meant?

SCHIFF: The overall objective was to lower tariff barriers worldwide on a nondiscriminatory basis. Tariffs at that time were still fairly high, particularly in certain sectors. In our tariff structure, we had certain sectors which were fairly modest in terms of the percentage of tariff, but there were others, chemicals being one and some particular sectors within the chemical area, which were very high. The Europeans had averaged their tariffs, so they didn't have the highs and lows that we did. And of course, we wanted the Japanese involved. The major agricultural exporters - the Canadians, the Australians, the Argentines - shared our concern about the highly protective arrangement for agriculture the European community had put in place and our interest in maintaining effective access to that larger market.

Q: To catch the times, by this point, were tariffs basically to protect internally or were they to raise money?

SCHIFF: In most cases, it was to protect. Some of these, as in the case of this chemical area that I was talking about, were a holdover from something that happened during World War I where we were concerned about protecting our organic chemicals industry. It was the Germans who dominated the market at that time. This was done to protect a sector of American industry. It was seen by others outside the United States and perhaps even many within the United States who were not particularly interested in this protected sector as outdated. It was something that became an important target especially for the Europeans. This was just one example. There were others in other countries, too. On the other hand, as I just mentioned, the agricultural exporters were quite apprehensive about being able to compete in the European community market because of the highly protectionist regime they had for their farmers.

Q: What was the state of the European Community when you were in Brussels from '64-'67?

SCHIFF: A work in progress. There was a serious disruption at one point, about 1965, when the French walked out for a period of time and totally disrupted the internal community business. Of course, it had a paralyzing effect.

Q: This was just about the time that they opted out of NATO, wasn't it?

SCHIFF: I can't remember the date. One of the things they were concerned about was majority voting. At that time, the Community operated on the basis of unanimity. When they vacated the premises for a time, it had a very profound effect on the negotiations. In time, they came back. They were, particularly with respect to agriculture, much more protectionist than other countries. They were a main obstacle to doing more ambitious things in agriculture. As you know from subsequent history, the European Union put up

stiff resistance to liberalizing the agricultural market...

Q: I've been told that while the French put up this great display, which is heartfelt, the Germans very quietly smuggled out underneath it and didn't let the French carry their water.

SCHIFF: That's very true. German agriculture was higher cost and therefore higher priced, than French agriculture. Within the Community, the French were the most efficient agricultural producers. As they saw it, the original internal community political bargain was French agriculture for German industry. They felt that the Germans were not doing their part. But this has been a continuing problem. The French had what they consider a more socially responsible view with respect to the agricultural policy. In the United States, the technological revolution in agriculture gave impetus to a massive displacement of people working in agriculture, both labor and smaller independent farmers. We paid a heavy price for this in the '50s and '60s because many of these people did not have the skills for industrial jobs and also had to move into urban areas, which created social and racial tensions. The French, as they perceived the same situation, recognized that change was coming and that increasing productivity in agriculture meant need fewer people would be needed, but they wanted that movement of people off the farms to be much slower so that they could accommodate them socially and economically. You get these two competing visions of how society should operate. We emphasize efficiency. The French are somewhat more compassionate about this. So, the game is to try to strike a balance between these two things.

Q: What part of this business did your job and your colleagues have?

SCHIFF: I was the one in our mission who was assigned the task of following the Kennedy Round. I was the one who performed the liaison between our mission in Geneva, which is where the trade negotiations went on, and the European Community officials. My contacts in Brussels were with both the community's staff who worked on these problems as well as with the missions from the individual country members of the organization. Then I would go down to Geneva and sit in on the negotiations there. I was the liaison with Ambassador Mike Blumenthal, who was the head of the delegation at that time. So, it was a fascinating job.

Q: Who was the ambassador of the EC mission?

SCHIFF: Jack Tuthill. Excellent.

Q: He had come out of Brazil, where he had been involved in Operation Topsy, which was to cut down on the number of Americans in our mission in Brazil, which was successful for a year or two.

SCHIFF: He didn't have to worry about that in Brussels because we had a small mission with an excellent caliber of people. Very professional. Highly regarded by other countries. But he also had been ambassador to the OECD. So, he had varied European

experience.

Q: When you were going between Brussels and Geneva, what was your role?

SCHIFF: Eating well. The dining in Brussels was fabulous and it was equally fabulous in Geneva.

No, I was a source of information to our mission and to Washington about the thinking of the European community on the major trade issues. That was my principle task, to be the reporter and the analyst of European views and positions. Then conversely, to pass on to the Europeans who were following this the views of the U.S.

Q: When the French pulled out of this, was everybody standing around with their mouths open?

SCHIFF: I can't remember specially what transpired, except that the thing slowed down to a crawl. I don't remember how long they stayed out, but it wasn't forever and it was in sufficient time that we could complete the negotiations within the time established by U.S. legislation – with some cliff-hangers along the way.

At one point, there was a headline in the paper that Secretary of State Dean Rusk was about to fly to Geneva to try to get these negotiations settled one way or another. That didn't happen.

Q: What about some of the other delegations? How about the British? How were our relations with them?

SCHIFF: Good. They were probably closer in their thinking to us than they were to the European Community. The agricultural exporters were much closer in their thinking to us. Agriculture was a real stumbling block. The European Community and particularly the French felt they had not been a community for terribly long. It was established in 1958. It was still a fragile structure. But the Australians, Argentines, and Canadians' objectives were similar to ours. The British in the industrial area similarly. I didn't follow the negotiations with the Japanese, but one thing I do remember was that when the agreement was finally signed, there were still bilateral negotiations going on between the Japanese and our guys.

What we learned in later years or came to appreciate more keenly was that there were so-called "non-tariff barriers" which were a lot more or certainly equally significant with tariffs. What you might call "non-tariff barriers" frequently had to do with institutional arrangements or attitudes that were internal to a society and they were after much more difficult to deal with.

Q: Speaking of that, did you have the feeling that, looking back at our own system, we talk in big terms of freeing things, but we have a pretty heavily subsidized agricultural system of our own?

SCHIFF: Yes, we do.

Q: Was that on the table, too?

SCHIFF: Yes. That was part of the negotiations. What we were talking about on the European side was similar, but they had introduced a very complex system of protection at the border, which was designed basically to limit competition on price. We became very much the residual suppliers. We wanted an opportunity to compete and we were being screened out. Our opportunities were limited. That was what the negotiation was really all about. No, we were not totally pure then and I doubt that we are today – not only with agriculture, but with other things as well.

Q: The agricultural side was a little earlier on, but the great war between the United States and Europe became known as the Chicken War. Was that a factor? Could you explain what it was?

SCHIFF: I wasn't in Brussels at that time. That happened shortly before I got there. It had been settled by the time I did get there. What I did see was the legacy of this episode. The Chicken War was a case of the Europeans using a form of protection which made it very difficult for American poultry exporters to get access to the European market. We had become very efficient poultry producers. This had led to a serious dispute between the countries. As you might expect with episodes like this, there was a lingering effect, which as I perceived it, was distrust on both sides. Each side accused the other of having misbehaved, not having been trustworthy during the negotiations. It took some time to work on that, to try to overcome that. It was an intangible, but an important intangible. In time, it was overcome.

Q: When you left there in '67, do you think things were moving along? France was back in.

SCHIFF: This had been a very successful negotiation. I think it was one from which everybody could take satisfaction. When I came back to Washington, I remember saying to one of my colleagues something to the effect that, "Well, with this negotiation over, the next logical step would be monetary unity, and it would not be long off." I was only off by about 30 years.

Q: As we speak today, the euro is taking another step. It's next year that the franc and the mark will disappear.

SCHIFF: I just saw in an article that the Greeks have decided to abandon the drachma and will join. I think it's 2002 that it becomes an exchangeable currency. I think one of the things which the Kennedy Round did was to strengthen the cement of the European Community structure. They had a common external policy. They had adopted certain common policies internally as well. They had a single tariff structure for the entire community. They had a lot going for them. It seemed that the inescapable next step

would be the monetary union.

Q: How was life in Belgium in those days? Did you have much contact with the Belgians?

SCHIFF: No. My contacts were just about exclusively with people from the European Community, the so-called “permanent delegations” or the bureaucracy. I had no contact with the Belgians except their restaurants and pubs.

Q: In '67, whither?

SCHIFF: The Industrial College of the Armed Forces at Fort McNair.

Q: That would be '67-'68?

SCHIFF: Yes.

Q: This has always been an interesting experience for Foreign Service people, to rub up against another... How did you find it?

SCHIFF: Fascinating. It happened to be a very tumultuous year in America. Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King were both assassinated during that year.

Q: '68 was a year of revolution in Europe, too.

SCHIFF: One of my more poignant memories of that year was, a discussion came out of what I believe was our final class seminar. It was on the use of the military in civil disturbances. If you looked out the window of our classroom, you could see Washington burning. Had that discussion taken place early in the academic year, the sentiments and thoughts expressed would have been - in my judgement- quite different. [But] no one endorsed the rioting and looting.

Q: This was after Martin Luther King was assassinated.

SCHIFF: It was a very enlightening experience. One of the things which I got out of it was to learn not to think in terms of a uniform mindset, a military mindset. It was just folly to think of the military in this way. These were intelligent, mostly thoughtful people. They differed among themselves just like the rest of us did. For them, it was more of a learning experience than it was for those of us who came from civilian agencies and particularly for us coming from the State Department. I found it a fascinating experience.

Q: All these great promises were made, that if you go to the War College, you're specifically selected, so this means an assignment will be ready and waiting for you. Most of us who've gone through this process have found “out of sight, out of mind.”

SCHIFF: I did have an assignment waiting for me. I had no problems in that respect. I went to the Economic Bureau. I became the director of Commodity Affairs.

Q: You were there from when to when?

SCHIFF: By the time I got there, it was almost '69 – probably fall of '68. I stayed there for about two years and then moved to take over the Regional Affairs Office in NEA. That was from '72-'74, so this would have been '70-'72.

Q: Was Jules Katz...

SCHIFF: Jules became the deputy assistant secretary and I took over this job.

Q: He was the towering figure in the economic side. What were you doing?

SCHIFF: There were about three categories of commodities that we dealt with. The most difficult ones at that time were cotton textiles and steel. We dealt with metals and minerals. Chrome was a concern at the time. We also dealt with tropical products like coffee, cocoa, and tea.

We were still in the Johnson administration. In the Johnson administration, one of the key struggles was over steel. There was enormous pressure from the domestic steel industry as well as the unions to cut down on “the flood of imports” from outside the country. What was ultimately done (I can't say I was a party to this. The actual engineering took place just before I got there) was a so-called “voluntary restraint” arrangement. That is a real misnomer because lots of arms were twisted. The result was that major steel exporters “voluntarily” agreed to restrain their exports to the U.S.

Q: You were making a real adjustment from going out and trying to break down these barriers in Brussels and Geneva and came back and found yourself trying to keep the bastards out.

SCHIFF: Yes. There was a lot of pressure for them. Of course, the same had been true for textiles. There had been a separate deal worked out on textiles when George Ball got trade authority approved by Congress. That made the Kennedy Round possible. So, textiles were highly protected. The basic problem was working out bilateral trade agreements under that general arrangement. Jules Rutz had been intimately involved in the negotiations of an international coffee agreement. So, he tended to watch over that. But there was an interest on the part – and discussions never came to much – with respect to cocoa and tea... Then in the metals and minerals area, the main problem was chrome. This was because there was a ban on imports of chrome from Rhodesia, which made it difficult for our domestic users to get supplies of chrome. The two sources were Turkey and Russia. Getting supplies from the Soviet Union raised political questions. So, those were the things that occupied much of my attention in the two years that I was there. It wasn't a terribly enjoyable experience for reasons which you mentioned.

Q: How did the State Department operate? Were you up against the Departments of Commerce and Treasury?

SCHIFF: Some of the worst negotiations I've ever been in were internal to the U.S. with these other agencies and particularly with Commerce and Labor. These were the handmaidens of American industry and trade unions and they wanted protection. I can remember having finished a negotiation with one Latin American country and then meeting with the business group afterwards. I had led that negotiation, but the authority and the negotiation terms had been worked out by the interagency group and ultimately with some help from the White House. I walked into this room and we started the discussion and one of these guys from the management side said, "Whoever negotiated this agreement should resign right now." I was strongly tempted, but I resisted. There was that kind of atmosphere.

Q: Now, we have the Trade Representative. But in those days, was State carrying the main ball?

SCHIFF: STR [Special Trade Representative] was certainly in existence. It had come into existence during the Kennedy Round. They were a voice frequently aligned with us in terms of policy. I don't think at that time they were the sluggers in the slugfest. I think we tended to carry more weight than they did. But it was helpful to have someone as an ally. The commerce and the labor people had strong political constituencies behind them, which was what made their impact more significant.

Q: Did you get calls from congresspeople?

SCHIFF: No, not too much.

Q: That came from elsewhere?

SCHIFF: If they were interested in protection, they would probably go to the others.

Q: For the two years you were there, where did things come out?

SCHIFF: Good question. We had these restrictive arrangements on steel and textiles. The coffee agreement continued in effect. There were no additional tropical commodity agreements. Nothing in particular stands out in my mind as a major accomplishment.

Q: Was the feeling that the Kennedy Round was unraveling?

SCHIFF: You might have said that with steel, but not with textiles because the legislation that had been put in place was the price of getting a congressional agreement on trade authority. I don't think that was a surprise. Our protectionist positions on textiles were no surprise to anybody.

Q: I'm told that when the Nixon administration came in in '69, Nixon had made all sorts of promises on textiles. Of course, textiles were the principal commodity with Japan and Asian countries.

SCHIFF: Yes. South Asia - India, Pakistan – were big exporters. Then it was beginning to spread. The suppliers were going island hopping. We chased exports through a lot of the Caribbean islands even if the amounts coming in were rather insignificant. I can remember work gloves in particular. I don't remember which of the islands were involved, but we were after them, trying to clamp down on the exports.

Picking up on your point about Nixon's campaign promises, after they came into office, I remember drafting a policy paper on textiles. Phil Trezise was our assistant secretary at that time. I believe our paper and recommendations which tried to confine protection to where we thought there was a reasonable [cause]. It was received by a White House group (Arthur Burns was one of the principals involved). What we got back was something that really was protectionist. This was a political commitment that they were going to honor. It wasn't that we were proposing that they dishonor it, but we were trying to get them to do this in a way that would do less injury to the trading interest of other countries. It didn't work.

Q: In 1972, you went to NEA as director of Regional Affairs. It's very interesting that you were able to hop between bureaus, which was very definitely not the case of most people.

SCHIFF: This is one advantage of having economics as something of a specialty. You are more welcome because you practice the dismal science which nobody else understands. When I finished in Europe, I was asked what I would be interested in doing next. One of my interests was Europe or getting into the East Asia Bureau. I was very interested in that area. I had no experience with it. I was too old, too senior, so they said, "Stay where you are." But NEA was an interesting bureau, and EUR, of course, also.

Q: Today is February 6, 2001. We're going to go to NEA in 1972. Stan, what was your job?

SCHIFF: I was in charge of the Regional Affairs Office. The NEA bureau at that time extended from Greece and Turkey on one end through the Middle East, the Arab countries, Israel, Iran, and then into South Asia, through Pakistan, India, Afghanistan...

Q: Did it have the northern whole of Africa, too?

SCHIFF: No, not at that time. The reorganization came later.

Q: You were there from '72 to when?

SCHIFF: '74.

Q: Who was your boss?

SCHIFF: Joe Sisco was the assistant secretary. I reported really to the three deputy assistant secretaries. Rodger Davies was one. Chris van Hollen was another. Roy Atherton was the third one. I worked closely with them.

Q: In regional affairs, when you consider India-Pakistan and Israel, those are oceans apart really.

SCHIFF: It was not a homogeneous region. It was interesting because the region was subdivided into subregions with discreet animosities in each region or subregion. You had Greece and Turkey, which were still battling over Cyprus and still are today. You had the Arab countries and Israel. Then you had India and Pakistan.

Q: And Iran and Iraq – were they...

SCHIFF: They were not confronting each other at that stage. But at one point, we had two wars going on at the same time. I and one of the deputy assistant secretaries agreed that we could not cope if a third one broke out. I think there was some danger that a third one could have broken out.

Q: Let's walk through the regions. Let's go back to my favorite place. During this '72-'74 time, I was consulate general in Athens. Let's talk about Greece and the colonels at that time. Did you get involved in that?

SCHIFF: Not directly, but you couldn't be oblivious to the fact that they were there and the repercussions that their rule had on the rest of the region. One constant in the equation in that part of the world was the continuing tension over Cyprus. That seemed to be unending.

Q: As a regional person, what did you do?

SCHIFF: Mine was essentially a coordinating role on a variety of subjects. It ranged from a relatively new subject, narcotics, to military assistance programs, economic assistance programs, cultural affairs, questions of military supply, etc. So, it was basically coordinating both within the bureau and also within the Department with other bureaus and other agencies.

Q: Let's talk about narcotics. When I was in Athens, we had a growing problem of Americans who were getting imprisoned for smuggling drugs, getting them in Turkey or in Nepal, etc. They ended up in jail. Did you get involved in that sort of thing?

SCHIFF: Not in the details. We were more concerned with general policy and the general approach with strategy to deal with the drug problem in the region. Turkey had been a prime source, but much of our attention at that point was also directed at countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan, which were also sources of supply and whose policies differed somewhat. Of course, what we were generally concerned with was getting the cooperation in the enforcement business from those countries that were involved.

Q: We were pressuring all these countries to crack down on drug trafficking and yet when an American got arrested, we had to go out and do our best to help him. This caused some problems.

SCHIFF: I wasn't in on that bail out operation. That was not part of our responsibility. The individual country problems were dealt with by the desk officers, not us.

Q: How about the Arab-Israeli problem? This was the '73 war, the Yom Kippur War, as opposed to the Six Day War. What were you all doing with that?

SCHIFF: We were not directly involved in the negotiations. That was kept within a smaller circle. But our role at that time was primarily on questions of military and economic aid and military supply questions. We had in our office one person, a colonel, on loan from the Defense Department throughout my tenure there. One replaced another. They were both very able people, and they gave us and gave the bureau advice on strictly military considerations.

Our office also had a function of being the channel to the NSC for papers originating in our bureau so that they would come through our office on their way to the assistant secretary and ultimately to the White House. We were the coordinator within the bureau on those kinds of things.

Q: By this time, Kissinger was Secretary of State. So, you didn't have any particular problem with the NSC, did you?

SCHIFF: No, not that I can recall directly, although I do remember when he was in office and the fighting was going on in the Middle East and he was traveling, we had at times difficult communications problems. Decisions on some of the military supply questions, even fairly minor ones, had to be sent to him. We might catch him en route somewhere to get that kind of decision. But when I first came into the bureau, Rogers was the Secretary of State. At that time, the State Department and Bill Rogers and Joe Sisco were given considerable latitude in dealing with the Middle East, more so than any other bureau vis a vis the NSC.

Q: I think it was a deliberate decision on Kissinger's part to turn the Middle east over to Rogers. It was his baby.

SCHIFF: That was my understanding of the way things worked at that time. I've read subsequently that that was the case.

Q: Did you feel the hand of the ethnic lobby, first with the Jewish lobby?

SCHIFF: No, we were not in that path.

Q: Then we had the other lobby, the Greek lobby.

SCHIFF: We were not because the country desk people would have been the targets for most of that.

Q: Did Iran or Iraq pose any problems?

SCHIFF: Not major ones. We still had CENTO at that time. I was the chief U.S. delegate to the CENTO Economic Committee meetings and also our office did all the preparations for ministerial meetings. So, in my area of responsibility, we interacted with Iran through this vehicle. There were no major problems at that time between us, in CENTO or generally.

Q: How about India and Pakistan?

SCHIFF: Difficult, a real challenge. Of course, it was during this period that war broke out. Again, our office was involved more on the periphery than directly and we were not directly involved in the negotiations, but we were involved again on questions of military and economic aid.

Q: Afghanistan?

SCHIFF: Our major concern at that time was with respect to drugs. It was not the kind of problem that we have now.

Q: What was the perception of the threat of the Soviet Union?

SCHIFF: I think there were perhaps some differences in perception on the part of some people in the NSC and perhaps in the Pentagon, too. There was a question that arose in a policy framework discussion of whether there was a Soviet threat which was based on a more or less coherent view of the region as a whole. There were a lot of people in the State Department – maybe they would have been accused of parochialism by others who saw things differently- who did not believe the Soviet view of the region as a coherent geographic unit and whose policy was based on that perspective. We didn't see it that way. Others may have. We tended to believe the individual countries in the region, or smaller groupings of them, were greater or lesser targets for Soviet activity during that period.

Q: While you were doing this, did you get involved in any particular issue during this '72-'74 period?

SCHIFF: I'm not sure that there was any one major thing that I got deeply involved in. I'd have to think some more about this, to try to engage in some recall. But offhand, I can't think of anything major.

Q: While you were with the bureau, they took away Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus.

SCHIFF: That came later.

Q: That came in '74.

SCHIFF: After I had left. I had had one impression with respect to my NEA experience. I had been in NEA 10 or so years earlier when I had been on the Turkish desk. Having been away and in different parts of the world occupied with different kinds of things, when I came back, I was distressed to find, as Yogi Bera would put it, "Déjà vu all over again." The problems were pretty much the same. They had not changed significantly. This was not what I had hoped for.

In answer to your last question, one thing I did become heavily involved in was engineering a change in the aid program to Turkey, which was very substantial. I did play a fairly significant role in effecting that change.

Q: In what manner?

SCHIFF: We had for years had Turkey on a major military-economic grant program. It was after a State of the Union message or a foreign policy message that Nixon had given in which he talked about giving greater responsibility for making choices to foreign friends. I tried to translate this into practical changes in the way in which we approached aid to Turkey and structured it so that a potentially large portion of the program would be in the form of loans and it would be up to the Turks to make the choice as to just how much they wanted to borrow. In other words, how much burden they ultimately wanted to put on their economy. It was a basic political-economic choice that they would have to make. We were able to get that accepted at that time. That took up a good deal of time.

Q: In '74, where did you go?

SCHIFF: I went to a unique assignment. This was to serve as the U.S. government coordinator for a major UN conference. This was on the topic of "human settlements." I discovered later that human settlements really meant getting into questions of urban development and urban growth management.

Q: You were doing this from '74 to when?

SCHIFF: '76.

Q: How did you fit into the UN? What did you do? Did you go up to New York?

SCHIFF: We had some preparatory meetings in New York. We had a preparatory committee of something like 50 countries. We had a two-year period in which to go from beginning to finale, which took place in Vancouver in June of '76. We had one preparatory meeting in Geneva; we had another one in Nairobi. I was leader of the UN delegation to the preparatory committee as part of my role. Then later when we went to the plenary session, I was the senior staff person on the delegation. Our senior

representative was Secretary of HUD, Carl Hills.

Q: What was the genesis of this operation?

SCHIFF: The first major UN conference was on the natural environment. It took place in Stockholm in about '72. From what I learned later, there was considerable resentment on the part of Third World countries at that conference because they considered problems of the natural environment a problem unique to the industrialized countries. As a matter of fact, the slogan that came out of there that I heard much about later came from Indira Gandhi, who was at that time the Indian prime minister, who said, "It's poverty that pollutes." As a result of this feeling of resentment, the Canadians proposed a conference, which they agreed to host, which was to be concerned with the built environment. That was what ultimately came to pass.

Q: When you were setting it up, what delegations were you working with mainly and how enthusiastic was our role in this?

SCHIFF: The countries that at the beginning we worked very closely with were the Western Europeans, Australia, and some individual delegates from Third World countries who were very talented people who had a lot to contribute despite perhaps the small size of their country or economy... Just about every other country other than the U.S. was represented at my level by urban planners or environmentalists, but the word in Washington was that Mr. Kissinger insisted that for conferences like this the State Department representative be in charge. That's what happened. For me, it was a unique and very interesting experience. It was out of the mainstream. You asked about the attitude of the U.S. In the U.S. government as a whole, my feeling was that there was not great enthusiasm. There never had been enthusiasm for this conference. But as time went on and we got increasingly engaged, the interest in it increased, particularly on the part of domestic agencies. For the State Department, it was not a major thing, but for the domestic agencies like HUD, the Interior Department, the Council on Environmental Quality, the EPA, etc., they were very interested. There was considerable interest on the part of interest organizations in the U.S., including the organizations representing the governors, the cities, the mayors, etc.

Q: What sort of things were you looking at?

SCHIFF: There were not issues in the traditional sense, international issues. It had been decided fairly early on in the preparation for this conference that the basic framework was going to be national rather than international. There were things that the international community could do in terms of providing assistance, particularly for the Third World countries, and also in terms of exchanging experience within industrialized countries as well as the Third World. The object of the conference was to develop a framework of policy for dealing with what were becoming increasingly significant and disturbing urban problems, one of which was population growth. Another one was the fact that because of population pressures coupled with poverty, people were crowding into cities. Cities were growing at an astronomical rate and still are. This was occurring in the Third World

countries, which were ill-prepared financially and otherwise, to cope with this kind of people movement. So, that was a major consideration. Housing people. Shelter was a major concern on the part of many people. Initially, there were some countries who – I think I first heard this from the Egyptian delegate, who happened to be an architect or an engineer and who had come to find out about how to make better and more efficient roofs – this was not about things like that. This was about policy and that was made clear at the outset. What kind of policy measures did countries have to devise in order to cope with this great surge in urbanization?

Q: This is a little bit like telling the sun to stand still. Was anything coming out of this policy?

SCHIFF: Yes. What came out of it was a framework which was agreed upon. It was not a universal blueprint, but it had a lot of ideas and suggestions which countries could follow and adopt if they liked. It was in a sense a planners conference. It was probably more intellectual than most of these conferences tend to be. But it also set in motion the possibilities of continuing an international exchange of ideas. One of the things that came out of this conference which was unique was that each country had been asked to produce films depicting certain aspects of development policy, urban or rural. So, you had a tremendous film library on urban development established overnight. This added another dimension to the conference.

Also, as happened then and in subsequent conferences, there was a parallel conference among NGOs which took place in Vancouver at the same time the UN conference took place. This brought together people outside governments for exchanges of ideas. Tangible results? No, I don't think this was the kind of conference that could produce tangible results. Intellectual stimulus? There I think it might have had some modest success.

Q: Did you see a growing connection between the various planners and the various places? This gave them reason to get together with contemporaries.

SCHIFF: I was not able to follow that. I left government shortly after this. But I think this happened. On how major a scale, I don't know. There was a new organization created. Unfortunately, the decision was later made to locate it in Nairobi, which is not the easiest place in the world to reach and, of course, has had its own problems in later years. How effective the organization has been, I don't know. But the basic groundwork for these kinds of exchanges was laid at that time. Of course, it doesn't all have to be channeled through the organization. It could also be done privately.

Q: What about Carla Hills? What was your impression of how she operated and her instructions?

SCHIFF: We got on very well. I was very impressed with her. Her role at the conference was limited to the final stage of the plenary. She was effective. But in conversations in Washington in preparing for this, I think she had a good grasp and a real interest in the

international dimension to the problem and also what was going on in other parts of the world with respect to things that happened in her domain. I was very impressed with that.

Q: Did both non-governmental and governmental agencies within the U.S. have much knowledge to share with others? Were we a principal source or were other countries more able?

SCHIFF: I suspect it was a combination of both. Before we went to Vancouver, we held six or so conferences in various regions in the U.S. to tap into the talents that we had that were scattered around the U.S. to get ideas and also to pass out information as to what was going on. I thought that was very useful. I was in on all of those discussions and I thought they were quite productive.

Q: I would have thought that the Vancouver meeting, bringing all these experts in, would have also provided for a major exhibition area, people showing what they could do as far as building modest but effective and safe housing.

SCHIFF: It was that. We were so busy in the official business that I didn't have time to see what was going on there. But they also brought together some very well-known people who spoke at their own conference and whose views were then transmitted via TV. Barbara Ward, a famous British economist, was one of those who made quite an impression there. Margaret Meade was another one. I'm not sure that she went there, but she certainly participated... We had had a big reception at the State Department and she was there as well. She was very interested in it. People like that. There were others who came from other parts of the world, of course.

Q: So, in '76, whither?

SCHIFF: I had decided I was going to retire shortly afterwards. I had a short stint in the Inspector General's Office and went with a small group to inspect the consulate general in Hong Kong and then from there the liaison office in Beijing. That was a very interesting experience.

Q: Here were these two entities. How were they working? I would have thought there would have been a certain amount of rivalry.

SCHIFF: I don't remember being struck by rivalry. What was noteworthy in my estimation at that time was the physical conditions under which the liaison office operated in Beijing. It was a liaison office. It had a very confined physical premise. Yet they were doing very interesting things. I think all or almost all of the staff were language officers who had been champing at the bit to get an opportunity to get there. We were there for only about 10 days and we got an eyeful rather quickly about how confining the situation was for the kids, for school... I think they operated within an apartment building on a landing of a stairwell. What was most striking was the restrictions imposed on communication between official Americans and the Chinese population. We wanted to go to the museum on Tiananmen Square. We had to get permission from the foreign office

to do so. One of our guys on the inspection team was from the Commerce Department and an expert on China. He wanted to go to Shanghai. That was a no-no because there was considerable unrest in China at that moment. We were there shortly after Mao had died when the Chinese were going after the Gang of Four and things were very unsettled. They were very concerned. The liaison people were very restricted in their ability to communicate with the Chinese. Nevertheless, they had some really interesting insights, many of which came from traveling around the country and reading posters.

Q: So you retired in '76?

SCHIFF: At the end of '76.

Q: You came in in 1950. Why did you retire?

SCHIFF: Too much déjà vu. I had become very interested in the subject matter of the UN conference for a variety of reasons. Some of it had started before then. Our kids were finished with college. I didn't have that kind of responsibility anymore. I was ready for new horizons.

Q: What did you do after you retired?

SCHIFF: What I first started doing was writing and publishing a newsletter and traveling around the U.S. This was a combination of environment, agriculture, land use, planning. This came out of the experience of this UN conference.

Also, while I was still at the Department, I had taken a few courses in planning and land use. I just happened to get interested in that. Publishing the newsletter gave me an opportunity of traveling around the country and learning a good deal about the country. I did that for a few years, but it was not a commercial success and I had to give it up. Having had my interest in American history whetted by my travels, I began taking some graduate courses at the University of Maryland. I did that for a few years. I began working on a book. The subject was the Presidential election of 1876.

Q: We're talking about the election of 2000, which is a disputed election like the election of 1976. These are the two that come to mind.

SCHIFF: It's been fascinating to follow this. At that time, the dispute centered in three states. One of those three states was Florida and some of what happened in Florida was not too dissimilar from what happened 125 years ago.

Anyway, then I became increasingly involved in Montgomery County civic affairs and particularly in planning and land use activities. I became chairman of a committee that dealt with those issues for the Montgomery County Civic Federation, which is an umbrella organization for neighborhood associations, of which we have over 100.

More recently, last June, the county established a countywide task force on transportation

policy. I was asked to serve as one of the co-chairs of that. That has kept me very heavily engaged. I've often said that the transportation policy is something of a misnomer because it really transcends transportation and gets into a lot of other things.

Q: Where businesses are located, housing, etc. We are living in a very congested area.

SCHIFF: That's the big problem. We're the number two worst congested metropolitan area in the country.

Q: Los Angeles being number one.

SCHIFF: Exactly. It's an extremely complex problem. It's an extremely controversial problem. Of course, that's what makes it interesting. So, that's where I am.

Q: Thank you very much.

End of interview