Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

BRUCE MALKIN

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INTERVIEW

Q: When and where were you born?

MALKIN: I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on February 15, 1946.

Q: Let's go on your father's side first. Where did the Malkins come from? And what were they up to?

MALKIN: My father's side all came from Georgia – the Russian Georgia, not the one in the south of the U.S. And my mother's family was from Lithuania originally. I'm not sure if they came here for economic opportunities or to avoid the czar's army or both.

Q: This was a great incentive - the czar's army was almost a life, wasn't it.

MALKIN: It was not a pleasant occupation to get drafted into. You didn't know when you were going to get out again. So they both migrated and they met sometime in Philadelphia and I think that's when they were married and started producing many children.

Q: What was your father's occupation?

MALKIN: Commercial laundry. Oh, my father or my grandfather?

Q: Let's start with your grandfather.

MALKIN: My grandfather I think was in the commercial laundry business in Philadelphia and he did well at that. And my grandmother would have been a housewife.

Q: And your father?

MALKIN: My father was always with the Philadelphia Board of Education. He was a teacher, a vice-principal, and finally a principal. Then he headed up, in the end, the night school system in Philadelphia for adults.

Q: Now where did he go to school?

MALKIN: Temple University.

Q: On your mother's side, where did they come from, Lithuania?

MALKIN: Yes, Lithuania.

Q: What do you know about that?

MALKIN: Nothing I can remember at the moment.

Q: What about on your mother's side – do you know her mother and father?

MALKIN: No, I never met any of my grandparents except my mother's mother who died when I was seven. I really never had a chance to have any relationship and ask about them. My family has not been strong in the tradition of passing down the lore of ancestry either.

Q: Did you grow up in Philadelphia?

MALKIN: Yes, I spent my first 21 years in Philadelphia. I went to the public magnet school, Central High School, and then the University of Pennsylvania for my BA.

Q: Where did your family live when you were a kid, growing up in Philadelphia?

MALKIN: Until I was four, we lived in an apartment near 15th and Spring Garden streets in a terrible place. We then moved to Comly Street in the northeast – off Frankfort Avenue. Then, when I was nine, we moved to West Oak Lane, which is in the northwest area close to the Cheltenham Township border but still within city limits – near Temple University's football stadium.

Q: What was life like as a kid?

MALKIN: Fabulous. It was great being a kid. I enjoyed my home and my friends and school and all the activities. I had a very blessed childhood. My mother was home with me, an only child, and took good care of me. It's amazing that, being an only child, I wasn't spoiled at all.

Q: What was family life like? I mean, let's talk about at home sitting around the dinner table, or the day's activities, that sort of thing.

MALKIN: Well, sometimes my father talked about his work and teaching experience. My mother who was at home talked about what we did during the day and what my schedule was and what she did in the way of household activities.

My father, when teachers used to be paid only for working nine months of the year, had a summer job, selling ice cream from a truck. We used to talk about some of the people he met and that's when I started collecting coins, when he had his ice cream truck. He came home with bags of coins and my job was to help him sort them and put them in envelopes and take them to the bank. I started collecting those coins too, putting them in my coin books.

Q: Where did your family fall religiously?

MALKIN: My parents were Conservative Jews and I'm Reform.

Q: How conservative were they? Was Judaism a major element in your early life?

MALKIN: We were in a Jewish neighborhood in the northwest, and every Jewish boy was going to Hebrew class twice a week and preparing for bar mitzvah. After bar mitzvah I didn't follow through. I only got interested again, really, when I my children were old enough to go to Hebrew school.

Q: You got religion again –

MALKIN: I guess the religion came back as a tradition in that area.

Q: Where did your family fall politically?

MALKIN: They were pretty liberal Democrats. That would be the general description of them. For the poor people, in favor of safety nets and education, very strongly education.

Q: Were you much of a reader as a kid?

MALKIN: I believe I was, but don't ask me to name books that I read then that weren't assigned by the school. I can't remember even the ones that were assigned by the school, let alone the extra work I did. But I did read and absorbed a lot.

Q: What was your neighborhood like – from a kid's perspective?

MALKIN: It was a middle class neighborhood. All the husbands were working and many of the wives were not; they were homemakers. They had a wide variety of jobs. Somebody was in real estate, my father was in teaching, and others were in business. My friend's father was also a teacher, then principal of a school. Someone else worked for the gas company. There was quite a diversity.

We had a single home, but a lot of the neighborhood was row houses. Most people lived in row houses. We had a three-bedroom, one-bath single home that was very comfortable. It had a nice little lawn in the back and front.

Q: Did you enjoy school?

MALKIN: Yes, I loved school. I did well at it. I was encouraged constantly to do well at school and I found that it came to me fairly easily. I didn't have to work too hard to understand things and it was a good experience for me.

Q: As you moved through the system up to high school, did you find that any particular courses appealed to you and others didn't?

MALKIN: Well, in high school I enjoyed doing math problems and got quite good at them. I wasn't big on art, I never did learn an instrument properly and I wasn't very athletic. But the things that had to do with mathematics were good for me.

Q: Where did you go to high school?

MALKIN: Central High School. It's in central Philadelphia.

Q: What was it like?

MALKIN: This was an all boys' high school and it's also a magnet school, you call it now. It was the only one in the city that drew boys from all geographic areas and other high schools due to academic excellence in their junior high school years. Central High School also attracted the elite of the teacher body of the Philadelphia Education System, because they were anxious to have better students to teach. I was in the advanced class within Central High School and made some friends amongst very interesting characters.

Q: What about this period, moving from '46 into the early '60s?

MALKIN: High school would have been from '59 to '63.

Q: Did the Kennedy candidacy make any particular dent in your interest?

MALKIN: Well, in ’63 I was 17, and I don’t recall it making a big difference. Off hand, the only thing I really remember sharply about the election is that he was the first Catholic to be elected President. That seemed to be a big issue in discussions in the press at the time.

Q: What about blacks in school? In Philadelphia, there is a large population of African Americans. Were there –

MALKIN: There were some at Central, but they were a fairly small minority

Q: Did you find that you were running with sort of a Jewish crowd at school?

MALKIN: Well, Jews were highly represented at school. In my neighborhood where I grew up, I only had one Italian Catholic friend who I was really close with. In high school, quite a few of the students I knew were Jewish.

Q: While you were in high school, were you pointed towards anything? Did you have any idea where you wanted to go, what you wanted to study?

MALKIN: I recall being more an across the board type. I don’t recall that my later interest in economics was well developed in my high school years. I had a comparative economics course that piqued my interest. When I left Central, I thought I was going to do advanced college work in mathematics, which turned out not to be the case.

Q: Well, what happened – you graduated in what year?

MALKIN: The summer of ’63 from Central.

Q: What was University of Pennsylvania like in those days?

MALKIN: It was a fine university. It had great facilities and well-known teachers. The disadvantage I had for knowing what it was like was that I had to commute the first two years to save money. So I lived at home, and at the end of the class day and library time I went home for dinner and everybody else went back to their dorms and met people and partied and did things socially. So I was at a disadvantage socially there to get around and do things other than just go to class and then go home and do homework. But the Annenburg Library was open then and it was just a wonderful library facility. They had a very good student union building which is still there, remodeled. There is a very strange dorm there – the quad – the freshman dorms. They always seem to be short of space for students, and I think until recently that was still the case but now they’ve been expanding so much that it’s almost impossible to recognize the campus. It is so big with all the new buildings that have gone up. But I’ve always had a good impression of Penn and certainly enjoyed the second two years I was there living on campus and in an apartment with friends.

Q: Did foreign affairs cross your radar screen at all while you were in college?

MALKIN: It was in my sophomore year that I had a Foreign Service Officer come to speak to my political science class. The career he described at that time just thrilled me because it incorporated all the things I wanted to do. I could use my economics and political science background, I could learn languages, I could travel around the world and work with high quality people, and I would get paid for it as well. So it seemed a terrific combination that I couldn't resist. I became more and more interested in it, and then went through the application process in my junior year. However, in 1967, I informed the State Department that I was going for two years of graduate school (on a National Science Foundation scholarship). The Department said that, as of December 1968, I was eligible to join the next junior officer training class at FSI.

Q: You graduated from University of Pennsylvania in '67. Was the draft a problem at that time?

MALKIN: Yes it was, actually. From '67 until it was over in '75, there was always the chance of being drafted. I was okay while I was at Penn and then I did a year of grad school in London and another year in Geneva, Switzerland. At that point my number came up, and I was due to be called up and drafted. In fact, I had to take my medical for the army at a Frankfurt, Germany army base.

To go back a little bit, as I said, I took the Foreign Service exam in my junior year at Penn, and I passed it and the other parts of the process, the oral, the medical, and the security check. In my senior year I was told that I was high on the appointment list, and I would be called to join the Foreign Service in 1967. Then I received a scholarship for two years of graduate studies. I had been to London between my sophomore and junior years when I did some traveling in Europe. I loved London, and I wanted to go back there. One of my economics professors at Penn knew a colleague at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), and put in a reference for me. So I went to LSE for a year and did my Master's in International Economics. I was exempted from LSE's first year courses thanks to my courses and grades in my undergraduate studies. I graduated cum laude. At LSE, an economics professor who knew of my keen interest in a career in diplomacy recommended me to the University of Geneva's Graduate Institute of International Studies. The Institute brought educated foreigners to Geneva to mix with the Swiss students. Half the classes were in French, and my French improved immensely while living there for the 1968-1969 academic year. Having a French girl as a friend helped the most. The economics taught there was less advanced than that taught at LSE, but the courses on international organizations and diplomatic history were superb.

So, in the summer of '69 when I finished the academic year in Geneva, I came back to State. I had not yet been drafted when I joined the August '69 Junior Officer Training class. At that time, Foreign Service work was considered by the Army as an acceptable alternative for deferral. I kept that deferred status for my Foreign Service work until I was too old to be drafted at 26.

Q: Do you recall your oral exam – any questions or how it went?

MALKIN: One of the questions I was asked was: If I were stationed in South Africa, how would I describe American race relations – black/white relations – to educated South Africans so that they would understand our system and why we're critical of apartheid? In the late 1960's, I found it a very difficult question to answer. I was not very sure of how well my oral exam went.

Q: When you came in, in what – '70 ?

MALKIN: The junior officer class of August '69 consisted of about 22 members. There were three or four women, one of them black. Overall, it was pretty much a middle-class white male group. I remember the JOT class as being a fun experience. Since my economic testing in the Foreign Service application process was very strong because I had majored in economics at Penn, I wanted to be an Economic Officer. I can't say that the academic studies at Penn had prepared me for what I would do as an economic/commercial officer, but it was a useful framework.

I was first told that I was assigned to our consulate in Khorramshahr, Iran, but was subsequently changed to our embassy in Kingston, Jamaica, where I duly arrived in November of '69 aboard a U.S. cruise ship.

Q: Then you came in '69. Your first post was what?

MALKIN: I was very excited. First of all, all the single men were being assigned to the Cords Program in Vietnam. They were going as Village Pacification Liaison Officers or, if they were lucky, assigned to our embassy in Saigon. However, I was the only bachelor who had taken the economics test option and done very well, and I was told that is why I was given the option to go as an Economic/Commercial Officer somewhere other than Vietnam. I was offered a position that had been vacated by a medical evacuation in Khorramshahr, the port city in southern Iran, which I think is mostly an administrative post for bringing in household and other shipments for the embassy. Still, I thought this was fabulous. I was going to Persia. I didn't care what the work was - it just seemed to be the whole beauty of the Foreign Service. I'd be going to a famous country. I bought my Farsi language book and I was anxious to get started with the language, I was doing area studies. And then I'm told that State received word from the Ambassador in Tehran that there had been an internal juggling of positions. Someone from the Embassy went to Khorramshahr to fill the job, and the embassy did not require anyone going to the position in Tehran to fill it when that transfer was made. Basically there were no more openings in Iran.

So, after a little bit of internal discussions, I was told by FSI that the only other available post at this time, because everything other than Cords in Vietnam had been assigned, was an opening for an economic/commercial officer in Kingston, Jamaica. Actually, it was a junior officer rotational position, eventually rotating into economic and commercial work. This was very disappointing as it was so close to the U.S., and I was really down for a

while because it didn't seem to be in the mainstream of foreign policy. But I came around to thinking of it as a good assignment when I considered the alternatives.

At that time you were allowed to take U.S. ship lines, so I went on the U.S.S. Roosevelt, which stopped at Aruba, Curacao, and Caracas before reaching Kingston. It took ten days to get there, and I enjoyed every minute of it. Then I got to Kingston, and it turned out to be a wonderful place.

Q: You were in Kingston from when to when?

MALKIN: November '69 to February '72.

Q: What was so wonderful about Kingston?

MALKIN: The people were great, the climate was beautiful, the beaches white sand, and the water blue. Being brand new, I liked everything I was doing. Even the visa work was different. I made good friends there. I was married there.

Q: You know, I've heard about Kingston – a real problem of lawlessness and all that. Had that developed at all while you were there?

MALKIN: I think that was very minor when I was there. It was when Michael Manley became prime minister, just after I left in '72, that Kingston and all of Jamaica took a political and economic nose-dive. Manley decided to get close to Castro, and his politics went way left and anti-American and anti-white. But when I was there it was under PM Shearer and his finance minister, Seaga. I tried to write a doctoral thesis there for Geneva on how Jamaica could be the Switzerland of the Caribbean. The Institute wanted me to come there for further work on my first draft, which I could not do at this point in time, so it was never approved.

Q: This was when Manley came in?

MALKIN: Yes, he was a disaster. Although he was the son of the George Washington of Jamaica, his politics were really left wing.

Q: What type of work did you do?

MALKIN: The first six months I was in the admin section working with the GSO and Admin Officer in a wide variety of tasks designed to keep the embassy functioning smoothly. Then it was the visa section, immigrant and non-immigrant, which was also active because there was such a demand for visas. Occasionally I see my old supervisor, Bill Moody, who is retired and now lives in Reston.

Finally, for the second year I was rotated into the Economic/Commercial Section, where there was a junior officer position. There were only an Economic Counselor and a

Political Counselor, but there was no political support job. So I got the available commercial job and started meeting the business community.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?

MALKIN: When I went down it was a political appointee named Vincent De Roulet.

Q: He was a problem, wasn't he, as I recall –

MALKIN: He was there the whole two years that I was. He created problems until he was PNG'd (made persona non grata) by PM Michael Manley. During his 1972 open congressional testimony in Washington, De Roulet said that he had met with Manley privately and told him, "The U.S. doesn't want you as Prime Minister. I'm going to work against you." Manley took that personally, and told De Roulet when he was in Washington to not come back.

The ambassador was very wealthy. He had a yacht with a five-person full time crew. He had race horses which he boarded at a stable in Jamaica and the Admin Officer was basically in charge of the race horses and the GSO (General Services Officer) was taking care of the yacht. Any time left over would go to the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission). So there was a lot of pressure on Admin from the top. And De Roulet was very quixotic and erratic. He once came to my office when I was interviewing immigrant visa applicants, and told me not to give anybody a visa. He stayed there for a half-hour or so, and I had to turn down everybody before me. If I thought they were good applicants, I told them to come back with some more documentation in a day or two and I'd look at it. But I believe that if I had actually granted a visa to anybody in front of him after he had told me not to do it, he would have had me sent away to someplace else on my first tour.

Q: What about Jamaican society, was it pretty open, did you meet many Jamaicans?

MALKIN: Yes, I did. The Political Officer, Kenneth Rogers, was very nice and he invited me to his receptions. He was very well connected, so I met a number of Jamaica's business and political leaders. At the end of '70, at the Political Counselor's Christmas reception, I met a woman whose parents had a record distribution and music studio company in Kingston and were doing very well as the sole licensee for many Motown labels. They distributed throughout the Caribbean Islands. I met her on her holiday vacation. She was back from Canada where she'd just graduated from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. She was planning to work for her parents until it got warmer and then go back to Canada to live again. The short story is that we got married in September of '71. So I left Jamaica in February '72 with a new bride.

Q: How did you find the economic-commercial situation while you were there?

MALKIN: It was doing very well. The isle was definitely prospering. The business community was mostly Lebanese- and Chinese- and Jewish Jamaican. They owned the bigger businesses, such as the brewery and the dairy, and were the biggest employers.

The dairy owner was my next-door-neighbor where I was living. It seemed the economy was doing pretty well. It was not a rich country, but it has good climate and the food was cheap, unless you bought imported food.

Q: Did you feel any of the tensions of the more black Jamaicans, the underclass? Did they live in areas where it wasn't a good idea to go?

MALKIN: Well, there were areas in west Kingston, or Spanish Town, which was a small city not too far from Kingston that were considered dangerous by other Jamaicans, especially before elections. I remember driving into a poor black neighborhood because I wanted a piece of this famous Jamaican carver's work. I drove to his place several times and nobody ever bothered me. There was still a certain respect for foreigners and white or light-skinned people. If you met somebody who was high on ganja, then he might give you a hard time. The one time I remember meeting a Rastafarian smoking ganja, he offered me some. When I told him I don't smoke, he said, "That's baad mon, that's baad."

Q: What about the white ex-colonial class? I sort of have the feeling that they were somewhat replicating the Kenyan upper class or white settlers there, or dissolute, remittance-type people and all that. Was that around?

MALKIN: I don't recall a big British overseas resident community in Jamaica.

Q: Maybe what I'm thinking of was more in Bermuda and Bahamas.

MALKIN: Sugar plantations and rum mills were big in Jamaica, but except for the banks, I don't remember a large British business community,

Q: When you left there in '72, where did you go?

MALKIN: I had to come back to Washington, of course. I'd married a foreigner.

Q: She was Canadian?

MALKIN: She was born in British Guyana, and she had Jamaican citizenship as well as Guyanese.

Q: And so what happened?

MALKIN: I started going to work, and my wife tried to orient herself and find work because we didn't have kids yet. She was not thrilled with the fact that she was so isolated out in the suburbs. Over the years, having an educated wife with not enough to do to keep her happy and busy, feeling like she's accomplishing something herself, became an increasing problem. She tried to learn to type and do office work, but she really didn't settle into anything for the two years we were in Washington. It was a lot different than being the saleswoman for her father's company, traveling among the

Caribbean islands. As I recall, she got her immigrant visa quickly because she was married to an American. She also got her U.S. citizenship after two years in the States, since she did not have to be resident five years if you were being sent overseas with the Foreign Service. I went to work at the Commerce Department's Trade Promotion Office, having done good work on our commercial programs in Jamaica. It was an orientation year to learn about and recruit for trade missions and catalog shows.

Q: How did you find the Department of Commerce in those days, because there has been a sort of long-standing clash between the State Department and the Department of Commerce?

MALKIN: The Foreign Commercial Service wasn't formed until 1980, and I was working for State, but Commerce had a big say in Commercial Officers assignments. The building was very big and cavernous, with long, wide, and dingy hallways. In my particular area of trade promotion, I found the people were quite dedicated and industrious and trying to do their jobs conscientiously. But it's not too stimulating there, and a lot of the jobs were a lot less interesting than what I was involved with.

Q: This is the sort of reputation it had - and one reason why probably the State Department didn't do very well in trade promotion. How were you welcomed there?

MALKIN: I don't recall anything but nice treatment from my colleagues at the Commerce Department the year I was there, In fact, some of the friendships I made were helpful in the future in other assignments. Since I'd now spent a year with them I was under their wing. They looked after me more than the personnel system at State ever would have. I had no angel working for me, I had no high contacts, and, at that time if not now, you had to have a friend in Personnel to get a decent assignment. Having Commerce on my side in the assignment process was a plus.

Q: What did you do after a year there?

MALKIN: I went to INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research)

Q: Doing What?

MALKIN: Economic analysis and research and reports.

Q: In any particular area?

MALKIN: I know my section was working on Japan a lot, and one of the CS there was an expert on Japan. I was trying to introduce some of the early computer uses. I was interested in computer programs at the time, and I got the LOTUS 123, I think it was called, which was one of the early forecasting spreadsheet programs. We tried to use that to take data and forecast. I felt that most INR work projects were heavily focused on providing current intelligence for Secretary of State William Rogers, who came back from his meetings at the White House and told his staff what President Nixon and NSA

Kissinger wanted to support their positions. INR was expected to produce papers to support those positions. My impression was that independent and longer term reporting was a waste of time. Dissenting research papers would not be welcome.

Q: This must have not been terribly inspired then, in INR at that time – you didn't feel you were on the cutting edge of where we were going.

MALKIN: I think that's a true statement. INR wasn't as respected as it became later on.

Q: Of course, you were dealing with Japan, and this was just the beginning of the concern about Japan as a competitor, which was at that time in textiles. Did that come up, looking at Japan as a trade competitor?

MALKIN: More as an economic competitor overall. Its economic growth was higher than ours, and its trade was a much larger part of its GNP.

Q: Then where did you go?

MALKIN: I continued at INR until early '74 when I began language training for my next assignment in Mexico.

Q: So in '74 you went to Mexico and were there from when to when?

MALKIN: I was in the Consulate General in Guadalajara for three years, until mid '77.

Q: What was your job?

MALKIN: In Guadalajara I had a wider role than I would have had in Mexico City, where officers were just following the petroleum industry or some limited sector of the economy. I was basically doing everything that wasn't consular or admin. I handled mostly trade promotions and U.S. investments. We had maquiladoras there, where American investors were assembling electronic items for re-export back to the U.S.

Q: A free trade area or something.

MALKIN: Yes, it's a value added manufacturing free trade area.

Q: Who was Consul General there?

MALKIN: Matt Ortwein. It was his final posting. It was considered to be a very easy choice post for an end-of-career CG.

Q: What was the situation in Guadalajara when you were there? Since you were dealing economic and political and all that?

MALKIN: Yes, I was responsible for our contacts with and reporting on economic, political, and commercial activities. Therefore, I was involved with U.S. and Mexican businessmen, provincial Governors, Chambers of Commerce, student leaders as well as agricultural leaders. USDA's newsletter printed my article on the tequila industry of western Mexico, which required a lot of intensive research on my part, visiting many tequila factories. Our jurisdiction covered six western Mexican states, including Jalisco.

Q: Did you go out and look, what is it cacti?

MALKIN: It is distilled from the fermented juice from the agave plant.

Q: There's a very large American community there?

MALKIN: There is in Lake Chapala, not so much in Guadalajara. There was a big community of veterans and elderly or sick Americans who needed affordable live-in help; there were a lot of deaths of American citizens being processed at the Consulate General because they were just dying from old age or sicknesses

Q: What was the political situation at that time?

MALKIN: As I recall, Luis Echevarría Álvarez, was the president, and he was a jerk. I think he is on trial earlier this year for some things he did in those days. He was pretty left-wing, and not pro-American. Then there were the political parties supported by different gangs, while the public universities and the private universities in Mexico City were having student warfare, which spilled over into Guadalajara in a smaller fashion. I tried to keep in touch with student leaders there, and write political reports on what was happening and get them to the Embassy. The Embassy always liked to get these items from the consulates.

Q: Were these university gangs politically oriented, or were they just gangs?
MALKIN: I think they were just gangs. They may have had some nominal connections with the political parties in Mexico. I remember my wife at that time still loved me, and she bought me a bulletproof vest to wear when I went to lunch with these characters. It was different to go to a restaurant with them. They cleared out the floor of the restaurant, and they had bodyguards. It was a little intimidating to be around real thugs.
We were a little nervous because this was only a year after the American Economic/Commercial Officer at our Consulate north of us in Hermosillo was kidnapped and killed, and Terence Leonhardy, the former Consul General in Guadalajara had been kidnapped and released. So the whole idea of attacks on Americans in that particular region of Mexico was certainly a real threat that you lived with. It made us aware that American diplomats could be at risk.

Q: Did you find, many of us had accepted the fact the PRI was going to be there forever and ever?

MALKIN: I never thought they would be displaced, by the PAN or anybody else, but eventually they were.

Q: Did you have much problem with Americans? Were they getting into trouble, arrested, kidnapped, robbed, that sort of thing?

MALKIN: In Mexico City they were, but not in Guadalajara. In Guadalajara my biggest problem was a crooked American businessman who had one of these maquiladoras, and he brought in these shipments of electronic components and did not pay for them. When I went to his factory to try to mediate a dispute with the Mexican suppliers, the factory was empty. It was padlocked and he was gone. That was unusual.

I started a little group among the American business community in Guadalajara to meet with the Consul General periodically, since there was no American Chamber of Commerce. We just had informal discussions at the Consulate itself, or maybe at CG Ortwein's home once or twice, to try to plum their thoughts on the likely depreciation of the peso vis-à-vis the dollar and the problem with all the peso-denominated bills that the Americans were investing in because it was going up so fast. What was going to happen if the peso really took a dive, which is exactly what happened in the late 70's.

Q: Did you feel the hand of our Embassy in Mexico City very much?

MALKIN: As I recall, the only ones interested in me were the people at the Regional Trade Center in Mexico City. The Commerce Department had a Regional Trade Center for Central America and Mexico, but it always had its trade promotions in Mexico City. I became friendly with the Mexican organizers of the large annual fair in Guadalajara. In 1977, my third year there, I convinced the men in charge of the fair to donate adequate space in the fairgrounds for an exhibition of American farm machinery. The actual organization of the American businesses was handled by the Commerce's Trade Center in the capital. It was the first time Commerce ever had an off-site exhibition outside Mexico City, although the Trade Center was supposed to be regional. I was flying to Mexico City to coordinate with the Trade Center Director, Art Leonard, and he and his staff came to Guadalajara to check on arrangements. We had a really big exhibition with tractors from John Deere and Caterpillar and a number of other agricultural machinery companies, and it was a big success. So everybody, both State and Commerce, were happy again with my commercial work.

Q: Then, you left there in what, '79?

MALKIN: '77. We served in Guadalajara from 1974 -1977. I should mention that our first daughter was born in April of '74, shortly before we moved to Mexico. Our daughter spent her first three years in Guadalajara, and, of course, became bilingual. Years later, she studied Spanish again and regained her fluency.

My next assignment was to Embassy Singapore, which I received basically because the Commerce Department pushed me very hard in the assignment process to go to

Singapore to do commercial work. During home leave that summer, we had our second daughter. We had the two girls, one of them was an infant and the other was three years old. I remember we flew on Pan Am 001 via Frankfurt, Tel Aviv (we stayed in Jerusalem for a few days), Tehran, and New Delhi. Finally we arrived in Singapore. So we had a very interesting trip halfway around the world with an infant and a three-year-old, which put another nail in our marriage coffin.

Q: You were in Singapore from when to when?

MALKIN: From the summer of '77 to the summer of '81.

Q: What was it like? Lee Kwan Yew was running everything I guess.

MALKIN: Yes, he definitely chaired the Benevolent Mandarin Program of Singapore, Inc. Politically, it was very well organized. Unfortunately, it depended on suppressing political criticism, press freedom, and an independent judiciary on political matters. Of course, the embassy was always concerned about the lack of a viable opposition party, treatment of opposition party leaders, a press and a judiciary that were not independent, but its efforts to change the system were unsuccessful. On economic and commercial policies, however, it was quite open. It was really a delight to be able to talk to business people in Singapore, and when they told you they would do something, they did it. Their word was good, which made working with them a pleasure. They were pro-American and anxious for higher technology.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

MALKIN: We had three ambassadors in Singapore during the four years I was there, including the infamous Richard Kneip, who had eight boys and was the ex-governor of South Dakota. He was not a diplomat or in tune with local politics, and it drove the DCM crazy. On the other hand, we also had the privilege of serving under two outstanding career ambassadors, John Holdridge and Harry Thayer.

Q: What were the main sort of interests that you were doing on the economic/commercial side?

MALKIN: I was promoting American exports and investments through Commerce Department programs I had learned during my earlier assignment in Washington. Again I worked closely with Commerce's Regional Trade Center in Singapore. I was trying to give American businesspeople information that would bring them to Singapore to do regional sales and manufacturing activities. I helped them find good local agents and distributors. Commerce was pretty good about putting together trade missions of small to medium sized businesses that normally would not go to places like Singapore unless they were brought in a group and hand-held. I would get them appointment schedules and arrange government meetings, which is the way I once was able to sit in on a meeting at the Istana Palace and meet PM Lee Kwan Yew. He liked American investors so much

that he hosted them for a meeting in his offices there. I was on a first name basis with the Minister of Trade, Goh Chok Tong, who later became Prime Minister.

I researched and authored a lengthy airgram (remember those?) called "How to Do Business in Southeast Asia". Based on almost 50 interviews, I pointed out all the difficulties we had competing with the Japanese in Singapore and other Southeast Asian markets. It was reprinted by the Department of Commerce and used as a model for Commercial Officers to use and also as a handout for potential investors

Q: How about ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations)? Was that getting going while you were there?

MALKIN: It was just getting going. It had economic and commercial objectives, but functioned more as a political forum at the time. Later, it had a free trade area and other activities, but it was not very effective while I was there.

Q: Were we seeing – was Japan our big competitor?

MALKIN: Oh, yes. Definitely Japan. Japanese businessmen were willing to spend the time and money and had the patience to develop long-term connections with the agents, distributors and manufacturers there. More so than even the big American companies, which sent high level people once a year to visit. That just was not a sufficient effort to establish close links in the Singapore business community. There were about 40 American banks represented on the island, but many of them were doing very little business other than showing their flag to their competitors.

Q: I saw this back in the '50s when I was in the Persian Gulf Commercial Office. People just wouldn't spend the time.

MALKIN: Yes, you had to be there for the weddings and the birthdays and the dinners out with the guys and build up some rapport before they would feel comfortable doing big business with you. It's just the way the Chinese did business there. And Singapore's population was 85% Chinese, with the business sector even more highly run by Chinese Singaporeans.

Q: Did you find yourself running across any Chinese business customs that were hard for Americans to understand?

MALKIN: Well, if that's a euphemism for bribery…

Q: Not only for bribery, but for other things. For example, going to weddings, going to funerals and you know show yourself, or just the way deals are made, or anything like that?

MALKIN: Basically, it comes down to the fact that, yes, in Southeast Asia, especially with the largely Chinese contingent there in business, you really had to take your time

and not be in a rush to set deadlines, goals, and objectives that were part of your corporate short-term strategy plan, but couldn't be achieved by the Singaporean in that time frame. Take the long view; be willing to invest and not make money for a while. In fact, the Japanese were giving away stuff just to get a toehold. They did loss leaders for a year or two or more if they had to. Then afterward they had a monopoly after every one else was driven out of the market. They recouped losses. They had other advantages we do not have, like the Zaibatsu, or multi-sector corporation. Their banks in the same corporate group would finance their deals; their ships would ship it; their suppliers would get the spare parts. That way they could lose on the initial sale and make it up on the spare parts, the shipping and the financing. They did not lose money in the end; maybe the direct seller did not make money but somebody in the group did.

Q: Did American investors invest?

MALKIN: Yes, there was a large business community because it is a regional hub and compared to Kuala Lumpur or Jakarta or Manila, it was safe, it was clean, communications were good and improving all the time, there were plenty of air connections for the region. Lots of things go through Singapore to get to other countries. The health conditions were excellent, the housing was excellent, the tennis was excellent, the swimming pools were excellent. You could get domestic help if you needed it. It was a very comfortable family-type place to live. As Commercial Officer, with all the new American companies coming in and the visitors to the existing ones, I was invited and going to two receptions an evening, four or five nights a week during the first year. I cut back after that. It was not good for familial relations.

Q: That reminds me, I talked to somebody that was there, I think an Economic Counselor in Beijing in the '90s and he talked about what he referred to as "death by duck". And this was they would have these delegations coming through almost on a daily basis and they would all have to go to a Peking duck restaurant, you know, which is fun for the first time, but the third time in a week it gets a little bit long.

Did you have any regional responsibilities there?

MALKIN: In practice, no, because we had Economic Commercial Officers in all the other capitals, and they were not delegating any power to Embassy Singapore. But much of what I wrote, I wrote in a way that was applicable to more than the Singapore market.

Q: How did you find the Department of Commerce? Were they supportive of you?

MALKIN: Yes, they were. Commerce's Foreign Commercial Service was formed in 1980, as you know, as a response to strong complaints by the American business community that State Department officers were not doing enough to help them get business overseas. Even though I opted to stay as an Economic Officer with State, I was put on the Country Team for the remainder of my assignment so I could attend meetings with my Economic Counselor boss. I also closely coordinated my work with Commerce's Regional Trade Center in Singapore. They were very helpful and backed me up.

Q: Was China getting to be a major rival?

MALKIN: China was not a rival competitor with American firms in Southeast Asian markets then. American (and Southeast Asian) companies were excited about selling to China more than buying from it. Singapore was touting itself as a rival of Hong Kong. Most of the Americans would go through Hong Kong as a gateway to the rest of China, for reasons that are pretty apparent. It is well placed and well organized for that business. Singapore always seemed to be in rivalry with Hong Kong for the Chinese markets, and it was trying to attract more business, but it is not in proximity with Beijing and northern China. Singapore did have excellent financial and legal services. It was trying to convince Americans and other westerners that its companies could do the necessary paperwork better, cheaper, and faster in Singapore than Hong Kong could.

Q: How did you treat the bribery situation?

MALKIN: It's a law. I mean, we had a law on the books that American companies could not engage in bribery to do business. It is still ion effect, and rightly so. The only time we discussed it was when we found out that the French had a law subsidizing bribery payments as a business expense. Of course, the Japanese would do anything; it didn't matter, what ever it took to get the businessman on their side. They didn't have any qualms about using gifts and money as incentives to do business. However, I believe that bribery of Singapore government officials was quite rare, as they were carefully scrutinized and relatively well paid.

Q: At that point, was Vietnam at all a commercial entity?

MALKIN: Not really. This was '77 to '81 and, of course, they were just recovering from war and rebuilding their political and economic structures. I don't think it became much of an attraction to Americans until after we had an embassy established there some 8 or 10 years later.

Q: How about Indonesia? Were business people using Singapore as the center, but doing a lot of business in Indonesia?

MALKIN: The big business in Indonesia was oil and gas. The only big American companies were in the oil and gas fields in northern Sumatra, just about where the (2005) tsunami hit up there. Although partnering with an experienced Singaporean company was an excellent arrangement, if you really wanted to do business in Indonesia, you needed somebody pretty good in Jakarta, too. You can't do business in Indonesia from afar. There are too many people to take care of, too many middlemen and high level people. It was not an easy place to do business; it never was, still isn't.

Q: In '81 you left there?

MALKIN: Right.

Q: Where did you go?

MALKIN: We went back to the Department (of State). My first job in the Department when we got back in ’81 was working in the Economic Bureau in the GSP (Generalized System of Preferences) Program, where we were using trade not aid as an incentive to developing countries to make economic progress. Instead of aid programs, we would give them trade preferences through lower tariffs for their goods being exported to the U.S. than we gave to developed countries. The only problem was of course that the developing countries' competitors are not France and Germany, but their neighbors, other developing countries.

The GSP program was well intentioned, and it did bring in a certain amount of new trade, but I do not recall seeing any statistics that it was an overwhelmingly successful program. It was very time consuming. You needed somebody full time because USTR's (U.S. Trade Representative) Jon Rosenbaum was running it. They were chairing the subcommittee for GSP product reviews, and held frequent meetings to go over new applications, complaints, and the trade figures for the previous year, which largely determined which goods from which countries were eligible for duty free treatment and which ones were not. It was really a very labor intensive process. I got good at it, and luckily I got some trips out of it. I went overseas to do trade seminars on how to benefit from GSP.

Q: Where were we doing most of this? Was it Africa? I mean where did we have GSP agreements?

MALKIN: It was a lot of countries – dozens, all throughout the developing world. I’m trying to think which ones took the most advantage of it. I think probably the Central and South Americans. A lot of it was agricultural - there were a lot of agricultural preferences given.

Q: How long did you stay in this job?

MALKIN: Until 1983, when my marriage went down the tubes with my first wife. We were divorced in ’86. From mid-1983, I was with the U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States (USOAS), which is located on the 6th floor of the old part of the Department. We have a small but interesting diplomatic mission, with an ambassador and DCM. I was the Economic/Commercial Officer for three years, which I found fascinating, and I enjoyed it a lot. I was able to use my Spanish again, and regained my fluency in it. When I arrived, the ambassador was William Middendorf, an experienced professional and a good man to work for. Our delegation to the OAS annual meeting in Brasilia in late 1983 won a Meritorious Group Award. Unfortunately, he was succeeded by Richard McCormick, a political appointment, who seemed to have little interest in the main issues before us.

Q: What were the main things that you were concerned with?

MALKIN: Trade restrictions. All the countries were complaining to USTR about trade restrictions. Jon Rosenbaum of USTR was a very hard-nosed negotiator who would join me for annual meetings with the OAS countries. That was one exciting area. The OAS country diplomats were always looking for either bigger quotas or lower tariffs or some special preference from the U.S., often on agricultural and mining exports. I helped them with their questions on GSP in order to get them to look at that as a program their countries could use.

We were almost always isolated in opposition to the other Latin American OAS members on the bigger, more important issues. Peru led the opposition, with support from Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, and Colombia. Sometimes we were supported by the Caribbean Island states. The Canadians were off on the side observing all of this to try to figure out why they should become members, which they eventually did.

Q: In OAS, did you see that the United States was seen as a big giver and everybody else was trying to get something?

MALKIN: We were perceived more as a big withholder, for not opening our markets more widely to their exportable products. They wanted us to lower our tariff and non-tariff restrictions, such as USDA inspections. They were fighting about copper and sugar and other issues that they had.

Q: What kind of a role did the Mexicans play at this point?

They were pretty quiet, but supported the lead countries in their votes.

Q: Brazil had its own barriers, didn't it?

MALKIN: That did not matter to them. They justified their protectionism based on their being a developing country.

Q: But we weren't supposed to have any?

MALKIN: As a rich developed country, we were seen as being unwilling to share our wealth. They felt that we were holding them back.

Q: How did you find the OAS mission fit within the State Department?

MALKIN: It was like being in a little embassy that just happened to be housed in the Department of State building. It could have been housed at an off-site place, too. I may have had some contact with my GSP friends, and coordinated often on ARA issues with country desk officers on OAS work.

Q: Why didn't you want to go into the Commercial Service?

MALKIN: I thought at the time, after looking at the two choices, that Commerce's FCS career future was more limited than State's. There would not be much job variety, and I would have some assignments in Washington in the Commerce Department. I decided that my chances for advancement and career improvement were better at State, which was really where I wanted to be with opportunities to do things other then commercial promotion. There were no special incentives; nobody offered me a promotion for staying with State. I just made that choice and I finished out my assignment in Singapore working for the Foreign Commercial Service, and then I came back to State and became a GSP expert.

Q: Your Washington tour ended at that point with the OAS? Or did you have another assignment in Washington?

MALKIN: That's when I went to the Regional Economic Policy Office in the EAP Bureau (EAP/EP). It had an opening, so personnel told me to go talk to them. Since I was immediately available and had a good interview with Bob Duncan, the Office Director, I got the assignment. So from 1986 to 1988, I was in the EAP/EP, doing research and reports on economic issues in the region. In 1988 Donald Westmore chose me to join his Regional Affairs Office (EAP/RA), where I was put in charge of the United Nations relations with the East Asian countries, 32 of them, and also human rights, including worker rights throughout the region. That was one of the areas I expanded considerably. The Labor Attaché position had been abolished in '86 during a reduction in force exercise, and there was no one really covering labor issues in East Asia. So I picked up that as part of my portfolio and enjoyed it very much. I traveled to see the labor union and labor-related political leaders throughout East Asia, and also I went to the annual ILO (International Labor Organization) meeting in Geneva to meet them there from 1990 through 1996. I became friendly with the AFL-CIO's Asian affairs office in Washington (then known as AAFLI) as well as some of the region's labor officers in different embassies.

Q: And basically, with different permutations you stayed doing this, did you?

MALKIN: Yes. In 1988, I transferred from an FS position in EAP/EP to a CS position in EAP/RA, which in 1998 was renamed EAP/RSP for Regional Security and Policy. I stayed in that position until I retired in 2002. Also in 1988, I remarried, this time to a Foreign Service Information Officer with USIA named Joanne Rinehart, and we live happily ever after.

I must mention the major changes in my work that occurred in 1998 after I earned my second Master's degree in National Resource Management Strategy from the National Defense University's Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF). When I returned to EAP/RSP, I found that the Office, under Pamela Slutz, had undergone a large transformation in my one-year absence. It now was responsible for all the "global issues" in the region, adding the environment, drug trafficking, refugees, and other smaller issues to my existing portfolio. To alleviate the new workload, I was assigned an FSO to be my assistant. From 1998 to 2002, I was the Global Issues Adviser in the East Asian and

Pacific Bureau, responsible for coordinating policy for many problem issues, including human trafficking, in the 32 country region. Human trafficking, especially of women and children, became a high priority under Secretary Albright. In this newly expanded role, I chaired the State/USAID selection committees of two grant funds of about $3 million each annually. One focused on improving the environment, especially in Southeast Asia. The other was specifically mandated to improve women's rights. I was responsible for final recommendations to the EAP A/S for grants to Asian non-governmental organizations involved in fighting trafficking in persons in the East Asia region. In that role, I led the EAP team that organized the first regional meeting of 21 EAP countries to discuss the trafficking of women and children. It was called the Asian Regional Initiative Against Trafficking, and was held in Manila in the summer of 1999. As a concrete result, I was able to get Bureau funding for the creation of an EAP regional website, www.humantrafficking.org, maintained to this day by the Academy for Educational Development. My team won a Meritorious Group Award for implementing a successful conference on a new and important topic.

Q: Let's talk about the labor then. Wasn't it about this time that you might say human rights watchers or other watchers were beginning to take a look at labor conditions for firms like Nike and, you know, all these firms that were having their, particularly clothing items, assembled abroad.

MALKIN: Yes, there was a lot of concern being raised about working conditions and the workers' rights in the East Asia Pacific countries manufacturing clothing, apparel, and shoes. This sensitized our regional embassies as well. The main thing was the lack of independent trade unions. Even though there were trade unions, they were government controlled. The governments didn't like independent trade unions in competition with the government unions and possible supporters of opposition political leaders. So we were championing at times the labor reformers who wanted to have a more independent trade union in their country, especially in Indonesia and Korea, which was achieved over time.

Q: How did you find the initial response? You know this became a concern with our embassies and all. Was there a certain amount of reluctance to get into the act?

MALKIN: I think it is natural that the embassy's job in friendly countries is seen as maintaining good relations with the host government, and talking about human rights violations is a prickly issue. It is confrontational to tell the government it is doing something wrong, something we do not approve of, and we want them to change their behavior. Our value-driven effort does not set well with some government officials, and, therefore, the embassy officers, from the ambassador on down, are sometimes reluctant to push too hard on this subject because they had other goals to achieve as well. It's a multi-faceted relationship and they sometimes felt that political stability or economic growth or other bilateral interests were just as important as our human rights interest, and they were going to work on other goals and not so much on human rights. Others championed human and worker rights in a very progressive fashion. Two EAP Assistant Secretaries immediately come to mind as outspoken supporters of human and worker rights, namely, Winston Lord and Stanley Roth.

Q: On this particular clothing and workers rights and all – where were some of the trouble points in Southeast Asia?

MALKIN: Southeast Asia is a big manufacturing supplier area for the U.S. Worker issues were evident mainly in Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia. We also looked at worker rights in the Pacific Islands, but these were not major suppliers to the U.S.

Q: As you got into this, were there any particular countries where you or the office got particularly involved?

MALKIN: Some of the embassies got very much involved, especially when the Assistant Secretary was very keen on pursuing human rights and worker rights issues. In the 1990's, we had Winston Lord and Stanley Roth as the Assistant Secretaries. Lord put Burma's situation very high on his agenda, and Roth went to Jakarta and asked for and got meetings with imprisoned labor leaders. They were very forward leaning on human and worker rights. I felt that my job was to be the Jiminy Cricket , the conscience of the Bureau, and make sure that they had the information available to them to be able to make informed presentations and keep communications on this subject alive. I was also very active with desk officers on specific country problems, especially if there was a UN or ILO connection.

Q: Did you have any problems with the Bureau? As you mentioned, bilateral relations are complicated. We have all sorts of issues going, and human rights is just one of them. Did you have problems with other parts of the Bureau saying, "Cool it, don't push trade union problems in Indonesia? We've got other things to worry about?"

MALKIN: The Burma Desk and Embassy Rangoon were the most aggressive on human rights. It was a top priority for them in their policy agenda. I joined EAP/RA in August of '88, the same month that the military junta shot down the students and the protestors in front of the embassy. People there were very upset and every Ambassador, or rather the Charge because we had withdrawn our ambassador, was very helpful in trying to promote human rights and peace with the democracy leaders and supporters. I visited there twice, and even met with Aung San Suu Kyi the second time. She is the leader of the opposition and daughter of the founder of modern Burma. In my U.N. portfolio, we kept up with the U.N. General Assembly resolutions against the government of Burma and the same in the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva and in the ILO. I was active in preparing and critiquing draft resolutions in all three institutions. I also briefed our U.S. delegations before they went to these meetings. I was helping them to know that Burma and other countries were not treating their workers properly. EAP also pursued human and worker rights in South Korea and China, despite our important security and economic relationships.

Q: Did you feel that there was any progress up to the time you retired?

MALKIN: Not in Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi is still under house arrest and other leaders of her party are in jail. There really has not been any breakthrough in the relations since 1988. It's still a mess in Burma. But it is the only country in the region where the bureau and the desk were willing to implement sanctions of some kind. The rest of the desks and office directors were more reluctant to do sanctions.

Q: Of course, with Burma, that was the only real issue we had almost. I guess drugs were the other thing.

MALKIN: Drugs, that's right. There was drug trafficking. It is part of the golden triangle. There is also human trafficking, mainly to Thailand and China.

Q: How about Thailand? Were there problems with Thailand?

MALKIN: One of the things we did with Thailand, was to encourage them to keep their border areas open to Burmese refugees and let U.N. agencies in to look after them and run the camps. They did not want to do that at first. Eventually, they did let the U.N. come in and the camps became safer and more organized. We were also telling the government that we wanted them to give their workers more rights as well, that they did not protect basic worker rights. For example, workers sometimes were not able to assemble, or bargain collectively.

Q: How about Vietnam? At some point we recognized them.
How is Vietnam fitting into this?

MALKIN: I think it became more prominent on the agenda after we re-established an embassy there. Until then, Vietnam was not particularly in the forefront of policy issues in the Bureau as were Japan, Korea, and China. Those were the three biggies, especially China and Japan. I think they have ten officers on each of the desks, so there is a tremendous amount of resources devoted to the northern part of East Asia and less to Southeast Asia, which focused heavily on Indonesia. The Vietnam issue became the human and worker rights of Vietnamese who went to Saipan and were being treated as slave labor in apparel sweatshops.

Q: How about Indonesia? Did you have problems there?

MALKIN: Yes, of course. Generally, the embassy was frank with General Suharto about the issues, and, of course, eventually, there was a revolution that ousted him. It was not a bloodless coup, but a pretty peaceful revolution. The daughter of the founder of modern Indonesia, General Sukarno's daughter, was elected President. It's been a rough ride to democracy in Indonesia, and it still needs constant tending, but it seems to be taking hold. You really need a generation or more for countries that are used to authoritarian rule to incorporate democratic behavior and the rule of law. They do not grasp the significance in the first few months or years that they have the right to vote, to feel free from governmental oppression, to assemble peacefully, and to print what they want and say what they want. So it takes sometimes the generation that was brought up under

authoritarianism to move on, and the younger people begin to feel that they are entitled to these rights. That's when democracy, I think, will really flourish in places like Indonesia.

Q: How about China. Here is a huge market, the 500-pound gorilla in the area, but dealing with human rights. It's a pretty abysmal record, isn't it?

MALKIN: I would say so. And labor rights must be included there. Again, it is a country with a government federation of unions that was just part of the system, that was not going to be asking for reforms or demanding any new benefits for the workers, except sometimes in safety and health issues. There were and there still are labor activists like Hong Dong Fong who moved to Hong Kong and transmits his radio show from there. The problem, again, with China, is that the main issues are national security and then economic, almost on a par with that. Then everything after that falls a lot lower on the scale of importance, usually, to the policy makers in Washington, and, therefore, to the embassies and its consulates throughout China. For example, China just enacted a law to use force if Taiwan declares its formal independence. So again we are really in a security issue and that requires a lot of focus. It has already surpassed Japan as our major source of imports from any one county. They have this huge trade imbalance with us, which is somewhat of a concern, especially as they undervalue their currency to the dollar, although the exchange rate was recently allowed to float just slightly.

Q: How about South Korea? South Korea had gone through several governments, but it had sort of settled down into a functioning democracy by then, or was that somewhat later?

MALKIN: It was still evolving, and the trade union movement was at the forefront of making helpful changes and demanding democratic rights. The independent trade unions were being oppressed by the government. The government had its own trade union federation for many years under the generals. Their federation was the one only one that officially represented them in Geneva at the ILO meetings. It took time, but certainly there has been a big sea change in the labor rights of South Korea. It now gets very high marks in human rights protection in general, and worker rights are a part of that.

Q: You were dealing with U.N. affairs there. What were some of the major U.N. programs in Asia?

MALKIN: I was working mainly with three institutions, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Commission, and the ILO. So, again, Burma was always on the agenda, a perennial pariah, and a rogue state. My job was to get support for yearly resolutions condemning the atrocities against the democratic opposition in Burma. We had to lobby the East Asians particularly, because they vote in regional blocks in the UN, and usually the non-block countries look to the block countries where the country of concern is located for signals on how to vote. So, we wanted to get the East Asians on the side of the UN passing strong resolutions condemning the junta. That was true in all three institutions.

Other issues in the UN for East Asia were the Human Rights Commission, where the Chinese were trying to make sure there was no resolution against their human rights activities, their human rights violations. That was the biggest battle in the Human Rights Commission. The top item was China. When I started, Cuba was the top item because very anti-Cuban people made up the delegation. Then later it shifted to China.

Q: What was your impression of United Nations operations in Asia?

MALKIN: Did it actually implement programs in Asia, like UNDP (United Nations Development Program)?

Q: Yeah.

MALKIN: I think the UN was trying to be responsive to U.S. interests. For example, UNDP certainly turned around in Burma where major projects were vetted by at least the five permanent members of the Security Council, including us. We were trying to make it a little more pro-human rights development program. The World Health people and those in public health administration were doing a great job. They were doing wonderful work in Burma, and I think they deserve credit. The UN High Commission for Refugees helped the Burmese refugees a lot once the Thai government permitted them to run the camps. I think it was UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) that we pulled out of because it was wasting money. Those were the major U.N. agencies.

Q: How about the staffing of the U.N. Did you run across U.N. people much during your work, or were you working more with their reports from our posts?

MALKIN: Mostly cables from our posts were my best source of information. Sometimes the U.N. published documents, but they were more on development and economic growth.

Q: What about refugees? While you were doing this were there still a significant number of boat people coming out of Vietnam and Cambodia?

MALKIN: Yes, I believe there were in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s. There were still Vietnamese boat people, but the country desks handled that issue at that time. The Cambodians were stuck in place under the Hang Sen regime, which still rules today. . Once he became first vice president, he maneuvered himself into being first co-president and then president. He has persecuted opposition politicians, and never completely shed his Khmer Rouge roots. Some Cambodians escaped to Thailand as refugees. Cambodia was mostly focused on transition from the communist Khmer Rouge regime to the more democratic hodge-podge they cobbled together after that. Cambodia has yet to fulfill its democratic promise and remains a very poor country today.

Q: Did the fact that, for a big part of this period we’re talking about, that you’re dealing with, along with other United Nations affairs, the United States wasn’t paying its dues and was at odds with the way things were being done? Did that affect your operation that you saw?

MALKIN: When you get into New York and you talk to any U.N. Assembly officials, the big complaint about the U.S. was when we paid our backlog of dues. We had adopted a new system whereby we paid on our fiscal year schedule, and we were still always about three to six months behind the U.N. cycle of budgeting. They were always complaining about that. The U.N. has often been beat up by various administrations as not being cost efficient or doing what we thought was appropriate actions. Now you see that we have someone who is supposed to be going to push for reforms in New York.

Q: John Bolton

MALKIN: John Bolton is now our ambassador to the UN, which he had no respect for when he was head of the International Organizations Bureau. I don't know if he has gained any new perspectives since then.

Q: It seems dubious. Why did you convert to civil service?

MALKIN: I had personal as well as professional reasons to do so. Professionally, I was stuck in my grade in the Foreign Service. I had gone from being a fast riser to a stagnant FS-2, and I did not see much opportunity in the future. Also, I was involved in a divorce and custody battle with my ex-wife. Thus, I did not want to be outside of Washington. If I stayed in the Foreign Service, I had to go overseas. There was an approaching limit on how long I could stay in Washington, so I had to get a Civil Service position whether I liked it or not. But it worked out very well. I liked my work, and I was able to get a GS-15 after two years in the job, mainly because of my new work on labor issues.

Q: There seemed to be quite a change in labor as a factor; the unions have gotten weaker in the Unites States. And of course as the Cold War died down, and labor was a principal tool to use against the communists. But when it went away, it didn't seem to me to have the same clout.

MALKIN: Absolutely correct. That's a great summary of the situation. In the U.S., labor's political clout, and support from policy makers, drastically lessened. Its clout domestically did not necessarily lessen once the Cold War was over, but the interest in labor union confederations as proxies for the political powers of adversaries was certainly over. It made them focus more on benefits for their members rather than fighting against the communist unions. Today, however, the AFL-CIO's membership is abysmally low, and four major unions are disaffiliating and may form a competitor federation.

In Asia, unions are doing much better compared to the '80s. They are quite lively and mostly in healthy condition. There are a lot of issues between private and public sector unions in Asian countries. The public sector employees having much comfier jobs with more benefits than private sector workers. When they demand still more benefits, it turns off a lot of people, especially in Thailand. The people thought the public sector unions were too greedy in what they were demanding. Also, the Thai people figure that even if

they are working for somebody today, they will be business owners tomorrow. They were not very supportive of the private sector unions.

Q: How about in Japan. How did you see the unions in Japan?

MALKIN: Japan has the third largest democratic union federation in the world, after ours and the British Trade Union Council. The RENGO Federation is big in Japan. It always has been very influential politically. They can support politicians and get them elected, so domestically they are still a powerful force. The AFL-CIO has had excellent relations over many decades with RENGO. They listen to our concerns and we listen to theirs. They met with the AFL-CIO twice a year to go over policy issues and mutual interests.

Q: You retired in 2002?

MALKIN: September one.

Q: What brought about retirement? Did you feel you could go on forever?

MALKIN: I was in the same position 14 years although the responsibilities had grown dramatically in 1998; I didn't succeed in my efforts to join the Senior Executive Service; I had 33 years of service and was eligible for a full annuity. My wife was retiring that summer as well. She retired on July 1.

Q: What was she doing?

MALKIN: She was a USIA (United States Information Agency) Officer, a Cultural Affairs Officer, and then stayed with USIA all the way through the move to State and then four or five years at State. Her last assignment was in the Office of Civil Rights. She is a little older than I am, so she felt like she'd like to retire and I said, "I'll retire too. I'm not going to get up and commute to work while you're at home. It sounds too unfair to me."

We talked about it for a while, and then I did not retire when I was 55 because my older daughter was getting married, and I did not feel I could afford to take a 50% cut in my income if we were putting money into her wedding. So I stayed another year. Also, on the job side, my position had accumulated, for want of interest elsewhere in the bureau, all of the strategic planning and budgeting process. I was basically in charge of the budgeting process for the bureau, and it got to be quite time consuming. The M Bureau kept changing the process so each year was a little different, and it was hard to get quantitative input from the embassies. It was tiresome and inefficient. Resources are spent poorly on managing the budget, so I was doing more of that and less of the other regional issues that I enjoyed so much. All those elements just came together at the time. A good friend of mine outside the Department said he retired early and loved it; he was having a great time. I was thinking it would be nice not to have to get up at 6:00 and commute and come back at 7:00. It might be nice to go on vacation without asking somebody if I can have leave and not have to negotiate my Thanksgiving and Christmas

holidays with the other EAP/RSP Officers. I do not have to wear a tie and jacket every day. So I talked myself into retiring, and it has been a great decision. I'm glad I did it when I did it.

Q: To round this up, what are you doing now?

MALKIN: During the last two years I've tried a number of volunteer activities, including working with a non-governmental organization on human rights issues and working in a handicraft retail shop that benefited African or other developing country artisans. It's Ten Thousand Villages.

Q: Oh, yes. My wife goes there quite often. It's a great organization.

MALKIN: Yes, it is a great organization. I worked for it for a year. Then I worked for a year for United Community Ministries (UCM) as an intake operator, trying to sort out whether people who called for help with food or small loans for rent and utilities were eligible for help at UCM. I also worked in Fairfax County's Sherwood Hall library as a monitor for its computer lab.

Last year (2004), I took an 18-session course with Fairfax County Public Schools to learn to teach English as a Second Language (ESL). But it's not called that anymore; it is now called English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). So it is no longer ESL, it is ESOL. I have been working with several organizations on Route 1 or close to where I live. I wanted to give service to the community after all these years. I've gotten so much out of my life, my country, my work, that I wanted to serve the community in different ways. I think the best way now is to help the people who need my assistance in learning English, working with a group that meets in the basement of the Groveton Baptist Church and another place called Progressive Hispano, which is a non-profit organization that has ESOL and citizenship preparation classes. Both are on Rte. 1, close to where I live in Mount Vernon.

Q: What's your impression of particularly Hispanic immigrants here. One of the statements often says, "Hispanics don't really pay much attention to learning English, they stick to themselves and can survive very nicely without learning English". What's your impression of this?

MALKIN: Well, of course they are the largest minority in the U.S. They are a huge community in my area of Fairfax County, and they can survive without learning too much English. But the ones who want to expand their opportunities are paying to go to class at night, after they work ten hours a day. They take a break, eat something, and then come to class for an hour and a half or two hours in the evening. If they're not working, they come in the morning. So, the ones who realize that this is an English-speaking country and they need English to get ahead come to class. We are seeing that there is a very keen demand for teachers and for classes that are affordable. These people are not making big bucks. We can't price ourselves out of their resources. I think that the more

teachers can teach immigrants to speak English, the whole country will be the better for it. That is why I am happy and proud to do it as a volunteer teacher.

Q: I commend you for it. It's really an important aspect. And also it brings out our foreign experience, that we're able to have a little more rapport than other teachers.

MALKIN: Yes. Of course, having worked in Mexico for three years and then with the U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States for two years in Washington, I feel I have a good sensitivity to the issues in the lives of people in Mexico, Central America, and South America. I am not supposed to speak anything but English in class, but my ability to understand and speak Spanish does come in handy when all else fails.

Q: Bruce, I want to thank you very much for this. It's been excellent.

End of interview